



Grapevine

Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 75

Autumn 2012

Green Party elects Natalie Bennett as its new leader

In the recent leadership election for the national party, Natalie Bennett a former journalist who has worked for the Independent, Times and as editor of Guardian Weekly, has been elected by the single transferable vote system, beating Peter Cranie by 1,757 to 1,204 votes in the third round. In line with Green Party election rules, the deputy leader was, therefore required to be a man. Will Duckworth (from Dudley, West Midlands) beat Richard Mallender by 1,329 to 1,245 votes.

Caroline Lucas, of course, remains as our very effective Member of Parliament.

**New Leadership
Announced**
Natalie Bennett

Will Duckworth

 **The Green Party**

Green Party Conference Bristol 7-10 September 2012

At the Conference, Natalie Bennett and Will Duckworth (as newly elected Leader and Deputy Leader respectively) gave speeches explaining their visions for the future of the Green Party, when there should be Green councillors in all local authorities and more Green MPs and MEPs.

There were headline debates on the National Health Service and Energy policy and on 'Ecocide'. John Lloyd, who attended the conference on behalf of the South Shropshire Green Party, will give a fuller account in the next issue of Grapevine.

Mike Tucker (editor).

Now to some important local issues:

Support the National Trust Campaign to protect Wenlock Edge Quarries

Wenlock Edge is 20 miles long and has one of the longest continuous strips of woodland in Britain. It consists of the world-famous Wenlock limestone formation, which is a very important location for fossils of this Silurian geological period. It is the most important habitat for dormice in Shropshire. The National Trust owns much of the woodland and some small quarry sites. However, the large quarries near Much Wenlock, where quarrying operations ceased a few years ago, are owned by Aggregate industries. Aggregate Industries have leased the quarries to Edge Renewables, who have submitted a planning proposal for a large-scale wood-chip processing plant. Although this proposal is supposed to provide a carbon-neutral source of energy, there are considerable environmental reasons to object to it. The National Trust grounds for objecting are:

1. The quarries should not be considered to be a 'brownfield' site. There is no overriding need for the operation to be set up in this sensitive area rather than a specific industrial site. They should be returned to the status of a 'greenfield' site.
2. There would be a significant impact on this iconic landscape from conservation and aesthetic perspectives.
3. Public access and enjoyment would be severely impacted.
4. Impact on the peaceful enjoyment of the AONB, as the processing of woodchip is likely to be very noisy, intrusive and disruptive.
5. The scale of the operation would harm the ecological recovery of the SSSI designated area.
6. A detailed alternative use is available. The local community and the National Trust have developed a vision for the future use of the quarries, which will address the community's priorities for local jobs, conservations, improved facilities and services.

Aggregate Industries approached the National Trust in 2008, seeking a partnership to develop future ideas for the site and there have been discussions between them ever since. The National Trust has developed a plan for the ecological restoration of the quarries, which are in a protected landscape. It would not be possible to develop this plan if the Edge Renewable proposal is approved. The National Trust has asked for members of the public to register their objections to the Edge Renewables plans on the Shropshire Council Planning website.

Ludlow Biodigester by John Lloyd

It is a sorry state of affairs that we are to see the Biodigester in Ludlow pass into history.

This was one of the early achievements of Tim Andrewes and myself (the Green Party Group) on the old South Shropshire District Council. We visited the then prototype project devised by Greenfinch and saw its potential and campaigned hard to enlist our fellow councillors to the idea.

What Greenfinch had to offer was a method of dealing with green waste, especially kitchen waste, via an Anaerobic Biodigester that didn't involve a burning operation, thus avoiding the toxicity that comes from the combustion process. At that period the introduction of the Landfill Levy had arrived so there was an economic incentive to look at new methods of waste disposal in addition to the ideological one that drove Tim and myself.

It's to the credit of the old District Council that it backed the idea and in the initial stage. We started to collect from food outlets in Ludlow and then households in the town. This was a weekly collection for the small domestic bins. Subsequently this was reinforced by a bigger wheelie bin for garden waste as the former was too sloppy to give the right mix to feed the Anaerobic Digester. Household collection was eventually extended to Church Stretton and other areas in south Shropshire, although there were still problems getting the right mix of garden and kitchen waste to feed the biodigester.

When the new Unitary Shropshire Council took over, they abandoned the existing scheme. The Ludlow installation continued to function but drew its waste from further afield which was not what we originally envisaged. Indeed, we had anticipated that when biodigester had proved itself, which it certainly did, it would be replicated in every township within the county.

The Shropshire Star (28/8/12) reported that an anaerobic digester at Swanscote Farm near Bridgnorth that is currently fuelled by maize and other crops grown on the farm to produce biogas and biofertiliser, has received planning permission to increase in size from 0.5 to 2.2 megawatts and to process food waste also. Planning specialists at Berry's of Shrewsbury say that a number of farmers are seriously considering adopting anaerobic digestion technology. This is to be welcomed but is unlikely to be adequate to replace the Ludlow biodigester as a means of recycling domestic and commercial waste collected by Shropshire Council.

