

**03**  
Caroline Lucas,  
Brighton's Green MP  
at Westminster

**04**  
Class issues:  
Primary schools in  
the city

**04**  
GreenLeaf  
giveaways and  
presents

**06**  
Keith Taylor MEP,  
Brighton's Green  
man in Europe

**07**  
Brussels: an eco  
destination close to  
home



# GREEN LEAF

## Cuts - who's next?

Join the Greens in fighting cuts which threaten our homes, our health, our livelihoods

**"We are all at risk." says Caroline Lucas, Brighton's Green MP. In Brighton and Hove, where the council has been ordered to make £3.5 million worth of cuts by the Coalition government, a number of vital and frontline services are at risk including HIV and AIDS services and careers support and guidance to young people.**

Here in Brighton and Hove our economy is largely composed of small and publicly owned enterprises, including the two universities.

"That means our city's economy is disproportionately exposed to public sector cuts," says Lucas.

**Job cuts may well lead to up to 4000 people being made redundant in Brighton and Hove**

And it's not just services that are at risk, but jobs and homes too. Green Group Convenor Cllr Bill Randall says "People fearing for their jobs and their futures are facing enormous uncertainty. Job cuts may well lead to up to 4000 people being made redundant in Brighton and Hove.



### The cuts we face thanks to ConDem & Labour mess

- The Government's re-organisation of the **NHS** would abolish primary care trusts and their regional health authorities with more than 20,000 people likely to lose their jobs.

- **Connexions** provides careers support and other vital public services for young people. Due to a reduction in the Area based grant the council have announced redundancies for the Intensive Personal Advisors

and terminated the contract with the company which provides careers experts, information, advice and Guidance Personal Advisors.

- **Cuts in housing benefit** will affect over 12,000 households in Brighton and Hove

- **The HIV Support Grant** from the Department of Health has been un-ringfenced.

- **Telegen**, a Brighton call centre, has closed due to competition from foreign based call centres.

### Green Action

- Caroline Lucas has written to Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to urge him to reconsider the cuts being made to the Area based grant, and to work with local authorities like the one in Brighton and Hove to protect Connexions

- Green councillors are meeting with different HIV stakeholders to learn more about the process, and use their influence to protect these crucial service

- Caroline Lucas has asked Edward Davey MP Minister of State for Business, Innovation & Skills "is the Government considering the introduction of disincentives for companies to relocate abroad to help protect jobs such as those lost at Telegen?"

**Greens would halve the deficit in four years with fairer taxes instead of unfair cuts**

Our immediate priority should be the creation of an extra million jobs and training places.

- Greens propose a £44bn package of measures that would include workforce training, investment in renewables, public transport, insulation, social housing and waste management.

- These jobs would provide our city with the vital 21st century infrastructure it needs, including an efficient public transport system, homes that are warm and cheaper to run and much lower energy costs for businesses.

- The Green Party would finance this by spending tax-payers funds differently, by cancelling Trident, taxing bankers' bonuses, introducing a 50% tax for incomes over £100,000 and a mansion tax with an additional band at the top level of council tax.

# City news

## Campaign for safer streets

| CAROLINE LUCAS AND THE LOCAL GREEN PARTY HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING HARD FOR A 20MPH SPEED LIMIT IN BUILT-UP AREAS TO BE IMPLEMENTED URGENTLY, TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY.

The latest figures show that 6,018 people were killed or seriously injured in Sussex last year.

In October, Greens successfully pressed for a scrutiny panel report to be produced on this important issue and Green Councillor Pete West chaired the panel. The report recommended that speed limits should indeed be reduced on roads in residential areas with high numbers of vulnerable road users.

Sadly the Tory council have chosen to ignore this advice choosing instead to continue their ineffective bump assisted piecemeal approach. So we will continue to campaign hard for a joined up approach that works. To support our campaign please sign our petition by going to campaigns at [www.brightonhovegreens.org](http://www.brightonhovegreens.org)



## On your bike

| GREEN CITY COUNCILLORS CYCLE LONDON TO BRIGHTON FOR MARTLETTS HOSPICE

Three Brighton & Hove Green city councillors took part in the Martlets Friday Night Ride this September.

Cllrs Ian Davey, Alex Phillips and Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett joined almost four hundred participants on the overnight ride from London to Brighton, and were "delighted" to have raised £613.05 for the Hove-based hospice for people affected by terminal illness.

