

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for the South East



News Bulletin

February - March 2010

This newsletter is a digest of the work of Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South East England, for February and March 2010.

It aims to provide a summary of Caroline's work for constituents – and anyone else who wants to know more about her work in the European Parliament, her constituency visits and key campaigning issues.

If you would like to be added to the recipients' list, or have any comments on the content of this newsletter, please email us at: carolinelucas@greenmeps.org.uk

For more information see Caroline's website: www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk.

Constituency case-work

Caroline warmly welcomed Worthing Council's rejection of plans for a **proposed housing estate at Titnore Woods**, calling it a "huge success for campaigners and local people who have fought a long battle against it". Caroline had opposed the plans for the siting of the housing estate, which would have posed a serious risk to the Titnore Woods greenbelt area west of Worthing – home to unique ancient woodland.

As part of her **campaign against water fluoridation in the South East**, Caroline has written to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat spokespeople on health demanding to know whether or not they would scrap the plan to fluoridate Southampton's drinking water, given that 72% of the people who responded to the public consultation on the scheme opposed it. Caroline and the Greens believe that the fluoridation plans amount to mass medication without consent.

Caroline condemned Shepway District Council's decision to approve plans for **expansion at Lydd Airport**. She criticized councillors for ignoring the advice of planning officers and turning a blind eye to the concerns of local residents. Expansion would mean an extra 500,000 passengers a year, putting strain on the local infrastructure and result-

ing in more aircraft noise, disturbance, and pollution. It could also have a detrimental effect on valuable conservation areas nearby.

In response to correspondence from constituents on **international human rights issues**, Caroline has raised a number of cases with EU Foreign Commissioner Cathy Ashton, including freedom of religious expression in Nepal, Morocco and Egypt, and the continued detention of politician and former judge [Birtukan Mideksa](#) in Ethiopia.

Caroline has welcomed the **new feed in tariff system** from [DECC](#) designed to incentivize small scale energy production. However, she has also written to the department to highlight the fact that it will put existing microgeneration pioneers – including many of her constituents – at a disadvantage by paying them a lower rate for electricity generated.

Following the judicial review confirming that Isle of Wight ferry operator Wightlink breached EU law protecting local habitats by increasing the size of its ferries without proper consultation, Caroline is now asking the Commission to investigate if the UK is properly upholding the **EU Habitats Directive**.

Caroline is quizzing the Commission over the decision by **Twinings** to move some of its operations to Poland, resulting in **the loss of 130 jobs in Andover**. She will demand assurances that EU funding is not being used to encourage companies to switch to cheaper workforces elsewhere in Europe, creating jobs in other countries while providing no compensation for British workers who lose theirs.

Campaigns and Issues

Food and Farming

When the European Commission issued the first new cultivation authorisation for a **genetically-modified plant variety** in 12 years, Caroline expressed concerns about the possible consequences for human health and the environment – and criticized the Commission for ignoring the widespread opposition to GM food and prioritising industry interests. The "Amflora" potato variety – intended principally for industrial applications – is controversial because it contains an antibiotic-resistant gene that could enter the food chain.

Peace and Human Rights

Caroline spoke out against the **UK's draconian control order regime** in March, calling it a stain on the Government's civil liberties record. Speaking in support of the efforts by the [Campaign Against Criminalising Communities](#) to stop the renewal of the controversial control order legislation, she said MPs should bring an end to the 'anti-terrorism' provisions which impose heavy personal restrictions on someone who may never have been charged. Sadly, MPs voted to maintain the current laws.

Caroline and fellow Green MEP Jean Lambert issued a joint statement after **Belgian police raided the offices of the Kurdish broadcaster ROJ TV** in Brussels, arresting a

number of highly respected activists in the international campaign for Kurdish human rights. The MEPs warned that such a move risked undermining efforts to create a better situation for the Kurdish community.

As Vice Chair of the Euro-Parliament's delegation to Palestine, Caroline welcomed a vote in Strasbourg on **the Goldstone report**, which saw a majority of MEPs supporting a strong Parliamentary position against the ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza – and breaches of international law. She said: "I and my Green Party colleagues will continue to oppose the illegal occupation of Palestine and will fight to ensure that international law is upheld on all sides. Only then can we achieve peace and justice in the region."

Transport & Aviation

Caroline has been looking closely at plans for a **north-south high speed rail link** which could damage parts of the Chilterns National Park. Caroline supports the high speed rail link in principle, as long as it does not take resources away from local rail networks – and has called for a thorough consultation in order to consider less damaging routes.

Animal Protection

As President of the Euro-Parliament's Animal Welfare Group, Caroline welcomed a Parliament vote calling for a **ban on the international trade in the endangered bluefin tuna**. She said that only a ban would give depleted bluefin tuna stocks some kind of chance to recover and joined calls for the species to be listed under Appendix 1 of the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, known as [CITES](#). Sadly, a majority at a key CITES conference in March voted against listing the species under the Convention – leaving it vulnerable to extinction.

