



A Green Thought

News and Ideas from Winchester Green Party

The Winchester March

At the end of November Green Party members joined the Winchester March. This demonstration was probably the largest in Winchester in modern times, probably bigger than the biggest events of Twyford Down, twenty years ago – certainly in terms of involving Winchester people. It got its support from a wide political spectrum and participants were motivated by different causes or campaigns – Silver Hill, River Park, Station Approach, Barton Farm, Chesil Street and Bushfield Down.

The unifying issue was that of lack of proper consultation and high-handedness from both elected members and officers of the Council. The Council appears to believe that it has a good record of consultation, but fails to understand that asking for people's views and then ignoring them is not a consultative process, but rather a tick-box device for rubber-stamping a pre-determined position. No consultees expect that their views will prevail, but they should expect that their arguments are considered and rejected only with reasonable countervailing arguments. Several organisations, including the Green Party, have consistently been



Photo: thanks to Joe Low

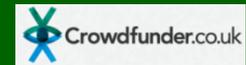
Air Pollution News: The Green Party has continued its campaign to clean up the air in central Winchester. Winchester failed to meet statutory limits on pollution for the deadline in 2010 and five years later has made no progress towards meeting those limits. Indeed the City Council continues to develop policy (including Silver Hill, Barton Farm and Station Approach plans) that will ensure Winchester's air remains toxic (currently equivalent to taking nearly two years of life expectancy from those exposed to it). In furtherance of our joint complaint with Friends of the Earth we had a good march and demonstration in the spring, including the occupation of the City Offices reception area until the Chief Executive was forced to come and speak to us and our Green MEP, Keith Taylor. Meanwhile our European complaint moves slowly on. The European Commission indicated that it would

be taking action against the UK Government on a number of cases including ours. The Government itself has made it clear that it would pass down



any infraction fines it suffered to local authorities that had it in their power to affect air pollution. Since our local Councils certainly could take action and choose not to, they will be prime targets for such fines.

Help turn Winchester Green in 2015. We are raising money to support parliamentary candidates in Winchester and NW Hants:



www.crowdfunder.co.uk/green-mps-for-winchester-nw-hants/

treated to the discourtesy and laziness of Council failure to address their concerns.

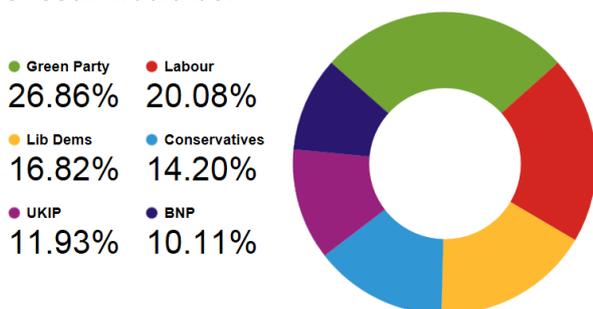
A Plan is not a Plan: The Council claims the controversial 'Station Approach' development is only an *'idea in the early stages, with no plans on the table at all, so it is far too early for people to start criticising'* Yet in 14 pages of the new Local Plan (consultation closed) defining the future of Winchester, this non-existent ambition occupies 4 pages with a very clear idea of what is intended.

Meanwhile central government has ignored all the consultation responses, deciding that the best way to solve the air pollution problem is to stop measuring it.

The Green Party is Growing The Green Party is experiencing a membership leap, more than doubling in the last year both nationally and locally.

Meanwhile there are interesting results from opinion polls. A Times poll in November asked the question 'if you thought any party could win in your constituency how would you vote?' 26% said that they would vote Green; this would beat UKIP (24%) and the LibDems (16%).

An even more interesting poll that gives the lie to the idea that the Greens are a single issue party was reported in the Huffington Post. This very large survey posed choices from anonymous policies under nine headings (Economy, Crime, Education, Health etc.). If people voted on policy the result would be:



You can input to the survey yourself at <http://voteforpolitics.org.uk/>.

In terms of actual intention to vote (YouGov surveys) the Greens now outpoll the LibDems. The BBC and ITV position giving the LibDems televised debate slots, but not the Greens, is increasingly indefensible.

Health or Tarmac? The perfect storm approaching the health service is partly demographic (the result of aging population), but very largely a consequence of Government choices. Declining support for social and police services is driving people who would previously have been catered for elsewhere towards the last resort of the emergency service. A shortage of nursing staff, with recruitment hardly helped by

sub-inflation pay rises, adds to the problem. In political panic the Coalition finds an extra £2B for the NHS, but £20B is now available for building new and unnecessary roads. A nice measure of Government priority.

How are we Different? There is a malaise in British politics, a failure to perceive any good in any of the political parties that have ruled us over the last decades. They routinely break promises, they're in it for themselves or their own narrow group of friends, even where they care, they are incompetent. Why should the Green Party be any different?

The Clinton catchphrase 'It's the Economy, Stupid' seems universally accepted. The Coalition has ditched everything in submission to this creed –the 'growth agenda' trumps all considerations of welfare, public services, education and environmental well-being that have hitherto been the hallmarks of civilisation.

Labour cared more about being seen as business friendly than acting on the environment. Road traffic increased. Rail was left privatised. Now they too have bought austerity as the path to improvement; accepting the narrative that the economic crash stems from too much public expenditure, rather than the casino banking, asset-stripping, carpet-bagging culture of free-market globalisation.

The Green Party doesn't accept the inevitability of austerity as the answer to our problems. We have clear principles to uphold centred on how we treat people and how we treat the environment. Our policies and actions attract increasing support because they are founded on unwavering principles that are hard to dispute: that we have one planet with finite resources. We must learn to manage them sustainably. And that the economy exists to serve people. Not the other way around.

Elections 2015: We will field two candidates in the General Election this year, Michael Wilks in the Winchester and Dan Hill in the NW Hampshire (including Andover) constituencies. We will also contest the St. Bartholomew's ward in the District elections. Dave Walker-Nix will be standing here (more details in the next issue).



Green Party

 <http://winchester.greenparty.org.uk/>  <https://twitter.com/TheGreenParty>

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