

Greens call for urgent national response to extreme weather events



Green Party

27 July 2023

Responding to the Met Office State of the UK Climate report [1], Green Party Co-leader Carla Denyer said:

“We are sleep-walking into avoidable disasters. The Met Office report underlines, once again, that the climate is in crisis – and we need to act now to prevent the impacts overwhelming communities and the services we all rely on.

“The wildfires in Europe, and around the world, this summer have shown just how quickly services can strain and buckle.

“We know that this government failed to prepare properly for the Covid 19 pandemic, and it and the Labour leadership have spent the past week running away from the actions needed to both prevent climate-related disasters, and recover from them.

“The tragedy is that we know what needs to be done – but the government and Labour are refusing to show the political leadership we need.

“In 2019, we called for councils to be able to access a £3 billion a year Climate Adaptation Fund, prioritising those areas at highest risk and with the poorest populations.

“If that money had been provided by central government, local communities most at risk from the wildfires and flooding events that are becoming ever more common would be better prepared already.

“We need the government to support local authorities to make changes, but most of all, we need the government to wake up, take responsibility and lead.

“So, today, we’re repeating our call for a £3 billion per year Climate Adaptation Fund that prepares and gives local communities the tools they need to make change happen – from planting more street trees to tackle flooding and overheating in cities, to a public information campaign recognising the effects of heat stroke and what action to take.”

Denyer also outlined other changes necessary, such as:

- A national review of fire service preparedness to deal with the kind of wildfires now sweeping Europe, and a commitment from government to invest in the staffing, protective clothing and resources needed;
- Providing local fire service leads with the freedom to work with local communities to tackle wildfires in a way that best protects people, wildlife, habitats and property;
- Heat stress-testing of all essential infrastructure including railways, pipelines, pylons and roads;
- London Under Water [2], a report from the London Assembly Environment Committee chaired by Green Assembly Member Zack Polanski published in February 2023, found extreme weather events had already led to flooding in hospitals and residential and commercial properties and people trapped in cars. It called for new warnings to be issued to over 200,000 properties most at risk of flooding, including schools, homes and businesses. These recommendations should be followed and other local authorities should be supported to undertake similar studies;
- Populations at high risk from floods – including those living in basements and in high rise buildings – to be supplied with evacuation plans;
- NHS resilience plans dealing with the impact of prolonged heat waves to be regularly tested and the results published to increase public confidence;
- Local councils to be supplied with the resources needed to bring public fountains and safe public drinking water back into use in towns and cities;
- Cafes and restaurants become “heat-safe” spaces offering free water;
- Outdoor working regulations to be reviewed to prevent workers suffering heat stroke, including maximum legal working temperatures to be introduced, as called for by the TUC [3].

NOTES:

[1] <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/news>

[2]

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/London%20Under%20Water.pdf>

[3] <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/it-too-hot-work#>

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