



South Shropshire Green Party



Officers 2003

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By Express to the Midi

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damaged and other problems so we arrived at Waterloo at 20.45, one hour late. I transferred quickly by taxi to Paddington and then stayed with a relative at Burnham, travelling home the next day. The holiday had been a memorable travel experience and I did not feel that I had in any way trampled on the environment. A definite recommendation for the green traveller!

And Provence itself?
Well, just magic.

Articles for next edition of Grapevine due with the editor by Mon 24th March. Please send by email if possible.

Membership subscriptions are now due.

Don't miss the Policy discussion meeting on Green tourism—February 25th. Contact Jim Gaffney (above) for details.

If you want an e-copy (pdf format) of Grapevine to send to friends email the editor.

Please keep your diary clear to help in the run up to the local elections on May 1st.



Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 36

Winter 2003

DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Under reform arrangements for local government there will be fewer councillors following the local elections on May 1st 2003. This reduction in numbers and the consequential ward boundary changes gives a smaller party like the Green Party a particular opportunity.

A lot of older councillors are expected to take this re-structuring as an opportunity to stand down so existing loyalties to sitting members will be less of an issue than they often are.

This gives us a real incentive for the elections. We currently hold one seat on the council and if we can gain two more we would expect to be able to exercise a significant influence, possibly even a controlling influence, depending on the spread of votes for other parties.

If you might be interested in standing for election please contact John Lloyd or Jim Gaffney. Even if you are not interested in standing we need your help to get our candidates elected.

GREEN PARTY AND THE EURO

With the likelihood of a referendum on entry to the Euro taking place this year it is time to explain why the Green Party is opposed to the introduction of the Euro.

It is a political stance believing that introducing the Euro will erode democratic control of our future. Delegating control of our currency to a remote bureaucracy

susceptible to the demands of internal corporatism and which is over responsive to major corporations will not necessarily serve national or local interests. Introducing the Euro has already been divisive, creating stresses between national and European levels of government, as in

GREEN PARTY AND THE EURO

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Germany and Italy where the strict Euro rules are damaging their local economies.

Once the Euro is in place across the EU the next step will be common taxation policy. The UK government will lose the ability to fund new infrastructure, or to renew public services without referring to Brussels. One Euro-size will have to fit all

The Green Party has a clear economic agenda and a vision of how taxation policy can be used to

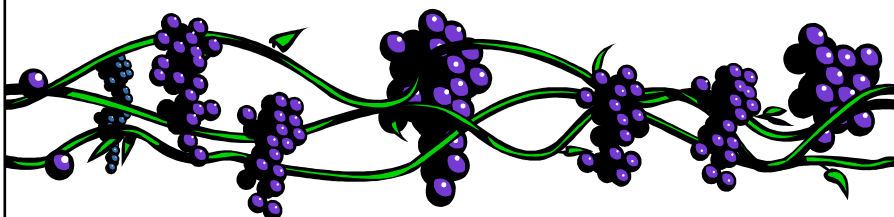
help create a more socially just and ecologically conscious society. If we join the Euro we will become powerless as an electorate.

Changing our government will not bring about change in financial or economic decision-making. That will become the right of unelected bankers.

The Green Party is committed to the NO campaign. While opposed to the Euro it is not opposed to close and appropriate co-operation in Europe or with the rest of the world.

Get ready for the District Council elections with Grapevine's ten helpful hints.

1. Consider standing as a Green Party candidate.
2. Sign a nomination form for candidates in your ward if asked.
3. Spare a couple of evenings in April to stuff envelopes and deliver election leaflets.
4. Support your Green candidates at local meetings.
5. Why not tell new voters, young people who became 18 since the last elections, about Green ambitions.
6. Put up a poster (or two) in prominent positions and persuade friends and neighbours to do the same. (Please do not fly-post).
7. Take the opportunity to meet and befriend any new neighbours.
8. Encourage your friends and neighbours to think about the future, and vote Green.
9. Offer help to elderly neighbours who need to get to the polling station.
10. And most importantly of all - VOTE - every vote counts.



blue as we sped south through the attractive Burgundy countryside and after Lyons sunshine was predominant. We arrived at the very impressive new TGV Mediterranee Avignon station 5 minutes early at 17.10 in unbroken sunshine and a temperature of 24 deg C. We all felt uplifted. A coach was waiting to transfer us to our hotel inside the magnificent city walls.