## Waste not!

| TORY-RUN BRIGHTON & HOVE COUNCIL'S TOP MANAGER REORGANISATION COSTS £1 MILLION

Brighton & Hove City Council taxpayers are counting the true financial cost of the internal reorganisation of the city council's services, as reports emerge that the four outgoing directors will receive a combined payout of up to £1million. In protest, Brighton & Hove Green councillors withdrew their support for the restructuring and refused to take part in the selection process for the four new directors. Green Group Convenor Bill Randall explains: "By taking part in the selection process we feel we would be validating proposals for reorganisation we do not support."

Green councillors believe that the combination of cuts and a profligate reorganisation such as this will only lead to greater hardship for the city's most vulnerable citizens, at a time of already enormous uncertainty.

## No Tesco

| GREEN MP CELEBRATES LEWES ROAD TESCO DECISION

Caroline Lucas, MP for Brighton Pavilion, and Lewes Road Community Garden campaigners were delighted when their hard work paid off and Tesco agreed not to open a new store on the site of the garden.

The Green MP had two recent meetings with Tesco's representatives where, along with Green councillor Ian Davey and founder of the garden Cathy Marchand, she managed to persuade Tesco to re-think their plans.

She said: "We made our case strongly in the meetings. I am delighted that they have listened to our concerns, and reconsidered their position. I pay tribute to all the local people who have fought such a tireless campaign to preserve the community garden."

Ian Davey added: "I hope very much that this will send a message to the developers that we want to keep it as a valuable community resource."



Top: Lewes Road Community Gardens

and Above: Cllrs Philips, Davey and Wakefield-Jarrett.

## Night hell

| VIDEO SHOWING EAST STREET, BRIGHTON NIGHT LIFE PUBLISHED ONLINE.

The noise, anti-social behaviour and disturbances on a Friday night on East Street got too much for local residents to bear. So, with the help of Green councillor Jason Kitcat, they published a film on youtube showing how their lives have been affected.

In the film, one family sleep in a corridor to escape noise and another have resorted to expensive triple glazing to try and get a good night's sleep. Jason said: "This is an exciting city full of great things to see and do, night or day. However, East Street has seen the pendulum swing too far".

Jason has been calling for an inter-agency 'summit' involving council officers, local police, club managers and residents to agree a new way of joint-working to tackle the issue. He explains: "By working together, I believe we can find a positive balance for all involved."

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## Hove roads

| LOCAL ACTION ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN GOLDSMID

Green councillor Alex Phillips, since winning the Goldsmid ward by-election in July 2009, has been busy working with the Goldsmid Local Action Team to push for the introduction of safer road crossings in the area.

Key speeding and accident hotspots were identified in the ward, and after months of campaigning residents in Goldsmid were delighted that a crossing on Old Shoreham Road was passed for implementation during the last city council budget.

With the crossing set to be in place by the end of the year, the Local Action Team has been looking into ways to reduce danger for pedestrians even further. Alex explains: "Winning approval for this crossing is a fantastic achievement for the LAT. Along with our efforts to tackle speeding, and working with local schools to ensure pu-

pils are using pavements and crossings safely, we're making a real impact on the safety of vulnerable members of our community".

## Historic building saved

| QUEEN'S PARK'S 'PEPPERPOT' GETS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE



Your Green Queen's Park Councillors

Inspired by the unmet potential of the well-loved local landmark, a 'Friends of the Pepperpot' group was set up last year to transform this disused building from a drain on council resources into a valuable asset.

The hard work has already been paying off - the Tower was featured in the Heritage Open Door showcase of the city's "hidden architectural treasures" this September, and has also hosted two successful local art exhibitions.

Green councillor Rachel Fryer, a founding member and Chair of the group, said: "After residents' concerns about the run-down state of the Pepperpot attracting antisocial behaviour, we've been looking for creative solutions to ensure it has a positive impact on the local community."

Rachel and local residents have been in discussion with the council. She explains: "This listed historic building was completely disused as renovation was too expensive, and knocking it down would be illegal. But the council recognises that community-led regeneration has already proved a real success, and there's so much more potential. There are plans for a 'winter warmer' event and restoration works on the exterior of the building early next year."

