

B9

Motion

Proposer: Ella Ward (Green Party)

Title: Suspend all prison construction and expansion

Motion text

1 This is a motion to impose a moratorium on prison construction and expansion.
2 The prison and criminal justice system is in crisis, and investing in prison
3 expansion instead of community-based alternatives only exacerbates this crisis.

4 The Young Greens note that:

- 5 • Prison expansion has grown rapidly in recent years, with more planned
- 6 • Existing plans for prison expansion are significantly delayed and already
7 costing £4 billion over budget
- 8 • Prison expansion is not increasing in line with the growth in people being
9 sent to prison
- 10 • Despite the SDS40 Early Release Scheme in 2024, the Ministry of Justice
11 projects the prison service will reach capacity again in early 2026
- 12 • Sending people convicted of criminal offences to prison is not proven to
13 reduce 'offending behaviour'
- 14 • Education provisions and drug treatment services are already over-
15 stretched and will be unable to meet prisoners' needs under continued
16 expansion; these provisions are essential to rehabilitation
- 17 • Prisoners are held in dehumanising conditions, with one quarter of the
18 population held in overcrowded cells designed for single occupancy, often
19 with open toilet facilities
- 20 • Many prisons are in poor, unsanitary, infested, unsafe and crumbling
21 conditions, with estimated maintenance costs of £2.8 billion, yet only
22 £520 million has been allotted for this over two years
- 23 • Self-harm, violence, and drug use in prison have increased, with
24 overcrowded prisons experiencing higher levels of this
- 25 • The government are currently using cells that do not meet basic fire
26 safety standards, in order to meet capacity demands

27 The Young Greens believe that:

- 28 • Continuing with prison expansion is an irresponsible, counter-productive
29 and wasteful investment

- 30 • Building new prison spaces and sentencing people to serve time in prison
31 does not and will not keep the public safer, rehabilitate more people, nor
32 serve as an effective deterrent to criminalised behaviour

- 33 • Investments must be diverted into community-based responses to 'offending
34 behaviour' with emphasis on rehabilitation over punishment

- 35 • Prison is not an appropriate or effective response to 'offending
36 behaviour', as it fails to address the root causes of harm, and in many
37 ways exacerbates the harm caused, by trapping people into cycles of
38 criminalised behaviour

- 39 • Decarceration (taking people out of prison) and excarceration (stopping
40 sending people to prison) are necessary directions of travel to
41 meaningfully address the cycles of harm and criminalised behaviour in
42 society, and suspending all prison construction and expansion is the first
43 stage of this

44 The Young Greens resolve:

- 45 • To call for a moratorium on all prison construction and expansion

- 46 • To invest in community-based support and rehabilitation programmes as
47 alternatives to custodial sentences, and as interventions before people
48 are forced to engage in criminalised behaviour

- 49 • To refuse to dehumanise and scapegoat people convicted of criminal
50 offences

- 51 • To address the root causes of circumstances that lead people to cause harm
52 or engage in 'criminal behaviour', not impose ineffective and arbitrary
53 punishment instead

54 Evidence:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmpublic/366/report.html>

Reason

This is a motion to impose a moratorium on prison construction and expansion. The prison and criminal justice system is in crisis. Prison populations are rising at a rate that prison expansion cannot keep up with, while crime rates are increasing. There is no substantive evidence that prison serves as an effective deterrent or keeps our communities safer, and continuing to invest in prison expansion wastes billions. Therefore, alternative community-based and rehabilitative responses to criminalised behaviour must be created and invested in. There must be a suspension of all prison construction and expansion.

Supporters

James Mitchell, Sam Andretti, Joe Clark, Amber Fae Lewis, Nick Ward, Beck Chamberlain