

Beds GreenView

Spring 2014



Green Party

The green newspaper for Bedfordshire & Luton

Energy Crisis: Real Solutions



The Green Party has outlined its plans to tackle the issue of energy price rises.

The party's 'Green New Deal' programme would see every UK home fitted with modern heating insulation, at no cost to homeowners. The funding would come from levying a windfall tax on the profits of energy companies.

The Conservative and Labour parties have been arguing over how to stop bills rising in the short term – but the Green Party argues that the problem can only be solved by reducing energy use.

Rupert Read, the Green Party's lead candidate in this year's European election, said: *"The only way to effectively keep energy bills down is to reduce our use of expensive fossil fuels. We need a nationwide programme of home insulation*

to bring every house up to a good standard. This would create jobs, reduce carbon emissions and keep people warm whilst keeping bills down."

European Election: Greens Can Win

European elections are held under a proportional voting system, so **every vote counts**. Last time round the Green Party was just 1% short of winning a seat.

It's Close

9%

Green vote last time

10%

Votes needed to win

The next European election is on **22nd May 2014**.

Your vote can make a difference this time. Please vote for a Green MEP for Eastern region.

Fair Fares?

The Green Party organised protests against rail fare rises again outstripping rises in wages.

On 2nd January protesters spoke to early morning commuters at each main station in the eastern region, including Luton where a year's season ticket to London now costs £4,816. Rail fares rose by an average of 3.1% at the beginning of the year. The privately owned train operating companies on our fragmented railway system charge some of the highest fares in Europe.

Green MP Caroline Lucas has put forward a Bill in Parliament to bring the UK rail network back into public ownership. She said: *"By taking back individual franchises when they expire, or when companies fail to meet their conditions, the Government could save over £1 billion a year, every year. This is money that could and should be reinvested in services, and also used to reduce fares."*

Green Party Policies on Energy:

- Greater investment in energy production through clean renewable sources – wave, wind and solar power.
- A nationwide programme of home insulation to tackle fuel poverty and create thousands of new jobs.
- Encouraging the installation of solar panels on public buildings, transforming them into safe and secure 'power stations' serving their immediate neighbourhoods.
- Opposing fracking for shale gas, which would prevent Britain meeting its carbon reduction requirements and lock us into a high-cost energy future.

Readers' Offer!

For a chance to win a fantastic educational wind turbine model, for children or inquisitive minds, simply return the back page reply form

EcoStyle manufactures educational renewable kits for schools, allowing children to learn about wind and solar energy

www.ecostyle.co.uk



www.eastern.greenparty.org.uk

Includes links to local Green Party websites

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Food Bank Demand Up – Greens Call for Living Wage



Jean Lambert

Jean Lambert, a former teacher from Walthamstow, has been the Green Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for London since 1999.

Active in the UK Green Party since 1977, Jean has been the party's Principal Speaker and Executive Chair.

Jean, who was brought up in Essex, is one of 48 Green MEPs in the European Parliament who are working to tackle poverty, promote human rights, protect the environment and stop cruelty to animals.

Jean has helped push through a new cap on bankers' bonuses, secure the banning of bee-killing pesticides and promote new legislation to tackle racism across Europe. She also works with trade unions to promote the Living Wage and new jobs in green industries.

Demand for food banks is on the rise across Eastern region – with some areas reporting a 400% increase in the number of people using food banks for basic supplies.

The Green Party is calling for the introduction of a Living Wage – a higher level of minimum wage – to enable people to make ends meet.

Green MEP Keith Taylor has published a report documenting the reasons why people in Britain are being forced to seek emergency food hand-outs. The study reveals that 33% of people using food banks face benefits delays,



Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett visits Norwich Foodbank

a further 19% cited benefits changes and 18.5% blamed low incomes.

Keith said: **“Food bank use is soaring because more and more people in Britain are experiencing the grind of poverty. Wages have stagnated for years, benefits are being cut and, increasingly, removed.”**

Natalie Bennett, Green Party Leader, said: **“The majority of people on benefits are in work but often so poorly paid that they cannot afford to live above the poverty line. The Government must make the minimum wage a Living Wage.”**

The Living Wage is based on the level of pay people need to make ends meet. It is currently set at £7.65, whereas the minimum wage is £6.31. The Green Party has actively campaigned for the adoption of the Living Wage since 2006 and has helped persuade a number of councils and businesses to introduce it.



Rupert Read Writes...

