

Suffolk GreenView

Winter 2013/14



Green Party

The green newspaper for Suffolk

Greens Challenge Overdevelopment



Development in the right place: Green councillors Rachel Eburne and Andrew Stringer have highlighted that a brownfield site in central Stowmarket, approved for affordable housing, remains undeveloped; meanwhile they are campaigning to protect a greenfield site just outside the town which has been zoned for industrial development.

Greens in Suffolk are campaigning against plans for large-scale development in the countryside. Suffolk authorities are pushing ahead with plans for thousands of new houses in big new estates on green fields outside towns such as Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and Ipswich (at Martlesham).

The Green Party has highlighted official figures which suggest that this level of development is not needed to meet local housing needs. There are over 10,000 empty homes in the county, while developers already have planning permission for thousands of homes that have not yet been built.

Rupert Read, the Green Party's lead candidate for the European election,

commented: "For too long, national planning policies have focused on overdevelopment in the east and south east of the country. Too many of our region's local plans are focused on encouraging excessive development and population growth. As a result we see expensive new homes built on greenfield sites which don't meet local housing needs.

"We need planning policies that will address the needs of current and future generations. That means bringing empty properties back into use, building homes local people can afford, building to high environmental standards and ensuring that the services people need will be available locally. It also means protecting the

countryside so we can grow the food we need locally and conserve a healthy environment."

This view is backed up by a report from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, which highlighted that Government planning policies are "being used to impose unnecessary greenfield development in the teeth of local opposition" and that "brownfield sites are being overlooked in favour of building on green fields that are easier for developers".

European Election: Greens Can Win

European elections are held under proportional representation, so **every vote counts**.

The Green Party narrowly missed winning a seat here last time.

It's Close

9%

Green vote last time

10%

Votes needed to win

The next European election is in **May 2014**.

With 10% of the vote the Green Party should win one of the seven MEP seats in Eastern region.

Green Party policies on development and housing

- Stronger protections are needed for agricultural land, greenbelt and urban green spaces. Landowners should be forced to go ahead with planned developments on derelict urban sites.
- Councils should focus on providing affordable housing that meets local needs and they should be required to bring empty properties back into use.
- Housing should be built to high environmental standards, including insulation, renewable energy, rainwater recycling and appropriate building materials.
- Local services, job opportunities and good public transport links should be required with all new developments.

Keep Our NHS Public

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas recently helped celebrate the 65th birthday of the National Health Service. She met with campaigners and paid tribute to "the greatest health service in the world".

But Dr Lucas warned that the NHS as we know it is under threat as services are cut back and privatised: "The huge campaign against privatisation has shown that there are plenty of people who still have that faith – and who will fight to protect it from being sold off to the highest bidder."

It has been revealed that the Government plans to privatise a key tier of management in the NHS worth £64 billion. This could see multinational companies put in charge of key decisions about the running of health services, sparking fears of further cutbacks.

Green Party members are working with the campaign group Keep Our NHS Public to oppose these plans.

The Green Party has also challenged the plans of Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust to cut 500 staff from mental health services and reduce inpatient beds by 20%.



Green MP Caroline Lucas is fighting to protect NHS services from privatisation

www.eastern.greenparty.org.uk

Includes links to local Green Party websites

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News in Brief

A large-scale opinion poll has shown that the Green Party is on track to win a seat in the European Parliament in Eastern region.

The poll, conducted by YouGov, stated: "Our research shows that... Greens would gain 12% of the vote, and the LibDems 10%." In Eastern region, this would put the Green Party on course to win the seat currently held by the LibDems.

Last time in the East the Green Party's Rupert Read was a close runner-up. On these figures, Rupert would be elected in May 2014 and the number of Green MEPs in the UK would increase from two to six.

Green Party Leader Natalie Bennett has called for an immediate end to licensed badger culls in England.

