

Greens slam Government as EU prepares to take UK to court over air pollution failures



Green Party

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*** Keith Taylor MEP: “The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than 50,000 people in Britain every year.”**

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has slammed the Conservative government for its consistent failure to tackle the air pollution crisis, as the EU prepares to [escalate action against the UK](#) for breaching air quality laws.

The latest EU review has revealed multiple failings by the UK Government in applying environmental law, with Britain being in breach of vital EU nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limits since 2010 and London overshooting its whole 2017 limit in the first five days of the year.

It is understood that the results of the review will be sent on 15 February to the UK. A court case at the European Court of Justice could follow if the UK Government fails to send a satisfactory response to the findings.

Keith Taylor MEP, a vocal air quality campaigner, is urging the UK government to finally take seriously its responsibility for the health of British citizens.

“The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than [50,000 people in Britain every year](#).”

“The failure highlighted by the European Commission review is as much moral as it is legal; Ministers have displayed an extremely concerning attitude of indifference towards their duty to safeguard the health of British citizens.”

“That the European Commission is having to hold to account this government for a public health crisis that costs the British public [more than £20bn a year](#) is a shameful indictment of the Conservatives’ irresponsible and deadly

apathy.”

“Theresa May’s administration is failing to do even the bare minimum, as required by EU laws the UK itself helped to set, to improve the quality of the air we all breathe. The bare minimum.”

“Where embraced and enforced, EU air pollution limits are helping to [prevent thousands of deaths every year](#) and saving [billions of pounds](#) in direct health costs. In fact, this government [readily acknowledges](#) that it is EU law that has been the driver of any positive air quality action in the UK. For the sake of the health and prosperity of the British people, we cannot risk scrapping these safeguards.”

“The government must finally face up to its moral and legal responsibility for tackling Britain’s air quality crisis. Ministers must now be forced to make a firm commitment to abiding by and fully implementing EU air quality laws. Theresa May must also make maintaining and strengthening these vital protections a priority as Britain prepares to leave the EU.”

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[Andrew Gwynne response to new rules new rules from the DFT covering access to taxis for disabled people](#)

Andrew

Gwynne, Labour’s shadow minister without portfolio, commenting on new rules from the DFT covering access to taxis for disabled people, said:

“It is welcoming to see the Government taking a positive step to help to prevent some of the discrimination faced by wheelchair users, finally bringing into force this aspect of the Equality Act of 2010.

“This new rule matches those already in place to prevent discrimination against users of assistance dogs, but still in the last year YouGov research showed that 42% of

assistance dog owners reported being turned away by a taxi or minicab

“Labour’s

Disability Equality Roadshow is touring the country, listening to disabled people, many of whom have raised discrimination as an issue.

“Unfortunately

the Private Members Bill I introduced earlier this year to fix this problem was

talked out by the Government, but I trust the Accessibility action plan will take on the recommendations suggested within my Bill.”

[John McDonnell responds to the IFS Green Budget](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, responding to the publication of the IFS Green

Budget today, which reveals that the Tories are going ahead with £34bn in additional austerity at a time when the NHS is in crisis following the slowest

growth in health spending since the 1950s, said:

“This

report from the IFS is damning of the seven wasted years of Tory economic failure. Rather than learning the lessons of his predecessor, Philip Hammond is

pursuing an austerity agenda that will make matters in our NHS and social care

system even worse.

“The Chancellor who has been at the heart of government since 2010 must take his share of responsibility, especially as the IFS is now cutting growth forecasts with the national debt at its highest as a fraction of national income since England won the World Cup, and with the tax burden at its

highest in thirty years.

"The fact the NHS is seeing its slowest growth in funding since the 1950s proves you cannot trust the Tories with our health service. And the social care

crisis is only set to get even worse as the Tories refuse to provide the funding needed, continuing to let elderly people in our communities down.

"Rather

than going ahead with £34 billion of austerity while our public services are

already stretched, which as the IFS say have under the Tories seen the longest fall in funding on record, it is time for the Chancellor to truly change direction.

"Labour would call for a serious boost to investment, underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, which would help bring an end to a Tory economy rigged against working people; sort out the public finances; and get the national debt under control."

