

# If the Tories continue to ignore the big issues then British consumers will continue to be short-changed – Gill Furniss

**Gill Furniss MP, Labour's**

**Shadow Minister for Steel, Postal Services and Consumer**

**Protection**, responding to news that the Chancellor will unveil details of the Government's

upcoming Consumer Green Paper in the Budget, including action on subscription traps and simplifying small print said:

"The data from Citizens

Advice makes clear that misleading consumer practices are extremely widespread,

with over 40 per cent of British people paying for a subscription they don't use.

"Consumers need much

better protection from stealthy subscriptions which often start automatically after a free trial. Clear notifications that billing or price changes are about

to begin should be the minimum that consumers can expect. At present, companies

have no incentive to improve, so allowing enforcement bodies to impose fines is

a positive step.

"While these changes are

welcome, the Tories with their light-touch approach have an abysmal track record on protecting consumers. Only last summer they sat back and watched Ofgem and the Competitions and Markets Authority effectively blame consumers for allowing energy companies to rip them off to the tune of £1.4 billion a year.

And to the surprise of no one, energy bills have just been hiked yet again. Labour would implement a price cap to properly protect consumers.

"These are sensible

proposals, but if the Tories continue to ignore the big issues then British consumers will continue to be short-changed. It's about time this government started taking its responsibility to UK consumers seriously."

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## News story: Foreign Secretary to visit Russia

The Foreign Secretary has accepted an invitation from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to visit Moscow in the coming weeks.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made clear that our policy towards Russia is to 'engage but beware' and the visit is entirely consistent with this approach.

Discussions will focus on the UK-Russia relationship and current international issues including Syria and Ukraine, where we continue to have significant differences. This is not a return to business as usual and the Foreign Secretary will continue to be robust on those issues where we differ.

We have always been clear that the UK will engage with Russia where it is in our national interest to do so.

Details of precise timings will be confirmed in due course. A potential visit has been in the pipeline for some time, with the Prime Minister and President Putin discussing this when they met in China in September 2016.

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## The UK does not have to pay a single Euro to exit the EU – and is making a very generous and friendly Brexit offer to the EU

I am glad the Lords have confirmed what I have long argued that the UK has no legal obligations under the EU Treaties to pay any one off exit payment or any continuing contributions after departure.

They missed out the even more important point – UK Ministers have no legal power to make any one off or continuing payments after leaving. The payments would not be authorised. The legal base of the Treaty supports our regular contributions but not the payments the EU have in mind.

The EU may well think it a good idea to ease the problems they have on our departure by charging us a huge sum for daring to leave. The answer is a simple and polite No to that request.

The EU needs to concentrate on making sure it still has tariff free access

to our market, which they also need. The good news is we are happy to offer them that. The bad news is they do not seem to be able to agree anything amongst themselves about how to respond to Brexit. The EU Commission also seems to think it should try and threaten and bully us, when the sensible approach is to be helpful and courteous, as we are towards them.

The UK is offering them tariff free trade and the full rights of EU citizens to stay and work in our country. That's a great and generous offer. Why can't they simply do the same civilised thing? Why don't they take seriously their legal obligations under their own Treaty to have good relations with a neighbouring state with a flourishing trade?

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## Environmental court opens in NW China province

A special court for environmental cases has been established in northwest China's Qinghai Province to provide legal service for environmental protection work in the Sanjiangyuan area.

The Sanjiangyuan environmental court, affiliated with the Yushu City People's Court, was approved by the Higher People's Court in Qinghai Province and was established on Tuesday, according to the government of the Tibetan prefecture of Yushu.

The court hired six people to handle environmental protection cases and civil suits related to pollution prevention and environmental damage in the area.

Sanjiangyuan literally means "the source of three rivers," referring to the Yangtze, Yellow, and Lancang (Mekong) rivers. The ecology in the area has degraded due to human activities such as overgrazing.

The environmental court is the first such specialized judiciary organ in the province, said Man Zhifang, vice president of the Higher People's Court in Qinghai Province.

Planning began on a national park in the area last year, aiming to protect the headwaters of the three rivers. It is expected to officially open in 2020. Endi

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# Foreign gov'ts should not interfere in internal affairs: HKSAR gov't

A spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government said on Saturday that foreign governments should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Hong Kong SAR.

In response to the U.S. Department of State's human rights report relating to the Hong Kong SAR, the spokesman said, since the return to the motherland, Hong Kong has been exercising a high degree of autonomy and "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" in strict accordance with the Basic Law.

This demonstrates the full and successful implementation of the "one country, two systems" principle, which has been widely recognized by the international community.

"Under Article 158 of the Basic Law, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) has the power to interpret the Basic Law. The NPCSC's power of interpretation of the Basic Law is part of the constitutional order of the Hong Kong SAR, and is recognized by Hong Kong courts," the spokesman said.

"There are ongoing judiciary proceedings regarding 'confirmation form' and 'invalid nominations' in relation to the 2016 Legislative Council election, as well as 'oath-taking' by certain Legislative Council Members. Foreign governments should respect the rule of law and the independent judicial system in Hong Kong. They should not interfere in the internal affairs of the HKSAR," the spokesman added. Endit