

Green View

News from
South Cambs Green Party

Green Party 
Real Progress

SPRING 2006

www.easterngreenparty.org.uk/scgp

Local party launches 'Green Bill'

The South Cambs Greens are launching a 'Green Bill' aimed at pressurising the District Council into some real Green action not just more 'grey' rhetoric. As Greens we want to pass on a Cambridgeshire that is both environmentally and socially in better shape than the one we inherited, so this 10 point Green Bill aims to inspire some new green thinking at the tired 'grey' District Council.

The essential elements of the Green Bill

- Provide more genuinely affordable housing by establishing local village housing trusts run by the community to ensure all affordable housing is kept affordable and available to local people. No stock transfers of council housing.
- Inspire more community involvement in the planning system by giving more power to Parish Councils and stand up to national government bullying by making a real stand against Prescott's ½ million houses.
- Radical upgrade in building regulations to ensure better local use of energy and water; for example all new dwellings should have solar hot water panels and rain water/grey water recovery systems. Lots of small changes made now, e.g. more use of absorbent landscaping surfaces to minimise wasteful and damaging run off, will help improve things in the long term.
- More action to calm traffic – give Parishes power to impose speed limits to 20mph in all built up areas of villages.
- Free school bus transport and more funding for Safer Journeys to School initiatives (which include more funding for cycle paths, walking buses)
- Improve public transport, for example subsidise an extensive network of small buses to serve our villages.
- All new developments over 15 and under 75 houses should have communal land set aside for food production and wildlife habitat. This should be land over and above open space and play areas already required. Developers to be required to ensure at least 50% of energy in these new developments comes from on-site renewable energy sources.
- Any large scale developments over 75 houses should have land set aside for the creation of a village farm that should be a minimum of 5 acres. This would be a communally owned village farm that provides local food for local people as well as be an education resource for local schools.
- The District Council should lead by example and establish an annual environmental and ethical exam to measure its own performance. For example the Council should be a GM-free zone and all energy that is used by the Council to come from local renewable sources.
- Introduce a South Cambs zero waste strategy like New Zealand. No landfill or incineration by 2020. Reduce volumes of waste and ensure that progressively higher percentages of waste is reused and recycled. The District Council must adopt the polluter pays principle.

Two thousand and six is likely to be one of the most significant years ever for the environment and social justice, not just in Britain but worldwide. With climate change a reality, global trade out of control, the poverty gap widening, terrorism an ever increasing threat, water shortage becoming a real issue and much more, the sound and radical policies of the Green Party are needed more than ever before.

The conventional parties are incapable of taking the necessary steps. We now need more help from our existing members and fresh input from new supporters. In addition we will be fighting elections again this spring and need funds to pay for the campaign.

Please contact the Green party for information on how you can get involved, make donations or become a member.

Get in touch with The Green Party – Telephone, email or write. See Page 4 for details

Cement works expansion plans

Cemex, the owner of the cement quarry at Barrington, recently applied for planning permission to develop the site, extending the quarry, increasing production more than threefold and most controversially, burning waste products in the new furnaces. Although the application has been 'suspended' by Cemex, it could reappear in another form. The proposals included a new co-incinerator process tower and a 105metre chimney visible from approximately 20 km away. With over 400 lorry movements a day with 25 % at night using a new access road from the A603, the proposals represented a major expansion of cement production. A major fear is that any development of the plant could lead to it becoming an officially recognised waste incineration facility. This would see the incineration of different types of waste in the furnaces which are used to process the raw materials into cement. This is known as co-incineration and could include municipal waste, tyres and sewage sludge. A much taller chimney is needed for the dispersal of the products of combustion into the atmosphere. Such discharges are subject to regulation, but are difficult to control. The disposal of wastes is a major and growing problem. Landfill sites are becoming less acceptable and will eventually be unviable. The Green Party has always advocated a policy of reducing the amount of waste produced, by reducing packaging, recycling more and generally promoting a life style which consumes less.

The Haslingfield Action Group is spearheading a campaign opposing the expansion plans
www.haslingfieldactiongroup.org
To receive updates on recent developments and progress email HAG at
haslingfieldactiongroup@yahoo.co.uk

Lack of water could scupper East of England Housing Plan

Government housing plans for the East of England suffered a major set-back on 15th February when experts told a public hearing that there was not enough water or sewage capacity to supply demand for proposed housing in the south of the region. The evidence backs concerns raised by Friends of the Earth that the proposed large scale development is simply not sustainable.