# What's our Green MP been up to?

## Fighting for fairness

Brighton Pavilion Constituency made history this May by voting for Caroline Lucas, leader of the Green Party, to represent them in Westminster. We assess her first 100 days.

Pictures: Tom Gildon tomgildon.com & Peter Forbes



Caroline Lucas outside the Houses of Parliament

### In the Commons

Britain's first Green MP, Caroline Lucas made her debut speech to the House of Commons speech in Parliament on May 27 2010.

The threat from climate change featured strongly but the new MP for Brighton Pavilion also drew attention to the UK's need for equality of opportunity, for an elected House of Lords, for an improvement to Britain's record on civil liberties, and for the introduction of a genuinely proportional electoral system. "Politics needs to renew itself, and allow new ideas and visions to emerge," she told the House.

### On Parliament

"I remain conscious of how strange, even alien, Parliament is. It isn't just the odd language, the arcane procedures and strange costumes. It's an institution designed for, and run by, an elite, who simply don't want to let the people have a real say in decisions.

"I want it to change. But the ques-

tion is, can parliament reform itself? I think that the proposed referendum on electoral reform will be the test.

"Obviously, each different voting system benefits different parties in different ways. The Tories gain from First Past The Post, so they back that. The Liberal Democrats gain from any change, and will take the Alternative Vote if that's the only crumbs that the Tories will let them have. And Labour, hopelessly divided on this, will try to look like they want change, while hoping to stick with the current system. They simply cannot put aside political self-interest.

But Greens believe the people should choose, not the politicians. Of course, at the moment the public won't be given the choice.

The referendum question only has two options: stick with the current system; or go for AV, two flavours of vanilla. Genuine reform is not on the menu.

That's why I've tabled an amendment that would give the public a real choice.

### Working for you

Since being elected Caroline has been:

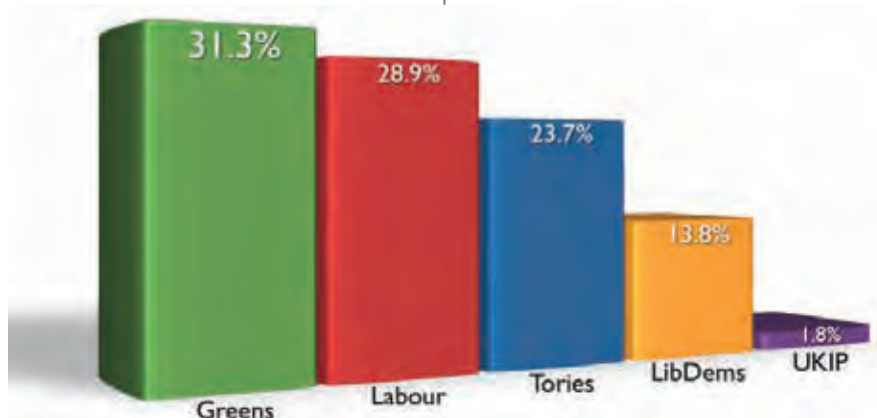
- Meeting with and supporting the victims of the Equitable Life debacle.
- Supporting MINDOUT in their bid to prevent Brighton and Hove Mind from removing the LGBT management structure.
- Meeting with Sussex Beacon regarding HIV services.
- Holding regular weekly surgeries in person.
- Meeting with the various heads of service in the council.
- Dealing with immigration cases. Recently she helped a Thai woman who the UKBA have tried to arrest twice because the Home Office gave her the wrong visa and so incorrectly believed she was an illegal overstayer.
- Caroline has also worked with RISE and is trying to organise a day with the social services department so she can see how things work on the front line.
- Caroline has been liaising with local councillors to develop their strategy for the future. This has included the Green Visioning sessions with councillors and local activists.
- She supported the Lewes Road Community Garden campaign and persuaded Tesco not to develop the site for another supermarket.

