

Thinking of voting for UKIP? Think again

Green Party press office briefing

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Out of Europe? No, build future prosperity by having a place inside Europe, say the Greens.

UKIP campaigns for Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. It argues that Britain would be better off if it continued free trade with the EU without being bound by EU laws.

This, the core of UKIP's platform in this and every election, is based on an illusion. The bulk of Britain's trade now is with our European partners. If we left the EU, we would still need to follow EU regulations in order to be able to trade with Europe, but we would have no say in drawing them up.

Building a better Europe from the inside.

The whole machinery of regulation governing the environment, industry and trade is now so closely bound up with the EU that withdrawal would bring a lot of disruption which would do the UK economy no good at all in the current recession.

The Green Party's proposals for a Green New Deal would create one million jobs in the UK within 2-3 years. The Green New Deal would be an investment for the future of British families rather than corporations. It is a positive vision for the future, while UKIP's vision harks back to a previous world and refuses to acknowledge the urgent problems of the present.

Europe's regulations on environmental matters are of course particularly important. Pollution knows no boundaries. Yet UKIP oppose, for instance, the banning of harmful pesticides and weed-killers. [1]

The Green Party agrees that there is much that needs reforming with the EU. We would reform, for example, the wasteful agricultural policy, the CAP. We oppose the move towards greater federalism that the Lisbon Treaty would bring if it were ratified. We are

for staying outside the euro-zone and keeping the pound. And we want extensive devolution of power from the national to the regional and local levels.

But the Greens believe that the fight for all these changes is best made from within Europe.

UKIP repeatedly claims that the EU costs Britain £41 million a day. But they never mention that we get £18 million a day of that back. [2] The contributions to the EU from member countries are used to benefit the EU as a whole. The creation of the EU has brought over 60 years of peace to western Europe and now the formerly communist eastern bloc countries have joined as eager partners. This huge dividend for peace and expanding prosperity make Britain's net contribution more than worthwhile and immensely good value.

Climate change isn't happening, according to UKIP.

UKIP's position on the climate change crisis shows it is not serious about tackling it. In their pamphlet, "The Debate is not over, Beware", they persist in peddling the idea that there is still no solid scientific consensus that greenhouse gas emissions from humankind's activities are leading to dangerous levels of global warming.

This is simply not true. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is now unanimous about the science, and almost all national governments – who would much rather have a good reason not to take decisions now on climate change – accept that it is real and is going to keep happening.

UKIP, on this question, is reduced to claiming that the IPCC is "not a scientific body" when it is clear from IPCC material that many scientists from across the world contribute to it. [3]

UKIP's view on climate change leads it to be in favour of the expanded building of coal-fired power stations, and to such eccentric policies as opposing green taxes, opposing wind farms and opposing a ban on energy-profligate patio heaters. [4]

UKIP is also opposed to the land-fill directive, which is intended to encourage recycling. And UKIP supports the expansion of nuclear power. [5]

If it's a sham, why are UKIP seeking election?

Voters must be wondering why UKIP is running for election to the European Parliament at all. Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader, has said that the Parliament is a "sham" and considers that it has "precious little influence on the EU except to give the misleading impression that the EU is democratic. "

Nevertheless, UKIP MEPs go on claiming attendance allowances for attending a body they regard as a sham. Simultaneously, UKIP have opposed closer scrutiny of MEP expenses and refuse to reveal their own. [6]

UKIP's backward-looking, narrow-minded views

UKIP's views on a range of issues appear to be highly backward looking, and out of step with modern Britain.

For instance, Tom Wise, UKIP MEP, has claimed that "mass immigration has a history of perverting political process." [7]

Another MEP, Mike Nattrass, is a former member of the New Britain Party, which opposed "coloured immigration." [8]

UKIP's letterbox leaflet features a prominent picture of Churchill giving his V for victory sign. They are apparently unaware that Churchill was one of the earliest champions of the formation of a confederation of European states.

UKIP have little sense of the importance of reform of Britain's political institutions – now clearly something that public opinion is pressing strongly for. They described the removal of hereditary peers from the House of Lords as "vandalism." [9]

Looking forward with the Greens.

While UKIP offers all these backward-looking ideas, the Green Party offers a forward-looking vision for a better future for Britain and for Europe. This would involve remaining within the EU to work with it on the major changes in economic strategy that the present economic crisis and the on-going climate change crisis demand.

[1] (<http://www.ukip.org/content/latest-news/262-ukip-fights-eu-pesticides-ban>)

[2]

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budget_of_the_European_Union#State_by_state_analysis)

[3] <http://www.ipcc.ch/about/index.htm>

[4] (<http://www.ukip.org/content/latest-news/450-eu-patio-heater-ban-to-punish-smokers>)

[5] http://www.letsrecycle.com/do/ecco.py/view_item?listid=37&listcatid=217&listitemid=51987§ion=legislation

[6] (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article3409951.ece>,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/the_daily_politics/8058100.stm#ukip)

[7]

([http://www.tomwisemep.co.uk/news/data/upimages/2285EnvironmentalAuditRev06\[1\].pdf](http://www.tomwisemep.co.uk/news/data/upimages/2285EnvironmentalAuditRev06[1].pdf))

[8] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/the-true-face-of-a-party-which-wants-us-out-of-europe-732288.html>)

[9] UKIP Programme & Speakers SW Rally 18th April 09