

Green peers demand Trade Bill includes parliamentary scrutiny and environmental protections



Green Party

6 December 2020

- **Jenny Jones: “The Government is trying to bulldoze democracy by saying that capitalism and big business are more important than the will of the people”**

Green Party peers have said parliament must be allowed scrutiny of post-Brexit trade deals as the government’s Trade Bill returns to the House of Lords for debate tomorrow.[1]

The Greens have also set out how the bill must include the existing strong protections for the environment, workers’ rights and food safety.

Green peer Jenny Jones said it was vital to protect democracy by ensuring parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals.

Baroness Jones said:

“The Government is trying to bulldoze democracy by saying that capitalism and big business are more important than the will of the people.

“Unlike the US Congress and EU Parliament, whose members are heavily involved throughout the whole process of trade negotiations, the UK Government is trying to keep Parliament in the dark with very little control over the trade deals that we sign.

“As Greens, we believe that the market and the economy should serve the people, not make us the servants.

“That’s why we have been fighting for strong parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals, involving Parliament in setting negotiating mandates, and culminating in each deal being put to a meaningful vote in parliament.”

Green peer Natalie Bennett warned it was vital the bill included strong protections for people and planet.

Baroness Bennett said:

“Too often, trade deals are used to undermine the important protections for the environment, workers’ rights and food safety.

“That is why we have been fighting for the Trade Bill to have strong protections for people and the planet, so that we can work together with other countries to improve rather than destroy.

“But ultimately we need to work towards the kind of model being developed in New Zealand, Costa Rica, Iceland, Norway and Fiji, their proposed Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability. That is seeking to ensure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, rather than as too much of our trade does, threatening them.” [2]

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2729>

2

<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/free-trade-agreements/climate/agreement-on-climate-change-trade-and-sustainability-accts-negotiations/>

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[Green Party calls out government on “damaging theatrics” over Brexit talks](#)



Green Party

- **Greens warn idea of EU bringing late proposals “misleading”**

The Greens have criticised government ministers for “anti-diplomatic” comments in recent days, after it was reported that a UK government source had suggested the prospect of a deal was “receding”. [1]

Molly Scott Cato, Green Party Brexit spokesperson and former MEP, said:

“From Jacob Rees-Mogg holding Brexit responsible for the record speed of a vaccine certification process actually undertaken under EU rules, to the toe-curling embarrassment of Gavin Williamson’s comment about the UK being a ‘much better country’ than others, we have seen the government’s Brexit out-riders out in force in recent days.

“Conservatives have honed this sort of anti-diplomacy to an art-form in recent years but fail to understand that we will always be part of Europe and that our relationship with our close neighbours will continue to be of vital importance after 1 January.

“Greens have always argued for us to keep as close as possible to the EU single market and we continue to champion being at the heart of Europe.”

Commenting on EU Commission Vice President Vera Jourova’s statement that the Brexit referendum was skewed by “fake news” [2], Scott Cato said:

“The process of Brexit has been dominated by propaganda and disinformation from the start. So their suggestion that the EU has somehow thrown new and unreasonable demands into the negotiations at this late stage is par for the course.

“But it is also untrue and impossible according to the legal process being followed by the Council, the member states and the EU Parliament.

“What we are seeing is the UK government engaging in damaging theatrics to prepare the public for a truly dreadful deal. Far from being oven-ready, the deal is still incomplete which leaves no time for businesses to prepare for the end of the transition period.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55182450>

2

Commissioner Jourova’s comments are reported here:

<https://www.euroweeklynews.com/2020/12/04/eu-says-dirty-methods-used-in-brexit-campaign/>

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[Greens call on government to stop just making climate promises and take action](#)



Green Party

4 December 2020

- **Jonathan Bartley: “Time is running out. We must see tangible plans and meaningful action being taken to go net zero across every single sector, including housing, transport and agriculture”**

Responding to the government’s new climate targets of reducing emissions by 68% over this decade, Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“While any raising of ambition from the government is welcome, there is no time for empty promises. We need to see immediate action, and a clear plan for the next five years, rather than new pledges, without plans for delivery, that can only be delivered by their successors.

