



South Shropshire Green Party



Officers 2006

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Please let the Editor have articles for the next edition of Grapevine by Friday December 14th 2006



Grapevine can be downloaded in colour from <http://www.shropshire.greenparty.org.uk/>



Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 51

Autumn 2006

GOOD SHOWING IN BY-ELECTION

Jo Callaghan put up a strong fight in the St Peter's Ward by-election for a District Councillor created by the resignation of a LibDem councillor. With strong support from local members every home was leafleted and the majority of homes canvassed.

The result of the election was in line with recent national results for the Green Party with Jo taking 8.3% of the vote. The winner with 488 votes was LibDem Tracey Huffer – a well known figure in Ludlow as she works at one of the

town's two doctors' surgeries. Conservative David Powell was second with 298 votes. He too is well known locally, being an active member of the British Legion Club. The turnout of 44% was excellent for a council by-election nationally though not unusual in South Shropshire.

The policy issues which concerned local people most were housing and affordable homes for local people, together with more general concerns about planning issues.

HELP FOR GREENING YOUR HOME

The Low Carbon Buildings Programme is a badly publicised DTI grant scheme aimed at homeowners and community organisations.

The grants can cover up to 50% of the cost of renewable energy technology including solar hot water or electricity, heat pumps, and combined heat and power systems.

The scheme requires applicants to have already taken significant energy conservation meas-

ures but by using accredited products and installers, significant grants can be obtained. Full details at: www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk/home/

INSIDE

*Prophecies ...
from a giant of science ...
... and a 1960s green guru.
Affordable homes - the answer is
rent not buy.*

RESURGENCE

John Lloyd journeys down memory lane to Oxford, and returns to find a green prophet from the 1960s lurking in his attic

Over the weekend of September 16th I travelled to Oxford for the 40th Anniversary of the magazine "Resurgence".

This was for me a journey down memory lane as I was part of the Editorial Group on this magazine in its early days. The people behind the launch of Resurgence were in the forefront of the growth of the Green movement in this country.

This all came home to me quite vividly when I picked up a copy dated March/April 1968, for there was a letter from the late Paul Derrick that caught my attention.

I think the letter is truly prophetic and I share it with you.

The editor of Resurgence, Satish Kumar, is speaking on Wednesday October 25th at 7.00pm in the Shirehall Restaurant, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury. His theme is "Soil, Soul and Society". Tickets £5 from Shrewsbury FoE on 01743 260071

OXYGEN

Dear Sir,

You are concerned about the possible exhaustion of the world's supplies of coal, oil and natural gas in a few decades, perhaps by the year 2,000.

But there is a more alarming prospect. The amount of oxygen in the atmosphere is limited and has been declining significantly in the last few decades.

Until the industrial revolution there were large quantities of coal, oil and natural gas locked in the earth, large amounts of carbon in solid or liquid form. This carbon is being burned in the atmosphere to form carbon dioxide; and the proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising significantly.

According to a recent report in the *New York Times* it will, by the end of this century, have reached such a concentration that the atmosphere will contain insufficient oxygen to support life. The calculation is based on known reserves of coal, oil and natural gas; on the rate at which they are being consumed; and on the rate at which the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is increasing.

This threat appears to be as potent as that from the radioactive effluent from atomic power stations. Perhaps we should not be too much concerned about the government's closing down of coal mines. Perhaps the government is being short-sighted in welcoming the discovery of North Sea Gas. It may help to solve our balance of payments problem but it will add to other and more intractable problems.

Yours faithfully,

PAUL DERRICK.

drastically reduced and the only immediate substitute is nuclear energy. The safety risks with nuclear he regards as insignificant compared to a climate change catastrophe. There is an analysis of 'environmentalism' which is particularly compelling, looking at this subject in quite a new light. The idea that we are competent to be 'stewards or developers' of the Earth is challenged.

