

Green Party writes to Michael Gove calling for more ambitious policy on plastics



Green Party

21 December 2017

Deputy Leader of the Green Party Amelia Womack has today written to the Environment Secretary Michael Gove urging him to be much more ambitious in his pledge to reduce plastic waste.

Plastic hit the headlines when the BBC show Blue Planet II exposed the amount of waste that has entered our oceans. In the last few weeks Michael Gove has been unveiling the government's plan to reduce plastic waste including consulting on a scheme for cutting single use plastics and creating bottle return schemes.

But the Green Party says that these "piecemeal" changes do not go nearly far enough and has urged the Environment Secretary to use the public concern created by Blue Planet to introduce a much more wide-ranging set of policies.

In her letter to Mr Gove, Womack, who recently tried living plastic free for a week [1], says [2]:

"To fix a problem as systemic as this [plastic waste] requires an holistic approach – one that I urge you to adopt.

"We need to design out waste from the very start of the consumer chain. That means ending the production of single-use plastics while providing the infrastructure necessary to enable large corporations and individuals to recycle close to 100% of the items they use.

"Second, we need to invest in alternatives to plastic. There is a slowly rising network of zero-waste shops across the UK and companies like Splosh and Lush create products designed to have a limited or no impact on the environment. Through government investment, grants, and rewards we can upscale the use of these products so that they are available to everyone and every business.

"Third, we need to discourage bad behaviour. The tax on plastic bags has already brought enormous benefits: since the tax was introduced in England,

the use of plastic bags has reduced 85%. That same model should be applied to plastic bottles, single use plastics, and microplastics.”

Notes

[1] <https://theecologist.org/2017/dec/19/my-week-without-plastic-ameliawomack>

[2]

Full text of letter below:

Dear Michael,

I have been greatly heartened by your increased interest in and desire to do something about the toll that plastic is having on our environment.

I do worry, however, that at present your goals are not ambitious enough.

The last few months have represented an awakening in the nation's consciousness about the problems caused by plastic to our ecosystem: Blue Planet has given a very visual representation to an issue long overlooked. If ever there was an opportunity to be bold about how we tackle the problem, it is now.

Recently I tried going plastic free for a single week. I was amazed at the extent to which plastic has infected our lives. It's in our tea bags. It covers nearly any grocery item we might buy. Make-up is impossible to buy without plastic. Having lived for a week without it, I can now fully understand why plastic litters our countryside and infects our oceans.

To fix a problem as systemic as this requires an holistic approach – one that I urge you to adopt.

Reducing plastic and waste will only be achieved through a strategy devised and implemented by government and industry. We need to design out waste from the very start of the consumer chain. That means ending the production of single-use plastics while providing the infrastructure necessary to enable large corporations and individuals to recycle close to 100% of the items they use.

Second, we need to invest in alternatives to plastic. There is a slowly rising network of zero-waste shops across the UK and companies like Splosh and Lush create products designed to have a limited or no impact on the environment. Through government investment, grants, and rewards we can upscale the use of these products so that they are available to everyone and every business.

Third, we need to discourage bad behaviour. The tax on plastic bags has already brought enormous benefits: since the tax was introduced in England, the use of plastic bags has reduced 85%. That same model should be applied to plastic bottles, single use plastics, and microplastics.

I would welcome the opportunity to share with you in person my experiences of living without plastic for a week or to talk about the policies we desperately need to preserve our blue planet.

Yours sincerely,

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales

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[Greens: Climate change omission moment Trump authority expired](#)



Green Party

18 December 2017

Green Party Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley has said the decision by Donald Trump to omit climate change from the US security strategy marks the moment when his authority “expired”.

Earlier today it was revealed [1] that, in a dramatic change from President Obama’s priorities, the Trump administration will drop climate change from a list of global threats in a new National Security Strategy.

Mr Bartley said:

“The first responsibility of any political leader is the protection and security of those in their charge. This will go down in history as the moment the US president abdicated responsibility for his country. Trump’s authority had already gone well past its sell-by date. Now it has positively expired.

