

Essex GreenView

Winter 2013/14



Green Party

The green newspaper for Essex

Greens Challenge Overdevelopment



Protecting green spaces: Councillor James Abbott with Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett at Bellfield, an area of trees and grassland in Witham, which Green councillors have protected from development.

Greens in Essex are campaigning against plans for development in the countryside and edge of local towns.

Epping Forest Green Party is opposing development plans in several parts of the district, including at The Old Glebe Field in Chigwell, where new housing would put a strain on local infrastructure. In Rochford, Green councillors Michael and Diane Hoy are playing a leading role in the local campaign against proposed development on the greenbelt around Hullbridge. Green councillors in

Witham have secured protection for the Bellfield grassland in the town and are continuing to campaign against proposed development on farmland between Witham and Rivenhall.

The Green Party has highlighted official figures which suggest that this level of development is not needed to meet local housing needs. There are over 20,000 empty homes throughout the county, while many brownfield sites in Essex are being left derelict.

Rupert Read, the Green Party's lead candidate for the European election,

commented: "Too many of our region's local plans are focused on encouraging excessive development. As a result we see expensive new homes built on greenfield sites which don't meet local housing needs.

"We need planning policies that will address the needs of current and future generations. That means bringing empty properties back into use, building homes local people can afford, building to high environmental standards and ensuring that the services people need will be available locally. It also means protecting the countryside so we can grow the food we need locally and conserve a healthy environment."

This view is backed up by a report from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, which highlighted that Government planning policies are "being used to impose unnecessary greenfield development in the teeth of local opposition".

Keep Our NHS Public

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas recently helped celebrate the 65th birthday of the National Health Service. She met with campaigners and paid tribute to "the greatest health service in the world".

But Dr Lucas warned that the NHS as we know it is under threat as services are cut back and privatised: "The huge campaign against privatisation has shown that there are plenty of people who still have that faith – and who will fight to protect it from being sold off to the highest bidder."

It has been revealed that the Government plans to privatise a key tier of management in the NHS worth £64 billion. This could see multinational companies put in charge of key decisions about the running of health services, sparking fears of further cutbacks.

Green Party members are working with the campaign group Keep Our NHS Public to oppose these plans.

In Essex, the Green Party is campaigning for more health services to be provided at a local level, highlighting that a community hospital should be provided for Witham and nearby villages to relieve pressure on GP surgeries.

European Election: Greens Can Win

European elections are held under proportional representation, so **every vote counts**. The Green Party narrowly missed winning a seat here last time.

It's Close

9%

Green vote last time

10%

Votes needed to win

The next European election is in **May 2014**.

With 10% of the vote the Green Party should win one of the seven MEP seats in Eastern region.



Green MP Caroline Lucas is fighting to protect NHS services from privatisation

Green Party policies on development and housing

- Stronger protections are needed for agricultural land, greenbelt and urban green spaces. Landowners should be forced to go ahead with planned developments on derelict urban sites.
- Councils should focus on providing affordable housing that meets local needs and they should be required to bring empty properties back into use.
- Housing should be built to high environmental standards, including insulation, renewable energy, rainwater recycling and appropriate building materials.
- Local services, job opportunities and good public transport links should be required with all new developments.

www.eastern.greenparty.org.uk

Includes links to local Green Party websites

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News in Brief

A large-scale opinion poll has shown that the Green Party is on track to win a seat in the European Parliament in Eastern region.

The poll, conducted by YouGov, stated: "Our research shows that... Greens would gain 12% of the vote, and the LibDems 10%." In Eastern region, this would put the Green Party on course to win the seat currently held by the LibDems.

Last time in the East the Green Party's Rupert Read was a close runner-up. On these figures, Rupert would be elected in May 2014 and the number of Green MEPs in the UK would increase from two to six.

Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett has called for an immediate end to licensed badger culls in England.

She described the culls as unscientific, inhumane and also shambolic, highlighting that a six-week trial in Somerset had failed even in its own terms, with the number of badgers culled around 40% of its target of 2,081.

Natalie Bennett said: "This slaughter of our indigenous wildlife, which is also causing substantial disruption to rural communities, has to end. We must take effective action to deal with the problem of bovine TB, but this clearly isn't it.

"We need to develop a co-ordinated approach of badger vaccination, improved biosecurity and hasten efforts towards the final clear answer to this problem – a cattle vaccine."

Is the EU Good for Our Environment?



Keith Taylor and other Green MEPs say that the EU has a leading role in creating a clean and healthy environment

Leaving the European Union would put at risk years of work to protect our environment, say campaigners.

Friends of the Earth, responding to David Cameron's announcement that he would hold an in/out referendum in 2017, called it "a poorly thought-through policy designed to see off his political opponents from the right,

with too little thought given to the consequences for our environment."

A recent Friends of the Earth report reminded us that Britain used to be called "the dirty man of Europe" with some of the worst emissions and filthiest seas. EU membership brought a shift to strict, legally binding targets.

The report also highlights that:

- EU bathing water directives clamped down on the discharge of effluent at the coast.

- EU air quality directives saw emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide cut.