Lovelock discusses the science behind the Gaia theory and the complex science of climate change and some readers may find the occasional passage a trifle obscure but the text is generally not difficult to read. Some of the conclusions concerning human responses to pesticides, pollution and our health obsessions are of much interest. The reason why 30% of us must die of cancer will probably be found surprising and perhaps disconcerting.

The final chapter considers some possible technological fixes which have been proposed and might be tried if the rapid temperature rise has commenced. These appear (at least to me) somewhat far fetched

and conceivably might make things worse. But as the author says, these ideas, even if they worked, would only buy us time to try and sequester (bury or somehow get rid of) the carbon emissions. The book closes on a gloomy note with a tribe of humans wearily making their way to the Arctic, the only remaining haven of civilisation.

This book will at times be uncomfortable reading for some Green Party members but it is nevertheless strongly recommended. It asks a lot of questions which are not easy to answer and is certain to generate some new thinking about many difficult subjects.

'Revenge of Gaia' would be a valuable addition to any bookshelf but it can be borrowed from your public library. For those members who attend our monthly meetings in Church Stretton one copy is available for loan.

'Revenge of Gaia by James Lovelock is sub-titled 'Why the Earth Is Fighting Back - and How We Can Still Save Humanity'
ISBN: 0713999144
Allen Lane £16.99

Someone with a thpelling problem ?



'Revenge of Gaia' by James Lovelock

Gordon Gissing reviews the latest book by the prophetic scientist James Lovelock. It may be uncomfortable, he says, but it will generate new thinking

Lovelock first conceived the idea of Gaia, the 'living' planet, in the 1960's. He was aware that the temperature of the Earth had remained within a range habitable for life for 3 billion years even though the heat output of the Sun had increased during that time by about 30%.

With profound insight he saw that it was the life forms on Earth, plant and animal, which had somehow acted together to regulate the temperature. He published his Gaia theory in 1979 but it was immediately dismissed, especially by the biologists. Despite repeated attempts to demolish the theory, it was never refuted and eventually in 2001 it came to be accepted by mainstream science.

Into this beautifully regulated system which had endured for so long, there arrived, as it were yesterday, the human species who began to interfere with this natural regulation by clearing forests and commencing farming. This mattered little while the human population was relatively small but the exploding World population of the last century and the rapid burning of the Earth's fossil fuel reserves has now precipitated the climate change crisis.

Lovelock's prognosis is truly alarming, with a tipping point in greenhouse gas concentrations resulting very soon in a rapid rise in

temperature. He sees billions dying and humans reduced to a tribal existence. Other climatologists, while conceding the Earth faces a severe crisis, do not go as far as these dire predictions. But as Lovelock stresses, science is never about certainties, only about probabilities. His view is that the probability of disaster is too high to be ignored.



*James Lovelock with a statue of Gaia
© Comby Institute 2000*

Although Lovelock is a 'green' thinker he does not always agree with conventional green policies. He maintains there is neither time nor space for any further development even of the 'sustainable' variety. In an excellent review of all available energy sources he concludes that renewable energy, although highly desirable in the long term, cannot produce energy in sufficient quantity in the short time available. Fossil fuel burning must be

Church Stretton Apple Fair

Sunday 22nd October 2006

11.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

Silvester Horne Institute, High Street,
Church Stretton



A big thank you to everyone who has volunteered to help at the Fair, but we could still do with a few more helping hands.

Whether you will be there on the 22nd or not, do see if you can help with one or more of the following:



Make toffee apples (we can supply the apples and the recipe)



Supply very large apples for our Longest Apple Peel Contest



Donate items for the Tombola – preferably with some apple connection (e.g. apple soap)



Research the background of apple varieties using the internet or the library



Compile quiz based on apple varieties (no horticultural knowledge required)



Distribute posters, put up display boards

We need to have the Fair set up by 10.30 a.m.
The Silvester Horne Institute will be open for us at 8.00 a.m.
Please allow plenty of time to get your stall set up.

Please return the form enclosed if you can help and have not responded to our earlier request.

Modern living. This says it all ...

