

NOTES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY HUSTING ON 15th APRIL 2015

Candidates for High Peak constituency:

Andrew Bingham - Conservative and incumbent
Caitlin Bisknell - Labour
Charlotte Farrell - Green
Ian Guiver - UKIP
Stephen Worrall - Liberal Democrat
Chaired by Helen Wallace

1. Bio-Diversity.

Given that according to the most recent State of Nature report, produced by 25 leading wildlife organisations, 60% of UK species have declined over the last 50 years and 31% have declined strongly, what is your party going to do to reverse these declines and ensure the health of the environment for the future?"

- AB - In 2011 the government published 'Bio-diversity 2020' re how to halt decline, including habitats for rare species affected by climate change.
- CB - An important question and the heart of the issue, we live in a fragile society, people, animals and plants have to co-exist, any upset has knock-on effects. We need to preserve it all. Lot of talk about re-wilding, need to be looked at seriously, what is now open moor used to be trees, we need a better balance.
- SW - A specific point re the need for better enforcement of wildlife and environmental crime laws. Lib Dem manifesto includes legal protection for bumblebee nests. Re-wilding, especially forests, target is at least one tree per child to reintroduce forest habitat.
- CF - State of Nature Report, almost half of insect life lost, loss of insect life has knock-on effect further up the chain, need neonicotinoid ban which last government fought against. Mixed messages from government, say want to protect but when it doesn't suit, destroy it. Green Party would ban driven grouse shoots, have detrimental effect on uplands, as well as gamekeepers killing birds of prey. Greens will protect nature.
- IG - No expert. In High Peak need balanced and healthy farming sector and sensible development policy to protect wildlife. Need to think also about economy. Wants to see move away from quarrying, the destruction and heavy wagons. Personal commitment to stop intensive home building on green fields, go for brownfield instead and contain housing need. Population growth huge contributor, need to change to more environmentally friendly economy ie tourism.

2. Planning/green belt:

- (i) **Since developers are not coming forward to develop brown field sites for housing, how would your party suggest dealing with this?**
- (ii) **In view of the reported need for affordable homes, how do the candidates see the importance of using brownfield sites as opposed to greenfield sites, and how would they achieve this in legislation?**
- IG - UKIP has specific policy of tax incentives to encourage building on brownfield sites, to offset greenfield being more profitable. Would also help small businesses compete with big developers, small numbers of houses on small sites better for environment and local economy.
- AB - Have already given councils power to protect green fields. Prefer brownfield development but needs to be a balance.
- CB - There was a specific brownfield first policy, but last government did away with it. Opened floodgates with Localism Act, allegedly more say locally but had reverse effect. HPBC have done a deal re the ex chemical site in Glossop so can build there right in heart of town, and provide exactly the sort of 1 and 2 bedroom houses that are needed.
- SW - Personally prefers brownfield before greenfield always. Has worked on ex ICI site at Blakeley, is now covered in houses in spite of heavy contamination. Would set up national capital committee to monitor commitment to green space. Mistake to get rid of brownfield first policy, hope to reintroduce it.
- CF - Agree with CB on effect of the Localism Act, easier to build on green fields, more profit so do it. Would introduce a Land Value Tax to encourage brownfield first.

3. Transport

- (i) **One scheme proposed to get folk out of their vehicles and onto the train is a Park & Rail with improved car parking on the site of the former diesel sheds and a "joined-together" transport hub for buses and taxis at Buxton Station. What will you do to make this happen?**
- (ii) **Rail travel is far more sustainable than road or air. What will you do to encourage the reopening of disused railway lines, in particular the Buxton to Matlock and the Woodhead lines? What should the government do to encourage more freight to go by rail?**

