



Grapevine

Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 80

Winter 2013-14

**Green Party co-operation across Shropshire
will strengthen our ability to fight elections**

A meeting in Shrewsbury between representatives of South Shropshire Green Party and Shrewsbury and North Shropshire Green Party has agreed to set up a co-ordinating committee to deliver the Euro-election campaign in 2014 and to target one or more seats with the aim of winning a ward on the Shropshire Unitary Authority in the next local elections. It will also develop and implement a new media strategy. The full agreement is on page 2.

We are also in the process of selecting a candidate for the next general election and have, at present, two nominations.



The next European and General elections represent an opportunity for Greens in Ludlow constituency. The natural party of opposition, the Lib Dems, polled badly last time and will be suffering from both its involvement in government and its broken promises. The Labour party has never been strong here and is also tarred with its former record and cautiously right wing policies. UKIP, whatever they say, will take votes from the Tories.

There are many people who don't think much about politics but who are deeply concerned at the current state of affairs. Over the years they have in greater numbers simply not voted at all. We owe it to them to offer a simple message:

it doesn't have to be like this!
Keep calm and vote Green



(The logo above is going to change. Look out for the new Green Party logo!).

Green Party co-operation across Shropshire

Following preliminary email negotiations between Shropshire party officers and activists, a discussion meeting took place in Shrewsbury on November 2nd attended by nine members from South Shropshire, and six members from the combined North Shropshire & Shrewsbury parties. The meeting was ably chaired by Jan Zablocki from North Staffordshire. After detailed discussions the following resolution was agreed:

‘That a Co-ordinating Committee be established comprising three members from Shrewsbury and North Shropshire GP and three members from South Shropshire GP’.

That the Co-ordinating Committee be asked to undertake the following actions over the next six months:

- 1. To design and deliver the euro-election campaign in Shropshire.***
- 2. To determine one target to win ward for Shropshire Unitary authority.***
- 3. To review all GP publicity and implement a new media strategy.***

That there is a review within nine months by the two parties.”

John Lloyd and John Crowe offered to represent South Shropshire, with Hilary Wendt shadowing John Crowe. As two of the group’s tasks are election-related it was agreed that Janet Phillips (who was unable to attend the meeting) should be invited to be the third delegate. John Lloyd suggested that we could have a pool of 6 people from which three would attend the Co-ordinating Committee. We are therefore looking for two more representatives. If you are interested in representing our local party in this project to work more efficiently across the county please contact John Lloyd.

There will be a full report on this initiative at our South Shropshire AGM in Ludlow on Saturday 15th February.

Shropshire Council Slashes Budget

The recent moves by Shropshire Unitary Council to slash its budget will see the end of local government as we know it. Its Council Cabinet has agreed to make some £80 million cuts over the next three years, with in the region of £37 million coming off adult social care and children and young persons' services. If that isn't bad enough, the axe will fall on every department in the Council. Cuts will become increasingly difficult as undoubtedly it will be when they try to re-negotiate the waste management contract with Veolia. This commands a sizeable part of part of the annual budget, but past experience suggests breaking this 27 year "nightmare" contract will be counter-productive. Earlier this year an attempt to negotiate a variant on the contract was costed at £169,000.



Notwithstanding the problems with outsourcing, the Council is hell-bent on providing services by commissioning. This will result in massive cuts in staff directly employed. Whilst all Councils across the country face severe monetary restraints, in Shropshire there is an ideological focus: the belief that organisations have to be driven by the profit motive to offer an efficient service. This, of course, is a myth and what is presented is a need for clean sweep of the Council, removing a dusty bureaucracy to be replaced by a streamline business-like alternative. The truth is a public backed enterprise can be the best solution. One only has to look at the East Coast Line, a re-nationalised rail company. Now it is in the hands of Network Rail it contributes its surplus profits to the Exchequer, on average £4 million a week, while other rail companies are being bank rolled by the taxpayer.

Cutting staff will mean less face-to-face contact between Council staff and local residents. The emphasis will be on "digital-first strategy". This may be alright while services are problem free, but given the number of outside contractors to be dealt with this looks like wishful thinking. With fewer staff manning the phones, this is going to be a replica of what is experienced with energy companies-a constant wait to get through. As for an old-fashioned letter will this ever get a reply? This is all adding up to a reduction in the quality of service received.

