

BRENT GREEN NEWS

Summer 2008

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Brent and Harrow Greens undertook an ambitious and successful campaign in the recent GLA election - coming a good fourth, and well ahead of the rest of the field, in the only marginal seat to change hands in London. A sizeable 45% more people voted for us in 2008 than in 2004, up by over 3,000 to 10,129. By comparison, the Lib Dem vote across both boroughs dropped by nearly 1,500 votes to 19,299.

The Green vote in Brent was particularly strong in seven wards, where the Green Party captured 10-16% of the vote share. If the poll was repeated across the new general election constituency of Brent Central we would have achieved 9.2%. We also beat the Lib Dems on two ballots in Barnhill and Kensal Green.



Free home insulation was a popular policy with voters

We thank all our voters and will be back to honour their confidence in us and to advance their number again - at the European elections in June 2009 and the local council elections in 2010.

In the meantime, alongside two re-elected Greens in City Hall, we shall continue to speak out against bad policies and practices, and to propose better alternatives - for the sakes of everybody today and our children's children into the future.

Shahrar Ali, recent GLA candidate for Brent and Harrow



LET OUR CHILDREN PLAY!

Today's children are like battery hens. They are kept inside in a confined space and fed on television and computer games—an exaggeration perhaps but with an element of truth. As a boy I played on Barn Hill and fished at the Welsh Harp with my brothers, chased escaped cows down Fryent Way, and swam at Kingsbury Open Air Baths—all without adult supervision. Few children have such freedom today.

Brent Council is currently consulting with 9-13 year olds on improvements to play facilities in the borough with particular emphasis on play equipment. Some children are demanding more challenging equipment such as aerial runways alongside mountain bike courses and skateboard parks, others are demanding more imaginative play areas such as the pirate ship in Mapesbury Dell. The Quintain Estates development around Wembley Stadium offers an excellent opportunity to create an exciting children's play facility.

However children will not use the equipment if their parents perceive parks and playgrounds as unsafe so it is important that parks are staffed by park rangers. Many children and parents are put off by lack of toilets, or unpleasant and unsafe toilets and solutions like that at Roundwood Park where the café now incorporates toilets could be adopted more widely. The employment of 'Play Rangers' whose job it is to facilitate (not lead or organise) play at specific times in playgrounds and open spaces would have a major impact. Play help's children's intellectual and social development so the Green Party should encourage providing for 'free range' children who can explore and use their local environment creatively and responsibly.

Martin Francis

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ONE WORLD. ONE CHANCE.

Vote Green Party





Pedestrians in peril on the ASDA slip road

ASDA HAZARD FIGHT CONTINUES

Local residents have become increasingly aware of the danger posed by deliveries to the ASDA Wembley store as a result of our campaigning.

ASDA lorries routinely block the pedestrian right of way on a slip road off Forty Lane, and in clear contravention of the road markings, forcing pedestrians into the main road against speeding traffic - day or night. We have collected images at http://brentandharrow.greenparty.org.uk/asda_danger.htm Lorries have also been observed along the bus stop on Forty Lane and even on the pavement itself.

Since July 2007, the local press has been actively covering our campaign. Here are just a few of the headlines: "**Lorry drivers are putting lives at risk**", *Wembley Observer*, July 2007; "**Supermarket deliveries dangerous**", *Harrow Times*, April 2008; "**Pedestrians in peril from huge articulated lorries**", *Willesden Leader*, April 2008.

Unfortunately, ASDA's dangerous malpractice continues unabated and Brent Green Party has renewed its resolve to put a stop to it. We now await a reply to formal representations to both the manager of the store and the chief executive of ASDA. We will step up our campaign with Brent council, other officials, and the press.

WEANING OURSELVES OFF OIL



As the price of oil hits record highs, people blame OPEC, speculators, fuel tax - but what we're seeing is our oil supply inexorably running down. Our love affair with oil will soon be over; our descendants will look on the era of the petrol car and kerosene-powered jet as a blip.

As environmentalists, we know we cannot afford the environmental costs of oil - global warming, air pollution, oil slicks, carcinogens - but we also know that the economic cost of oil is too great.

The flow from each oil field declines before all the oil is used up in that field. For decades we've found new oil fields, but discoveries are far between today. The total global flow of oil from existing fields is starting to dip, just as China and India see rocketing car ownership and expanding heavy industries. Demand is exceeding supply. The result? A scramble for control of oil. Witness the Iraq War and the squabbling over the Arctic seabed. Antarctica will soon be in the sights of oil exploiters. Saudi Arabia might turn up the tap and Canada will dredge their shale, but we are witnessing the last gasp of the oil economy.

We need to wean ourselves off oil and gas now, not in twenty years. We need to give ourselves energy security: we are held hostage by dictators in Russia and the Middle East. Biofuels won't help - they've helped trigger a food crisis as land is turned over to running cars rather than feeding people. Nuclear is no option - it is dangerous, costly, and unsustainable.

