

O'Dowd welcomes Budget Bill passing final stages in the Assembly

Finance Minister John O'Dowd welcomed the 2024-25 Budget passing its final legislative stages in the Assembly.

IFA senior women's football team backs road safety campaign

Northern Ireland international footballer and Glentoran Women player Emily Wilson has backed a road safety campaign to reduce road deaths.

Green Party demands ambitious action in wake of Climate Change Committee report

As the Climate Change Committee publishes its 7th carbon budget [1], the co-leader of the Green Party, Adrian Ramsay MP, has demanded the Government ensure ambitious climate action isn't delayed any further – and for polluters to pay the highest price, not the poorest in our communities.

Adrian Ramsay MP said: "Today's advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) makes clear that a climate safe future is still within our grasp – and that the cost of not reducing climate emissions will be far higher for our economy than the cost of investment in net zero. Crucially, we need to see the Government make investment choices that result in households benefiting financially from climate action too – both by ensuring everyone can access renewables and energy efficiency and because they are paying lower bills. The public are clear that they want to see the worst climate polluters pay, and we need to make sure that the costs of climate action never fall on those least able to afford it.

"A thriving green economy is also vital if we are to prevent climate deniers, like Reform, from weaponising the mass destruction of climate chaos. Instead, we must help the most vulnerable and build resilience in communities to adapt

to climate breakdown.”

He continued: “Without an immediate acceleration of climate ambition, our economy, national security and environment are all at serious risk. That’s why we are disappointed not to see the CCC go even further on measures to reduce energy demand. In the face of impending airport expansion decisions by this Labour government, more ambitious policy is urgently needed to keep the aviation sector in check. Their advice shows strong public support for limiting airport expansion and introducing a frequent flier levy where the small percentage of the population who take the vast majority of the flights have to pay more .

“The CCC have shown that a positive, fairer, jobs-rich, greener future is possible, and they have set a clear pathway for the Government to follow. Now, we need the Government to step up, stop the vested interests who are intent on delaying, and show the ambition and leadership this moment demands.”

Notes

1. [The Seventh Carbon Budget – Climate Change Committee](#)

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Britain must lead on defence and aid

Today, the Prime Minister did what we’ve been urging him to do for years: commit to increasing Britain’s defence spending to 2.5% of GDP.

That is essential. With Vladimir Putin waging war on our continent, and Donald Trump in the White House cosying up to him, this is the most perilous moment for Europe in my lifetime.

Trump is threatening not only to betray the brave Ukrainian people, who have heroically resisted Putin’s war machine for the past three years, but also to undermine peace and security across Europe – including here in the UK.

In the face of that threat, the UK must step up and lead in Europe – and that has to include a big boost to defence spending. Today I urged the Prime Minister to go even further and bring all parties together to get to 3% of GDP as soon as possible.

But while we agree with the Government on the urgent need to spend more on defence, we have a clear difference of opinion on how to fund it. [We have set](#)

[out a clear plan to raise that money by increasing the Digital Services Tax on the profits of social media firms and other tech giants.](#)



But Labour – along with the Conservatives and Reform – say it should instead be paid for by cutting international development spending. **That is a big mistake.**

The Conservatives already cut back on international aid when they were in power, and that did enormous damage to the UK's soft power around the world. Deeper cuts now – at the same time as Donald Trump and Elon Musk are gutting America's aid programmes – will only leave a vacuum for Russia and China to fill, strengthening the hand of authoritarian regimes and further undermining our security.

I am immensely proud that the Liberal Democrats have led the way on both defence and international development. It was we who enshrined the 0.7% of national income target in law. And that aid has been transformative for millions of people in poverty and hunger. It has helped to tackle the spread of disease, and counter the harmful impacts of climate change.

At this time of great conflict and instability, the UK needs to strengthen both our Armed Forces and our soft power, including international aid. With your support, that is what the Liberal Democrats will keep fighting for.

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Green parliamentarians write to Defence Secretary over defence spending principles

- Green MPs and peers call for defence spending decisions to be based on “core principles”
- Ellie Chowns MP calls foreign aid cut announcement “cruel and unnecessary”
- Green letter highlights growing security threats relating to climate breakdown, food security and cyber security

The six Green Party parliamentarians have written to the Defence Secretary John Healey setting out a series of “core principles” they say any decisions about defence spending should be based on [1].

The letter comes as Keir Starmer announced that a rise in the defence budget will be funded by cuts to foreign aid.

In the letter, the MPs and peers call on Healey to ensure that all decisions on defence spending “tackle the biggest threats to long term human security, including climate chaos, food insecurity, and cyber-attacks on democracy”.

They also urge an increase in spending on diplomacy, peace-building and overseas aid in order to improve our security.

Responding to Starmer’s announcement today, Ellie Chowns MP said:

“It’s horrifying to see Keir Starmer follow Trump’s lead, gutting our international aid budget to increase defence spending. This is naive populism playing with life-and-death decisions.

“How many people will fall ill or die because they cannot access health services; how many more will go hungry? And how many children will be denied an education as a result of this decision? Cutting aid risks making the world more volatile and more dangerous, not safer. Real security means tackling hunger, poverty, and climate chaos.

“Taking money from the poorest in the name of defence is both cruel and unnecessary – we could and should instead be taxing the wealthiest who can afford to contribute more.

“The idea that the only way to strengthen our defences is by taking from those with the least is immoral. It’s a choice and it’s the wrong one.”

Notes:

1. The full text of the letter reads:

Dear John,

We are writing to set out the importance of any decisions about future defence spending being underpinned by core principles. In an ever more insecure world, made more unstable by the comments and actions of the US President, and with the ongoing need to stand up to Putin, it is vital that genuine long-term stability, safety and security is a priority. Alongside addressing the threats posed by the international political situation, the government must also address the significant and growing security threats relating to climate breakdown, food security and cyber security.

As such, we call on you to uphold the following principles:

- Tackle the biggest threats to long term human security, including climate chaos, food insecurity, and cyber-attacks on democracy
- Increase spending on diplomacy, peace-building and overseas aid, as key to security and defence policy
- Don't cut spending from other departmental budgets to increase defence spending
- Strengthen our ties with Europe
- Uphold international law, the rule of law and the right to self-determination
- Recognise that a global prohibition on nuclear weapons will make everyone safer
- Address the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity such as poverty, human rights abuses and resource scarcity
- Restore UK sovereignty by decoupling from reliance on the US
- Use economic levers such as sanctions on companies still operating in the UK and complicit in Russian fossil fuel exports

We look forward to your response and to working constructively with the government towards enduring safety and security.

Yours sincerely, all Green parliamentarians

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