Experts from Thames Water told the public hearing taking place on the East of England Plan that not only is no water available to supply the proposed new development around Harlow, but that there is currently no technological solution to the sewage problem and no funding. The Government wants 478,000 new homes in the East of England and these proposals are now being considered as part of the region's draft spatial strategy.

It has always been quite clear that these proposals do not make sense because of the demand they will create for water and sewage treatment in this dry region. Now the experts have revealed the true extent of this problem - and said no ready solution exists. John Prescott decided where he wanted the housing to go in his Sustainable Communities Plan before he did his homework. Before you start building, you need to be sure that when you turn on the tap, water will come out. If the Government has made such a mistake for the Harlow area, we have to ask if they have made the same mistake on the other areas proposed for large scale development. The East of England Plan is the East of England Regional Assembly's (EERA) draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The public hearing, known as an Examination in Public, is being held at the Spirella Centre, Letchworth until March 3rd 2006. The hearings are held before an independent Panel of Inspectors who will report to the Regional Assembly and Government later in 2006. Under Government rules, the public does not have a right to appear or be heard at the examination. Attendance is by invitation from the Panel of Inspectors.

The East of England Plan sets out the kind of development which will happen across the region by 2021 affecting every aspect of life in the region from agriculture and transport to coastal policies and the region's economy. In the Plan EERA proposes a rising population, more houses and development pressures such as road building and airport expansion. Specifically, the Plan proposes: - 478,000 new homes; - a 678,000 rise in population caused in part by inward migration; - 421,500 new jobs; new roads and airport expansion.

Greens launch real public consultation on energy

On 1st February The Green Party launched its own public consultation on the future of energy use and electricity generation in the UK, in the wake of the launch of the government's Energy Review.

The Greens' survey is being conducted between 1st February and 15th April 2006 in the street and via public meetings held by Green Parties across the country. This process will truly engage the public, in contrast to the public consultation being held as part of the government Energy Review, which was launched by the DTI on 23rd January.

Keith Taylor, Principal Speaker of the Green Party, says of the DTI consultation, "The questions posed to the public by the DTI are over-complicated, require long answers, and don't encourage ordinary people to contribute. This will restrict the 'debate' to experts and those with the resources to write lengthy and detailed responses. The Green Party believes that ordinary people do have strong views on the future of energy in the UK and that the opinions of these people should be heard. Our consultation is asking questions in much simpler terms and will provide some clear and simple answers for the government to consider."

In a further effort to engage ordinary people with the Energy Review, local Green Parties will be organising public

meetings in communities all over the UK to discuss the issues in depth, and then put together 'community responses' to the DTI consultation.

The campaign also aims to switch two million households and businesses to green electricity tariffs by the end of 2006 and to stimulate a rush of applications to exhaust within months the £30 million Low Carbon Building Fund renewable energy grants, which begin in April. It is clear that Tony Blair has already decided to press ahead with more nuclear power whatever the results of the DTI consultation, and to continue to provide only a tiny amount of support for small-scale renewable energy projects. The Green Party aims to use consumer pressure to send Mr Blair a message he can't ignore - that the public want more investment in energy-saving and renewable energy, not nuclear power.

The Green Party's public consultation forms part of a major campaign, "Green Energy Works"
www.greenenergyworks.org.uk

Climate vandal Blair

Tony Blair has talked big over climate change, and has presented global warming, quite rightly, as an urgent problem needing action. But when it comes to the crunch, he is weak. He encourages airport expansion and won't support fuel taxes on aviation, being opposed to clawing back any of the aviation industry's annual £9bn subsidy or introducing new taxes to limit airlines' impact on the environment.

He doesn't believe 'restrictions on air travel at an international level' would cut passenger numbers, which are scheduled to double by 2020 and triple by 2030 – and could be responsible for as much as 60 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and puts the lie to Tony Blair's much-hyped 'green credentials'.

Aviation is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gases, already responsible for more than five per cent of all the EU's emissions, with passenger numbers set to triple in the UK by 2030.

Railway closures

The Labour government is now planning to close many local railway stations and possibly large sections of railway line across the country, according to a consultation paper leaked recently. The Treasury has taken control of the railway finances from the Independent Rail Regulator and Gordon Brown is seeking to make major cuts in government subsidies which the railway network can ill-afford.