The real solution is simple. Local, sustainable, small-scale energy production, using sun, wind, wave, and the earth. This is not a hippy fantasy; there are eco-houses in the UK that put more electricity into the National Grid than they take out. We can outlast oil, but we need to shift into an economy focussed on energy conservation, rather than the profligacy of the last century.

Matt Hodgkinson

OPEN LETTER TO BORIS JOHNSON , Mayor of London—Published in the *Evening Standard* 23.06.08

Dear Mr Johnson,

I notice that in spite of the embarrassing resignation of one of your aides; you have been being quoted in a favourable light in some of the papers today. The Evening Standard mentions you speaking of "...my passionate belief that racism is vile, repulsive and has no place in modern Britain." (P8 23/6/2008) and both the Standard and the Guardian cite "...clear and unambiguous opposition to any racist tendencies." (Guardian p.6).

Opposition to racism is supported by most Londoners, and Greens and Trades Unionists from all over the world, but what many of us would like to know is how you square statements such as the above, with the instruction reported to be emanating from City Hall that the Rise festival will no longer have "anti-racism as its central message and ordering the dropping of the message "London united against racism" and all reference to opposing racism.

If such a directive has actually been issued with your authority I suggest that you withdraw it forthwith and publicise this as widely as possible, since it sends a very dangerous message at a time when the BNP has just managed to get a GLA rep elected. At such a time it is hardly credible to maintain that you oppose racism but no longer believe that it is a serious problem in London, so unless you reverse the ill-advised tinkering with the Rise festival and its anti-racist ethos, your words about racism will just seem like so much pious claptrap.

Just like New Labour spin. I'm sure that you wouldn't want that.

Yours sincerely

Peter Murry (Secretary of Green Party Trades Union Group)

"If there's no action before 2012, that's too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment."

Rajendra Pachauri, the scientist and economist head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 17th Nov 2007

SPEAK OUT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is happening, it's happening now, it's caused by human activity and the majority of the world's governments are extremely concerned about its implications. Yet they can point to very little tangible progress – Kyoto, the world's first agreement on climate change, has been largely nullified by the intransigence of the world's greatest greenhouse gas emitter, the USA – and 'business as usual' continues and greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise.

There are innumerable indicators of global warming – melting ice-caps and glaciers, rising insurance bills for extreme weather events, flora and fauna migrating northwards, yet the UK's recent Draft Climate Change Bill, which claims to be driven by the objective of capping the UK's CO₂ contributions at a level which is consistent with a global temperature rise of 2°C has been shown by the Tyndall Centre to be more consistent with a 4 or 5°C rise.

This failure of the UK government to do more than 'business as usual' is mirrored in the near paralysis of the world's governments in their attempts to come to terms with the scale of the problem.

The G8 nations very recently agreed that they should set about reducing their CO₂ emissions by 50% by 2050. However, straight away, Mexico, Brazil, China, India and South Africa demanded substantially greater reductions in the G8 nation's CO₂ emissions leaving them as low as 20%, or even 5%, of present day levels. Unthinkable! But is not the destruction of huge parts of the planet within 100 years even more unthinkable?

It is clear that Western Governments are not going to have the courage to take anything like the hugely challenging steps needed unless people demand it. We are going to have to press our national and local governments very, very hard – and to do this with total conviction.

Nothing increases conviction more than actually trying out, in small ways at first, the actions we know will help bring down our carbon footprint: - using the car less, turning the thermostat down a notch, eating more eco-friendly food etc. Each of us now needs to start living with much less impact on our environment so as to develop the deep conviction that an alternative way of living is not only possible, but really does bring its own rewards. In doing this we will be better prepared for when we will have no choice but to live more frugally and we will have strengthened the basis on which we can establish common cause with our friends and neighbours.

Herein lies perhaps the key challenge: how do we engage the intelligence and attention of the majority of ordinary people who are so far at present from giving any real credibility to the idea of man-made climate change and its consequences? I suggest that a large part of the answer lies in communication - partly the government becoming more honest, partly local government taking a more 'proselytising' attitude, and just as importantly, engaging ourselves at the personal level e.g.:-

- Talk about climate change whenever a pretext arises.
- Attend public meetings on climate change and related subjects, particularly local ones.
- Given half a chance, raise climate change as an issue at all political meetings.
- Tap into the online community: the BBC weather site gives solid basic information; the Tyndall Centre provides very insightful briefings www.tyndall.ac.uk; sign up on the One Hundred Months website www.onehundredmonths.org or go to www.marklynas.org for a very up-to-the-minute, fully interactive blog web site.
- Complete the Brent Council's Climate Change consultation questionnaire by 31st August at www.brent.gov.uk/consultation

