

Green Party slams UKIP aid proposal



Green Party

3 May 2017

The Green Party has condemned UKIP's proposal to cut aid spending from 0.7% of national income to 0.2% [1]. The Green Party is opposed to any cuts to the foreign aid budget and believes it should be increased to 1%.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Cutting the aid budget will cost lives. Any move to rollback our commitment to international development would be a dereliction of this country's duty to the rest of the world.

"UKIP's little-Englander approach has no place in a global, interconnected world. We should be increasing our aid budget, not slashing it by billions of pounds. There's nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need.

"Our foreign aid spending is crucial to help stamp out inequalities around the world. A solution that simply creates another problem elsewhere is no solution at all.

"We know that aid alone isn't enough, and that it must come alongside fairer trading rules, but it is the bedrock of a credible foreign policy where Britain can play a positive role in world affairs. In the coming weeks the Green Party will put forward a bold plan to step up Britain's global commitments on aid, climate change and nuclear disarmament."

Notes:

1. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/799256/Ukip-overseas-aid-spending-cut-ten-billion-year>

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Greens call for emergency intervention into air pollution crisis



Green Party

3 May 2017

The Green Party is calling for an emergency intervention into the air pollution crisis ahead of the publication of the Government's draft air quality plan [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, spoke at an assembly at a London school this morning and called on the Government to clean up the UK's filthy air, which is linked to 40,000 early deaths every year.

The demand comes as new figures reveal the cost of taking a bus, coach and train has soared while the cost of travelling by car has dropped dramatically between 1980 and 2016 [2].

The cost of motoring, including purchasing a vehicle, has fallen by 20% since 1980, while rail fares have risen by 63% and bus and coach fares are up by 64%.

The High Court ruled on Thursday (April 27) that the Government must publish its draft air pollution plan before May 9 [3].

Bartley said:

"It's astounding the Government had to be forced to reveal its plan for tackling air pollution and squandered taxpayers' money fighting to keep it a secret. Our filthy air is linked to the early deaths of 40,000 people every year and any delay in tackling this crisis is unacceptable.

"The stark difference between the cost of travelling by car and taking public transport lays bare how little this Government cares about tackling the problem at its root. If we keep pushing people into cars instead of promoting rail and public transport, our air is only going to get dirtier and harder for our children to breathe.

"The Green Party is the only party committed to taking immediate action on air pollution, with investment in cycling, walking, electric vehicles and

public transport. We'd also properly fund and expand the Clean Air Zone network and introduce a Vehicle Excise Duty for new diesel vehicles alongside a diesel scrappage scheme."

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/02/uk-government-publish-air-pollution-strategy>

2. <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-25/718544/>

3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/27/air-pollution-plan-election-campaign-bomb-court-government>

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[Brexit announcement: Molly Scott Cato full speech](#)



Green Party

2 May 2017

Caroline Lucas today (May 2) gave voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge.

Molly Scott Cato's full speech (check against delivery):

Firstly, as an MEP, working in the European Parliament; seeing firsthand the many positive things the EU is doing, I would like to congratulate Caroline for refusing to vote to trigger article 50.

I would also like to thank the 113 other MPs – from Labour, LibDems, SNP, and Plaid Cymru – for doing likewise. What we saw on Article 50 was a genuine

progressive alliance against the government's plans for an extreme Brexit.

It is only a tragedy that so few Labour MPs followed their hearts and their minds and instead capitulated both to Theresa May and the whips within their own Party.

Since the 24th June last year, it seems to me that it has been the Tory government that has been moving us towards the hard Brexit cliff edge, but Labour that has stood ready to push us off.

The Party has shown itself hopelessly divided and the failure to oppose the government on this the most critical issue for generations has played straight into the hands of the Tory Right.

By voting in such large numbers to trigger Article 50, without fighting for any conditions, Labour MPs have effectively handed Theresa May a blank cheque.

And we know what the small print on the back of this cheque is:

Invoking delegated powers, which would enable the government to make post-Brexit laws behind Parliament's back.

A Great Repeal Bill allowing the government to tear up EU legislation that has both improved and protected our environment, and defended workers' rights. This bonfire of regulation is a threat to everything we hold dear – clean air, clean water, landscapes where wildlife can flourish – and my meetings with businesses tell me that it is not what they want.

We have also seen the politics of consensus between EU nations replaced by the language of hostility, whether it be the threat of gunships to solve a dispute about Gibraltar or the threat of creating a tax haven if you cannot get your way on trade deals.

But wait. Didn't we hear Labour's Brexit spokesperson, Keir Starmer, say that Labour would rip up Theresa May's Brexit plan?

We should not be taken in by Labour's apparently softer more considered approach to Brexit. Their message is confused and contradictory and still has some uncomfortable hard edges.

They promise to guarantee existing rights to all EU nationals living in the UK, but say they will end free movement. Yet they also want to retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union.

Taking a tough stance on freedom of movement is incompatible with membership of the single market, something Keir Starmer himself acknowledged.

Greens believe that remaining in the single market is vital for protecting jobs and workers' rights. That in turn means defending free movement. In particular, we want young people to continue to enjoy the rights enjoyed by their parents and grandparents – the right to travel, study and work across Europe.

