



Dairy crisis proves Green policies are vital

Alison Johnstone MSP

The recent dignified protests by dairy farmers around the country helped remind us all that there's price to be paid for a cheap pint of milk - and of our reliance on a handful of big corporations.

As with so many elements of our economy, consolidation lets us down when more localised systems would be more sustainable. The dairy crisis is part of a looming global problem with food and drink supplies due to climate change and our reliance on imports. Ensuring the resilience of crucial products like milk should be uppermost in governments' minds but instead they've left big business to take control.

On a recent tour of a local dairy it struck me how naturally we Greens speak the same language as small and medium sized businesses. We can easily see the benefits to the local economy whereas the big political parties are obsessed with the rich and powerful.

The public and media perception of us doesn't help. We're often labelled as "anti-growth", with one national newspaper columnist referring to us as "stuck in an Iron Age Appreciation Society time warp".

And of course who can forget George Osborne's famous statement: "We are not going to save the

planet by shutting down our steel mills, aluminium smelters and paper manufacturers. With endless social and environmental goals ... businesses will fail, jobs will be lost, and our country will be poorer."

"We must do more to recognise the benefits small firms bring to local economies"

It all adds up to a belief that you can't be pro-business and Green at the same time. I think we need to work harder to challenge this false cliché.

Ahead of May's local elections I took part in a hustings by the Federation of Small Businesses and the more I spoke the more I could see people nodding with agreement. Given how crucial to our economy small businesses are, especially as we try to recover from the crash and ongoing Coalition/SNP cuts, these firms need much more care and attention. At the moment it seems to me the Scottish Government is too focused on the big players, taking every opportunity to promote the idea of slashing corporation tax to attract multinationals.

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By contrast the dairy I visited is proof that by keeping things small scale you can keep prices to the consumer low without squeezing the producer.

On the way to the dairy I couldn't help noticing how many huge supermarkets have sprung up south of the Edinburgh city bypass. When I arrived the owner showed me adverts from newspapers in which the big retailers, who are still paying farmers less than the price of production, were blatantly flogging milk for pennies to lure customers in.

I discussed with him the issues he faces, including red tape. We should of course regulate and inspect businesses where appropriate but must do more to recognise the benefits small firms bring to local economies and help them rather than treat them the same as the big corporate operators.

The dairy crisis demonstrates the Scottish Government's failure to prevent supermarkets becoming so commonplace and powerful in our communities. Greens will always champion more localised economies - it's a shame with others it takes a crisis for the penny to drop.

The key question for Greens is: how do we build better relationships with small and medium sized businesses to show them that our policies will keep them afloat?

Editor's Letter

Summer may have been a washout, but at least it wasn't boring.

The Catholic church in Scotland set out to prove gay rights will render marriage conceptually impossible, the SNP snubbed the Dalai Lama, and then suggested scrapping a policy deemed fundamental to their existence - opposition to NATO membership.

Radioactive mutants found in post-Fukushima Japan, the biggest power failure in history in India, the Greenland ice cap and Arctic sea ice extent at record low ice levels, all lead to the conclusion that action is urgently needed, not to focus on renewables, silly, but to drill for more oil.

And Neil Armstrong passed away, reminding us that giant leaps for mankind really can be made, if only the will to make them exists.

Richard Doherty, Editor

PS. If you received this in the post, please provide us with your email address so that we can further reduce our environmental impact. Thanks!

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We are always keen to hear your ideas! If you want to help out - whether it's by writing about activities you are engaged in, sending us your photos to decorate the pages, or contributing in some other way - do get in touch. Please send all contributions, ideas or feedback to: greenprint@scottishgreens.org.uk

SCOTLAND



While the current media and public debate about NATO membership for an independent Scotland has been prompted by the SNP leadership's suggestion they could reverse their anti-NATO policy, the issue is one for all of us. Indeed, the SNP move has stirred a welcome and wider questioning of the place and role of an independent Scotland in the world.

David Mackenzie

As Martha Wardrop said in Summer's Greenprint: "By reaching agreement on the removal of nuclear weapons and stopping Trident replacement, Scotland's independence could help promote the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament."

The knee-jerk response to the question of NATO membership is to think first about defence, and, in light of so-called 'geo-political realities', to look around for which particular global gang appears to offer protection from largely unspecified threats. Roll the question back one stage and think about security. If you do that thoughtfully you have to consider everyone's security, not just your own.

That leads you back one stage further to ask just what that kind of universal security might be founded on, and then we are moving away from nukes and carriers and drones and guns and national self-interest, towards grown-up, mature things like co-operation, common problem-solving, sharing and contributing. That approach has always been right, but you might have thought that even the densest of 'conventional' minds could grasp that if we don't act positively, our common future will be short and very nasty.

NATO says that it acts to maintain the safety of its members, but in practice that usually means acting for Western power and economic interests. It has nuclear weapons as a key part of its policy and it is important to understand that these weapons are not only for use in case a member is attacked by nuclear weapons. NATO is prepared to use nuclear weapons first. If your state does not have nuclear weapons, joining NATO means you accept that other members of the alliance are ready to use them to commit mass murder on your behalf. Further, a government of an independent Scotland which opts to join NATO would seem more likely to punt expulsion of Trident into the long grass.

The Scottish Green Party is a member of the No To NATO Scotland Coalition which is working to inform the public debate on NATO and to act in solidarity with those SNP members who oppose the proposed change of their Party policy.

