



# South Shropshire Green Party



Officers 2003

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Articles for next edition of Grapevine due with the editor by March 16th. Please send by email if possible.

## CAR OR BICYCLE ?

(Continued from page 7)

The UK currently has a dispensation which allows a non-peddalling mode but this is likely to disappear and should be borne in mind when buying a machine.

### Making a Purchase

Before buying a machine it is necessary to consider price, weight, range, gearing, intended use and overall quality. Readers are strongly recommended to call up the 'A to B' cycling magazine website [www.atob.org.uk](http://www.atob.org.uk) which has an extremely useful and up to date review of all electric bicycles currently available in the UK.



# Grapevine



Newsletter of the South Shropshire Green Party

Issue 40

Winter 2004

## 2004 - a year of hope for the Greens

### But how many more chances have we got?

Would you like the bad news or the good news first? Let's start with some of the bad news.

- George Bush and Tony Blair have torn up the UN charter
- George Bush has wrecked the Kyoto agreement.
- The Labour Government has failed, abjectly, to do anything to address the transport crisis in the UK.

I'm sure we could all add plenty more items to the list, but let's not get too depressed for the New Year. Let's just get concerned – and determined to do whatever little bit we can to help sort things out!

So here's some of the good news.

- There were huge protests against the war-mongering and truth-twisting of our leaders. One of the demonstrations was, by a long way, the largest ever

seen in this country on any issue, and was entirely peaceful. Clearly UK citizens are neither as stupid nor as apathetic as our leaders think!

- The same message came through on environmental issues; for example over 90% of the public were unconvinced by the arguments of the multinationals on GMOs.
- Politically in both Scottish and local elections, the Green Party enjoyed the best results ever.

In a sense, the New Year message to Grapevine readers is the same as ever.

### HELP

Give us your energy, your encouragement, your time or your money, or any combination of them. We are being heard, we are making an impact.

## EURO ELECTION 2004

The European election on June 10th will select our MEPs for the next five years.

Unlike most domestic elections a system of proportional representation is used for Euro-elections. This means that the voter chooses the party he wishes to vote for, all votes in the region are totalled and seats are awarded to the parties according to the percentage of the total vote received by that party.

Prior to the election each party has submitted a list of candidates in a preferred order and the



seats awarded to the party are distributed according to the order of that list.

In the West Midlands there are currently 4 Conservatives, 3 Labour and one Liberal MEP. The Green Party vote at just under 6% in 1999 influenced the shape of the election but was not enough to gain a seat.

Our electoral aim this year is to work regionally to gain a green voice for the West Midlands in the European Parliament.

Heading the Green Party list in the West Midlands is Chris Lennard (pictured left).

### Practical support you can give now

The West Midlands Green Party has to provide a deposit so that it can nominate candidates. The deposit is returnable if our vote reaches 5%.

#### Can you help ?

£10 bonds are being issued to fund the deposit. Any individual can subscribe to as many units as they wish. The bonds are refundable if the election deposit is returned.

**Please contact John Lloyd or Jim Gaffney if you can help.**

## GREEN POLICIES IN EUROPE

A major part of Green activity in the European Parliament has been to create a strong case against GM crops, with the hope of moving to a complete ban.

Social policy has also been high on the agenda with issues ranging from refugees to pensions reform. The Greens have also campaigned against war, prejudice

and unfair trade as well as inequality and the destruction of communities both in Europe and elsewhere.

Although British entry to the Euro is a domestic issue the Green Party position is to oppose entry.

The full manifesto for Europe will be available in the spring.

use a more modern battery, either nickel cadmium (NCd) or nickel metal-hydrate (NMh) which are small and relatively light in weight. The motor only operates when the machine is pedalled and they are generally referred to as 'pedelecs'.

The Giant Lafree (the gents model is pictured below) which I am now using, is considered to be the best of the pedelecs currently available. It has an aluminium frame and is only slightly heavier than the standard roadster.

This bicycle is very suitable both for car replacement journeys and for longer leisure cycling. If the battery fails it can be pedalled home without too much difficulty and you can carry a spare battery if you want to. The downside is that the Lafree is quite expensive, but it is a well equipped quality machine.

