

Muir opens the 2025/26 Water Quality Improvement Strand Funding

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir, has opened the 2025/26 call for applications to the Water Quality Improvement Strand of the Environmental Challenge Fund Competition.

Greens call for council elections to be held as planned

Reacting to news that 11 councils have asked the government to postpone elections this year, Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay MP said:

“People must be allowed to vote at the local elections in May. It would be an outrage if the first outcome of a plan the government claims will devolve power from Westminster to local areas is to see democracy cancelled. Our fragile democracy can’t afford that.

“Behind the rushed and undemocratic pleas from County Council leaders to deny their electors a vote, is the fact that many of those closer to the voters – district and borough council leaders – are opposed.

“With a five-fold increase in Green councillor numbers over the last five local elections, it does look like the two big parties are running scared of facing the voters.

“Indeed, how can the government claim an electoral mandate for these major local government changes if those most impacted see their elections postponed?

“The Green Party is urging the government to save our democracy, allow these long-planned elections to take place and get around the table to discuss how to make devolution work for people in local areas across the country.

“The imposition of large unitary authorities doesn’t help people engage with decisions being made locally. We want decisions made closest to where they have the greatest impact with significant devolution of powers and funding from Westminster. Without that, people will grow ever more cynical about politics.”

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[Greens urge faster transition away from fossil fuels](#)

Responding to new data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service showing that the average temperature in 2024 was 1.6C above preindustrial levels, Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer MP said:

“This news comes as uncontrollable wildfires rage in Los Angeles, and just months after unprecedented flooding in Spain killed over 200 people.

“The target of limiting warming to below 1.5 degrees was an attempt to prevent the deadliest effects of the climate crisis. Breaching that limit is catastrophic for humanity – and yet our leaders are sleepwalking into this deadly new future.

“We need to massively speed up the transition away from fossil fuels – that is the bottom line. In a world of 1.5 degree warming it’s unconscionable that the government is still letting some new North Sea oil and gas drilling go ahead – Starmer must revoke those consents and licenses immediately.

“But we also need to start thinking about how we make our communities more resilient in the face of the extreme weather that is now unavoidable. From flooding to extreme heat, our homes and neighbourhoods need to be fit for the future.”

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[Ulster Supported Employment Ltd \(USEL\) Board Appointment](#)

Communities Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, has announced the appointment of Mrs Michele Corkey as a USEL Board Member. This appointment is from 1 January 2025 until 31 December 2028.

O'Dowd announces £500,000 road and footway improvement scheme for Old Foreglen Road, Ballymonie, Dungiven

Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd has announced that a £500,000 carriageway resurfacing and footway scheme on Old Foreglen Road, Ballymonie, Dungiven will commence on Monday 13 January 2025.