



Grapevine

Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 78

Summer 2013

Results of Local Elections in May



The results in South Shropshire for Green Party candidates standing in the Shropshire Council elections were:

Bishop's Castle – Hilary Wendt was third with 107 votes (7.3%). Lib Dem. elected.

Clun – Janet Phillips was fourth with 131 votes (8.4%). Lib Dem. elected.

Ludlow North – Frances Newman was fifth with 69 votes (5.5%). Conservative elected.

Ludlow East – Imogen Jones was fourth with 64 votes (7%). Lib Dem. elected.

The South Shropshire Green Party Manifesto was distributed as election publicity and has encouraged new people to contact the party and attend meetings.

No South Shropshire seats were targets for the Green Party. However, Oswestry South in north Shropshire was targeted and Duncan Kerr for the Green Party came second with 337 votes (32%), narrowly missing defeating the leader of Shropshire Council, Keith Barrow (Conservative) who got 488 votes. This shows what can happen when the Green Party puts in a lot of effort.

Nationally the Green Party gained 14 seats (8 from Conservative, 3 from Labour and 3 from Lib Dems), held 10 seats and lost 9 (7 to Labour, 1 to Conservative and 1 to UKIP) – a net gain of 5 seats. In Cornwall, Tim Andrewes, who was a Green District councillor in South Shropshire, won a unitary council seat at St Ives East.

In Warwickshire, the Green Party gained 2 seats (in Nuneaton and Leamington). The Nuneaton result was particularly good because Keith Kondakor was elected by beating the Tory County Council leader. There were also Green Party gains Worcestershire, in Malvern and Worcester.

A Message and some comments from our Election Agent

The South Shropshire Green Party extends a big 'thank you' to everyone who supported us during the election campaign, and especially to those of you who took a deep breath, chose

not to vote tactically, and the put on record what you really believe in. We are sorry we were not able to offer candidates in all divisions, and intend to do better next time. You can follow us online at www.greenparty.org.uk following the links to West Midlands and then Shropshire.

Janet Helen Phillips
South Shropshire Green Party Election Agent

Five Arguments against Tactical Voting

- 1.As in any relationship, if you don't say what you really want, nobody really knows so you're unlikely ever to get it.
- 2.Just as importantly, the other parties will see no imperative to reconsider their policies to be sure of your vote next time.
- 3.So tactical voting encourages timid, middle of the road politics within which other points of view are marginalised. Seen from the outside, those political parties likely to be elected look pretty much the same.
- 4.Even on a good turnout, 35% of the electorate don't vote. It's not apathy: it may be boredom, anger, mistrust or a lack of hope, but it's also a tacit statement of disrespect for the 'political class.'
- 5.It can be a depressing experience to vote tactically, only to find that your vote wasn't needed to make the difference, or that the candidate, or their party, are less attractive in office than you hoped they would be.

Janet Phillips
Election agent and Green Party Candidate in the Clun Division



Bee-killer pesticides to be banned across Europe for the next two years



Following campaigns by environmental groups, Green Party members and MEPs, the three most common neonicotinoid pesticides, which have been implicated in the dramatic decline in bees, have been banned in Europe for the next two years, from 1st December, on all crops attractive to bees and on cereals planted in the summer. Two of the less common neonicotinoid pesticides are still approved for use and a campaign continues to get them banned.

The ban was approved by the European Union, although the UK Environment minister, Owen Paterson, whose constituency is North Shropshire, voted against the ban on the basis that the link with bee mortality was not proven (and strong lobbying from the pesticide industry and some farm lobbyists).

Monsanto and Genetically Modified (GM) Crops



According to the Avaaz campaign website, the chemical company giant, Monsanto is gradually taking over our food supply, poisoning our politics and putting the planet's food future in serious danger.

Since the beginning of agriculture, farmers could choose which seeds to use and whether to buy new or use seeds from their own crops. This is all in danger as biotechnology companies patent seed varieties. Monsanto has a near monopoly in the USA with patents on 96% of GM seeds planted there. Many of these seeds have been developed by Monsanto specifically to resist herbicides, also developed by Monsanto, so that the herbicides can be used in crops to kill weeds. However, the farmers have to buy new GM seeds each year and in the USA have been prohibited from planting their own seeds from year to year. Monsanto has sued hundreds of farmers for practicing the age-old art of seed saving and plant breeding.