In response to a number of letters from constituents, Caroline has written to Bob Ainsworth, Secretary of State for Defence, calling for clarification over **the use of animals in military experiments**. An investigation by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) into the Porton Down military research facility found that live pigs are being surgically mutilated and blown up with explosives – reportedly to simulate the effect of a terrorist attack. Caroline has questioned the scientific efficacy of such tests and called for the MoD to replace cruel and unnecessary animal experiments with alternative methods.

At a session of the Animal Welfare Intergroup in February, Caroline was happy to host Peter Stevenson, a consultant for Compassion in World Farming, who discussed the need for **improved enforcement of the pigs directive**, as well as speakers from Pfizer Animal Health and a German pig farmer who gave an overview of, and discussed alternatives to, pig castration.

Environment & Energy

Greens in the Euro-Parliament held a conference in February **comparing the EU's new strategy 'Europe 2020', to the proposed 'Green New Deal'**. As a member of the UK's

Green New Deal Group, Caroline criticized the Euro-Commission's short-sighted obsession with growth and competitiveness above all else, and its failure to provide a clear 2020 vision for a more sustainable future and a better quality of life in Europe. She said: "The EU 2020 Strategy does not recognise the crucial links between economic, environmental and social issues. Only a Green New Deal offers a joined up approach to the challenges we face – delivering new jobs and sustainable economic solutions to the current crisis."

Green Economy & International Trade

As the Euro-Parliament's rapporteur on a proposal on **illegal logging and deforestation**, Caroline was disappointed when the EU Council cut several tough measures out of proposed legislation designed to rein in the illegal timber trade. She is now working hard to reinstate the strict and effective measures that received overwhelming support from MEPs in 2009. She is currently holding a range of meetings with NGOs, industry, Council Members, Commission and fellow MEPs in the hope of finding agreement to proceed with her original proposal for a complete prohibition on the import of illegally logged timber. Parliament's second reading begins in April.

In the wake of the **financial crisis in Greece**, Caroline and the Green group condemned the fact that the EU failed to find the political will to act independently to resolve the crisis – leading to an intervention by the IMF. In particular, they criticized Angela Merkel's role in creating the weak financing plan. The Green group likened the EU's failure to act in this instance to its **failure to play a decisive role at the climate talks in Copenhagen**.

Health

Caroline has been very active as shadow rapporteur for the Green group on the controversial **Estrela report** – 'Improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding' – which covers maternity and paternity leave and pay. Caroline and her colleagues are fighting particularly hard for a minimum two weeks' paid paternity leave for all fathers across the EU. This was adopted in the Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, and Caroline will defend it again when it comes to the plenary vote.

In a letter to the *Independent* newspaper, Caroline repeated her calls for an **EU wide ban on the use of the chemical Bisphenol-A (BPA)** in everyday products. She continues to support Breast Cancer UK's No More BPA campaign warning the UK government about BPA in baby products, and hopes that the campaign, increasing research showing the potentially harmful effects of BPA and recent moves in countries like Canada, will prompt the UK Government to take urgent action – investing in more research, product labelling and effective legislation – in order to guarantee that human health is adequately protected.

Media and Information Technology

Caroline welcomed the decision of MEPs to vote against the proposed agreement to **supply SWIFT bank transfer data to the US authorities**. She said the Parliament had shown real strength in rejecting a piece of legislation that Council was attempting to get passed in a thoroughly undemocratic way, and which, as currently drafted, threatened the fundamental rights of EU citizens.

LGBT

In a letter to Home Secretary Alan Johnson MP, Caroline has raised **the asylum application of a prominent Iraqi campaigner for LGBT equality**. Ali Hili, the leader of the group Iraqi LGBT, currently lives in exile in London and his application has been outstanding for nearly three years. He has received a fatwa from inside Iraq, as well as numerous threats in London. Iraqi LGBT estimates that over 700 LGBT people have been assassinated in Iraq over the past few years and Human Rights Watch has confirmed that torture and persecution of the LGBT community is widespread. Caroline has therefore urged the Government to grant Ali Hili asylum and guarantee his right to travel.

European politics

When MEPs voted on the new European Commission, Caroline and the Greens voted against the returning President Jose Manuel Barroso and his new team. Caroline said that **Barroso had shown no vision and no determination to face the challenges of the converging economic, social and environmental crises**. Caroline warned that another Barroso administration would mean more of the same: a Commission with no real vision, and in hoc to big business.

Find Caroline online

* To become a supporter of Caroline on Facebook, click here (you must already be registered) - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Caroline-Lucas/8948360263>.

* All of Caroline's news releases, speeches, articles, publications and correspondence with the European Commission and UK government departments – as well as further information about the European Parliament – are available on her website: www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk.

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