A woman went into Whinberries, the All Stretton Village Shop, and asked "where does the free bus to Tesco leave from?"

AFFORDABLE HOMES

As the District Council consults on its new policy document Councillor John Lloyd challenges the prevailing ethos of housing ownership and calls for new priorities for social homes to rent

In Council and in the local press, much time and space is given to “affordable homes”.

There is a problem out there and it is particularly acute in South Shropshire where a big divide exists between wage rates and house prices.

What then, should we as councillors do? The Administration has come up with some very elaborate plans in their document ‘Affordable Housing Solutions’, which is currently out for consultation in the District. The complexity of their proposed solutions is worrying because it is destined to take a great deal of time, for both officers and councillors, and may not necessarily get to the heart of the problem.

For me it is a matter of providing **homes** for those in real need and who have a clear local connection. It is not the responsibility of the Council to be a vehicle for getting people “on the housing ladder”. Our task should be campaigning for more social housing to rent and seeing that they get built. Over and above this, I see the Council lending its support to Co-operative Housing Schemes, where like-minded people can come together to solve their particular housing needs.

Rents in the social sector are generally below those that are asked in the open market for accommodation. It is up to householders to make up their own minds if they wish to jump from renting to actually owning their own home. Then they are on their own. In many ways, the prevailing ethos of owning your own home is a status symbol that needs to be broken. It is certainly less common in

European countries and, for that matter, the very very rich in their Belgravia flats rent their property.

In national terms, it has meant excessive amounts of capital have gone into the housing stock and into multiple-billions of mortgage debt, all at the expense of investment in other ‘quality

of life’ assets such as good, reliable, clean and inexpensive public transport. This, I concede, is not something that can be tackled at local level.

With a national population of over 60 million, the pressure for land to build on will not ease. But where to build? The Government showed some promise when it extolled the virtues of using brown field sites but this seems to have geared down their quest to increase the numbers of new housing builds. Unfortunately, on the

(Continued on page 5)

*... channel
demand through
the rented route
for people who
NEED
to live here*

strictly ‘numbers’ game, South Shropshire has few brown field sites. The thrust has consequently turned to using ‘green’ ones on the edges of our towns, and to large gardens, which are designated ‘brown’, irrespective of how lovely they might be.

What, of course, is lacking is a strong Government will to revitalise the many brown sites in the West Midlands. There needs to be a move to make the older industrial towns much more desirable places to live in. This will take the pressure away from migration into the countryside. What happens at the moment is that people are buying themselves out of urban deprivation if they can and leaving areas they know to spiral down further.

There is only so much that can be done at District level but what is done needs to stem from a clear vision that is not exclusively pragmatic. What we build next year will probably be there for a hundred years or more. We must have some vision and be prepared to think boldly about the real needs of the society we represent, not the pressures that come from other peoples’ wants.

Certainly we need more rented properties but in small schemes. The existence of one person households in increasing num-

bers needs to be addressed. Under occupation is a factor but in a democratic country this is not easily solved. However, in terms of land use there is a requirement for informal community accommodation schemes with shared domestic facilities over and above the garden to sit in.

Much more attention needs to be paid to the infrastructure, ensuring the availability of public transport and the kinds of facility that make communities come together and work. These principles must have prime consideration in our policies for planning.

Some ‘infilling’ in towns and villages will undoubtedly take place and, if urban spread is to be contained, building higher may have to be acceptable. Much depends on the sensitivity of the planners if serious environmental problems are to be avoided.

In South Shropshire we cannot match the demand from people who **want** to live here. Local people cannot afford free market house prices. What we can do as a District Council is channel demand through the rented route for people who **need** to live here. This should be our prime concern and the main reason for releasing land for development.

DIARY

Sun Oct 22nd Apple Fair—Silvester Horne Inst, Church Stretton

Monthly Meetings

Daytime - 1st Monday - 10.30am, Acorn Restaurant, Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton

Evening - 2nd Tuesday - 7.30pm, Gallery, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, Mill Street, Ludlow (PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE).