



South Shropshire Green Party



Officers 2006

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Please let the Editor have articles for the next edition of Grapevine by Monday September 18th 2006

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set a seal on where the town is going. It could give it an identity which will influence how it develops and it will give the town a focus on which it can build both pride and a sound economic future.

All of transport's problems cannot be solved in Craven Arms but it would be a good start by recognising the town's transport heritage in a way which brings the town alive.

Such a move could also begin the process of answering the question of how we continue to enjoy mobility and still save the planet.



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



Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 50

Summer 2006

An election - coming to your locality soon

The prospects for Shropshire County and South Shropshire District Councils becoming unitary is receding fast for the time being and it looks as though there will be elections for County and District Councillors in May 2007.

We have had representatives on the District Council since 1995 and it is most important that we increase our electoral base. With two members on the Council we can form a 'group', which under the current structure would enable us to have a greater impact than the small numbers might imply.

The present administration, dominated as it is by the Lib Dems, falls far short of the radical endeavours which are needed to secure a sustainable green future for South Shropshire. There is plenty of puff about recycling, affordable living, and energy efficient homes but the Lib Dems sell out too readily to funding agencies, rather than managing the District's affairs according to real local priorities.

As always the Lib Dems are showing us that they do not have a coherent philosophy to guide them. The Council needs greater Green Party membership to provide its green conscience.

The council elections elsewhere in the country in May this year showed a strong upsurge in support for our candidates (see page 2) and given a reasonably strong campaign we can do well in South Shropshire. We have plenty of policies and many good ideas about how to implement them. So now is the time to look for commitment by our members to stand as Green Party candidates.

Don't leave it someone else, it's your turn to stand in May next year. We can and should field a candidate in every ward for the District Council.

INSIDE

*A rail alternative
A new vision for Craven Arms ?
A Green approach to public buildings
And ...
Numbers matter*

TESTING LOCAL VIEWS

At the Ludlow Green Fair in May the Green Party stall carried a short questionnaire which we asked people to complete and let us have back immediately. There were three questions about planning related issues. So what did they tell us?

First, and perhaps no surprise at all was the fact that 96%

MAY ELECTIONS - GREEN PARTY GAINS

The Green Party did well nationally in the local government elections in May 2006. Although there were no elections in Shropshire to raise local interest the Green Party gained 20 new councillors – more than the National Front who, regrettably, got all the national press headlines.

The West Midlands headline was that voters in Worcester City Council gave 11.5% of their votes to the Green Party, just 303 votes less than the Lib Dems. Sadly this was not turned into seats in the council but the increase in the total vote for Greens suggests that the first Green councillors will not be long in arriving.

The party fielded 72 candidates in the elections in the West Midlands, including one in all but one of the seats in Birmingham. There was a good showing too in Solihull, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Wolverhampton.

The next elections in Shropshire and South Shropshire will be next year.

wanted more local shops, rather than a wider range of supermarkets. Similarly 93% wanted better public transport rather than a range of better and faster roads. A closer vote was on car parking. 37% wanted more town centre parking while 63% sought a park-and-ride arrangement.

On approaches for the re-use of redundant industrial land in Ludlow, by far the favourite options were for a mix of market and affordable housing (37%) and for only affordable housing (32%). Only 3% sought solely market priced housing but 16% thought that the housing should include local shops and light commercial development. However 22% of people thought that such development should also have plenty of green areas for leisure use.

The final question was about planning the expansion of our towns – importantly, who should have the final say. The recent referendum in Church Stretton has clearly been noted – 37% of people felt that a referendum should be the deciding method, though 32% were in favour of banning any expansion beyond existing borders. 19% were in favour of allowing town and parish councils to have the final say. Most interestingly no-one backed the present system.

If there is a lesson from this short poll it is perhaps that local political leadership is seen as failing. Sacrificing vacated land (such as might be proposed for the Lloyds site in the centre of Ludlow) to another supermarket would be unpopular, and people would want to have their say directly.

Why does nobody love Craven Arms?

The old cattle market has gone, to be replaced by a new town centre, now home of the South Shropshire Housing Association and a few retail businesses. The Discovery Centre has been in place for several years and is gradually finding a role for itself as it keys into the community better. The Old Post Office houses the AONB people, there is the new Community Centre and across the road the eco-friendly homes flank the road to the railway station.

Why is it not working? Could it be that Craven Arms has lost the purpose of being there? Once a “frontier town”, with the cowboys, it was a junction, with cattle and sheep being driven in to market from all points on the compass. The railways made this a hub of activity; trains into Wales, and country towns Bishop’s Castle and Much Wenlock usefully connected. Apart from the main Cardiff/Manchester line only the Heart of Wales line remains with a much-reduced service and lacking the freight element.