She described the culls as unscientific, inhumane and also shambolic, highlighting that a six-week trial in Somerset had failed even in its own terms, with the number of badgers culled around 40% of its target of 2,081.

Natalie Bennett said: "This slaughter of our indigenous wildlife, which is also causing substantial disruption to rural communities, has to end. We must take effective action to deal with the problem of bovine TB, but this clearly isn't it.

"We need to develop a co-ordinated approach of badger vaccination, improved biosecurity and hasten efforts towards the final clear answer to this problem – a cattle vaccine."

Is the EU Good for Our Environment?



Keith Taylor and other Green MEPs say that the EU has a leading role in creating a clean and healthy environment

Leaving the European Union would put at risk years of work to protect our environment, say campaigners.

Friends of the Earth, responding to David Cameron's announcement that he would hold an in/out referendum in 2017, called it "a poorly thought-through policy designed to see off his political opponents from the right,

with too little thought given to the consequences for our environment."

A recent Friends of the Earth report reminded us that Britain used to be called "the dirty man of Europe" with some of the worst emissions and filthiest seas. EU membership brought a shift to strict, legally binding targets.

The report also highlights that:

- EU bathing water directives clamped down on the discharge of effluent at the coast.

- EU air quality directives saw emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide cut.

- EU habitats directives obliged the government to take care of wildlife in special protected zones.

- The EU is calling now for binding targets for renewable energy by 2030.

Keith Taylor, Green Party MEP for the south east of England, said: "The EU offers the best opportunity for concerted action to succeed, for responsibilities to be shared, for expertise to be pooled... and for the UK to play a leading role in setting the international agenda."

The Green Party wants the EU's role in environmental protection to be strengthened, not jeopardised.

But the Greens are realistic about the EU's shortcomings. The Green Party wants to cut through the distant bureaucracy, giving more power to elected MEPs not unelected Commissioners and putting a curb on corporate lobbying.

Employment Figures Mask Murky Jobs Market

Conditions for Britain's workforce are deteriorating, prompting the Green Party to call on the Government to ban controversial zero-hours contracts and take action to create lasting jobs.

Although official employment figures have been rising, they mask some gloomy trends: a rise in zero-hours contracts, more temporary work and a general lack of job security.

According to the Unite union, 5.5 million people are on so-called zero-

hours contracts. These contracts can require the worker to be on standby every day but only paid when they work.

"Zero-hours contracts put workers in an invidious position, uncertain if they're going to have enough money to pay their rent, the food bills and other essentials", said Natalie Bennett, Green Party Leader.

Official figures show that temporary jobs have accounted for almost half of the rise in employment since 2010, in what has become known as 'underemployment' – people seeking a permanent job but who are only offered temporary, insecure work. The number of permanent jobs in the UK has reduced by 8,000 since 2005.

The Green Party is campaigning for more jobs and apprenticeships in areas such as sustainable food production and clean energy.

Jean Lambert, Green MEP for London, said: "Investing in manufacturing and skills for green industries is key to ensuring the UK meets its climate change targets. It is essential that more sustainable green jobs are created in the UK, both for a greener economy and long-term employment."

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Green and Pleasant Land

Green MEPs have warned that recent reforms to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) don't go far enough in supporting small farmers, improving animal welfare and encouraging environmentally-friendly farming.

The European Union has been under pressure to reform the CAP, with evidence of growing public support for sustainable farming practices. A poll by rural campaign group CPRE showed that 84% of the British public believes that farmers have a responsibility to conserve the countryside and wildlife.

The CAP has encouraged large-scale intensive farming since the 1960s, with huge subsidies going to large corporate landowners and smaller farmers losing out. Intensive farming has brought about major changes to our landscape, with small farms turned into vast fields of monocrops, hedgerows destroyed and usage of chemicals dramatically increased. Numbers of farmland birds such as yellowhammers and linnets have declined by over 50% as a result.

