

Caroline Lucas environment stunt: full speech



Green Party

30 May 2017

Caroline Lucas, Green Party co-leader, today staged an emergency intervention into the General Election campaign to highlight how the environment has been ignored in the national debate so far.

Caroline's full speech to Parliament Square (check against delivery):

Good morning everyone – and thanks so much for coming down here this morning.

We're here to talk about the environment – a topic that has been sorely missing from the General Election campaign so far.

For those of us in the environment movement, the lack of attention doesn't come as much of a surprise.

Despite "the environment" actually meaning the air that we breathe, the water we drink, and the food that we eat: it's rarely talked about in British politics.

It appears that for some, the environment is a secondary concern – something to be considered once we fix (so-called) more important issues.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

Our prosperity depends on the natural world.

It is the ultimate source of everything we make and use – from food and materials, to the air we breathe.

But it is in crisis.

2016 was the hottest year on record – and the targets set in the historic Paris Agreement will be breached within years unless we act fast.

40,000 premature deaths a year are attributable to air pollution, and thousands of children breath in toxic nitrous oxide fumes on their way to school every day.

Our wildlife and nature are in crisis too: 60% of UK species are in long-term decline, whilst 15% are at risk of extinction.

These are just some of the many environmental challenges we face – and they will all be exacerbated by the ‘red tape bonfire’ that looks set to follow an extreme and dirty Brexit.

Despite these monumental challenges, there is virtually no discussion of them at all in the general election campaign.

So, today, I have written to Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn to ask them an important question:

Where is your commitment to the environment?

We need to get the natural world back to the heart of this election – not least because of the current approach to it.

Theresa May’s Conservative party have been taking donations from big oil, whilst forcing fracking on communities across the UK.

And despite it being a public health emergency, the Tory manifesto mentioned air pollution only once.

Is that really acceptable that after seven years of being dragged through the courts the Government still has no action plan on air quality?

There’s not much point in talking about a strong and stable leadership, if we don’t have a strong and stable environment.

As for the Labour Party, it has been heartening to see it adopt a more ambitious agenda on climate change.

But it is simply not possible to tackle the climate crisis whilst continuing to support the fossil fuel industry to the tune of £6bn each year.

Or handing out £37bn of taxpayers money to Hinkley Point C – in the full knowledge that wind and solar are now the cheapest way to generate electricity.

That the environment has received such scant attention from both Labour and the Tory’s in this election is a shameful and reckless dereliction of the duty they have – not only to the planet- but to future generations, to whom we leave the natural world

Over the last seven years, I’m proud that the Green Party has led the charge in Parliament for environmental protections and action on climate change – and, quite simply, a prosperous, thriving future will be green – or not at all.

From a new Green Investment and Innovation Centre to a new Environment Act, the Green Party has the ideas and policies to create a prosperous, confident and caring Britain.

We sincerely hope that Jeremy and Theresa will respond to our call today, and make sure that in these final days before June 8th: the environment gets the air-time, column inches, and, crucially, the political importance that it deserves.

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ENDS.

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Caroline Lucas stages emergency intervention for the environment



Green Party

30 May 2017

*** Caroline Lucas: "It beggars belief that this election has been almost environment-free when we face an air pollution crisis, a climate denier in the White House, the threat of an extreme Brexit and accelerating climate change"**

*** Lucas asks Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn: 'Where's the environment?'**

*** Photo opportunity: Lucas takes giant Green question mark to Labour HQ, 10 Downing Street and Parliament Square [1]**

Caroline Lucas, Green Party co-leader, will stage an emergency intervention into the General Election campaign to highlight how the environment has been ignored in the national debate so far.

Lucas and Green Party campaigners will today visit Labour HQ and 10 Downing

Street with a giant Green question mark, asking Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May: "Where is the environment?".

The visits will follow letters sent to Corbyn [2] and May [3] by Lucas, calling on both to reflect the scale of the threat currently facing the environment in the remaining 9 days of their parties' campaigns.

With 2016 the hottest year on record and Britain facing an air pollution crisis, Lucas will call on Corbyn and May to make the General Election a "turning point in history" and put the environment back on the political agenda.

The question mark will then be taken to Parliament Square where Lucas will address campaigners about the importance of the environment.

Caroline Lucas, Green Party co-leader, is expected to say:

"It beggars belief that this election has been almost environment-free when we face an air pollution crisis, the threat of an extreme Brexit and accelerating climate change.

"Environmental protection isn't an optional extra – it must be part of any long term vision for this country's future. But shamefully it's an issue that has been conspicuous by its absence so far in this election campaign – and this has got to change.