- CF - Would scrap HS2 and put that money into public transport and rail, needs improvement. Would re-open the Woodhead route.
- SW - Plans for Buxton a good idea, not sure how can achieve it, though MP can persuade. More generally will only get more people on rail if improve infrastructure, standing room only on Manchester line, need to increase capacity. Lib Dems would have review in first year and work out which lines to re-open, would push personally for the ones round here. Would also electrify more lines, and double track where possible to increase capacity.
- CB - DB Schenker car park a very good idea. But need to look at whole network, and at freight and passenger sharing, and pinch points. Not sold on HS2, wants more investment in local lines, still 1 hour to Manchester after 150 years, need better services. Re Buxton-Matlock, opening Monsal Trail brings issues not there 10 years ago, have to balance, there are problems and not sure it's a goer. Woodhead is more possible. Also understands Northern Rail backtracking on revised peak times, good news, need to ensure rail affordable as well as providing parking.
- AB - Freight an issue. Hope valley line is full because of freight use, installing passing loop to increase capacity for passengers and freight side by side. Buxton fares, put cap on so no real increase, Northern Rail duplicitous playing around with peak times to increase fares that way, pleased have changed mind. Woodhead - looking at feasibility, hugely ambitious. Campaigning for Glossop bypass, Trans-Pennine tunnel part of that, may not be viable but worth a look. Buxton-Matlock, study 10 years ago deemed not feasible, Buxton has tended to look to NW not east Midlands, but getting more linked now to Derby with eg University, so maybe worth another look.
- IG - On face of it makes sense, but doesn't know enough about it. What stops people using trains is price and regularity of service. If had been asked 20 years ago, would have said privatisation a good idea, with hindsight it hasn't worked out, £100 million paid to Northern Rail in subsidy, they pay dividends and provide poor service compared to eg France and Germany. Major contributor to environment and local economy. But don't assume roads always bad, there are economic challenges and one is transport.
- AB - Re DB Schenker site, yes sounds sensible. Train franchise up for renegotiation, need to ensure new franchisee doesn't try same trick as Northern Rail on peak times.
- CF - Key part of Green Party policy is to re-nationalise the railway, not hard to do over time as franchises come up for renewal.

3. Food and Farming

- (i) **Nowadays, Supermarkets force farmers to distribute only perfectly shaped and sized produce, thus causing huge wastage of viable food which does not quite match up to their standards. Would your party bring in any legislation to avoid this on-going catastrophe, and what would this be?**
- (ii) **As agriculture in the UK has become more mechanised and intensive, food takes more energy to produce, pesticides are killing off the bees, GM superweeds are appearing, and modern farming methods have been blamed for soil degradation and increased risk of flooding. This is not sustainable. What will your party do to reverse the trend?**

- CB - Love veg whatever the shape. Need to encourage people to grow their own, need more allotments, projects like the Serpentine, anything we can do to get producers to wake up and realise people aren't bothered about the looks. Dirty carrots keep better! Need to encourage farmers to take better care of the land, look after fields, move away from intensive use of pesticides, more natural. Need pressure from people saying they don't want it anymore and take power back.
- SW - Re vegetables - said to be legislation forcing standardisation, not sure if exists but if it does, get rid. Wouldn't introduce legislation, should be people led, and we are seeing it happen. Re farming, need to be careful, perception is if grow everything organically will be better, but if no inorganics, fertilisers, people will go hungry. Don't produce enough food in the world - well, we do but it isn't distributed fairly. Glad to see ban on neonicotinoids, one of a number of problems for the bees. Damage to soil infrastructure, lot of talk about flood defences, need to reintroduce trees and natural features that protect from floods. A lot needs thinking about carefully.
- CF - Need to get away from inorganic methods. If soil allowed to become unsuitable, in future won't be able to grow anything. Re veg, supermarkets dictate to both farmers and consumers, consumers

can't insist they want odd shaped veg if not there on offer, need to control supermarkets. Has read about scheme in Europe where take odd shaped veg and give it away, puts pressure on supermarkets. Have to take control, can't rely on people power.

AB - No sympathy for big operators. Introduced measures to limit 'corporate bullying', farmers reluctant to complain, so methods eg to let the NFU make complaint instead. People are now interested about food provenance, one thing doing well is farmers' markets, increased use as people want proper veg, so can be consumer led. Bees - have national pollinator strategy over 3-5 years. Floods - spending £3.2 billion on flood management. Re farmers, trying to cut amount of red tape, bewildering number of forms, needs simplifying.

HW - But the government did lobby against the neonicotinoid ban?

AB - Concern is whether the evidence is there, view is it isn't, but strategy is to look at it.

HW - And GM crops? Owen Patterson has been lobbying to allow them ò

AB - Owen Patterson lost his job! It's easy to pontificate, happy to discuss but we do have to feed ourselves.

IG - Buy organic veg and worry about provenance of food, but relatively affluent. Price of food has plummeted because of supermarkets, easy to say they're dreadful but a lot of people rely on them. Some do treat farmers well, eg Booths, so not supermarkets per se that's bad, some do behave badly but not all. Not about government, about people; if people use supermarkets they'll keep on opening them. Market will decide, not everyone has the choice.

