

## Kimmins announces increase to planning fees from 1 April 2025

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has announced that an inflationary increase in planning fees will come into effect from 1 April 2025.

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## Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Experiences and attitudes of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland in 2024

The 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Experiences and attitudes of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland in 2024' report was published by The Executive Office today.

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## 'Zane's Law' needed to tackle toxic sites

Green MP Sian Berry urged the government to bring forward Zane's Law to protect people from contaminated land after new research showed that out of 13,093 potentially toxic sites that councils have identified as high risk, only 1,465 have been inspected (1).

Zane's Law, named after seven-year-old Zane Gbangbola who died when Hydrogen Cyanide was carried by floodwater from a contaminated landfill site into his home in 2014, was previously brought forward as a Private Members Bill by former Green MP Caroline Lucas (2).

Now Sian Berry, who won the Brighton Pavilion seat held by Lucas, said: "People will be harmed unless UK regulations on contaminated land are changed, as this new research shows.

"Our current laws are dangerously inadequate, especially given climate breakdown, rising sea levels, increased rainfall, and flooding that will continue to disturb this contaminated land."

Wales Green Party leader Anthony Slaughter added:

“The fact that half of Welsh Councils are unable or unwilling to give figures for potential toxic sites, while of those identified the vast majority remain uninspected is a shocking indictment of a lack of leadership at every level of government.

“Communities across Wales have for too long suffered the toxic legacies of polluting industries. This contaminated land crisis demands urgent legislation at a UK government level for the safety of our communities and future generations.”

Sian Berry added:

“Zane’s Law would align the UK with global best practice for the protection of communities from hazardous land. It would reinstate legislative provisions removed by the Conservative government from the 1990 Environment Protection Act and ensure the UK adheres to the Universal Right to a Healthy Environment, endorsed by the UN in July 2022.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. [Toxic town impact as most high-risk contaminated sites unchecked – BBC News](#)
2. [Landfill’s Toxic Legacy – Byline Times](#)

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## [Greens call for water companies to be taken into public hands as Environment secretary visits polluted Windemere](#)

10 March 2025 / 10 March 2025 by [Green Party](#)

Green Party Co-Leader Adrian Ramsay MP has poured cold water on today’s visit by Environment Secretary Steve Reed to Lake Windemere and the announcement that United Utilities will invest £200m into upgrading 10 wastewater treatment works at Windermere [1]. He said:

“The government is today trumpeting its “Things Can Only Get Cleaner” tour. But the reality is that can only happen if we take back control of our water.

“United Utilities offers a prime example of the failed privatisation experiment with our water.

“More than 140 million litres of waste were pumped into Windermere by the

corporation between 2021 and 2023 at times when it was not permitted [2].

“The company then took legal action to try to block public access to data on treated sewage it is discharging into Windermere [3]. That failed.

“So the company has now belatedly agreed to invest £200m in cleaning up Lake Windemere. But it’s been dragged kicking and screaming to act.

“United Utilities has spent years focussed on paying out dividends to shareholders and fat cat salaries rather than treating sewage.

“The Group’s CEO has amassed around £1.41m a year in salary and bonuses and the company will pay its investors – which include some of the world’s biggest asset managers – £339m in dividends this year, up from £310m for 2023. This hike follows reported higher operating profits thanks to a rise in customer bills. All this puts the £200m investment into Windemere into sharp focus.

“It’s time to bring United Utilities and all water companies back into public hands so that our bills can be used to improve the service rather than being siphoned off into the pockets of shareholders.”

## Notes

1. [UK government vows to clean up Windermere after sewage criticism | Pollution | The Guardian](#)
2. [Sewage illegally dumped into Windermere repeatedly over 3 years, BBC finds – BBC News](#)
3. [Clean water campaigners claim victory in Windermere sewage case | Pollution | The Guardian](#)

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## [A message from Christine Jardine on International Women’s Day](#)

Reflecting on the year’s International Women’s Day theme of “accelerate action”, I am sadly reminded of how much more we still need to achieve.

The World Economic Forum has estimated that at the current rate of progress, it will take until 2158 to reach full gender parity. That’s another 133 years from now – and it’s just not good enough.

Liberal Democrats have long fought for gender equality, and we’ve secured some great successes. From introducing shared parental leave to improving

workplace protections from sexual harassment, I'm incredibly proud of what we have achieved so far.

But it's clear there is more to do – and I'm determined our party continues to lead that charge.

That means pushing our revolutionary parental leave and childcare policies – helping more mothers return to the workplace should they want to, and fighting against the gender pay gap. Or our plans to end period poverty and ensure that survivors of violence against women and girls are properly supported in the criminal justice system.

Women deserve an ambitious vision from political parties of how their lives can be improved. So it's disappointing that the government seems to have missed opportunities to make this a reality. They removed the target for women's health hubs in the latest NHS mandate, while their Crime & Policing Bill fails to mention domestic abuse once.

The fight for equality continues. Liberal Democrats will keep pushing on these issues and others, to deliver the positive future that all women deserve.

Of course, accelerating action also means supporting the tireless campaigners who are already doing fantastic work. I am especially grateful to the groups within our own party who are pushing for change. Lib Dem Women and the Campaign for Gender for Balance are just some examples, who lead the fight to get more women involved in politics.

We as a party – and a country – have come so far. If we keep working together, we can go even further.

Happy International Women's Day.

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