"With almost no mention in the leaders debates and glossed over in the manifestos, it's hard to believe any other parties are committed to stopping climate targets slipping further out of reach, cleaning up our air or ending the free-fall in biodiversity.

"We have the chance to make this General Election a turning point in our history, when the UK steps to become a world leader in environmental protection. But to do that we need to put the environment back on the political agenda."

ENDS.

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

Notes:

1.

Event details:

Date: Tuesday 30 May 2017

10.30am: Photo at Labour HQ

10.50am: Photo at Downing Street

11.10am: Photo and Speech at Parliament Square

Press are invited to join Lucas for a speech at Parliament Square at 11.10am. There will also be photo opportunities before the speech, as Lucas and Green Party campaigners take the giant Green question mark to Labour HQ and 10 Downing Street.

2.

Letter to Jeremy Corbyn:

Dear Jeremy,

I am writing to express alarm and concern at the lack of discussion and debate about the environment in the current election campaign.

The UK's prosperity depends on the natural world. It is the ultimate source of everything we make and use – from food and materials, to the air we breathe – and we rely on delicate ecological systems to sustain life on earth – from bees pollinating our crops to trees absorbing carbon dioxide. Building a successful society and economy is not at odds with protecting our environment: it is impossible without it. But, right now, we are destroying the foundations of our economy faster than they can be regenerated: we are eroding the ground we're standing on.

2016 was the hottest year on record, and without urgent action, the world will blow the 1.5 degree threshold set in Paris within years – meanwhile, due to climate change and intensive farming, 60% of UK species are in long-term decline, whilst 15% are at risk of disappearing altogether. The natural world faces a profound threat, and it requires bold and decisive action. That it has received such scant attention in this election is a shameful and reckless failure of the responsibility and duty we have to the natural world.

With regards your manifesto, there were a number of welcome environment announcements – especially on the topic of climate change. Your commitment, for example, to a substantial increase in clean, renewable energy is impressive, but, unfortunately, the Labour Party fails on a number of key issues. If we are serious about the 1.5 degree threshold, we know we must put an end to airport expansion, and, as per our G7 commitment, urgently phase out all fossil fuel subsidies. A serious approach to tackling climate change cannot include handing out vast subsidies to the white elephant that is Hinkley Point C.

Furthermore, and as you know, for the last forty years, the EU has been the bedrock of environmental protections in this country, and Brexit poses a profound risk to many vital protections for wildlife, nature, and human health. We need a new Environment Act, accompanied by a strong regulator and new court, to effectively enforce EU-derived environmental law. Your manifesto hinted at such policies, but did not go far enough – indeed, of the 128 page document, only 2 pages were dedicated to the environment.

I write in the sincere hope that in these last 9 days of the election campaign that we can give the environment the airtime, column inches, and, crucially, the political commitment it deserves – and, with the UK's climate

targets slipping further out of reach and biodiversity in free-fall, that we debate these most important issues at a vital turning point in human history.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lucas

Parliamentary Candidate for Brighton Pavilion

Co-Leader of the Green Party of England & Wales

3.

Letter to Theresa May:

Dear Theresa,

I am writing to express alarm and concern at the lack of discussion and debate about the environment in the current election campaign.

The UK's prosperity depends on the natural world. It is the ultimate source of everything we make and use – from food and materials, to the air we breathe – and we rely on delicate ecological systems to sustain life on earth – from bees pollinating our crops to trees absorbing carbon dioxide. Building a successful society and economy is not at odds with protecting our environment: it is impossible without it. But, right now, we are destroying the foundations of our economy faster than they can be regenerated: we are eroding the ground we're standing on.

2016 was the hottest year on record, and without urgent action, the world will blow the 1.5 degree threshold set in Paris within years – meanwhile, due to climate change and intensive farming, 60% of UK species are in long-term decline, whilst 15% are at risk of disappearing altogether. The natural world faces a profound threat, and it requires bold and decisive action. That it has received such scant attention in this election is a shameful and reckless failure of the responsibility and duty we have to the natural world.

In your manifesto, there was one paltry mention of the air pollution crisis, and no mention of the jaw-dropping cost reductions in renewable energy – meanwhile, fracking will be forced on local communities, whilst the dirty and expensive energy of the past will continue to receive lavish public hand-outs. Furthermore, I echo the concerns of many thousands of people across the UK who believe that the trajectory being set by the Conservative party for an extreme Brexit poses a fundamental threat to the stable and effective mechanisms of environmental protection provided for the European Union. The documents recently leaked to Greenpeace and The Guardian showing UK attempts to weaken vital climate regulations adds weight to those fears.

