

Report: Environment faces 'cocktails of threats' from Brexit



13 February 2017

UK Environment faces a 'cocktail of threats' from Brexit, says report by MP

- Key environmental rules could become 'unenforceable'
- Desperation for trade deal with the US risks 'chlorine chickens' and 'hormone beef' coming to UK market
- Lucas: we urgently need a 'green guarantee' from the Government to ensure our environment is protected
- Over 1100 EU environmental laws need to be transposed in UK law

A new [report](#) [1] by the Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas, has highlighted what she calls a 'cocktail of risks' to the UK's environment from Brexit.

The report, which has been released just days after the House of Commons voted to trigger Article 50, notes that the EU has been an effective driver of environmental action, and that Britain is now entering a period of 'profound uncertainty' which could lead to the downgrading of many key protections.

As well as detailing the impacts of Brexit on the environment the report calls for a 'Green Guarantee' to ensure that current levels of environmental protection and funding are maintained and strengthened. It also called for a new 'Environment Act' to be put in place ahead of Britain's exit from the EU and for Britain to retain membership of key European agencies.

As part of her report Caroline Lucas revealed House of Commons Library research which finds that over 1100 EU environmental laws will need to be transposed into UK law and that 'the Government has yet to identify all of the EU environment legislation'.

The report spells out ten distinct ways in which Brexit threatens environmental policy in the UK including:

- A lack of oversight of compliance with environmental rules. At present the European Commission and ECJ monitor and act upon breaches of legislation – there is no similar system in place in the UK and laws could become unenforceable.
- Britain exiting key agencies like the European Environment Agency and the Chemicals Agency – which support implementation and development of environmental policies.
- Regulatory equivalencing in new trade deals leading to reduction in environmental protection.
- Potentially exiting from key schemes such as the Emissions Trading Scheme – where the UK has been a key player.
- Reduction in funding for the environment as EU spending on the UK stops.

Examples include ending CAP Pillar II payments and the LIFE+ fund.
Currently the EU is the major funder for agri-environmental schemes.

Caroline Lucas, a member of the Environmental Audit Committee and a former member of the International of the European Parliament's Trade Committee, said:

"Though we've hardly heard it mentioned by the Government it's clear that British environmental policy faces a cocktail of threats from Brexit. Just days after the Brexit vote in the Commons we can clearly see the huge risks of downgrading environmental protections as part of the post-referendum process. Key laws could become unenforceable, spending on crucial schemes could be cut and new trade deals could undermine existing regulations.

"Outside the EU, there will be much greater probability of legislative change in the UK, more exposure to the political cycle and a danger that investors will be wary of potentially higher risks. The relative attractiveness of the UK as a place for green investment is in danger of being further reduced.

"Theresa May's courting of the United States in pursuit of a new Free Trade Agreement, poses an even greater risk that Ministers may be tempted to water down regulations – such as those on GMOs, pesticides, and animal hormones. We could see chlorinated chickens and hormone beef on UK markets.

"As well as outlining many of the dangers we currently face, this report seeks to present solutions. We need a Green Guarantee that will deliver on Government's commitment to ensuring that "we become the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. We also need to immediately begin work on introducing an Environment act to ensure that Britain crucial rules and enforcement don't drop off as Britain exits the EU."

Notes:

[1] A copy of the report is
here: <https://www.carolinelucas.com/sites/carolinelucas.com/files/Safe%20Guarding%20Environment%20after%20Brexit.pdf>

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[Green Party: Government has no viable](#)

plan for prisons crisis



13 February 2017

The Green Party is calling on the Government to tackle the growing prisons crisis after an undercover BBC investigation discovered chaos in HMP Northumberland, one of the country's largest prisons [1].

Justice Secretary Liz Truss is expected to call the plan to cut prison numbers a 'dangerous quick fix' in a speech to the Centre for Social Justice today [2].

