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GreenVine



The Newsletter of the Bristol Federation of Green Parties

GREENS DO WELL IN BRISTOL!

Sadly we didn't manage to get David Taylor elected as an MEP for the South West in the European elections. But the vote was of course in the whole of the huge South West region, which stretches from the Cornwall & the Scilly Isles to Gloucester, from Swindon to Bournemouth - and Gibraltar!

But we in Bristol can be very pleased, because unlike the rest of the region, where our vote dropped by 1% from 8.2% last time to 7.2%, in Bristol it increased substantially, to the point where **in Bristol West we got 16.1% of the vote!** A magnificent achievement, and I'd like to thank all Bristol West members who helped in the campaign, and also those from Bristol East and Bristol South who also helped in Bristol West, and not least, of course, in their own campaigns.

In **Bristol East**, the figures were 25% for Labour, 18.8% UKIP, 17.4% Lib Dem, 16% Tory, 11.1% Green. Respect got 4.2%. So you can see that in both Bristol East and Bristol South the vote generally has become much more fragmented, with no party able to claim second place with any confidence, though under the circumstances perhaps Labour did surprisingly well in both.

In Bristol South we got 12.1%, and in Bristol East 11.1%. And even in Bristol North West where we haven't got any real organisation we got 8%! I think we can all be proud of ourselves, and David Taylor has sent all of us his thanks. What is significant about all these 4 results is that they are Westminster parliamentary constituency results - not just council wards (which are about 10 times smaller).

You may also be interested to know that in Bristol West the Conservatives got 23.8%, the Lib Dems 30%, and Labour only 17.2%! **Yes that's right - we were only 1% behind Labour!!** (who currently hold the seat!), and only 7.8% behind the Tories! On these figures we can claim, I think, that Bristol West is now a **4 way marginal constituency!** We convincingly beat UKIP who gained 8.5% of the vote. Respect scored only 3%.

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A CURE FOR EUROPHOBIA

Try to engage politically with the European issue and you'll find yourself wading in a swamp. So little is understood of the democratic mechanisms of the EU that very few people, let alone Greens, are able to explain, convincingly, how the EU voters voice is being heard. And how the EU can ever be something to get excited about. Conversely its difficult to argue against further integration without having a sickening feeling that you might be descending into jingoistic nationalism.

A friend of mine who used to work for Irish Green MEP Patricia McKenna took early retirement recently. He'd had enough. He described the EU as "A machine that's designed not to work for the people", and when you look at the power structures you can see why. New policy is prepared by the European Round Table of Industrialists (www.ert.be). Policy is then handed to a board of failed politicians who form the executive government board or 'commission'. They call the shots. The elected parliament only has a right to amend or delay this flood of legislation and directives. The democratic part of Europe any honest MEP will describe as 'sticking your finger in the dyke'. Hence the swamp and the sinking feeling.

The Green Party won't score high enough in the European vote until we formally align ourselves with a tough reform campaign such as the Dutch "People's Constitution for the European Union" (www.pceu.org) and commit ourselves to backing Westminster until the EU is democratic. We all know Europe is a mess but it's down to us to show both party and voters a way through the quagmire. **Tony Gosling**

.../GREENS DO WELL IN BRISTOL!

Even in Bristol South, their supposed stronghold, Labour only got 27%, while the Tories and Lib Dems got just 15.8% each. Bristol South can be proud of themselves since they got 12.1%, only 3.7% behind the other two 'main' parties! However, UKIP beat everyone except Labour with 17%. Respect got 4.2%. What is worrying is that the BNP got 6.6% in Bristol South, and 7% in Bristol East, though in Bristol West they got less than 1%.

In terms of votes in Bristol West, we got only about 300 less than Labour – approx. 3800 for us as against 4100 for them.

There seems to be no doubt that as a consequence we can expect increasing (negative) attention from the other parties here in Bristol. Certainly in Bristol West we will be perceived to be a threat, especially by Labour, but also by the Lib Dems who will now be expecting to take the seat from Labour at the next General election and won't want us spoiling 'their' party! We can also expect them both to suddenly find 'very Green' credentials!!

