

Greening Europe

News from Molly Scott Cato,
the first Green MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar

Spring 2016

Greens exposing and tackling corporate tax avoidance



Greens have exposed tax avoidance on a massive scale by giant furniture maker

IKEA who have used a series of tax loopholes in European countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. This is the latest in a long line of corporations avoiding tax and comes hot on the heels of the Google tax fiasco. Greens have long campaigned for greater transparency in tax matters. In particular, as a member of the European Parliament's special committee on tax, Molly has been pushing for public country-by-country reporting (CBCR), which would require companies to report exactly where they carry out their economic activity and generate their revenues, so ensuring fair taxes are paid. Molly even seems to have persuaded George Osborne, who recently announced he supported public CBCR! However, she remains sceptical of the government which has done much to try and block genuine progress on tackling tax avoidance in Europe. Molly says:

"Public country-by-country reporting for all sectors is essential in providing transparency and ensuring corporations are properly scrutinized. I am pleased the chancellor appears to be a new convert. However, perhaps he could provide his MEPs with an economics lesson, as they seem not to have got the message on tackling tax avoidance. Last year they voted against country-by-country reporting in the

Keeping up with Molly

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European Parliament. The public needs to know if this is a genuine change of heart or just warm words issued during the heat of the Google fiasco."

Molly's corner

This year we will make a momentous decision about our future destiny. Those of us who are positive about our EU membership will have to work hard to make our case. We are up against forces that are using fear, cynicism and misinformation; aided by the massive vested interest of the right wing media.

But this campaign won't only take place in the media. It will also take place during conversations on university campuses, in shops, down the pub and on buses. Those of us wishing to portray an accurate picture of the EU will need to initiate those conversations and counter the many myths which have built up over many years.

My own experience tells me the EU is not wasteful and bureaucratic. Neither are European laws created by some abstract entity known as 'Brussels' and then imposed on us. Being part of the EU means decisions are agreed by our government in its role on the Council of ministers.

Of course The EU is not perfect, but it is often European governments, including the UK, that block progressive measures agreed by the Commission and the Parliament.

From our rights at work and cracking down on tax avoidance, to improving the quality of our air and our water, EU laws and standards have provided the best protection. These would be severely threatened by Brexit, with powerful corporations persuading the government they are 'red tape' standing in the way of growth and profit.

Those of us who want the UK to remain part of the EU must help bust the myths and share our vision of a Europe of partnership, solidarity, peace and hope.

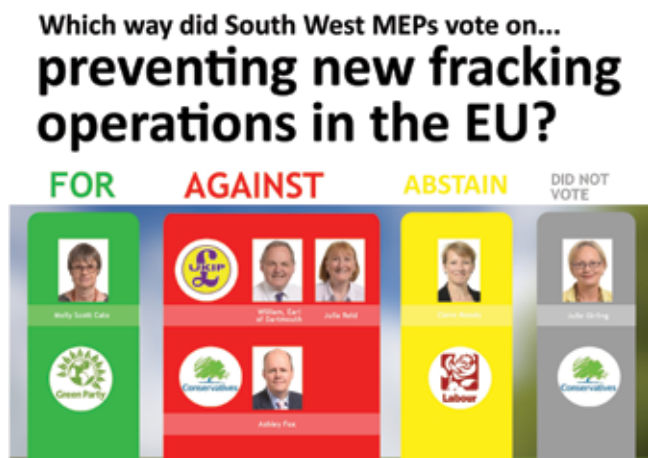


The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

Green Party
for the common good

Working to support communities and the environment of the South West

The South West is not for shale



Molly has shown that Greens are the only political opponents to fracking in the South West. She voted for an amendment calling on member states not to authorise any new fracking operations in the EU, which Ukip, Tory and Labour MEPs in the region either voted against, didn't vote, or abstained. The amendment, put forward by Greens, urged member states to reject fracking due to its negative impacts on the climate, environment and on biodiversity. Despite the failure of the other SW MEPs to support the amendment, it received majority support. Molly says:

"This is an example of Europe at its best but our political representatives at their worst. A majority of democratically elected members did the right thing defending our environment and communities from the frackers. It is shocking and shameful that only the Greens are willing to stand up to this dinosaur industry in the South West. Fracking is deeply unpopular and faces strong opposition whenever and wherever it raises its ugly head. Our local communities don't want the noise, air, light and water pollution that this industry would bring. And for the sake of our climate we must leave fossil fuels in the ground. The South West is not for shale and we will not allow this industry to devastate our beautiful region without a fight."

Last August, 22 licence blocks for oil and gas extraction were issued across Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset alone, impacting on many sensitive and designated areas, including the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, Poole Harbour, The Quantock Hills, Exmoor National Park, and Salisbury Plain.

