

Green View Spring 2014

News and Views from
the Green Party in
Duke's Ward - No. 44

County Rethinks City ETRO

The County Council has delayed implementation of a new city centre Experimental Traffic Regulation Order following an outcry from disabled residents who say it would prevent them from accessing essential services.

The scheme, which is designed to make the pedestrian zone safer by reducing vehicular traffic, proposes to remove the current permit system that allows disabled parking in Market Square and behind the museum, having already provided extra disabled spaces around the edges of the zone.

A steering group has now been set up to carry out further consultation with disability groups and other stakeholders, before introducing a revised scheme later in the year.

Cllr Dave Brookes said: *“The zone rules as they stand are confusing and difficult to enforce, and a revamp is long overdue. Reducing traffic in the pedestrian zone will make it safer for everyone, but it is also really important that people with very limited mobility are still able to get to the services they need.”*



Canalside Shrubbery gets a New Look



Following a request from Cllr Dave Brookes on behalf of residents in Spinners Court, Canal & River Trust volunteers have cut back branches overhanging the footpath, removed overgrown vegetation, and planted new shrubs in the area around the Sanitary Station next to Chancellors Wharf.

Greens Condemn District's Housing Plans

Green councillors say that the City Council's new Local Plan will be a 'developer's free-for-all' and will allow wholesale destruction of the countryside around Lancaster. Around 8,000 houses could be planned for the green fields between Scotforth and Galgate alone. Green Cllr Tim Hamilton-Cox explained:

Consultants engaged by the City Council have recommended that our planners allocate enough land to build 610 houses per year, for the next 20 years. In the Green Party's view, it is very difficult to predict housing demand for the next few years, let alone the next 20. And, if you make different - we'd say more realistic - assumptions about population growth, job creation, and household size, then you get a different target."

"Lancaster District's population grew by 3,800 in the 10 years between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, but the assumption used in the housing targets is that it will grow by 20,000 over the next 20 years. Whilst 2,513 houses were built in the ten years from 2002/03 to 2012/13, the new recommended target is to build more than 6,000 houses every 10 years."

"We think that housing policy should be focussed on addressing the proven need for affordable housing - as evidenced by the council house waiting list - rather than delivering executive homes on greenfield sites."

Want to be kept informed?

Email Cllr Tim Hamilton-Cox on timhc@gmx.com if you'd like updates on the housing situation.

Altham Meadows

The NHS has confirmed its decision to close the local inpatient service for people with severe dementia at Altham Meadows in Morecambe, and to centralise the service at Blackpool. NHS managers say that they will instead invest in better community services to ensure that people remain in their homes for as long as possible.

Green County Cllr Gina Dowding said: *"We are worried that relatives will find it much harder to visit patients when the service is moved out of the district. Assistance with transport arrangements is being talked about but nothing has been confirmed as yet."*

Green Party Public Meeting

Why does Europe Matter for a Greener Future?



Hear from Peter Cranie and Gina Dowding (above), the Green Party's top two North West candidates for the European elections in May, and ask them your questions.

7.30pm Tuesday 8th April

at the Friends Meeting House
(near the railway station)

Council Budgets Set

The City Council agreed a Council Tax increase of 1.99%, equivalent to 8p a week for a band D property. The Council has had to make significant savings following a reduction in Government grant of £1.7m.

The total budget for 2014/15 is £18.54m. Green Cllr Jon Barry said: *"The Green priority was to make savings without cutting major services like cleansing, parks and the CAB."*

Solar panels on City Council buildings are expected to bring in around £55k during their first year. Greens are pushing for further 'invest to save' projects, including more renewable energy.

The County Council also agreed a Council Tax increase of 1.99%. It has to find £300m worth of savings over the next 3 years. Green County Cllr Gina Dowding said: *"The Council has mostly done a good job in difficult circumstances. But I was unable to support the budget as it included cuts to school crossing patrols and recycling credits for community groups, and introduced new charges for post-sixteen Special Educational Needs and disabilities transport."*

People Power Saves Off-Peak Bus Services

The County Council has cancelled plans to cut a swathe of subsidised evening and Sunday bus services from May, following an overwhelming response to its public consultation in January. The proposals have been withdrawn for further consideration with a promise to negotiate better deals with the bus companies.

Cllr Dave Brookes said: *"This is great news for the many people that rely on these buses and simply can't afford to use taxis instead."*

Residents' Parking Update

With the original target date for providing extra spaces on Queen St and minor tweaks to parking zones F, H & I now in the past, the latest information from County Highways is that the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders will be published in April.

This starts a legally required 21 day consultation period, after which the works can be programmed, assuming no objections are received. If there are objections, a report has to be taken to the County Council cabinet member to make a decision whether to proceed.

Friendship Centre Bowls

Indoor carpet bowling has been added to the list of activities offered at the Friendship Centre on Robert St, thanks to a recent grant for new equipment from the United Utilities Community Fund. For more details call 07821 328342, email contact@thefriendshipcentre.co.uk or call in to the Centre on Monday, Wednesday or Friday mornings.

Awards for Using Less

Local energy saving company LESS held an award ceremony at the end of last year, showcasing individuals and organisations that had made exemplary efforts to cut down their energy use over the last two years.

The Borough pub in Dalton Square won the Energy Saver (Organisation) category for significantly reducing their energy use without spending huge amounts of money, by making lots of small changes to operate more efficiently and effectively.

For more information and to see short films about all the winners visit www.lessenergy.org.uk.

Flora Tree Planting

More than forty volunteers including students from Green Lancaster planted 550 trees in early March, to extend and regenerate woodland at the Fairfield Association's new Flora nature reserve off Aldcliffe Road.

An initial phase of fencing, wetland creation and hedge restoration works on the reserve has now been completed, and plans are being drawn up for a new footpath up to a viewing point near the wood. For more information see the Flora website at www.florafields.org.

Canal Wharf Ramp

Construction of the new pedestrian ramp between Penny St Bridge and the canal moorings on Aldcliffe Rd has been delayed into the new financial year, but it is hoped that works will start soon.

Triangle Planning Permission

The Friends of the Triangle group have secured planning permission for change of use of the site to public amenity space. The next task is to produce a detailed design to satisfy planning conditions.

Your Duke's Ward Councillor

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