

# Safety must be always be the top priority, but UK and US bans on carrying electronic devices on aircraft leaves questions unanswered – Richard Burden

**Richard Burden MP, Labour's Shadow Aviation Minister**, responding to the announcement of a cabin baggage ban on laptops on certain direct passenger flights to the UK from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, said:

"The safety and security of passengers must always be the overriding priority for Government and for airline operators. If the Government has evidence the level of security checks on passengers carrying electronic devices is of exceptional concern in the countries listed then it is right that prompt precautionary action should be taken.

"This announcement leaves a number of important questions unanswered and we are seeking urgent clarification from Ministers. It's important the Government set out clearly the precautionary steps they have taken in response to advice from security services to reassure passengers and the public. The Government must also work with airline operators to ensure all passengers are given the necessary information and flights can continue where appropriate with minimal disruption as possible."

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## The Drever Commemoration Lecture



**University of Dundee – Saturday Evening Lecture Series 2017 – Dundee to the World**

Saturday 25th March 2017

An evening with three graduates who shaped and reported on global events.

This is also the Drever Commemoration Lecture.

This event will celebrate three of our prestigious graduates who studied here during James Drever's time as Principal. James Drever was a massive advocate for political discourse, encouraging students to strike and make stands against funding cuts. Each of these graduates has gone on to make an impact in the field of politics:

- Sir William Patey has played a leading personal role in some of the most challenging diplomatic events of our times during his Ambassadorial roles in Sudan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.
- Lord George Robertson is a former politician and was Secretary of State for Defence between 1997 and 1999.
- John Suchet is a former foreign correspondent, presenter and a commentator on major ceremonial occasions.

You can register for this event [here](#).

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## [Greens issue stinging rebuke to Princess Anne after GM intervention](#)



22 March 2017

**Keith Taylor MEP:** 'This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda.'

**Molly Scott Cato MEP:** 'The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype.'

Green MEPs are condemning Princess Anne's 'historically ill-informed' suggestions that Britain should embrace GM crops post-Brexit.

Princess Anne, who is supposed to remain politically neutral, was speaking to the Farming Today programme on Radio 4 when she echoed the suggestion of some Conservative Ministers that Britain should [water down EU GM crop safeguards](#) following the UK's exit from the European Union.

The royal intervention comes just days after MEPs in the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted against the import of a range of genetically modified maize varieties for use in feed and food.

The majority of MEPs [voted against proposals](#) to authorise several genetically modified maize varieties from Syngenta.

**Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East and a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:**

"This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda and doing so with a flimsy grasp of agricultural history and science. It's fair to say that she doesn't speak for the average UK farmer, let alone the average British citizen."

"In stark contrast, just this week, I joined elected MEPs from across Europe to vote against the import and use of untested GM maize in the EU. It is the sixth time in just over a year that the European Parliament has signalled it's opposition to the approval of new GM foods. EU GM safeguards are vitally important."

**Dr Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West and a member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, said:**

"The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype. Genetic modification has failed to live up to its promised benefits particularly in terms of yield."

"Perhaps the Princess should have a word with her brother, who has a deep understanding of ecological and systemic risks from GM crops, which are intended for intensively farmed monocultures which threaten biodiversity and soil fertility."

"There is also the issue of corporate power. The planned merger between German pharmaceutical giant Bayer and American seed-maker Monsanto would strengthen the arm of the GM seed lobby. If this takeover is ever allowed to take place it would create one giant corporation controlling 30% of the world market for seeds and 24% of the pesticide market."

"Agri-business argues we need GM to feed the world, but the world already produces enough food for 10bn people. Our focus should not be on increasing production, but rather on reducing food waste and radically reorganising our wasteful and inefficient food distribution system."

**Mr Taylor concluded:**

"Worryingly, Princess Anne appears to be [supporting Tory Ministers](#) who have suggested Brexit could be 'an opportunity' to water down GM crop regulations in Britain. As Greens, we will be fighting to make sure this doesn't happen; it is vital we maintain and strengthen EU GM safeguards post-Brexit. For the health of British people, the environment and farmers, the UK must not be flooded with untested genetically modified crops."

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## [More affordable houses for urban poor sanctioned for Puducherry, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh](#)

Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has sanctioned 3,128 more affordable houses for the benefit of urban poor in Puducherry, 924 for Telangana and 2,655 for Himachal Pradesh under the Prime Minister's Awas Yojana (Urban).

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## [Press release: 1,000 jobs created at new £300 million factory for electric taxis](#)

The Business Secretary Greg Clark and Transport Minister John Hayes welcomed the opening of a new £300 million electric taxi factory today (22 March) that will create 1,000 jobs in the Midlands.

The London Taxi Company factory in Coventry will have the capacity to assemble more than 20,000 vehicles a year.

Built with a £300 million investment from LTC's owner, Geely, the plant will include a new state-of-the-art research, development and assembly facility at Ansty Park, Coventry, to develop the new TX5 model, a zero emissions taxi, and other hybrid technology vehicles.

It has been supported by £16.1 million from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, through the Regional Growth Fund, which was awarded in 2015.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Our iconic black cabs are famous across the world. The London Taxi Company's impressive new factory and R&D facility showcases the innovation that makes the UK a world leader in the development of new automotive technologies.

Through our ambitious Industrial Strategy, we are committed to building on our strengths and taking advantage of the opportunities the new low carbon economy provides.

The government is committed to improving the country's air quality and creating a low carbon economy, which is already worth over £46 billion.

Today, the Department for Transport is announcing a further £64 million of investment to promote the use of electric taxis.

This money will support 2 schemes:

- A £50 million Plug-in Taxi Grant programme. This will give taxi drivers up to £7,500 off the price of a new vehicle. Taxi drivers who switch to the new electric cabs could also save around £2,800 in fuel costs a year.
- £14 million of investment will deliver new dedicated chargepoints for electric taxis in 10 council areas.

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

This government is committed to improving air quality and reducing pollution in towns and cities, which is essential for people's health and the environment.

This is also great news for the economy as we invest in cutting edge technology and the next generation of transport and engineering professionals by creating thousands of new high-skilled jobs.

The £50 million PITG programme funding is part of the £290 million announced in the Autumn Statement to support electric vehicles, low emission buses and taxis, and alternative fuels.

The introduction of electric taxis could transform air quality in our cities, especially in London, where there are around 23,000 diesel black cabs with a further 15,000 operating across the country.

The £14 million provided by the Department for Transport to fund chargepoint projects for taxis is going to all 10 cities that bid for funding in its recent Taxi Infrastructure competition. These include:

- Birmingham (£2.9 million)
- Coventry (£1.2 million)
- London (£5.2 million)
- Nottingham (£700,000)
- Dundee (£515,000)
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (£1.98 million)
- Oxford (£370,000)
- Cambridge (£426,000)

- Wolverhampton (£478,000)
- Slough (£157,000)

These projects are expected to deliver around 400 rapid and 150 fast chargepoints which will enable the take-up of around 23,000 ULEV taxis nationally including supporting existing plug in private hire vehicles.



## **[Plug in taxi grant and dedicated chargepoints information sheet](#)**

PDF, 37KB, 3 pages

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