

Election 2005 – What's in it for your environment?



Concerned about the environment? Tell your MP!

Politicians are very busy people. They have to prioritise what they think are the most important issues of concern to their constituents. However, what they think are the most important issues should be influenced by what their constituents have indicated to them. That's democracy.

We know that at least 12,000 people in the Cheshire region care enough about wildlife to join the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and we are sure there are many more concerned local people out there. We know from a recent poll published in The Guardian that 68% of people in Britain are concerned about the environment and climate change. We know from the recently published United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Report that there is plenty to be concerned about globally as the human population continues to unsustainably consume the planet's natural resources and debilitate its natural life-supporting ecosystems.

So where are the environmental elements in the all-important manifestos of prospective candidates standing in the imminent General and Local Elections? And if they are not there, why are they not there? Could it be that they are not on the list because too few people have flagged them up to politicians as important or is it

because they are just too difficult to deal with? Do they fall off the pile because they are overtaken by more immediately solvable social and economic issues on which progress is more easily measured? What does it take to get environmental protection as high on the political agenda as healthy school dinners?

This publication has been produced to encourage you to consider the importance of wildlife and the natural environment as one of your priorities when you vote for candidates in the General and Local Elections this May. I hope it will stimulate you to ask questions of politicians when they canvas at your door, or at least make your views known to them – they are your prospective representatives and should be very willing to listen to you.



**Chris Mahon - Director
Cheshire Wildlife Trust**



Make wildlife conservation and environmental education part of every politician's manifesto!

Question Time for Cheshire's MPs

Here's a taste of what your local politicians have in store for wildlife and the environment locally, nationally and internationally.

At the beginning of 2005 Cheshire Wildlife Trust Director Chris Mahon wrote to each of the 22 MPs whose constituencies cover Cheshire, Stockport, Trafford, Tameside, Warrington and Wirral, plus the seven members of Cheshire County Council's Environment Strategic Panel. He asked them five questions relating to wildlife and the environment. The answers from the eight who replied are set out over the following pages.

(Note: The answers have been shortened but the opinions and facts expressed have not been altered. The information contained in the answers does not necessarily represent the views of Cheshire Wildlife Trust or the producers of this publication.)

WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION



1. Can you tell us a bit about the environmental elements of the manifesto that you will be representing at the next election, particularly anything that affects wildlife and the conservation of the natural environment?

Derek Twigg MP (Lab) Halton

The Government is currently undertaking a review of Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The aim of the review is to ensure that legislation remains relevant for the 21st Century, with a view to rationalising the identification and protection of rare and endangered species, and bring forward amending legislation where necessary. This is the principal piece of legislation covering the conservation and protection of birds, other animals and plants. Although various amendments have been made to Part 1 over the last 23 years, no comprehensive strategic review of the

effectiveness of its provisions has been undertaken until now.

The Government has introduced the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Bill, where the central purpose is to improve the local environment that directly affects people's quality of life. This bill provides enhanced powers for local authorities and the Environment Agency to tackle local environment quality and anti social behaviour. It forms a key part of the cross-cutting 'cleaner, safer, greener' agenda and builds on the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Andrew Stunell MP (Lib) Hazel Grove

The Liberal Democrats will be putting forward proposals for a much more determined move to cut greenhouse gases and slow down global warming, which is an increasing threat to species and ecosystems in the UK and around the planet.

As the party's spokesperson on energy, I am very keen to see more efficient use of fuel, and a progressive switch to non-fossil fuels. We have detailed plans to cut emissions, in line with the Royal Commission on Environmental Protection recommendations, to less than 40% of current levels by 2050. A key to success globally will be engaging with the USA, India and China to get

international agreements that go far beyond the Kyoto targets.

We plan to concentrate future developments on 'brownfield' sites – and it is worth noting that the North West has a higher proportion of derelict land than any other part of the UK, so there is no excuse for destroying good land. Linked to this has to be a move to more sustainable farming, with respect for biodiversity and the broader value of our countryside. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has made a start, but we want to see that process accelerate.

Sir Nicholas Winterton MP (Con) Macclesfield Lady Ann Winterton MP (Con) Congleton Stephen O'Brien MP (Con) Eddisbury

Conservation is very much at the heart of the Conservative & Unionist Party's philosophy. The then Conservative Government signed the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the Rio Summit in 1992, which established the obligation to protect our wildlife. Conservative colleagues in the House of Lords successfully strengthened this obligation by making it a statutory requirement during the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Shadow Environment Team is currently putting together our green policies for the forthcoming general election manifesto. One policy which will significantly affect the countryside is our opposition to regional housing targets, including the Government's current targets that demand an extra 155,000 houses per year over a 20-year period.

The next Conservative Government will abolish the present Labour Government's regional planning targets and will return the

final say on planning decisions to the local authorities. In addition, a Conservative administration will seek to make use of our current housing stock, more than 700,000 of which are presently lying empty, rather than accept unsustainable development on our previous green belt.