[The measures announced so far in Theresa May's long-promised housing white paper are feeble beyond belief – Healey](#)

Commenting on further detail on the content of the government's white paper on housing, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing John Healey MP said:

"The measures announced so far in Theresa May's long-promised housing white paper are feeble beyond belief.

"After seven years of failure and a thousand housing announcements, the housing crisis is getting worse not better.

"There are 200,000 fewer home-owners, homelessness has doubled, and affordable house-building has slumped to a 24 year low

"Ministers should be setting out clear plans to deal with these problems, but all Theresa May's Ministers have delivered so far is hot air.

"The government should instead back Labour's plan to fix the housing crisis – thousands more affordable homes to rent and buy, a charter of renters' rights and action to end to rough sleeping homelessness."

ENDS

- The government's announcements on housing to date:
https://www.gov.uk/government/announcements?keywords=&announcement_filter_option=all&topics%5B%5D=housing&departments%5B%5D=all&world_locations%5B%5D=all&from_date=06%2F05%2F2010&to_date=

- The government's record:
 - The number of households who own their own home has fallen by 200,000, with the number of under-35 households owning a home down by 344,000.
 - There are over 900,000 more households renting from a private landlord than in 2010 including one in four families with dependent children, but rents have risen faster than incomes.
 - Despite 13 separate cuts to housing benefit, including the bedroom tax, the housing benefit bill is £4bn higher each year in cash terms.
 - There are 143,000 fewer council homes than in 2010, with only one home in every six sold under the right to buy replaced, despite promises of 'one for one' replacement. Measures in the recent housing and planning act are set to mean the loss of 23,503 council houses a year according to the housing charity Shelter.
 - According to the Government-commissioned Local Plan Expert Group it is now taking councils almost a year (306 days) longer to adopt vital local plans for housing than in 2009. Among the main reasons are: "a lack of political will and commitment", "a lack of clarity on key issues", "too many changes... of policy", and "a lack of guidance, support and resources". We've had constant chop and change but no improvement, despite six pieces of planning legislation in six years under the Tories.
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[Brexit - like independence – is bad for Scotland's economy](#)

By Kezia Dugdale

The Brexit process is a shambles. First Theresa May said there shouldn't be a vote in Parliament, then her hand was forced. Next she said she wouldn't be publishing a White Paper on her plans for leaving the European Union, but again she was forced into a u-turn.

With each passing day it becomes clearer that this isn't a government in control but an administration being dragged further to the extremes in order to win over support on the Tory backbenches.

As opposed as I am to leaving the EU, I accept that the referendum result didn't go my way. This was a UK-wide vote and the UK voted to leave. We have to accept that we are leaving the European Union. The battle must now turn to how we get the best deal for the country.

That's why today in the Scottish Parliament Labour will vote against the

government's current plans to trigger article 50 and begin the process of withdrawal. Brexit is happening, but it doesn't have to be the right-wing version that Theresa May is advocating.

The Tories are threatening to inflict economic vandalism on our country and we must fight that.

But the only thing more damaging for our economy than a Tory Brexit is the SNP's reckless plan for independence.

Labour will not support another independence referendum under any circumstances.

This isn't a knee-jerk reaction. It's based on standing up for the working people the Labour Party was founded to represent.

Brexit will be terrible for Scotland, but independence would be an outright disaster. Our public finances are already struggling. The SNP's budget will impose nearly £170million of cuts on local services like schools and care of the elderly. But leaving the UK would turbo charge that austerity, meaning £15 billion in cuts over and above those already happening today.

That would put the life chances of the next generation of Scots at risk, and have severe consequences for our health service, the payment of pensions and defence in a separate Scotland. Being part of the UK means all of these things are protected. Remaining in Britain secures jobs, helps our economy and bolsters our public finances.

But just as important as the impact of actually leaving the UK, another independence referendum would be deeply divisive.

We all remember what happened the last time – family rows, difficult relationships at work, and communities ripped apart. Scotland is divided enough already, whether along constitutional lines or between the richest and the rest. We can't afford any more division, but that is exactly what another independence referendum would bring.

The majority of people in Scotland voted for working together, in both the EU and Scottish referendums. People know that together we're stronger – as a nation and as communities across the country.

So instead of trying to use Brexit as an excuse to force another independence referendum on the people of Scotland, the Nationalists should stick to the day job.

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