Veteran campaigner Bill Bicksell of the US disarmament organisation Ground Zero told us a few years ago that 'Scotland was the key'. He was talking about resistance to Trident furthering the aim of global nuclear disarmament, but it could also apply to what Scotland can contribute by reframing the way in which we define our place in the world.

Say "No to NATO in Scotland"

Please visit <http://notonatoscotland.org.uk> and <http://tridentploughshares.org> to show your support in the campaign to promote Scotland as an international advocate for disarmament and peace.

Dual the A9 - dare we take the pledge?

Jason Rose

Photo by Erik Baurdoux

There's a great episode of *The West Wing* in which Jimmy Smits and Alan Alda are running for President and are told by their advisors at a rally for corn growers they must pledge support for ethanol subsidies. Smits has his doubts but chooses to take the pledge. Alda chooses to be honest and tells the farmers that ethanol is a bad bet. It gives him a rosy glow but doesn't win him the White House.

In Scotland we have our own version of the Ethanol Pledge – it's called Dual The A9. Whatever your true feelings you'd have to be on a political kamikaze mission to publicly say the notorious main road between Inverness and Perth didn't need upgraded. And I have a real problem with that. As a Green the last thing that comes naturally to me is support for laying down swathes of tarmac through the Cairngorms National Park. But how do I stick to my principles without alienating voters?

Firstly, let's address this "notorious" reputation. If you Google "dual A9" the first thing that comes up is DualtheA9.com – a website set up by Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser. He claims the A9 has the "highest fatality rate" of any road in Scotland. He's wrong. The A9 has the highest number of fatalities of any road in Scotland, which given its great length isn't hugely surprising. The highest rate – that is the number of fatalities per mile of road – actually belongs to the A730, a four mile route in Glasgow between the Gorbals and Rutherglen. It is closely followed by the much longer A92, which despite stretching right across Murdo's Fife constituency, doesn't seem to get him terribly exercised. Furthermore, the A9 is assessed as a low to medium risk (the second safest category out of five) by the European Road Assessment Programme.

The SNP Government clearly sees dualling the A9 as a vote-winner. Its £3bn of roadworks will begin in 2015, cunningly around the time of the next Westminster election and just before the next Holyrood election. The first phase of work earmarked is at Aviemore, right on Danny Alexander's doorstep. The infrastructure minister

Alex Neil says dualling will "reduce driver frustration." I think this is where Greens come in.

A recently published report from Scotland's Chief Statistician shows fewer deaths and serious injuries on roads where safety cameras have been installed. If dualling must happen it must surely be accompanied by cameras. Then we should consider the claims that dualling will create jobs and support the economy. In fact, a consultants' study warns of centralisation of local trade in Inverness and Perth, causing the small towns and villages along the A9 to lose out.

All the while a review is gathering dust on the shelves of Transport Scotland. It says running faster and more frequent trains between Inverness and the Central Belt would significantly benefit the economy, accessibility and social inclusion. And crucially, the improvements could be delivered for peanuts compared to dualling the A9.

"Running faster and more frequent trains would benefit the economy, accessibility and social inclusion."

The review says with more double track and passing loops – which would be easy to construct – we could reduce journey times by 20 minutes, making the rail service more competitive with car travel and more attractive for freight. This in turn could reduce congestion on the A9, addressing

that holy grail of "driver frustration." The review highlights the potential of removing over 13,000 HGV trips each year from the A9, with another positive knock-on effect of improving air quality in towns and villages along the route. It would also benefit Highland business by enabling an effective working day in the Central Belt, boost tourism and make life easier for those who don't have a car.

We don't have to "take the pledge" on the A9 but should recognise we're going against the flow of traffic, highlighting the need for proper safety features and support for the small communities who stand to lose trade, and campaigning hard for a much better rail service. The Tories have "DualtheA9.com" – what about "Dualtherailway.com"?

Looking towards Europe 2014

Ross Greer

When any of us think of 2014 with our political hats on, the first thing we'll be thinking of is the independence referendum. Whether it's a crucial matter to individual Greens or not, it's the most important single decision the people of Scotland will take, potentially in our lifetime. There is however something else before the referendum.

In 2014 we also have an election to the European Parliament. That June, we'll have the chance the chance to take part in a nation-wide fight with the other four major parties to see what colour Scotland's six MEPs will be for the next five years.

European elections are fought using the proportional voting system of party lists in a similar way to the regional list element of the Scottish parliament elections. Scotland is counted as a single European constituency that elects six MEPs. Currently we are represented by two Labour, two SNP, one Lib Dem and one Tory, but in 2014 we can change that.

Greens are essential in Europe - now more than ever - as a voice against austerity politics, centralisation of power to undemocratic institutions and environmental vandalism. We are a force to be reckoned with in Brussels as the fifth largest group (through the European Free Alliance) with 55 MEPs and the only established group to have made gains at the last election (13 new MEPs).

Across Europe, Green parties are already preparing for 2014. In Scotland we have issued our call for nominations for candidates and by the end of the year we will know who they are. The Elections and Campaigns Committee have been discussing our campaign for some months now and I am currently liaising with the Green Party of England & Wales on how we can best work together and share resources between now and the election – but it will take much more than a solid national campaign to win Scotland's first MEP.

