



A Green Thought

News and Ideas from Winchester Green Party

Changing the Politics

Winchester Green Party is standing in the local Council election on 5th May and Alison Craig is the candidate in the St Bartholomew Ward.



Alison Craig grew up in Winchester and worked as the Hampshire Regional Liaison Officer for Caroline Lucas, leader of the Green Party, till Caroline's election to Parliament as the first ever Green MP.

Last year the Green Party achieved 12 per cent of the vote in St Bartholomew, one of the top two results in Hampshire for the Green Party. This year we have every chance of winning here. *"People are so dismayed by the Liberal Democrats' broken promises in the*

Coalition that in a recent by-election they gained just 4 per cent of the vote, coming sixth", says Alison.

The Tory local candidate in St Bartholomew, Gary Adams, says he wants to improve recycling services but City Council Tories just voted to defeat a proposal for a kerbside glass collection recycling scheme for the city.

Green % votes in Winchester wards



A Fairer Voting System

On 5th May this year, voters will be asked to vote 'Yes' or 'No' to this simple question:

Do you want the United Kingdom to adopt the 'alternative vote' system instead of the current 'first past the post' system for electing Members of Parliament to the House of Commons?

**ON 5TH MAY VOTE FOR
ALISON CRAIG
GREEN PARTY
IN THE
CITY COUNCIL ELECTION -
ST BARTHOLOMEW WARD!**

**VOTE YES TO THE
ALTERNATIVE VOTE!**

Winchester Green Party is urging everyone to vote Yes, to change the Parliamentary voting system from the outdated First-Past-the Post system to the Alternative Vote (AV). AV requires winning candidates to poll a minimum of 50 per cent of the vote. In last year's Parliamentary election, winner Steve Brine gained only 48.5 per cent.

A Yes vote means:

- Harder working MPs – candidates need to secure a real majority of voters to be sure of winning, not just the one in three voters who can hand them power under the current system
- An end to tactical voting: under AV you will be able to vote for whoever you want to win, knowing your vote won't be wasted. Results will reflect the widest supported Parties – so the Green Party will stand to do better under AV.

See our *Frequently Asked Questions* about AV section on our website, under Campaigns.

Against Wasting Things:

No to Barton Farm

Unlike local Liberal Democrats, Winchester Green Party is opposed to the Barton Farm development

and is actively campaigning against it. Cala Homes' proposal for 2000 houses on the last surviving 'green wedge' of land into Winchester

would change the city's environment forever, increasing local traffic by up to 20 per cent.

Just before the recent public inquiry, an officer within Hampshire County Council took it upon himself to say that these very severe traffic effects would be acceptable – in exchange for a £2 million payment to HCC by Cala Homes. LibDem HCC councillors objected to this only on the grounds that the sum of money was insufficient!

Alison Craig, Green Party local election candidate says: 'We are dismayed that the Barton Farm proposal is even being considered when scores of homes stand empty across Winchester District. If second homes (which are often left empty) are included, 756 homes are standing empty in an area of significant housing need.



An empty home in Eastgate Street, owned by the City Council

We are lobbying Winchester City Council to bring empty homes back into use and to use its discretionary power to abolish the discounts on Council Tax payable on empty property. The City Council must use the new central government funding it has received – the New Homes Bonus – on renovating empty properties and bringing them back into use. If Barton Farm and other over-development is permitted, our District is in danger of becoming like the M27/A27 corridor (Hedge End, Fareham, Portsmouth). If the environment is degraded, jobs will go too'.

The Green Party entirely rejects the notion that this region has to take more than its fair share of economic development and therefore housing. Since 1981, while England's population has risen by 10 per cent, and Hampshire's by 17 per cent, Winchester's population has risen by 32 per cent.

Winchester Green Party is:

- opposing all new housing development on greenfield sites;
- challenging Winchester City Council to publish its full method for estimating

'housing need' (rather than housing demand);

- pushing for a new WCC Empty Homes Strategy;
- campaigning for the abolition of discounts on Council Tax payable on empty properties

A community farm for Winchester?

Winchester Green Party has been working with the City Council over a potential site for a Community Farm (or possibly new allotments). The site is north of Hillier Way and east of Nuns' Stream, adjacent to a car park used by the Football Club. Owned by the City Council, the site was previously used as a settlement lagoon for river dredgings, and then as a biking area. It has since served as a fly-tip for builders' rubble and a dump for worse, frequented by drug addicts. The Greens have asked the Council to carry out a small excavation to establish the basic usability of the soil (what is underneath? Is it toxic? etc) before we then sound out the local community to gauge interest.

Allotments for health and wealth!

The Greens are also lobbying the City Council for more land for allotments, and shorter waiting times, currently up to two years.



A recent study from Holland showed that allotment holders get significant health benefits from the activity. Growing your own fruit and vegetables is also cheaper than buying it in the supermarket! A survey organised by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners found that the average cost of running a plot (250 square metres) is £202 per year. The minimum value of the fruit and vegetables grown, when working a plot to full production, equates to £1564 per plot.