“All across America communities are rejecting his reckless leadership and he is being shunned abroad. His willful ignorance of the threats that the world faces and his denial of scientific fact will surely consign him to the same historical category as King Canute.”

Notes

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/18/trump-drop-climate-change-national-security-strategy>

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[“We are winning” says Green Deputy Leader before visit to Yorkshire fracking site](#)



Green Party

14 December 2017

Deputy Leader of the Green Party Amelia Womack says that campaigners are winning the fight to stop fracking for good ahead of her visit to the proposed fracking site at Kirby Misperton [1].

A decision to allow fracking to start at the Yorkshire site was expected last month but the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy Greg Clark, who has faced heavy lobbying from campaigners, has delayed giving the green light.

Womack believes a vital point in the fight to stop fracking across the UK has been reached as momentum is now with environmental protesters.

Womack said:

“To the people on the frontline against fracking in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and across the country I say thank you and just look at what you have achieved. A delay of even a few days or weeks might not seem like a great deal but it is so so important. It shows hesitation on the government’s part. It’s given us more space to make the arguments against fracking. It’s shown that the likes of Third Energy and Cuadrilla who are determined to get rich

off the destruction of communities and ecosystems cannot have it all their own way. It shows we are winning.

“We might look back at this moment in future as a time when the tide turned against the frackers. I’m looking forward to thanking you in person and to being with you once again in the fight to stop fracking.”

Both Cuadrilla and Third Energy have faced legal challenges against their attempts to frack in Lancashire and Yorkshire respectively [2]. Local residents have raised concerns that the companies are not carrying out necessary environmental monitoring and in Lancashire the government’s move to force through fracking against the wishes of the local council has caused outrage.

Notes

[1] Amelia Womack will arrive at Kirby Misperton at 12.30pm on 15th December 2017

[2]

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/aug/29/campaigners-launch-last-ditch-appeal-to-stop-fracking-in-lancashire>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/09/04/no-uk-fracking-this-year-as-yorkshire-legal-challenge-drag-on/>

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[Greens respond to Sheffield's vote to fell memorial trees](#)



Green Party

13 December 2017

Responding to the news that Sheffield Council Cabinet has voted unanimously

to fell 41 memorial trees, Alison Teal, Green Party Councillor for the city, said:

“This week we’ve seen trees adorned with Christmas decorations brought down without notice and now the council has decided that the social historical significance and beauty of 41 memorial trees can be dismissed and disregarded. I urge the council to cease their insensitive felling of the city’s trees and restore its green heart and heritage.”

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[Greens: PIP statistics reveal government’s “twisted priorities”](#)



Green Party

13 December 2017

Co-Leader of the Green Party Jonathan Bartley says the latest statistics [1] on the use of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) reveals the government’s “twisted priorities”.

The annual statistics show that nearly half (47%) of claimants to the Disability Living Allowance element of PIP who had a reassessment this year either saw their allowance decreased or disallowed. The statistics reveal that 443,000 people will have had their claims reduced or removed.

Meanwhile a Freedom of Information request submitted by the party to the Department of Work and Pensions found that the amount paid to the private companies tasked with carrying out PIP assessment has increased by an average of 30% [2].

Bartley said:

“The Government is taking food from the mouths of disabled people while laying on a banquet for private companies. This comes only a week after

Philip Hammond revealed his biases by labelling disabled people a drain on UK productivity. It shows just how twisted the Government's priorities have become.

“By slashing away at welfare, the Government is heading in totally the wrong direction. It is weaponising welfare against those it should help. It is time it recalibrated it's moral compass and steered it's policies in a new direction. We need a new, modern vision for the welfare state – one that removes barriers for those who want to work, while giving real choices and opportunity to everyone. It could start by piloting a universal basic income that supports every person, with extra payments made available to those – like the disabled – ensuring everyone can lead the pursue the life they want.”

Notes

[1]

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666525/pip-statistics-to-october-2017.pdf

[2]

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals
IAS	£20,254,568	£128,482,423	£158,604,257	£199,985,576
CAPITA	£3,073,986	£61,371,930	£44,682,003	£66,797,479

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