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Green World

The official magazine of the  Green Party | GW89 Summer 2015 | Price £2.00

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Cover: © Ryan Rodrick Beiler /
Shutterstock.com
Photography: Creative Commons,
Shutterstock, Fulya Atalay / Jack Wilson
Books for review to: Book Reviews,
Green World, Green Party, Development
House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London,
EC2A 4LT
Printing and distribution:
Printed on 100% recycled paper by
Pensord, Blackwood, Caerphilly
Copy Deadline for GW90:
2 September 2015 (tbc)

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Leading the way



Shahrar Ali

Green Party Deputy Leader

We are running out of time to avoid the worst impacts of an environmental crisis of our own over-consumptive making. We need to fix our broken economy, which doesn't value things according to their worth but treats the planet as so much inexhaustible treasure to be plundered for profit.

Such truths may be alarming, but they are not exaggerated. Nor do we confuse the psychological difficulty of our having to change habits as an excuse for inaction. As if the daily grind was not a trap worth escaping anyway – with extra working hours no harbinger of improved quality of life.

As we witness the next sales frenzy, Greens think of the double injustice faced by those least able to afford protection against sea-level rise and least responsible for the consequences of the rich continuing to live out their American dreams.

We care for the countless other species we share this beautiful planet with – for their own sakes. And what of the future generations unable to press their claims upon us? That doesn't mean we aren't responsible for ensuring that we leave as much and as good for them.

The Green Party will put pressure on our government to set stronger targets in the run-up to the Paris climate talks. We can't allow our leaders to squander or postpone yet another opportunity for international agreement on carbon reduction.

Tackling climate change requires social transformation and, in turn, mass mobilisation. We must continue to push this issue at the grassroots, amongst our networks and neighbourhoods, and within town hall chambers. We must redouble our efforts for investment in wind, solar and energy efficiency, and put pressure on local government to take a lead on building standards.

As Greens, let us vocalise and engage, educate and give others the space to re-imagine politics. Let us become leaders, all of us, to make this happen. 🌱

Local election gains

Matthew Butcher

General election years are traditionally very difficult for Greens fighting local elections. With people tending to revert back to the bigger parties, and traditionally crossing the same boxes on both ballot papers, we tend to brace ourselves for local losses as people pick their next MP.

This year, however, was different. With all results in, the Green Party now has 166 councillors – up four. A remarkable result in Bristol saw us win seven new council seats, meaning we now have 13 councillors in total in the lush city of the West. In the grand old city of York, we doubled our number of councillors from two to four, with councillors pledging to protect local services and the environment.

The Green Group in sunny Norwich

remains strong, despite a strong showing by the local Labour Party. With 14 councillors, the Greens are the official opposition in the city – and will be holding the administration to account.

Greens also won seats for the first time on Bournemouth, Bath & North East Somerset, Forest of Dean, Lewes, Mendip and Warwick councils, and won a dramatic victory at Cambridge City Council with just three votes more than Labour after a full recount (pictured, above). New councillors in these areas show the breadth of Green support across England – and reflect expert campaigning and action on local issues.

There were, of course, some disappointing results. In Brighton, where



the Greens ran the council for the last five years, we now have 11 councillors remaining. Despite their losses, the Brighton & Hove Green Party can be proud of achievements such as making the council a Living Wage Employer, reducing the gap between high and low earners and, in the face of drastic government cuts, protecting libraries and children's centres.

Greens also have strong numbers in Lancaster (nine), Solihull (nine), Stroud District (seven) and Oxford City (six).

Next year sees a set of crucial county council elections. With such a strong showing in this year's local elections, and over one million votes for our parliamentary candidates, 2016 is set to be a very exciting year indeed.

Local party transformations

Louise Venn, Senior Local Party Development Officer

We have seen fantastic growth in our membership – from 15,000 last year to 67,000 in June 2015. This surge is unprecedented, with new members getting active in their local parties, recognising the Green Party as the only real hope of achieving urgent political reform.

It is the skills and energy of these new activists that enabled local parties to campaign and stand candidates across many new areas in 2015, quadrupling our vote share. But this is just the start.

Now, the challenge facing local parties is to fully harness our growing numbers in a structured and sustainable way, as we build a grassroots movement to change our political system – all without donations from large corporations or vested interests.

The most effective local parties have adapted rapidly by defining new volunteer roles and teams, while retaining a strong core strategy, structure and clear internal communications. New area-based teams are proving very effective, as they allow

members to meet, plan and campaign close to where they live. But it is important not to sub-divide in haste and stay aligned to local authority boundaries to coordinate campaigns for more council seats. Developing a federal or branch

structure is proving to be the best solution in many cases.

For policy and partnerships work, local strategies in areas like housing, health, education, the environment, energy and transport can be supported by working groups that link interested members with local partner organisations – so they can research, scrutinise and influence local situations, while informing policy at regional and national levels, too.

Almost all local parties have been developing task-based working groups for campaigns, media, canvassing and leafleting, drawing on the skills of researchers, writers, photographers, film-makers, fundraisers, designers, event organisers and administrators.

There is useful guidance for growing local parties – including the 'Party in a Box' on the members' site, and the 'How to Win Local Elections' guide by the Association of Green Councillors – and we have many exciting new resources and training events planned. So if you are not already active in your local party, get in touch, get involved, and be part of the change.



Lambeth Green Party is just one example of a thriving local branch

Progressives working in partnership

For the next five years, **Caroline Lucas** will be representing more than 1.5 million people who voted Green. Here, she explains how she'll be building alliances with Parliament's other progressives

As each day passes, and ministers line up to announce the next short-sighted government policies, it's easy to feel glum about the coming five years. The crises we're facing in this country, from child poverty to climate change, look set to worsen under a government driven so resolutely by an obsession with austerity economics.

As the Green Party's sole representative in the House of Commons, I'll be doing all I can to provide the genuinely alternative voice that's so desperately needed.

The greatest threat we face from this government is their reluctance to do what's needed to tackle climate change. We know that credible solutions exist that could wean us off fossil fuels. If we were to invest in an ambitious energy conservation programme, for example, we'd both work towards ending the scandal of cold homes and save the Exchequer money. A radical insulation programme would return £1.27 in tax revenue for every £1 invested by government and create over 100,000 jobs in the UK. It is a tragedy that ministers are so obsessed with a deficit reduction plan – one that's failing even on its own terms – that they are turning their backs on such commonsense practical action.

And it's not only on climate change that Greens must provide a real alternative. The Labour leadership challengers, with the notable exception of Jeremy Corbyn, are refusing to make a stand against the cuts to public services that are driving people to desperation. One in five families, for example, say that they have already had to cut back on food as a result of the below-inflation rises in child benefit and child tax credits that have hit 7.7 million children – and it's increasingly down to us Greens to fight against any further cuts that could plunge even more young people into poverty.

But in the face of such a grim prognosis, there is hope.

It's been easier than I'd imagined to work cross-party with like-minded

backbenchers in order to get things done. Behind the party machines are some Labour MPs who are prepared to stand up for a truly public NHS, some Lib Dems who will work to defend our civil liberties and, of course, the SNP and Plaid with whom I already regularly work

“I'll be doing all I can to provide the genuinely alternative voice that's so desperately needed”

in Westminster. In my view, it's more important than ever that progressive MPs join together on the issues where we can agree.

To that end, I'll be doing all I can to build alliances in the new Parliament. In re-tabling an NHS Reinstatement Bill, I am calling out for all those MPs who believe in public healthcare to stand up and be counted by supporting the legislation. When I lay down early day motions on votes at 16 for the EU referendum or on ridding our world of nuclear weapons, I expect MPs to cross party lines and stand up for the principles at stake.

The Tories have a majority, but it's only a slim one. If progressives work together on key issues, we stand a real chance of defeating the government in crucial votes.

But a new progressive politics must also extend far beyond Westminster. That means putting social movements as well as civil society at its heart – and I believe it also means having a frank discussion about the potential for some electoral pacts in first-past-the-post elections. The next five years will be hard enough, but the prospect of perpetual Tory governments reigning over us as candidates' votes are split doesn't bear thinking about. 🌱



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#UnlockTheHouse aims

Clare Phipps

It is almost a century since women in this country achieved the right to vote and stand for election, yet still more than two in three of our MPs are men. And despite the fact that one in 10 UK voters have disabilities, only a few MPs do. Although many people with disabilities, or caring or family responsibilities, are able to work full time, one of the barriers preventing more from

becoming MPs is the current ban on job-sharing. And because women still make up the majority of these groups, they are disproportionately affected.

Two of the many people currently locked out from Parliament because of this barrier are Green Party Women's Group Chair Sarah Cope (who is the main carer for her two young children) and GPEx member Clare Phipps (who has a disabling



Clare Phipps (L) and Sarah Cope

sleep condition). This May, Sarah and Clare applied to be joint general election candidates for Basingstoke, but were rejected because of a ban on job-shares for MPs. With the support of the Green Party and a great team of lawyers, they are now raising funds to challenge this decision, and to spark a change in the law. They believe they can and will overturn this archaic and discriminatory legislation.