The range of an electric bicycle between charges will generally be about 20 miles but can be very much further by pedalling in favourable conditions without using the motor.

Compared with a car the resources and energy used to manufacture and run an electric bicycle are negligible. Some care is needed when disposing of spent batteries to avoid pollution problems.

## Exercise and the Electric Cycle

It might be thought that if an electric bicycle is doing most of the work the exercise benefits are lost. This is not so. A cyclist will comfortably be using about 100 to 120 watts (0.13 to 0.16hp) when pedalling an ordinary bicycle along the flat or up modest gradients.



This output is still being used when pedalling an assisted machine. You simply go faster on the flat and more easily up the hills. If a motorist switches to a pedalled electric for a given journey the resulting exercise can only be beneficial.

### Legislation

EU regulations specify the conditions for an electric machine which remove the necessity for tax, insurance and a driving licence. The most important of these is the requirement to pedal the bicycle in order for the motor to operate.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## CAR or BICYCLE?

*Gordon Gissing is a regular cyclist . In this article he explores the benefits of using an electric bicycle.*

I am a regular cyclist and use a lightweight bicycle for both leisure and utility journeys. This activity has reduced my car mileage and provided healthy exercise. In this context I have been assessing electric bicycles, which have seen significant advances in design and technology in recent years.

I hope to show you that the modern electric bicycle can replace the car for many of those short journeys which make up the majority of car mileage.

### The Health Factor

There is no doubt that regular cycling helps to promote a healthy lifestyle. It is possible to enjoy a substantial and varied diet without acquiring the many problems which come with being overweight and the cardiovascular benefits of cycling are well established. Perhaps less well known is that cycling is a safe and beneficial exercise for the very common affliction of low back pain.

Replacing a car journey with a bicycle combines exercise, utility, negligible cost and environmental benefits, an unlikely outcome for any other form of physical activity.

### The Modern Electric Bicycle

Electric drives for a bicycle started with a bolt-on kit for an ordinary

machine which drove one of the wheels via a friction roller. Although this method is still available it results in a number of problems and is now generally considered outdated.

The modern machine is an integral design driven either by a hub or crank motor. Hub motor bicycles are usually imported from China where there is a thriving electric bicycle industry.

Chinese designs are generally solid machines with a lead acid battery and are invariably very heavy. The cheaper versions may be crude and of poor quality perhaps with only a single gear.

The better and more expensive models, of which the Powabyke is a good example, can be very effective. This machine has a very large battery and a good range and will climb the steepest hills with only modest assistance from the rider.

I used a Powabyke for two years and found it very suitable for the short trip of a few miles to town instead of using the car. It goes well on the move but the excessive weight makes it very cumbersome to park. With assisted pedalling it can be used for quite long journeys but if the battery runs out it would be difficult to pedal home.

Currently the most advanced design is the crank motor driving through the chain. These models

## B & Q

### *Bargain and Quality or Brash and Questionable?*

Planning permission is being sought for a retail park comprising a B&Q superstore, fast food outlet and petrol station to be built on land between the Ludlow bypass and Foldgate Lane. For me, the worst aspect of this plan is the way that it will radically alter the southern approach to the town, making it look like every other town in England, instead of the unique place which most of us appreciate.

The other arguments against the development are based on economics, aesthetics and concern for the health of the population and the environment.

- Firstly, we are told B & Q will provide jobs. In the short term possibly, but will these be outweighed by the job losses resulting from the probable closure of Ludlow Homecare and the possible closure of the more specialist builders' merchants already providing a valuable service?
- Secondly, the accompanying fast food outlet will provide jobs, but will also result in a huge increase in litter, traffic and light pollution affecting a wide area. Furthermore, with government reports highlighting changes in eating habits as a cause of the rise in the incidence of obesity, especially among the young, perhaps we should be taking this opportunity to refuse that option. Ludlow is one of the forerunners in the Citta Slow movement which aims to promote healthy eating based on slowly produced food eaten at leisure, and our affiliation with this approach, which sits well with our gourmet reputation, is likely to produce more long-term revenue than a burger or pizza chain.

