

Leeds

GreenLight



The Newsletter of Leeds Green Party

Spring 2012

Labour joins Tories over cuts

The Green Party is now the only party dedicated to fighting Tory cuts. Labour's Ed Balls has announced that he won't promise to reverse spending cuts to vital social services. That's nothing new. Labour were promising cuts even before the last general election. The cuts are hurting many of the most vulnerable people in our society: disabled people, children, senior citizens.

But the cuts don't make economic sense – sacking public service workers means that they can't pay income tax. They have to start claiming benefits. The economy spirals downward while unemployment grows towards 3 million.



Green Party Leader Caroline Lucas is one of the authors of the "Green New Deal"

The Joy ofTax

"We don't pay taxes. Only the little people pay taxes". Those were the words of an American property tycoon who was later jailed for tax evasion. But many wealthy people and corporations in the UK continue to believe this. They send their money to tax havens around the world so as to avoid paying tax. The total "tax gap" could be as much as £70 billion.

Many of these tax havens (Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man) are controlled by the UK. Labour did nothing about this in 13 years. The present Tory/LibDem government is doing as little as it can. In fact, they are closing tax offices and sacking the staff. This shouldn't come as a surprise – the Tories now get half of their party donations from banks and hedge funds. This issue is not a priority for the 22 millionaires in Cameron's cabinet.

The Green Party wants to close down these tax havens as a matter of urgency. We believe that if big corporations want to do business in the UK they should pay tax here like the rest of us.

The Green New Deal

The Green Party campaigns for large-scale investment to get people and the economy working again. This strategy ended the Great Depression in the 1930s and it will work now. Britain badly needs new infrastructure: regional railways, renewable energy projects, new affordable housing for the homeless. The three big parties all want to carry on cutting.

Drinking in Headingley

Young people in the Headingley area want to have a good time and that often means going out for a drink. Regrettably, this frequently results in an aftermath of nuisance, litter, and broken glass on the pavement.

Headingley is supposed to be protected by a Cumulative Impact Policy. This means that people applying for a licence to sell alcohol must show that a new bar will not add to the problems. At present this policy is not always properly enforced. The Green Party wants to ensure that the rules for granting new licences are strictly obeyed. We also want to see more police and support officers on patrol to make sure that drinkers behave themselves with consideration for the rest of the community.

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A living wage for working people

What is the Living Wage?

The hourly pay that workers need to provide themselves and their family with a decent standard of living, as calculated by economists.

How much is it?

In most of Britain the Living Wage is £7.20 per hour. However, in London it is £8.30.

Why do we need a Living Wage when we've got the minimum wage?

Half of children in poverty live in families where one or both parents are working.

Increasing their wages means child poverty would be cut dramatically.

Introducing a Living Wage will also mean people are happier in work, healthier and more productive.

Is the Living Wage realistic in the current economic climate?

Yes. In London it has been introduced for all council workers. It is optional in the private sector but many companies have chosen to bring in a Living Wage for their employees.

The taxpayer ends up subsidising poverty pay through tax credits and other benefits. This means employers like the big four supermarkets can pay minimum wage to around 900,000 workers knowing that the taxpayer will stump up the difference. This amounts to a massive subsidy to the private sector.

What is the Green Party doing about the Living Wage?

The Green Party-controlled Council in Brighton has raised the wages of lowest paid staff to the Living Wage. In Norwich Green Councillors are calling for all City and County Council staff and contracted workers to be paid a Living Wage.

A Green vote is not a wasted vote

In the local elections of 2011 the Green Party in Headingley took 17.5% of the vote. A big thank you if you were one of our supporters. Of course, we want to build on this in May 2012 – we think people in Headingley are ready to be represented by a more progressive party which has a genuine vision of what the city of Leeds can become.



Greens want to see better cycle facilities in Leeds, like those in Copenhagen

Can Leeds become Copenhagen?

There are too many cars on the streets of Leeds. Lots of people would like to cycle to work, school or university but they feel that using a bike is not safe. The whole community benefits when more people cycle. Air quality improves, public health improves, there is less traffic congestion. Bus fares are high and petrol costs £1.33 per litre.

But if we are to feel safe on our bikes then we need our own roadspace. This means

building cycle paths that are physically separate from the motor traffic. After all, when we walk we don't have to share space with lorries and buses, we use the pavement.

Things can change. In the 1960s Copenhagen was the same as other cities – most people travelled by car. It was noisy, congested and polluted. In the following decades the city council spent money to improve facilities for cyclists. Now they have the highest rates of cycle use in Europe.

Leeds Greens propose building the first dedicated cycle tracks from the city centre right out to Lawnswood. We also want to reduce the speed limit on residential roads to 20 mph. We believe that these changes will show that safe cycling has public support. We want to transform Leeds so that it becomes an example of what a city can be in the 21st century.

Bolsover council's remuneration panel suggested a cut in councillors' allowances to bring Bolsover into line with other councils, yet only one of 37 councillors – a Green – thinks this is a good idea. Just fancy that.
(Private Eye – October 2011)