



Mike Tucker
(Editor)

Grapevine

Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

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Green Party Successes in the West Midlands

In the May 2012 local elections the Green Party did excellently in the West Midlands with wins in all target wards.

Green councillors were elected for the first time to Worcester, Dudley and Warwickshire Councils.

In Solihull, Chris Williams was elected to Chelmsley Ward and Greens were re-elected in two other wards (*see p.4 for full results*). In addition Andy Hodgson, councillor for Shirley South has defected from the Liberal Democrats to the Green Party, giving the Green Party a total of 6 councillors on Solihull Council.

With Felicity Norman as Green councillor for Leominster on neighbouring Herefordshire Council, Shropshire is one of the few local Councils without a Green councillor. Of course, John Lloyd was a Green councillor on South Shropshire district council (which no longer exists) but it is much more difficult to get candidates elected onto unitary authorities, such as Shropshire Council. This should be an aim for the Green Party for the local elections to be held in 2013.

John Lloyd is, of course, a town councillor for Church Stretton although such councillors are usually elected as individuals rather than as members of a political party. However, in Leominster, Peter Ellis, standing as a Green candidate, has recently won a seat on the town council, replacing Green councillor Maria Smale, who retired due to ill health, but beating a strong campaign from Tory and Labour candidates.

SALTS – A CAMPAIGN TO SAVE A LUDLOW TOWN SURGERY

There are currently two doctors' surgeries providing a service to Ludlow town. Each is in the town centre, is purpose built and easily accessible for people arriving on foot or using near-by parking facilities. At present more than a third of residents walk to the surgeries.

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Strategic Health Authority (SHA) propose to move the surgeries from their present position to the Eco Park on the far side of the A49, as part of a 'health village'. This development will incorporate the surgeries, a local hospital to replace the existing East Hamlet Hospital and a number of other facilities. Planning permission and approval from the Strategic Health Authority have been granted. The building is scheduled to start in July with a completion date of summer 2014.

The Eco Park is 1.8 miles from the town centre and yet there is no coherent transport plan for people to access the 'health village'. The loss of the surgeries will have major impact particularly on families with young children, people with disabilities and older people. The latter two groups are over-represented in the Ludlow population.

The SALTS campaign focussed on alerting residents to what was planned, specifically that there would no longer be an in-town surgery and bringing pressure to bear on the PCT and the SHA to ensure that there would be, at least, a branch surgery in the town.

The campaign began in November 2011 and a public meeting was attended by more than one hundred people, almost all of whom had no knowledge of the planned loss of surgeries. They supported unanimously a move to put pressure on the PCT and made contributions to fund leaflets and other expenses. More than one thousand Shropshire residents signed a petition, most of them coming from South Shropshire. The local press gave good reporting of the campaign. Shropshire Radio interviewed two members of the SALTS group.

Research discovered that, despite much trumpeting of a consultation process, the decisions to proceed with the loss of the surgeries were made in 2009 before any consultation took place; when this consultation did happen it did not make clear that the doctors would move out of the town.

The campaign proved to be both a positive and negative experience. We saw real community action attempting to protect an essential primary health service but the promoters of the Health Village development aggressively opposed the campaign, including giving misinformation about whether the SHA required the GPs to be part of the scheme if the hospital was to go ahead.

There is a two year period available to SALTS and we hope, during that time to ensure the continuing provision of a GP surgery. We will look at the possibility that a completely new practice might wish to set up, that the present two practices will acknowledge the need and provide a branch surgery or that some form of a community enterprise scheme might be put together.

Joyce Brand (for SALT)

N.B. John Lloyd's letter to the Shropshire Star (29/4/2012) supported this campaign.

Housing proposals for Church Stretton green field sites

Proposals in the Shropshire development plan (SAMDEV) to build homes on playing fields at Church Stretton Secondary School and on a field at Snatchfields, east of the A49 at Church Stretton, have been strongly opposed by local residents at a public meeting on 29th May. John Lloyd (local town councillor and Green Party organiser) wrote to the Shropshire Star on 10th May adding his support to the campaign in defence of the meadows around Church Stretton against these housing proposals and suggested that there were suitable ‘brownfield’ sites, such as Windsor Place (which is already partly developed) near the town centre that could be redeveloped for affordable homes. It is claimed that there are 60 applications in the SY6 area in urgent need of accommodation. This need might be met by such sites, providing the Housing Association received enough funds from central Government.

Shropshire Council gave presentations of their proposals at a public meeting on 11 June, attended by 400 people. Although Church Stretton has met its minimum housing requirements under the plan, the Town Council had agreed to an additional 150 houses over the period of the new Development Plan. It was proposed that the school playing field, which is adjacent to the A49, could have 40 houses and possible industrial units. Campaigners are concerned that this could lead to ribbon development from Church Stretton to All Stretton, greatly detracting from the rural nature of the Stretton valley.

The local Green Party, while recognising the need for more affordable housing in south Shropshire, believes this can be met by small-scale developments in existing towns and villages without building on Greenfield sites.