Monsanto's power in the USA gives them a base to dominate agriculture across the world, driving an industrial farming take-over and destroying the livelihoods of small farmers. However, some farmers and scientists are fighting back and winning. One group in India has helped win three patent battles against the corporations and in Brazil, five million farmers successfully sued Monsanto for unfair collection of royalties.

In spite of the general opposition to GM crops in Europe, Monsanto have found loopholes in European law to have exclusive rights over conventional seeds. They already own 36% of all tomato, 32% of sweet pepper and 49% of cauliflower varieties registered in the EU. The European Parliament has objected to such patents and the European Patent Office could end the patenting of food seeds bred using conventional methods. *See the avaaz.org web site to sign the petition to urge the European Patent Office to prevent the patenting of seeds.*

Opinion piece – One Man’s Meat (a case for vegetarianism) (extract)

By Tom Manson

We are not living (as our experts would have it) in an overpopulated world where food is in short supply, but in a world where an increasingly large proportion of land is given over to the cultivation of crops to feed animals to end up as clothing, accessories, sundries, and meat for the rich man's table. We eat meat because as babies, as soon as we are able to intake solid foods, our mothers bung it into us - having been advised by our 'experts' that it is 'good for us'. Why do they push meat? Because gigantic sums of money are invested in it. Fortunes are spent on the advertising of meat, meat products and animal bi-products, and greater fortunes are made from the preparation, transport and sale of them. Here, however, are a few facts to chew on:

- In most cases the livestock destined for our dinner plates is fattened on grains, and since it takes many pounds of grain to produce one pound of meat, the vegetable protein required to make the meat for one person's meal could provide a meal for two or more vegetarian families.
- Meat is consumed for its protein value, yet only one fifth of every portion is protein (and half its weight is water) - whereas in grains, lentils, soya-beans and other such foods, the protein content is between a quarter and half its mass.
- Meat is more costly to buy and requires many more acres of land per protein yield, to produce.
- The chemicals used to quicken the growth of crops to feed our livestock, and the effluence from that livestock, are polluting lands and rivers, destroying vegetation and wildlife, poisoning the seas and devastating valuable fish stocks.
- While the conditions in which livestock are kept encourage ever more virulent animal diseases, now crossing over species and affecting us humans too, uneaten, decomposing meat is encouraging vermin in our habitats and spreading further disease.

In our abattoirs today, high pressure water jets are used to glean every ounce of tissue from the bones of even diseased carcasses to make the processed meat products on sale in our supermarkets and fast food outlets. Many thousands of gallons of precious water are used in this procedure, while worldwide, millions of children are dying for the want of it. These are just a few of many horrors to be found in our meat industry.

Yes, just like in the war business, slaughter is the game and money is the aim. All the way from growing the crops to feed our animal victims to fill our stomachs, and in all the many other products produced from their carcasses, from clothing and accessories to jells and glues, the financial rewards are colossal. This is the only reason for our continuing carnality, and in spite of all the known detrimental effects it has upon our health and our environment, the associated industries involved in the rearing and slaughter of our animal brethren, like our oil and automobile industries, will not relinquish a penny of their booty.

The karmic effects here and now upon us and our earth are evident in global gluttony for some and mass starvation for others as more and more deforestation takes place either to accommodate our four-legged or feathered 'friends', or grow the foodstuff to fatten them - to end up as meat on the rich man's table. Where market forces do not provide the opportunity to trade in crops or livestock, land is now being cultivated to grow other diversions to match the rich man's madness, such as poppies and marijuana - hastening the degeneration and demise of Western culture, and the devastation of our planet.

A vicious downward-cycle of destruction inviting disaster for all, as we may guess, the god behind this whole morbid misadventure is ... Mammon.

(For further information contact Tom Manson on tom@tommanon.co.uk).