### Housing

**One of Caroline's constituents biggest issues is accessing social housing and homelessness. There isn't enough housing to meet the demand and Brighton & Hove City Council is struggling with limited resources.**

- The Government has announced £1.8 billion cuts to housing benefit, increasing the pressure on social housing, as private tenants are unable to afford their rent. Caroline describes one such case "a woman came to my surgery a few weeks ago, desperate to be re-housed because she, her partner and child were all living in a single room in Brighton, and she was expecting another child very soon."
- Cuts in housing benefit will affect over 12,000 households in Brighton and Hove which is more than 14 times the number of affected households in West Oxfordshire, within David Cameron's own constituency.
- People in one-bed properties will pay an extra £728 a year - thanks to a higher cut in housing benefit than anywhere else in the South East for that type of property.
- In a city that is desperately short of homes, David Cameron's proposal that council tenancies should be reduced to five years, is another attack on our way of life, threatening families, continuity of education and entire communities.
- Caroline has written a strongly worded communication to David Cameron challenging him to provide data to support his housing policy, suggesting "This policy is a transparent attempt to divert attention away from the consequences of the cuts that your Government is making and it can only be described as a counterproductive assault on tenants' rights."

For more information on Caroline go to [www.carolinelucas.com](http://www.carolinelucas.com)



The result of the vote in Brighton Pavilion at May's General Election where Caroline Lucas won the seat for the Green Party.

# Education

## School facts

Alex Phillips, Green City councillor for Goldsmid ward in Hove, says we need local schools for local kids

The council has a long-term aim to create three much-needed new primary school classes in Hove. It's target is ambitious – for doors to open for September 2011.

Negotiations continuing with City College have led to an agreement to use the Connaught Adult Education Centre on Connaught Road in Hove. This is a step in the right direction, and congratulations to parents who have campaigned vigorously over the last couple of years. However, this does not solve the problem entirely, as there are clearly many families who live on the Brighton & Hove border who are nowhere near The Connaught.

The shortage of places was worsened by the last Labour administration who allowed developments with a low proportion of family housing, without creating the necessary additional infrastructure in terms of schools and doctors' surgeries. This forced many families into one bedroom flats in an area with too few primary schools.

We are still concerned about the impact this could have on important adult

education at the Connaught. At the time of going to press, the overall provision may include other sites, and other options for new school sites are being explored, such as the Hove Park depot.

Competition is something that the last Labour Government brought in. In many people's view, it's a nonsense system. Competition means that if the Council wants to decide who should run the school, then they cannot apply for it to be run by the Local Authority (LA). The Council is unable to get an exemption from the competition process for any new school. Exemptions are only usually applied for, when for example, two existing schools become one school.

Opening this up to competition means that the new primary school could become an Academy, a free school, or a religious school, all of which can have their own admissions procedures. There is nothing



to stop a religious school becoming an Academy, putting it outside of LA rule.

The biggest problem

with schools out of LA control is that they rule admissions and exclusions; parents and students have fewer rights, and there are

usually fewer governors. Residents want and need a local school for local kids run by the LA. This competition process, combined with Academy and Free schools may lead to all LA schools being wiped out.

In the Green Party we're very worried about the future for education which is taking an increasing number of schools out of LA control. Academies and Free Schools can teach their own curriculum and examples elsewhere include teaching Creationism, devoting 20% of learning time to teaching business skills and creating mini stock-exchanges, as well as a less diverse curriculum.

They often see a high turnover of staff as teachers are forced to re-apply for their jobs with pay and conditions only protected for three years as we've seen at Falmer Academy (now Brighton Aldridge Community Academy). Academy sponsors can appoint over 50% of the governors giving them control

over how the school is run.

Caroline Lucas MP and Cllr Rachel Fryer, Green Party Education Spokesperson, recently met with Rod Aldridge, founder of Capita, sponsor of BACA and potential sponsor of Portslade Community College if it becomes an Academy. Speaking after the meeting, Rachel said "whilst we were pleased he's committing to joining Local Authorities Admission criteria, avoiding school exclusion in his Academy and prioritising Special Educational Needs he has the power to reverse this at any time. We are not satisfied that his interpretation of 'Entrepreneurship' as a specialism will cater for all pupil's needs. And he is currently chairing the Governing Body at BACA which has only two parent governors and one teacher governor out of 13. He has no intention of increasing community representation on the governing body.

Join local parent-led group, Action4Kids at [action4kids@googlemail.com](mailto:action4kids@googlemail.com)

Pictures: Charlotte Macpherson charlottemacpherson.co.uk

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# Freebies

**Recycle in Style** with this fabby recycled retro spot nine bottle recycling bag from [www.dotcomgiftshop.com](http://www.dotcomgiftshop.com)

Priced £4.95, we have 10 to give away to the first 10 readers to get in touch, just email [info@brightonandhovegreenparty.org.uk](mailto:info@brightonandhovegreenparty.org.uk) with your name and address and we'll pop one in the post.

