

The Greens' Natalie Bennett talks to Nouse

By [Joseph Silke](#), Editor

Tuesday 13 February 2018



Natalie Bennett was the leader of the Green Party from 2012 to 2016 [Image: Edinburgh Greens via flickr]

This past week, the Model United Nations Association here at York hosted the former leader of the Green Party of England and Wales: Natalie Bennett. Ms Bennett spoke with confidence and some charm about the democratic deficit she sees in our electoral system and, unsurprisingly, the need for a more environmentally friendly economy which prioritises protection of the planet over growth in GDP. Ms Bennett spoke to Nouse about the future of the Green Party, and her vision for reform and a more sustainable future.

With the persistence of “Corbyn-mania”, I asked Ms Bennett whether there is still a place for the Green Party within British politics as a party of the left. “I’d group that into two areas,” she said. “The Green Party wants to remain a member of the European Union. We value the free movement of people and have been fighting ever since the referendum for a ratification referendum.” She criticised Labour’s policy on Brexit, saying: “We have a very clear policy on Brexit. We want to remain in the Single Market and keep free movement. What many people don’t recognise is that Labour doesn’t have a position at all. They have said they want a long transition deal but nothing about what comes afterward.”

“Then there’s also broader ideology,” she continued, “in terms of the practical reality that we cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet. That’s not politics; it’s physics.” Ms Bennett decried projects such as HS2 and the new Hinkley Point project and added: “I’m really looking forward to the Universal Basic Income, which has been a long-term Green Party policy, taking off. It is an entirely new model in which people’s welfare is not dependent on the employment market.”

UBI is a system under which all citizens receive an unconditional payment from the state for their cost of living, replacing much of the welfare system. There have been no large-scale trials, although the Finnish government began a small, two-year experiment in January 2017 involving 2000 people. “Welfare shouldn’t be means tested,” she stressed, “and payments should be provided gladly as a measure of a decent society and that’s not how Labour approaches things.”

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has been making headlines of late with the government’s environment plan. I asked Natalie Bennett whether she approved of the Government’s direction. “Michael Gove has done some good things,” she replied. When I asked her whether that is strange for her to admit,

she replied: "If you ask the question why, it is pretty clear he is running to be the Chancellor or Prime Minister."

On the issue of agricultural subsidies, which Mr Gove has focused on for reform post-Brexit, Natalie Bennett began by speculating that "there's at least a 30-40% chance that Brexit won't happen at all." She prefaced by stating that the Green Party has "always been opposed to the CAP" and what is needed in Britain is a "revolution in our food production" that is ecologically friendly. "We have poisoned our planet with pesticides," she said, "we have polluted our rivers and our drinking water with these chemicals. We need a transformation and certainly a replacement for CAP is part of that."

The issue of fake news continues to recur in our public life. Recently, it was animal sentience that gripped the headlines. The Independent claimed that the defeat of an amendment by Green MP Caroline Lucas to the EU Withdrawal Bill proved that the government believes animals cannot feel pain. The reality was that the amendment put forward would have come into conflict with the government's new and extensive animal protection plan. Ms Bennett, however, claimed that it was the "right wing press" who had attempted to "confuse the issue" by objecting to the Green attempt to conserve the EU's preexisting protections. Michael Gove has insisted that not only will current protections remain but tougher measures will be enacted post-Brexit.

Finally, on electoral reform, I asked the f o r m e r Green leader whether she s u p p o r t e d the clamour from some on the left for an expansion in the franchise for 16 and 17-year-olds. "Absolutely! That's been Green Party policy for at least a decade. We know that if people vote for the first time, they are more likely to keep voting. We can set up a whole new generation of voters and truly make Britain a democracy." The Labour government in Wales recently made the move for local elections. Citing the expansion of the franchise for the Scottish separation referendum, Ms Bennett concluded: "16 and 17-year-olds were given the vote and they used it in very large numbers. There's no excuse not to look to the future."



Most Read **Discussed**

1. [What is the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance?](#)
2. [Review: Little Mix - LM5](#)
3. [Penalty for submitting work up to an hour late halved](#)
4. [UK government in contempt of Parliament ahead of key Brexit vote](#)
5. [How to depose a Conservative leader](#)
6. [Led Astray - The Case Against Greta Van Fleet](#)

Write for Nouse Politics

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in Politics

[UK government in contempt of Parliament ahead of key Brexit vote](#)

[How to depose a Conservative leader](#)

[Aufwiedersehen: Merkel plans her departure](#)

[US turnout surges in Midterms](#)

[Trans-Atlantic spats overshadow Centenary](#)

[Up to a million Muslims imprisoned by China](#)

- [About Nouse](#)
- [Who's Nouse](#)
- [Website Credits](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Student Discounts](#)
- [Print Editions](#)
- [Mini-Sites](#)
- [Nouse on Twitter](#)
- [Nouse on Facebook](#)
- [Nouse on Google+](#)