If Labour believe, like the Tories, that the fundamental rules of the club – such as the four freedoms – will be bent or watered down to accommodate a hardline UK, they clearly do not understand that the EU works by unity of purpose. Theresa May's attempt to portray the remaining 27 EU members as somehow ganging up on Britain shows that she shares her party's inability to understand how the EU works. Her approach to the negotiations demonstrates that she is constitutionally unable to cooperate and her confrontational stance is damaging our relationships with our closest neighbours for generations to come.

Like Labour, we will of course ditch the great repeal bill, but we would replace this with a Great Reform Bill, to deliver a fair and proportional election system, reform the House of Lords and introduce a written constitution, so we know what our rights are.

Labour say they would prioritise jobs and the economy in negotiations with the EU. These are of course vital, which is why we say we should stay in the single market. But such a focus risks side-lining the environment. This is why the Green Party is committed to both a new Environmental Protection Act and a Clean Air Act to ensure environmental protections are maintained and enhanced.

Labour's call for parliament to be given a truly meaningful vote on the final Brexit deal is welcome, but their reluctance to give British people the same right shows a blatant disregard for democracy.

This brings us to our policy announcement today. Greens believe that the people of the UK must be given an opportunity to have their say through a ratification referendum. It is a democratic requirement that when we get to the end of the negotiating process, and we see what Brexit really means as opposed to a series of promises that cannot be fulfilled, we have a chance to decide whether that it better than continued EU membership.

Take back control was the strap line which persuaded many to vote Leave in the referendum last year. It's now clear what that meant. A power grab by the Tory right so they can make a bonfire of regulations which protect our rights and environment; and an opportunity to hand control to powerful corporations and wealthy elites and turn us into a tax haven.

A ratification referendum is the chance to *give* back control.

In two years time, we must give back control to the people, providing them with an opportunity to accept or reject the future that is on offer, or decidewhether actually we are better off remaining a full member of the EU.

So on June 8th:

Vote Green to block hard Brexit.

Vote Green to have a real say on our shared future.

Vote Green to Give Back Control.

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[Brexit announcement: Caroline Lucas full speech](#)



Green Party

2 May 2017

Caroline Lucas today (May 2) gave voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge.

Caroline Lucas' full speech (check against delivery):

This General Election potentially changes everything.

We are at a crossroads – and the choices we make in the coming weeks will have huge consequences for the kind of country we're going to be in the future.

And the biggest choice we face is clearly about Brexit.

Though my party fought hard for Britain to stay in the EU, and I voted against an unconditional triggering of Article 50, we accept, of course, that the referendum was an instruction to the Government to begin Brexit negotiations.

We do not accept, however, that the decision should be irreversible.

The referendum should be the start, not the end, of the democratic process.

And it's therefore right that people should have the right to a say on the final deal in a ratification referendum – with the option to remain in the EU if they so choose.

There are those who will say that this is contrary to the 'will of the

people’.

But the claim that the referendum produced an irreversible verdict is a sham.

At a General Election, voters obviously have the right to revisit the choice of government that they made at a previous election.

It would be ludicrous to suggest people couldn’t change their minds about which way to vote, as facts change, and experience becomes clearer.

And in the same way, it gives them the right to revisit a referendum result, as long as the parties are clear about the options on the table.

Whoever forms a Government after June 8 will have a mandate to negotiate with the EU on our behalf.

But we live in a democracy and it would be deeply undemocratic to impose the terms of any deal on Britain’s citizens, on our communities, young people, and businesses.

So let’s give people honest choices.

Let’s be clear that there is a wealth of difference between a soft Brexit, with membership of the Single Market, and an extreme Brexit – the one our Prime Minister is hell bent on pursuing, where we’re out of the single market, out of the Customs Union, ending free movement, and with our key social and environmental protections at risk.

The day following the EU referendum the Green Party called for the British people to have a further say on the *details* of any Brexit deal.

We stand by that position and today we pledge to voters to go further.

Our election manifesto will not only include a ratification referendum, it will also explicitly make the option to remain in the EU part of such a ratification referendum.

Greens proudly and passionately campaigned to remain in the EU.

And, unlike some, we’ve not changed our deeply held belief that we are better off in the EU.

The Green Party is united behind a bold vision for a fairer, greener, bigger future which has co-operation at its heart.

From tackling climate change to preventing terrorism, the challenges of our times require us to work with our neighbours to find solutions.

Not cast ourselves adrift.

Still less fashion ourselves as a bargain basement tax haven drifting off the continent, as Theresa May has threatened.

And while we’ve all learned to treat polls with extreme caution, it might

just turn out to be significant that last week's Yougov poll showed, for the first time, a majority of British people now oppose Brexit.

And maybe that's because the costs of Brexit are becoming clearer.

Inflation is already rising as imported goods rise in price.

Real wages are stagnating, investment is on hold.

All these indicators will be worse by 2020 when the election was meant to take place.

The referendum outcome last June was never supposed to be the final word. It was the beginning of a conversation.