# Your community

## Green vision

Rebecca Melhuish talks to Lizzie Deane, the most recently elected councillor in Brighton & Hove, and to the Green City Councillors about their vision for the City.



This July saw the election of the city's newest green councillor, Lizzie Deane, in the St Peter's & North Laine ward.

Lizzie, a freelance media consultant working in local government, was delighted to be elected to succeed Keith Taylor in a by-election created by his move to Brussels as MEP for the South East. Pleased to be joining two Green councillors, Pete West and Ian Davey, who are already representing the ward, she says: "This result is a testament to the hard work of Green councillors over the past 14 years, and the proven track record of the Green Party in fighting years of mismanagement and privatisation by Labour and the Tories in Brighton".

Having lived and campaigned in the area for four years, Lizzie is well aware of the issues affecting local people: "The adverse effects of extended licensing hours, and drug and alcohol misuse and its legislation are a few key issues I hope

to address, as well as helping to find ways of minimising the pain brought on by the Tory council cuts. Sitting on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also made me acutely aware of how social and economic inequalities impact on people's health across the city."

Lizzie is hoping to be re-elected in the local elections in May 2011. She says. "These first few months are just the beginning."



### Green Vision:

The Green Group of councillors have a vision for Brighton and Hove, and hope that the council elections in May will give them the majority they need to create a fairer, healthier and happier city.

- **Jobs.** By supporting local jobs and local businesses, with a focus on the thriving local sectors of tourism and sport, the creative industries and green industries, Green councillors will work to reduce unemployment and ensure everyone can enjoy meaningful and rewarding work.

- **Housing.** Greens will remain at the heart of the campaign for more affordable homes, the protection of tenants' rights and housing benefits, and the end of the 'right-to-buy'.

- **Transport.** An efficient, affordable, comfortable and sustainable local transport network would transform our city from a congestion and air-pollution hotspot, into a city residents can travel around quickly and easily without affecting the health or environment of others.

- **Defending public services.** Green councillors will campaign to protect crucial front-line services from crumbling in the face of the coalition's draconian public sector cuts, to create a city which:

- keeps you healthy but has a publicly owned NHS when you need it;
- has a good local school with a place for every child;
- ensures independence and dignity for all through a quality adult social care service;
- provides medical care and social support to reduce drug and alcohol problems;
- has a police service that ensures city wide safety.

- **Waste.** Greens would work to ensure the infrastructure is in place for a zero-waste city, fueling local jobs in the process.

### Your Green Councillors

| BRIGHTON AND HOVE has elected thirteen Green City Councillors who are here to help you on issues that concern you most. [www.brightonhovegreens.org](http://www.brightonhovegreens.org)

#### St Peter's & North Laine

**Ian Davey**  
tel: 296430



**Lizzie Deane**  
tel: 291138



**Pete West**  
tel: 296431



**Queen's Park**  
**Ben Duncan**  
tel: 296441



**Paul Steedman**  
tel: 296443



**Rachel Fryer**  
tel: 296442



**Preston Park**  
**Amy Kennedy**



**Regency**  
**Jason Kitcat**



**Sven Rufus**



#### Hanover & Elm Grove

**Bill Randall**  
tel: 296436



**Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett** tel: 296435



**Georgia Wrighton**  
tel: 294365



**Goldsmid, Hove**  
**Alex Phillips**  
tel: 294539



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# Your Green Euro MP

## Brighton's boy in Brussels

Keith Taylor, the newest Green in the European Parliament, has been busy since his arrival



Above: Keith Taylor at the European Parliament in Brussels  
Below: meeting constituents in his South East constituency



**In May Keith Taylor took up the Green Party seat in the European Parliament, representing the South-East of England. He says "As a former local Green councillor, I think it's important to bring the work of the European institutions closer to my constituents and address people's concerns about the future of our region."**

Keith was appointed a Vice President of the Local Government Association Group in the European Parliament – and welcomed the opportunity to put his experience as a Brighton and Hove councillor to good use. Calling for stronger and more accountable local democracy, he said: "At a time when the coalition government is slashing funding for every town hall in the country, local authorities need all the friends they can get."

