

Green Party: Grammar school expansion is height of evidence-free policymaking



7 March 2017

*** Jonathan Bartley: “Theresa May should be getting rid of current grammar schools – not paving the way for new ones.”**

The Green Party has accused the Government of “evidence-free policymaking” after the announcement that the budget will pave the way for new grammar schools.

Research from the Sutton Trust has found selective schools benefit those who are already advantaged the most, while failing to serve the needs of those who most need support. [2]

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said:

“This is the height of evidence-free policymaking that we know will entrench inequality in an already divided society.

“If Theresa May was serious about making sure every child has a good school place she would be getting rid of current grammar schools – not paving the way for new ones.

“The evidence shows grammars benefit the already advantaged and fail those who need the most help. Instead of ploughing money into selective education the Prime Minister should be investing in our state schools and creating far more places than this scheme will provide.

“We need education policy that gives every single child the best education possible – not just those whose family can afford a tutor.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39183815>
2. <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/poor-grammar-entry-grammar-schools-disadvantaged-pupils-england/>

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Grenville Ham to take on Wales Green Party leadership as Alice Hooker-Stroud steps down



6 March 2017

Leader of the Wales Green Party Alice Hooker-Stroud today announced that she will be stepping down at the end of March. Grenville Ham, current deputy leader and expert in renewable energy, will take over.

Grenville Ham, said:

“I want to thank Alice for all her contributions to the Wales Green Party, and to build on this movement which genuinely represents the best interests of Welsh people, rather than one that panders to big business. I look forward to continuing the Wales Green Party’s work of creating a society where people are more important than profit”.

Talking about next steps for the Wales Green Party, Ham added: “It will be an immense privilege to lead the party into the Council elections in May. My priority will be to support all of the hardworking Wales Green Party candidates who offer their communities the chance to vote for fresh ideas and a positive future. I will be standing myself in Brecon, and I’m already seeing local people recognise that in order to get a meaningful change they can’t keep voting for the same old parties”.

Hooker-Stroud, who has led the Wales Green Party since the beginning of 2016, said in a statement today that the lack of funding for smaller parties in the UK has contributed to her position being untenable.

Hooker-Stroud said:

“I love Wales and I feel honoured to have represented the Wales Green Party’s vision on behalf of our members. Though the decision to step down was not easy, it was made easier by the fact I knew I would be handing over to Grenville, a committed, skilled, and experienced member of the Wales Green Party who will take us forward with confidence to the elections in May.

Speaking of her reasons for stepping down, Hooker-Stroud said:

“As a party that cares about who lines our pockets, we don’t take funds from big business donors like other parties do. That means our members have the biggest say – not corporate lobbyists, but it has contributed to my role being effectively a voluntary one, which for me has sadly become untenable. I am proud that every person in our party has an equal say, and proud that when

I speak on behalf of the party, that I know I speak on behalf of our members. However, the financing of political parties in general needs urgent reform so that politicians aren't just the mouthpieces for big business, and so that alternative voices are heard."

Hooker-Stroud added: "Parties that have a lot of money can do a lot, and those who have a smaller amount can do less. That is how contemporary politics works. We need to level the playing field financially for political parties in Wales, and in the UK. It would be a much fairer country all round for everyone."

Notes

[1] The Wales Green Party campaigns to make politics fairer, which includes fairer finances for political parties. The party call for a cap on large donations that mean wealthy individuals and organisations have a huge influence on politics, and for state funding to be available to parties who achieve more than 3% of a proportional national vote. Other countries, such as Sweden already give state funding to political parties to level the financial playing field.

[2] Ham was elected as a deputy leader in December in 2016. He gained over 50% of the Wales Green Party membership vote against two other candidates. He ran as a candidate on the regional list for Mid and West Wales in the Welsh Assembly elections last year and is currently standing in this May's council elections in his own ward, St Mary's in Brecon. He runs a not-for-profit engineering company in Powys and has been awarded the British Empire Medal for 'Services to the Renewable Energy in Wales'.

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[Revealed: MPs pension fund invests in tobacco and fossil fuels](#)



3 March 2017

MPs pensions are invested in tobacco, fossil fuels and the US treasury, a new report has revealed.

The Annual Report of the Parliamentary Pension Fund has, for the first time, published the fund's top 20 investments – and they include British American Tobacco, BP and Shell [1].

TOTAL ASSETS: £621m

BP: £5.59m

SHELL: £4.97m

RIO TINTO: £1.86m

Minimum Fossil Fuel Exposure: £12.42m

+ BAT: £5.59m

The publication of the investments comes after pressure from MPs wanting their pension fund to be more transparent, especially with regard to its exposure to fossil fuel assets. Until this week the Parliamentary Pension fund did not disclose any of its holdings, meaning its 1,800 members had no idea how much of the scheme is invested in oil and gas companies, or other controversial industries such as weapons manufacturers or tobacco.

Caroline Lucas, the Green MP for Brighton Pavilion, welcomed the fund's move towards transparency but warned of the 'huge risks' of exposure to fossil fuels.

She said:

"After years of resistance the Parliamentary Pension Fund has finally come clean and made public their top twenty holdings. This is a good first step, but, as expected, the fund has a deeply questionable investment strategy investing in dirty energy and tobacco."

