

A Green Thought

News and Ideas from Winchester Green Party



City Election – May 5th

With the new boundary changes, a complete District Council will be elected this year. The Green Party will be fielding more candidates than ever before in the District, including three in St Bartholomew's.

Dr. Michael Wilks, our lead candidate, medical director of a charity providing treatment for addiction, and is a Vice-President of the British Medical Association. Also standing are Rhian Harrison, Latin teacher at Pilgrims School and Campaigns Co-ordinator for Winchester Greens, and lawyer Lucy Clement, who is particularly concerned by the housing crisis and the impact that is having on the city's social and environmental wellbeing. All candidates live in St Bartholomew's.



Dr Michael Wilks speaking at a recent meeting on Europe and the environment



What We Want for Winchester

Vision

Winchester has so much to value, in its built heritage, its landscape setting and its human scale. But it could be a much better place if its streets were made more friendly to people and if new development respected its past. We need a vision of a healthy, walkable city, with safe and enjoyable streets.

'Winchester's heritage is so important, it must be core to all decisions made about its future.'

End to 'Big Planning'

With such a vision we might hope that the Council's planning function would be much more sensitively directed. For too long the Council has behaved as if Winchester were Docklands ripe for massive development. Rather than assuming the role of fixers in vanity projects like Silver Hill and Station Approach, planners should imagine themselves as guardians of what is good and seek to understand how that came to be. Winchester evolved over centuries – planners would be wise to allow that process to continue – creating briefs for areas in need of development and then allowing piecemeal applications that met the brief.

More Democracy

For some years many have felt disenfranchised. Nearly all the significant decisions about Winchester have been made by an out-of-town elite. And the Council pays only lip-service to the notion of consultation. This needs to change – the Green Party will lobby for at least some representation for city residents in the form of a Town Council. Consultation must mean showing some considered response to what people say.

'We need more local representation in Winchester, it's time to put an end to the out-of-town elite.'

Clean Air

Recent statistics suggest that Winchester's level of air pollution could be leading to tens of early deaths per year. The Council continues to do nothing to alleviate this problem and seems intent on worsening it by encouraging more traffic on to gridlocked streets. We will continue with our formal complaint – the Council continues to risk massive fines for its lawbreaking.



Modern transport policy

Winchester is not a suitable place for road traffic. We see access and mobility in terms of public transport, walking and cycling. Not only is this the key to clean air in Winchester, but also the key to healthier and safer lifestyles, the return of streets to people, more access to visitors and shoppers and a more prosperous town centre. There are many economically vital towns in Europe (and even some in the UK) which do things much better than we do.

'The traffic congestion and resulting air pollution in Winchester city centre is unacceptable. It's time for this to change.'

Good Housing

The Green Party opposed Barton Farm but not because Winchester does not need housing. Many of those (especially the young) whom we rely on to work for local services and the local economy cannot afford to live here. Local Plan housing targets pretended a case of local need, but were really all about market demand for bringing in new population (probably mostly as London dormitory). It does bring in 'affordable housing' but at 80% of market rent in Winchester such housing cannot be seen as meeting any kind of social need.

The Council is providing a very small amount of new social housing, but the government's plans to carry on selling social housing and affordable housing (often to buy-to-let landlords) without significant replacement, is diminishing the social housing stock. We believe the Council must maintain and increase its social housing stock and it should pay for new build out of the rates.



Courtesy of the Hampshire Chronicle



Isolation?

Europe – In or Out?

The Green Party is pro-European both by natural inclination and by reason, because interdependence is the glue of family and so it is of a family of nations.

The economic arguments are sterile – the truth is that nobody knows where the balance lies. But the most serious problems in the world are international and need international co-operation – climate change, air, water and beach pollution, fishery destruction, damage to habitats etc. The European Union is big enough and civilised enough to make a difference to these things and it works through regulation.

We know what the leading politicians for the Exit campaign would do because they have told us – they would scrap wildlife regulation, landscape protection and air pollution legislation.

Like all political structures, (including our own Parliament) the EU needs reform. The politicians are not making a great job of that, but ordinary Europeans are getting involved, by working together in campaigns for instance to cause a re-think on the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP).

The people can reshape Europe, so that the good it does in maintaining a Europe free of internal conflict and protecting the environment is key.