What is so sad is local government if correctly structured could offer a quality service along side genuine democracy. This would mean the abolition of rural unitary councils and the formation of councils with a less geographical spread so that if cuts in a budget were required these could be understood in a local context. This, of course, is alien to Council Leader, Keith Barrow who sees councils as little more than an agency to hand out contracts, which ideally would happen once or twice a year. Gone is Municipal Enterprise, where councils did the job themselves and fill the gap that private enterprise failed to do. Can you imagine any Council today doing what Hull did decades ago; set up a telephone exchange for the City? This, incidentally, is still running successfully.

The present state affairs is soul destroying to the likes of myself who have put so much time and effort serving on councils, who believe there is a place for community action via a local council and hold onto the vision, which is best described in the term "the Culture of Cities" . It is up to Greens to build this future and give hope to others to join them.

John Lloyd (Organiser South Shropshire Green Party)

Planning changes by Shropshire Council will cut local democracy

The pending changes in the planning process by Shropshire Council will fundamentally change the ability of Shropshire residents to challenge development applications that they see as unacceptable. Most planning decisions will be delegated to Council officers, with regional planning committees having a very limited role. Localisation is fading from the political agenda and 'openness' is being lost. Numbers of Council planning staff will be cut and the planning process may be left to the local councillor to stitch up a deal with those Council officers that remain. This is certainly not a healthy prospect for local democracy and should be opposed.

The Co-operative Bank

The future of the Co-operative Bank may not be so easily solved by moving to a "bog standard" P.L.C. now its Bondholders have voted for changes that will result in hedge funds having over-all control. Many of the Co-op's customers will be greatly disappointed at the turn of events, especially as many were drawn to the bank in the first place because it had a different approach: one that involved account holder democracy and assurances that it would endeavour to invest ethically. It was never perfect but was so much better than the Big Four Banks. We are still to know how the business turned so sour. One suspects that if it had continued to act in a sustainable way and hadn't tried to borrow so freely, following the worst of City practices, its future would have been secure. Indeed it might have still been paying dividends. The opportunity is now open for a new bank to be formed that reverts to the principles of the Rochdale cooperative pioneers and which is directed by those who believe in these principles.

John Lloyd (Organiser, South Shropshire Green Party)

Electric cars – are Shropshire Council letting us down?

Stretton Climate Care recently had a meeting entitled 'Electric Cars – Value for money?

Electric cars are becoming increasingly affordable and economical to run but a map of electric vehicle charging points shows that there are at present none in central and south Shropshire, while there are many in the West Midlands conurbation and a number in Herefordshire and in neighbouring areas of Wales. Drivers of electric vehicles from elsewhere are likely to avoid Shropshire and local people will be reluctant to buy electric cars, if nothing is done.



However, there is some recent good news! Stretton Climate Care is working with the Church Stretton Cooperative supermarket to set up an electric vehicle charging point in the Coop car park. Climate Care will provide 40% of the funding and the Coop will provide the electricity. Perhaps Shropshire Council will take note and help fund electrical charging points elsewhere!

And now for some good news!

From Chris Williams' Twitter feed:

'Well done to Neil Laurenson, Green Party councillor in Worcester for securing implementation of the 'living wage' for council employees in the city.'

From the Web:

Vote to make Ecocide a crime to protect our future. Ecocide is the destruction of ecosystems. Together we can stop it. One law to change it all. Go to:

<http://www.endecocide.eu/?lang=en>.

And you may like to support - **European Citizens Initiative for an Unconditional Basic Income**

<http://basicincome2013.eu/>

And more bad news!

'Green Activist' newsletter reports that the 19th yearly session of the global climate change conference in Warsaw, Poland went so badly that 800 civil society groups and trade unions walked out, citing the appalling lack of ambition and commitment manifest in the talks. NGOs blamed lobbying from fossil fuel companies for impeding progress in the talks.

Election Candidates: information for national party members

We are in the process of choosing a Green Party candidate for the Ludlow Parliamentary Constituency. The next General Election will be, at the latest, in the summer of 2015, but could be earlier. Nominations close on 7th December.

Dates for your diary:

Friday January 31 2014 Postal voting papers, including candidate statements, should reach national members by this date. Contact John Lloyd if there are problems.

Saturday 15th February 2014 The Annual General meeting of the South Shropshire Green Party will begin with a **Hustings** when candidates will address the meeting and answer questions from the floor.

Saturday 1st March 2014 **LAST DATE** for national members' completed voting paper to reach John Lloyd.

