

Herts GreenView

Winter 2013/14



Green Party

The green newspaper for Hertfordshire

Housing: Right Type, Right Place, Right Amount



Southfield School in Hatfield is suffering the effects of overdevelopment: pupils have been moved out because of the number of lorries expected for servicing development on greenbelt land at New Barnfield.

Government policies are encouraging new development in the countryside, according to a report by the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The report found that the National Planning Policy Framework is "being used to impose unnecessary greenfield development in the teeth of local opposition" and that "brownfield sites are being overlooked in favour of building on green fields that are easier for developers".

In Hertfordshire, there are plans for 66,000 new houses over the next two decades, many in open countryside. Green Party campaigners have argued that this level of development is excessive, highlighting that there are over 10,000 empty homes in the county and many derelict sites.

The Green Party is campaigning to reduce the impact of these developments on local people and the environment. In Dacorum, the Green

Party opposed developers' plans for 15,000 new houses and put forward an alternative plan for a lower level of development with high environmental standards. In Welwyn Hatfield, the Green Party is actively opposing plans for building on greenbelt land, including an incinerator planned for New Barnfield.

Rupert Read, the Green Party's lead candidate for the European election, commented: "For too long, national planning policies have focused on overdevelopment in the east and south east of the country. 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."

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.

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.

Meanwhile in Hertfordshire the Surgicentre at the Lister Hospital in Stevenage has been bought by the NHS after three patients died following routine surgery when the hospital was in private hands.



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 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

Eastern Green Party: c/o 27 Clarendon Road, Norwich, NR2 2PN

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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



Simon Grover, helping St Albans residents with his clear 'Green Guide' to recycling

St Albans Green Councillor Simon Grover has produced a handy one-page guide to the city's new recycling system, following a flood of enquiries from confused residents.

St Albans Council introduced changes to cardboard, plastics and food waste recycling. Councillor Grover said: "I welcome this intention to reduce landfill costs, increase sales of recycled material and improve recycling rates. However, information about the scheme has been patchy, causing confusion for both residents and collection crews. That's why we brought out our own Green Guide. Lots of people have said it's very useful." St Albans Council now uses Councillor Grover's 'Green Guide' to update its own information.

Download guide: www.sagreens.org.uk

Green Party members across Hertfordshire are campaigning for a more integrated public transport system.

Herts Green MEP candidate Jill Mills (pictured) has carried out a survey of cyclists using St Albans station to find out how much demand there is for extra bike space on First Capital Connect (FCC) trains. 40% of respondents said they would like to take their bike on the train if there was room, while others highlighted that they would want better storage at their place of work.

FCC bosses have promised to consider ways to improve facilities for cyclists on trains and at stations. New style trains are being proposed for 2016 with more space for bikes.

In Hemel Hempstead Green Party campaigners are calling for improved bus services to the train station while in Watford Green Party councillors are pressing for improved road safety measures.

The Green Party wants to see action to ensure that integrated public transport is available in all our villages, towns and cities at a reasonable cost. Green campaigners have called on the Government to require operators to work together to make it easier for people to use different modes of

transport to complete their journeys. Jill Mills said: "Clearly there is a way to go before we can have a green journey

to work, travelling efficiently door to door without costing the earth."



Fracking in Herts?

Licences for fracking in parts of Hertfordshire could be granted during 2014, it has emerged.

The Government has been conducting environmental assessments of large parts of England to see whether there could be potential for drilling for shale gas, ahead of a public consultation. Much of North Hertfordshire is included in the study.

Further licenses for fracking could then be granted during 2014, although permission from local councils and also from landowners would be needed before fracking could take place.

Fracking – or hydraulic fracturing – uses a mixture of water, sand and chemicals to blast rocks in the earth to release trapped shale gas. It is a controversial process which has been linked to local and global environmental problems.

In the North West of England, fracking was put on hold following two small earthquakes in Blackpool in 2011. In Pennsylvania, fracking has been linked to pollution of the

water supply, making drinking water unusable for some households.

Additional fracking sites would also result in increased carbon emissions, which are warming the planet, melting the Arctic ice and causing major changes to the world's climate and weather systems.

Questions have been raised over the Government's support for fracking. Chancellor George Osborne has more than halved the amount of money fracking companies have to pay in tax, even though leading drilling company Cuadrilla has admitted that fracking will have an 'insignificant effect' on gas prices.

The Green Party has highlighted that this 'dash for gas' would prevent Britain meeting its carbon reduction targets and lock the country into a high-cost energy future.

Karen Harmel, from North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Green Party, said: "We cannot continue to remain hooked on the finite resource of polluting fossil fuels. It is time for investment in clean renewable energy for the future!"

Food Security Research Launched

Hertfordshire University, Rothamsted Research Station and the Royal Veterinary College have launched a new joint research project on food production in the UK. Britain currently imports 60% of its food and the Vice Chancellor of Hertfordshire University has highlighted the grim picture of what could happen if the food supply chain is damaged.

Herts Green MEP candidate Jill Mills attended the launch of the research project and spoke out in favour of producing more food locally. She said that a focus on free trade means that Britain continues to import food that could easily be grown here while farmers in poorer countries are not paid a fair price for the food they grow for export.

Can YOU help Hertfordshire Green Party?

Yes, I will help by:

- Voting Green in the May 2014 European election
- Voting Green in future local elections
- Displaying a window poster at election time
- 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:

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