Green Party calls for insulation grants to help small businesses survive cost of living crisis

2 December 2022

The Green Party of England and Wales is calling on government to offer a Small Business Saturday reprieve to firms facing soaring costs through insulation grants and a package of support measures.

Co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

“We know from visiting independent businesses and social enterprises up and down the country that they want to green their operations, improve employee welfare and make it easier for people to shop locally.

“But they need government to get behind them and offer the right package of incentives.

“Businesses tell our councillors that they want government insulation grants, reform of business rates to incentivise greener business practices, differential VAT rates to favour small businesses, and an immediate suspension of Covid-loan repayments.

“Small and independent businesses and enterprises are the lifeblood of local communities. Small businesses can help revitalise our high streets.

“Yet, many are struggling with the cost of living and high energy bills. Running costs are set to increase again in March when the government’s short-term support will end.

“The Green Party has long been the party of small business. We want to see them thrive.”

This Small Business Saturday the Green Party are calling for:

1. Grants to insulate small businesses to cut energy bills and emissions. Government should provide businesses with grants to insulate their premises to reduce their running costs, energy use, and emissions for

good.

2. Higher business rate exemption for small businesses that green their operations. Businesses should be incentivised to green their operations by not having to pay higher business rates as a result of taking sustainable measures such as installing solar panels.

3. Support for small businesses to improve employee wellbeing. Government must support businesses to improve the wellbeing of their employees. Measures should include exempting all childcare providers in England from business rates.

4. Reform of VAT to support small businesses and suspension of Covid repayments. The government must reform ourVAT system so that it differentially supports smaller shops and businesses compared to larger and online businesses. Likewise, there should be an immediate suspension of Covid loan repayments to provide much needed relief for businesses.

5. Creation of Virtual High Streets. Councils should work with small and independent businesses so residents can use an online portal to buy from participating local shops and have items delivered on the same or next day.

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Green councillors call on Michael Gove to properly fund local services

2 December 2022

Green councillors in ruling administrations in England and Wales have written

to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, calling on him “to ensure proper funding of local services and… sound policy that works for people, not profit.”

The Green cabinet members and committee chairs who have signed the letter have called for a three-year funding settlement, an increase in all council budgets in line with inflation, an increase in investment for retrofitting homes and in services for the most vulnerable, particularly adult and child social care.

In the letter, the councillors say: “It makes no financial sense to cut local government funding to the point where they can no longer deliver even basic services.”

They urge Mr Gove to “join local government in working to protect the most vulnerable and build resilient, joyful communities, so we can serve our communities in the way they deserve and give them hope for the future.”

Co-leader of the Green Party, Carla Denyer, who is a councillor in Bristol, said:

“Councils are at breaking point. Several, including Tory controlled Councils, are on the verge of bankruptcy. Michael Gove must listen, not just to the strong chorus from Councils run by opposition parties, but also to Tory councillors.

“The Conservative head of the Local Government Association has said: ‘the numbers just do not add up,’ and added: ‘We desperately need to protect budgets and services from the impact of inflation, without which there will be real service cuts to some of the most vulnerable in our communities.’ [1].

“As councillors, we work hard to build communities that are fairer, greener and healthier. We work to support local businesses, deliver vital services and protect and improve local environments.

“In order to do so effectively, councils need a guarantee from Michael Gove that we will receive an increase in all council budgets in line with inflation and a three-year funding settlement.

“We need that funding certainty so we can increase investment in adult and child social care. We need it to fund the insulation of our homes to make them warmer and cheaper for residents to run.

“If Michael Gove is really committed to levelling up, to decent housing and building strong communities, he must listen to councils and act.”

NOTES:

[1] https://www.local.gov.uk/events/past-event-presentations/lga-annual-conference-2022/lga-chairman-cllr-james-jamieson-welc

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Green Party reaction to government go ahead for Sizewell C nuclear power plant

29 November 2022

Responding to the government's decision to give the go ahead to the Sizewell C nuclear power plant in Suffolk [1], Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

"This is an ideological decision driven by a misguided energy policy. It is clear there are cleaner, quicker and much less expensive options to meet our electricity needs. Investment in renewable energy and insulation at scale are what is needed to tackle both the climate emergency and cost of living crisis with the urgency needed.