To win, we cannot just rely on a collapse of the Lib Dem vote that pushes us ahead of them. We must aim to nearly double our share of the vote from 2009 (80,442; 7.3%) to be absolutely certain of gaining the sixth seat, and to do this we need to campaign at a grassroots level. Canvassing regularly between now and June 2014 to identify our voters is crucial, and I would encourage branches to start now before the weather worsens this year. There are Europe-specific '60 Second' canvassing forms available upon request to anyone who needs them. Another key element will be fundraising. Without money there is no campaign, it's as harsh as that.

Local branches should think about running events soon that can both replenish their coffers after the council elections, and start contributing towards our Euro Fund. We will hopefully be running some large scale fundraising efforts as well, but grassroots activity is key.

"Greens are essential as a voice against austerity politics, centralisation of power to undemocratic institutions and environmental vandalism."

With the election just three to four months before the independence referendum we will have to fight hard to be heard in the media, but no one can stop us from knocking every door

and talking to as many voters as possible. Two years might seem like a long time, but it will be a long time before we have a lead up like this one so let's not waste it.

A Scottish Green MEP will mean that every single person in Scotland will have at least one representative who does not think business-as-usual is enough, who rejects the politics of austerity, and who will work for a fairer and more sustainable Scotland and Europe.



Photo by Steve Cadman

A new era for the Green Party of England and Wales

Richard Doherty

Elections in 2012 provided a heftier political binge than is often the case, but the party going to greatest excess this year was to be found in England and Wales!

Caroline Lucas decided not to seek re-election for another two-year term in the role of GPEW leader, and Adrian Ramsey has stepped aside as deputy leader also. Caroline and Adrian will still be prominent voices for the Greens, but Natalie Bennett as leader and Will Duckworth as deputy leader have been tasked with taking GPEW forwards.

After long arguing about how best to structure GPEW to best participate in the world of established media, it was decided that roles of leader and deputy leader should be established in 2008, to provide a public face and a strong voice for Green politics and policies. The success speaks for itself

when you consider the progress the party has made ever since, and hopefully the new leadership can deliver continuing electoral gains.

Caroline said: "I'm hugely honoured to have served as the first Leader of the Green Party and I'm proud that during the four years of my term, we've moved Green politics forward to a higher level, with the Party by far the most influential it has ever been.

"We're lucky to have a wealth of capability and experience in our party. Now feels like the right time to step aside, to allow more of that ability to come forward and help the party to grow."

Deputy Leader: Will Duckworth

The first member of his working class family to go to university, Will went on to teach maths before serving the Dudley ward as the area's first Green Party Councillor.

"I wasn't a member of the Green Party until 2008 when I read all of the online information on all the parties and realised that I agreed with almost everything on the Green Party's web site. I decided that I wanted to vote Green in the local elections but there was no candidate and I found out there was not even a Green Party in Dudley.

"I then joined the Greens, helped set up Dudley Green Party and sought advice from the West Midlands regional party. With their assistance and advice I started campaigning in my local area to help people sort out the issues they had with the Local Authority. It was mainly dog poo and pot holes but there were also serious problems with insulation and heating in Council Houses. I was not necessarily successful but I always tried and word spread.

"After a poor showing in 2010 I managed to come second in 2011 and won the seat in 2012. It took thousands of door knocks and about 100,000 leaflets to achieve but the hard working team reached this goal. The deputy leadership was then fought on the basis of being a Socialist candidate who knows how to win in a deprived area. We go forward as a real alternative to the 3 blue English parties."

Vision for the Party

As Deputy Leader, Will intends to channel national resources to replicating the success of the West Midlands across the whole of England and Wales. The three policies Will wants to see GPEW prioritise are: creating more jobs, especially in building and improving homes; fighting against nuclear weapons; and citizens' income. Among his other suggestions and opinions are that the name of party be changed to The Green and Social Justice Party, and also that "we can't save the planet under a capitalist system. If life is about greed we can't expect people not to be greedy."

Twitter: @willduckworthGP



Leader: Natalie Bennett

"After more than 20 years as a journalist on three continents, finishing with a five-year stint as editor of the Guardian Weekly, I decided that it was time to work full time on political change.

"I joined the Green Party on 1 January 2006, feeling that I had to play my part in tackling the world's environmental crisis – not just climate change, but soil degradation, destruction of our rivers and oceans and more. By mid-January I was canvassing on doorsteps in Camden, north London, by May I was a council candidate. In the autumn conference of that year, little knowing what I was getting into, I was co-opted onto the Green Party national executive, on which I was to serve four years as internal communications coordinator (and to be the GPEW official delegate to the Scottish Green Party conference in 2010).

"Since then, the party has taken over my life – four years on the executive, two years as my local party chair, a parliamentary and London Assembly candidate. I was the founding chair of Green Party Women (in 2008), having found when I first became a member of the national executive that there wasn't a single female voting member. By the time I left Gpex, women outnumbered men, the result of the work of lots of women to support others and encourage them to stand.

"I've also been active in promoting the advance of Green Party policy, from proportional liability on the roads to the call to abolish the Corporation of the City of London, from parental leave to job-share MPs. I'm a trustee of Britain's largest feminist group, the Fawcett Society; an active member of The People's Supermarket co-operative, seeking to provide an alternative model of food supplies; and a member of the board of the Green European Journal."

