



South Shropshire Green Party

Officers 2005/6



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*Please let the Editor have articles
for the next edition of Grapevine by
Monday December 19th 2005*

Saturday 1st October
We welcome Green Party
members from around the West
Midlands to join us in Ludlow

The afternoon session at 2.30pm
with guest speaker,
Dr Ian Dormor,
is an open public session. He will
speak on Climate Changes and
Woodland Cover

The Education Room, Museum
Resources Centre, Ludlow Library.

Come yourself and bring a friend.
Don't miss this important date!



Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 47

Autumn 2005

OPPRESSION IS NO ANSWER

*Jim Gaffney considers the July attacks on London and the
Green view of international terrorism*

I'm sure all Green party members shared the sense of shock and outrage that swept the country when the recent terrorist bombs went off in London. It felt very close to home for so many people - my sister, for example, regularly uses one of the targeted tube lines on her way to work in Whitechapel. There were some anxious hours for us before we heard she was safe. Lots of families were not so lucky.

This kind of thing happens almost every day somewhere in Iraq. Our hearts go out to the Iraqi families who suffer and to everyone living in that country where basic safety, that we can usually take for granted, does not exist. The Green Party continues to believe that the war in Iraq was initiated on false pretences. It has become clear that there was a reckless lack of forethought about how to stabilise and run the country after the defeat of Saddam.

At the recent Green Party conference we expressed our opposition to the Government's approach to protecting our citizens from further terrorist attacks. Giving the Home Secretary the power to lock suspects up for 3 months before presenting evidence against them will be counter-productive in the long run. The experience of internment without trial in Northern Ireland showed us that such action provides an extra pretext to terrorists to present their campaign as justified.

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Saturday 1st October
We welcome Green Party members
from the West Midlands.

Regional meeting - Education Room,
Ludlow Library from 10.00am

Don't miss this important date!

Full details on page 7

THE PETROL CRISIS

The panic-buying at petrol stations this week highlights the need for the government to get to grips with the fuel crisis by showing real leadership and foresight in developing more sustainable transport systems for the twenty-first century, as the Green Party has been urging for many years.

The reality is that oil is a finite resource. As it depletes, and demand grows, it will increase in price. Gordon Brown has said that global issues need global solutions - but these solutions must also be sustainable. With the growing industrialisation of China and India, the situation is only going to get worse. To ask that Opec increase oil production is dangerously short sighted.

A responsible government would be planning now for when oil is even more expensive and in short supply. Industry analysts predict

crude oil will double from its present price in the next few years. For the government not to take immediate decisive and positive action now is a betrayal of this and future generations. We cannot afford to wait until petrol stations run out of fuel to act, or when the floods caused by global warming are at our door - because that will be too late.

The Green Party believes that we must develop alternative and sustainable transport solutions now. This means the government taking the rail network back into public control, improving public transport, and encouraging the development of low-carbon emitting transport systems. This is the fourth fuel crisis in as many decades - how many do we need to suffer for the government to wake up?

Chris Lennard
West Midlands Green Party Spokesman

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The Government's other measures smack of authoritarianism and opportunism, the need to be seen to be taking immediate tough action, rather than genuinely considered policy which will make us safer. The Green Party believes that it is quite possible to use existing law and procedure to convict those against whom a genuine case can be made.

As for making it easier to deport suspects, two questions (at least) arise. If sound evidence exists, wouldn't the best thing be to convict those inciting terrorism under UK law in open court? Why will deporting people make them less dangerous? Many British citizens have been

attacked and killed in New York, Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and so on. I suspect that this element of our Government's response panders to racism rather than having a rational basis.

Overall, we believe that in the long run the UK can only start to help set the world back on a path to safety and freedom by showing a consistent commitment to justice and peace. If we truly believe that we have a democratic, just and peaceable society (and compared to many parts of the world we do), we should set an example. This does not mean knee-jerk oppression at home and unjustified use of violence abroad.

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Strand C: Extension of bridleways and creation of new off-road routes to provide connected "ways", suitable for off-road cyclists as well as horse riders and walkers.

Strand D: Safe cycling and walking routes for pupils to access the primary school and the Community College. Recent work to create a tarmac surfaced path round the perimeter of the Playing Field

will greatly assist safe access by Year 6 cyclists to their nearby school.

Strand E: Members of the local cycling group are working to map routes for cycle rides in the area. It is hoped that the resulting maps will be of use to both visitors and local riders seeking recreation and exercise on two wheels.

John Smyth - Bishop's Castle District Cycling Group

Saturday 1st October

Welcome Green Party members from around the West Midlands.