We are often told to think of ourselves as ‘consumers’. We are led to believe that the pursuit of more material goods will produce happiness. Indeed, our whole economic system is based on this principle. But it’s worth asking: what is it that really makes us happy?

What Really Makes Us Happy?

Is it having lots of ‘stuff’? Is it consuming more? Or is it feeling secure? Having enough nutritious food? Loving, and being loved? Having good friends? Feeling confident about the future facing our children? Surely these things really make us happy – giving us security, longer-term purpose and fulfilment.

We are bombarded with marketing from big business and soundbites from conventional politicians arguing that we must continue to buy more things in order to have status and grow the economy.

But have these politicians really got their priorities right? Britain remains one of the most wealthy countries in the world, and yet more and more people are relying on food banks to meet their basic needs. An economy based on traditional ‘growth’ only seems to benefit those at the top and not meet many people’s basic needs.

Maybe continuous economic growth is not the route to happiness. We have enough wealth in Britain to meet everyone’s needs, but we need to share that wealth better. We need an economic system that doesn’t just measure the overall amount of consumption, but measures the level of poverty in society, whether we have access to the services we need and values the time we spend with our friends and family. That’s why more and more economists and governments around the world are supporting a new measure of economic success, based on wellbeing.

Perhaps it’s time to question the label of ‘consumer’ that the old political parties want to attach to us and focus instead on how we create a healthy and happy society.

Make a difference with your energy bills



We’re an energy company unlike any other – we take the money our customers spend on their electricity and gas bills and use it to build new sources of renewable energy, such as windmills. People:Power is at the heart of what we do – the more people who join us, the more sources of green energy we can build. Switch and the Eastern Region Green Party will receive a donation of up to £60*. Join us, it couldn’t be easier and takes less than five minutes.

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Rupert Read is the Green Party's lead candidate in the May 2014 European election.

Climate Challenge



Storm damage: Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett visited the region shortly after the December storms to discuss the action needed to protect coastal communities, such as in Hemsby (Norfolk) where several homes were lost

Climate scientists are warning that floods, storms and extreme weather are becoming more frequent due to man-made climate change.

The Green Party is calling on the UK Government to take urgent action to address the impact of the floods and storms on communities; and to lead in moving our economy away from dependence on polluting fossil fuels, so we can avoid runaway climate change making extreme weather patterns the norm.

A clean energy future

The Green Party is campaigning for a national programme to insulate people's homes and move our economy to a clean energy supply. Our region has huge potential to generate much more energy from clean sources: wind, solar and also tidal power. The Green Party is calling for the Government to

invest in these energies of the future rather than fracking and nuclear.



Nuclear not the answer

The Government is pursuing a new generation of nuclear power stations. These will take nearly twenty years to build, divert money away from clean energy sources and leave a legacy of toxic waste. A combination of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy can meet

the UK's energy needs and allow fossil fuels and nuclear to be phased out.



Fracking won't cut fuel bills

The Government is 'bribing' communities to accept fracking in their area and has designated much of our region as potential fracking sites. Fracking involves drilling for yet more fossil fuels that will exacerbate climate change. The process involves large amounts of chemicals and water, which could both pollute and deplete water supplies. An Ofgem

report said that fracking was unlikely to reduce fuel bills, so the only real beneficiaries will be the big oil and gas companies.



For detailed information on how the UK's energy needs can be met through energy efficiency and renewable energy please see the Zero Carbon Britain report: www.zerocarbonbritain.org

Do You Share Our Views on the EU?

- ✔ Promoting peace in Europe and the wider world should continue to be a central purpose of the EU.
- ✔ The EU must take a lead in addressing climate change and securing a healthy future.
- ✔ Europe should promote healthy local economies and fair pay, not cuts to public services and 'growth' for big business.
- ✔ Strong safeguards are needed to protect the natural environment and wildlife, on land and in the seas.
- ✔ The EU should stand up for those seeking asylum and should uphold justice and oppose discrimination.
- ✔ EU institutions should be reformed so more decisions are made by elected MEPs rather than unelected bureaucrats.

If you share the Green Party's positive vision for a fair, green and democratic Europe, vote Green in the European election on Thursday 22nd May.

Who Should Represent You in Europe?

The Green Party has a great chance of winning a seat in the European Parliament in this region. Lead candidate Rupert Read was just 1% short of winning last time.

Opinion polls suggest the election could see a close contest between Rupert and current LibDem MEP Andrew Duff. So, how do Rupert's views and record compare to Duff's?