"The long-term financial risks associated with oil, coal and gas assets are well known, yet the Trustees of the PCPF are refusing to even meet with fund members to discuss this issue. If we are to prevent the worst of climate change, then we must rapidly transition away from an economy run on fossil fuels by investing in the renewable energy that we have in abundance. It's right that the MPs should lead the way on this transition."

"It is well within the scope of the fiduciary duty of pension fund trustees to account for non-financial factors – there is therefore no excuse for profiting from tobacco, an industry that is responsible for one of the greatest public health crises of our time."

"MPs are currently exploring a potential legal challenge to the fund on its approach to transparency, as well as its possible failure to adequately address the long-term financial risks associated with climate change. MPs shortly after the launch of a public campaign, [Divest Parliament](#), calling on MPs to encourage the PCPF to be a more responsible investor.

Notes:

[1] Page

15: <https://www.mypcpfpension.co.uk/docs/librariesprovider4/annual-reviews/annual-review-2016.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

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[Green Party warns Government cuts to policing are putting lives at risk](#)



2 March 2017

The Green Party is warning of the danger of underinvestment in public services following the revelation policing in England and Wales is in a “perilous state” due to Government cuts [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The devastating impact of Government underinvestment is clear. Severe budget cuts mean some police officers can’t properly respond to emergencies, track down offenders or protect domestic violence victims. This is now clearly putting lives at risk.

“Underinvestment in the NHS, social care and prisons has already created even greater need, and put even greater strain on public services. Rather than being dealt with appropriately and sensibly, problems are being passed from one agency to another, including the police service, and greater cost being incurred in the long run.

“Despite the hard work of those on the frontline, the people who deserve help, support and protection are being left without it. These cuts are short-sighted and no solution. The Government must recognise this urgently before the budget next week, and change course, otherwise even more lives will be put at risk.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/02/inspectorate-police-engaging-dangerous-practices-austerity-cuts-diane-abbott>

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Dubs Amendment: the families that opened their doors to child refugees that have yet to come



1 March 2017

Catherine Marchand: "Our lives, like many others in our position, are on hold as we wait to see whether Theresa May will let us open up our home and provide the safety and security that these unaccompanied minors so desperately need."

Duncan Blinkhorn: "Our message to politicians is: we are here, we are waiting to help, and we are not alone."

Keith Taylor MEP: "There are families and local authorities across the country that are waiting to provide the support and security these vulnerable children need."

There are families, communities and local authorities across the UK waiting to help vulnerable child refugees, according to Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East.

The former Brighton councillor is highlighting the story of a Brighton couple who have spent the last seven months going through a rigorous fostering process in the hope of offering a safe home to a vulnerable child fleeing conflict.

Catherine Marchand and Duncan Blinkhorn from the Hanover and Elm Grove area of the city are speaking out about the Government's 'callous' abandonment of child refugees ahead of [Wednesday's Commons vote](#) on the Dubs Amendment.

Catherine and Duncan, both 55, hope to demonstrate to MPs that there are compassionate families across the UK keen and able to care for and provide homes for the 3000 unaccompanied minors the Government had originally promised to bring to safety.

Catherine, a Community Nurse who has worked in the NHS for more 35 years, said:

"The government's decision to renege on its promise to thousands of the most vulnerable refugee children is utterly appalling."

"Our lives, like many others in our position, are on hold as we wait to see whether Theresa May will let us open up our home and provide the safety and security that these unaccompanied minors so desperately need."

"The success of the World War II Kindertransport scheme, to which my family and countless others will forever owe a debt of gratitude, relied on the goodwill of national governments and their peoples. The British people's compassion and goodwill is not lacking – so where is our Government's? History will not judge us kindly if Theresa May insists on maintaining her callous approach to a refugee crisis that is driving unaccompanied children into the arms of human traffickers and extremist groups."

Catherine's partner, Duncan, the co-ordinator of the Brighton Bike Hub, added:

"We have invested much of the last seven months in making preparations to help. We are lucky to have the support of our community and are proud that Brighton and Hove identifies as a 'city of sanctuary'. Ours is not an isolated case, there are families like ours in communities across the country that are keen and able to help"

"Our message to politicians is: we are here, we are waiting to help, and we are not alone; now is not the time to pull up the drawbridge, it is the time to embrace your humanity and uphold a promise you made to three thousand vulnerable child refugees."

Keith Taylor, who has been a vocal critic of the Government's wavering response to the refugee crisis, said:

"I share, wholeheartedly, Cathy and Duncan's sense of anger and frustration at the Government's behaviour towards the most vulnerable child refugees. While I want to commend Cathy and Duncan for their patience and their compassion it is important to recognise that their story is not unique; there are families and local authorities across the country that are waiting to provide the support and security these vulnerable children need."

"The UK has taken just 350 lone child refugees which is nowhere near the 3000 originally proposed by Lord Dubs and is equivalent to fewer than one per local authority in the UK."

"Britain has a proud tradition of welcoming those most in need. We stepped up to rescue 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi persecution. Which is why I am echoing Cathy and Duncan's calls for MPs to stand by the country's values and fight to reverse Theresa May's decision and keep the Dubs scheme alive."

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