4. Energy and Climate Change

(i) **UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions have declined since 1990, at around 1% per year but, according to Defra, DECC, and BIS they have actually been rising by around 1% a year if the greenhouse gas emissions embedded in imports to the UK are included. Does your party acknowledge that we should accept responsibility for these emissions and include them in the 80% reduction by 2050?**

(ii) **Are you confident your Party's Climate Change Policy will help catalyse an international agreement in December 2015 that will keep mean global warming well below the crucial 2°C rise?**

IG - If move manufacturing elsewhere generally goods made in less ethical and environmentally friendly ways, some hypocrisy and hubris there. Re setting an example, the Chinese don't care, building coal fired power stations everywhere, fanciful to pretend what we do has any effect. Need an energy policy that provides energy at a price people can afford. Economic problems due to instability, need to rebalance economy, away from south east and more mixed economy, and we do need nuclear power, it's affordable and clean. Re alternative energy, is it practical?

HW - UKIP wants to get rid of our climate change commitments?

IG - Yes, would repeal climate change act and remove renewable subsidies.

AB - Climate change is here and we have to deal with it. Green Investment Bank set up, are building a new nuclear station. We all use more energy as a society and need to address that. Paris conference, think will get something from it. A lot more solar panels about, some in places that don't look nice, but do you want solar panels or a power station? One untapped potential is our seas, wind and tidal power, could get more from that.

CB - Got to get agreement in Paris, essential for our future, need to work for globally binding, ambitious targets. Embedding energy in imports, need to work with developing countries to skip coal and oil, go straight for clean and efficient energy provision, learn from our mistakes and help others.

SW - Lib Dem policy pretty good, Zero Carbon Act so net emissions almost zero by 2050. Need to factor in embedded Carbon, or it's a way to pretend we've reduced Carbon when haven't really. Need to try for agreement in Paris, but don't think will get it, not confident. This was greenest government ever but the bar was set very low. Climate change is real, need to fight it even if that means cost of energy goes up, really worried about how many people don't believe in climate change.

CF - Green Party policy is to be Carbon neutral by 2050, lots of policies to achieve this. Eg individual Carbon allowance, up to you how you use it, or can sell spare allowance. We've outsourced a lot of our emissions, if China building power stations, it's to produce good for us, not for them, we can't criticise, we need to help. Nuclear is not carbon free energy, a lot of Carbon involved in process. Can also do so much better on energy efficiency, even basics like heating houses, if new build to German passive house standards, and existing ones retrofitted. And better public transport would save energy. Pessimistic about Paris, even if reach agreement. No-one taking it seriously, climate change is biggest threat to our world but we only look 5 to 10 years ahead.

Qs from audience - What incentives to invest in renewable energy on our homes? What about wind and hydro?

CF - Green Party is only party to set targets for renewable energy - no, that was true this morning, the Lib Dem manifesto is out now ò Lot more we can do. FITs good but want to see more community

generation, community power stations run for benefit of local population, better energy security. Could do a lot more round here with wind energy.

- SW - Nothing in Lib Dem manifesto about FITs, disappointed. Good idea if everyone had solar panels, make significant difference to energy requirements. Community energy schemes don't get much support, want to expand and see a lot more incentives. Target is over 30% renewables by 2030, including expansion of onshore wind, may be unpopular but windmills not that ugly, though national parks maybe not best place. Generally people happier to see them offshore but more expensive.
- AB - FITs reduced because oversubscribed and over time technology gets cheaper. Worth noting half a million homes added solar panels since rate reduced. Money invested has doubled and energy produced up by 120%. On offshore wind we are way ahead, more installed than rest of world combined. New Mills hydro scheme fantastic, proud to have it in High Peak, lot of potential, should build as many as we can. Would end subsidies for onshore wind.
- IG - Objects to targets that impose costs on those least able to pay. No objection to offshore wind but have seen area in Spain covered in wind turbines and solar panels, looks shocking. Agree single turbine can look beautiful but not miles and miles of it.
- CB - Propose Energy Security Board to find right mix including renewable and nuclear. Extra power to Green Investment Bank so can invest more in business and individuals, and set up British Investment Bank for interest free loans to help with energy efficiency measures. Derbyshire CC looking at solar farms on old coal sites, to make use of otherwise unusable brownfield land.

