



GREEN VOICE



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Residents of Lancaster Cohousing and Halton village celebrate work starting on their community hydro scheme. Founded with support from Green Party councillors, it will generate cheaper, greener electricity for homes and businesses, plus income for the parish to invest in environmental, recreational and conservation projects.



The energy crisis - Green solutions

by Mark Rotherham

One in five households can't afford to heat their homes. Within just a few years it's expected that one in three households will be plunged into fuel poverty.

"The need for clean energy is urgent," said Green Euro MEP candidate Peter Cranie. "Solar panels and super-insulation would rescue nine out of 10 homes from fuel poverty, quadruple carbon savings, and create up to 200,000 jobs."

Two former Green Party councillors have already helped pioneer the largest low carbon housing development in Britain. Shortlisted for a national award, the Halton development near Lancaster consists of 41 energy efficient homes and includes community facilities,

workshops, offices, studios and shared outdoor space.

"Forward thinking Greens are already solving the energy crisis," said Peter Cranie. "And we want low cost heating made available for every household."

Greens are also backing the Energy Bill Revolution - a public alliance of charities,

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trade unions, consumer groups, and businesses committed to warm homes and lower bills for all.

Along with energy saving measures funded by a carbon tax on big companies, the Green Party has been calling for a cap on energy prices for the last two years.

In contrast the Government has guaranteed French nuclear company EDF nearly twice the current market price for its electricity. And the ongoing cost for dealing with toxic waste from their reactors will be passed to the taxpayer.

"The government should back real solutions not vested interests," said Peter Cranie. "On cost and safety, renewable energy is a win-win for people and the environment."

For Sale: Your NHS

The NHS in the North West has surrendered £700 million worth of contracts to the private sector over the last two years.

"The NHS was founded to prevent disease and protect us when we're sick. Now we need to protect our NHS" said Green Party Health spokeswoman Gina Dowding.

The Labour Party began the privatisation process and Tory-Lib Dem government health reforms have ramped up the sell-off.

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Backdoor contracts worth £7billion have already been handed to companies such as Virgin, Serco, and Care UK. A further £20billion “bonanza” for private firms is predicted by corporate finance advisor, Catalyst.

Our NHS is being broken up and sold off but North West Greens are fighting back.

"We were out in force at the mass demonstration in Manchester to show the government what we think of their reforms" said Euro MEP candidate Laura Bannister. "And we'll keep up the pressure to save our NHS."

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas is working hard in parliament to salvage the NHS and Green MEPs are busy campaigning in Brussels for better tax rules to ensure that countries have enough in their budgets to pay for decent health services.

The Green Party opposes any sell-off of the NHS – you can too at keepournhspublic.com

Manchester: Green Party members on the frontline of the fight against NHS cuts and privatisation.



News in Brief....

Calling Cumbria

Green Party EU candidate Peter Cranie will be speaking in Ulverston on Thursday 20th February, Coronation Hall, 7pm. Why not make it a date, and come along and find out about our Green vision for Cumbria and the European Union?

Big business first, local communities last

Local councils in the North West, including Salford and Trafford, are investing taxpayers' money in the fracking industry – despite their supposedly 'impartial' roles as planning authorities.

Party leader's New Year Message

Green Party leader Natalie Bennett wants more support in 2014 for the people who need it most. Listen to her message in full at <http://goo.gl/GYs911> or scan the QR code below.



Bedroom Tax

Wigan-based Green Party member Michael Moulding has helped win a partial government climb down on the controversial 'bedroom tax'. People with disabilities who have lived in the same home and received housing benefit continually since 1996 have now been told they are exempt.

Support farmers and small businesses say Greens

by Julia Willis

Supermarkets should be stocking more local produce to give the region's farmers and shoppers a better deal.

That's the view of Green Party campaigners in the North West who say that the government must act on a new report by the Campaign to Protect Rural



Cumbrian Green Party Euro MEP candidate Jill Perry

England (CPRE). The report calls on supermarkets to localise supply chains to guard against the volatility of global food prices. NW Greens agree it's time to tackle the power of the big supermarkets, and provide more support to small business and food schemes that promote local produce.

