

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for the South East



News Bulletin

Winter 2009 – 2010

This newsletter is a digest of the work of Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South East England, for Winter 2009 – 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 visits and case-work

Caroline criticized a report by planners which recommended Rushmoor Borough Council approval for a **major increase in aircraft movements at Farnborough airport** as 'irresponsible and misguided'. Increasing aircraft movements at the airport by a proposed 79 per cent in the next ten years would likely lead to a 70 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

On behalf of large numbers of **disability living allowance claimants** in the South East who have had their payments affected by short or long term moves to live in the EU, Caroline has been seeking to clarify the situation after a European Court ruling and has called on the government to speed up its process for assessing claims and making payments.

Caroline paid a visit to a **community compost centre** in East Sussex and spoke to workers there about their efforts to promote **sustainable agriculture**. She is also helping the centre to clarify the UK government's interpretation of EU environmental law, amid fears that small scale community composting facilities may go out of business if

they have to implement site adaptations designed for much larger plants where the risks of environmental contamination are high.



Caroline condemned a planning application by Arora International Hotels to convert the Mercure Hotel in **Crawley** into an **Immigration Removal Centre** – effectively a detention centre for children and adults awaiting deportation. She called on Crawley Borough Council to turn it down, and was delighted when the proposal was indeed refused. For more information, click [here](#).

Caroline visited the Sussex Wildlife Trust's headquarters this month to learn about their important work on **protecting and promoting biodiversity**, including the Living Landscapes initiative.

In a letter to West Berkshire Council, Caroline stated her objections to a planning application for the **proposed new Enriched Uranium Facility** ("Pegasus") at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston – urging the Council to reject it and pay heed to the concerns of local people.

Caroline has been representing a number of airline pilots living in the South East who fear that the EU's revised **Airline Pilot Fatigue** laws are a **grave health and safety risk**. Greens voted against the legislative proposals when they came before Parliament and Caroline is now hoping that the new Transport Commissioner will review the plans.

Caroline lent her support to a campaign to challenge the controversial **Salden Chase** housing development near Milton Keynes that would see 5,400 new houses built on farm land – with potentially negative consequences for surrounding villages. She continues to oppose plans for new housing and retail developments in the South East that she believes are **unsustainable**.

Caroline continued her campaign to stop **the fluoridation of water in her South East constituency** by making a formal complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, warning that the UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has not fulfilled its legal responsibility on the use of hexafluorosilicic acid and disodium hexafluorosilicate in drinking water. The South Central Strategic Health Authority has decided to add hexafluorosilic acid to the drinking water of **Southampton** in 2010.



Caroline gave the **Brian Hodgson Memorial Lecture in Charlbury**, speaking to a packed hall of local residents and campaigners about the UN climate summit in Copenhagen and the world's ability to halt climate change.

Caroline lent her support to workers at **Twinings** in Andover and North Shields who faced redundancy when the company announced plant closures and job losses – having decided to move labour abroad to Poland and China.

Campaigns and Issues

Food and Farming

Caroline warned that a new 'supermarket ombudsman' being proposed by the Tories could not effectively challenge the damaging practices of the big supermarkets without the **power to be proactive** and **protect the anonymity of farmers** who come forward to complain about supermarket monopolies. An experienced campaigner on sustainable food and farming, Caroline has [led a campaign](#) in the Euro-Parliament for a Commission investigation into **supermarket dominance**, in response to increasing concern over the practices of the major food retailers.

Peace and Human Rights

Caroline continued her opposition to the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system by lending her support to the [Re-think Trident Campaign Coalition](#). CND and Compass have brought together a coalition of over 100 leading figures from across British public life to call on the Government to scrap Trident replacement and re-deploy the resources saved to more socially useful areas. A poll in September 2009 showed that **63% of the public oppose the Government's plans to renew Trident**.

More than one million children in England are growing up in **overcrowded and cramped conditions** – and Shelter research shows that living in overcrowded housing harms the health of children, causing depression, anxiety and stress. Caroline signed up to Shelter's petition demanding an update of Government definitions of overcrowding in the home. [You can sign the petition on the Number 10 website](#) until March 29th.

Caroline signed an open letter to **Veolia**, the French transport giant, urging it to halt controversial operations in the Occupied Territories. Veolia is currently helping to build

and operate a **tramway linking illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem with Israel**. Veolia also operates bus services for Israeli settlers, running them between the illegal settlements and Israel – thereby strengthening Israel's hold over occupied land and **undermining chances of a just peace for the Palestinians**.

Caroline called on Prime Minister Gordon Brown to use all available diplomatic means to bring an immediate end to the **repression of Kurdish politicians in Turkey** – and to promote a political and negotiated solution to the Kurdish conflict.

A long time supporter of the campaign for the **peaceful independence of West Papua** from Indonesia – and for the right of self-determination for its people – Caroline hosted a launch event for the [International Parliamentarians for West Papua](#) attended by Benny Wenda, exiled West Papuan leader and chair of Koteka Tribal Assembly. She commented: "The EU must put pressure on Indonesia to end its curbs on the freedom of journalists and human rights observers, withdraw its military presence from West Papua, and, with the UN, facilitate a genuine vote on self determination."