The extent of this likely erosion of the railways is reminiscent of the infamous Beeching closures. Dr Richard Beeching became chairman of British Railways in 1961 under the Conservative Government and closed many of the small local stations which were crucial to the survival of thriving, rural communities. Since the destruction of vital transport links, we have seen a decline in rural communities and increased reliance on cars. Together with recent massive fare hikes, passengers are likely to leave the railways in their droves.

It is appalling that the current government with all its rhetoric about climate change, is taking steps to undermine the viability of public transport and force the public into cars. The railway network is vital both in terms of reducing reliance on polluting vehicles and in maintaining links between isolated communities.

The tragedy of the 1960s under the Tories is about to be repeated under the Labour government and this must not be allowed to happen.

As part of the Railways Act 2005, the government closed down the Passenger Committees and made closures easier to instigate. The public endure irregular trains, crowding, extortionate fares and now closures with little recourse for complaint. The privatisation of the railways under the Tories is substantially to blame for these problems and Labour has done little to improve the situation. We need a major re-think and major investment. Rather than pouring millions into endless road-building schemes, Blair needs to put his money where his mouth is and save one of Britain's best loved forms of sustainable transport.

Nuclear reactor costs

The projected cost of cleaning up the sites of Britain's old nuclear power stations is likely to leap to more than £70 billion. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), set up last April to supervise state-owned nuclear plants, said it was "almost certain" that its initial estimate of £56bn - itself the equivalent of a charge of £800 for every adult and child in the country - would have to be revised upwards.

It is claimed it is part of a softening-up exercise for the go-ahead to be given for up to 10 new nuclear power stations. The new plants are likely to be built on existing sites to minimise the threat of a public backlash. The Government is proposing to streamline major planning inquiries but senior nuclear industry figures also want to strip public inquiries of the power to investigate the safety of Britain's new nuclear reactors. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that officials in the nuclear power industry want ministers to reduce public scrutiny on planning applications in order to keep down costs and secure the support of investors.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Green Party aims to create a peaceful society with social justice for all, living within the limits of the Earth's resources. We support energy efficiency in housing, buildings and transport to protect us - in the long-term - from the damage being created by human activities

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Real Progress

Tory greenwash?

Recent headlines about a conversion to the Green cause of the new head of the Tory party are welcome. But when it comes to the hard decisions, do the Tories fare any better than Blair? The Green Party is disappointed with the Conservative Party's intention to relax planning restrictions on Green belt land, and that it is proof that Tory green rhetoric has no substance.

The revelations do not lie well with new tory leader Cameron's newfound green agenda. The party has obviously decided that letting developers build new houses will make them more popular than sticking to their green principles will. This is hardly surprising. The head of Cameron's green task force, John Gummer, has a history of sanctioning construction in the green belt when he was a celebrated Environment Minister yet also a chief construction industry lobbyist. We recognise that there is a need for new homes, but first we should consider building on the 60 plus thousand hectares of previously-developed land.

David Cameron tries to say the right thing to the right people all the time. He tells the public his priority is the environment, then tells the CBI we need a road building program. The Tories are still funded by big business and their integrity is still compromised.

It seems we have everything to fear from mainstream political parties who stop at nothing to grab votes. The public must not be conned into thinking they have changed their spots.

Join The Green Party

Single £31.00 (low income £10.50)

Joint £41.00 (low joint £14.00)

Student: £5.00

Life £400 (life joint £540)

Name.....

Address.....

.....PostCode.....

Phone.....

Email.....

**Post this form to
Simon Sagers
(address below)**

Tell your friends

Do you have friends who really should be in the Party, but have hesitated for years?

Do you belong to community associations, local environmental groups or charities that sympathise with the Green message?

At a time when the three mainstream parties are growing even closer together, there has never been a better time to persuade sympathisers to join.

The Green Party doesn't take financial contributions from multinationals, unlike other parties (the Lib Dems are sponsored by MacDonalds, Labour by BAE Systems) - we need the support of our membership to make an impact.

Only by building a strong, grassroots network of local parties will the Green message be effective.

Recruit another member today!

DIARY DATES

Wed 10th May

S.CAMBS GREEN PARTY Meeting
7.45pm The Plough, Coton

Sat 10th June

Open Day at Organic Health, Church Road
Hauxton. Tel Jackie Garfit 01223 870101

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