I write in the sincere hope that in these last 9 days of the election campaign that we can give the environment the airtime, column inches, and, crucially, the political commitment it deserves – and, with the UK's climate targets slipping further out of reach and biodiversity in free-fall, that we debate these most important issues at a vital turning point in human history.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lucas

Parliamentary Candidate for Brighton Pavilion

Co-Leader of the Green Party of England & Wales

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Green Party launches disability manifesto demanding empowerment for d/Deaf and disabled people



Green Party

29 May 2017

***Jonathan Bartley and Ben Fletcher, first ever Deafblind parliamentary candidate, to highlight struggle against cuts**

***Disabled people entitled to basic rights and opportunities being removed by Conservative Government**

The first Deafblind person ever to stand for Parliament in the UK, Ben Fletcher, will join Green Party Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley today (Monday 29 May) at the launch of the Greens' disability manifesto (1) in Putney, south west London.

Ben, born profoundly Deaf (2) and partially sighted (3), who is standing as the Green Party candidate for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields, said:

"Disabled people are desperately under-represented in public life in Britain. At a time of deep disillusionment with politics in the UK, it is really important for the MPs elected in 2017 to reflect the diversity of the people

they are meant to represent.

"There are over 11 million disabled people in Britain. That's one in six. And yet many of us are still prevented from participating fully in education, in employment, and in politics because of inflexible, outdated attitudes, needless barriers to access and a general lack of understanding about what disabled people can really achieve if they receive the support they need."

Jonathan Bartley, who co-leads the Green Party as a job share so he can support his disabled son Samuel, will attack the Government's record on supporting disabled people and present a bold alternative vision:

"This General Election is about the kind of country we want to live in. Is it the kind of country the Tories tell us we must accept, in which austerity cuts are inflicted on those least able to withstand their impact, including disabled people who already face huge barriers to basic equality?"

"The Green Party refuses to accept that the UK, as the fifth largest economy, cannot do better. The Government should focus on removing the real barriers to disabled people finding work, and tackle the widespread prejudice against disabled people rather than fostering it."

The Green Party's disability manifesto highlights the daily struggle disabled people continue to face, from their battle to hold on to essential Personal Independence Payments (PIPs), the recent loss of £30 per week for people in the Employment Support Allowance Work Group, and the scrapping of the Independent Living Allowance which enabled disabled people to live autonomous and dignified lives, to the over 40% reduction in the number of d/Deaf, disabled and older people receiving social care due to slashed budgets.

At the heart of the Greens' disability manifesto is a plan for a community-led Care & Support Service where we will train, support and resource communities to better help each other and the most vulnerable in our society, at the same time saving money by supporting wellbeing and helping communities to identify and meet their needs, alongside councils, the NHS and Government.

Ben Fletcher, 36, who lives in Southfields with his partner Lauren, works as Lead Developer for FT.com at the Financial Times. His first language is British Sign Language (BSL) (4). The Green Party is campaigning for full recognition of BSL as an official language of the UK.

He decided to stand for Parliament despite the closure of the Access to Elected Office Fund (5) by the Conservative government after the last General Election. The fund, which provided financial support to disabled candidates standing for political office, has never been reopened, despite a recommendation to do so by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in September 2015(6).

Fourteen percent of the Green Party's candidates in this election describe themselves as having a disability.

Ben said:

"I have been able to stand for Parliament thanks to the support of the Green Party, who have shown themselves to be an inclusive, diverse and modern political party. I am proud to represent a party that stands up for what really matters. If elected to Parliament by the people of Putney on 8 June, I look forward to doing the same".

Ends

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

For a contact on the day call Mike Blakemore 07718 570675

Notes:

The launch takes place at Church Square, St Mary's Church Putney, Putney Bridge Approach, Putney SW15 2JQ at 10.30am on Monday 29 May.