Andrew Duff *Liberal Democrats*

Wants to see a 'United States of Europe' with bigger budgets and more decisions at EU level

Drafted the 'Lisbon Treaty', which led directly to a more corporate-focused, centralised EU

Voted against EU measures to address the impact of floods and tackle climate change

Supports new trading agreement with USA (TTIP) that will threaten employment rights, public services and environmental protection

Rupert Read *Green Party*

Wants a strong EU that protects the environment, supports vulnerable people and passes power to the local level

Along with existing Green MEPs, opposed the Lisbon Treaty because it made the EU too much like a club for big business

Promoting a low-carbon economy and action to support communities affected by flooding

Along with existing Green MEPs, opposes the TTIP and wants stronger legal safeguards for people, animal welfare and the environment

Protect Young People's Future Today

The Green Party plans to reduce numbers of young people out of work by pressing local councils to create more apprenticeships.

New research by the Prince's Trust has revealed that young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are more than twice as likely to feel unable to cope with life as their peers.

Green Councillors in Norfolk and Suffolk have put forward plans for securing long-term investment for apprenticeships, to help create a positive future for more young people.

Former Green Councillor Tom Llewellyn, now working for a housing association, helps hundreds of young people across the region into apprenticeships. He said: "**Taking on an apprentice involves a lot of risk for employers, especially small businesses. Greens want to reduce that risk.**"

Green Party European election candidate Rupert Read explained: "**We want to remove the bureaucracy of taking on apprentices by working with organisations that can provide the mentoring and administration of such schemes.**"

Supporting Disabled People Greens Oppose Incineration



The Green Party recently joined disabled protestors in demonstrations against the private company Atos, which has come under fire over the way it assesses whether people should receive disability benefits.

The Government has put Atos in charge of implementing its policy of cutting disability benefit spending by half – but Atos is simultaneously being paid almost the entirety of those savings as its fee.

Disability allowance assessments are now carried out by people who do not have

medical training or knowledge of the varied way that disability affects people.

Marc Scheimann, Green Party candidate for the European elections, stood with protestors outside the Atos centre in Luton which serves Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Marc said:

“I came to protest, but found myself comforting two people shaking and crying as they went in for their assessment. This system is ill-informed and heartless. Assessments must be done by doctors who understand disability.”

The High Court has recently given the go-ahead for a waste incinerator to be built at Stewartby after rejecting a challenge to the planning permission that had been granted for the scheme.

The possibility of a waste incinerator has been hanging over the people of Stewartby and the surrounding areas for several years, ever since Covanta proposed an enormous plant on the former Rookery South Pit site.

Covanta had indicated it would be pulling out of the UK, having not gained sufficient customers for the plant, but the latest developments show that an incinerator may well go ahead on the site and that strong opposition of many local people is to be ignored.

Lucy Bywater, a Green Party campaigner in Bedford, said: ***“Incinerators are wasteful, burning valuable resources and removing incentives for councils to improve recycling. There are also potentially serious health implications of emissions from incinerators.”***

Fighting Library Closures



Library users across Bedfordshire are angry about cuts to local services.

In Luton two libraries have closed – Wigmore and Sundon, and the mobile service has been axed.

In Bedford and Central Bedfordshire services are currently being ‘put on hold’. This means qualified librarians are not being replaced when they leave, and book stocks are falling.

Marc Scheimann, Beds Green Party candidate for the European election (pictured above with protestors), said:

“Libraries offer important services to the community. As well as lending books, they offer internet use, learning opportunities and sign-posting. We need to fight to protect our libraries: past closures in Luton have shown that once they are gone they don’t come back.”

Can YOU help Bedfordshire Green Party?

Yes, I will help by:

- Voting Green in the European election on 22nd May 2014
- Voting Green in local elections
- Displaying a window poster for the forthcoming election
- Delivering some leaflets in my area
- Coming to a Green Party event (please tick to request details)
- Supporting Green Party campaigns
- Making a donation (cheques payable to Eastern Region Green Party)
- Joining the Green Party (please tick for details)

Name:

Address:

Telephone: Email:

Please return to: Eastern Region Green Party, c/o 27 Clarendon Rd, Norwich, NR2 2PN.

Alternatively, email: eastern@greenparty.org.uk Or phone: 01582 485868.

The Green Party will contact you using the details you have supplied. If you do not wish to receive information from the Green Party please tick here:

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