At present 80% of CAP subsidies go to the largest 20% of farms. The reforms will start to redress this balance but plans to shift more



Greens want to conserve East Anglia's countryside, including these open fields near Ely. Photo: NickFord (nickpix2012, Flickr)

subsidies into environmentally-friendly farming were watered down during the negotiations.

The Green Party will continue to press the EU to promote fairer, more ecological farming:

- Promote **Neighbourhood Farms** to grow food for nearby towns and villages, and encourage local, short supply chains.
- Encourage **Sustainable Farming** that conserves the soil and promotes biodiversity. In particular, subsidies should be used to encourage organic

farming, creation of wildlife habitat and growing multiple crops.

- Promote **high standards** in food safety and animal welfare.

Mark Ereira-Guyer, who is second on the Green Party's list of candidates for the European election, said: "Green MEPs will press for action to support small-scale, environmentally-friendly farming and create short supply chains for our food. This is the only way to keep food prices down as oil prices increase and provide the much needed safeguards our wildlife needs."



Saving Childhood

Rupert Read Writes...

A series of recent reports has shown that children growing up today are far more disconnected from the natural world than previous generations. Children are spending less time playing outside and more time in front of screens.

At the same time, health problems among children are on the rise, with one in ten young people suffering from a mental health condition, increasing levels of attention disorders and one in three children clinically obese.

So, are these two trends linked? Writer Richard Louv argues that alienation from nature has resulted in "diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses".

His concerns are shared by the National Trust, the RSPB and hundreds of other organisations who have come together to launch a new film-based campaign called Project Wild Thing, which aims to promote the benefits of free outdoor play for children's physical and mental health.

At the same time, there is growing support from parents and professionals for a rethink of the UK's approach to early years education. The Government is increasingly basing its policies for nursery years on 'school readiness' and introducing more formalised learning, and use of computers, at a younger age. The Too Much Too Soon campaign rightly highlights that the nursery years are a crucial stage of a child's development, where play helps children to develop their communicative skills and explore their natural creativity. We should consider a longer period of nursery education and a later start to formalised schooling – a policy that has been very successful in Scandinavia.

More and more parents, professionals and campaigners are becoming very concerned about our children's alienation from nature.



Our society has become highly commercialised in recent decades and children are suffering as a result. We need an urgent rethink about how we protect children's wellbeing and encourage the next generation to grow up enjoying nature and wanting to protect it for the future.



For more information please visit: www.projectwildthing.com www.toomuchtoosoon.org

Rupert Read is the Green Party's lead candidate for the 2014 European election in Eastern region and a founder member of the Leave Our Kids Alone campaign, which argues for a ban on advertising aimed at children.

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Green Policies

Six Green Party policies you might not know about:

- Use the planning and tax systems to **support independent shops** and help communities stop large new supermarkets.

- **Clamp down on corporate tax avoidance** and introduce a 'Robin Hood' tax on risky currency speculation.

- **Abolish student tuition fees.**

- Renationalise the railways to keep fares down and improve services.

- **Tackle fuel poverty** through a free nation-wide home insulation scheme, funded by a windfall tax on the big energy companies.

- **Mend Britain's broken democracy** by devolving power to local level, introducing elections to the Upper House, reducing the voting age to 16 and protecting the rights of campaign groups.

Green MEPs' Achievements

There are 48 Green MEPs in the European Parliament, in the fourth largest political group. They have successfully influenced a wide range of legislation including:

- A cap on bankers' bonuses.
- Access for all young people to the European Social Fund, for education, training and support from voluntary organisations.
- Consistent measuring of human rights progress across all EU countries.
- The ban on animal testing for cosmetics.
- Passing the Energy Efficiency Directive – to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020, with measures to achieve the goal and legal framework supporting.
- Protection of the countryside: improving farmers' pay, banning bee-killing toxins and promoting seed biodiversity – towards a GMO free Europe.

- Monitoring groundwater and ensuring companies are liable for environmental damage they cause during shale gas extraction (fracking).