Vision for the Party

"The Green Party has a distinct vision for the future that I believe offers the only viable way forward for Britain. We need to present that proudly, loudly and clearly, stressing that we are not just anti-austerity – although we are very much anti austerity, understanding that we need investment in a better future for all of us – investment in jobs, in housing, in public transport, in renewable energy. We also know that we can't, and shouldn't want to go back to 2006, before the economic crisis struck, when more than a quarter of Britain's pensioners and children were living in poverty, and we were consuming three planet's resources even though we only have one. We understand that we can't keep treating the planet as though it were a mine and a dumping ground, and the poor as though they were rubbish. We understand that we need to relocalise our economy, supporting local manufacturing, farming and services to together build strong communities that are resilient in the face of economic and environmental shocks within the limits of a low-carbon world.

"By the end of the decade we should aim to have at least one councillor in every major town and city across the country, an MEP in almost every region and a realistic set of "next generation" parliamentary constituencies that we are building in a serious way. West Midlands and others have shown that targeted structural development that treats the party as a team not a series of isolated pockets delivers genuine results. If we continue with business as usual we will not reach out into new territory and become a truly national party.

"Even rolling out a modest programme where every region uses its own adaption of a national framework could result in new councillors in new councils year on year. We should develop regional organisers and easy to use systems that can be picked up and applied everywhere. By treating the national party as a coordinated election team we should be looking beyond just ensuring that we win one new MEP in the North West and South West in 2014 (where we need less than a 1% increase) and potentially looking at two more. But that very realistic goal (of tripling our MEPs!) cannot be achieved if we over focus our energies in single regions at the expense of others."

<http://natalie4leader.org> | Twitter: @natalieben

"We need to relocalise our economy to build communities that are resilient in the face of economic and environmental shocks."

Food for thought: politics on the menu

While many claim to stand for equality both locally and globally, to care about preservation of the environment and the welfare of those it sustains, often there is little evidence of these ideals existing in any practical sense.

Richard Doherty



Photo by Oxfam East Africa

Actions speak louder than words and Greens have long been unique in leading by example. Having consistently promoted environmental protection, it is vital to increase awareness that this, most clearly defined, means a protection of the environment in totality – protection of everything that makes up our delicate eco-systems.

The 'environment' as often discussed in politics and media has a tendency to consider humankind as the centre, rather than as a part of the whole. One clear example of humankind's need for, and lack of, harmony with our environment in the wider sense is the effect of pesticides and habitat destruction on the decline of honey bee populations and the knock-on effect for agriculture, with vital crops dependent on bees for pollination.

An example that still fails to get enough media or political attention, however, is the relationship between climate change and farming of animals for food. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that nearly 20% of greenhouse gases are a result of meat production. Some researchers suggest the figure is closer to 50%. Solutions proposed for tackling our climate-related problems usually focus on new forms of energy and efficiency and – while vital – it is unlikely that this will cut emissions soon enough if we don't also adjust our eating habits. If we do adjust, it will immediately allow us to have a significant effect on reducing emissions globally.

The issue of energy used to power our bodies runs parallel to the issue of energy used to power our vehicles and homes. Very few people who identify with Green philosophy can currently live an optimally carbon-free life. Many have little choice but to drive polluting cars

at times as a result of industrial conventions, and this is something Greens are obviously working to change. Similarly, not all Greens are vegetarian or vegan, but in the past this far more closely resembled the example of polluting transportation than it does now. As the benefits become clearer, it is becoming ever more incompatible with environmental ethics not to promote a revolution in the industry of food, with much stronger emphasis on the alternatives to a meat-based diet – as incompatible

"Nearly 20% of greenhouse gases are a result of meat production."

as it would be not to encourage technological progress in clean, renewable energy.

Writing in the FT, Jeremy Grantham explains that the world is depleting mined fertilisers like potash and phosphate,

while chemically-resistant bacteria and pathogens are increasing, and agricultural costs – for things like oil and fertiliser – are only expected to rise.

The current agricultural model is failing catastrophically. Global food prices rose 6% in July because of wild swings in weather conditions according to the UN, causing fears that the 2007-2008 food crisis will be repeated, impacting most on the world's poorest. Weather is proving to be far more hostile to farming across the globe in general, with a substantial increase in droughts, floods and heatwaves, and this was clear in the UK where the wet summer decimated harvests.

On top of this, it is demand for meat that is playing a key role in driving up food prices to wholly unsustainable levels. Prices of corn and soya, for example, have recently hit record highs after a history of unsustainable subsidies for the corn and soy fed to livestock, and the British Poultry Council warn the amount spent by that industry

per year on feed could soon rocket to £1.9 billion – a 35% increase.

Professor Dr John Porter of the University of Copenhagen said: "It has not been properly recognised yet that we are dealing with a food system here. There is a whole chain that is also going to be affected by climate change."

Hannah Stoddart, Oxfam's head of economic justice policy, said of the crisis: "This is not some gentle wake-up call – it's the same global alarm that's been screaming at us since 2008. These latest figures prove yet again that there is something fundamentally flawed in the way we produce and distribute food around the world. For too long our leaders have stood by complacently, while up to a billion people go hungry worldwide."

What is needed to feed a human population expected to reach nine billion by 2050, is root and branch reform in farming. With more frequent climate extremes, researchers say there are tough choices to be made, and call for more study into crops that can survive extreme weather.

On average, it takes one-third more water and land to produce foods for a meat-based diet than it does for a plant-based one, so what makes sense is also to optimise how we make use of the crops we grow. Increasing grain stocks will be vital to deal with the effects of climate change, but the more land given for feeding and farming livestock, the less capacity there is – not least without mass-deforestation – for growing crops to feed ourselves, let alone stockpile for emergencies.