Licence to kill



Molly joins councillors and campaigners in Bristol

Molly has described new measures which will allow car manufacturers to produce and market cars that emit pollutants more than twice the legal EU limit as a licence to kill. This was the first European regulatory measure to be introduced in the wake of the Volkswagen scandal in which the German car manufacturer was found to have used software to purposely deceive Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) tests. The new measures will permit a discrepancy between the regulatory limits enshrined in law and newly introduced Real Driving Emissions tests designed to assess vehicle emissions on the road. Molly says:

"Rather than clamping down on the car industry's irresponsible approach to pollution, EU governments, the Commission and now a majority in the European Parliament have instead provided a giant loophole. This underlines the deadly influence the car industry has on the EU Commission and EU governments. The fact that Tory MEPs were urged to vote in favour of these measures reveal a government that has a dangerously cosy relationship with the car manufacturing industry and their lobbyists."

NOx emissions from diesel vehicles are responsible for around 75,000 premature deaths in Europe per year while emissions from diesel vehicles are responsible for the deaths of 29,000 people a year in the UK. The serious problem of air pollution in Bristol was recently highlighted by Green councillors when Molly visited the city. Government data show nearly 200 deaths a year are attributable to air pollution in Bristol.

South West view: important news affecting the region

Hinkley in meltdown



Vice President of the French Assembly, Denis Baupin, joined Molly and protesters at the gates of Hinkley last year

The new nuclear power station at Hinkley is facing meltdown. Indeed, as we go to print, it looks increasingly likely the project will fall apart. EDF, the state-owned French company responsible for building the plant, has repeatedly delayed the 'final' decision on funding Hinkley C and one of the unions representing EDF employees has questioning how the company will pay for the project given it is seriously strapped for cash. Molly says:

"The whispers in the boardroom have spilled out and created panic. EDF directors and employees knows that the deal on Hinkley simply does not stack up and the company sooner or later faces bankruptcy if they proceed with Hinkley C. Given that EDF is 85% owned by the French government this has now become a political tussle rather than a commercial decision. Either Energy Secretary Amber Rudd faces the collapse of UK energy policy or the French government faces the bankruptcy of its state energy generator. It is time Osborne gave up on this white elephant which is seriously undermining investment in the renewables sector and the grid infrastructure to go with it. We know that renewables can transform the South West, providing all our energy needs cheaper, more quickly and more safely than nuclear ever can."

TTIP will lead to a downfall

A recent study provides further evidence that the planned TTIP trade deal between the EU and US could devastate agriculture in the South West. TTIP aims at harmonising agricultural and food standards between the two trading blocs. The new research indicates this would result in the 'downfall of parts of the agricultural sector' in Europe. TTIP will place the US in a competitive advantage due to economies of scale



and the nation's lower consumer and production standards, says the report. Also highlighted are issues such as GMOs and growth hormones where harmonisation would leave European farmers at a disadvantage. Molly says:

"This is scientific evidence that TTIP is a corporate charter primarily aimed at benefitting large US agri-business and threatens rural livelihoods and communities. It also poses a threat to our precious countryside which depends on a successful farming sector."

Marine conservation zones

Molly has welcomed the designation of 23 new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) around the UK, eight of which are in the South West and include Land's End, Hartland Point to Tintagel and Bideford to Foreland Point. Molly said:

"I am very proud to represent a region where so much of the coastline is recognised as having particular environmental value. We should celebrate such great wealth and this status offers an opportunity to protect and restore the precious wildlife of our coasts and sea."

However, she was disappointed that Studland Bay in Dorset had not been included in the new MCZs:

"While Studland Bay is a busy recreational area, there is no reason why the area could not continue to be a multi-use site which allows for low impact water-based activities to continue alongside thriving wildlife."

Green Report

Changes to energy policy is unfair competition



Molly is to use the findings of a new report, looking in detail at changes to energy policy in the last eight months, to challenge the Tory government on whether they breach rules on a fair and competitive market.

The report finds that the pace and intensity of interventions by the government in the UK's energy policy have severely impacted on the renewable energy sector. In particular, the report concludes, there are 'valid concerns about the approach and intent of recent policy changes as well as effects on the competitive operation of the electricity market in the UK'.

The report suggests a deliberate strategy to favour certain parts of the energy sector over others, thereby creating an inherently uneven playing field. In particular nuclear and fossil-fuel investors are being offered preferential treatment over renewable investors, say the researchers from renewables specialist, Green Peninsula.

The report also suggests there are 'clear breaches of regulations, both at a UK and EU level' and that policy changes could undermine the UK's ability to meet its mandated emissions and renewable energy targets.

The report paints a particularly bleak picture of the South West, suggesting policy changes have

left the region in a depressing situation, despite the potential for 100% of energy needs to come from renewables. The region is in complete stasis, suggest the researchers, something which runs 'directly contrary to the intentions of EU Directives.' Molly says:

"We aim to use this report to challenge the destructive and devastating policy changes we have seen since the Tory government was elected. We hope the Competition Commission will force the government to change policy so that the energy market operates fairly and in accordance with EU rules."

"We are finding huge support for our action from the renewables sector which has been so badly hit by ideological and irrational policy changes. It is time to empower and re-power the renewables energy sector [to] so that it can deliver the jobs and the clean green energy our economy and environment are crying out for."

Full report can be downloaded from the website:

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2016/02/12/renewablesreport/>

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