And to reinforce the point, The Guardian on Saturday 19th June had a leader mentioning Bristol West and warning Labour in all the hype about UKIP, not to overlook the Greens who 'had a good election on June 10th'. In places where they stood in the local elections, the party took an average 10%. The Greens retained all but one of their local council seats and added a handful of others [10 new seats]. They made a respectable showing in the European elections too, boosting their national share to 6.3% overall'..... 'With all the signs pointing to a much tighter contest [in the next General Election], the Greens may have an effect on Labour's chances of holding seats like Brighton Pavilion, Bristol West, Lancaster & Wyre, and Watford'. It goes on – 'Labour ... needs a strategy to deal with a "Green Nader effect". One obvious tactic would be to give more priority to the environment in the coming months. Whether that would impress either Green fundamentalists or incorrigibly angry ex-Labour supporters must be open to doubt. But in its current decline, Labour can hardly afford not to try'.

So there you go. I rest my case! It's started already!
Geoff Collard

Recycling Furniture – *and* Lives

A Community which recycles furniture, helps homeless people get off the street *and* saves the tax-payer £500,000 a year? This is what Emmaus Bristol aims to do, by offering home, work and companionship to up to 18 formerly homeless men and women (known as Companions) in the centre of Bristol. Shaftesbury House in St Philips provides a supportive, drug and alcohol free home where each Companion has his/her own room and shares responsibility for cooking and household chores in the communal areas. Five minutes walk away, the workshop and retail area in an industrial unit in Barton Manor provide work (each Companion works a 40 hour week) on the Community business of collecting and refurbishing donated goods for resale to the public.

And the tax saving claim? A study by Cambridge University of Emmaus Cambridge, which opened in 1990, has found that there are savings to the Treasury which amount to over £26,500 for every Companion in the Community. The Community prevents around 925 tonnes of junk being dumped in landfill sites each year. Furthermore, the support given to Companion, which helps them to rebuild their lives, leads to savings in funds which would otherwise be spent on such things as their accommodation in hostels, public order and legal costs, health and drug and alcohol treatment.

Emmaus Bristol really is recycling lives – and they need your help to do it. Visit their workshop and retail area at Barton Manor, St Philips, BS2 0RL, Tuesday to Saturday from 10m to 5pm (early closing at 4pm on Friday) and buy good quality house and office furniture, bric-a-brac and bicycles at bargain prices. Or phone 0117 954 0886 to donate goods or find out more.

FUTURE STRATEGIES

We ran a good campaign in the European election, thanks to everyone's efforts, and it would be a shame not to build on the success of it. We now need to plan ahead a bit to prepare for future elections, not least of which will be the city council elections next May, which may or may not coincide with the General Election (Blair does not *have* to call this until May 2006).

The first step is to attend local meetings and decide what we should be doing. These things might include socials, fundraising events, policy education evenings and newsletters. I'd urge as many people as possible to come to the next scheduled meetings, which will set the scene ready for the autumn when we'll be starting again after our summer holidays.

Next up will be the SW Region meeting in Bournemouth on 3rd July. I'll be going, so if 2 or 3 others would like to go we could take a car; otherwise I'll go by train. This meeting will review the European election campaign and results in the South West, and then move on to discussing future regional strategy.

On 3th July, we're having a social train ride on the local Severn Beach branch line to the Lamplighters pub at Sea Mills. Everyone welcome – especially new members or those non-members interested in the Green Party. It's very relaxed – you can join the train at any station along the route from Temple Meads (where it leaves at 7pm – I shall be joining at Redland). We then get off the train at Sea Mills / Shirehampton and walk to the Lamplighters pub where there is a nice garden overlooking the river Avon near where it joins the Severn estuary. We return on the train about 10.15pm. Do come, and bring your friends!

