

1/2m homes could spark water crisis



REGIONAL planners must place sustainability at the heart of South-East England's long-term economic strategy, Caroline has warned.

Speaking as the South-East England Development Agency (SEEDA) launched a four-month roadshow of public meetings to discuss the region's economy, she said it was vital that the Government replaced its narrow focus on economic growth with more emphasis on well-being and sustainability, and that planners in the South-East consider the wider impact of the policies on the rest of the country.

She said: "The South-East already boasts the highest economic growth in the UK but this does nothing to alleviate the region's very real, and worsening, problems: traffic congestion and inadequate public transport, lack of affordable housing and increasing pressure on the region's environment and natural resources.

"Put simply, it is time to stop measuring economic success in terms of GDP growth alone and prioritise such factors as sustainability, quality of life and environmental protection too."

The public consultation on the South-East's Regional Economic Strategy, which will be published in

Spring 2006, began just days after plans to build 578,000 new homes across the region were announced by the South-East England Regional Assembly (SEERA).

Caroline said: "This level of housing development is simply too high for the region, which is already over-crowded and economically 'overheating'.

"By adopting such high targets for housing growth, SEERA has agreed to place an unsustainable burden on the region's infrastructure – especially its water supply – and increased the human costs of climate change, which studies have shown is likely to affect the South-East worse than any other region of the UK."

She said there was undoubtedly a need for more affordable housing in the region – but argued that the need for housing must be balanced against the impact of new development on existing residents and the environment.

Other ways of increasing the level of affordable housing – such as bringing back into use the region's 83,000 empty homes and requiring a higher proportion of dwellings in new developments to be earmarked for social housing – should be prioritised over a policy of "concreting over the countryside", she added.

London pollution soars

In May 2005, a monitoring site (sponsored by the Mayor of London) demonstrated that pollution levels in London have broken EU laws with levels in Ealing being in breach of EU standards for more than 100 days.

Under EU rules, the Government has until September 2006 to notify the Commission that it has failed to meet clean air standards. However failure to act – by Blair's own admission – would contribute to the most long-term serious threat to our environment.

Jean said "Blair has admitted that the time to act is now. He said that if he could leave one message to the British people it is one of urgency. Blair has until September 2006 to

own up – but London is in breach of air standards now. If the UK is serious in taking a lead on this issue I look forward to seeing the UK act immediately and in Blair's own words, with foresight and will."

It remains to be seen whether Tony Blair will act to protect the London population from the many respiratory afflictions associated with high pollution levels.

Jean tabled a Priority Written Question on the matter and called on the Commission to monitor the situation. She added, "At the end of May, London broke the EU limit of 35 breaches. As Britain currently holds the EU Presidency, if we fail to meet targets on our own doorstep, what sort of leadership is that?"

News in brief ...

Moon bears

Jean and Caroline have been working closely with 'Animals Asia' in its campaign to save the Moon bears. They praised the work of the China Wildlife Conservation Association for developing programmes that are helping endangered species in China and urged Chinese medical practitioners to replace bear bile with cheap and effective herbal and synthetic alternatives.

Export victory

Euro-MPs have demanded a halt to subsidised cattle exports to the Middle East after a written declaration proposed by Caroline attracted the support of almost 400 MEPs.

More than 200,000 cattle are exported annually from the EU to Lebanon and Egypt, enduring journeys of up to ten days – and conditions already outlawed in the EU to prevent animal suffering – at a cost of £50m to EU taxpayers.

Jean has also called on the government to use its presidency of the EU to push for the abolition of all live animal exports.

Green joins globalisation think-tank

Caroline has been appointed to the board of directors of the US-based International Forum on Globalization (IFG).

Caroline, a member of the European Parliament's International Trade Committee said she was honoured to serve on the IFG board.

UK urged to use EU presidency to promote Green reforms

The European Union has the potential to take action on current environmental and social concerns. The question now is whether the UK Presidency will take this opportunity to improve ecological and social justice in the UK and across the EU or if the next six months will go by with little change?

The UK Presidency is currently defending the ability to 'opt-out' of the Working Time Directive, undermining the rights of workers across the EU. Jean said she was disappointed that the Commission reinstated the 'opt-out' into the directive and, expressing her concern, commented; "The direct correlation between the rise in working time and increasing mental illness in the UK is a clear warning that the workforce needs better protection. It is currently possible for someone to work more than 60 hours a week and be paid less than £11,000 a year. Ending the opt-out would ensure sufficient safeguards to protect the health of workers were in place."

The UK presidency will also address climate change on a global level but following Tony Blair's address to the European Parliament Jean remains apprehensive as to how successful this will be;

"Mr Blair spoke more about NATO than the supposed presidential priority of climate change. Devoting only half a sentence of his speech to environmental sustainability betrays his real intentions and doesn't inspire confidence."

To highlight areas of concern for the UK presidency Jean and Caroline have commissioned a report on energy and climate issues through the Association for the Conservation of Energy (ACE). Caroline too holds out little hope for the UK presidency;

"Together with the services directive, the further delay of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive and recent issues with air quality it seems we are facing a missed opportunity and a depressing outlook for the next six months" she said.