My holiday in Provence is not the subject of this note but our tour manager, during our coach tours around the region, did point out some of the impressive infrastructure of the new TGV line. A magnificent and lengthy concrete viaduct across a river valley was particularly beautiful. The investment in this new line had been tremendous and thoughts turned to the perennial UK rail investment problems.

We returned to the UK on Sunday 27 October, the day of the great storm. All was sunny and warm at Avignon and there was a chance to assess the new station. It is built in the form of an inverted dinghy, aligned east-west, the north face with numerous windows and intended to hold off the violent 'mistral' wind which blows fairly regularly down the Rhone valley from the Alps. The south face is designed to shade the station from the intense Mediterranean sunshine. The roomy concourse has a typical French open buffet cafe with tables and chairs scattered about in pavement style.

The indicator board not only shows the next departure but also a LED platform simulation with coach numbers displayed so that passengers may assemble at the appropriate point to join the train. With trains up to 18 coaches long this arrangement is absolutely essential to avoid chaos as the train arrives.

Our Nice-Brussels train left at 13.46 emphasising the rapid transit available although we did have an extra hour as we moved clocks back to UK time that evening. It was a French holiday weekend and the train was heavily loaded. Finding our reserved seats was a bit of a battle but the main snag was lack of luggage space as all the racks appeared to be full. Travel light if possible!

The climatic change was now reversed and on arrival at Lille (Europ) on time there was a distinctly chill wind blowing down the platform. There is a baggage detection check at Lille and although my luggage went through without problems there was a warning bleep as I walked through the detection arch. I had to stand aside feeling like a criminal. I was asked to remove my top coat and a detector probe was passed over me. The trouble turned out to be my camera in a jacket pocket. Travellers be warned - leave everything possible in your luggage!

Once through the Tunnel we ran into the aftermath of the great storm with signals apparently

BY EXPRESS TO THE MIDI

Gordon Gissing tells how Eurostar and TGV opened up the Midi

Greens will generally avoid and disapprove of mass tourism, sustained by the aeroplane, itself an intolerable noise polluter and additionally damaging the upper atmosphere and contributing to climate change. There is also grave environmental damage caused by hordes of holidaymakers descending on once pristine areas resulting in hideous commercial developments.

In this context, recent advances in railway technology and infrastructure now make it possible to use this environmentally friendly transport mode to reach much of Europe in a reasonably short time. Furthermore this method of travel is more distributive in nature, i.e. passengers can leave the train at or near their intended destination which is very unlikely to be one of the mass tourist honeypots. The French TGV and other national railways and the Channel Tunnel have revolutionised travel times and further progress was made with the opening of TGV Mediterranee in June 2001. Avignon could now be reached from Waterloo in less than eight hours including a fairly lengthy change at Lille. So when I spotted a hassle free organised short tour

to Provence using Eurostar/TGV I booked a trip for late October.

It was necessary to stay overnight in London (an irritating extra expense) in order to catch the morning 08.27 Eurostar Brussels service. In pouring rain and in the dark (and thinking ahead to Provencal weather) my taxi delivered me to Waterloo in good time and I found my reserved seat. Although there were 41 people in our party I did not meet them here as they were scattered about the train. Our Eurostar was delayed and we lost our slot in the Tunnel so arriving in Lille (Europ) 30 minutes late. The connection time was generous although we needed to transfer by coach to Lille (Flandres) for our 13.07 (now French time) to the south. The train called only at Charles de Gaulle airport, Marne La Vallee (Disneyland) and Lyons before reaching Avignon.