"We need stronger rules, properly enforced, to ensure that farmers get a fair price", says West Cumbrian businesswoman and Green Party Euro MEP candidate Jill Perry. "We also need changes to the tax system to make life easier for small businesses."

Green Party members across the region are actively involved in supporting local food projects. Find your local Green Party at northwest.greenparty.org.uk

European Greens cap bankers' bonuses

by Mark Rotherham

Europe's Green MEPs joined forces to help introduce a new law to limit bankers' bonuses. The cap means that from this year bonuses can exceed salaries only to a specified limit – and only with shareholders' permission.

"The Greens in Europe have done what others have

only talked about," said Green MEP candidate Peter Cranie. "The Bonus Cap will discourage bankers from gambling with investors money to try and win big payouts for themselves."

Under these new laws banks must set aside more money to avert the risk of a future credit crunch, and they must disclose their profits and taxes paid. They must also

lend more money to small businesses. Green MEP Jean Lambert said, "The EU is doing more to address people's concerns about the banking system than the current UK Government. It's no wonder so many right-wing politicians want us to leave the EU!"

UK Chancellor George Osborne tried to block the

cap when finance ministers met in Brussels.

"If elected, I'll strive to get the banking system working for ordinary people" said Peter Cranie, "and be a strong voice for the Robin Hood tax – a tax for the people that will help fund our NHS and our schools, and fight poverty at home and abroad."

Green Comment

Fracking fantasy - a nightmare for the North-west

Fracking, the controversial method of drilling and extracting gas from underground rock, could be coming to your community.

From Blackpool to Bowland, St Helens to Salford, the industry is exploring all corners of our region - and government bribes are now on the table to persuade local councils to put pounds before people. It's seen by some – corporations, politicians and others who will never have to live near a fracking site – as a cheap replacement for dwindling North Sea oil supplies. And a big pay day for them all.

That's why the government ignores the evidence about risks associated with fracking, and listens only to industry propaganda and fantasy figures. So let's be absolutely clear. Fracking will not reduce energy bills. Even the government's own advisers reckon our continued reliance on gas will push up bills by hundreds of pounds more than if there was a shift towards low carbon alternatives.

Hundreds of lorries making thousands of journeys will be the scourge of local communities – where very few local jobs will be created.

And just as it has in the USA and Canada, fracking will pose a threat

and important habitat and wildlife areas, should not be underestimated. Some local farmers already fear they would lose their livelihoods if water becomes contaminated.

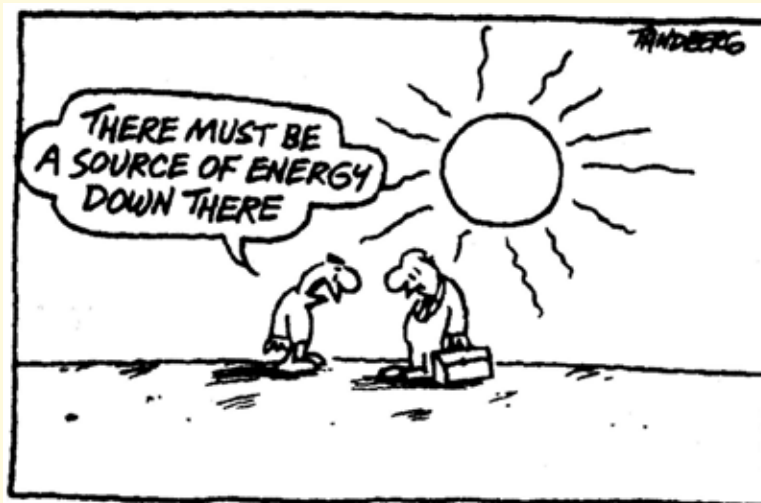
Fracking is little more than a desperate and dangerous attempt to mop up the last fossil fuels available – a short-term dash for gas with potentially catastrophic long-term consequences.

We say efforts ought to be focused on meeting climate change targets, generating our energy from renewable sources and creating thousands of green jobs instead.