### Housing

Keith raised concerns that affordable homes and new social housing will be worst hit by the Government's cuts to housing budgets and the scrapping of regional targets. Although he welcomed the reduced risk of unsustainable development on green field sites, he warned the funding cuts for housing would lead to a "dangerously weak" housing policy and even fewer affordable homes.

The MEP said that new affordable housing, and a retro-fit of existing housing stock to reduce climate change emissions and lower energy bills, should be prioritised.

### Carers

Keith experienced first hand the pressures of caring for a child with learning disabilities when he spent time with a local parent carer in Brighton as part of an initiative organised by TreeHouse, a national char-

ity for autism education. The MEP called the 'Walk In Our Shoes' project "a great way to connect carers and their families with decision makers – and motivate them to bring about better services at a local and national level."

### Fuel

Responding to reports that oilmen are looking for oil in the South East region now that North Sea oil is becoming too expensive to access, Keith warned of the consequences of turning England's southern counties into "one big oil field". He raised concerns that new drilling could conflict with renewable energy plans and said that "in light of the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster and volatile oil prices, the need for urgent change away from fossil fuel-powered energy systems is clearer than ever".

Keith was in Worthing, West Sussex, in June to help launch a new eco restaurant. He praised the owners of Green Cuisine for providing a good example of how to put a strong ethical ethos into practice; through everything from sourcing the produce, to working with other local companies and using environmentally friendly, cruelty-free paint and cleaning products.

### Parliament in Brief

Keith co-chaired his first meeting of the 'Fair Play: Retailer and the Food Supply Chain' informal working group in June. This cross party group looks at the market dominance of large retailers and supermarkets, calling on the EU to address uncompetitive practices.

Keith signed a cross party appeal to French President Nicolas Sarkozy to end the European Parliament's two seat system in Brussels and Strasbourg. The Green MEPs have long campaigned for the Parliament to locate all of its duties in Brussels, and stop the huge waste and significant climate emissions associated with the monthly move.

Keith joined the European Al-

zheimer's Alliance and asserted his commitment to improving services for those affected by mental illness.

Keith signed a Written Declaration (like an early day motion in the House of Commons) calling for regulation to limit the industrially produced trans-fatty acid content of food products. He criticized the UK Government's reluctance to ban trans fats and called for more checks on the food industry.

Keith also signed a WD promoting global action to protect biodiversity and calling on the EU to show leadership to protect our natural world.

In response to concerns from environmental groups, Keith tabled a Written Question to the Commission expressing concern that EU legislation to assess the effects of intensive agriculture on uncultivated or semi natural areas was not be-

ing effectively enforced in the UK.

In his first full meeting of the transport and tourism committee, Keith highlighted the need for the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy to properly protect sensitive marine areas, guard against unsafe oil drilling, and promote sustainable tourism.