The Green Party voting procedure uses the Single Transferable Vote and there is provision for negative voting. Nominees may not campaign for votes except through the Hustings and their written statements.

Coping with the Cold: Green Party Event on 25 January 2014
2-5 pm at the Ludlow Mascall Centre, Lower Galdeford, Ludlow, SY8 1RZ
Phone: 01584 873882

HELPERS WANTED !!!!!

The South Shropshire Green Party is keen to contribute to sustainable domestic energy for all. We have therefore instigated a public event, “Coping with the Cold” in Ludlow on 25 January 2014.

The aim of this event is to help provide information to householders and private landlords on how best to secure affordable warmth and energy efficiency, plus to move these issues up the political agenda. There will be an advice fair plus a panel of speakers followed by a question and answer session. Confirmed speakers and/or advice givers include Shropshire Council, the Just Credit Union, the Affordable Warmth Forum, Marches Energy Agency, and Lightfoot Enterprises and the Linus Project. Phillip Dunne, our local MP is also invited, as will be the press. We are also lucky to have a performance by the Clee Hill Children’s Choir singing appropriate song(s)!

It is very important that progress is made on issues of affordable warmth and energy efficiency to help reduce the appalling trend of more cold related deaths (which increased nationally by 31% during the winter of 2012); to bring modern, civilised affordably warm homes to many households presently struggling to do so; and to help householders to move to a low-carbon future. This event is also planned to highlight the Green Party’s commitment to social justice, and to help change public perceptions of us as a “one issue party”.

We need you:

Leafletting: To help make this event a success we hope to do extensive leafletting of Ludlow in January. We therefore need Green Party members and supporters to help do this. The more helpers we have the more we can share the load – meaning that no-one has more than 20 – 30mins delivering. Green Party member and SSGP’s “Official” artist Tom Manson has designed some superb publicity materials for this event – so let’s get them out there!

On the Day: We want to have a Green Party stand at this event to help sign up new members and supporters, answer questions about Green Party policies and its vision, and to garner signatures on our “Living Wage” petition. Or, **Bake a cake:** Cakes (preferably organic and most definitely free range) would be very welcome for us to sell on the day to help defray the costs of this event.

Haven’t got time to bake a cake, leaflet, or help on the day ? Please consider making a donation to help us be more active and thus increase our presence in our communities.

We want to hear from you: If you can help with either leaflet delivery or helping to run the Green Party stand on the day or by baking a cake please **contact** either **John Crowe or Hilary Wendt on 01588 680 338 or email crowe@Freedomia.net**

Diary Dates

Sun. 29th Dec. Green drinks in the festive season. From 7pm 'Coach and Horses', Swan Hill, Shrewsbury.

Sat. 4th Jan. West Midlands Green Party Regional Annual Conference, central Birmingham, 0930-1530.
Introduction by Will Duckworth
Variety of fringe events.
How to involve more people in your local party.
Catch up with old friends.
Cost £8 with reductions for unwaged and low-waged.

Mon. 6th Jan. South Shropshire Green Party meeting, Acorn Cafe, Church Stretton 10.30am

Tues. 7th Jan. Provisional Green Party meeting in Ludlow. Contact Janet for confirmation and details.

Sat. 25th Jan. 'Coping with the Cold' public meeting, Bishop Mascall Centre, Ludlow 2-5pm

Mon. 3rd Feb. South Shropshire Green Party meeting, Tan House, Little Stretton 10.30am.

Tues. 4th Feb. Provisional Green Party meeting in Ludlow. Contact Janet for confirmation and details.

Sat. 15th Feb. **S. Shropshire Green Party AGM, Bishops Mascall Centre, Ludlow, 2pm. Duncan Kerr, Green Party EU election candidate will address the meeting, following his excellent second place in Oswestry for the Shropshire Council elections. Also hustings for General Election prospective candidates will be held.**

Fri. 28th Feb. to 2nd March Green Party Conference, Liverpool (details on Web site).

Mon. 3rd Mar. South Shropshire Green Party meeting. Venue to be announced.

Tues. 4th Mar. Provisional Green Party meeting in Ludlow. Contact Janet for confirmation and details.

Fri. 21st March Fundraising Ceilidh, Ludlow brewery. Details to follow.

N.B. Sometimes, particularly in the winter it is not always possible to staff advertised group meetings. If you are not a regular attender and are thinking of attending, please ring John Lloyd or Madeline Haigh for Church Stretton meetings, or Janet Phillips for Ludlow (contact information on next page).

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