5. Fracking

(i) **Is fracking renewable?**

(ii) **Where do you stand on fracking, Yes or No?**

(iii) **Our constituency has been earmarked for fracking. The government has said it will outlaw fracking in National Parks but not under National Parks. The British Geological Survey data shows that there is likely to be shale gas under north of the High Peak and the Vale of Edale. Given the concerns about the local health and environmental effects of fracking, and the campaign to keep fossil fuels in the ground to prevent Climate Change, will the candidates support or oppose plans for the extraction of shale gas in the High Peak?**

- CB - Party policy as stands is against it, because at end of last government amendments to Infrastructure Bill to allow sensible and cautious approach not agreed, and safeguards for National Parks and water source protection zones removed. If in place would be good basis to work from, but not. Would oppose it in and under national parks and in water source protection zones. Note in Buxton, mineral water source a particular issue, enormous difficulties from Nestle to enable Crescent redevelopment. Yes will sign the Frack Free Promise.
- SW - Has signed Frack Free Promise, disappointed not in Lib Dem manifesto, it's a fudge, would vote against it. No it's not renewable at all and we shouldn't be using it. Admits unsure at first if just scaremongering but has researched and realises not so, wouldn't support it in UK or anywhere else in world. If want to move away from fossil fuels, opening up another source of them is crazy.
- CF - Totally opposed, it's fossil fuel, we don't need it. Labour party position is strange, could have voted for a moratorium but abstained, don't understand that position. Is banned in a lot of the US now because of risk of contamination, methane leaks, earthquakes, greenhouse gas emissions etc. And amount of infrastructure needed for the wells never mentioned - thousands of litres of water needed, brought in by tankers day and night, industrialisation of whole communities. You need a lot of sites and they're horrible.
- IG - Don't think anyone welcomes the idea per se but even if think have to move faster to using renewables, 80% of homes still rely on gas for heating. Gas isn't great but better than coal. In the US some areas have banned it, but the price of gas has come down by a third. Need to understand better if can extract it safely. Re national parks, the boundary is already weird, whatever the law we'll find the boundaries just change. Don't want it, but aware of Nimbyism, if have to consider it to reduce price can't just exclude it near you. Would hate it but so many people in fuel poverty need to look at it. But not without democratic consensus, as a party very keen on democratic debate.
- AB - Yes, pro-fracking. Opportunity for domestic energy, jobs and investment, and have a problem we need to deal with. Infrastructure Bill still does prevent fracking in national parks, can only go under as far as 3km. There are more conditions, need Environmental Impact Assessment, and has to be more than 1km down.

6. Nuclear Power

What should we do about our ever increasing stockpiles of nuclear waste?

IG - Whatever the scientists say is safest.

AB - Like IG, whatever scientists say is safest. Pro-nuclear, have to generate power from somewhere.

- HW - At end of last parliament, added in to Major Infrastructure Regime, so Cumbria voted against it, now can be forced back in spite of local opposition.
- IG - But what's the alternative? Bribe people to accept it? Would not give local people right to stop it.
- CB - Uneasy about nuclear because of the waste, so toxic and dangerous. But if has to be there, store in safest place. But there is technology that will solve it eg Thorium reactors that use the waste, not being looked at enough, in Lords Committee now, exciting possibilities.
- SW - Shift in Lib Dem position, which doesn't support, were against but now pro. Forget nuclear, not renewable. If some way to make use of waste for power, maybe, but then you build a station and run out of waste? Need remediation to make it as safe as possible before storage, lab where works is working on ways to remove most dangerous radio-nucleides. Re local agreement, no-one would want it regardless, but has to go somewhere, wherever deemed safest.
- CF - Policy of no nuclear power, so at least no increase in stocks. Change to Infrastructure Bill was very undemocratic, done right at the end of parliament without proper discussion.

7. Sustainable Economy

(i) Do you think the government should encourage the development of local currencies as a way to stimulate the local economy?

(ii) Capitalism v Climate Change: does capitalism have a future, is a green economy the solution?

(iii) Government spending, including central and local government (not to forget arms length entities like LEPs), collectively have tremendous buying power. What measures would your party introduce to ensure that all the suppliers from whom government (and partners) purchase goods and services are operating sustainably, ethically, and contribute to the well-being of the British economy, environment and population?