Under the framework of the 2004-2011 Local Plan, and the hours of discussions that preceded it, Craven Arms was to be the hub of the District’s industrial sustainability. Instead, attention has moved away. Ludlow is the chosen candidate, with its boundaries controversially breached to foster the “Eco Park” and then, just inside these boundaries, the Foldgate Lane development.

All are car-orientated ventures, you can only get there by road and it’s a long up-and-down hill walk or cycle ride from the station or town

centre.

What Craven Arms has is a flat terrain, brown field sites and, most importantly, a central position for transport. That means it is easy for people from Ludlow and Church Stretton (even from Shrewsbury) to travel there. The future of Craven Arms should be built on public transport. It should be the one place you are sure to get a bus or train to or from at any hour of the day.

New plans should be afoot to open up derelict rail lines, possibly using light rail trams (see page 6 opposite). Re-instating the Wenlock/Bridgnorth connection would be a boost for tourism, exploring the romantic connection with Houseman’s “Wenlock Edge”. As for the Bishop’s Castle line, this presents a bigger gain for Bishop’s Castle than Craven Arms. The lack of a good transport connection has not helped their small enterprise park to fill with tenants and new jobs.

The mere suggestion that there is an alternative to our reliance on road transport usually results in glazing eyes and the response – “what about the cost?”

Sure, capital costs are high, as they are for most energy saving schemes. A solar panel on a roof is relatively dear but the running cost is negligible. Transport does have running costs, but there are environmental costs too which cannot be ignored if road use continues to grow.

Going for public transport as Craven Arms’ purpose in life would

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A NEW LOOK AT RAIL

With thanks to the Church Stretton & District Rail Users Association newsletter for this story.

Since the end of last year, an interesting form of transport has been operating the Sunday services on the line between Stourbridge Town and Stourbridge Junction.



This is the Parry People Mover. Looking a bit like an enclosed single deck four-wheeled tram, it is powered by a simple but effective engineering device: the flywheel. The principle has been around for a long time, and the first Parry People Movers appeared a number of years ago, but it has taken the Company a long time to get this environmentally-friendly form of transport accepted by the powers-that-be.

The rotating flywheel, approximately 1 metre in diameter and 500kg mass, is mounted horizontally beneath the floor of the vehicle and rotates at a maximum speed of 2,500 rpm. Acceleration is provided by the energy stored in the flywheel, which can also capture braking energy for later re-use.

Electric motors provide the initial charging up of the flywheel, and

this stores enough energy for the vehicle to reach the next stop in normal operation although a battery is provided for emergency use.

Normally the flywheel will just be re-charged at stations, thus avoiding the need for an electrical supply along the whole length of the route.

A comparison of moving 50 people by different forms of transport by the equivalent of one gallon of fuel gives the results:

- 14 cars av30 mpg - 2.1 miles
- Diesel railcar - 2 miles
- Single Decker Bus - 7 miles
- Parry People Mover - 15 miles

Recently Shropshire County Council invited expressions of interest for potential operators of rail services on the former Cambrian Railways line between Gobowen and Blodwell via Oswestry. This line, which had been down-graded for freight use only following Beeching, has not been used for many years although the track is still in place.

Pre Metro Operations Ltd (the operators of the Sunday Stourbridge service) have responded with a proposal to operate Parry People Mover railcars over the six-mile route, every half-hour in both directions and serving eight stations along the line. The Gobowen-Oswestry section would take ten minutes, once more connecting Oswestry with the national rail network.

TAKE NOTE OF THE NUMBERS

Many people find statistics somewhat boring, quickly passing over them to more meaty features. It is nevertheless quite surprising how important they can be to help put things into perspective. This seems particularly true in all things ecological, as Alan Manser sets out to show..

For example, it is quite shocking that in this country one farmer each week gives up the struggle to make a living from farming, many of them terminating life as a result. One pound in every seven is spent in Tesco's - apples are flown in from New Zealand or the Cape all year round while two thirds of our orchards have been destroyed. Around 15% of the price of food goes on packaging.

Yet another revealing statistic published by Nurex, a government advisory body, shows that there is 1340 cubic metres of high level, 237,000 cubic metres of intermediate level and 2,060,000 cubic metres of low level radio active waste stored in 37 different sites throughout Britain, with only eight per cent of the intermediate material adequately packaged.

While on the subject of nuclear, Mr Brown (Chancellor of the Exchequer, I believe) has spoken on the Government's intention to update, at vast cost, Britain's nuclear deterrent. Question - how "independent" is the need to rely on the U.S. to supply the rockets and install them in our subs at an American base for use only with the approval of the U.S ? It is also puzzling to work out by which countries currently holding nuclear weapons we are threatened.