GPEx elections go online

Tom Harris, GPEW Electoral Returning Officer

The Green Party Executive (GPEx) is 'responsible for the overall and day-to-day direction of the Party'. Every summer, elections are held for roughly half its roles. This year, for the first time, elections will be online, operated by Electoral Reform Services (ERS), though members can still vote via a paper ballot.

There are several reasons for the switch to online.

Increasing turnout: GPEx elections traditionally have turnouts of around 20-

30 per cent. Online voting should help to increase participation.

Cost: Last year, 16,000 ballot papers, return envelopes and election booklets were printed and posted to members. While kept as low as possible, costs were significant. Since then, membership has more than quadrupled, so going online will save a considerable sum.

Practicalities: With 20 volunteers, the count for last year's GPEx elections took 10 arduous hours. Now, with over four



times as many votes, it is simply no longer practical to operate a count by hand.

There are too many other benefits to name here, but it is very clear: electronic voting is an exciting, necessary and important step forward for our party.

Voting runs from 3-28 August.
my.greenparty.org.uk/gpexelections

Justice and the Green Party

Rebecca Joy Novell, Lead Convener, Green Party Crime and Justice Working Group

The Green Party believes that lives and liberties must be protected within the law, and we strive for justice, including social and economic justice. The government's proposed changes to the justice system create an unequal and therefore unjust system. Following the general election, the Crime & Justice Working Group has identified three key areas it will focus on in the following months.

Human rights: The Conservative Party has threatened to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights. The Green Party is at the forefront of opposing this, and over the coming months will meet with

organisations to build support for the act. We are planning a meeting at the next conference with specialist speakers.

Legal aid: "Legal aid is both a right in itself and an essential precondition for the exercise and enjoyment of a number of human rights", according to UN Special Rapporteur Gabriela Knaut. The Coalition introduced changes to legal aid, denying vulnerable people access to representation. Legal aid is essential to the justice system, and the Green Party aims to prevent further cuts and fight for a reversal of the changes. We would ask members who have been denied legal aid to tell us of their experiences to help us better target our work.

Police reform: The new Investigatory Powers Bill will grant the police greater surveillance powers. As the Green Party believes in the protection of civil liberties, we plan to work with relevant organisations to monitor the impact of the proposed bill. Again, we welcome communication from members with experience in this area, including those who are being unfairly monitored.

The Crime & Justice Working Group is open to all members, and we are looking for more people to get involved to help develop our policy and campaign works.

For more, email Rebecca at:
rebeccajoynovell@gmail.com

Eastern Africa Greens Federation

Laura Bannister, GP Spokesperson on International Development

In February, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy funded Jessica Northey and me to go as GPEW representatives to Uganda for the first Eastern Africa Greens Federation (EAGF) strategy workshop.

We joined 30 people from Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda to develop regional cooperation between Green parties and movements. In this part of the world, with the exception of Kenya, Greens are still emerging, though national parties are working hard and are determined to win seats in their upcoming elections.

Each country has its own challenges,

both political and practical, including difficulty in getting registered as a political party in Burundi and the jailing of some leaders in Rwanda. It is not easy to build public understanding when both education and communication technology are patchy, and funding basic activities is tricky when GDP per person is less than £100 a month.

However, there was a huge sense of solidarity and shared struggle between our work here and theirs in East Africa. Just like us, they are a grassroots movement working against the odds to raise their profile and push for vital social change.

My favourite part of the workshop was the discussion about values. Participants were interested to hear about our own broad agenda, and came up with ambitious shared principles for their region's Green parties (see boxout).

We were told that EAGF

is the only cross-border political grouping in East Africa, with most political parties based around ethnic and interest groups. Developing a vision based on a shared positive ideology was almost unique to the Green movement, and it was very exciting to watch it happen.

East Africa is at the forefront of many of the issues we talk about in GPEW – the injustices of capitalism, environmental protection, and struggles by women and minority groups. Supporting the EAGF's aims supports our own, and we hope to build up long-term links that will strengthen us all.

THE AGREED VALUES OF THE EAGF

1. Justice, equity and human rights
2. Democracy, accountability and non-corruption
3. Promotion of green ideology
4. Non-violence, peaceful co-existence
5. Integrity and honesty
6. Sustainable development



22nd European Green Council

Elizabeth Ward

Taking place in Croatia's capital Zagreb, the 22nd European Green Council was opened with rousing speeches from Co-Chairs of the European Green Party, Monica Frassoni and Reinhard Bütikofer. Mirela Holy, leader of the Croatian Greens, next introduced themes of anti-austerity, green jobs, and climate change. Then, amid a maelstrom of press, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović anointed our event as an almost regal affair.

The first major plenary of council was 'Green Strategy: Ideas to Change the EU'. Having just finished our own election campaigns, the English contingent was keen to be involved. Discussing 'establishmentarianism', we learned that, for many of our sister parties, being part of government has led to them being viewed as 'establishment' parties. It's something we steer well clear of here in

the UK – if only thanks to our retrograde electoral system.

Populism was a recurring theme. Much discussion centred around how we, as a Green family, can harness the strategies used by parties such as Syriza and Podemos. Yet populism has a darker side: the rise of the far right is a worrying trend across Europe. A perfect storm of high youth unemployment and wily right-wing parties has led to a growing trend of fascism and anti-immigration, most worryingly amongst young voters. Here in the UK, the Young Greens have done a wonderful job in galvanising youth movements to support Green politics.

The main purpose of the council was to elect the ninth committee member, and with efficient digital voting, Maria Peteinaki from Greece was voted in, followed closely by Hungarian candidate Peter Ungar. Maria is an architect in

Athens and told me how the economic crisis has made business more difficult than ever.

However, she went on to say that Syriza's anti-austerity rhetoric has given many people hope.

Austerity was a common theme. Much of eastern and southern Europe have suffered disproportionately, and the continuing rise in unemployment shows little sign of improvement. As we enter another five years of austerity in the UK, we remain the strong anti-austerity voice.

The 22nd European Green Party Council showed that the Green Family is unique in having this tight network of enlightened minds, dedicated to the green vision, which should be a resource as we approach an impending referendum in the UK.



UK in the EU – our common future

Green MEPs **Jean Lambert** and **Keith Taylor** say that the European Union brings many benefits, and explain the reasons why the Green Party will be campaigning to stay in a reformed EU

In the forthcoming referendum, the Green Party will campaign to remain within the EU. Why? Firstly, because that is our agreed, established party position. Secondly, because we believe that to tackle the major international issues confronting us, such as climate change, preserving biodiversity, protecting human rights, challenging financial and corporate power and growing inequality (to name but a few), we need to work at the international level. We believe that, despite all its problems, the EU offers Greens the possibility to have that international effect, both in the EU and beyond. Yes, it means pooling some of our national power, but it gives us a louder voice and a wider policy effect.

This is about subsidiarity – a word we'll hear a lot in the coming campaign. It means that decisions are taken at the lowest effective level, and that does not always mean locally or nationally – the effective level can be international.

Some will claim that the UK needs to make its own decisions and be a strong nation. Part of what makes us a strong nation (the Euro-sceptic argument goes) is having a nuclear weapon and the strength of the financial City of London – neither of which is attractive to us

“If Britain were to leave the EU, many achievements related to environmental legislation will be at risk”



Greens. We need to create an EU for the common good, not for private profit.

It's worth remembering both that it was the UK that pushed the single market and trade agenda in the EU and that 80 per cent of our environmental legislation (clean air, clean water, environmental impact assessments, et cetera) comes from the EU and covers 28 countries – not just one. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has its roots in the desire for regional self-sufficiency, and the UK had industrial farming before we joined the EU. While we have worked to secure sustainable progress in the Common Fisheries Policy, which will see the end to fish discards and allow fish stocks to return to a sustainable level, Greens have also worked to shift the CAP – with some success. We have also worked to improve animal welfare across the EU, which has not stopped the UK having higher standards in some areas. None of this stops the UK moving towards greater self-reliance, in food or in energy: in fact, the development of renewables in the UK has been pushed by binding EU targets. We might have done more and faster if we had been out of the EU, but, looking at recent governments, it

is difficult to make that argument. If Britain were to leave the EU, all these achievements would be at risk.

We should also consider what the UK brings to the EU – what would it miss if we left? The UK has had a major impact on equality legislation in the EU, for example. Twenty-eight countries now have anti-discrimination legislation on grounds of race or ethnic identity, modelled on UK legislation. This example shows how policy ideas and development shift within the EU – it's about mutual influence and exchange within a legal framework, and it happens with a directly-elected European Parliament to provide democratic oversight at the international level, just as the Westminster Parliament does at the national level.