- EU habitats directives obliged the government to take care of wildlife in special protected zones.

- The EU is calling now for binding targets for renewable energy by 2030.

Keith Taylor, Green Party MEP for the south east of England, said: "The EU offers the best opportunity for concerted action to succeed, for responsibilities to be shared, for expertise to be pooled... and for the UK to play a leading role in setting the international agenda."

The Green Party wants the EU's role in environmental protection to be strengthened, not jeopardised.

But the Greens are realistic about the EU's shortcomings. The Green Party wants to cut through the distant bureaucracy, giving more power to elected MEPs not unelected Commissioners and putting a curb on corporate lobbying.

Employment Figures Mask Murky Jobs Market

Conditions for Britain's workforce are deteriorating, prompting the Green Party to call on the Government to ban controversial zero-hours contracts and take action to create lasting jobs.

Although official employment figures have been rising, they mask some gloomy trends: a rise in zero-hours contracts, more temporary work and a general lack of job security.

According to the Unite union, 5.5 million people are on so-called zero-

hours contracts. These contracts can require the worker to be on standby every day but only paid when they work.

"Zero-hours contracts put workers in an invidious position, uncertain if they're going to have enough money to pay their rent, the food bills and other essentials", said Natalie Bennett, Green Party Leader.

Official figures show that temporary jobs have accounted for almost half of the rise in employment since 2010, in what has become known as 'underemployment' – people seeking a permanent job but who are only offered temporary, insecure work. The number of permanent jobs in the UK has reduced by 8,000 since 2005.

The Green Party is campaigning for more jobs and apprenticeships in areas such as sustainable food production and clean energy.

Jean Lambert, Green MEP for London, said: "Investing in manufacturing and skills for green industries is key to ensuring the UK meets its climate change targets. It is essential that more sustainable green jobs are created in the UK, both for a greener economy and long-term employment."

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Green and Pleasant Land

Green MEPs have warned that recent reforms to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) don't go far enough in supporting small farmers, improving animal welfare and encouraging environmentally-friendly farming.

The European Union has been under pressure to reform the CAP, with evidence of growing public support for sustainable farming practices. A poll by rural campaign group CPRE showed that 84% of the British public believes that farmers have a responsibility to conserve the countryside and wildlife.

The CAP has encouraged large-scale intensive farming since the 1960s, with huge subsidies going to large corporate landowners and smaller farmers losing out. Intensive farming has brought about major changes to our landscape, with small farms turned into vast fields of monocrops, hedgerows destroyed and usage of chemicals dramatically increased. Numbers of farmland birds such as yellowhammers and linnets have declined by over 50% as a result.

At present 80% of CAP subsidies go to the largest 20% of farms. The reforms will start to redress this balance but plans to shift more



Greens want to conserve East Anglia's countryside, including these open fields near Ely. Photo: NickFord (nickpix2012, Flickr)

subsidies into environmentally-friendly farming were watered down during the negotiations.

The Green Party will continue to press the EU to promote fairer, more ecological farming:

- Promote **Neighbourhood Farms** to grow food for nearby towns and villages, and encourage local, short supply chains.
- Encourage **Sustainable Farming** that conserves the soil and promotes biodiversity. In particular, subsidies should be used to encourage organic

farming, creation of wildlife habitat and growing multiple crops.

- Promote **high standards** in food safety and animal welfare.

Mark Ereira-Guyer, who is second on the Green Party's list of candidates for the European election, said: "Green MEPs will press for action to support small-scale, environmentally-friendly farming and create short supply chains for our food. This is the only way to keep food prices down as oil prices increase and provide the much needed safeguards our wildlife needs."



Saving Childhood

Rupert Read Writes...

A series of recent reports has shown that children growing up today are far more disconnected from the natural world than previous generations. Children are spending less time playing outside and more time in front of screens.

At the same time, health problems among children are on the rise, with one in ten young people suffering from a mental health condition, increasing levels of attention disorders and one in three children clinically obese.

So, are these two trends linked? Writer Richard Louv argues that alienation from nature has resulted in "diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses".

His concerns are shared by the National Trust, the RSPB and hundreds of other organisations who have come together to launch a new film-based campaign called Project Wild Thing, which aims to promote the benefits of free outdoor play for children's physical and mental health.

At the same time, there is growing support from parents and professionals for a rethink of the UK's approach to early years education. The Government is increasingly basing its policies for nursery years on 'school readiness' and introducing more formalised learning, and use of computers, at a younger age. The Too Much Too Soon campaign rightly highlights that the nursery years are a crucial stage of a child's development, where play helps children to develop their communicative skills and explore their natural creativity. We should consider a longer period of nursery education and a later start to formalised schooling – a policy that has been very successful in Scandinavia.

More and more parents, professionals and campaigners are becoming very concerned about our children's alienation from nature.



Our society has become highly commercialised in recent decades and children are suffering as a result. We need an urgent rethink about how we protect children's wellbeing and encourage the next generation to grow up enjoying nature and wanting to protect it for the future.