In his book 'Discovering Provence' Richard Turnbull remarked that you could fly to Nice in an hour and a half but then you did not feel you had made a journey. Travelling overland at a more leisurely pace the unfolding landscape and the gradual climatic change made the journey much more rewarding. How right he was! Grey skies gave way to flecks of

ALL STRETTON'S MILLENNIUM PATH

At one time it felt that another millennium would probably pass before the long-standing plan to link All Stretton and Church Stretton with a safe footpath would be realised.

The challenge has been to create a usable path alongside the busy B4370 between Church Stretton and All Stretton, barely a mile to the north. The old footpath was only wide enough for one person at best, was not negotiable by push-chairs, and with the growth in traffic, particularly in the size of vehicles using the roadway, it was an intimidating walk which many All Stretton villagers refused to use.

A survey in 2000 showed there were more than 50 school children in All Stretton attending Church Stretton's two schools, which are only about 1200 yards from the village centre, but only a handful of older pupils walked to school.

Local councillor John Lloyd played an important part in

keeping the authorities focused on the plans. Local landowners have co-operated but changes in ownership and other delays meant that the negotiations had to re-start a number of times. The final bits of the jigsaw dropped into place during the early summer and the County Highways Department, after consulting about the detailed plans during August, began work in early December 2002.

The sixteen weeks of work are costing £350,000 and involve re-building about half a mile of road, with the removal of a hedgerow and a mature oak tree. New drainage is also being installed. The new boundary will be planted with a new hedge and oak saplings. The resulting new highway will give a much safer and more pleasant walk between the two Strettons.

We hope to see both adults and children taking advantage of the path next spring, and who knows ... perhaps a walking school bus ?

GREENS IN ACTION

There are 41 Green councillors on 23 UK local authorities, three Green members of the London Assembly, two MEPs (for London and the South East) and a green member of the Scottish Parliament.

Lancaster City Council has six Green councillors. Result - a new collection programme for re-cyclables and investment in cycle paths.

Oxford also has a Green Lib/Dem coalition in the city. Result - the council's main energy supplier is now one using renewable energy.

Greens are gaining support in local elections. A higher percentage of the vote is being won and the number of councillors is increasing.

7TH LUDLOW GREEN FAIR SUNDAY 27 JULY 2003 10am-4.30pm

Ludlow's annual celebration of all things green has become one of the area's biggest summer attractions and the 2002 event was the biggest and best ever, welcoming over 2,000 visitors to the Market Square where 50 stalls offered everything from low energy light bulbs to organic produce.

An eclectic mix of businesses and campaigning groups were represented such as



Poster/Flyer Distribution

As the Fair has grown, publicity has become a massive task. Last year 250 posters and over 3000 flyers were distributed far and wide via the stallholders and a small team of volunteers, including a last-minute handout of leaflets in Castle Square the day before the event. This distribution is really now a job in itself. Good lists of suitable sites are available, but it needs someone to co-ordinate it. We also need help with local signage immediately prior to the event.

BTCV, CPRE, Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, Ethical Investment Co-operative, Precious Earth, South Shropshire District Council, Survival International, The Wasteless Society and WEN. Last year's fair included pollution-busting plants, fairly traded goods, an underwater bicycle, a model of a bio-digester plant and river trips on a solar-powered boat, with fringe events in the nearby Assembly Rooms and lots of activities for children completing the picture.

Arrangements for 2003 are already under way, with Sally Ford again undertaking overall organisation of the event, but help is needed. We are looking for individuals who would be willing to organise the following:

Info Shop - a stall providing information on businesses and charities not otherwise represented at the Fair.

This involves writing to a list of suitable organisations to request participation, having their leaflets etc. sent to you, bringing them along on the day and setting up the stall, clearing up the stall and disposing of leftover material by distributing to libraries and elsewhere or recycling.



The Church Stretton Apple Fair

The Church Stretton Apple Fair once again had a large attendance and made a profit to help support local activities.

Over 100 varieties of apple were on display with familiar names like Cox's Orange Pippin being jostled by exotic sounding Tydeman's Late Orange and Mère de Ménage, while the whole display was enhanced by rare local celebrities such as Onibury Pippin.