1. The disability manifesto will be available at 10.30am at <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/green-guarantee/all-manifestos-alternative-formats.html>
2. "Deaf" with a capital 'D' is often used to refer to those people who see themselves as "culturally Deaf", members of a cultural and linguistic minority, who tend to use British Sign Language to communicate and are proud of their Deaf identity. "Deaf" with a lower-case 'd' is often used to refer to people who see their deafness as a medical condition, and who prefer to use speech rather than sign language. They do not tend to see themselves as part of a Deaf community. See: <https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/about-deafness-and-hearing-loss/deafness/describing-deafness.aspx>
3. Ben has retinitis pigmentosa (RP), the name given to a group of inherited conditions of the retina that all lead to a gradual progressive reduction in vision. See: <http://www.rpfightingblindness.org.uk/index.php?tl=aboutrp>
4. British Sign Language (BSL) was recognised by the British government as a language in its own right on 18 March 2003. BSL is a separate language from spoken English, with its own vocabulary, grammar and syntax. It is also different from other sign languages around the world (eg American Sign Language). See: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/vo030318/wmstext/30318m02.htm>
5. The Guardian, 25 Jan 2016. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/25/government-urged-restore-fund-disabled-election-candidates>
6. Equality and Human Rights Commission response to the UN Special Rapporteur on Disabilities' inquiry into the right of disabled people to participate in political and public life, September 2015. See: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/file/4661/download?token=PIl5W6zL>

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Greens warn Tory attack on democracy can only be stopped if other parties work together to stop power grab



Green Party

28 May 2017

***Deputy leader Amelia Womack: “Progressive parties have a responsibility to the public to work together to protect democracy”**

Green Party deputy leader, Amelia Womack, will today (May 28) use a high profile panel at Hay Festival to warn Labour and the Lib Dems that they urgently need to come together in an attempt to stop what she will describe as an “attack on democracy” by the Conservative Party.

Womack will point to pledges made in the Conservative manifesto to change the voting rules for mayoral and assembly elections in England and Wales in ways that will favour them [1]. The Conservatives want these elections to be conducted using first past the post, a system which usually favour larger parties.

Womack will appear on a panel with Guardian columnist Zoe Williams, author David Boyle and Andrew Simms of the New Weather Institute to discuss ‘The Alternative – Is it time for a new progressive politics to arise in Britain?’ [2].

Speaking ahead of the festival, Womack said:

“There’s no denying our voting system is broken but the Tories are trying to overhaul it for the worse. Their push to spread the first past the post system to mayoral and assembly elections is an attempt to gain control at all levels and a direct attack on fairness within our democracy.

“Other progressive parties need to wake up to what’s happening. In particular Greens, Labour and the Lib Dems have a responsibility to stand up for every

member of the public's right to a vote that counts, to democracy. We should work together to stop this power grab and advocate for proportional representation, which is widely supported [3] and would result in fairer representation in the age of multi-party politics.

"The Labour leadership's refusal to even have a conversation about electoral alliances during the election campaign [4] is dangerously neglectful of the people they claim to represent. The Lib Dems were at least prepared to talk but, sadly, were not able to agree any reciprocal agreements in key constituencies. Despite the obvious challenges around forming electoral alliances during a snap general election campaign, we have seen significant and growing grassroots support for doing politics differently, with widespread recognition that our broken electoral system is denying too many people a voice. It will be deeply disappointing if the other progressive parties continue to be complicit in this after June 8.

"This is the most important election in a generation and the outcome will affect us for years to come – but it is not the end of the road and we must consider how to work together to build a positive future for the next five, 10, 50 years.

"When I've been on the doorstep talking to voters across the country the appetite for grown up politics is there, we just need the political will to make it work. I hope that progressive parties will be able to get round the table, look at the state of the political system and agree that it needs root and branch reform."

Ends

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

Notes:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/june2017/2017/05/are-conservatives-trying-change-rules-politics-so-they-never-lose-again>

<https://www.hayfestival.com/p-12259-zoe-williams-amelia-womack-david-boyle-and-drew-simms.aspx>

<https://www.change.org/p/make-this-the-last-general-election-to-use-our-broken-voting-system>

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/05/09/lucas-labour-and-lib-dems-have-betrayed-the-people-they-represent/>

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Green Party responds to Corbyn's speech



Green Party

27 May 2017

The Green Party has responded to Jeremy Corbyn's speech on foreign policy and terrorism. The Greens praised Jeremy Corbyn's 'tough on terrorism, tough on the causes of terrorism approach' but noted only 11 Labour MPs voted against the military intervention in Libya which went on to be harshly criticised by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The responsibility for terror attacks like that in Manchester lies solely with those who perpetrate these heinous crimes, but it is important to look at the wider picture too. The Labour leader is right to point to failed Western intervention as a cause of instability. Indeed when you look at the Libyan Intervention you see failure at almost every level. If we're going to beat terrorism we need both adequate security measures at home and a look at how Britain's role in world affairs can have serious unintended consequences which lead to greater insecurity. Greens are united in our belief in a foreign policy built on diplomacy and peacebuilding and when you vote Green on June 8th you know that you'll be voting for someone who will seriously scrutinise the march to war of any Government."

Ends

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