

Green Party response to new Ofgem price cap



Green Party

25 May 2023

Responding to the new Ofgem price cap [1], Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer said:

“The new price cap underlines the urgent need to transition away from more expensive, environmentally damaging fossil fuels as fast as possible, both for the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis.

“Even with a lower price cap, bills are still higher than before the energy crisis and are likely to remain high for the future.

“So, the most financially and environmentally sustainable way to get people’s bills down is to focus on reducing the amount of energy people need to use.

“We need an emergency grant to homeowners, landlords and councils to fund immediate insulation improvements to those at risk of fuel poverty, so that those who need support most urgently get it first.

“And the UK must immediately take the simple and overdue step of breaking the link between electricity and gas prices, to end the absurd situation where even when electricity is being generated cheaply from renewables, everyone pays the much higher cost of electricity produced by gas power stations.

“It is common sense that a nationwide insulation and renewable energy programme will create warmer, more comfortable homes for everyone, creating millions of jobs, reducing bills for homes and businesses, stabilising the economy and reducing carbon emissions.”

Notes

1

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/customers-pay-less-energy-bills-summer>

For more information or to arrange an interview contact the press office on press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

Greens pledge to bring democracy to private sector housing and end feudal leaseholds



Green Party

22 May 2023

Up to 10 million people in England would benefit from a Green Party pledge to abolish feudal forms of home ownership and replace them with a system that offers people choice and control [1].

Co-leader Carla Denyer, who has witnessed the growing crisis in leaseholds as a Bristol councillor, met with leaseholder Martin Madera to hear his concerns about the ownership model on Friday [19 May]. [2]

Denyer said:

“People feel trapped in their own homes by a form of ownership that loads them with rising, uncapped costs and gives them no say in how their properties are maintained or repaired.

“Government promises to cap spiralling costs linked to ground rents, service charges and exploitative property management companies haven’t given people control. Too many high rise flat owners have been saddled with fear and uncertainty over who will pay for hazardous cladding to be replaced in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy six years ago.

“Downing Street has now demolished Housing Secretary Michael Gove’s promise to do away with what he described as ‘feudal’ leaseholds [3], leaving millions of homeowners trapped.

“The Green Party’s Right Home, Right Place, Right Price Charter [4] set out how we would tackle the housing shortage while simultaneously protecting

valuable green space for communities, reducing climate emissions, tackling fuel poverty and providing genuinely affordable homes.

“By abolishing leasehold in favour of ‘commonhold’ – a system widely used in other countries – we would democratise ownership and allow people to make joint decisions about what should happen in shared areas of flats and housing complexes.

“People could come together and choose their own management company, set their own service charges and take control of decisions around where they live.

“Between 2018 and 2020, the Law Commission produced a series of reports [5] calling for changes, but the government has largely offered warm words without substantial reform. We say it is time to act now for up to 10 million people who could have a better future.”

Martin Madera, a leaseholder in the Hotwells & Harbourside area of Bristol, has seen his building insurance shoot up from under £1,000 a year in 2020/21 to over £2,600 a year now and is battling to get the property’s owners to commit to fully replace hazardous cladding.

Martin says: “Leasehold is a nightmare – we cannot place building insurance ourselves despite paying for 100% of it and we cannot replace our managing agents unless the freeholder agrees. We even have very little say over the contract for essential remediation work that will be carried out on our home.

“I’m stunned that none of this was pointed out to me when I bought the property in 2010. We need fundamental reforms and we need them without delay.”

NOTES

1

Owners of long leasehold properties do not own the property outright – they are in a landlord and tenant relationship with the freeholder. The rights and obligations of the respective parties are governed by the terms of the lease agreement, supplemented by statutory provisions. Essentially, long leaseholders buy the right to live in the property for a given period.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities estimates there are 4.86 million leasehold homes in England, of which 69% are flats and 31% are houses. The majority of flats in the private sector are leasehold (an estimated 95% of owner-occupied flats and 70% of privately rented flats). Around 8% of houses in England are leasehold.

