

Green View

Winter 2015

News and Views from
the Green Party in
Skerton East Ward - No 2

Ryelands Park in bloom!

Skerton Greens have been supporting the Friends of Ryelands Park with their continuing plans to improve the well-used green space. A recent development is the plan to achieve Green Flag status for the park.

Green activist Jean O'Neill said: *"This will ensure that the park is a welcoming, safe and secure space, well-managed in partnership with the community. We will have a good sustainability plan, celebrate the park's heritage, and provide for all age groups. There are fun monthly activity afternoons open to all on the first Sunday of the month. Come and help us plant bulbs, look after the trees, and improve our park together."*



Summer wildflowers in the park



David Fleet with Green
Mayor Cllr Jon Barry

Lune Bank Gardens

A new project to restore a historic riverside promenade was visited by the Mayor in September. Friends of Lune Bank Gardens has been set up to bring people back to the Skerton attraction, first opened in 1905 with funds donated by Lord Ashton. The group meets at the rowing club boathouse at 7pm on the last Tuesday of the month. For more info contact lunebankgardens@gmail.com.



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Locals aim for Paris climate summit

The Green Party's Emily House (pictured, second left) is joining a five-day cycle ride from London to Paris, arriving in time for the UN Climate Change Conference. Government representatives from more than 190 countries will be at the meeting, and it is hoped that they will achieve for the first



time in over twenty years of negotiations, a binding and universal agreement on climate aimed at limiting global warming to 2°C.

Green City Councillor Caroline Jackson said: *"It is vital that this summit succeeds in order to protect the eco-systems which we rely on for our food, water and health. The Green Party is renewing its call for a positive transition to a low-carbon economy. Over the coming weeks there will be ways to join the campaign at local and national #ClimateSense events."*

> **Vigil for the Climate:** Sunday 29th November, 4 - 5pm, Dalton Square

Hospital pharmacy sell-off

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust decided in September to contract out its outpatient pharmacy services to one of the big chemist chains, rather than follow calls by the Trust's board of governors and local people to consider a not-for-profit alternative. A number of other trusts across the country have successfully set-up wholly-owned 'arms-length' companies, allowing them to recycle cash benefits within the NHS while still making the VAT saving on drug purchases that is one of the key motivations for change.

Green City Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, who has been instrumental in promoting an alternative, said: *"The Trust's executives have resisted the calls to consider options that would support the ethos of the NHS, and instead the contract will now go to a company that has the sole aim of maximising profits for shareholders."*

Drastic service cuts inevitable at County

Government reductions to the County Council's budget together with increasing demand for services mean that cuts to some key services will be inevitable. Recent budget forecasts show that in two years' time the County Council will barely have enough funding to pay for the services it is legally obliged to provide (costed at circa £684m). Non-statutory services including subsidised bus services, arts funding, youth work, and street lighting - to give just a few examples - currently amount to another £100m.

Green County Cllr Gina Dowding said: *"It is not an exaggeration to say that the situation is dire. The County budget has been reducing sharply for the last five years. Government cuts in areas such as health and welfare are increasing the demand on local services, yet funding to local authorities continues to be cut. Things may get even worse than forecast as the Chancellor says he is contemplating even bigger cuts to local government funding in the spending review due to be unveiled on 25th November."*

Electric vehicles (EVs)

Green councillors have asked the City Council to follow through on its 2014 energy strategy and look at using EVs for its pool car fleet and install EV charging points in council car parks. This would save both money and carbon, and lead the way on improving air quality.

Pension fund divestment

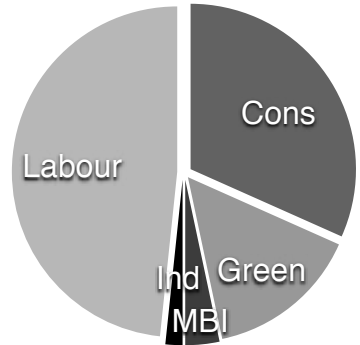
Green County Cllr Gina Dowding asked to be a member of the Lancashire County Pension Fund Committee, and has since been successful in getting action on ethical investment, with the pension fund recently signing up to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment.

Gina said: *"In a recent national survey of local authority pension schemes, Lancashire had the lowest investment in fossil fuels. The fund has also recently signed a major direct investment deal in wind energy, on the basis that this will provide a long-term steady return for the fund. This is a great start, but of course there is plenty more that could be done."*

Local election results

Following the May City Council elections, Labour had 29 councillors, Conservatives 19, and the Greens 9. The Morecambe Bay Independents lost 8 seats leaving them with just 2 councillors. One independent made up the last of the 60 seats.

At the first Council meeting Labour voted itself in to run the council as a minority administration, and for the first time in 14 years the Greens do not have a place on the City Council's Cabinet.



Make-up of Lancaster City Council following May 2015 election

Skerton East Ward results in full

Abbot Bryning	Labour	1214	Elected
David Fleet	Green	550	
Jennifer George	Conservative	848	
Janet Hall	Labour	1202	Elected
Jean O'Neill	Green	514	
Robert Redfern	Labour	1237	Elected
Stephen Riley	Green	455	
Andrew Swarbrick		232	

Lune Bank litterpick

Skerton Greens organised another litterpick in September, this time clearing along Lune Bank Gardens and back down Halton Road, bagging 10 sacks of rubbish.

Marketgate benches

Greens are continuing to ask for the covered seating to be put back in Marketgate. The shopping centre management has now said that it will review the bench situation once the new Primark has been opened.

Giant hogweed alert

In July Skerton Greens were made aware that giant hogweed was growing along the river by Mainway. It is an invasive species that can cause permanent skin damage if handled without protection. Green activist David Fleet put up hazard tape and warning signs, prior to it being sprayed to eliminate it.