Editor's Note and Comments: Tom also argues that our digestive systems are those of fruit-eating herbivores, not carnivores and that as our systems are not suited to meat-eating, resulting in detrimental effects to brain and body, including the rise in heart disease and cancer. I consider that there are good ethical and economic arguments for reducing or even stopping meat-eating but that the biological argument is probably dubious. Certainly doctors now consider excessive animal fat is bad for us but this may be partly due to our sedentary life-styles. Among our closest animal relatives, most primates, including gorillas and orang-utans are vegetarian (although oranges also eat insects) but our closest relative, the chimpanzee is an omnivore, which supplements its mainly vegetarian diet with insects, birds and mammals, even hunting quite large animals by cooperating in groups. It is known that early humans were also omnivores and, in fact it was cooperative hunting which led to social structures and tool-making and eventually to modern humans.

Rural Transport – a discussion by Mike Tucker

The South Shropshire Green Party Manifesto (which I hope you have all read) states: 'The Green Party believes that Shropshire needs a better strategy to develop public transport both for those without cars and to persuade people to leave their cars at home. This includes a better bus network and a more frequent stopping train service through Shropshire. A target for the overall reduction in road traffic should be introduced to decrease congestion and pollution'.

In a 'Green World' article 'Greening the Treasury' it is suggested that the cost of driving and flying should continuously increase and money raised could be channelled into public transport, as in London where the younger generation no longer see car ownership as 'cool'. However, as stated in a letter in the subsequent issue this is not the case in many rural areas where, unless public transport is improved first, not having a car would prevent people from getting jobs and ensuring that they have no social life. This letter was written from Dorset but the same argument definitely applies to Shropshire.

For many years, the Green Party, Friends of the Earth and Sustrans have advocated increased bicycle use instead of cars. This has had a positive effect in some towns, where adequate cycle lanes have been put in place but the effect has been minimal in rural areas. Certainly we see more bicycles around but these are almost entirely sports bikes for road work or mountain biking and generally do not replace cars. Our manifesto states that the South Shropshire Green Party supports tourism and where possible this should be based on walking, cycling or public transport. Some cycling holidays do replace tourism by car but it is more frequent to see large cars carrying bicycles to mountain biking destinations. Also some cycle holiday organisers need to ensure better road courtesy by their riders. It is not uncommon for local resident's cars to be stuck behind a mass of cyclists, taking up much of the road and making overtaking dangerous or impossible on our narrow, winding country roads. On the positive side, I do see a few cyclists arriving by train on the Heart of Wales

line and presumably they also make use of other railway lines. I understand that in the Netherlands buses have racks for bicycles and if this could be introduced here it would help people to enjoy cycling holidays here.

Electric cars would be a non-polluting alternative to petrol or diesel but until either the batteries have a much longer range or charging points become frequent in rural areas, they are hardly practical for most people in rural areas. The hybrid car seems to be the best, environmentally friendly option, if you can afford them!

Diary Dates

Monday 1st July – Monthly meeting 10.30, Acorn Cafe, Church Stretton

Tuesday 2nd July – Monthly evening meeting 19.30, Feathers hotel, Ludlow.

August – No meetings due to holidays

Monday 2nd September – Monthly meeting 10.30, Acorn Cafe, Church Stretton

Tuesday 3rd September – Monthly evening meeting 19.30, Feathers hotel, Ludlow

Monday 7th October – Monthly meeting 10.30, Acorn Cafe, Church Stretton

Tuesday 8th October – Monthly evening meeting 19.30, Feathers hotel, Ludlow

Autumn/Winter Event in Ludlow – details to follow later.

**In case you
John Lloyd**

missed it in the last issue, please note the following important letter from



Rock Cottage
All Stretton
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Tel. 01694 723143

Dear Grapevine Reader,

In the light of increased postal charges we are having to review the circulation of Grapevine. As far as possible we are encouraging all readers to receive it by email, though we recognise that not everyone has this facility.

If you are a paid-up Green Party member you are entitled to receive Grapevine by post if necessary. **However, if you do not pay a party subscription, we request that you either opt to receive Grapevine electronically, or send payment (minimum £2.00, payable to “South Shropshire Green Party”) to cover postage costs to me at Rock Cottage.**

If you are willing to change to being an email recipient, please let Madeline Haigh know on MHaigh3@aol.com. Also, if you have changed your own email address recently, please remember to keep us updated.

Yours sincerely,
John Lloyd

P.S. If you live in Church Stretton or Ludlow we are happy for you to continue to receive hand-delivered copies of Grapevine but we cannot do this in more rural areas.

South Shropshire Green Party Officers 2013

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