

Schools, colleges and universities must close this week if lockdown is to be effective, says Green Party



Green Party

1 November 2020

Schools, colleges and universities must close this week if lockdown is to be effective, says Green Party

The Green Party is calling for secondary schools, colleges and universities to be added to the list of closures from Thursday after a month-long lockdown in England was announced by the Government.

Co-leader Jonathan Bartley is demanding this afternoon that common sense prevail, following the release of figures by Independent SAGE showing that a lockdown with schools remaining open will be significantly less effective than if they were closed.

“The government is fond of saying they are following the science, but this is an example of them doing the exact opposite,” says Bartley.

“The figures are clear, a lockdown with schools open would need to be three times longer than if they were closed, to have the same impact. This lockdown is going to negatively affect huge numbers of people, so it has to be worth it.

“Of course there are going to be exceptions – young people with special educational needs for instance should still be able to attend schools in person. But in general, this is the time to shut secondaries and universities, move to remote learning, give the support needed to curb the rates of infection where that can be done, fix the test and trace system which is still woefully underperforming. Use the time to make this lockdown worthwhile.”

Green Party Education spokesperson Vix Lowthion said: “The government produced their own guidelines back in August which clearly stated that secondary schools must be on a remote learning rota or closed when the threat of the virus increases. Surely, that’s where we are now?

“University teaching can move online during this heightened period and school

teachers can focus on online learning plans whilst appropriate home-school rotas are put in place. Yes, it's a huge challenge for our schools but so is working in a frankly unsafe environment where you're not being given the back-up you need to keep yourself and your pupils out of harms' way.

"Along with this there needs to be thought put into safeguarding for children at home, their physical and mental health and making sure they have everything they need to learn – the tech equipment and the support.

"The vast majority of children in secondary schools and young adults in higher education are able to learn from home with supervision from teachers. In the medium term this 'blended learning' will disrupt the economy less than a full shutdown including primary schools as in most cases older children have less need for intensive childcare provision."

ENDS

Independent Sage weekly briefing

30.10: <https://www.independentsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WeeklySlides30Oct.pdf>

August contingency planning guidance for

schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-possible-measures-to-be-taken-before-schools-and-colleges-close>

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Green Party Welcomes Expert Evidence from New Pandemics Report



Green Party

29 October 2020

Green Peer Natalie Bennett has welcomed the greater understanding of the relationship between the destruction of habitats and the risk of causing future pandemics.

Speaking ahead of the launch of the IPBES report into the link between biodiversity loss and pandemics, Baroness Bennett said:

‘Our wellbeing and our economy are utterly dependent on the environment, as this important report reminds us. In the case of the coronavirus pandemic and other deadly diseases such as SARS and Ebola, as well as Covid-19, it is clear that a significant factor is our destructive and exploitative relationship with the natural world.

‘We are destroying natural forests and other wild habitats on an unprecedented scale, disrupting ecosystems and giving greater chances to viruses to jump to human populations.

‘Poor standards of animal welfare in settings like wet markets and factory farms also increases the potential for spill-over events.

‘We need to be protecting our few relatively natural spaces, in severely nature-deprived nations like the UK increasing them, and ensuring all of our lands and seas are treated with respect. In the UK we should start with setting a target of designating 20% of Britain as national park and shifting rapidly to agroecological production of healthy food, with crop diversity and an enormous expansion of agroforestry.’

ENDS

Note:

IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service) brought together 22 experts from across the world to provide scientific evidence on risk factors driving Covid-19 and other pandemics and identify what can be done differently to prevent future pandemics.

The launch can be followed live from 14.00 GMT here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcKuw5BMgLM&feature=youtu.be>

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Green Party accuses Government of “ripping up” environmental protections



Green Party

28 October 2020

Responding to Government amendments to the Environment Bill currently going through Parliament, Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales said:

“Government’s vague long-term plans to deliver environmental improvements, ‘enabling’ local authorities and ‘promoting’ resource efficiency amount to little when compared with the European law it intends to replace.

“It was clear that Brexit would weaken environmental protections and the government’s proposed Office of Environmental Protection was a toothless watchdog. But the government amendments to the Environment Bill would allow the Government to basically tell the Office of Environmental Protection what to do.

“Given that the inspiration for Brexit amongst many Conservative MPs was precisely ripping up the ‘red tape’ that has protected our countryside, waterways, and natural habitats for decades, to have no route to independent legal redress would be a source of considerable concern.