Planners approve Ironbridge Power Station’s wood biofuel plans against environmental opposition

Shropshire Council approved plans for E.ON build a storage shed to house wood fuel so as to convert Ironbridge Power station to burn imported wood fuel pellets, alongside the coal it currently imports from Russia. E.ON says this is part of their plans to reduce their carbon footprint, although this would depend on sustainable forest management with the trees being replaced to absorb carbon emitted during combustion. The huge amounts of wood fuel pellets required would come from North America as local sources would be inadequate. Telford Friends of the Earth mounted a vigorous campaign to oppose the plans but were unsuccessful in persuading councillors. An environmental audit should be carried out to see if the plans really do reduce carbon output compared to the present, taking the energy used in pelletisation, transport etc into consideration. E.ON says that the plans will safeguard 100 jobs. The Ironbridge power station

currently generates up to 100 MW of electricity but is due to be decommissioned in 2015.

Lack of progress on recycling targets

While

a councillor on the old South Shropshire Council in 2007, John Lloyd criticises the 27 year contract which was given to Veolia for waste collection. Veolia has now stopped doorstep recycling of cardboard, no longer uses household food and garden waste to feed the anaerobic digester at Ludlow and has failed to make progress on recycling the plastic waste it collects. It has also applied to build an incinerator in Shrewsbury against local opposition. Shropshire Council is tied into the contract that still has 22 years to run and is unlikely, therefore to meet recycling targets.

West Midland Local Election Results May 2012 (see page 1)

Worcester: Greens 720, Cons 442, Labour 236, LD 52.
(Neil Laurenson elected with 50% of the vote).

Dudley: Greens 1525, Labour 1269, Cons 335, UKIP 257.
(Will Duckworth elected with 45% of the vote)

Nuneaton: Greens 1012, Cons 651, Labour 488.
(Keith Konkador elected with 47% of the vote).

Solihull, Smiths Wood: Greens 1030, Labour 473, BNP 150, Cons 132.
(Mike Sheridan re-elected with 58% of the vote)

Solihull, Chelmsley Wood: Greens 1336, Labour 644, Cons 147.
(Chris Williams elected with 63% of the vote)

Solihull, Shirley West: Greens 1001, Cons 729, Labour 426, LD 406.
(Howard Allen re-elected with 39% of the vote).

Nuclear bits from the news

NEW SARCOPHOGUS AT CHERNOBYL

A report from the “*Chernobyl Forum*” says that the sarcophagus built immediately after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 is ageing and is to be replaced.

The new one is to be 105 metres high and 260 metres long, will cost \$1.2 billion and take three years to build. Most of the money will come from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The report further says that the biggest cost of the catastrophe continues to be dealing with its growing long term health effects, resulting in seven million people being in receipt of welfare benefits. And Belarus has estimated the losses over 30 years at US \$235 billion.

According to Ukrainian figures, the number of people designated as permanently disabled by the Chernobyl accident (and their children) increased from 200 in 1991 to 91,219 in 2001.

The “*Chernobyl Forum*” is a group of representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency and other UN bodies. *For more information, see* <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Booklets/Chernobyl/chernobyl.pdf>

FROM THE PAPERS

Nuclear Power



Rosatom, the Russian company that built Chernobyl, has confirmed its interest in new generators in Britain, probably Wylfa on Anglesey and Oldbury in Gloucestershire. *This is Money 10.4*

Plans by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and International Nuclear Services, to continue using vessels beyond their ‘*sell-by*’ date will raise major safety concerns. The boats are used for the transport of highly radioactive materials in European and Atlantic waters. *Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment, 15.4*

On May 6th, Japan will have no nuclear power for the first time in more than 40 years. The trade minister said that the last reactor currently operating would be shut down before the two reactors disabled after the Fukushima disaster would be back online. *Reuters 17.4*

DIARY DATES

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

Tuesday 7th August, 4th September, 2nd October, 6th November

Date for contributions for Autumn issue of Grapevine

31st August 2012

Green Party Autumn Conference

Council House, Bristol, 7th – 10th September (see www.greenparty.org.uk for details)

Folk down the Track

This popular series of folk concerts at locations accessible by train restarts on 21st June in Knighton. Subsequent concerts will be held as follows:

19th July - Emma and the Professor at Ludlow Brewery, Ludlow

16th August – Castle Folk Club – Castle Inn, Knuckas

20th September – In Voice – Sitwell Arms, Bucknell

18th October – Castle Folk Club – Castle Inn, Knucklas.

COME AND JOIN US

The South Shropshire Green Party is a small group – with big ambitions. We want a Green future for Shropshire, with a Green Council, and Green representation at Parish, Town and County levels. We need your support to make this happen, and we need it now.

The Green Party is the only party that puts people's needs before multinational profits; the only party with a comprehensive food and farming policy; the only party with the will to tackle the root causes of climate change. Local Green councillors are needed to protect and invigorate our rural communities, for example pushing for local transport and jobs, and a fair future for all our young people.

Please join us and help to make this happen. If you are a Green Party member and would like to stand for election, now is the time to come forward! We would like everyone in South Shropshire to have an opportunity to vote Green in the next year's Shropshire Council election.

YOUR PARTY NEEDS YOU.

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