This referendum is about our common future, and we believe that young people from the age of 16 should have the right to vote on that. Greens in Europe will make the case for Britain to remain a member of a progressive union. We need to confront the realities of climate change, protect fundamental rights and shift financial power. We believe we can do this better by being in the EU than by acting alone. 🌱

The case against Green EU-ophilia

Jenny Jones and **Rupert Read** say the European Union is in need of radical reform to fix its serious defects, and an EU that does not undertake such reforms is not something that Greens should support

We write as Greens who have both stood for election to the European Parliament (Read came close to election in Eastern England in 2009 and 2014). We see clearly how the EU can be and has been a force for good in terms of keeping the peace among its member states and in terms of its impressive role in environmental and social regulation.

But we believe that the Green Party's love-in with the EU needs to come to an end, to be replaced by a more honest willingness to face up to its very serious defects.

A clear example of those flaws is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the EU-US deal currently being negotiated, which the Green Party is united against for the following reasons:

- TTIP enables the democratic will of the people to be struck down by big business.
- TTIP is a project of secretive lobbying.
- TTIP is about gigantic corporations being able to break open and gobble up public procurement and public services.

We argue that TTIP should not be viewed as some kind of aberration from EU standard practice. It *is* EU standard practice:

- There is far too little democracy in the EU: the Council of Ministers operates almost entirely in secret and (together with the commission) holds the whip hand over the parliament on most issues.
- Brussels is dominated by corporate lobbyists who outnumber NGO lobbyists by about 15 to one. EU rules would make it very difficult for, for example, the railways to be brought back into full public ownership in this country.
- The EU has been a pro-business front from the beginning, and a vehicle for organisations such as the European Round Table of Industrialists to get their way. The Lisbon Treaty and the 'Stability and Growth Pact' have only deepened this.



It is an illusion to think that TTIP is anything other than a natural extension of the logic of the EU. We Greens, being serious about our outright opposition to TTIP, need to be serious also about radically reforming the EU. It's not just about ending the insanity of moving the parliament from Brussels to Strasbourg once a month. Anything less than truly radical reform – such as ending the impunity of the culture of secrecy, removing the huge power of business lobbyists, prioritising public service over private profit and one-planet ecological sanity over businesses' endless-growth multi-planet agenda – would mean that the EU is probably, on balance, more of a hindrance than a help to Green objectives.

Moreover, systematic problems are caused by all four of the 'four freedoms': the freedom to move capital, products, 'services' and labour all over the EU. The four freedoms constitute a bosses' charter: they form together a key demand of exploitative international capital, a demand that should be rejected. There is no leftist case for an unreformed EU.

We are in the early stages of an EU referendum campaign. If we leave the EU reform agenda to David Cameron, we are condemning ourselves to political

irrelevance and the EU to becoming, in practice and on balance, even more of a dogmatically anti-ecological, pro-growth, pro-big-business, undemocratic organisation than it already is.

The 'Green Yes [to staying in the EU]' campaign needs to be consistently constructively-critical of the EU's pro-'globalisation' agenda. We should call for the referendum to include an option for an *improved* EU, along broadly green lines. We must not miss this historic opportunity to set out the kinds of reasons for a radically different approach from business-as-usual, reasons that were first brilliantly couched in Mike Woodin and Caroline Lucas's book, *Green Alternatives to Globalisation*.

Let's not insult the intelligence of the British electorate. Let's tell the truth. There are tremendous structural difficulties in the way of reforming the EU to address most of the problems we've sketched above. One of us (Jones) is frankly sceptical that there is any chance of such reforms succeeding. The other of us (Read) is determined to try. But we agree that an EU that does not undertake such reforms is not something that Greens should support. For the record, we both love Europe, just not the EU. 🌿

Preparing for Paris

Andrew Pendleton, Head of Campaigns at Friends of the Earth, explains what must happen at the climate negotiations in Paris and beyond

Alyson Austin doesn't look like a climate change activist. Neither does Barbara Martin. They are of a similar middle age, and to all intents and purposes, are ordinary women leading ordinary lives. But what they share in common is that they are both on the frontline of the fight against climate change. And both are determined to win.

It seems perverse that while strutting its climate credentials internationally, the new government is as bellicose as ever on fracking and is dithering over phasing out old coal power stations. In the meantime, to please their backbenchers, the Conservatives are poised to follow through on an election pledge to stop onshore wind power, the cheapest of clean power sources, in its tracks.

And so as our leaders – and those in many other nations – play politics with climate change and bow ever more obligingly to polluting vested interests, it's left to people like Alyson and Barbara to make a stand. Alyson lives in Nant Llesg, near Merthyr Tydfil, in Wales. She's one of many in the local community campaigning hard to stop a massive new opencast coal mine on her doorstep. Barbara is a Lancastrian and is, with passion and dignity, leading opposition to Cuadrilla's efforts to frack at two sites near Preston.

With a global glut of coal, oil and gas large enough to fry the planet four times over, only fools would try new, potentially earth-shattering ways to extract new coal and gas. But try they are.

Come November, all eyes, including Alyson's and Barbara's, will be on Paris. In global

“Just as you cannot part put out a fire, you cannot tackle climate change by halves”

climate negotiations terms, Paris is the new Copenhagen. At COP21, the climate summit in Paris spanning November's second two weeks, negotiators and ministers will thrash out what many are hoping will be a new deal to halt global warming. The US and China have already announced targets for reducing emissions of climate pollution, and the G7 nations have recently pledged to phase out fossil fuel use by the end of the century – steps in the right direction.

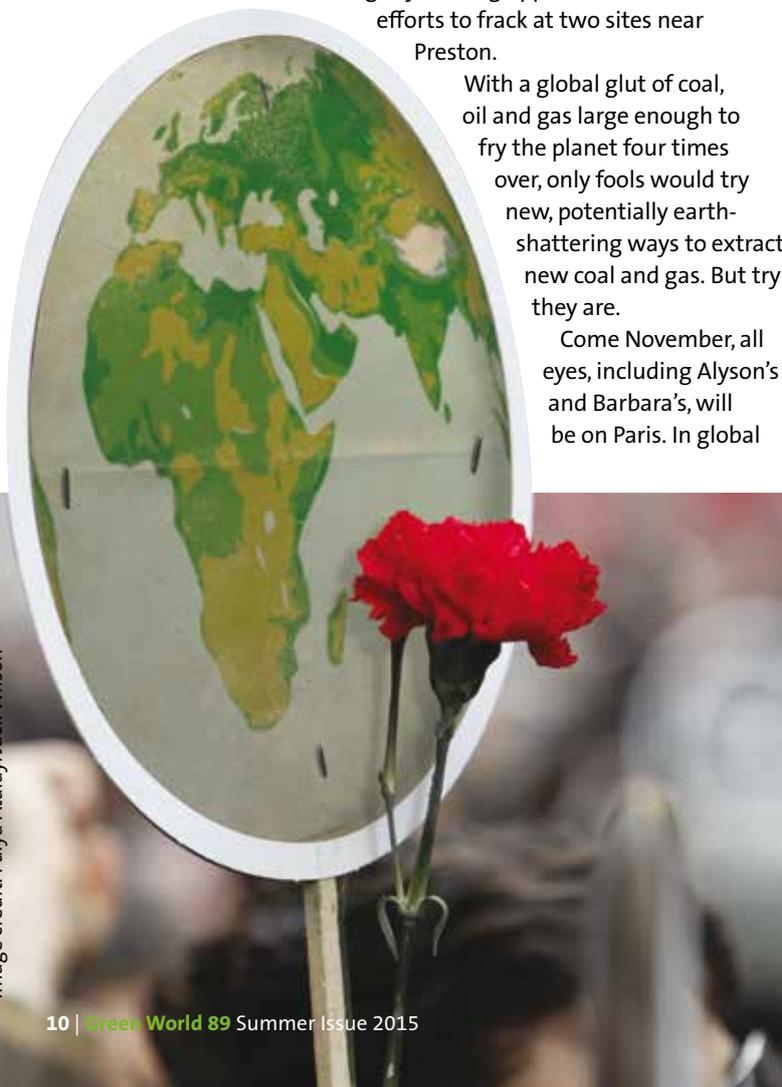
But make no mistake: no one currently thinks Paris will measure up or even come close to the level of action needed globally.

Traditionally, this is the way such things are fashioned, especially at the intergovernmental level. Gradually, incrementally, we edge towards a negotiated compromise. But on climate change, compromise will not work. Just as you cannot part put out a fire, it is not possible to tackle climate change by halves. The choice facing humanity is either to do the absolute job or fail absolutely.

So if Paris already appears destined to fall well short, what is to be done? First, we must approach November with our hopes high, but focused not only on COP21, but on what happens afterwards. We do need the best deal possible in Paris, but we mustn't position it as the make or break moment, but as a possible turning point and a moment when we showcase the leadership that the world's Alysons and Barbaras are taking.

Second, we must preserve and not compromise on the nature of the international negotiations. The vested interests and captured governments want to refashion the process into something akin to a massive charity auction, where nations make voluntary pledges based on goodwill. And yet much of the progress we have made so far is because commitments have been binding and failure carried the threat of legal sanction. This includes no compromise on fairness. While global power continues to shift south and east, the overwhelming majority of nations with the wherewithal to act first and fastest remain in the north and west.

