



A Green Thought

News and Ideas from Winchester Green Party

Introducing Dr. Michael Wilks

We are sad to say that Alison Craig will probably not be standing for City Council elections in 2012 because her job has taken her to live in Salisbury. Alison took the Green Party vote here in St Bartholomew's ward progressively up from below 2% of turnout in 2008 to 17.5% at the last election.



Dr Michael Wilks

We are fortunate to have Dr Michael Wilks take over the task of Convenor for the Winchester branch and agree to stand for next May's local elections in this ward.

Michael has held major roles in the British Medical Association and in medical bodies in the EU. He wrote the excellent article on Climate Change and Health in our previous edition of *A Green Thought*.

Barton Farm

We have consistently opposed the Barton Farm development. The Winchester Green Party believes that there is a strong need for truly affordable social housing in Winchester, which should be provided by Council build.

The need is of such scale that the public ownership of 'brownfield' land (including excess car parking) is perfectly adequate to cater for it and provide the financial resources to build it. The Barton Farm project only creates 'affordable' housing on the back of large-scale commercial house-building on greenfield sites.

The outcome of the public inquiry on Barton Farm gave the developers a green light. The Secretary of State, Eric Pickles overturned this result by instructing the Council 'to engage with the Government's intention to move away from top-down imposition and to allow local communities to take on a far greater role in identifying the level and location of the housing that is needed.'

Although this U-turn happened as a result of action by our Tory MP, the Tory-dominated District Council immediately agreed a Core Strategy to build 4000 commercial market houses. To ensure that this was pushed through the Council, the Tories imposed a whip on all their councillors.

Note that the Cabinet has no member from Winchester itself. The Council is exactly balanced between Tories and LibDems, but two Tory-leaning Independents from Bishops Waltham can guarantee that their view will prevail.

The outcome is that a decision on Winchester's future was made exactly by the 'top-down imposition' Pickles told Councils to move away from.

A bad day for democracy in Winchester.

Community Solar Power

We campaigned and leafleted over 5 weeks to get 24 people interested in a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) installation. A meeting was held at short notice on 22nd October at which an installer was appointed. At last our scheme had got off the ground.

One week later the Government announced that its PV incentive (the "feed-in tariff") would end on December 31st, and not on March 31st as previously stated back in August 2011. In spite of this, we were able to get four installations completed by the new deadline. This U-turn, although subject to legal challenge, has already seriously damaged the PV industry.

Not to be deterred, we are launching "Phase Two" of the project. With PV prices falling and a more competitive home market, PV-generated electricity is now within the grasp of a wider section of the community, even if the return on the cost of installing it will be made more slowly.



Miss Fiona Lief, with Green Party members
Dr Michael Wilks and Rob Parker

A medium size installation will cost around £7000 producing an annual income of about £600 and saving 1 ton of CO₂ passing into the atmosphere each year.

If you would like to participate in this revised scheme or have any questions – phone:

Rob Parker 01962-890160; rxeparker@yahoo.co.uk
or
Peter Soulsby 01962-620146 petsols@hotmail.co.uk

National Issues

Coalition Shows its True Colours on the Environment

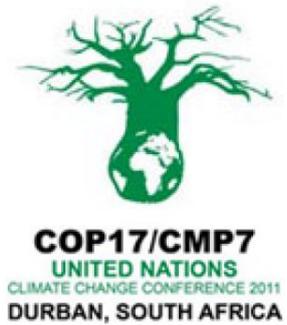
When David Cameron was campaigning to be elected he made passionate statements of his concern for the environmental welfare of the planet and promised us the 'Greenest Government Ever'.

His coalition partners, the LibDems, had always proclaimed themselves the natural defenders of environmental values. No longer.

George Osborne's autumn statement showed us what Cameron's party really stands for - to promote the cause of big business and to abolish safeguards to protect our environment.

And now the LibDems have joined in. Vince Cable says the Habitats Directive has got in the way of big developments. Danny Alexander has lobbied for a huge increase in road building – committing us to more CO₂, production and dependence on oil.

Nick Clegg personally intervened at the request of one of his own MPs to support a Devon road project that will ruin the landscape, heritage and rare species-habitat.



International Issues

So, yet again, the annual Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting, this year in Durban, has managed to pull a very small rabbit out of a big hat.

While it is true that countries have come together, in a way never before achieved, to work on binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission levels, the delays will surely mean that the overall aim of limiting a rise in the planet's temperature to +2 degrees Celsius will not be met.

Michael Wilks set out some of the results of uncontrolled rise in GHGs and temperature in our last edition. As ever, it will be poorer countries who will be exposed to the result of repeated failure on the part of world leaders to take this threat seriously.



Green Party



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If you have views on anything written in this newsletter, or would like to know more about your local Green Party group, contact us via our website: www.winchester.greenparty.org.uk