

# [A new ten-year strategy to improve Scotland's mental health](#)

Today I want to talk about something which I know will be of huge personal importance to many readers – mental health.

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## [Green Party: Scrappage scheme the only way to help people ditch diesel](#)



# Green Party

4 April 2017

The Green Party has responded to news the Government plans to encourage people to get rid of diesel vehicles by introducing what has been dubbed a “toxin tax”.

Caroline Russell AM, Green Party transport spokesperson, said:

“It’s good to see the Government recognising the damage dirty diesel engines do to our air and our health, but if we are serious about encouraging drivers to leave diesel behind we need to help them to do that. We urgently need a proper scrappage scheme which helps businesses swap diesel for cleaner vehicles, while people giving up domestic cars should have access to efficient public transport, car clubs and streets that enable safe walking and cycling.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/20-daily-toxin-tax-for-diesel-drivers-mhkzggdn3>

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## **SPP intensifies supervision of environment-related crimes**

China's Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) has stressed tightened supervision over major environment-related cases.

The SPP will carry out special supervision focusing on air and water pollution from January 2017 to December 2018 in heavily polluted areas including the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta, the three northeastern provinces and the Yangtze River valley.

From March 2015 to December 2016, 3,868 environment-related criminal cases involving 4,982 suspects were transferred to police by administrative agencies upon suggestions from procuratorates.

During the same period, procuratorates at all levels also supervised public security organs in investigating 4,853 people suspected of damaging the environment and resources, and transferred 171 cases of duty-related crimes involving 246 officials.

The SPP alone or in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Environmental Protection directed the handling 62 major environmental violation cases during the period.

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## **President of Nauru's visit to Australia**

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency the Honourable Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and Madam Louisa Waqa to Australia from 5-9 April 2017.

This visit will provide a valuable opportunity to reaffirm the friendship between Australia and the Republic of Nauru, and will allow us to explore ways to strengthen the many links between our two nations.

Australia and Nauru share a strong interest in the stability and prosperity of the Pacific region. We enjoy close cooperation on combatting the scourge of people smuggling. Australia is also Nauru's largest trade, investment and development partner.

The visit will provide the opportunity for President Waqa to meet with

officials from the Asian Development Bank, and share in lessons learnt from Australia's infrastructure and sustainable energy facilities.

President Waqa will visit Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. I look forward to meeting with President Waqa and Madam Louisa Waqa during their time in Australia.

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## Cheaper food after Brexit?

The Common Agricultural policy has been bad for UK consumers and bad for producers. Our time in the EU has seen our domestic output meet less and less of our needs, seen imports from the EU surge, and given us dearer food. There are high external tariffs of most food from outside the EU.

I still think it likely commonsense will break out in due course and the farmers and other exporters of the continent will not want to face high tariffs on their voluminous exports to us. Let us, however, suppose there is no deal, and we just leave. What tariffs would result on EU food exports to us?

The current EU external tariff on food stuffs are, according to the UK Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (12 October 2016 publication)

Beef 65-87%

Pork 43-50%

Lamb 45-51% (there are however substantial tariff free quotas for NZ/Australian lamb)

Chicken 27-41%

Cheese 42-68%

Milk and cream 50-74%

Butter 63%

Vegetables 10-15%

Wheat and barley 53%

Jams etc 24%

Processed ham 27%

Processed chicken 88%

As a result of these current penal impositions on most non EU exports to us, the EU does most of the exporting to us. The Dutch account for 75% of our flower imports, and 23% of our vegetables, with Spain another 27%. The Dutch provide 44% of our poultry imports, Ireland 68% of our imported beef and the Danes 26% of our pork.

We now import around half our butter and 60% of our cheese, 35% of our beef, 60% of our pork and 40% of our poultry.

So what would happen if we move to WTO rules and impose these high tariffs on

EU foods? It would be wise to cut tariffs on various foodstuffs we could not produce economically at home from non EU countries, which you can always do under the WTO scheme as they are out to stop increases, not declines.

Undoubtedly there would be a surge in domestic production of butter, cheese, beef, flowers, pork and poultry were such barriers to be erected. Moving to world prices for items where we could not produce at home would help reduce price levels. Why, for example, do we have to have a tariff on oranges and other hot country fruits, which we cannot grow for ourselves?