Brian Orr

Possible Council Action

HOUSING

Implement programme of wall and roof insulation on a street-by-street basis
Ensure energy saving and water conservation measures are incorporated in all council new build and encourage in private developments
Make paving of front gardens for off-street parking subject to planning permission and require any such surfaces to be permeable.
Discourage building of new housing in gardens

ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

Increase the amount of street tree planting and resist attempts to reduce or remove existing trees unless they are proved to be dangerous or damaging property, and only after proper consultation with all who would be affected by removal
Plant groups of native trees in existing parks, open spaces and waste land
Provide more wildlife areas such as meadows and ponds in local parks
Safeguard existing allotments and encourage 'grow-your-own' by providing demonstration allotment plots in some of the local parks
Introduce programme of providing households with low fee water butts on the same basis as existing compost bin service

TRANSPORT

Improve and extend existing cycle lane network and provide safe cycle routes to local high schools
Ensure any new schools are built near good public transport facilities or work with Transport for London to ensure that public transport links are provided where they are currently poor
Improve cycling travel allowances to council staff, introduce bike purchase scheme and provide cyclists' changing facilities
Provide charging points for electric cars at key points in the borough
Extend Green Travel Plans to all council departments and schools encouraging 'walk/cycle/ public transport to work' all year round
Continue to promote car pools/car sharing as an alternative to car ownership

EDUCATION

Carry out an environmental survey of existing school buildings to establish opportunities for energy and water saving
Plan a programme of building improvements based on the findings of the survey incorporating improved insulation, solar heating, water re-cycling and other measures as appropriate
Extend the surplus food and cardboard recycling for compost scheme to all schools
Encourage schools to develop wildlife areas and vegetable growing plots in their grounds
Appoint an Environmental Education Adviser to the School Improvement Service to promote environmental education across nurseries and schools
Institute an annual 'Save Our Planet' competition open to all schools to be awarded to the school taking the most effective action against climate change

WASTE REDUCTION

Work with local commerce and retail to reduce waste at source by encouraging reduction in packaging and on-site re-use or recycling of surplus materials or by-products
Seek ways of extending the composting scheme to include surplus food from restaurants and stores
Encourage re-use of surplus furniture and equipment by providing a collection facility at the borough re-cycling centre
Publicise the Freecycle network through the council's website and Brent Magazine

COUNCIL AND CITIZENS

The council should launch a programme of public information and education on Climate Change
The council should declare its support for the Transition Towns movement as a way of including the whole population of the borough in the battle against climate change.



Roundwood Park Lodge Café, much loved by local residents, is under threat from Brent Council. Founded over ten years ago by Mariaska Romanov, it provides a much needed community focus for Harlesden and Willesden. It has cheap, quality food, using organic ingredients where possible. Now, the council is demanding £160,000 unpaid rent alongside rent of £35,000 a year, realising a decade on that they can get some cash from this successful venture. Thousands of you have already signed the petition from *Save Our Community Café*, and the Green Party is joining you in calling for the café to be saved. Brent Council say they want to keep a café on the site, but Camilla Clayton tells us that the council is planning to replace the full-time contracts of the staff with 'zero hours' casual labour contracts, so staff will not know if they have work from one day to the next! You can contact Friends of Roundwood Park via their website: <http://www.friends-of-roundwood.ik.com/enquiry/home.ikml>

Save Our Community Cafe campaign: mariaska@us.com or Camilla.clayton@virgin.net

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WHY I JOINED THE GREEN PARTY By Pete Murry

I joined the Green Party for ecological reasons growing from a childhood fascination with wildlife and urban tourism into rurality. I had political reasons too, school and university studies led me to agree with Armenian radio that "Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man and under Communism the reverse is the case". I was also politicised by work. I have temporarily been a builders' labourer and a factory worker where dirty, dangerous conditions and the arbitrary and exploitative behaviour of employers showed me the importance of Unions. This was reinforced in the gentler conditions of teaching and lecturing where Unions are important not just as defenders of workers but also as defenders of education. After brief acquaintance I saw that the Labour party and a genuinely radical political labour movement were not the same, further more the LP and the Left in general had, until a few years ago a gaping chasm where an understanding of political environmentalism should be and I have yet to be convinced that the "greening" of other political parties is more than cosmetic. The way these strands of reasons to be Green interact makes me a Socialist Green rather than a 'Deep Ecologist' because humans are part of the natural environment and urgently need to learn how to play a non-destructive, non-exploiting role in it.

CONGRATULATIONS...

...to local Green Party supporter Daniel Viesnik for the successful completion of his 1,000+ mile walk, 12 week Footprints for Peace/Sortir du Nucleaire stroll across the English and French countryside from London to Geneva for a world free of nuclear power and atomic and uranium weapons AND for his recent legal victory.

Use this form to join the Green Party of England and Wales and Brent Green Party or visit www.greenparty.org.uk/join

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