10 million Britons who own their homes in a leasehold –

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8047/>

2

Pictures available – email press@greenparty.org.uk

3

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/may/10/plans-abolish-feudal-leasehold-system-england-wales>

4

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2023/04/05/greens-call-for-right-homes,-right-place,-right-price-charter-to-beat-housing-crisis-and-protect-green-space/>

5

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/leasehold-reform-in-england-and-wales/>

For more information or to arrange an interview contact the press office on press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

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Green Party response to Keir Starmer's speech on the future of the NHS



Green Party

22 May 2023

Responding to Labour leader Keir Starmer's speech on the NHS [1], co-leader of the Green Party Carla Denyer said:

"Starmer claims that it's not all about the money, but years of underfunding is the key challenge facing the NHS. More reorganisation and target setting will simply be rearranging the beds in the corridor. Staff shortages and recruitment problems can only be seriously addressed by offering NHS staff a pay rise in line with inflation.

"The Green Party will unashamedly go after the super-rich who have seen their wealth surge in recent years [2]. By increasing their taxes, we can ensure NHS staff are properly paid and that the years of underfunding of our NHS is

addressed.”

Notes

1. <https://labour.org.uk/press/keir-starmer-unveils-labours-mission-to-create-an-nhs-fit-for-the-future/>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/21/number-of-billionaires-in-uk-reached-new-record-during-covid-pandemic>

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Greens urge radical railway rethink as Transpennine Express enters last week of contract



Green Party

22 May 2023

The Green Party has said the privatised rail industry has reached the end of the line as FirstGroup’s contract to run Transpennine Express comes to an end following months of cancellations and delays on the main intercity rail line in the North of England.

Earlier this month, Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, confirmed FirstGroup – which runs the Transpennine Express – will be stripped of the franchise when its contract ends on Sunday 28 May and services will be run by an Operator of Last Resort.

Matt Edwards, Green Party spokesperson for Transport and Leader of the Green Party on Bradford Council, said:

“The shambolic levels of service on this crucial rail line has not only caused misery to passengers but has caused serious economic damage to towns and cities across the North of England.

“FirstGroup has consistently refused to take responsibility for the service

and consistently used loopholes to try and hide just how bad a job they were doing (1).

“The privatisation and fragmentation of our railways just hasn’t worked. The government is spending more money now subsidising the railways than it was in the 90s.

“Instead of delivering improvements, large amounts of money have just been handed to private companies to give to their shareholders whilst rail fares have gone up and service has gone down.”

The Green Party spokesperson also called for a complete rethink of how the railways are operated and funded.

“For decades now we have talked about our railways like they are a business that must be profitable. The truth is that our rail network is a public service that needs to benefit everyone. To do that it must be brought back into public ownership.

“Giving people affordable and reliable public transport as an alternative to driving will reduce congestion on our roads which will help tackle air pollution and reduce carbon emissions.

“We don’t expect our roads to make a profit. Why are the railways different?”

ENDS

Notes

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/27/revealed-north-of-england-train-line-vastly-under-reports-cancellations>

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Carer’s Leave Bill to become law

Millions of people care for loved ones, doing everything from day-to-day physical caring, washing, dressing and feeding for those who cannot care for themselves, to things like shopping for a housebound elderly relative.

Yet far too many unpaid carers go without adequate support and struggle to balance caring responsibilities and work.

The Carer's Leave Bill is a first step to providing greater support. It will allow carers to take time off work to manage caring responsibilities.

Passing this Bill will be a really critical step forward for unpaid carers juggling work and care and it would benefit employers as well. "

Helen Walker, Chief Executive of Carers UK

The Bill will give an estimated 2.4 million carers across the UK a statutory right to take five days of unpaid leave per year, helping carers to better balance work and care.

The Bill was introduced by Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain last June and has been shepherded through the House of Lords by Lib Dem Chris Fox.

Today the Bill passed it's final parliamentary stage and will soon become law.

The law will have benefits for employers too. Many businesses already provide a version of Carer's Leave to their staff and report reduced recruitment costs, and improved retention and wellbeing.

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