- More efficient asylum processes – protection of vulnerable persons (children and victims of trafficking or torture) and more equal access to rights and benefits.

For further information on Green MEP achievements please visit:

www.greens2014.eu

Greens on Five East Suffolk Rail Success

Green Party members are now serving on five town councils in Suffolk, following two by-election wins in 2013.

Nicky Elliott (pictured), wife of Green Waveney District Councillor Graham Elliott, has been elected to Beccles Town Council. In Hadleigh, Green candidate Ian Welsh was elected to the town council in a closely-fought by-election in July. Bungay, Stowmarket and Saxmundham are the other Suffolk town councils on which Green Party members sit.



The hourly train service between Ipswich and Lowestoft is proving a success. Passenger numbers on the line rose by 12% in the first six months after the hourly service started in December 2012.

The new service was introduced following a twenty year campaign by Green Party Councillor Graham Elliott (pictured). It was made possible by the construction of new track at Beccles which enables trains to pass each other.

Graham Elliott said: "This is the biggest improvement to public transport in eastern Suffolk for a generation and provides a public transport spine that buses should connect into. I'm now working to bring Beccles station building back into use to ensure it becomes a welcoming gateway to the town."



Robert Lindsay, 49, is a Green Party candidate for next year's European elections.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I am married with two young children. I live in Bildeston, in south Suffolk, where I'm a parish councillor and run a smallholding. I am also a freelance journalist, having formerly worked for national newspapers.

What brought you into politics?

My interest in the natural world as a teenager became an interest in Green politics when I realised that if we left it to existing politicians we would soon not have much of a natural world to protect.

What do you want to achieve?

I'd like to see Suffolk rebuild a strong local economy. We have the resources in terms of local skills and land and sea, but too much power and influence is handed to big business and a financial elite.

What are you working on?

I have been actively campaigning against a Tesco application in our local town of Hadleigh, for more protection for our rivers and for slower speeds on roads in our towns and villages.

Why should we vote for you in a European election?

The European Union's founders wanted the EU to keep the peace, but it has become too focused on promoting free trade and serving the interests of multinational companies. The political elite of the EU and Britain base their economic and social policies on constantly chasing national GDP growth. The Green Party is the only political party that recognises that this is not going to meet our needs. We need economic policies that focus on producing the food, goods and services we need locally and conserving resources.

Outsourcing Policy Challenged

Suffolk County Council's policy of outsourcing care services should be reviewed, say the county's Green Party Councillors.

Public concern about the transfer of care services to private companies is on the rise, with a growing number of high-profile cases of neglect around the country linked to care being provided 'on the cheap' by companies with risky business models.

Green County Councillor Mark Ereira-Guyer has warned that privatisation not only risks the quality of care but is also a short-term policy. He said: "In many cases, councillors are asked to endorse services purely based on the lowest cost. When private care providers fail it is then those councils which have to pick up the bill."

In Suffolk, many services have been transferred to private companies, including the county's care homes. Hadleigh, Ixworth, Wickham Market and Beccles are all expected to lose their care homes in the next couple of years as facilities are moved to nearby towns. In Stowmarket, the care home is being moved from the town centre to the middle of a housing estate over a mile away.

Mark Ereira-Guyer continued: "Selling off assets like care homes is not a good policy when we have an ageing population. Public services should remain within the public sector where quality and accountability are required."

The county-owned care homes were given to a private company, Care UK, whose founder is well-known Conservative donor John Nash. His wife gave £10,000 to Bury St Edmunds Conservatives in 2009.

Can YOU help Suffolk Green Party?

Yes, I will help by:

- Voting Green in the May 2014 European election
- Voting Green in future local elections
- Displaying a window poster at election time
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- Coming to a Green Party event (please tick to request details)
- Supporting Green Party campaigns
- Making a donation (cheques payable to Eastern Region Green Party)
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