“The Green Party is campaigning for a strong, independent environmental regulator with legal powers to prosecute the government for breaches of environmental law. We are supporting amendments to the Environment Bill that will create powerful environmental protections for decades to come.”

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Green Party Celebrates new UN Nuclear Weapons Treaty



Green Party

26 October 2020

- **UK government should establish Global Britain as country committed to real security and peace**

As the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now been ratified by 50 UN Member States, it will come into full legal effect under International Law on 22 January 2021.

The Treaty requires signatories to 'never under any circumstances ... develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices'. It provides two legal pathways by which nations holding nuclear weapons, like the UK, can eliminate their arsenals, and sets out the principles for establishing sustainable legal, institutional and verification systems for treaty compliance and implementation.

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP and longstanding supporter of nuclear disarmament said:

"This Treaty represents a new hope for the world in an era of increasing instability. The stigmatisation of certain categories of weapons has been a crucial outcome of previous international treaties prohibiting chemical weapons, biological weapons, antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions under international law. Weapons that are outlawed are increasingly seen as illegitimate, so this international prohibition of nuclear weapons is an essential step towards their global elimination. There can be no justification for holding these weapons that threaten mass destruction and appalling suffering were they ever to be used. At this time when we are having to find a new place in the world, the UK should establish our role as a country committed to peace and global disarmament."

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

"I have written to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to request that he signs the Treaty in the name of the United Kingdom. As one of the three original signers of the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty, we have a particular responsibility to lead in fulfilling its binding legal requirements,

including nuclear disarmament.

“Conservative politicians are fond of saying that they support multilateral disarmament, and yet the government has failed to participate so far. Now that this UN Treaty is about to become International Law, the government has an opportunity to show that their commitments are more than empty words.”

Rebecca Johnson, Green Party Security, Peace and Defence Speaker and first president of the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons (2017 Nobel Peace Laureate), said:

“The Treaty was taken forward by UN Members because they recognised the high risks and catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons. They looked at the facts and evidence and recognised that nuclear weapons do not deter and might be detonated by accident, intent or insanity. Far from being a security asset, nuclear weapons are an obstacle to peace and progress, and get in the way of collective security actions to tackle the real security threats we have on the ground from Covid to climate and the ecological emergencies facing us all.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

The UK is one of three depositary states for the 1970 Non-Proliferation [Treaty](#) (along with the United States and USSR, now Russia). In accordance with their NPT obligations, the UK and all signatories are required to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.’ It was on this basis that a large number of NPT states parties initiated the multilateral negotiating process (under UN General Assembly auspices) that led to the adoption on 7 July 2017 of the [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), which has so far been signed by 84 states and ratified by 50, and will enter into force on 22 January 2021.

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[Green Party rejects government](#)

attempts to downplay structural racism



Green Party

22 October 2020

- **Government must acknowledge that higher Covid risk is built on centuries of oppression and exploitation**

Ahead of Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch's statement to the Commons, Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack has rejected comments made by government advisor Dr Raghiv Ali that "structural racism is not a reasonable explanation" for black and south Asian people's greater risk of illness and death.[1]

Womack said:

"The higher rates of Covid infection amongst communities of colour can largely be explained by poorer quality housing and the fact that they have access to a narrower range of jobs. But what the government is failing to accept and respond to is that these reduced life chances are the result of centuries of oppression and exclusion."

In Black History Month, Womack emphasised the link between past oppression and present disadvantage.

She said:

"The Green Party has called for an All-Party Commission of Inquiry for Truth and Reparatory Justice to begin to address these inequalities caused by structural racism.

"Telling the truth about Britain's history of colonialism and its central role in the trans-oceanic trafficking in enslaved Afrikans is the first step towards a society where all can flourish."

Womack repeated the Green Party's call for urgent action now to address structural inequality.

She said:

"We agree with the BMJ that 'tangible action must be taken now to protect BAME people'. But we would go further and argue that urgent action must be taken to ensure that people from minority communities are given equal chances

in our society.

“Such measures could include affirmative action in employment, mandatory levels of representation on company boards and public bodies, and the use of blind CVs in recruitment processes.”

ENDS

Notes

1

Dr Ali made his comments during a briefing on the first quarterly report on Covid disparities, led by the government's Race Disparity Unit and the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54634721>

2

On 11 October, the Green Party Conference passed a motion committing to reparatory justice for Afrikan enslavement:

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2020/10/11/green-party-commits-to-reparatory-justice-for-afrikan-enslavement/>

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