Third, once the Eiffel Tower's last COP21 LED has been switched off and the summit's bar has closed, it'll be back to our nations. Alyson and Barbara will not compromise and neither will the many tens of thousands fighting similar battles worldwide. Because our leaders won't draw one, unequivocal line in the sand, it's time for people to draw a million. No new coal, oil and gas; renewables wherever we can win them. Perhaps when the new Paris comes around, we'll have created enough momentum to end the equivocation. 🌱



Key risks of climate change

Let us not forget what we're fighting for, the Working Group II contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report on climate change outlines, amongst other considerations, the vulnerability and exposure of human and natural systems to climate change.

The key risks that the report identifies with high confidence are:

- 'i) Risk of death, injury, ill-health, or disrupted livelihoods in low-lying coastal zones and small island developing states and other small islands, due to storm surges, coastal flooding, and sea level rise.
- 'ii) Risk of severe ill-health and disrupted livelihoods for large urban populations due to inland flooding in some regions.
- 'iii) Systemic risks due to extreme weather events leading to breakdown of infrastructure networks and critical services such as electricity, water supply, and health and emergency services.
- 'iv) Risk of mortality and morbidity during periods of extreme heat, particularly for vulnerable urban populations and those working outdoors in urban or rural areas.
- 'v) Risk of food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems linked to warming, drought, flooding, and precipitation variability and extremes, particularly for poorer populations in urban and rural settings.
- 'vi) Risk of loss of rural livelihoods and income due to insufficient access to drinking and irrigation water and reduced agricultural productivity, particularly for farmers and pastoralists with minimal capital in semi-arid regions.
- 'vii) Risk of loss of marine and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for coastal livelihoods, especially for fishing communities in the tropics and the Arctic.
- 'viii) Risk of loss of terrestrial and inland water ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for livelihoods.'

The report concludes that many of the key risks 'constitute particular challenges for the least developed countries and vulnerable communities, given their limited ability to cope', adding that climate change is projected to increase displacement of people, which can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts.

It is clear that it is in everyone's interest to see that these risks never become reality.

Climate change in numbers

95% level of certainty in the scientific community that global warming is caused by greenhouse gases resulting from human activity (IPCC)

2°C long considered the maximum rise possible before 'dangerous climate change' (although recent research suggests it could be lower)

0.85°C global warming experienced from 1880 to 2012 (IPCC)

5°C temperature rise expected by the end of the century without concentrated action on carbon emissions (IPCC)

2014 year that was the warmest on record (NOAA)

14 out of 15

number of the warmest years on record that have occurred since the turn of the century (NASA/NOAA)

275ppm level of CO₂ in the atmosphere through most of human history (350.org)

350ppm target level for atmospheric CO₂ (350.org)

400ppm average global CO₂ concentrations as of May 2015 (NOAA)

2100 year by which fossil fuel use must be phased out (IPCC)

Painting the world green

We can't always rely on politicians to find solutions to environmental problems, so people all over the world have taken power into their own hands. **Amelie Boleyn** reviews some successful (and promising) green movements

North America – Tar Sands

The challenge: Stopping the Keystone XL Tar Sand Oil Pipeline. Renowned climate scientist Dr James Hansen has called developing tar sands 'essentially game over' for the climate, and he's identified Keystone XL, the pipeline connecting oil fields in Alberta to Texas, as the fuse that could light the tar sands carbon bomb.

The action: Over 750 #noKXL actions, big and small, have taken place to stop the pipeline since 2011. They range from impromptu events when President Obama is in town, to days of action with hundreds of participants, to tens of thousands of people gathering in Washington DC. US Green Party Leader Jill Stein was arrested in Texas in 2012 while trying to deliver food to Keystone XL protestors camping in trees.

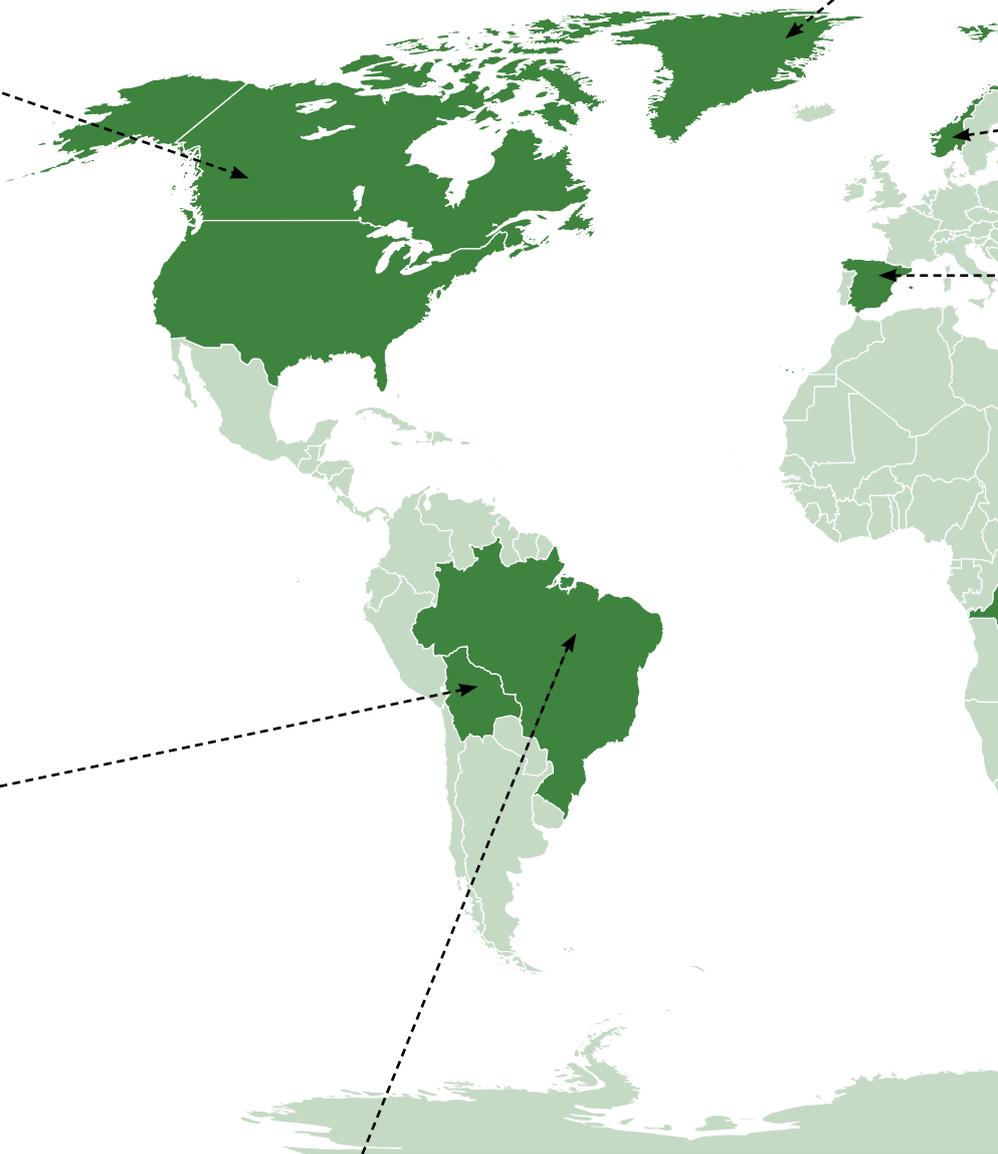
nokxl.org

Bolivia – Water Wars

The challenge: In the late 1990s, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programme forced Bolivia to sell its state-owned water company, Semapa, to US corporation Bechtel, causing unaffordable increases in water rates.

The action: After years of public protest, and fed up with government inaction, The Coalition for the Defense of Water and Life (La Coordinadora), led by union organiser and anti-globalisation activist Oscar Olivera, paved the way for an unofficial referendum, showing 96 per cent of citizens wanted out. After a new political administration was elected, the state took ownership of water rights back into its own hands – despite facing compensation procedures.

sites.google.com/site/lacdayv/about



The Amazon – Deforestation

The challenge: Deforestation appeared to be an intractable problem for many years, with little progress in reducing it, despite many government and NGO projects and widespread global concern. During the second half of the twentieth century, the deforestation of the tropics became a global concern.

The action: Over the past decade, the rate of deforestation in the Brazilian

Amazon dropped by 70 per cent. Civil society, including environmentalists, indigenous groups, rubber tappers, and unions, changed the framing of the deforestation issue, forcing governments and businesses to take action. The fight continues, though, as deforestation is showing a worrying increase in 2015, following a weakening of the 'Forest Code' in 2012.

amazon.org.br/?lang=en

The Arctic – Climate Change

The challenge: Defending communities of the Arctic from climate change.