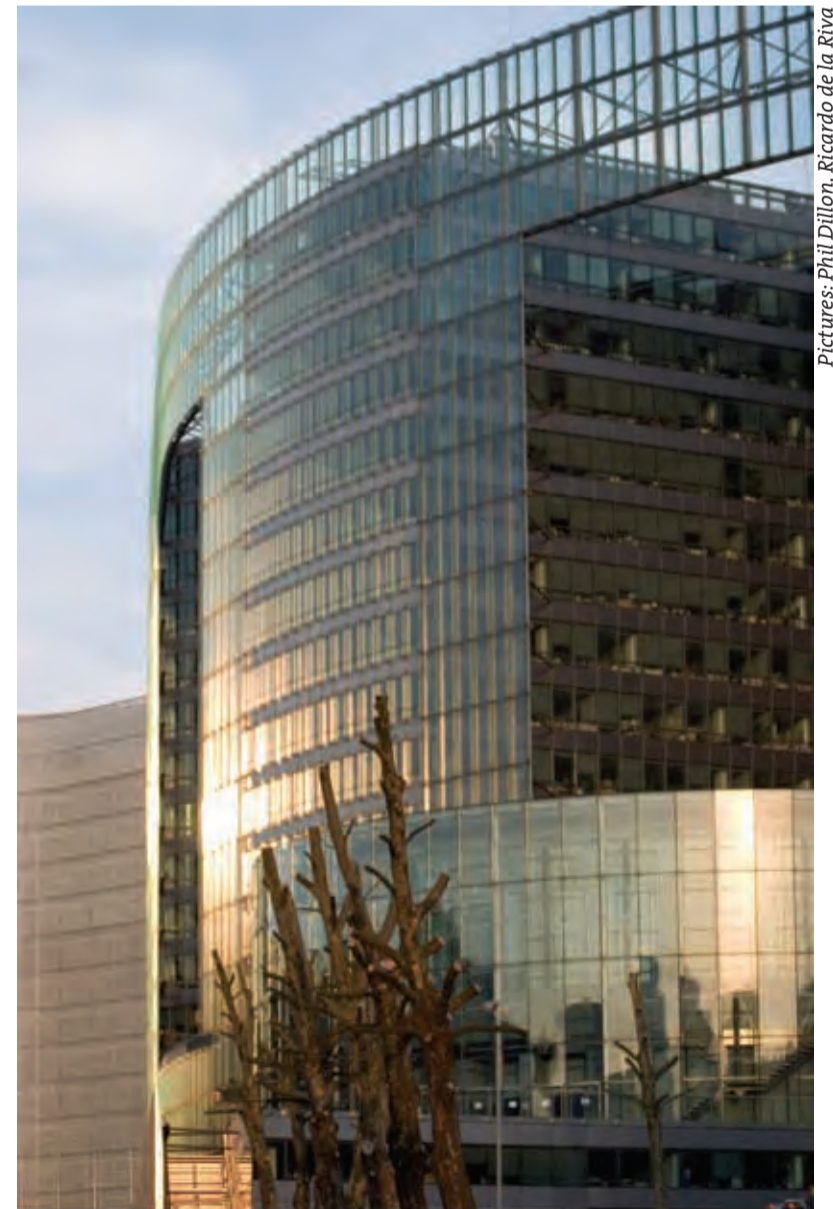
### Keith's Committees and Delegations

**Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN)**

**Committee on International Trade (INTA)**

**Committee on Petitions (PETI)**

**Parliamentary delegations to Afghanistan, Iran and Palestine**



# The Heart of Europe

Brussels: home to the European Parliament and a must-do cool short break destination

Brussels is getting rid of its grey image and gaining itself a reputation as one of Europe's must-do cool short break destinations, with its human size, trendy bars and restaurants, fabulous food, great nightlife, fantastic shopping, museums, exhibitions and festivals.

Brussels is also becoming well known as a mecca of style, attracting increasing numbers of big names in national and international fashion.

## Green Brussels

Brussels has wholeheartedly embraced sustainable development as part of its overall regional urban plan, where the development of energy-efficient buildings and a sustainable economy is closely linked to the re-population of formerly abandoned districts and the bringing back into use of empty buildings: estimates put the number of unoccupied apartments at around 35,000 and un-

occupied office space at around 2 million square metres.

## Gay Brussels

As headquarters of NATO and the EU the city has a smart, cosmopolitan mix which is reflected in the city's gay life. In recent years, Brussels has taken full advantage of its location at the heart of the Paris/Amsterdam/Cologne gay triangle. The city's monthly club nights have become legendary amongst gay Euro clubbers with party night trains and shuttle buses bringing pink night owls to Brussels from all over western Europe. Sophisticated and hedonistic, Brussels offers the very best of European gay life.

The main thoroughfare, Rue Marché au Charbon boasts a picture perfect location just a stone's throw away from the Grand Place in the heart of the historic Quartier Saint-Jacques. Located in a cluster of delightful gabled Dutch style townhouses there's traditional wood panelled estaminets (old fashioned pubs), swish lounge bars and pavement cafes. Blissfully traffic free, in the evening, the crowds spill out onto the cobbled streets creating a laid back and welcoming buzz.

Cutting straight through the gay village you'll find a section of one of Europe's most colourful tourist attractions, the Comic Strip Trail where blank walls are jazzed up with psychedelic murals of Belgium's most famous cartoon characters. This provides a fun back-

drop to Brussels gay life and the mural of Broussaille, a popular 1980s animal detective strolling along arm in arm with his androgynous girlfriend Catherine, has become the much loved symbol of gay Brussels.

## Where to stay

**Hotel Cafe Pacific**  
Rue Antoine Dansaert 57  
Tel : +32 2 213 00 80  
info@hotelcafepacific.com  
www.hotelcafepacific.com

Uber cool, this boutique hotel is set right in one of the hippest boroughs of the capital, in one of the most lively streets downtown. Architect Marc Humblet reequipped the rooms and the complex of the "Café Pacific".