There is a lesson to be learnt and that is you need Green Party Councillors in all Local Government Authorities to keep alive the Green Agenda.

The Shropshire Council Planning Process and SAMDEV housing proposals

By John Lloyd

Prior to the formation of the Shropshire Unitary Council the planning process was in the hands of the County's five District Councils. Each Council had its own housing development plan and guided by Whitehall it is intended that these individual plans are fully replaced.

This is where the Site Allocation and Management Development(SAMDev) Plan kicks in. This is seen as a more embracing consultative exercise than hitherto and the public in the market towns are encouraged to have their say. Church Stretton has already gone through a series of public meetings and its Town Council has responded to SAMDev.

The background to this is that the County Planning Authority has built up a portfolio of willing landowners and developers with land to sell which could be used for housing development. Generally the Planners are looking for a five year supply of land to give greater flexibility so it has greater control on where housing might go. Also, from the outset some sites are considered unsuitable and so the field is then narrowed down with those remaining ending up as the "runners" from which the public is asked to select their preferred options.

There is no question of there being no provision for housing development, because even with a resounding "No" from the public housing will still occur under the presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' as defined by the authorities.

The aim is a Final Plan of preferred sites to be published mid 2013, with expected first proposed planning applications under SAMDev appearing the following year. What strength the public views will command, even with all the talk of "Localisation" is yet to be seen. The ultimate decision on the SAMDev Final Plan will be made in Full Council, having been looked over by a Planning Inspector and that will be that. So it does suggest that who is your County Councillor could be very important.

N.B. It has been announced on the radio this morning that the Government is abolishing the requirement that a percentage of all new developments should be 'affordable' housing and will provide funds to encourage more house building. How this will affect the planning process is not yet clear.

Mike Tucker

Green Party pledges support for local farmers

The Green Party passed a new set of Food and Agricultural policies at its Spring Conference. Green Party policy will support small, local farmers in our region. The policies would put more local food into schools, hospitals, restaurants and local shops. It would also require more accurate labelling of food, so you know where your food comes from and how it was produced.

The new food policy is designed to help tackle food poverty, which is the inability to obtain healthy, affordable food. It is not just about cost, although this is obviously an issue for many people. It can also be because people lack shops selling healthy food in their area or have trouble reaching them due to lack of transport or mobility issues. Lack of knowledge about how to eat healthily and the cookery skills to create healthy meals are also important factors which allow food poverty to develop. If people have the skills, they can produce healthy food very affordably, it need not be the more expensive option.

The Green Party is calling on councils to take simple steps to address the food poverty issue. The council could save the distress and expense of chronic food-related medical conditions by supporting not-for-profit community-based projects, such as food cooperatives and community cafés and ensuring that cookery classes are offered in areas identified as being at risk of food poverty.

Food poverty can be about the overabundance of ‘junk’ food, as well a lack of healthy food and the Green Party is calling for the planning policy to limit the number of establishments in a given area selling food high in saturated fat, salt and sugar – so-called ‘junk food’ restaurants, especially near schools. Grants should be made available for establishments selling healthy food.



Farewell to David Gibbon

David Gibbon, who has been a stalwart of the South Shropshire Green Party for many years, has moved to Yorkshire to be close to his father and brother. David has stood for the Council in Church Stretton and Craven Arms, has been very active in a number of environmental organisations in Church Stretton and has been very active in the Craven Arms’ farmers’ market. As an agriculturalist, he made a major contribution to the Green Party Policy paper on Agriculture and Food. He will be much missed in South Shropshire but I am sure he will contribute to Green Party activities in Yorkshire.

DIARY DATES

South Shropshire Green Party meetings at the Acorn Cafe, Church Stretton

Tuesday 2nd October 1030am - Chris Williams West Midlands organiser and district councillor for Solihull will be visiting so we hope for a good turn-out.

By popular demand, meetings will then revert to Monday, so the next meetings are at 1030am on: 5th November and 3rd December 2012

New South Shropshire Green Party evening meeting in Ludlow

Tuesday 2nd October 2012 7.30-9.00pm at The Feathers (Tanners Room)

For further information contact:

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In December there will be a 'bring and share' meal at the Tan House, Little Stretton. More information will be available later.



For further information please contact Madeline Haigh (Tel. 01694 723627).

Leominster Apple Fair

Saturday 27th October 10-4

The Priory Church, Church Street, Leominster

Entrance £1.50. Children free.

Large display of apples, apple growing advice and information, **and apple identification.** Apples, cider, perry, apple juices, cakes, jams, jellies, honey, herbs and other produce for sale. (Opportunities for tasting many of these products) Also, pictures, prints, cards and crafts.

Home-made refreshments, competitions, stalls, crafts and displays,

The Jenny Pipes Morris.

Come along and enjoy the colours, the tastes and the smells!

This year Herefordshire Green Party are hosting an autumn walk as part of h.Energy week, details on their website or from the number below.

More information from 01568 780886

Date for contributions for Winter issue of Grapevine - 30th November 2012

Please could all members who would like to receive Grapevine by email and do not already do so, let Madeline know their email address. Also, please could anyone whose email has recently changed let her know the new address.

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