The action: Well-known global NGOs such as Greenpeace have successfully raised awareness about drilling for oil in the Arctic, but local communities have also come together from the region themselves, represented by organisations

such as Many Strong Voices, which raises awareness about the effects of climate change in the Arctic as well as small island developing states, bringing together over 20 organisations to take collaborative and strategic actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation at local, regional and international levels.

www.manystrongvoices.org

Norway – Divestment of fossil fuels

The challenge: Halting investment in dirty fossil fuel technologies to keep within two degrees of warming. Investment funds represent a marked obstacle to these efforts, as the connection between climate change and capitalism obstructs cleaner energy technologies.

The action: Pressure from groups including Greenpeace, WWF and Fossil Free led to the Norwegian parliament's finance committee passing a motion this May that will see the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund – worth US\$900 billion (£589 billion) – dump its coal interests. The move is expected to lead the way for divestments by other funds.

gofossilfree.org/norway

Spain – Fracking

The challenge: Fighting plans to extract 180 billion cubic metres of gas from shale formations across the Green Valley and prevent contamination of vital water resources.

The action: Anti-fracking camp 'Frackanpada' has seen more than 13,000 people gather in Gateiz, a city in the centre of the Basque Country region where fracking is proposed; the most recent camp took place from 13-19 July. This mirrors similar actions across the globe, such as #nodashforgas and #frackoff in the UK, and anti-fracking *collectifs* in France, which routinely launched with a screening of *Gasland* – released in French cinemas two months before a national moratorium was adopted in 2011.

frackanpada.frackingez.org/home

Australia – Fight for the Reef Partnership

The challenge: The Great Barrier Reef is under threat from Queensland government actions, backed by federal approval, including fast-tracked mega port developments, mining, dredging and encouraging a shipping superhighway.

The action: Fight for the Reef, a partnership between WWF-Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society, is working to protect the reef and the AU\$6 billion (£3 billion) tourism industry and 60,000 jobs it supports. As well as garnering thousands of signatures, bringing thousands to rallies in Australia, and gaining worldwide media coverage, the campaign has attracted support from UNESCO, which is watching the 'major threats' to the reef's health.

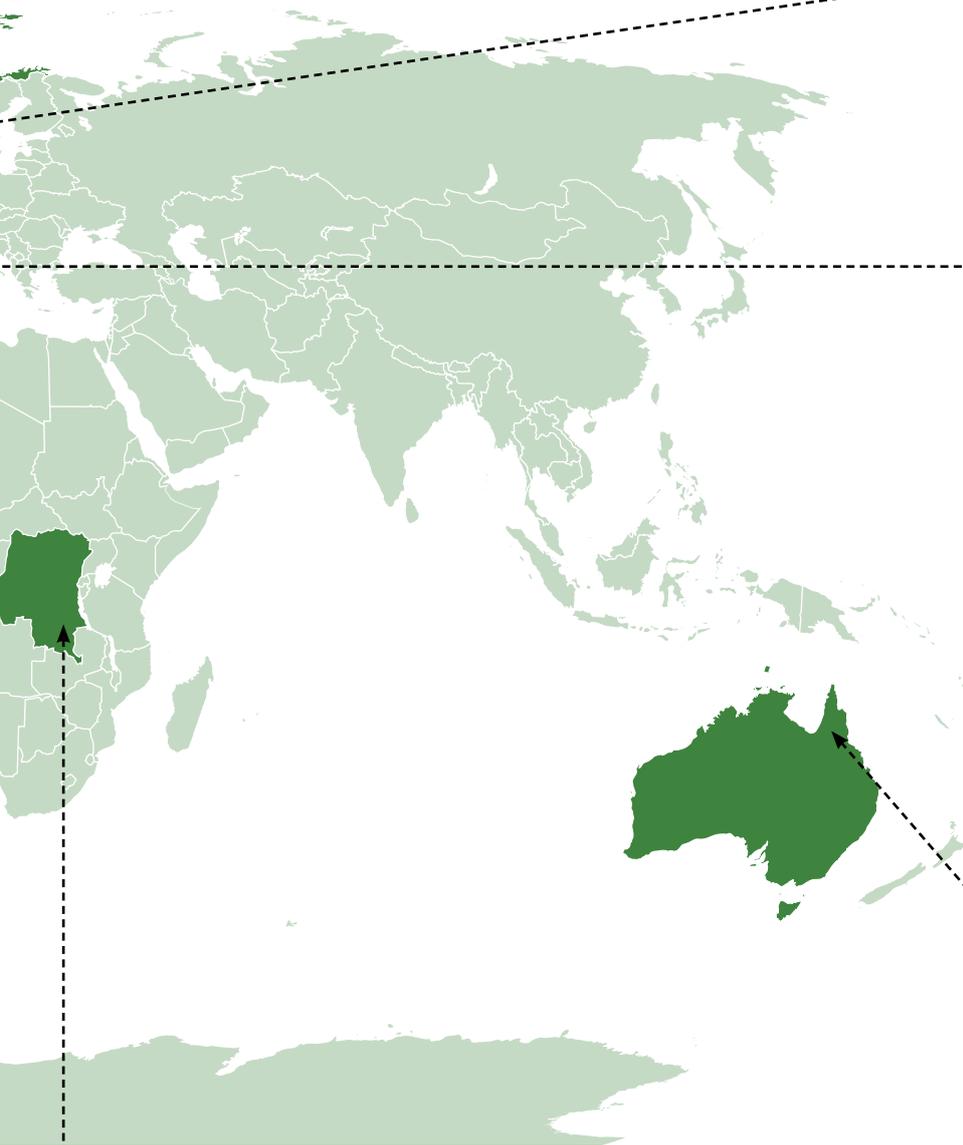
fightforthereef.org.au

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – Conflict Minerals

The challenge: An insatiable demand for electronics in the West has resulted in rare earth minerals being procured through dubious supply chains, which has attracted campaigns on a similar magnitude to conflict diamonds. The DRC area bordering Rwanda experienced a war that supposedly ended in 2003, but hostilities continue, funded by the extraction of these conflict minerals.

The action: A coalition of manufacturers, government agencies, and non-profits launched the Conflict-Free Smelter (CFS) programme last December. The CFS identifies smelters through independent third-party auditors who assess whether raw materials are 'conflict-free'. The programme has resulted in companies including Intel and Apple no longer purchasing minerals from this region.

www.conflictreesourcing.org/conflict-free-smelter-program



Farmer-to-farmer solutions

Jane Reynolds explains the origins and success of Central America's Campesino a Campesino movement – even in the face of Big Agriculture

“Farmers helping their brothers and sisters so that they can help themselves to find solutions and not be dependent on a technician or on the bank. That is Campesino a Campesino.”

– Argelio Gonzaleze, a campesino in Santa Lucia, Nicaragua

The origins of the Campesino a Campesino (farmer-to-farmer) movement go back to the 1960s, when smallholders in Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras and Nicaragua developed a working method and a set of practices to defend their livelihoods and way of life from the so-called Green Revolution, which brought industrialised farming to the Global South.

In the early years, farming communities set up small-scale agricultural improvement projects in which they were supported by progressive NGOs, and encouraged to trust in their intimate knowledge of their environment. Projects followed a set of simple principles: to start from your own needs, put the simple things first, then the complex; progress gradually step-by-step; work with your own capabilities and local resources; develop small-scale experiments; limit the introduction of technology; and develop a multiplier effect by holding farmer-led workshops for neighbouring communities.

The first projects concentrated on increasing productivity by improving the soil and its water-holding capacity, often by adding organic matter to soil. Impressive increases in yield were obtained (sometimes as much as 400 per cent), and, naturally, this brought about an increase in confidence and enthusiasm, as farmers realised that they didn't need the industrial agriculture tools and the huge burden of debt they brought with them to improve their farms. From these small beginnings, farmer-to-farmer projects have developed a wide range of sustainable approaches to pest and weed management, diversification of crops, green manures, reforestation, and agro-ecological biodiversity management.

The movement grew steadily through the 1980s and 1990s, fed by the failure of the Green Revolution to bring any benefits to smallholders and by structural adjustment programmes that led to worsening conditions. But the movement and its methods were largely dismissed as lacking in good scientific basis by international agricultural research, dominated as it still was by the drive to mechanisation, monocultures, and high chemical inputs.

In the 1990s, however, two things happened that brought attention to the farmer-to-farmer methods.

