

Greens call for inquiry into government's handling of Covid-19, one year on from start of lockdown



Green Party

23 March 2021

The Green Party has called for a full public and judge-led inquiry into the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic on the one year anniversary of the first national lockdown. [1]

In the wake of almost 150,000 Covid deaths [2] and as the successful vaccine rollout means pressure on public services is starting to lift, the Greens have said the government must be held accountable for past mistakes which have left their mark on everybody living in the UK and that we all need to learn lessons for the future.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

"The government's mishandling of this pandemic has resulted in thousands of avoidable deaths and left many families grieving for loved ones who died before their time. We must ensure that we learn the truth about decisions made throughout the pandemic and to ensure that such mistakes are not repeated again.

"Now that the success of the vaccine rollout means we are no longer in the depths of the emergency, there is no reason to delay a public inquiry any further. As time passes, memories fade and the ability to understand exactly what went wrong diminishes.

"There are so many questions the government needs to be accountable for, not least why it took so long to lockdown in the first instance, why it spent billions on a failed test and trace system and why it decided it was safe to open up for Christmas, causing the deaths of thousands more people.

"It will take generations for us to come to terms with what has happened over the last 12 months and we need to begin now to plan a site for commemoration and reflection. We support the National Memorial Arboretum's proposal of a memorial of health workers who lost their lives to Covid [3] as well as the idea of local commemorative woodlands close to all our towns and cities."

The Greens are also calling for the government to start providing the resources now so that every local authority has an effective test and trace system in place, run by local public health authorities, ahead of the lifting of most lockdown restrictions. [4]

Bartley said:

“As we all look forward to the lifting of the lockdown restrictions after Easter, it is vital that we have a functional contact-tracing system.

“While the vaccine will help in eliminating the risk of more people dying from coronavirus, we know that when lockdown lifts the chance of local outbreaks amongst the half of the population that has not been vaccinated increases. The government needs to be allocating funding now to enable local authorities to set up effective test and trace programmes. We’ve seen how effective our local public and community health teams have been with rolling out the vaccine, we now need to support them to make the vital contact tracing system work effectively.”

Notes

1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronaviruses-23-march-2020>

2

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths>

3

<https://www.thenma.org.uk/visit-us/what%27s-here/the-memorials/memorial-to-covid-19-key-workers>

4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52530518>

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Green Party calls for new vision for armed forces in response to defence review



Green Party

22 March 2021

- **Calls for refocusing on promoting peace and protecting people and places from the effects of climate change**

The Green Party has criticised the government's plans to focus the defence review away from the needs of citizens and towards robots, drones, and cyber warfare [1], warning the armed forces should instead be used to promote peace and defend people and places from the effects of climate chaos.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley has criticised the rationale of both last week's integrated review [2] and the defence review today as being posturing about the power of Global Britain rather than a practical plan to make British people safer.

Bartley said:

"We utterly oppose the decision to encourage a global nuclear arms race by increasing the cap on our warheads. This is a play to defend our seat on the UN Security Council but is no substitute for the geopolitical security we had as part of the strong European bloc.

"We continue to insist that the government lives up to its legal obligation to prevent proliferation by signing up to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

Bartley also argued for a new purpose for our armed forces, that have performed such an important national role during the pandemic.

"The armed forces have played a crucial logistical role in the pandemic and we are likely to need them in similar roles as climate change threatens more intense weather events.

"It is flesh-and-blood servicepeople who have supported Covid testing and who we will need to provide national resilience as the climate crisis intensifies. Cyber soldiers are no substitute for real soldiers and killer

drones are a dangerous development that distances us from the moral responsibility for taking a human life.

“Greens would use our armed services to make peace not war. We would rename the Ministry of Defence as the Ministry for Security and Peace, making the promotion of peace a key foreign policy objective and linking the role of the defence services more closely to the crises that actually threaten global security.