A few more statistics. A Greenpeace report claims that last year 25,000 square kilometres of Amazon rainforest were felled and cleared for soya production to feed chickens. In the last three years 70,000 square kilometres have been cleared, or 6 football pitches a minute or 12 pitches in the time it takes to cook a chicken McNugget.

Fairtrade sales have grown more than 10 fold since 1998 rising from £16.7m annually to £195m this year. Organic sales are expected to reach £1.4m this year.

A final statistic of interest. The world's largest dam, in eastern China, now completed, cost \$24 billion. It has displaced nearly two million people, flooded almost 400 square miles of land and drowned 13 cities. It is also likely, according to environmentalists, that the reservoir will become a toxic cesspool of effluent, industrial pollutants and rubbish. The dam also, apparently, sits astride a significant seismological fault. Not a happy thought for the downstream environment!

Your help needed - Apple Fair - October 2006

Sunday 22nd October 2006

Silvester Horne Institute, Church Stretton from 10.30am

And help us prepare for the day ...

August 22/23 at Little Stretton (see Diary on page 5)

A GREEN APPROACH TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS

While the public debate about Church Stretton's proposed leisure facilities has confined itself to residents letters in the newspapers, local Green Party Councillor, John Lloyd, has been looking at how green principles should be applied when the centre is designed and built.

If we accept that there is a need for enhanced Leisure Facilities at Church Stretton School, there is also a need for a "green approach" to their design and construction.

The District Council has recently had to vote a supplementary estimate of £46,200 for increased costs on South Shropshire Leisure Centre.

Solar panels, especially when built into the 'design brief' are a practical solution, as they can take advantage of the large area of roof space. Indeed, solar power can be used not only to heat water, but also to generate power.

There are a number of approaches to capture light in public buildings that have been utilised elsewhere, to help minimise energy costs.

1. All new buildings should be confined to the present site.

As with housing, similarly the standard of design for a public building should achieve an efficient use of land, which is a scarce resource. At the school there is ample room, as most of the buildings are single storey and could go higher if need be.

Expansion beyond the school boundaries would compromise the rural idiom of its setting, with the serious loss of the water meadows.

2. New buildings should maximise the use of natural light and take advantage of any solar gain.

It is extremely important that 'running costs' are kept as low as possible. Energy prices have soared in 2006 and further increases are expected.

It is important that this group of buildings is not seen solely as a consumer of resources.

It has the opportunity to become a beacon for recycling and to act as a generator of energy, at the very least for its own use.

3. The conservation of water.

Like energy costs, water rates are on the increase. Already a number of local authorities have been forced to close down swimming pools due to the rise in prices.

Consequently, the introduction of a 'brown water' system could be a real advantage. Pumping used water from the swimming pool to flush lavatories should be considered.

4. Insulation should be used to maximum effect.

This is one of the most effective ways of saving energy and is cost effective. It is estimated that this will give a 15% return on current prices on the investment through energy saving.

Building work at the school would give an opportunity to use local materials. There is a plentiful supply of wool in Shropshire and this is an ideal insulator. Already much used in Germany, it offers the possibility of a new local industry here.

5. Self-sufficiency in energy.

Micro-generation is a possibility, with the free flow of air in the valley. Wind power could be an option here. There is no reason why there should not be a net gain for the School, with surplus energy being sold to the grid. Furthermore, this is a useful tool in instructing children of the possibilities of 'renewables', as it seems clear that these will feature strongly in their lives in comparison to their parents.

6. Cars.

There is a need to reduce car use, in line with our local Agenda 21 commitment and reinforce our understanding of the threat of climate change. The introduction of parking charges should not be ruled out if space is at a premium.

If extra parking space is seen as a requirement, it should go underground. The sight of large parking lots seen from the Stretton hills would be environmentally damaging. Once again, solar power might be considered if parking meters are introduced. These work well in Ealing and many other local authorities.

7. Conclusion:

It is important that Church Stretton is innovative in tracking its own future using green credentials, and so leads the way for the future by creating a working example of what Leisure Facilities can offer in environmental terms.

DIARY

Thurs Aug 17th Outing by rail to Llandrindod Wells

Leave Church Stretton 0921 Craven Arms 0936

Return 1530

Meet on the train and enjoy a day in Wales

Tue/Wed Aug 22/23rd Apple Fair Working Party from 1030 daily

Tan House, Little Stretton. Bring a picnic lunch.

435 bus from Ludlow (0950) arrives Little Stretton 1027

Get off bus at Green Dragon, next door to Tan House.

Sat 30th Sept West Mids Regional Meeting in Rugby

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

Monthly Meetings - none in August

Daytime - 1st Monday - 10.30am, Acorn Restaurant, Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton - next mtg Sept 4th

Evening - 2nd Tuesday - 8pm, Unicorn Inn, Lower Corve Street, Ludlow - next mtg September 12th

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