The first was the food emergency in Cuba following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this crisis, Cuba turned to the farmer-to-farmer methods and transformed a large part of its agriculture to low-input organic systems. In this effort, farmers were joined by scientists at government agricultural research

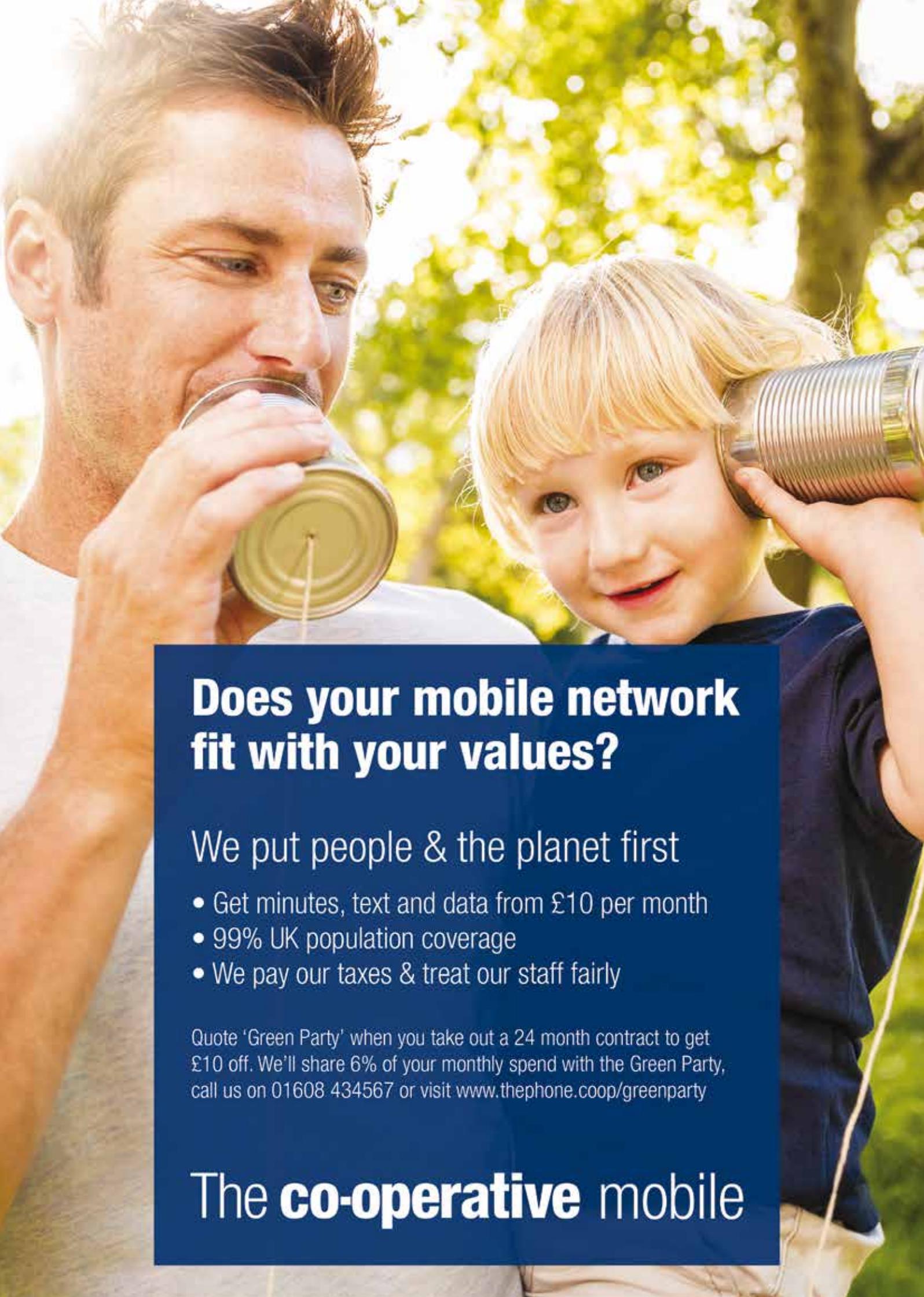


By The Photographer (Own work) CC BY-SA 3.0

stations and universities. In contrast to conventional systems, where small-holders are the passive recipients of 'expert advice', farmers and scientists worked as equals to develop bio-fertilisers, integrated pest management, and other techniques for low external-input agriculture. Reforms were enacted to scale down collectives and cooperatives, placing greater control over farming and marketing directly into the hands of smallholders.

The second event came in 1998. Hurricane Mitch, one of the Caribbean's five most powerful hurricanes of the 20th century, slammed into Central America, causing extensive damage. In the aftermath, scientific research showed that the organic low-input farms had incurred considerably less damage than neighbouring conventional farms.

Hurricane Mitch uncovered a conspicuous 'policy ceiling' in sustainable agricultural development. While the farmer-to-farmer movement has been successful in developing the technical and methodological aspects of sustainable agriculture, with the exception of Cuba, it is limited in its ability to influence policy. Lack of political will on the part of national governments appears to be holding back grassroots efforts at scaling up sustainable agriculture. The next task confronting sustainable agricultural development is to translate farmer-to-farmer successes on the ground into the broad-based, public pressure needed to influence national policymakers. 🌱



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Green Party Autumn Conference 2015

Friday 25 September - Monday 28 September

Bournemouth International Centre

www.greenparty.org.uk/conference

We expect up to 2,000 members to attend Conference this September, as we meet in Bournemouth in a venue overlooking the beach to recharge our political batteries post election.

As well as the core conference business of policy making, the programme will have a special focus on the **governance review**, introductory sessions for **new members**, and there will also be **fringe sessions** on a variety of subjects run by internal and external groups, as well as topical **panel debates** open to the public. An outline timetable is available on the website, and a full timetable will be available from end July.

Bookings

Online bookings can be made via the website from 1 July. Book before 1 September to take advantage of the early bird prices. There is an Access Fund available for those who are suffering financial hardship.

Accommodation

We have allocations of rooms at nearby hotels. For information on these as well as other nearby B&Bs, hostels and other options, see the website.

Crèche

There will be a free crèche for the children of GP members. For more information and a booking form, visit the website. *Places must be booked in advance.*

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uk/conference](http://www.greenparty.org.uk/conference)**

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Germany's energy transition

Green World takes a look at the bucolic Bavarian village of Wildpoldsried, where a renewables revolution is benefitting the economy, environment and community

Germany's *Energiewende* ('Energy transition') is setting an example for the rest of the world in how to increase the use of renewable energy, and nowhere is this more evident than in the small agricultural Bavarian village of Wildpoldsried.

Over the past 18 years, Wildpoldsried has undergone a remarkable renewables transformation, which now sees it generating four times more energy than it needs and earns the community €5 million (£3.6 million) each year.

But it all started in 1997, when Mayor Arno Zengerle was elected and undertook a survey showing that the 2,500 residents were keen for a number of municipal buildings – such as a new sports hall, school, theatre, pub and retirement facility – to be built in a way that was ecologically sound and didn't send the modest village into debt.

In response, the council came up with a mission statement – *Wildpoldsried Innovativ Richtungsweisend* (Leadership), or WIR-2020 – with three main aims: renewable energy installation and energy saving measures; ecological construction; protection of water and ecological wastewater disposal. As the German Renewable Energy Act was just about to come into force (in 2000), the village knew it could benefit from generous feed-in tariffs.

Cladding municipal buildings in solar photovoltaics (using local firms to benefit the local economy and municipal bank balance) was just the start. With encouragement from the council, local resident Wendelin Einsiedler formed a civic society for renewables investment in Wildpoldsried. Thanks to the society's investment and a small grant, Wildpoldsried erected its first two wind turbines in 1999; two more followed in 2001; a fifth went up in 2008; and now the village has 11 in total.

Other government-encouraged moves included the installation of five anaerobic digesters on some of the village's

many dairy farms. Together, the digesters produce more than 400,000 kilowatt hours of energy – both electricity and heat – per year. And, in 2005, the village also installed a CHP district heating system that runs on wood pellets or waste wood from local forests. To date, all public buildings are connected to the system, as well as two commercial operations and more than 100 private homes.

More recently, the community has also begun testing a 'smart grid' system, to see if it can balance energy production and use through the storage of electricity. Wildpoldsried has 32 electric vehicles leased to residents, and the cars' batteries are given priority when there's an energy surplus; in future, the idea is that these batteries will return electricity to the grid when there's a power shortage.

All in all, the village of Wildpoldsried has invested more than €30 million in renewable energy, and Mayor Zengerle expects to recoup it in the next 10 to 12 years. The village's economy is booming, as small businesses have sprung up to sell, install and service technologies, and the council has managed to build at least nine new community buildings over the past 18 years, including the school, gym and community hall that the residents asked for. Eco-energy tourism is also in full swing, and Wildpoldsried has inspired the area where it's located to follow its lead: the Oberallgäu region decided a few years ago that it would aim to achieve 70 per cent renewable electricity by 2022 (set against a national target of producing 60 per cent of all energy from renewable sources by 2050).

All this, of course, has only been possible because of popular and governmental support for the transition to renewable energy, and the world is watching as the central German government adjusts its feed-in tariffs with the aim of getting the balance right between incentivising renewables and keeping household fuel bills down. 🌱





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Calls for constitutional reform

With the recent election proving that first past the post is not suited to modern politics, **Amelie Boleyn** considers the constitutional reforms needed, and how to achieve them

Before becoming Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau wrote on openDemocracy: ‘The time has come to restore popular sovereignty and create a democracy worthy of the name. In Barcelona en Comú, we think that the best place to start this democratic, citizen revolution is from the bottom up, from our towns and cities.’