A separate report published today highlighted the rising number of suicides in prisons, the impact of staff shortages and a 'toxic' working environment [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Justice Secretary appears to be caught like a rabbit in the headlights. A huge crisis in our prisons is bearing down but there is no viable plan to deal with it.

"Liz Truss has repeatedly ignored the calls for sensible moves to bring prison numbers down to manageable levels. Reducing overcrowding would ease the excessive workload of prison officers, ensure a focus on rehabilitation and help stop the riots, deaths and escapes that are becoming commonplace.

"We're not talking about turfing dangerous criminals out onto the street. We need a long term, common sense approach, including investment in education, youth services and anti-poverty measures to tackle crime at its root, as well as restorative measures to cut reoffending.

"The privatisation of prisons has proved disastrous and profit-focused companies should never have been allowed to take control of such a large part of our justice system. A complete overhaul of our failing prison system is necessary, with all prison services brought back into public hands."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38931580>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/13/liz-truss-rejects-calls-to-cut-sentences-to-reduce-prison-population>
3. <http://home.bt.com/news/uk-news/profound-shift-needed-to-change-trend-on-prison-suicides-11364150503382>

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[Green pressure sees Government finally publish shelved employment status law review](#)



10 February 2017

*** Greens condemn Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for not publishing employment status law review for more than a year**

*** Jonathan Bartley, Green co-leader: "As Tory ministers sat on the review's findings workers everywhere have been left to fend for themselves"**

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has finally published a review into employment status law [1] which was launched and then shelved under the Coalition Government.

The publication, more than two years after the review's launch in October 2014, and more than 13 months after the report was seemingly ready for publication in December 2015, came after repeated calls from Green co-leader Jonathan Bartley for the Government to stop "sitting on the findings" [2].

The report's belated publication coincides with a court ruling today (February 10) which found a plumber working on a self-employed contract is in fact entitled to the rights of a worker [3].

Bartley wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister in October last year [2] calling for the review to be published after a similar ruling found two Uber drivers were not self-employed but entitled to workers' rights.

Bartley said:

"It is shameful that Tory ministers have sat on the findings of the Coalition's review into employment status. As they did so workers everywhere have been living in increasing insecurity and left to fend for themselves.

"Without legislation which adequately safeguards their rights these workers have been badly let down and it is clear this review should have been published at the earliest opportunity – in 2015.

"More and more court rulings are showing what can be achieved when people take control and stand up against exploitation and demonstrating how woefully insufficient our employment status law it is for dealing with modern employment practices.

“It is welcome that these issues are now being addressed by the ongoing review led by Matthew Taylor of the RSA, but the substantial and important findings of the report just published should have been put in the public domain long before now, so as to inform debate and help formulate ideas for law reform.”

Notes:

1. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585383/employment-status-review-2015.pdf
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2016/10/28/green-party-open-letter-to-theresa-may-landmark-uber-ruling-means-government-must-reveal-findings-of-shelved-employment-status-law-review/>
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38931211>

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[Green Party condemns Boris Johnson's push to keep selling arms to Saudi Arabia after bombing](#)



10 February 2017

The Green Party is horrified by the revelation Boris Johnson urged the UK to continue selling weapons to Saudi Arabia after a funeral bombing in Yemen last October [1].

The airstrike, on October 8 last year, claimed the lives of 140 people. A UN report concluded the attack had breached international humanitarian law [2].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“These letters reveal Boris Johnson’s stunning disregard for human rights. He went out of his way to ensure arms were sold to a brutal, oppressive regime knowing full well such weapons had previously been used to kill innocent Yemenis and could be again. Johnson has shown utter contempt not just for the 140 people who lost their lives in the Sana’a bombing but also for the people whose lives he put at risk with this terrible decision.

