

Green Party disappointed as Government speeds towards HS2



Green Party

23 February 2017

***Caroline Russell AM: “The Government must be held to account over its terrible decision to squander our limited resources”**

The Green Party is disappointed the HS2 Bill will receive royal assent today [1] and has pledged to keep standing up for the environment and local communities.

Caroline Russell, Green Party transport spokesperson and London Assembly Member, said:

“Today is a sad day for campaigners who have worked tirelessly to stop this wasteful project going ahead, but we’ll keep on fighting to protect the local communities and environment from the damage threatened by HS2.

“The risks far outweigh any potential benefits and it’s staggering so much money will be poured into HS2 when better transport projects improving local rail networks desperately need investment. The Government must be held to account over its terrible decision to squander our limited resources on a project that will save only a few minutes on trips between London and Birmingham.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39057772>

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Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region to draw ecological 'red line'

According to the "Guidelines on Drawing Up and Safeguarding Ecological Red Line," the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, together with the regions along the Yangtze River Economic Belt, need to draw up a "red line" for ecological protection by the end of 2017, while other areas should come up with a "red line" before the end of 2018.

The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the regions along the Yangtze River Economic Belt are under China's two key development strategies, and the decision to draw up the ecological red lines are deemed complementary to the strategies.

The red lines are based on China's administrative divisions, but will eventually ensure the completeness of the ecological system across the country.

Survey portrays confidence and concerns of Chinese



Zhao Lingyi, a post-90 woman, introduces her cakes to a customer in her shop in Weihai in Shandong province, Dec 19, 2016. [Photo/Xinhua]

A survey carried out by China Central Television indicates that those born in the 1990s and those above 60 are more confident about their financial health, reported chinanews.com.

The China's Economic Life Survey, sponsored by CCTV, the National Bureau of Statistics, China Post and National School of Development at Peking University, suggests new trends in income, expenditure, social security, and life quality of Chinese people.

This year's survey shows that 16 percent of post-1990s and 13 percent of those aged above 60 are confident about their financial prospects.

According to previous surveys, the confidence in income in 2015 rebounded to the highest point in recent years.

In terms of investment, Chinese households are relatively risk averse, with 35 percent investing in nothing. The most popular financial products are insurances – nearly two in five people chose to spend on them.

The survey also shows that 46 percent of respondents prefer to spend on tourism, leading in various kinds of consumption choices.

More than half said they “are under much pressure from work, and have no time to exercise”. At the same time, 34 percent said they buy health care products and services.

When it comes to attitudes toward the second-child policy, 24 percent of respondents said they do not plan to have another child in short term due to economic pressure.

The survey collects feedbacks from 100,000 Chinese households in 104 cities across the country by sending them post cards with questionnaires. This year, big data technology was applied in the survey.

The detailed information about the survey will be aired on CCTV next month.

[The magic extra million is a public sector constant quest](#)

If the state is spending £100 million on providing a service the debate will be about providing an additional £1m to make it better. The possible extra £1m is endowed with magic powers by the service providers and often by the political opposition. The extra one million we are told would make all the

difference to the quality and performance. A government that refuses it is mean, is cutting the service. A government which votes it is caring.

The trouble is it is simply not true that the extra million will tip a service from poor to good, or will make all the difference to the quality and quantity delivered. All the energy that goes into debating the extra million diverts the energy that should be going into debating how we spend the £100 million. It would be an odd programme where all £100 million was well spent, an odd service where you could find no ways of being more efficient and delivering higher quality.

Sometimes if you ask how would the extra £1m be spent it becomes obvious that it is not the answer. Of course some services need more people to deliver them well, or higher pay to motivate and retain good people, or more capital equipment to make the task of provision better. Sometimes extra money is part of the answer. The danger is that politicians will see extra money as the sole answer, when if you vote more money you still need to supervise how it is spent, and how the rest of the money is spent which it is topping up.

The private sector concentrates more on outputs than inputs. If I go to a shop they do not tell me how much it costs them to run and staff the shop. Shop A does not claim to be better than Shop B because it spends more on wages, computers and lighting. The shops compete on service and appearance without saying which is the low cost and which is the high cost store. Those running the shops are always trying to get the costs of running the shop lower, whilst preserving or improving quality. Sensible employers also know you do not have a good quality service if you treat staff badly and pay them too little.

The public sector needs to concentrate more on outputs, service volumes and quality. Some of the services will need more money to make them better, but we need to start with an honest analysis of what needs doing to expand or improve them, which includes working out how well we are spending the large sums already committed.

The public sector has an approach that adds in something called "efficiencies". Some of these are sensible improvements in purchasing, staff use and service delivery. Some are cuts in service dressed up as efficiency improvements. What we need is a management process based on continuous improvement, and implemented by using talent well within the organisation. Good public service providers need to be good employers, training and mentoring staff and helping staff to worthwhile careers based on pursuing service excellence.

ID tags issued to troops in PLA units

Servicemen and women with the People's Liberation Army are being issued

personal identification tags to improve personnel management as well as battlefield logistics and medical support.

Thirteen units across the Navy, Air Force and Rocket Force have been given the tags, which consist of two parts—a metal tag engraved with the bearer's name, rank, blood type and military member code and an auxiliary metal tag with a quick-response code and a built-in microchip with their health information.

Troops have also been issued wristwatches that can measure the wearer's heart rate and send distress signals, according to PLA Daily, the military's official newspaper.

Officers and medical professionals with the units were given a cellphonelike device that can receive signals from soldiers, scan a tag bearer's QR code and record emergency and medical situations.

Development of the tags and auxiliary instruments began in November 2013, and the first products were tried out by a brigade of the 27th Group Army, the paper reported, adding that the equipment has proved effective in battlefield medical efforts during combat exercises.

The newspaper quoted an unnamed official from the Central Military Commission's Logistic Support Department as saying that users from the 13 units will test the devices' reliability and usage. Users are also told to check whether the tags and wristwatch can work well with other logistics and medical equipment, and whether their electronic frequencies are compatible with those of weapons, the official said.

The official also said the introduction of identification tags will help improve the database of military members' personal information and logistic and medical services during combat or emergencies.

However, a PLA officer who did not want to be named told China Daily that he has found some problems with the wristwatch, such as its buttons being too big. He urged the military to solve the problems.

Zhou Yuan, a commentator for PLA Daily, has called for tests on whether enemies can be prevented from using the devices and whether the devices' signals will expose bearers' location to an enemy.

Currently, militaries in more than 30 nations including the United States, Russia, Germany and Japan use such identification tags.