Relatively speaking, we could be forgiven for thinking that we have it good in the UK, with freedom of expression, equality, balance of power, the right to vote – all in the sixth largest economy in the world. But with a bizarre example of checks and balances (exhibit: an unelected upper house), many would argue that to maintain the Westminster status quo without better seeking parity with civil society is as undemocratic and naive as it is deluded. And whilst the clear casualties of the 2015 general election were the credibility of first past the post and of the Conservative government elected with a minority of 35 per cent of votes, calls for wider constitutional reform have

“The time has come to restore popular sovereignty and create a democracy worthy of the name”

been brewing since the Scottish referendum debate, which ironically catapulted nationalist SNP advocates to colossal success in Westminster.

As a truly democratic movement, the Green Party has long been riding the same crest of the devolution wave – pursuing progressive ideas that seek empowerment from the bottom up, rather than from a trickled-down, centralised elite. The demand for greater devolution to communities, enshrined by a constitutional consensus, must serve as the political narrative for a true democracy. Such a democracy must be one with integrity, and the agility of a legitimate system designed to lead by example, rather than a ‘giftwrapped’ model where an unrepresentative minority holds the balance of power. It is time for a more intelligent, radical mandate, which also removes the handcuffs of our democracy from the chains of corporate multinationals and the draconian politicians who feather their nests from Westminster.

As the Green Party backs calls for a People’s Constitution, demand in the post-election climate couldn’t be greater.

Drawing from precedents already in place, such as The Scottish Constitutional Convention, The Citizens Assembly of British Columbia, The Constitutional Assembly in Iceland, and, of course, Barcelona en Comú in Catalonia, a blueprint for devolution from traditional centralisation towards a political mandate for bottom-up citizen empowerment must arise.

The Sustainable Communities Acts and Localism Acts, which could have provided some reassurance to communities, especially those unrepresented by majority single party councils, have done little to deliver empowerment to communities across the country. Thus, the ingredients for radical progress towards decentralisation couldn’t be better placed, especially against the backdrop of the crumbling walls of Westminster, in need of £3 billion in repairs.

Meanwhile, often deprived, under-represented communities from all corners of the nation are crying out for a voice – to grasp the political will for redistributed governance, failed by business-as-usual politics, there is no better time for constitutional reform like the present. We need to mobilise civil society, and to call for a renewed referendum on electoral reform and PR, as well as promoting the template for a People’s Constitutional Convention. This would include further items, such as total recall, the extension of the right to vote to all 16-year-olds, and replacing the House of Lords with a fully-elected upper chamber. In this way, we can replicate the devolution of power exemplified by Barcelona en Comú (et al) to our towns and cities.

As the cloth of welfare continues to be cut and the government dismantles our fragile welfare state while the rich get richer and the vulnerable suffer most, the integrity of our so-called freedom of expression, equality and right to vote, continue to mean little without radical change. Without constitutional reform placed firmly on the agenda, we have no voice at all. 🌱



Democracy in action: the Green Party pursues progressive ideas and empowerment from the bottom up

Creatively protecting public spaces

Elise Benjamin

Green councillors have been at the forefront of a growing campaign to stop Labour-run Oxford City Council from introducing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that would criminalise begging, busking, sleeping in toilets, street art, cycling down the wrong street at the wrong time, peddling, street drinking, and more. In late May, the campaign went national with a petition of almost 72,300 forcing the council to remove rough sleeping from the list. Labour has also now removed pigeon feeding.

At every stage of the decision-making process, Green councillors have highlighted the problems with such hard-hitting legislation and have led a series of street protests including two mass busks, forming an alliance with Keep Streets Live, homeless organisations, musicians, religious groups, and comedian Mark Thomas.

On 11 June, Labour councillors were forced to postpone the decision on the PSPO after Liberty sent them a 20-page legal opinion from a QC with a threat of legal action if they went ahead with their plans. According to Liberty, the plans are unlawful on a number of human rights and common law grounds.

Oxford city centre Green Councillor David

Thomas has taken a lead in the campaign to oppose the PSPO. After hearing the news of the Liberty legal action, he passionately addressed the 100 per cent Labour City Executive Board meeting, accusing them of ignoring their own consultation when it went against them, creating a national embarrassment for the city, ignoring the warnings of the three Green city centre councillors as well as professional bodies and individuals, and refusing to investigate safer, fairer and more viable alternatives. In addition, he exposed Labour's trick of removing rough sleeping whilst refusing to back down on begging so they can use it against rough sleepers instead.

The campaign continues.



Pedalling the green lifestyle

Shan Oakes

The relaunched York Cycle Rally on midsummer weekend featured the Pedal Power Invention Convention including rickshaws, cargo bikes, velocars and all-ability bikes, as well as the famous six-person pedal-powered jukebox. The same day, the naked bike ride graced York City Centre to celebrate the fragile human body and bikes, as opposed to mechanisation and cars. Festivals with bikes, music and alternative technology and lifestyle stalls and demonstrations are a great way to offer the green vision.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2 August
Brinsley Animal Rescue Open Day
Brinsley, Nottinghamshire
brinsleyanimalrescue.org

- 13-16 August
The Green Gathering
Chepstow, Monmouthshire
www.greengathering.org.uk

- 6 September
Nottingham Green Festival
The Arboretum, Nottingham
www.nottmgreenfest.org.uk

- 6 September
doitforcharity London to Brighton Cycle 2015
www.doitforcharity.com

- 7-12 September
Stop the Arms Fair – week of action
near London's ExCeL Centre, which hosts the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair
www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk

- 18-21 September
Great British Beach Clean
Various locations
www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch

- 25-28 September
Green Party Autumn Conference
Bournemouth International Centre
www.greenparty.org.uk/conference

- 4 October
Demonstrate at the Tory Party Conference
Manchester Central Convention Complex
www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk

- 10-11 October
Vegfest UK London
Olympia Conference Centre
london.vegfest.co.uk

CLAUS OFFE

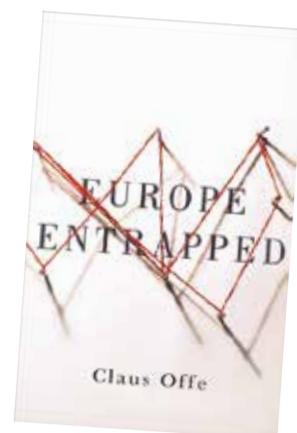
EUROPE ENTRAPPED

Polity Press, 2014, 104pp, £16.99 or e-book £9.99

Claus Offe is a critical supporter of the EU. Not only does he appreciate the potential economic advantages of international cooperation, he also holds close to the vision of a 'social Europe', one in which redistribution might take centre stage. He effectively skewers the nature of the financial crisis facing Europe, identifying five key ingredients, including cheap money supply from central banks, reckless lending in the financial sector, a secular decline in growth rates, and pervasive financialisation of economies. Structurally, Europe's heartlands are hamstrung by the nature of the economic system they have built for themselves. Offe argues that 'capitalist democracies with open borders are essentially addicted to ever-deeper sovereign indebtedness' (p28). On top of these economic challenges, the democratic deficit at Europe's heart lends it little legitimacy amongst the peoples of its member states. In particular, it is beset by the fact that 'the EU does not have a widely appealing and inspiring vision of its own future or that of its citizens to offer' (p74).

Offe's analysis of the causes of the trap Europe has led itself

into is superb, but he stumbles over the alternatives. He demeans populist parties such as Syriza and Podemos, with their appeal to 'resentments, fears and national identities' but with 'little or nothing to offer in terms of policy'. Yet what has become clear is that Syriza possesses concrete alternative policies, but not the political power to overcome the intransigence of the Eurozone finance ministers, Germany foremost. Offe argues that German political elites are unwilling to play the role of 'Europe's hegemon' (p93), yet this seems to belie reality. In particular, in negotiations with Syriza, it became clear that Wolfgang Schäuble, German Finance Minister, possessed ultimate authority over decisions being made. Whatever the EU's institutional framework might suggest, Germany is at least playing the role of hegemon. Greens must reckon with this shift, and rethink our approach to the EU in light of it. Offe's book will be a great help in understanding the dynamics of the crisis afflicting the continent, but ideas for its overcoming will need to be sought elsewhere.



Daniel Whittal

THOMAS PIKETTY

CAPITAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Harvard University Press, 2014, 696pp, £29.95

This book has cast a long shadow since its publication in 2013 (2014 in English). At the time of writing this review, Piketty and other eminent economists have criticised the Chancellor's latest economic folie, while Syriza tries to defend its citizens against the Troika. *Capital* is a book of the moment, and required reading for anyone wanting to engage Team Austerity in debate.

As a non-specialist reader, I found some sections difficult, but am glad that I persevered. The text bristles with information and ideas; no overview can do it full justice.

Piketty takes a very long view of economic inequality. He crosses centuries and continents examining how things got better, then much worse. On the way, he uses informative graphs, extrapolations from Balzac and Austen, and a few little algebraic formulae. His favourite is ' $r > g$ ', which translates loosely as 'existing wealth increases faster than overall growth'.