“Britain should stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia immediately. UK weapons must not be used to violate international law and human rights.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/10/boris-johnson-urged-uk-to-continue-saudi-arms-sales-after-funeral-bombing>
2. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-saudi-un-idUSKCN12K2F1>

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Greens, Disabled People Against Cuts and bereaved mother call for inquiry into deaths of benefit claimants



10 February 2017

The Green Party, Disabled People Against Cuts and a mother whose son died after his benefits were cut have called on the Government to launch an independent inquiry into the deaths of benefit claimants.

An letter [1] to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Damian Green MP, calls on the Department for Work and Pensions to launch an independent inquiry into the methods used to assess benefit claimants and their entitlements, to determine “whether these procedures are fair and proper or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of claimants”.

The Green Party has also compiled a dossier listing 50 people who died while claiming benefits. The dossier includes the death of Mark Wood, whose mother Jill Gant co-signed the letter to Damian Green.

Wood starved to death in 2013, aged 44. A doctor had said Wood, who had Asperger’s syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder and mental health problems, was completely unfit to work. Yet despite this Wood was found fit for work and his benefits were cut, forcing him to survive on about £40 per week. Four months later he was found dead, weighing just 35kg. [2]

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

“It is unacceptable that in the fifth richest country in the world people are starving to death, like Mark Wood, or taking their own lives, as Michael O’Sullivan did, because their benefits have been cut. The social security system should be an ally, not an enemy of those who need help.

"Britain is a caring nation. We should be proud to look after each other and take every measure possible to ensure people receive the support they need – starting with an independent inquiry into the deaths of benefit claimants."

Mags Lewis, disabled spokesperson for the Green Party, said:

"We urgently need an independent inquiry into the deaths of people receiving benefits to find out if the methods used by the Department of Work and Pensions to assess claimants are fair or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of some of claimants."

"Until this has taken place it is impossible to feel confident that lessons have been learned from the tragic loss of those who have already died while claiming benefits – or that others will be kept safe in the future."

Linda Burnip, co-founder of Disabled People Against Cuts, said:

"As the UK Government has been found guilty by the UN of committing grave and systematic violations of disabled people's human rights we feel a public inquiry into deaths which have been linked to the discredited Work Capability Assessment regime must urgently be initiated by the government and Department for Work and Pensions."

Jill Gant, mother of Mark Wood, who starved to death four months after his benefits were cut off in 2013, said:

"I believe an enquiry is absolutely essential because the Work Capability Assessment is not fit for purpose for the most vulnerable, particularly those with mental health problems, like my son Mark who died of starvation aged 44 because his benefits were stopped."

Notes:

1.

The Green Party
The Biscuit Factory
Room 202, A Block
100 Clements Road
London
SE16 4DG

The Rt Honourable Damian Green MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to ask you to launch an independent inquiry into the deaths of people receiving benefits. Such an inquiry should be tasked with examining

the methods used to assess claimants and their entitlements. It should determine whether these procedures are fair and proper or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of some of claimants – who have the highest support needs which should be met by society.

As the evidence continues to mount that this is the case, The Green Party has compiled a dossier highlighting the stories of fifty individuals who died since 2008, and where there is good reason to believe their treatment at the hands of your department has been a factor in their deaths.

Treatment such as the suspension of benefits to David Clapson who went on to die just three weeks later from diabetic ketoacidosis, after the fridge used to store his insulin stopped working when he couldn't afford to top up his electricity card. Many of these fifty examples cases coroners, in their verdicts, have expressed grave concern about the methods employed by your department.

We want to ensure that all pertinent questions have been asked, and that any relevant lessons have been learned. At present it is impossible to feel confident this is the case.

The more time passes without an inquiry, the longer concerns will remain and questions will hang over the procedures used by your department to handle benefits. We urge you to use your power to end that uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party

Mags Lewis, disability spokesperson for the Green Party

Linda Burnip, co-founder of Disabled People Against Cuts

Jill Gant, mother of Mark Wood, who starved to death four months after his benefits were cut off in 2013.

2.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mark-wood-sweet-and-gentle-44-year-old-man-with-mental-health-problems-starved-to-death-after-9161749.html>

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