And this General Election is a chance to reflect on what we have learned since then...

That Brexit is being used by the Tories to drive through an ideological agenda that champions deregulation and privatisation on an unprecedented scale

That people were lied to.

That there is no £350 million each week for the NHS.

That the PM has *no intention* of seeking to enable us to remain members of the Single Market.

That immigration is unlikely to be controlled because, as David Davis has himself acknowledged, it's necessary for our economy

And indeed it's become clearer than ever that immigration is not to blame for the lack of social housing, GP appointments or local jobs – government spending cuts are.

What's also become clear is that the official opposition has been no serious opposition at all.

The Labour Party haven't only given the Tories a blank cheque for a hard Brexit.

They've given them a lift to the bank and helped them cash it in.

If Labour had made the case for staying in the Single Market, they could have made common cause with other opposition parties, and together we could have had a chance to avoid this most extreme of Brexits.

That was a tragically missed opportunity.

Meanwhile their unconditional support for triggering Article 50 meant that the opportunity to secure some key safeguards was squandered

Why would the Government listen to calls for an immediate guarantee for EU

nationals living in the UK, or for a meaningful parliamentary vote, if the opposition had already made clear its intention to support Article 50 in any and all circumstances?

The General Election makes a different bigger future possible and it's crucial that voters are not lied to again.

Brexit is not inevitable.

The triggering of Article 50 is not irreversible.

And we still believe we are better off as members of the EU.

Greens see the bigger picture and we stand up for matters.

Not based on political expediency but based on principle and evidence.

The Conservatives could have sought to unite the country by bringing leavers and remainers together.

Instead they chose to sow more discord and division – they cannot be trusted.

The environment matters. Nobody voted to scrap environmental protections on June 23 yet leaving the EU places out local, national and global environments in jeopardy.

Climate change is the greatest challenge our world faces and co-operating with our EU neighbours to take collective action is how we rise to that challenge.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because the environment matters.

Our pledge is about standing up for young people too. For the generations that have most to lose if we cut ourselves loose from the EU.

Greens want young people to have big opportunities and a big future.

And that means the right to study, travel, work, live and love across the EU.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because young people matter.

A Green vote on June 8 is a chance to stay part of the EU because a resilient, diverse economy matters.

And it's a vote for the certainty that we will stick to our principles and use the negotiation period triggered by article 50 to fight for a deal that puts social and environmental justice first.

If the Government is so convinced that they'll get a decent deal then there's no reason that they wouldn't trust people to have a final say.

If the Government believes it's own rhetoric about the will of the people

they'll respect that electorates are free to change their minds.

This General Election changes everything and the choices we all make matter like never before.

Our message is simple and unambiguous.

The Greens are the only political party to unequivocally pledge to give voters the chance to keep EU membership.

For a final say, and for a chance to vote to stay in the EU, vote Green.

Greens give voters chance to stay in EU

*** Greens reveal new pledge giving voters ratification referendum with option to keep EU membership**

*** Caroline Lucas: "A democracy worthy of the name must mean people having a real say"**

*** Event: 10.30am, The Space Studios, 129-131 Mare Street, London, E8 3RH**

Caroline Lucas will offer voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge at an event tomorrow morning (Tuesday 2 May).

Lucas, Green Party co-leader, will pledge to give voters a final say on any Brexit deal – with the chance to stay in the EU if they don't like the deal the Government negotiates.

Speaking to workers and activists at Space Studios in London, an art studio which has benefitted from EU funding, Lucas is expected to say:

"A democracy worthy of the name must mean people having a real say over the major decisions that affect their lives. That's why the Green Party has consistently said that the referendum should be the start, not the end, of the democratic process. And it's why today we are announcing our intention to push for remaining in the EU to be an option in a ratification referendum."

The Greens are the only party to have made an official and unambiguous pledge to include the option of remaining in the EU on the ballot paper of a ratification referendum.

Lucas is expected to say:

"Whoever wins this election has a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the British people – but that does not mean that they have a right to impose a final deal. Instead we demand a ratification referendum which gives people the option to remain in the EU if they wish, or to vote back the Government's deal.

"There are some who say that this is a re-run of the referendum, but that simply isn't the case. Instead this is giving people an informed say over our

shared future. If the Government is so convinced that they'll get a decent deal then there's no reason that they wouldn't trust people to have a final say.

"Our message is simple. For a final say, and for a chance to vote to stay in the EU, vote Green."

Lucas will be joined by Molly Scott Cato, the Green Party's EU spokesperson who is gearing up to take the Bristol West seat from Labour and join Lucas in Parliament.

Scott Cato, Green Party EU spokesperson and Bristol West candidate, is expected to say:

"Take back control was the strap line which persuaded many to vote Leave in the referendum last year. It's now clear what that meant. A power grab by the Tory right so they can make a bonfire of regulations which protect our rights and environment. A ratification referendum must give back control. People must be given an opportunity to vote for the future on offer at the end of the article 50 process, or decide whether actually we are better off remaining a full member of the EU."

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Brexit announcement: Greens give voters chance to stay in EU



Green Party

2 May 2017

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