Depressing facts are plentiful. Climate change is mentioned, though this isn't his comfort zone. He spends time establishing that the twentieth century's relative equality was a blip

caused by the world wars. Piketty illustrates this with U-shaped curves; unsurprisingly, the deepest ones refer to Britain and the USA, where inequalities are back to Belle Époque levels.

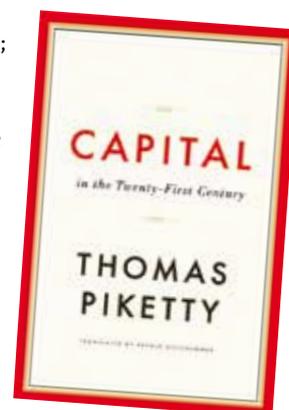
Rather than wring his hands, he offers solutions including a global, progressive tax on capital. This should be: (a) international, to stop the one per cent moving their inherited billions to Switzerland; (b) progressive, so that oligarchs would pay more tax than their 'staff'; (c) applicable to total wealth, not income.

Being a details man, Piketty spends chapters explaining why this would work better than austerity, why the Eurozone would be the ideal place to start, and why it's a utopian idea that will never happen.

My only reservations would be that *Capital* is more challenging for non-economists than necessary. I'd also have liked more politics, particularly about how different systems are related to (in)equality over time. Maybe that's for another book?

This is an important work, and the whole thing is worth reading carefully. A British Piketty might vote Green, and Greens can certainly vote Piketty.

Kate Sweeny



Publications Coordinator Martin Collins is compiling a list of green books and pamphlets, and would like to hear about books written by party members on a subject of use to the Green Party or pamphlets/booklets (but not leaflets) published by the party that will help navigate our policies. Please send information (author, publication date, title, ISBN, publisher, and a 50-word synopsis) to: publications@greenparty.org.uk

Marching against austerity

Up to 150,000 people, including many Greens, gathered in central London in June to march in opposition to the Conservatives' ideologically-driven war on welfare.

Tom Williams was on the ground to find out why some of the protesters were there

Alan Jaye, Norfolk Fire Service

We're here to protest against the cuts that the government is making on the fire service and the public sector in general. Across the country, brigades have seen severe cuts. In Essex, they've got rid of 120 full-time firefighters. London has got to save £11 million from its budget. We are at a point where no more cuts can be made. We want to send a very clear message to Cameron and his government that austerity isn't the way forward – we should be looking to invest in our future.



Linda Charnock, Bolton

I'm the leader of the anti-bedroom tax campaign in Bolton, and the day after the election, it was heartbreaking. People were telling me that they can't survive another five years. In Burnley, a gentleman got sent to prison for being in arrears with his bedroom tax. They took his home off him, threw his stuff in a skip and now he's homeless with his son. This is a guy who has lived in his property for 30 years. The government and local councils are putting people in fear of losing their homes. Without people getting on the street, having their say, and showing how strong we are, this government is just going to carry on taking and taking from everywhere.



Elle McAll, North-East London

Austerity has been the widely-accepted narrative that has gone largely unchallenged by those in power. But I think it is an excuse for more ideological cuts. If they really wanted to grow the economy, they'd put more money into consumers' pockets, create more jobs and invest. But they are doing exactly the opposite. My housemate is doing a placement in a young people's mental health service and they are so over-stretched. They are not being supported and the service is really struggling.



Alan Francis, Milton Keynes

The Tory election win is really going to hurt people, particularly the least well off. I'm here to say that's not acceptable and we've got to keep campaigning against it. Milton Keynes isn't a particularly politically-active place, but there was over 300 people at an anti-austerity meeting last month, so there is a real groundswell of opinion building against austerity.





Helen Royall, Stroud

I know people who have been forced to go back to work when they are not well enough, and I've had friends commit suicide because they were so terrified of the situation they were in. The system that we've got is broken, and we've got to do all we can to show that we are not happy, and we've got to do something to change it. If we demonstrate consistently and say the same thing every time – which is we do not want these cuts – then I believe we'll get somewhere.



Mala Savjani, London

I [work] at a legal aid law firm... mostly in the immigration service but also across family and housing. The repercussions of the cuts have been very obvious in these areas. We are now in a situation where there is practically no legal aid available for the most vulnerable in our society, and this is creating huge repercussions across the board. It means that people, especially those who can't speak English, end up completely unrepresented. We're in a situation where the Conservatives can dictate entirely what is going to happen on the back of the votes of a quarter of the population. No other voices are taken into consideration. But people across the UK have come to London today to protest and say that this wasn't our decision and the choice has been taken out of our hands.



Lucy, Highgate, North London

I'm here today dressed as a mermaid because I believe that the best way of expressing our anger is through creativity. I'm using my voice to speak up for people who can't be here. Austerity is not just about finance and economics. It is a human rights issue. These cuts force people to be people they don't want to be. Parents can't care for loved ones because they are working two jobs, and disabled people are told they can never work. Austerity forces people into boxes and people are faced with dehumanising choices, but the government isn't accepting responsibility for this and is blaming the very people most affected.



Scott Robinson, London

I work as a radiographer. We do all the X-ray scanning and ultra-sounds in hospitals. We're currently under a lot of pressure because of cuts being made to the NHS. Money is being taken away from clinical services, we are losing our pay and our workload is going up excessively. Amongst the staff, morale is very low. We feel like we are being hit from every side.

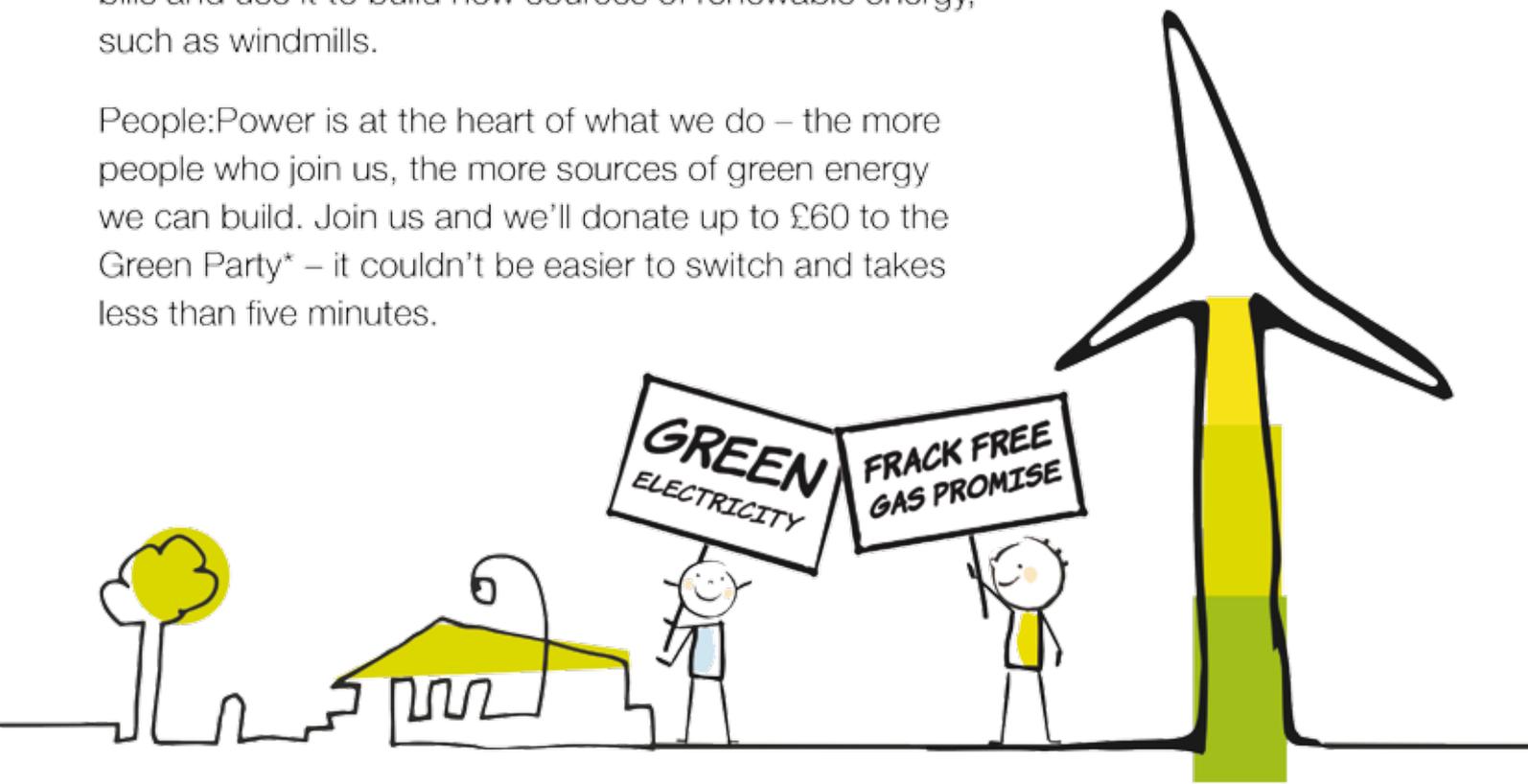


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