

Greens call for water action now, not more legal squabbling



12 September 2023

Reacting to news that the Office for Environmental Protection has found that the government and regulators, Ofwat and the Environment Agency, may have failed in their legal duties to enforce clean water standards on privatised firms [1], Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

“The government must stop defending the indefensible and act to enforce the very basic expectations the public have for clean rivers and beaches, and clean water to drink.

“The public are fed up with Ministers claiming that private companies constantly discharging sewage into rivers and onto beaches is unacceptable, but then doing nothing to enforce existing laws.

“We don’t need months more of legal squabbling between the regulators, government and privatised water companies.

“We need action now. That means the government forcing companies to invest rather than pay out shareholder dividends, capping excessive pay to failing water company bosses and bringing our water back into public ownership as soon as possible.”

NOTES

1. <https://www.theoep.org.uk/news/oep-identifies-possible-failures-comply-environmental-law-relation-regulatory-oversight>

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Green Party calls for a tax on the super-rich in response to effective bankruptcy of Birmingham City Council



5 September 2023

Responding to the effective bankruptcy of Labour-run Birmingham City Council [1], Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer said:

"This is just the tip of the iceberg. Over the next two years at least 26 councils in some of Britain's most deprived areas are at risk of going the same way [2] and the Local Government Association has warned councils in England face a funding gap of almost £3 billion just to keep services standing still [3].

"Thirteen years of Tory austerity has left day-to-day local services delivered by councils crumbling. This cannot be fixed without extra revenue.

"This should serve as a wakeup call to Labour. It's time to tax the super rich who have seen their wealth mushroom in recent years, so as to provide extra money to maintain vital public services.

"Even millionaires themselves have joined economists and politicians from around the world in calling for extra taxes on the richest [4]. Labour needs to play catch-up and pledge to tax the super-rich, or a future Labour government will drag the country into bankruptcy."

The Green Party Group Leader on Birmingham City Council, Cllr Julien Pritchard, also blamed mismanagement from the local Labour Administration for the crisis. He said:

"Our Labour-run Council has been dealt an awful hand but they have also played it terribly. They have utterly mismanaged an equal pay crisis with awful consequences. Ordinary Brummies shouldn't have to pay for Labour's mess.

"The government will need to step in to ensure Birmingham residents don't suffer – it's vital this isn't solved with a fire sale of the city's assets at knock down prices.

"We need to see solutions that ensure those most in need in our city are protected. This includes tackling the Council's appalling housing conditions, supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis, and protecting the vital services our residents rely on."

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/05/birmingham-city-council-financial-distress-budget-section-114>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/aug/28/at-least-26-english-councils-at-risk-of-bankruptcy-in-next-two-years>
3. <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-analysis-councils-face-almost-ps3-billion-funding-gap-over-next-two-years>
4. <https://taxextremewealth.com/>

Education system left crumbling after 13 years of Tory austerity, say Greens



4 September 2023

Responding to the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) crisis, where crumbling concrete has resulted in the full or partial closure of 104 schools, the co-leader of the Green Party Carla Denyer said:

“Our education system has been left crumbling after 13 years of Tory austerity. But successive governments have known about the problems with RAAC going all the way back to the 1980s.

“Our schools are not fit for purpose. This was revealed during the pandemic when failures to properly ventilate our schools became apparent. We’ve also seen portacabins in place semi permanently in many schools. And now this dodgy concrete crisis.

“As chancellor, Rishi Sunak decided to axe investment in new schools from 100 to 50. That was despite a Department for Education survey that revealed the need to rebuild 300 to 400 schools.

“At the very least, the prime minister should reverse the decision he made as chancellor to halve the rebuilding programme. Beyond that we need proper investment in our schools’ infrastructure to bring buildings up to a standard fit for the 21st century.”

Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer

makes urgent call to save rail ticket offices



1 September 2023

Carla Denyer, MP candidate for Bristol Central and co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, has urged residents to make clear their objections to the closure of ticket offices before the public consultation ends at midnight tonight [Friday 1 September].

The three-week consultation has been over proposals to close most of England's 1,000 station offices, including at Bristol Temple Meads Station.

Carla said:

"Stations in and around Bristol are vital transport hubs for thousands of people and the ticket office staff there are often the only source of advice for people trying to navigate the ticketing system.

"Having a human presence at a ticket office is especially important for disabled and elderly passengers who may have additional requirements.

"The fact that our trains are operated by different, privatised companies already makes ticketing overly complicated, making ticket office staff crucial. And, in our current cost of living crisis, they are invaluable to helping people find the cheapest route to get from A to B.

"This is all part of the Government's lack of investment in public transport in recent years to the detriment of people and communities, particularly the disabled and elderly who can become isolated without these crucial services.

"If the Government wants to save money on the subsidies it gives to private train operating companies, it should do what the Green Party has long proposed, return the franchises to public control when they expire so that money spent on trains goes back into trains – and ticket offices – not into the pockets of remote shareholders.

"Public transport should be run for people, not profit. I hope as many residents as possible are able to take part in this consultation before it closes today and make sure their concerns are heard."

ENDS

Image of Carla at Bristol Temple Meads Station ticket office available upon request

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Scrapping 'nutrient neutrality' rules could lead to the ecological collapse of our waterways warn Greens



29 August 2023

Responding to the news that the government is scrapping 'nutrient neutrality' rules as a way to boost house building [1], Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay has warned it could lead to the ecological collapse of our waterways and has repeated a call to take water back into public ownership.

Nutrient neutrality rules were put in place in 2017 by the EU. The rules prevent local authorities giving the go-ahead to new developments that are projected to add to river nutrients such as phosphates and nitrates, either through wastewater from new homes or run-off from building sites.

Ramsay said:

"It is beyond credulity that the government's answer to dealing with our toxic rivers is to water down regulations and allow even more filth to flow into them. There's a risk that scrapping nutrient neutrality rules will result in the complete ecological collapse of our waterways.

"Rather than weakening regulation we need firmer controls on private water companies and hugely profitable housebuilders. The Green Party would do this by taking water companies into public ownership, ending the siphoning off of profits to shareholders and investing instead in cleaning up our act. We'd also have a clear focus on affordable, high quality and environmentally friendly homes, by investing in a large scale council house building programme.

"The government's reckless actions once again put the spotlight on Labour. Will they pledge that a future Labour government will reinstate rules which prevent developments polluting our waterways?"

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/aug/28/uk-rivers-at-risk-as-michael-gove-rips-up-rules-on-new-housing>

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