That's why the Green Party is in the frontline against fracking, why our Euro election candidate Laura Bannister and veteran

campaigner Anne Power have played a prominent role in protests at Barton Moss near Salford, and why we will continue to resist this dirty, dangerous and desperate activity. You can too by voting Green in 2014

Could you be fracked? Find out at foe.co.uk/frackingmap



to health and the environment, which is why the European Parliament has called for tougher regulation and an outright ban on fracking in sensitive areas.

The North West is undoubtedly a sensitive area. Agricultural land covers 80 percent of the region, so the threat to our rural economy,

Better public transport for all

by Julia Willis

HS2 – going nowhere fast

The NW Green Party is calling for the wasteful high-speed rail project HS2 to be scrapped. Costs are spiralling out of control and the final bill could top £80 billion – that's a staggering £3,000 for every household in the North West.

"The government is gambling with taxpayers' money to build a fast train for fat cats" said Green Party Lancashire County Councillor Gina Dowding. "Hard-pressed people in the North West should not have to fork out a fortune just so a private train company can help executives shave a few minutes off their journey time."

Greens believe that authorities in the North West should oppose the proposals and lobby instead for investment in decent public transport here and now.

Improving rail links between the north's business communities, towns and villages is a far more effective way of boosting the region's economy.

Instead of subsidising private train companies the Green Party wants to return the railways to public ownership. This would save £1 billion a year while offering better services and lower fares.

Fighting for Liverpool's bus lanes

Green councillors in Liverpool are working to save the city's bus lanes after the Mayor announced plans to scrap them.

Almost half of Liverpool families (46%) do not own a car or van. This means that reliable bus services are vital for large numbers of people needing to get to work on time or access local amenities and leisure activities. Increased traffic congestion and delays are already being felt in the city and air quality is also likely to suffer as a result of the lane closures.

Safer Streets

Green Party Lancashire County councillors helped persuade the Council to introduce a 20mph limit in residential streets across the county, making our streets safer for children to walk and play and improving the quality of life for everyone.

- ### Green Vision
- A strong North West with the best regional transport system.
 - The £43billion allocated to HS2 spent on improving local transport links and creating real jobs.
 - To make public transport more affordable including creating a North West travelcard similar to London's Oyster scheme.
 - Safe cycle and pedestrian routes and better road safety for everyone.
 - The rail network run for the benefit of passengers and not for profit.



Greens act to save open spaces

A case for nature

by Mark Rotherham

A major report – the UK National Ecosystem Assessment – has shown that economic prosperity and environmental protection are two sides of the same coin.

"The economic case for nature is crystal clear," said Cheshire-based Green Euro MEP candidate John Knight, who was shocked at Tory attempts to sell-off Delamere Forest. "The benefits we get from rivers, wetlands, forests and wildlife are worth billions of pounds to the economy."

The report also found that

urban green spaces are worth at least £30bn a year in saved health and welfare costs.

Yet the government presents those who are committed to protecting nature as enemies of economic growth.

Chancellor George Osborne said that laws to protect rare species are a "ridiculous burden on business." Environment secretary Owen Paterson backs GM foods and the pesticides industry, and thinks that ancient forests should be bulldozed for new housing. Education secretary Michael Gove has even tried to downgrade environmental education.

This is despite the report finding that more than half of Britain's wildlife species are in decline. Bees, wildflowers, Butterflies and songbirds are disappearing. So too are red squirrels, harbour seals, hedgehogs, starlings and many more.

"Greens are working hard to reverse this alarming decline," said John Knight. "Our wildlife trusts, the RSPB and other conservation groups are also doing vital work to help nature's recovery and deserve all the support we can give them."

North West Greens are leading the fight against the loss of much loved green spaces. Cash-strapped Liverpool City Council wants to sell off Sefton Park Meadows, one of the jewels in the city's crown. But the local Green Party and others, including the Party's national leader Natalie Bennett (pictured above), are determined to stop the bulldozers and a record number of objections against the sell off have now been lodged. Find out more and add your voice at liverpoolgreenparty.org.uk

News in Brief....