Grantham said: "Sadly, we are easily manipulated by vested interests. The world is likely to act too slowly to conserve resources, improve farming technologies and discourage meat eating and waste, which accounts for between 30 and 40% of all food from field to mouth. Our behaviour, which unnecessarily pushes up prices, will inadvertently cause malnutrition and outright starvation in poor countries."

Porter suggests we have so far avoided the scenario where population growth outstrips food production, but also that the world now has triple goals of producing food for humans, crops for biofuels and feed for livestock, often raised to be eaten: "In my view we can have two out of those three and not all three."

I am of the strong opinion that, if for no other reason, environmental factors mean the consistent position for Greens is to regard meat-eating as similar to practices like the mining of fossil fuels, and that we should be leading efforts to fundamentally transform society's relationship with food. Being anti-meat is not anti-

business, in the same way as being anti-coal or oil is not anti-business.

It is a radical position that calls for new businesses and new methods for industry to evolve and meet the needs and responsibilities of the modern world. Even outwith the slaughterhouse, when you factor in the sad realities of large-scale dairy farming methods as required to cater to the demands of giant corporate supermarkets, it appears self-evident that current models of food production are

"We should be leading efforts to fundamentally transform society's relationship with food."

long overdue for reform, and that industries need help to modernise – and localise.

While it might be necessary to adapt short-term policy to enable transition away from conventional industries, the longer-term position for those keen to be at the forefront of such a necessary evolution is to say that damaging,

unsustainable industries cannot go on, and all workers within such industries should receive government assistance to adopt new food-production methods that are cost-effective and limit negative environmental impact.

What subsidies would be needed to modernise our national model? What crops are viable here long-term? How can our import/export better operate? We urgently need our leaders to find the answers to such questions, and fund the researchers and engineers who can offer real solutions.

Speaking of the situation in America – the biggest meat consumers in the world – where economic factors at play everywhere are among the motivation for people to eat less meat, New York Times columnist Mark Bittman said: "We still eat way more meat than is good for us or the environment, not to mention the animals. But a 12% reduction in just five years is significant. It's something only the industry could get upset about. The rest of us should celebrate."

Interestingly, a main hurdle to overcoming the notion of meat as a necessary dietary fixture is psychological – and male. Researchers for the Journal of Consumer Research who looked at metaphors American and British consumers use for food suggest meat is consistently thought of as 'masculine'.

They said: "To the strong, traditional, macho, bicep-flexing, All-American male, red meat is a strong, traditional, macho, bicep-flexing, All-American food. Soy is not. To eat it, they would have to give up a food they saw as strong and powerful like themselves for a food they saw as weak and wimpy."

Vegetarianism and veganism are no longer on the margins of society – they are a part of the mainstream. It is time for environmentally-friendly diets to be given the governmental support we all urgently require them to have. The reality is that if we cannot achieve this, instead of eating to live, we are merely appropriating by destruction.

"It is time for environmentally-friendly diets to be given the governmental support we all urgently require them to have."



Flexing some consumer muscle to reduce packaging waste

Anya Hart Dyke

The Scottish Government has ambitious targets to cut Scotland's waste from households and businesses with its Zero Waste Plan, aiming for 70% of all waste being recycled and a maximum of 5% going to landfill, by 2025. The best recycling rates in Scotland are currently held by Clackmannanshire Council at (only) 53% – how do we do our bit to cut our own waste footprint but also that of the retailers we spend our money in?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) says that in 2010 the UK disposed of an estimated 10.8 million tonnes of packaging waste, of which around 67% was recovered. Comparing overall packaging recycling rates in the UK for 2010 with those of 1998 – at 27% – you could argue we've come a long way. The UK has a statutory producer responsibility regime for packaging, which places a legal obligation on businesses that make or use packaging (with a minimum turnover of £2m or 50 tonnes of packaging) to ensure that 'a proportion' of it is recovered and recycled. But is it working?

Paper, with a recovery/recycling rate in 2010 of 82%, masks the very low rate for plastics of 24% in the same year. How do retailers continue to get away with producing so much non-recyclable plastic packaging? We need regulations on packaging that are as robust as the EU's recently updated Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive.

In the mean time we can show a bit of consumer muscle and communicate to companies that we expect them to be taking measures to minimize their waste. After all, we are responsible for what we buy, once bought it becomes our waste. If we continue to buy all this non-recyclable packaging, the least we can do is ask companies what steps they are taking to ensure its recovery. I started

the 'AsktheQ' campaign for this purpose, to communicate how strongly I felt about my waste footprint to the businesses I supported, and because more often than not this information wasn't available on their websites or was out of date.

While the campaign is broadly about sustainability, the questions I most often put to companies relate to: the sustainable use of raw materials in their products (particularly in food and packaging); how efficient a company is in its operations – most importantly reducing packaging and minimizing the amount of perishables wasted, but also applying the three Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) to what waste is generated on their premises; and what companies are doing to ensure that consumers can recycle or

"We are responsible for what we buy: once bought it becomes our waste."

compost the unavoidable packaging that comes with the products they buy for health and safety, or hygiene reasons.

Tweeting your findings with the appropriate Twitter @names, using the hashtag '#AsktheQ', offers the opportunity to highlight a company's shortcomings, as well as promote any commendable efforts, with millions of people. Many companies have a presence on Twitter and track what is being said about them. AsktheQ pushes for greater transparency – for what is being done, what isn't, and what plans companies and local authorities have to do more – not everything can be achieved overnight. By encouraging firms to tell us what their packaging reduction, recovery and recycling targets are and then tweeting about them, we can better hold them to account.