Transport & Aviation

Caroline wrote to Transport Secretary Lord Adonis to express her concern about the **'chaotic and unreliable'** way First Capital Connect operates its train services – and to call for an end to their franchise so that the service can be brought back into **public ownership**.

Animal Protection

Caroline joined with fellow Greens in the Euro-Parliament to lead a challenge to the proposed new **EU law on animal experiments** because of controversial amendments that would weaken the legal requirement to use **available non-animal alternative methods** – and restrict the ability of national governments to introduce higher animal welfare standards than those required under the EU law.

Environment & Energy

Prior to the **UN climate summit in Copenhagen** in December, Caroline made an impassioned plea for a successful outcome in a speech to a [Campaign Against Climate](#)

[Change](#) rally in London, before joining the landmark ‘Wave’ demonstration, organised by the [Stop Climate Chaos Coalition](#) – demanding a fair international deal to stop global warming exceeding the critical threshold of 2°C.



In the aftermath of the Copenhagen summit, Caroline labelled it ‘**disastrous**’, and commented: “World leaders have failed us, producing nothing but an empty accord which is not fair, not ambitious and not legally binding.”

Caroline, the Parliament’s rapporteur on **illegal logging and deforestation**, criticised Member state governments for proposing a weak agreement on key EU deforestation legislation. Given that deforestation is a major contributor to climate emissions, she said it was crucial that all loopholes in EU law on importing illegal timber be closed. As she pilots the report through second reading, Caroline hopes that the Parliament’s strong amendments will be properly taken into account.

Green Economy & International Trade

Caroline joined calls by the World Development Movement to transform the **Royal Bank of Scotland** – saved by the British taxpayer to the tune of £56 billion – into a Royal Bank of Sustainability, ensuring that it and other publicly-backed banks help pay for Britain’s transition from a high-carbon economy wracked by debt and rising unemployment to a low **carbon-society** that provides **millions of green jobs** and better public services.

Concerned about the **continued use of sweatshop labour** by companies making clothes for the British high street, Caroline signed up to War on Want’s campaign calling on the Government to strengthen the laws to improve ethical standards.

Women’s Issues

Caroline praised the Spanish government for its solid commitment to tackling **violence against women** across the EU. Opening Spain’s six-month rotating EU presidency, the country’s interior minister [launched a campaign](#) for a new approach to gendered violence, with proposals for a **Europe-wide system of restraint orders** aimed at curbing attacks on women and for **EU legislation to protect women** across borders.

Conscious of the need to increase the number of women representing the people of Europe in the EU’s institutions, Caroline signed a [petition](#) demanding a **fairer gender balance** in the Commission.

Caroline endorsed a Charter drawn up by **Asylum Aid** as part of a campaign to obtain rights for **women seeking asylum in the UK**, calling on the UK Border Agency to end the discriminatory treatment of women asylum seekers and ensure access to crucial services for those in need.

Caroline submitted a response to the government consultation on a new licensing regime to **regulate the lap dancing industry**. She supports the **Fawcett Society** and **OBJECT** in their campaign to stop lap dancing clubs being licensed like cafes. The new Policing and Crime Bill means it will now be possible to apply greater controls and regulations to lap dancing clubs.

Media and Information Technology

As negotiations on the **EU Telecoms package** took place in the Euro-Parliament, Caroline slammed attempts by former trade Commissioner Lord Mandelson to scare internet users into obeying copyright laws via proposals to give ISPs the power to **cut off internet users** without trial. She believes that such proposals undermine the right to internet access and wider civil liberties – and signed a Downing Street petition against the plans.

LGBT

A member of the Euro-Parliament's **Intergroup on LGBT Rights**, Caroline joined calls demanding that the Parliament of Uganda reject the **Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009**. The legislation includes provisions to punish those alleged to be lesbian, gay or bisexual with **life imprisonment** and, in some cases, **the death penalty**; any parent or teacher failing to report their LGBT children or pupils to the authorities with a fine or three years' imprisonment; and landowners providing shelter to LGBT people with seven years' imprisonment. The legislation would apply to Ugandan citizens both inside and outside of the country.

Press Highlights

Caroline has appeared on BBC News, BBC Radio 4 Westminster Hour twice, BBC One Andrew Marr Show, BBC One Politics Show South East, BBC One South Today, BBC News Hampshire and the South East, and LBC Radio with Ken Livingstone.

She has represented the Greens on a variety of issues in The Ecologist, The Guardian, Business Week, EUObserver, EGovMonitor, Evening Standard, The Independent, DeHavilland, Morning Star, New Statesman, One World Civil Society, The Times, Planning Resource, and The Irish Times – as well as a range of regional and local press. Caroline was voted Guardian Eco Hero of the Noughties in an [online poll](#).

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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