Next generation faces climate catastrophe

Climate scientists are warning that unless emissions of greenhouse gases are cut now, our planet will heat up by at least 4°C by the end of the century. An increase of 2°C is already considered 'dangerous'.

Green Party National Conference

Liverpool's iconic St George's Hall will host the Green Party's national spring conference from 28 February to 3 March. Visitors, and members old and new are very welcome – more information at greenparty.org.uk/conference

Alternative education of your whole child: head, hands & heart

Lancaster Steiner School has vacancies for 3-11 year olds (nursery vouchers accepted in Kindergarten). For more information visit lancastersteiner.org.uk/ or phone 01524 841351.

The School is also seeking new trustees with experience of financial management, HR, curriculum, legal issues etc to support free school funding application.

Live a better life

It's 100% vegan, totally healthy, completely ethical – and it's coming to Liverpool on Saturday 12 April. For more details about the 'Live a Better Life' fair at the city's St George's Hall, visit www.labl.org.uk

Bury 'not for shale'

Greens in Bury are campaigning to have their borough declared a 'Frack Free Zone'. The move comes as drilling companies Cuadrilla, IGas and Dart scan the North West for sites to drill. Could your home be fracked? Find out at wrongmove.org

Power to the people?

St Helens Green Party is fighting Labour Party proposals to include the borough in a so-called Liverpool City Region 'combined authority'. Greens say power should be closer to the people of St Helens – not further away.

A greener Birkenhead?

Wirral Green Party has published its Greenprint for Birkenhead – a visionary plan to restore the town's status and create a place to be proud of. Find out more at www.wirralgreenparty.org.uk

Invest in the North West



Halton Lune Community Hydro is aims to raise almost £1million from North West residents to complete its ambitious 200kW hydro by the end of 2014. Anyone can become a member from just £250, receive a 5% pa return on their investment – and have a say in how the hydro is run. More information at haltonlunehydro.org or phone 01524 220010

Green jobs for region's youth

by Richard Frost

Millions of pounds destined for the banks should be redirected to the North West to create sustainable jobs in public services, renewable energy and housing insulation.

288,000 people are currently out of work in the North West, an unemployment rate of 8.3%. In the 18 to 24 age group the rate is nearly 20%. "That is a scandalous betrayal of our young people," said Green Euro MEP candidate Peter Cranie.

Government policies have dumped young workers on the dole and government 'remedies' have been a disaster.

The Youth Contract, a flagship scheme announced with some fanfare by Nick Clegg two years ago aimed to create 160,000 jobs over three years - about 53,000 a year - but in its first year the scheme helped fewer than 4,700 young people into work.

In 2012 the German renewables industry created



Peter Cranie

350,000 jobs. "Just think what that would mean for our young people facing a future of unemployment and unpayable debt," said Peter Cranie. "Green jobs would be local, skilled and plentiful."

Greens in Oxford and Kirklees, Yorkshire, have already pioneered a similar job creation plan with great success.

Why I Vote Green

Green Voice asked Lancaster resident Angie Jones why she votes Green...



“The short story is that I found Green policies make a lot of sense.

I started young, trying to change the world (or at least my part of it) and worked with different movements and voted for particular political leaders

with this end in mind. After the government restricted civil rights in the 1990's, I lost hope in politics and considered not voting at all.

Eventually, I decided to find out what various parties said they were going to do (even if I didn't believe them).

The Green Party stood out from the rest, proposing an equal, fair and sustainable economy that works with the natural world and meets

everyone's needs. I also read in my local newspaper what Green Party councillors are actually doing, and this started to whittle away at my cynicism.

For me, the Green Party has been a revelation. Greens have the best policies and they fights for the common good. And I now know it is not a single issue party, but an all issues party. That was the clincher and why I'm voting Green in May.”

WAYS TO SUPPORT US

If you share our values we hope you'll support us. Any help you give will make a real difference. Together we can create a fairer future for everyone.

ELECT MORE GREENS

In the 2009 European elections we missed out by just 0.3% of the vote, and instead Nick Griffin of the British National Party became a Member of the European Parliament. Help us stop this happening again. Vote Green Party in May 2014.

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