IRAQ – NO FORCED RETURNS



The UK Home Office is determined to forcibly deport Iraqi refugees back to Iraq. Jean Lambert joined a demonstration at Bush House, London, in protest at the new policy, which she said exposed refugees to danger of torture or death and breached the UK's human rights commitments.

These articles are available in large print on request from the MEPs office.

If you want to find out more about the Green Party MEPs' work and campaigns visit their websites at

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Jean and Caroline became the UK's first Green Party Members of the European Parliament when they were elected to represent London and the South East in 1999. They were re-elected in June 2004 to serve another five year term. The Green / EFA Group in the European Parliament boasts 42 MEPs and is the Parliament's fourth largest political group.

MEPs in action

For peace, social justice and the environment



G8 LEADERS FIDDLE AS CLIMATE CRISIS LOOMS

G8 leaders meeting in Scotland for their annual summit in July have betrayed the hopes of millions of campaigners by failing to agree on an action plan to tackle climate change.

Tony Blair had promised to make tackling climate change a priority of his presidency of the G8 – alongside justice for Africa – but he failed to secure agreement on any enforceable targets or timetables for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Green MEP Caroline Lucas, addressing a packed meeting of the G8 Alternatives Summit, said: “Tony Blair and other G8 leaders have continued to profess their commitment to tackling the problem – but failed to exercise the political will to agree the necessary measures.”

Tackling climate chaos and runaway global warming has never been more urgent. Parts of Germany and Spain have been paralysed by floods and drought for much of this summer – and scientists have discovered that a frozen peat bog in Siberia – larger

than the area of France and Germany combined – is melting, releasing billions of tonnes of methane likely to massively accelerate global warming.

Caroline also warned that the Make Poverty History campaign had become far too close to Government. Despite their good intentions, she said, Bono and Bob Geldof’s strategy risked turning debt cancellation and increased aid into acts of philanthropy – rather than long overdue delivery of justice.

“The G8 leaders did agree to cancel the debts of some of the world’s poorest countries and to increase development aid – but both have been subject to unacceptable ‘conditionality’ agreements and many countries have failed to benefit at all.”

The G8 claims to have agreed to spend £48 bn on aid and debt relief – though this figure has been contested by many campaigners, who claim it has been based on counting agreed debt relief and pre-existing aid packages twice. In any event, it pales into



BREACHING THE PEACE? Caroline joins Scottish Greens at a successful blockade of the Trident nuclear submarine base in Faslane as G8 leaders met in Gleneagles.

insignificance when compared to the costs of enforced trade liberalisation in the developing world (estimated at over £270 billion), and, worse, in comparison with military budgets.

“Tony Blair claimed the G8 was about efforts to eradicate poverty – but in reality it was about sharing a few crumbs from the ‘top table’ with

the developing world as usual. The G8 didn’t agree to redirect a single penny from their staggering military budgets to conflict prevention, clean water, health or education.

“The UK spends £48 every single second on its Trident nuclear submarine system, and it has recently announced it will spend another £1 bn upgrading it in direct

contravention of our commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

She added: “In short the G8 summit failed to deliver on climate change, poverty reduction, world trade or disarmament – and has missed another opportunity to make the world a safer, more just place as a result.”

Civil liberties and human rights lost in 'war on terror'

Jean Lambert MEP has spoken out against the British government’s policies – at home and abroad – which have led to greater insecurity in the UK, and especially in London, and an erosion of civil liberties and the protection of human rights.

Of the July terror attacks on London, Jean said “I wholeheartedly condemn the London bomb attacks and give my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims who came from so many countries. To move forward we need

solutions that will break the cycle of violence. Instead we have seen government action that erodes human rights and civil liberties, and a major increase in violent attacks on Muslims. These developments undermine the very freedoms we are supposed to be protecting.”

“The so-called war on terror was supposed to increase global and national security, but we have created a situation where Iraq has become a terrorist training ground and London has seen its first ever suicide bombers.”

“The current situation also means that civil liberties and human rights are being undermined. We look set to allow deportations to countries practicing torture – with a possible amendment to the Human Rights Act to allow a breach of the prohibition on torture. Another proposal would violate Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights which Liberty tell us would have criminalised those who sympathised with the African National Congress during the worst

days of South African apartheid. There are also proposals for anti-terror courts that would sit in secret and measures that would violate Article 5 of the European Convention, the right against arbitrary detention. Add to these the measures of racial profiling in police ‘stop and search’ investigations and increases in racial attacks, and you have a very grim picture indeed.

“These bomb attacks have no clear message and, at the very point where the G8 leaders have at last begun to talk about poverty and

climate change – have served to undermine our freedoms to campaign on these issues. At this time it is vital that we work together to defend our human rights and civil liberties and work for a foreign policy which breeds justice and peace, not hatred and violence.”

Jean sits on the European Parliament’s Civil Liberties Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee.