For more information: www.theurbn.com/2012/07/pushing-for-greater-transparency-on-sustainability-the-asktheq-twitter-campaign/

Vegware: new thinking for food packaging

Richard Doherty

In July, Alison Johnstone, MSP for Lothian, and Green Councillor Gavin Corbett paid a visit to Vegware, the Polwarth firm who have created the UK's first completely compostable food packaging range.

Their visit marked the official launch of the Food Waste Network website, Vegware's new zero waste initiative designed to matchmake any UK business with its ideal food waste recycling partner free of charge.

With landfill currently the most expensive and environmentally harmful destination for the UK's waste, businesses stand to save money through maximising recycling, and Vegware maintain that the first step towards zero waste is the introduction of food waste recycling.

Alison Johnstone said: "It is a particular pleasure to support local companies which are doing the right thing and creating a viable business out of it. I was so impressed with Vegware's responsible approach to fully compostable packaging and now to food waste that I submitted a motion to Parliament backing the company. That's why I was pleased subsequently to be asked to launch the Food Waste Network and I hope it really takes off.

"I'm sure that the site is going to be a valuable tool for businesses looking to cut waste and save cash. There are some superb community food waste initiatives in Lothian and I hope that this new service will put them in touch with more businesses, creating a win-win situation for jobs and the environment."

Since their range of catering disposables is certified compostable, all Vegware products can be diverted from landfill and recycled organically, together with food waste. Only compostable packaging can break down quickly enough to be included in food waste recycling, and whilst many packaging firms offer

some eco options, Vegware is the UK's only firm with third-party compostability certification for the full range of eco catering disposables.

Iain Gulland, Director of Zero Waste Scotland said: "By signing up to the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, organisations are showing their commitment to use resources more efficiently, save money, and meet new Waste (Scotland) Regulations. Huge economic and environmental gains can be

"Huge economic and environmental gains can be made by tackling food waste."

made by tackling food waste, and it is fantastic to see so many businesses make a commitment to make their operations even more efficient."

In order to help UK customers divert catering waste from landfill, Vegware started mapping and liaising with all food waste recycling services, and after it became apparent that there was no one single source of accurate information on this rapidly-changing sector, Vegware opened up their information to non-customers, thus creating the Food Waste Network.

Gavin Corbett added: "One of the big issues I'm dealing with on the doorsteps is the change from weekly to fortnightly collections of waste as City of Edinburgh Council seeks to get serious about recycling. It is the right thing to do and long over-due. But I have also been arguing that real change will come further upstream, by challenging commercial companies to rethink quite radically how they do packaging and presentation. I am delighted that it is a business right in the heart of my ward which is showing the way."

www.foodwastenetwork.org.uk

Food Waste Network

Any UK business can email its food waste recycling needs and postcode to recycle@foodwastenetwork.org.uk, ring 03300 883 654 or visit www.foodwastenetwork.org.uk



Edinburgh: planning for the long term

Gavin Corbett

Green Councillor for Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart

The period after a successful election can pass in a flurry of activity with barely a time to pause. With six Green councillors, four of whom are new to the job, we have certainly been busy ensuring that we establish ourselves as hard-working, effective ward councillors who also drive progress in the city as a whole.

At ward level we distributed thousands of thank-you letters in our key areas which helped to generate contacts, casework and hopefully, plenty of goodwill. We are currently working on our autumn ward newsletters to go out in our six currently-held wards and starting to penetrate the next batch of target wards.

At council level we've been working hard on issues as diverse as the City Council's governance review, where we have led the opposition groups in critiquing a crude effort to centralise decision-making in the Council.

Cycling has featured strongly with our efforts to ensure that the achievements of Sir Chris Hoy are marked with a step change in cycling provision in the city and that the Administration is held to commitments on cycle spending. We've been working with a new social enterprise Remade on its efforts to set up Scotland's first community-run Repair and Re-use Centre. We have supported time-banking, backing the Splashback group on a community bid to re-open a swimming pool in Leith, and getting stuck into a review of school buildings, among many other things.

But what we are really mindful of is the need to keep one eye on the far horizon. As Greens we have big ambitions for a fairer and greener society and our campaigns to that end are grounded in our contesting elections. So our big priorities remain

the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections and the 2017 council elections and we also want to make a real contribution to the national effort in the 2014 European elections (where a first Scottish Green MEP is a real prospect) and to make an impact on the 2015 Westminster election (if the coalition survives until then).

That is why it is so important to plan long term. Our recent election successes have been grounded in solid long-term planning. However, led by the Branch Committee, the Edinburgh Branch has already taken important steps to develop a five

year plan through to 2017. That plan covers the vital mechanical things such as growing membership and fundraising but seeks to create proper synergy between what our MSPs and councillors do and what the

branch and local ward teams do. The conclusions so far have been the focus of a planning day and a Branch meeting and the councillors group has organised two "away days" to develop our big themes for the next five years.

It's a lot of work with no immediate pay-off, but it'll certainly yield big benefits in the long term.

www.edinburghgreens.org.uk

Twitter: @EdinburghGreens

Facebook: EdinburghGreens

Below: Gavin Corbett with Steve Burgess.

"As Greens we have big ambitions for a fairer and greener society."



Sustainability in Business

Hilary Charles

The members of Standing Orders Committee were in for an unexpected treat after a recent meeting in Moffat, hosted by Chris and Alis Balance – we were invited to visit Moffat CAN, the community business they have spent the last three years building up.