For more information please visit: www.projectwildthing.com www.toomuchtoosoon.org

Rupert Read is the Green Party's lead candidate for the 2014 European election in Eastern region and a founder member of the Leave Our Kids Alone campaign, which argues for a ban on advertising aimed at children.

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Green Policies

Six Green Party policies you might not know about:

- Use the planning and tax systems to **support independent shops** and help communities stop large new supermarkets.

- **Clamp down on corporate tax avoidance** and introduce a 'Robin Hood' tax on risky currency speculation.

- **Abolish student tuition fees.**

- **Renationalise the railways** to keep fares down and improve services.

- **Tackle fuel poverty** through a free nation-wide home insulation scheme, funded by a windfall tax on the big energy companies.

- **Mend Britain's broken democracy** by devolving power to local level, introducing elections to the Upper House, reducing the voting age to 16 and protecting the rights of campaign groups.

Green MEPs' Achievements

There are 48 Green MEPs in the European Parliament, in the fourth largest political group. They have successfully influenced a wide range of legislation including:

- A cap on bankers' bonuses.

- Access for all young people to the European Social Fund, for education, training and support from voluntary organisations.

- Consistent measuring of human rights progress across all EU countries.

- The ban on animal testing for cosmetics.

- Passing the Energy Efficiency Directive – to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020, with measures to achieve the goal and legal framework supporting.

- Protection of the countryside: improving farmers' pay, banning bee-killing toxins and promoting seed biodiversity – towards a GMO free Europe.

- Monitoring groundwater and ensuring companies are liable for environmental damage they cause during shale gas extraction (fracking).

- More efficient asylum processes – protection of vulnerable persons (children and victims of trafficking or torture) and more equal access to rights and benefits.

For further information on Green MEP achievements please visit:

www.greens2014.eu

Rundown Roads



Epping Forest Green Party campaigner Steven Neville, facing daily delays

Essex Green County Councillors are pressing the Conservative-run authority to improve the county highways service.

James Abbott, Leader of the Green Party County Councillors, has proposed several initiatives directly to the Cabinet member for Highways at County Hall. These have included a local priority scheme for speeding up pothole repairs where the parish council and the local County Councillor both report the same defect. Greens have also proposed devoting 10% of the local Highways Panel's budget to employing two extra highways officers in each borough to help clear the backlog of schemes.

Solutions Rejected

Both suggestions were rejected by the Conservative highways chief. Not only were these rejected, but the Tory Cabinet member has announced two changes to the highways service which will make things worse. Firstly, he further downgraded the repair standards for rural areas – meaning that bad potholes in rural lanes will remain for months longer.



Pothole reported mid-September at Sewardstone Road, invisible to cyclists when puddles form. fillthathole.org.uk

Secondly, and without consultation, he introduced a new Terms of Reference for the local Highways Panels that stated that the press and public were not allowed to attend panel meetings unless he said so. Councillor James Abbott commented: "Far from trying to improve the highways service, the Conservative Cabinet member seems intent on making it even more centralised and less responsive to local communities. Greens will continue to press for improvements – residents and taxpayers deserve better service."

Works Delayed

In Epping Forest, between Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell, lights were put either side of Roding Lane Bridge at the end of 2012. There was an outcry as traffic at peak times stretched back to the top of Palmerston Road. When it was announced that this would be the case for over a year many local residents, including Green campaigner Steven Neville, asked for works to be brought forward, and the necessary money spent to make the bridge safe. However, Essex County Council went



Rickstones Road, Rivenhall – still waiting for repair after four years of residents reporting it

No Nuclear Expansion at Bradwell

Green County Councillors James Abbott and Michael Hoy are pressing Essex County Council to oppose expansion of nuclear facilities at Bradwell on the Essex coast.

The old Magnox power station at Bradwell closed in 2002 and is now one of the many sites being slowly decommissioned, at a cost of tens of billions of pounds to taxpayers. As well as the possible use of the site as a nuclear waste storage facility, the Government has suggested Bradwell as a site for a brand new nuclear power station.

Councillor James Abbott said: "The Green Party has consistently opposed nuclear energy on the grounds of its

high costs, safety risks and the fact that there is no acceptable means of dealing with radioactive waste.

"The disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan shows that, even in the most advanced countries, nuclear is not always safe. It is now two years on from the tsunami and earthquake that damaged the Fukushima plant, and yet the company that owns it is still struggling to keep the massively radioactive reactors under control, using a process that is producing 400 tonnes of contaminated water every day.

"The Government should focus on clean, renewable energy sources and on reducing energy use."

ahead without getting the consents needed from the Environment Agency and utility companies, which resulted in further delays to the work, leaving long queues in the area daily.

In Rivenhall, Rickstones Road and the adjacent footway floods every time there is heavy rain due to failed

drains and the verge is eroding into the road. The County Council has been notified repeatedly for four years, with the local Highways Panel agreeing to investigate a scheme to build new drains and kerb the bank to stop it eroding. Residents are still waiting for the work to be actioned.

Can YOU help Essex Green Party?

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- Voting Green in future local elections
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- Supporting Green Party campaigns
- Making a donation (cheques payable to Eastern Region Green Party)
- Joining the Green Party (please tick for details)

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