- IG - Government spending should be done wisely and sustainable, best way is to be democratically accountable, problem is as state grows, less effective control. No matter who we vote for, laws are made elsewhere. Localism is talked about but not much is achieved, need smaller state, more local control. Local currency, doesn't know a lot about it, intriguing if increases local purchases, wonders whether works in all economic environments. Capitalism v green, capitalism provides the solution eg cars are far more efficient now than they were, and can get electric cars - market driven.
- AB - Local currencies, not an expert but will look at it. Capitalism, not a battle, drives innovation, profit not a dirty word. Gets bad press because of how some companies behave, but are getting more responsible, consumers are looking and companies respond. Business dealing with local government always difficult, worries at all levels about effectiveness of procurement policy.
- CB - Would encourage local currencies, could make a real impact, working in partnership to deliver real localism. Take down the barriers, don't insist council has to do everything, or expect them to. Re capitalism, look at more co-operative ways of working, the Rochdale pioneers had something.
- SW - Local currencies, not knowledgeable, thought it was just a gimmick but clearly not. Capitalism of itself won't solve the problems, and it needs shackles, like Zero Carbon Act, nurtures sustainable development by taxing Carbon. Cheapest way tends to be environmentally unfriendly way so government needs to force capitalism to do what it naturally would not. Unfettered capitalism is not compatible with green, but with constraints it can be. Green procurement needs to be factored in, so not just about the bottom line. Factor in environmental friendliness and local benefit as a cost, and get better procurement.
- CF - Local currencies are good, have been shown to support local economy. Want procurement to be more local, cut down on transport, local food in schools, smaller scale economy. Capitalism v climate change, not compatible, relies on growth, how can we grow indefinitely in a finite world?
- IG - Example of energy control system factory in Stockport, reduced energy use, reduced costs, driven by profit.

8. Waste

(i) When will we be able to recycle all our plastic waste?

(ii) Currently High Peak has no scheme for recycling for businesses, many businesses are paying thousands of £ annually for waste to go landfill. What would your party do about this?

- IG - Don't know, but have to look at why things covered in plastic in the first place
- AB - Produce 177 million tpa waste in the UK, but landfill is reducing. Anything making it easier to recycle is good and support it, introduced schemes to reward recycling, by household. One thing noticed more than anything over the years is recycle bins, and how people go about it as matter of course. Like at one time drink driving OK, not now, social stigma, and same for recycling. Business waste - there's a market for recyclables, costs will drop, it's for councils, not necessarily central government.

- CB - Plastics, don't know when, but don't use so much in first place. Business recycling, absolutely, need to do it, Labour will do locally if re-elected in May. Moved here 25 years ago, amazed no bottle banks, have come a long way in last few years but could and should do more.
- SW - Plastics - don't know but some are intrinsically not recyclable, so have to use less. Come from oil, not so damaging as burning but another way fossil fuels damage the environment. Business recycling, manifesto only mentions domestic waste. Central government does have a role here, should drive it with businesses and encourage them to recycle.
- CF - Not sure what policy is but we need more recycling.

Summing Up

- IG - Clear disagree on lots of things but important can make democratic decisions in the UK for the UK. If you can persuade people to your point of view then will support it.
- AB - MP for 5 years, has voted for some things you will have disagreed with and the other way round. Will always listen to both sides of an argument, if elected will continue to use judgement and won't be stubborn or proud about it.
- CB - Tackling climate change is an economic necessity, and the most important thing, need to look long term not short term, with a greater role for mutuals and co-operatives. Stark choice here, a world like that or more right wing policies with Andrew. Will be really close election in High Peak, think really hard about who to vote for.
- SW - Possible sounded too pessimistic before. Sustainability is a key issue re food and energy, all feed in to climate change. This next parliament has to be the one that does it, but neither of major parties will, needs the smaller parties in there to make it happen. Lib Dems have made some inroads, without them there would have been nothing.
- CF - Austerity. The other parties bang on about it, and how way out is to grow the economy, not really serious about climate change. Growth is not the way out. Can do it by creating green jobs and infrastructure, in fairer more equal society. Put people and planet first, not companies and profit.

JCMM

17April 15

Post Script:

We apologise that a number of questions that had been submitted in advance had to be left out due to lack of time. One of these was sent to the candidates after the hustings with a request for a written response - it and the responses to date are summarised below.

Herbal Medicine

For over two decades, herbalists have worked closely with the Department of Health towards achieving statutory regulation, with protected title and 'authorised health professional' status. There have been two public consultations, with opinion overwhelmingly in favour of herbalists being regulated and having legal recognition and protection of title, as people understand that this also protects the public from untrained individuals who call themselves herbalists. Three successive governments have promised this would take place, the outgoing government published a report which said that we would not be statutorily regulated, on the very last day of Parliament before it was dissolved, citing 'insufficient evidence that herbal medicine works', despite our evidence base being comprehensive and recognised world-wide. Herbal medicine is sustainable, is used all over the world and is not reliant on the profit-driven pharmaceutical companies. If elected, will you support our appeal against this decision and work towards making this sustainable and effective form of medicine available to all?

IG - Your question like many others last night demands a more informed response than I can give at the moment. One of the privileges of standing for election is the opportunity to learn and understand better other people's perspectives. I will look into this and get back to you as soon as I am able.