“A central part of their responsibilities would be the defence of people across the world from the effects of climate chaos and dealing with the humanitarian and environmental impacts of climate-related disasters.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56477900>

2

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969402/The_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

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Government's industrial decarbonisation strategy "aimed low and will still miss its target", Greens warn



Green Party

17 March 2021

- **Councillor Carla Denyer: “It is depressing to see how, yet again on a vital green issue, the government has aimed low and will still miss its target.”**

The government’s new industrial decarbonisation strategy [1] goes nowhere near far enough and lacks the proper plan and finance to achieve its aims, the Green Party has warned.

Bristol Green Party Councillor Carla Denyer, who proposed the UK’s first climate emergency declaration, said:

“We welcome the government’s recognition that CO2 emissions must be squeezed out of UK industrial production, although the target of reducing emissions by two-thirds by 2035 is inadequate.

“But we have to ask Greta Thunberg’s resounding question: ‘Where is the plan?’ This isn’t the first time we’ve seen a government department offer only hot air when what is needed is a clear plan and funding to back it up.

“Instead of an ambitious plan and funding on the scale we have seen from the EU and US, this strategy is nothing more than wishful thinking. It is depressing to see how, yet again on a vital green issue, the government has aimed low and will still miss its target.”

David Flint, convenor of the Green Party’s Climate Emergency Policy Working Group, added:

“If we take the strategy on its own terms, it fails to address the ultimate high emitters – oil and gas – which are problematic both offshore and onshore. Indeed, without a clear commitment to reduce oil and gas refining, both carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) and hydrogen may simply prolong the pollution. Hydrogen is not a solution unless it is rolled out alongside sufficient renewable electricity to produce it and we are far from achieving that.

“The government has also failed to rise to the challenge of phasing out carbon-intensive blast furnaces in steel production. We simply cannot arrive at a net-zero carbon emission economy unless we undergo a rapid transition of our steel industry. We need a government plan to urgently invest in electric arc furnaces melting scrap steel to minimise the amount of carbon released from the industry.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-decarbonisation-strategy>

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[Greens Condemn Integrated Review as 'Misguided'](#)



Green Party

16 March 2021

'Unless everybody is secure, nobody is secure'

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley has responded this morning to the Integrated Review calling it 'Misguided'. He said:

"This review is based on meaningless rhetoric about Global Britain and a desire to boost the sale of arms by British companies. It will do nothing to increase the security of British people. The posturing about providing global leadership on cooperation and democracy will convince nobody, especially coming from a government that is in an ongoing dispute with its closest neighbours and has shamelessly broken treaty obligations entered into less than a year ago.

"Much is made of the potential of the Indo-Pacific region. But the power in that region lies with the Quad – USA, India, Japan and Australia – who had their inaugural meeting last week and felt no need to call on the services of Boris Johnson. [1] Such post-colonial fantasies will do nothing to make up for the damage to our trading, diplomatic and security relationships caused

by Brexit.”

Bartley went on to consider the real meaning of security, saying:

“We are also horrified that, at a time when the UN is actively seeking to negotiate nuclear disarmament, the government is proposing to increase the UK’s stockpile of nuclear weapons. We repeat our demand for the government to live up to its legally binding commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and sign up to the UN Treaty on the Prohibitions of Nuclear Weapons. [2]

“We deeply regret the misguided framing of security as a competitive survival of the fittest and a failure to grasp that the real source of insecurity across the world is the sale of arms and climate destabilisation for which the UK itself is largely responsible.

“Rather than being based in competition, the government should set a vision for global security and resilience in all countries.

“Unless everybody is secure, nobody is secure.”

ENDS

Notes:

[1] [White House statement on the Quad](#) reaffirming their commitment to ‘quadrilateral cooperation between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States.’

[2] Mark Urban, Newsnight’s Diplomatic Editor, notes proposal to raise ‘cap’ on nuclear warheads from 180 to 260. As he notes ‘it’s hard to reconcile with, “the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic & progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally”, a commitment made by UK govt in 1995 extension to Nuc Non-Proliferation Treaty’.

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