That weekend, Scotland had stunning, warm sunny weather and the walk along the park to the regenerated church was the perfect tonic after a Standing Orders meeting!

When we arrived at the depot, Chris explained the flower beds at the front were to be planted with flowers that could be sold to hotels for table displays. Large vans had been bought by the team for collection of their recycling items – newspapers, cans, cardboard, food waste etc.

Chris and Alis have had some inspirational thinking – collect and recycle, grow and compost, poly tunnels, allotments, community involvement, simple plots to technologically advanced machines. It was a wonderland of green living! For example, a beautiful fence of intertwined branches that showed how shrubs and branches can be composted in an artistic and practical way.

The jewel in the crown of this amazing venture is the Aquaponics system. We walk through another doorway – not sure what to expect – and in front of us is a small fish tank which Chris adds food to. The fish are eager to eat, but Chris was eager to invite us further inside.

We could hear water flowing but the "beds" on

either side seemed quite normal. At the far end of the building, two large tanks which started to splash and gurgle when Chris approached – they were home to tilapia fish. The fish seemed to recognise Chris as he fed them. He then explained how the fish waste is filtered through a system which provided the roots of the plants with nutrients; how the roots taking the nutrients cleaned the water back for the fish; how the fish grew and could be farmed while the roots of the plants were chard that could be served with the fish once both were sold locally.

I think I can speak for SOC members when I say we were gob-smacked. SOC are not comfortable with being gob-smacked, but then Chris added - once the wormery is complete, the fish will eat from there and then the need for fish food will be eliminated. I have no superlative beyond gob-smacked – but that's where we were!

The adventure that Chris and Alis have embarked on is still going with new ideas of how to spread sustainable living to communities in Scotland. This was truly an inspirational visit for which we thank both Chris and Alis. It puts my wee compost and strawberry baskets to shame, but the journey home certainly had me thinking – how much more could I do?

Moffat CAN: www.moffatcan.org

Moffat CAN is a community-owned company and charity, established in 2009, to promote environmental and sustainability awareness, and engagement in the community, providing sustainable, low-carbon products and services. Moffat CAN recently announced funding from the Big Lottery allowing them to offer work experience and training for those struggling to find employment. The project recently expanded to Annan with a furniture and household goods re-use service, seeking to offer affordable, secondhand furniture, and free household uplift of re-usable household goods across Annandale.

Creation of a sub-branch in Renfrewshire

Sean Lafferty, Convenor Renfrewshire Greens

Starting a new branch (or sub-branch in our case) is never easy. Trying to reignite an old one can be even harder, but the re-establishment of the Renfrewshire Greens has been long overdue.

The county is in the top ten most populated council areas in the country and at its centre is Paisley, Scotland's fifth most populated urban area. Put simply, Renfrewshire is too big not to have a Green presence.

Renfrewshire has massive potential for the Scottish Greens, and Green policies, if implemented, can make real change for the better in the county. Improved transport links, with a bus station, improved cycle lanes and the continuation of local health services are just some of the issues that the group will be campaigning on locally.

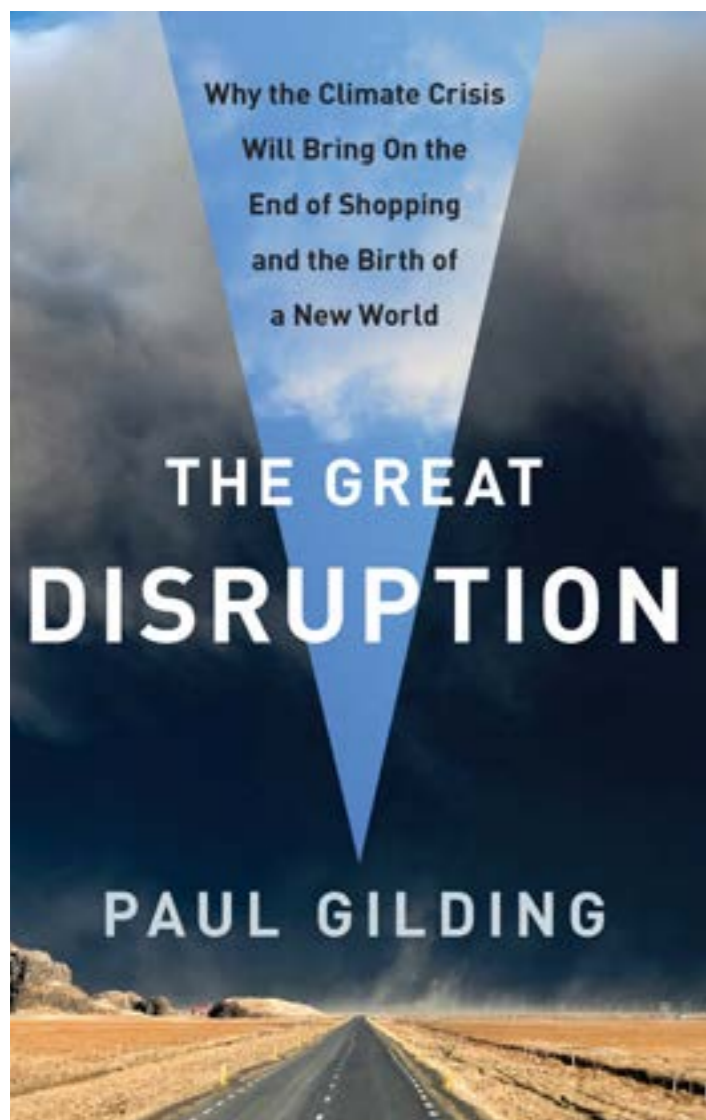
We know from the election of an independent candidate at the 2011 local authority election, that the electorate are starting look for alternatives and, like the rest of the country, we will look to capitalise on the collapse of the Con-Dem vote in Scotland. Unfortunately no Greens stood for

election in Renfrewshire last year, but we're hoping to change that.