A range of stalls sold cheese, preserves, organic vegetables, cakes, plants and handmade wickerwork while apple refreshments were available all through the event.

Among the activities you could attempt to create the longest apple peel, get your own mystery apples identified by experts, work



Crowds around the main display

your way through an apple quiz, take part in the raffle and then, at the end of the day, you could have bought some of the display apples to take home and eat.

Congratulations to John Lloyd and his team of helpers for an outstanding day.

DIARY 2003

Jan 21 st	Green Party monthly meeting	Ludlow, Feathers	8.00pm
Jan 26 th	Regional Green Party AGM <i>(contact Jill Harvey 0121 453 5838 email: jill@harveys-house.freemove.co.uk)</i>	Birmingham	11.00am
Feb 25 th	Discussion and Policy meeting on Green tourism <i>(contact Jim Gaffney for details - visiting speaker expected)</i>		
Mar 2 nd	Green Party monthly meeting	Ludlow, Feathers	8.00pm
Mar 13 th to 16 th	National Conference <i>(if you plan to go do remember to use the mid-Wales rail line from Craven Arms)</i>	Llandrindod Wells	
Apr 1 st	Green Party monthly meeting	Ludlow, Feathers	8.00pm
May 1 st	District Council Elections		
Jul 27 th	Green Fair in the Castle Square	Ludlow	10.00am to 4.00pm

DREAM CITY ?

A totally integrated, fast, efficient, cheap public transport system - trains, buses and trams.

A daily open-air market with around 50-60 stalls, the majority of which sell only local produce, including half a dozen organic producers (freshly-pressed apple juice on tap - Mmmm!)

A traffic-free town centre with 5,000 cycle racks/stands, a network of cycle paths and cheap cycle hire.

Solar projects on all kinds of different buildings from blocks of flats to a church, office buildings to a hotel.

A 4-day Environmental Film Festival with documentaries from all round the world.

A ban on the use of pesticides in viticulture and a big push to encourage fast-food providers to use reusable containers.

Segregated doorstep collection of all recyclable waste.

"Plus Energy" housing designed to put excess electricity on to the grid.

A local council which prides itself on its environmental record and is determined to channel funds into sustainable transport, recycling etc.

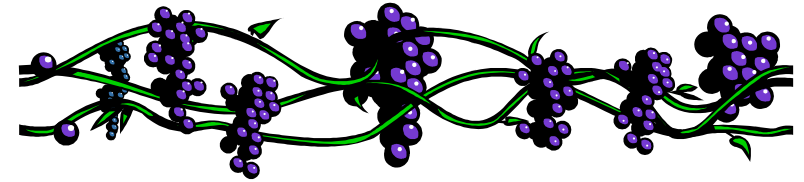
A Green Party mayor.

Green Party conference national TV news headlines with daily interviews with Green Party politicians.

No, it wasn't a dream, although at times it did seem almost surreal. This was Freiburg, Germany in October 2002.

It's a great holiday destination - you can get there by train - with loads to see and do. Let us know if you're thinking of going and we can give you more information.

Sally & Clive



Green Transport Stall

A similar job to the above, but focussed on sustainable transport. Last year's stall had a survey for people to complete and enter a free draw with tickets from Wales & Borders as prizes and a Harry Potter Hogwarts Express Quiz for the kids, as well as bus and train timetables and other information.

Green Party Stall

Each year, SSGP has had a different theme: last year's was Indoor Pollution with Linda Downey's excellent dolls' houses display and information. Anyone with an idea for this year's stall and the willingness to organise it, please get in touch.

Catering

Aragon's Restaurant has supplied refreshments for the last two years and we hope will do so again in 2003. There have also been many requests for additional snack catering. The arrangement of a large number of tables and chairs (with attractive flowers courtesy of Lesley) last year was a big improvement. Someone is needed to be in charge of catering arrangements both beforehand and on the day.