Behind the building's original 1890s stained-glass entrance the decor is contemporary-chic, with clean lines, a bright smooth look and well thought out detail. There are just 12 bedrooms and one duplex suite, each decorated individually and poetically.

The ground-floor bar and café has retained the original wood panelling on its walls and evokes both past and present with a modern yet nostalgic look. It is open all day – head here for particularly lively evenings.

### Pries: Rooms from 129 Euros

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[www.raileurope.co.uk/](http://www.raileurope.co.uk/)  
Belgian Tourist Office  
217 Marsh Wall  
London E14 9FJ  
Tel. 020 7531 0390  
[www.belgiumthelaceto.be](http://www.belgiumthelaceto.be)



Pictures: J.Remy



# Caroline Lucas MP writes...



The Coalition are inflicting a massive con-trick on the people of Britain: fairer taxes not cuts are the answer

Picture: Tom Gildon



HAVE YOU HEARD the one about Cameron's Big Society? Doing the job you were doing before but not getting paid for it! Except the joke is on us. The new government is trying to con us into believing that savage spending cuts are not just inevitable, but critical for our survival. With the bullying tactics of the rich, they have decided if they shout it loud and long enough we will believe them. But this isn't about economics, it's about ideology. The truth is that these cuts are a choice - a choice between a dramatically smaller state, with those on the highest incomes affected least, or a state which cares about the poorest and most vulnerable

within it, and which is based on everyone paying a fair share.

The coalition government has wielded its axe and slashed public spending, forcing those on lower incomes, who depend on public services the most, to pay the highest price. Even the Institute for Fiscal Studies has concluded that this is unfair.

There is another way. First we need to recognise that by cutting so fast and so deeply, we risk a double-dip recession. And second, we should ask those best able to pay to foot the bill through fairer taxation. That's the challenge I'm issuing: for that political choice to be made.

It must be clearly asserted that we are not all in this together: that some had more responsibility for this crisis than others, and some benefited more from the boom that preceded it. Those who enjoyed the largest benefits must pay up now.

The UK is currently one of the most unequal societies in Europe. But the financial crisis offers us an opportunity to rebalance the tax system. We could do it, for example, by applying the 50% tax rate to incomes above £100,000, abolishing the upper limit for national insurance contributions, raising capital gains tax to the recipient's highest income tax rate, and helping lower earners by reintroducing the 10% tax band.

Moreover, the huge extent of tax avoidance, tax evasion and unpaid tax in the UK economy is truly staggering. HM Revenue & Customs themselves admit that tax evasion and avoidance together come to at least £40 billion a year, whilst in November 2009 they also admitted there was £28 billion of unpaid tax owing to them.

The answer seems simple: cut

tax abuse, not tax-collectors' jobs. Whilst these appalling losses to the nation's coffers are occurring, HM Revenue & Customs are pursuing a programme of job cuts which will ultimately reduce their own staff by 20,000 - close to one quarter of the total. This makes absolutely no sense. This programme should be reversed, staff re-employed, and local tax offices re-opened in order to tackle tax abuse. It has been calculated that at least £15 billion of extra tax could be collected each year as a result. That could prevent a massive range of cuts.

According to Richard Murphy, tax expert, chartered accountant and co-author of a report I produced earlier this year, "A range of additional options exist for changing the tax rules for the UK so that more than £40 billion of additional taxes could be raised each year by the end of the life of this parlia-

ment. That, together with the tax collecting efficiency savings already noted, would together deliver more than £60 billion of tax revenues for the UK."

**By cutting so fast and so deeply, we risk a double-dip recession**

Whatever the government likes to pretend, a government really can spend to save the economy when in a recession. The crucial thing is to make sure that such spending is a genuine investment in the future - a major investment in renewables and energy efficiency, for example, could create hundreds of thousands of jobs, help stabilise the economy, and address the climate crisis too, while a major investment in affordable housing would help address the housing crisis in places like Brighton and Hove.

If we believe a big society is one that is decent and fair, we should be rejecting Cameron's sound bites and backing this call. Fairer tax not cuts must become the real battleground of this new Parliament. It is the debate the Coalition and Labour alike must embrace. As the full ghastliness and unfairness of the cuts become ever clearer, the public clamour for fairer taxes rather than cuts can only grow.

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