- 10.30 – 1.00 Join in the morning session & discussion (members only)
Lunch and an opportunity for informal exchanges
- 2.30 Afternoon session with Guest Speaker : Dr Ian Dormor who will speak on Climate Changes and Woodland Cover (open to non-members)

Venue: The Education Room, Museum Resources Centre, Ludlow Library

Don't miss this important date!

Diary

Mon 3rd Oct 10.30 a.m. Acorn Restaurant, Church Stretton
(Church Stretton meetings will always be on the first Monday of the month, except January when it will be on the 9th. (Tel. 01694 723627)

Tues 11th Oct 8.00 p.m. Unicorn, Lower Corve Street, Ludlow
(Ludlow meetings will always be on the second Tuesday of the month, except December when the meeting will be on 10th Jan. (Tel. 01584 872806)

Sun 23rd Oct 4.00 p.m. onwards Tan House, Little Stretton
"In Celebration of the Apple" – A social event for Apple Day:
Quiz, music, apple-tasting, food and wine & cider. Tickets £5.
Members & guests only (Tel 10694 723143)

Fri 6th Jan 7.30pm "Greet 2006 The Green Way" – a New Year Party at the Acorn Restaurant. Prize for the best New Year Resolution.

A CYCLING STRATEGY FOR THE BISHOP'S CASTLE AREA

Bishop's Castle is one of the smallest market towns in Shropshire. Relatively isolated in the hilly South West of the County, its dependency on the car as a means of transport has helped it to produce figures for the burning of fossil fuels and the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere 40% above the national average. An active local campaign is under way in an attempt to reduce this figure.

Public transport links are under used and fairly minimal - six buses each way to Shrewsbury, with the last return being 5.40 pm., a daily return service to Ludlow, and a once a week return service to Welshpool, Newtown, Telford and Knighton. The nearest railway station is at Craven Arms, some ten miles distant, and it is possible to make a train connection by bus, once or twice a day. As is the case in much of Shropshire, tourism is now the main source of revenue in the area and there is an established campaign to promote it as a sustainable activity by encouraging visitors to use alternative modes of transport to their cars.

There are two schools in Bishop's Castle, a primary school, mainly serving the needs of the town children, and a Community College drawing pupils from a large catchment area, 80% of whom travel by bus.

If the community is to reduce its use of fossil fuels there is scope for initiatives that would

encourage and promote cycling as a safe, healthy and environmentally friendly form of local transport, recreation and tourism, and as an alternative to the car for short journeys, or those linked with public transport.

A vital part of any campaign would be to overcome the perception of cycling on public roads being seen as a dangerous activity. In the following analysis possible cycling initiatives will be considered as five strands.

Strand A: A largely off-road route linking Craven Arms to Bishop's Castle, at least partially following the track bed of the former Bishop's Castle Railway line. This could depart from the Onny Valley at Plowden and follow a minor road route to Bishop's Castle which would also link Eyton, Lydbury North, and Brockton to the town.

Such a comparatively flat route, open also to walkers, horse riders and wheelchair users, would be a huge boost to cycling and cycle tourism in the area. It could eventually be extended at both ends to link Ironbridge, via Much Wenlock with Newtown, and thereby with two National Cycle Routes.

Strand B: Designated lanes linking Bishop's Castle to its surrounding villages, either as "Quiet Lanes" or with appropriate signage warning motor Vehicles to give consideration to cyclists.

FOOD MILES

Research for the government on 'food miles', by AEA Technology Environment, has looked at whether 'food miles' can be a valid indicator of food industry sustainability.

Food transport has a significant and growing impact on road congestion, road accidents, climate change, noise and air pollution. The environmental, social and economic costs of food transport are estimated at £9bn per year of which £5bn is due to road congestion, £2bn is due to road accidents, £1bn is due to pollution and £1bn to other factors.

Food shopping by car accounts for 40 per cent of the total costs. Consumers travel an average of 136 miles a year by car to shop for food. The quantity of food transported by heavy goods vehicles has doubled since 1974 and food transport now accounts for 25% of all HGV vehicle kilometres in the UK. Transport of food by air has the highest CO2 emissions per tonne and is the fastest growing mode. Its use more than doubled between 1992 and 2002 and it now accounts for 11 per cent of CO2 emissions from food transport.

All the transport use for UK food produced 19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2002 of which 10 million tonnes were emitted in the UK, representing 1.8 per cent of the total annual UK CO2 emissions. Unsurprisingly the report shows that in general higher levels of vehicle activity lead to higher environmental impacts. But the mode, timing, location and efficiency of food transport is important as well as the distance.

The report states that 'food miles' alone is too simple a concept to capture the impacts of food transport. Instead the report recommends focussing on four aspects which are key performance indicators of the food industry's sustainability:

- To cover the impact on road congestion the report recommends monitoring distances travelled transporting food in urban areas.
- To cover wider congestion the report recommends monitoring food transport by heavy goods vehicles.
- Transport of food by air should be monitored.
- To cover the impact of food transport on climate change the report recommends monitoring overall CO2 emissions from food transport.