The last meeting this summer will be the Bristol Federation (Bristol Wide) Co-ordinating meeting to agree an integrated Bristol approach to both strategy and policy. This meeting will be on Monday 19th July I'd suggest a meal afterwards for those inclined – we found a very good Turkish restaurant round the corner on Christmas Steps after the post Euro election social! As regards policy, very important for next year will be education, but also local taxation, health, and of course transport. In the late autumn, we're fortunate in having the Green Party's national Conference locally in Weston-Super-Mare, from 21-24 October, with the SW regional meeting taking place there also on the Sunday (24th). I can recommend Conference to anyone who hasn't been before – it's interesting and good fun! I hope to see some of you at one or two of these events! **Geoff Collard**

GLOUCESTER ROAD

I just thought I'd put together an impression of the couple of Saturdays I spent on Gloucester Road handing out leaflets and manning the stall with Chris. I think, as we can see from the election result support for us in that part of town is strong. The majority of people were interested in being approached by the Green Party and the reaction of lots of people was 'oh, good', and gratifyingly lots of people said they had already voted green or were about to. Several engaged in debate, but just seemed to want to check that what they thought were our policies were being clearly expressed, rather than wanting to know ! There were questions about our policy on Europe, which seemed to please most people.

Only one or two mentioned Respect and they were mostly ready to be talked out of voting for them. Confirming the trend quite a few people said they didn't vote, but couldn't really say why.

So, what is to be learnt from this?

1. Gloucester Road is a good place to encounter green supporters, so maybe we should have some stalls up over the summer and early autumn, or do some surveys there to get ideas on local issues for campaigning in the General Election. I think it is a good idea for parties to try to engage people outside election time.
2. A lot of people don't vote because of disillusionment with politicians. We need a good way to get our message across that we are different from the other parties. Could we talk to people in existing green councils e.g. Oxford to tell people about what we do when in power?

Daniella Radice

DIARY

GREEN PARTY DIARY

Sat 3 Jul, 12.00-4.00pm, Brewsters Neptune Bars, Boscombe Pier Approach, Bournemouth.
SW Regional Meeting

Tue 13 July, social **train ride on the Severn Beach branch line to the Lamplighters pub at Sea Mills**. Train departs Temple Meads at 7.00pm. Return train c. 10.15pm

Mon 19 July, 6pm. Bristol Green Parties committee meeting. Upstairs at the County Sports Club Colston Street. Contact Daniella Radice, tel 952 5796.

21 - 24 Oct **Green Party National Conference** in Weston-Super-Mare, with the SW regional meeting taking place there also on the Sunday (24th).

LOCAL MEETINGS

Bristol South

21 July at Charlie's house
20 Beaulay Road, Southville at 7.30 p.m.

Bristol West

6 Jul, at Audrey's house
31 Upper Belgrave Rd, Clifton at 7.45pm

Bristol East

TBA. Contact Christine Prior or Mike Crawford

WAR RELATED EVENTS

Wed 30 Jun, 5.50pm
'Handover Iraq' day. There will be a procession from the peace vigil at the Centre to a rally outside of the Council House. Meet at the peace vigil, 5.30p.m.

OTHER EVENTS

Wed 7 July, 7.30pm, St Georges, (Great George Street, off Park Street)
King Cotton, by David Mowat

IN VIOLENT ENVIRONMENT

KING COTTON, a multi-media show looking at Bristol's cotton industry from critical deep-ecology and other perspectives, is showing at St Georges Bristol, (Great George Street, off Park Street) on Wednesday 7 July at 7.30pm price £8/£5 concessions. To book a ticket ring 923 0359.

The show has been conceived and produced by party member and Masters graduate from Edinburgh's Centre for Human Ecology David Mowat. It was put together as a way to get a handle on the destructive power of economic globalisation, and to bring diverse people together in the making of the show. It tells a number of inter weaving stories, especially those of Green Maps man Ivor McGillivray and of La Ruca story teller Steph Anderson. It also has big band jazz, soulful blues from harmonica legend Johnny Mars and narration by the incomparable Ben Baddoo, whom you may remember from the Seymours fundraiser gig last December.

This may be the only chance to catch the show in its full glory, with youth theatre, large screen film and African drumming. Don't miss it!

Bristol West requires a new Local Party Contact. Keith Wiltshire wishes to retire from the post. We will discuss this at our next meeting – further details of post from Keith.

CONTACTS

The Bristol Green Parties **email list** is lively and informative, providing the most up to date information on local events and proceedings. To subscribe send an email to: bgp-subscribe@topica.com

Bristol Green Parties' Website contains the latest information as well as local party policy. The website is managed by Mike Crawford, contactable via email on barkingfishmike@hotmail.com

Local contacts are as follows:

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