

Green View

Spring 2015



News and views from the Green Party in Castle Ward - No. 65

County U-turns on crossing

The County Council has scrapped plans to upgrade the zebra crossing on Meeting House Lane to a 'puffin' traffic light crossing, despite it being the top priority of a committee of local County and City councillors. Green County Councillor, Gina Dowding said:

"Four accidents have been reported to the police in just over six years, but there have also been many near misses that didn't get reported. Traffic is likely to get busier in this area and I fear that it is only a matter of time before there is a very serious accident."

Hedge laying success!

Teams of volunteers recently laid the hedge alongside the playing fields in Fairfield in just two days. The competitive event was organised by green councillors Jon Barry and Dave Brookes with help from the County Council and the Fairfield Association. Funding was secured by Lancaster Green Spaces from the Lancaster University Wind Turbine Community Fund. Dave Brookes and hedge laying partner Jon Hayes from Southport somehow won the second day, and are shown with their prize winning section.



Wi-fi for all in the city centre?

Lancaster University's Digital Lancaster project offers the prospect of free wi-fi in the city centre. Castle Ward Green candidate Nick Wilkinson said: *"There's a huge opportunity here for the City Council and University to collaborate to make the city centre a wifi hotspot to benefit residents, visitors, and businesses."*

Support for a stronger NHS

Green Party general election candidate Chris Coates is supporting the campaign for an NHS Reinstatement Bill that is designed to restore the NHS as an accountable public service. This would include abolishing the purchaser-provider split and joining up health and social care services. See www.nhsbill2015.org for more details.

Council solar farm at Middleton?

The City Council is to commission a detailed study into a proposal to build a solar farm on 32 acres of former industrial land at Middleton. Cllr Dave Brookes explained:

“Initial reports suggest that a 5 megawatt installation could generate enough electricity for 1500 houses, and bring in valuable revenue for the Council amounting to a net gain of £4m over 20 years.”

Residents’ parking improvements

The County Council has finally published a set of County-wide ‘parking places consolidation orders’ that officers say need to be in place before long awaited changes can be made on Queen St and in Zones F, H and I. The process is still ongoing however, and although officers say that physical works will be done ‘very shortly’ after the legal process is complete, this is expected to be July at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Greens have been doing door to door surveys of residents in Fairfield in readiness for the County Council’s promised 12 month review of zone J. County Cllr Gina Dowding said:

“We know that some residents are desperate for these changes, and we have tried our best to get the process sped up, but officers are adamant that it cannot be rushed. On the other hand they say the new consolidation orders will make future parking changes much quicker, and we will be expecting this promise to be delivered on.”

Transport masterplan for Lancaster

The County Council has prepared a ‘vision’ of how it believes the district’s transport network should look in 2031. Due out for consultation on 23rd March, following a year’s delay, it particularly seeks to address the one-way system and the A6 corridor to Galgate.

City Council budget set

The City Council has set a budget with a Council Tax increase of 1.99%, equivalent to £3.98 per year on a band D property. Important services have been retained despite a £1.7m funding cut from central government, although £1m has been contributed from balances to achieve this. Council officers are advising that a further £3.5m of savings must be found by 2018. Green councillors supported retention of additional funding for Police Community Support Officers and reducing the number of empty homes in the district, plus a small increase in street cleansing budgets.

General and City Council Elections on May 7th

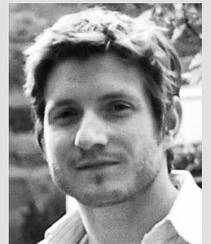
There will be two sets of elections in Lancaster on May 7th: a general election for the parliamentary constituency, and a local election for the City Council. You will receive two ballot papers, one for each election. For the City Council elections, you will have two votes on the same paper to elect two councillors to Castle Ward.

The Green Party candidates for the local elections in Castle Ward are **Dave Brookes** and **Nick Wilkinson**.



Dave lives on Regent Street and has a background in civil engineering, associated with a strong interest in the natural and built environment. He is a trustee of the Fairfield Association, for whom he managed the contractors and budget on the creation of the Fauna and Flora nature reserves, and leads on the Aldcliffe Road Triangle project. He is also a trustee of the Lancaster Charity, and Chair of the Friendship Centre.

Nick grew up in Brookhouse and now lives in the centre of Lancaster on King Street, but in between he spent more than a decade working for the NHS in London. He is passionate about public services and the local community and since coming home he has taken on a number of voluntary roles including acting as Secretary for the Lune Valley Housing Association and becoming a trustee for the Lancaster Charity.



Castle area clean-up

Castle Ward Green candidate Nick Wilkinson organised a litter pick on the path between Sainsbury's and Long Marsh Lane, plus Quay Meadow and Vicarage Fields. Fourteen bags of rubbish, a pair of trousers and a few traffic cones were collected. Nick said: "A big thank you to all who came along to help."



Fair trade centre opens

The FIG Tree has completed its move from Garstang to Lancaster, and is now open three days a week (Thurs, Fri, and Sat) in St John's Church on North Road. It features a permanent exhibition exploring four themes: fair trade and fair trade towns; the slave trade and its abolition; Quaker heritage in '1652 country'; and chocolate production. There is also a cafe and a shop selling local and fair trade products.

Potholes and paving problems

Cllr Dave Brookes reported a series of potholes on Carr House Lane that have since been repaired. Following a complaint from a resident, Castle Ward candidate Nick Wilkinson has also reported a number of rocking flags on Meeting House Lane.

Prince's Trust rescue paths

A small group of young adults aged 16-22 spent two weeks working in Fairfield Orchard after selecting the area for their community project. Prince's Trust Morecambe Team 40 cleared two sections of path that were being gradually lost to grass, and laid a new smooth surface. The team also secured discounts on plant and materials that were paid for by the Fairfield Association.

West Road homeless project

The new supported housing building on West Rd is nearing completion. An 'open day' is taking place on Thursday 2nd April at 1-3pm, where local residents can raise concerns about how the project will be run. The building is for single homeless over 25s and will have 6 emergency bedrooms, 12 move-on units, and 5 self-contained apartments. There will always be at least two members of staff working, and the idea is that residents will be supported so that they can learn to live on their own.

Wheatfield Street housing

An application for 65 new affordable houses on a site between Blades St, Wheatfield St and the railway, was approved at planning committee.

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