Competitions and Fringe Events

Last year, for the first time, we organised additional events including children's entertainment, a walk, a Design an Eco House competition and a series of talks. Anyone who has fresh ideas and is interested in organising anything along these lines, now is your chance!

Anyone who volunteers will not be left on their own - plenty of support will be available. However, as you can see, we do need a much bigger group of helpers in order to ensure the success of the event. Fresh ideas and plenty of enthusiasm are needed. Organising an event like the Green Fair is hard work, but great fun. Please join the team!

All offers of help welcome - please contact Sally on 01584 856376 or email Savoir-Faire@freenet.co.uk



A Councillor's Year

District Councillor John Lloyd reflects on a year of representing Church Stretton North and on the challenges and the loneliness facing the long-standing Green councillor.

It is hard to believe that in May I will have served on South Shropshire District Council for eight years. In this time there have been many changes, in particular, the arrival of a new structure which saw the end of the long standing committee system and the adoption of a more managerial one with an Executive plus Advisory Committees, modelled on the Westminster Cabinet system.

I am not yet convinced that this fits the needs of a small local authority such as SSDC.

Back in March I wrote an open letter to all Councillors complaining that the role of the "back bencher" was being diminished and it was becoming

some respects this must reflect my age but there is much merit in good debate which reflects all opinions.

Challenge to the Executive should, under the current structure, be provided by the Scrutiny Committee but in reality this has been a weak Committee. Being the only Green in the council my challenge has to be very selective if it is to be effective.

During the recent crisis in agriculture I was able through a process of putting motions to Council to initiate a number of workshops to discuss the plight of the small family farms which are still a significant feature of South Shropshire. It was an opportunity to point out how "industrial agriculture, globalisation and liberalisation of trade was decimating traditional



agriculture and affecting social welfare locally" here in the UK. Recognition was given to the role of Farmers' Markets and the possibility of a local produce showcase in Craven Arms but without more Green Party Councillors so much becomes words rather than action.

This also applied to a motion to Council calling on them to have a day set aside in the market towns for a "Toxic Spring Clean", when a collection would be made of such substances as pesticides, old batteries, oil and paint containers so that these hazardous materials would not find their way into landfill sites via the weekly black bag collection. This was seen

as impractical by the Executive, though there was considerable support from individual Councillors. It is already clear that the future of the council's recycling policy will be dictated by the rigidity of the contract with Biffa. I have always opposed the nature of this contract because it means that if you want to do anything extra to move towards the Green vision of a 'wasteless society' you pay dearly for any new initiative.

In the November council meeting we considered the use of outside brokers to manage some of the Council's funds. I have in the past raised the matter of ethical investments. This time we were given a list of banks and building societies with which to lodge funds. I moved that the Co-operative Bank be included. This was referred to the Scrutiny Committee.

Being single-handed on the Council it is not possible for me to attend all Committee meetings, though in this case I had a fair

idea I would be wasting my time. The broker's opinion would no doubt be accepted, ignoring the fact that a number of councils around the country use the Co-operative Bank's services. Had I attended I could also have reminded members that ethical investments have stood up remarkably well in the depressed stock market. Whilst the Co-op may not fulfil my wishes entirely it does at least have an ethical policy and that fact is worth recognising.

May sees the District Council elections and, at the moment, it is my intention to stand again and win. I would like some help and I would like to be able to think that more Green Party members would join me so that we can make a determined effort to fight, and hopefully win, more seats this time

GRANTS FOR SOLAR ENERGY

The government is making £20 million available in the first 3-year phase of a photovoltaic (PV) demonstration programme.

Substantial grants of between 40 and 65% on total installation costs are available towards the installation of solar electricity equipment, whether you're a householder, business or social housing group.

Information is available on the grants website with a listing of approved installers and advice on suitable equipment.

It is also possible to make initial applications online or by calling a telephone helpline. The website is at www.solargrants.org.uk and the Helpline number is 0800 298 3978.

At the end of November 2002 a total of 132 grants had been made – 12 from