"The design of Sizewell C will follow the much criticised Hinkley Point C scheme in Somerset which has been delayed by years and beset by technical difficulties and mushrooming costs. It is clear that large nuclear reactors are far too slow to help solve our climate crisis and way too expensive to address sky-high energy bills."

Notes

1. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/nov/29/sizewell-c-nuclear-plant-confirmed-edf-suffolk-jobs-uk

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Greens call for winter rent freeze and ban on evictions

24 November 2022

The Green Party of England and Wales is calling for the government to urgently bring forward its promised Renters Reform Bill in time to stave off a winter of evictions and homelessness.

The call came as new figures showed so-called no fault evictions leaping 76 per cent [1}

Carla Denyer, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, said the Bill must include:

“An immediate cap on rent increases until at least the end of March 2023, as well as a ban on no-fault evictions over the same period to prevent landlords evicting tenants in order to raise rents.”

In Scotland, where the Scottish Greens are in government with the SNP, similar measures have already become law [2].

Average rental prices outside London have hit a high of £1,162 a month, jumping 11% in the past year [3].

The UK government produced a White Paper in June [4] and Housing Minister Andrew Stephenson told Parliament in October the legislation was still a “priority.” [5]

Carla Denyer added:

“Knowing that you have a secure home over winter is vital for both physical and mental health. Households already face soaring energy and food costs; the last thing they need, on top of everything else they have to contend with, is unaffordable rent rises and the fear of being evicted.

“Rising private rents and increasing evictions have also been cited as major causes of a dramatic increase in homelessness in London and other cities. The number of people sleeping rough on the capital’s streets has jumped by a shocking 24% in the past year [6]

“We are calling on the government to introduce an immediate freeze on rent rises and a ban on evictions by landlords who simply want to increase rents between tenancies. The Scottish government has introduced legislation to safeguard tenants this winter. We want to see the Housing Minister introduce similar measures in England, and for the Senedd to use its devolved powers to do so in Wales [6].”

Notes

[1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-63719126

[2] Cost of living: rent and eviction – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

[3] Average rent climbs to £1,162, according to Rightmove, up 11% in a year – as charities warn tenants are struggling to make ends meet (msn.com)

[4] A fairer private rented sector

[5] Housing Minister Andrew Stephenson

[6] Number of people sleeping rough in London up 24% in a year | Homelessness | The Guardian

[7] Rent freeze call by Plaid Cymru voted down by Labour – BBC News

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Caroline Lucas granted Urgent Question on COP27 outcome

21 November 2022

- **“After one of the most consequential global climate summits in a generation, all our Prime Minister could muster was a 33-word tweet”**

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP for Brighton Pavilion, has been granted an

Urgent Question on the COP27 outcome, taking place in the House of Commons this afternoon at around 15:30. Her statement is below:

“At the conclusion of one of the most consequential global climate summits in a generation, all our Prime Minister could muster was a 33-word tweet.

“This frankly pathetic statement is just the latest piece of evidence that our Prime Minister utterly lacks the climate leadership our country, and planet, desperately needs. From a screeching u-turn on showing up to COP27 in the first place, to failing to rule out a disastrous new coal mine in Cumbria, to gifting fossil fuel companies a gigantic tax loophole for climate-wrecking oil & gas investment – these are not the actions of a climate leader.

“So when the COP26 President Alok Sharma so powerfully stated that 1.5C is “on life support”, can the Government explain in detail its reaction to the summit? Does it agree that the final agreement’s absence of action to peak emissions before 2025, and a clear commitment to phase out all fossil fuels, shows pitiful progress? And if so, why is this Government ploughing ahead with a swathe of new oil & gas licences?

“And when Ministers were “concerned” about the unjust imprisonment of British citizen Alaa Abd el-Fattah, and the Prime Minister “raised the case” with his Egyptian counterpart, why are his family still being forced to seek answers and action? Alaa has faced intimidation, and has suffered fainting fits and mental breakdowns – yet the Government is standing idly by.

“Our planet is staring climate catastrophe in the face. While the loss and damage fund agreed at COP27 is a welcome victory for climate justice, the only way we can maintain a liveable planet for all is to keep fossil fuels in the ground for good. A woefully brief Twitter statement simply won’t wash.”

ENDS

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