There are many complexities in trying to solve the problem. Examples include:

- Organic food can halve the negative environmental effect of conventional crops (when levels of inputs and benefits of biodiversity are considered); but this can be offset by long journeys by air or road.
- More local sourcing does not automatically reduce the environmental and social costs. For example, replacing single trips of large HGVs from distribution centres to supermarkets by multiple van deliveries from farmers to shops might possibly worsen congestion of inner-city roads.

REFLECTIONS ON A HOLIDAY BY TRAIN

By John Lloyd

My first foray into foreign parts was in the late forties, as a teenager, travelling through France into Spain – a whole story in itself. The memory stays with me of slatted wooden seats on local trains and a Spain that was largely as Laurie Lee had left it. This year my travels were much more cushy, but no less exciting. My destination was Liguria and, in particular, the Cinque Terre; this lies on the North West coast of Italy where it adjoins the French Riviera.

One thing one must learn about train travel is never take more luggage than you can comfortably carry; also allow enough time between changing trains. The essence of travel is not to arrive as quickly as possible, but to enjoy the journey for itself. A useful aid to this end, especially in France, is to leave for your destination at a time which allows a stock-up at the local boulangerie/l'epicerie before boarding the train. This is a wise precaution because French trains serve the most appalling food imaginable. This in a country that loves its food is as inexplicable as the French acceptance of UHT milk.

The first leg of the summer holiday terminated in Lille, via the Channel tunnel and a stay overnight. This northern French city is alive and its heavy industrial past largely forgotten. It is modern and with a great deal of civic pride. It has a fine Opera House, metro, museums and pedestrianised shopping areas and, nice to see, a well-used bus service radiating out from the

city centre.

The following morning was the long haul, right through the heart of France, north to south. It is one of those occasions that you grasp how big a country it is. However, the TGV is fast and by early evening the train had arrived in Nice.

Somehow this fell below expectations, largely I suspect because staying by the railway station and with limited time, it was not possible to explore the old town fully. Nevertheless, walking along the Promenade des Anglais did not offer much charm of the 'twenties to savour. Where, one might ask, were those characters from Somerset Maugham's day? That panama hatted gent, with Malacca cane in hand, and that much younger woman in stylish mode on his arm? Nowhere, just cars, more cars, tail to tail, polluting the atmosphere and blanking out the sea front.

Moving on was not, therefore,



Vernazza—Cinque Terre coast

a time of regret, for what was to come was the highlight of the journey; to travel on the coastal line from Nice to Genova and then on to Bonassola, a little fishing village resort and the final

destination. This coast is, in some ways, reminiscent of that stretch of waterfront in Devon, by Dawlish, where the train hugs the rocks on its journey.

The Cinque Terre is largely unspoilt because of its remoteness and only when the railway arrived did the area open up as a holiday destination. Even now, car travel is restricted by the terrain and this is helped by the whole coastal strip being designated a nature conservation area. Walking along coastal paths and into the hills that lay behind the inlets with their fishing villages is a delight. Wild flowers, butterflies abound and all this in early June is set against an azure blue background.

The ticket system on Italian Railways takes some mastering, especially if you happen to be at an unmanned station. One is confronted with a large vendor ticket machine displaying multiple options. Coins and notes are frequently rejected and can disappear altogether. Time is of the essence here to study the instructions with a dictionary at hand, even so fellow travellers more often than not step forward to help.

That, of course, is the other fascination with train travel. You meet people and strike up a conversation. On the journey, our first encounter was with a group of Indian nuns on their way to a retreat in Northern Italy, having previously been to Rome for the Pope's enthronement. The Abbess spoke good English and we exchanged pleasantries but they left the train before we could learn about their life in India. One thing of note was they



Riomaggiore - Cinque Terre coast

all travelled light. Each had a small overnight bag and they had been travelling for weeks.

By contrast, two American lads joined us a station or two later and were very chatty. Both were from New York, one was Mexican and we touched on world affairs. It is somewhat reassuring to find these twenty year olds had George Bush summed up pretty well.

There are, of course, travelling companions one would choose not to have. Having changed trains at Genova, I was stretching to put my bag on the rack above the seat in the carriage, when a smartly-dressed woman tried to steal my wallet, on this occasion without success. This is rather more of a problem on night trains, but these gangs are always on the look out for an opportunity when the traveller's attention is diverted.

Looking back on the journey, there and back, the only hold up was this side of the channel. All trains went from the named platforms and on time. It went like clockwork, thanks to full and helpful information from Ffestiniog Travel, who specialise in rail travel abroad. (tel. 01766 512400).