Against wasting people – NO to the cuts

Winchester Green Party is campaigning against the public sector cuts which are hitting the poorest,

youngest, and most vulnerable members of society hardest. Winchester Green Party joined Unison at the anti-cuts demonstration in Winchester on 24th February. Alison Craig, Green Party local election candidate says, "*We recognise that public accounts must be put in order. But the deficit problem was created by the recklessness of bankers and financiers, and they are not shouldering their share of the solution.*"



In 2008, the country spent £850 billion bailing out the banks, but in 2010 the Chancellor announced that the banks would pay a 'special levy' of merely £2.5bn a year from 2012. At that rate it will take them 340 years to repay their debt to us, without any interest.

We especially condemn:

- the reduction by a third of Sure Start children's centres in Hampshire (reduced by 28 from 81 to 53) and cuts to care home-nursing staff;
- forthcoming cuts of £2 million to local bus services;
- the broken promises of the Liberal Democrats in allowing the perpetuation of bankers' reckless trading and bonuses.

Unfairness

The government keeps telling us '*We are all in this together*', but the facts since the banking crisis speak for themselves:

- the average pay of FTSE 100 directors has risen 55%
- corporation tax has been cut
- staff at Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, the watchdog for tax evasion, have been reduced by around 30,000 in the past five years
- bonuses are back in the many billions
- there has been only minor reform of the banks.

We are told there are no alternatives to public sector cuts. But there are, and the Green Party is committed to promoting them. How about:

- clamping down on tax evasion by corporations and the rich, estimated to cost the state £95 billion a year – this would more than cover the £81 billion, four-year cuts programme underway
- making the banks pay for a crisis they created: last year they paid themselves over £7 billion in bonuses, and just four banks made £24 billion in profit
- imposing a modest Robin Hood tax of 0.05 per cent on global financial transactions (initially just on UK financial institutions), which would raise an estimated £20 to 30 billion per year, reducing the annual deficit by between 12.5 and 20%
- imposing a tax on empty property, to raise £5 billion a year
- dropping Trident with a long-term saving of £60 billion.

The idea that the private sector will somehow grow to replace public sector jobs is false. What in reality happens is that large numbers of the lower paid move into the twilight world of part-time minimum-wage employment uncertainty. Meanwhile the super-rich move the other way, increasing the polarization of society.

After Singapore, the USA, and Portugal, the UK is already one of the most unequal societies in the world, with the richest 20% over 7 times as rich as the poorest 20%.

There is an alternative!

Unlike the other parties, the Green Party has a clear vision of healthy future economic development, and is committed to investing in public services to resolve the deficit crisis.

How about creating over a million 'climate jobs' nationally, by investing in:

- renewable energy; currently only 2.2% of UK energy comes from renewables compared with 8.9% in Germany, 11% in France, and an impressive 44.4% in Sweden
- clean-tech engineering, to enable us to move away from fossil fuel use
- public transport including bus networks
- sustainable and affordable housing and development.

Against wasting heat: NO to open doors

The Greens have written to dozens of retailers asking them to keep doors closed, if their heating is on, and to stop wasting energy. Even in the coldest weather, many shops in the High Street keep their doors wide open while turning the heating up, in the hope of attracting more customers.



Winchester Green Party's Close the Doors campaign has been warmly received by shoppers and High Street shop staff

Local election candidate Alison Craig says: *"I grew up and went to school in Winchester, so I remember the time when shops kept their doors closed in cold weather. Leaving them open is barmy at a time when we need to bring down climate change emissions."*

Winchester District has the highest greenhouse gas emission level in Hampshire, with an average of 12 tonnes of CO₂ per person per year - well above the national average of 9.4.

GROWING THINGS

Spring in Hyde

You may have noticed a change to the public flowerbed on the corner of Hyde Street and Worthy Lane. After years of neglect it is now a bright display of crocuses and daffodils.

The flowerbed (owned by Hampshire County Council, and managed under contract by the City

Council) had been neglected for many years and was a mass of nettles. Local residents had tried in vain to draw attention to its plight.

Winchester Green Party responded by organizing a 'Guerilla Gardening' work-party in late November last year. Braving the icy temperature, volunteers got out spades, forks and trowels, cleared the nettles, picked litter, and planted hundreds of bulbs, and a walnut tree, which they donated themselves.



Locals guerilla gardening with the Green Party!

Local campaigner on behalf of the flowerbed, Jane, says: *"I have noticed with pleasure the bulbs erupting and the little posts you have inserted to prevent damage from passing traffic. I wish you all very good luck in the preservation of a renewed and delightful entry to Winchester. Thank you for picking up the challenge. I have for more than two years failed completely with any other Councillors!"*

The Green Party is working with the City Council to plant up the flowerbed further with attractive shrubs and wild flowers, and to maintain it



www.winchestergreenparty.org
rxeparker@yahoo.co.uk
01962 890160

Previous issues of Green Thought can be found on the website.