Most people agree that we do need a second petrol station following the closure of Castle Garage, and that an out-of-town site is preferable to a town centre location. However, with careful forethought, this could still be achieved with the minimum visual impact on the area.

*Linda Senior*

## DIARY

If there is only one meeting a year you can come to this is the one.  
**Saturday 7th February - The Feathers, Ludlow - 2pm**

Guest Speaker and AGM

## A ROOF OVER WHOSE HEADS ?

*John Lloyd sets out the case for a radical new approach to South Shropshire's housing plans.*

Mr John Mattocks BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI will be with us in January leading the South Shropshire Local Plan enquiry. This will set the guidelines for future development throughout the District until 2011.

This public consultation is likely to continue well into February and will hear verbal objections to the emerging plan developed by the Council. Already the enquiry has received written objections.

Many of the key planning matters have been debated in Council – affordable housing, the re-location of the abattoir in Craven Arms ... not to mention the controversy over further commercial development on the outskirts of Ludlow.

Unlike most of my colleagues on the District Council I do not regard building as a good thing per se. In

the case of new house building I was the single vote that supported the County Council's Sustainable Development Structure Plan.

This is because I believe it could bring discipline to the planning process and check the District Council's profligate attitude to speculative free market house building, instead of catering for genuine local housing needs.

Hence we find that when the District Council did (eventually) conduct a Housing Needs Survey they identified a demand for 287 affordable dwellings each year for the next five years.

So the Council finds itself in a position where it has this identified local demand yet it has planning authority for only an additional 500 new dwellings within



the terms of the Structure Plan to 2011.

Looking back to 1996 I could weep at the damage done to our environment through the planning process. Water meadows built over, magnificent trees felled, hedges grubbed out, traditional orchards lost – and all to what purpose? Another builder's dream, another developer's pocket lined, but little in aid of the community.

So since 1996 a considerable section of our population has lost out, mostly local, mostly hourly paid. Now the cry is going up that we must do something about the demand for affordable homes, and we know what that will mean. The only plots now

available are on greenfield sites - more countryside lost to concrete, young families pushed further out of town, increased car use, growing town centre parking problems and more school buses.

Many of the roots of the problem do not rest at District level. The questions of second homes, the policies of building societies and other lenders, the tax system, all are issues which are not in our hands.

What I have put to the Local Plan inspector is that here should be a moratorium on new housing generally and only affordable dwellings should be allowed. This would assist a lower level of development in the District which would be more targeted at needs and will match up with the County Structure Plan.

Most importantly it would help us address the social imbalance where new housing is beyond the means of a high proportion of the population.

## ITS HARD BEING GREEN !

Do you remember what life was like before you started reading and talking to people about 'environmental' awareness, before your conscience clicked in? Do you remember how easy it was? You just bought the first thing that you needed, no worries about pollution, landfill etc.

Then one day perhaps you talked to someone or read something – possibly about recycling to avoid landfill. Maybe you visited a landfill site or saw pictures in a magazine or on TV. So you started thinking, and then recycled a few things. That made you feel better - for a while!

Looking at what you recycled perhaps you saw that you could widen your scope and recycle more. Then you found that by not buying certain things, or certain packaging forms, you wouldn't have to recycle as much; or perhaps you found that you could recycle more because of the packaging of the 'new-to-you' product.

This changed your way of shopping and you started to look at everything you bought. Reading more articles and talking to other people made you realise that some ingredients in packaged food were either bad for you, or for the environment, or both. So now you started to read labels when you shopped!

Then there are clothes. Lots of plastic in clothing – so you buy cotton. However a few years later (it takes some of us a time) you read that cotton has more chemicals sprayed on it than just about any other crop. So you start looking at hemp and organic cotton, more expensive and less selection (this type of clothing is almost always casual). Its certainly better for the environment and it makes you feel better.

Now your whole life has started to change. You join the Green Party, Friends of the Earth etc and you learn that there is so much more to do.

When you see someone's shopping trolley at the supermarket, loaded up with rubbish, or you see things left out for the refuse collection which could easily be recycled, do you think back to how you used to be and how easy life was?

Would you go back to it? Its hard being green – but I wouldn't!

*Ian Smith*