If you live in Renfrewshire and would like to get more involved then please get in touch. It's never been a better time to be a Green in Renfrewshire. We'll be working hard to arrange regular meetings and socials as well as increasing our presence in the media and at local events.

We're keen to hear from old members about their experience of the party locally and advice from members up and down the country is always welcome. We know that people are attracted to our ecological policies and our commitment to equality; we just have to give them a chance to vote for it.

If you'd like more information about the Renfrewshire Greens, please email: greenprint@scottishgreens.org.uk



The Great Disruption

By Paul Gilding, Bloomsbury (2011), £8.99

I would like to recommend this must read book to green members. It has many virtues. It is short, concise, clearly argued and in non technical language, but references are provided for any follow up. It assumes that the climate crisis is a given on the basis of majority scientific opinion and then examines the consequences in a variety of scenarios.

The good news is that it is generally optimistic about the capacity of people to react positively when confronted with the facts of the situation. The author then outlines the shape of the green economy, how it might be reached and the need to progress to a no-growth economy on which substantial work has been done.

What is also good news is that most of the policies being advocated by the Scottish Green Party are in the frame. It also indicates indirectly the key role that the party plays as the main advocate for this process, as it will only finally be adopted by the people and so those in power once a tipping point has been reached in public opinion.

I hope that this will invigorate party members and bolster them in their views that they are on the right track.

Review by Francis Valentine

The complexities of being a Green Hamburger

Lynne Hunter



I find myself back living in Germany, and so once again I've joined the German Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen). The Federal system means that you always join a regional party, and this time around I'm a member of the Hamburg Greens, as opposed to the Lower Saxony Greens.

What is often missed out in discussing the German Greens is that the individual histories of the Green Party in each region are very, sometimes radically, different from one another. Of course, the name itself indicates this: 'Bündnis 90' [Alliance 90] was the name of the party founded in 1990 in the Former East Germany, while 'Die Grünen' [The Greens] was the name of the Former West German party which officially formed in 1980: the two parties became one in 1993, but kept both the names.

At the moment the Hamburg Greens are celebrating 30 continuous years of Green MPs in the Hamburgische Bürgerschaft [Hamburg regional parliament] – hence, perhaps, there is more introspection than usual. At this year's regional conference we voted on changing our name, and much of the discussion on this vote centred on why the Hamburg Greens had 'GAL' (Grün-Alternative Liste) [Green Alternative List] tacked onto Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in the first place.

There was no German Green Party in Hamburg's 1978 regional election: it would take another two years for Die Grünen to appear. However, Hamburg had two forerunners and both contained members coming from the following movements: anti-nuclear; women's; peace; and environmental. The 'GLU': 'Grünen Liste Umweltschutz' [Green List Environmental Protection] had this basis but is often described as 'conservative' and 'bourgeois': essentially a right-leaning ecological party. Other elements which were, perhaps, less expected were

anarchists and, as there were splits occurring in the 'Kommunistische Bund' [Communist League], a very significant number of Communists. The 'Bunte Liste' [Colourful List] most definitely a left-wing ecological party, consisted of these less anticipated elements. By the time of the next regional election in 1982 these two parties no longer existed. This beginning has had a significant influence on the policy and direction of the Hamburgers (you do get used to being a 'Hamburger').

"The Hamburg Greens are celebrating 30 continuous years of Green MPs in the regional parliament."

Die Grünen in Hamburg were a minor party in 1982, too small to get beyond the 5% needed to be elected. The 'Alternative Liste' – often shortened to AL – [translated as, unsurprisingly, 'Alternative List']: a left-wing party with origins

and members much like the Bunte Liste suffered from the same problem. Both parties being unable to achieve this minimum requirement, a merger was mooted and the resulting party was a mix of Greens and AL – hence 'GAL' – and it was a success. GAL achieved 7.7% in the election, got into the Bürgerschaft, and, as mentioned above, has been there ever since.

During this year's conference vote it was clear that younger members generally wanted to be defined as Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, and a councillor told us of an event where the hosts were confused as to why the German Association for Applied Linguistics were represented when they had been looking for a speaker from the Green Party. Understandably, members of the first hour were split: some wanted rid of the confusion; some wanted the roots with its mix of every political variation, and the resulting party which somehow survived, to be acknowledged and kept. The name has been changed since I joined: we voted to have just the normal Bündnis 90/Die Grünen name amalgamation. The Hamburg Greens have, it could be said, put the old GAL to bed.

October Party Conference, Glasgow

The Scottish Green Party Autumn Conference will be held in the Maryhill Burgh Halls in Glasgow on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 October 2012.

The conference theme will be Power Structures. There will be speakers on local communities, local authorities, the EU and a global view in order to consider how Scotland sits in relation to these power structures.

For booking forms, please contact office@scottishgreens.org.uk



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- Women's Network Young Greens

Declaration

I accept and will further the aims of the Scottish Green Party, and am not a member of any other political party except a Green Party abroad.

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