“The government has had four years since it signed the Paris Agreement, which committed it to try to limit temperature rise to 1.5C. This can only be achieved by reaching net zero by 2030 – something that it is nowhere near achieving. It isn’t even on track for 2.0C.

“Time is running out. We must see tangible plans and meaningful action being taken to go net zero across every single sector, including housing, transport and agriculture. Without this, more pledges only leave the difficult decisions – such as constraining aviation, electrifying our heating and transport systems, and moving to plant-based diets – to future politicians.

“We have seen from the recent spending review that the government does not understand the extent of the action that is required in this climate emergency. A true Green New Deal, implemented immediately, would reduce

emissions and create millions of sustainable Green jobs, protecting the future for us all and for generations to come.”

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[Caroline Lucas responds to Government's new climate target](#)



Green Party

3 December 2020

Responding to the government's pledge to cut at least 68% of emissions by 2030, Caroline Lucas MP said:

“This is a welcome improvement on the UK's previous commitment but climate action needs to be judged by what it delivers and what is scientifically necessary, not by what politicians deem is politically palatable. And the science says we need to go further and faster in the face of an accelerating crisis. The UK also has a particular responsibility to do so, given its historic emissions as the first country to industrialise.

“The Prime Minister's 10-point plan takes us only half-way to meeting interim climate targets, while government support for new roads, airport expansion and fossil fuel infrastructure undermines progress.

“There are immediate steps this Government should be taking to show this commitment is more than just another hollow promise. It should cancel the £27 billion roadbuilding programme; rule out any airport expansion; end subsidies to the fossil fuel sector and put in place plans for a just transition so that workers are part of a green, sustainable future and not abandoned as so many communities were in the 1980s.

“Most important of all, tackling the climate emergency needs a fundamental reset. We must abandon the fixation on endless GDP growth which is driving our planet beyond its natural limits, and put people's wellbeing and the

health of the environment at the heart of all government policy-making.

“Ministers appear to be waking up to the climate emergency – but they have not yet grasped the scale of it. This new emissions target must be only the starting point of even greater ambition.”

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[Greens call for extra support for businesses hit by Covid ahead of Small Business Saturday](#)



Green Party

3 December 2020

The Green Party has called for additional measures to support small businesses that have suffered heavy losses during the coronavirus pandemic, ahead of Small Business Saturday this weekend. [1]

As small companies across the country struggle to keep afloat due to the pandemic [2], the Greens have called for a five point plan to help them keep going:

- **Extend the business rate holiday into 2021/22** for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with the UK government providing compensation to local authorities for loss of income. As business rates are devolved in Wales, we also call on the Welsh Government to do the same.
- **Increase the amount of support to small businesses who have had to close** during lockdown and expand the criteria for those eligible. The current payments offer a derisory £1,300 a month for those with a rateable value of £15,000, which for a lot of small businesses would not even cover rent.

- **Widen the amount of support to small businesses who have stayed open**, such as nurseries, but are struggling due to the additional costs of Covid, through an additional discretionary grant for councils to administer.
- **Grant 15% of government contracts to small and micro businesses** and revise the government contract application process to remove the current barriers for entry to small business
- **Extend the current tourism VAT cut through 2021** and expand by applying to food and drink served in pubs, bars and restaurants, on hotel bookings and on theatre, music concert and museum and gallery tickets. This should form part of a process to review our VAT system outside the EU so that it differentially supports smaller shops compared to larger and online shops.

Green Party councillor Zoe Nicholson, deputy leader of Lewes District Council, said:

“Small businesses make a huge contribution to all of our lives and are at the centre of our plans for thriving local economies which work for the wellbeing of people and the environment.

“However, this year many have been left fighting for survival as a result of the pandemic. It is vital that the government steps up its support for these businesses which so many people rely on.

“The Green Party’s five point plan would ensure many more are able to carry on providing their essential services that contribute so much to their communities and keeps money local, rather than letting it be eaten up by multinationals and swooshed off to the nearest tax haven.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com/>

2

Research released in September by insurer Simply Business found that coronavirus could have cost small businesses in the UK up to £69bn. The survey found coronavirus had cost the average small company £11,799, with 25% of firms believing they were at risk of closing.

<https://uk.style.yahoo.com/covid19-could-cost-small-businesses-up-to-69bn-coronavirus-103231334.html>

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