The next Conservative Government will also withdraw from the discredited EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and restore national and local control. The CFP has failed to protect fish stocks within our waters and this has had adverse consequences for both marine life and our fishermen. We will introduce new management practices based on sound science and the latest conservation techniques. This will include permanently closed areas to fishing for conservation purposes, a ban on industrial fishing and a prohibition of production subsidies. We are also in favour of a Marine Bill, to bring strategic and sustainable planning to our coastal waters.

Graham Brady MP (Con) Altrincham and Sale West

The Conservative manifesto will contain proposals to protect the green belt – when John Prescott said: "The green belt was a Labour policy and we intend to build on it" he unwittingly came rather close to the truth. On Altrincham's doorstep there are proposals to build a major rail freight interchange on 85 hectares of green belt land. I will continue to oppose the development. Although it's clearly desirable that an increasing amount of freight is carried by rail, that aim should not be achieved by building over a large area of green belt land when a brownfield site would make far more sense. The environmental impact on the surrounding area would be immense, not to mention the large lorries that would be thundering along country lanes en route to the depot.

I have always fought to preserve the few green spaces that remain in my constituency. I intervened over the Grange Road playing field in Bowdon, which was under threat from development; as it was regularly used by a local school, I managed to get the Secretary of State for Education to guarantee its survival.

I have also consistently opposed the tendency to infill every spare acre or quarter of an acre with new housing. The current trend towards large houses shoe-horned into tiny plots does not bode well for the kind of back-garden wildlife which people of my generation were lucky enough to take for granted.

Steve Wilkinson CCC (Con) Bucklow

There has to be increased emphasis placed on waste recycling, despite the improvements over past years. In conjunction with the Districts, new targets need to be set to further improve the position. Reducing waste will have a major impact on the wider environment.

Cheshire County Council continues to support a derelict land reclamation programme to enable these areas to provide new habitats and increased public access for recreation.

Molly Hale CCC (Lib) Hoole and Newton

In February 2005 I proposed that the County Council support proposals, put forward by the Tree Council, for special protection for ancient and important trees as 'Green Monuments' – trees that may be hundreds if not thousands of years old. I feel looking forward, tens, if not hundreds of years is important for our environment and wildlife as a whole.

That is why I believe strongly in:

- the preservation and protection of our urban spaces for their contribution to wildlife and our urban environment. Including the protection of redundant transport corridors so that they can be used to provide alternative options to the car, such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- the continued protection of our open countryside, particularly by building on brownfield land wherever possible.
- our 'Econet' land reclamation programme, the Mersey Forest and other schemes to preserve and extend our range of habitats.

I believe each of us has a role to play – especially in reducing

the resources we use, which put pressure on our environment and habitats: by developing alternatives to the use of the car and hydrocarbon consumption; encouraging cycling and walking; and improving recycling and waste minimisation. I particularly want to ensure that Cheshire County Council leads the way in reducing its consumption of water and energy as part of its business.

An extract from the Cheshire County Council Liberal Democrat group manifesto for the forthcoming elections states:

"Cheshire Liberal Democrats wish to see a county that cares for its environment in partnership with the local economy. We must develop better working relationships between the county, members and the business community. Reducing waste will be our priority by encouraging everyone to 'slim their bin'. We will work with districts to maximise opportunities across Cheshire for recycling and composting. We will not support mass incineration. We will explore any realistic environmentally friendly and achievable initiative that will help to tackle the problem."

CLIMATE CHANGE



2. The Prime Minister has stated that climate change is the greatest threat that faces humanity. Do you agree with this position? What do you think we should be doing about climate change locally?

Andrew Stunell MP (Lib) Hazel Grove

Climate change is undoubtedly the most serious long-term problem, not least because it makes some other major hazards progressively worse – including shortages of food and water, increasing the pressures for conflict, and the spread of diseases. We have to build strong international agreements to move from carbon-emitting wealth creation to carbon neutral growth.

The UK can be a world leader in this, which when you look at the detail, is much more feasible than the doom-mongers suggest. In the last 10 years our GDP rose by 33%, but our energy use by only 3%. It just needs a bit more effort to get that last figure on a downward trend.

Sir Nicholas Winterton MP (Con) Macclesfield Lady Ann Winterton MP (Con) Congleton Stephen O'Brien MP (Con) Eddisbury

Climate change is the single most important environmental issue. With ever-increasing CO₂ emissions, more needs to be done to address the issues and problems being created. We fully support the Kyoto Protocol and the target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050.

It is, therefore, a great shame that the Government recently admitted its domestic target of reducing emissions by 20% by 2010 will not be reached. CO₂ emissions are actually higher now than they were in 1997. The Conservative Government reduced CO₂ emissions by 7.3% between 1990 and 1997.

We need to convince the United States administration, which is responsible for a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, to co-operate in global action against climate change. It is disappointing that Mr Tony Blair has failed to use his influence in Washington to secure their agreement. In contrast, Mr Michael Howard would make this a priority for the next Conservative Government. However, the US must at the same time guard

against other polluting nations making economic inroads at the expense of the competitiveness of US industry, which would result in the wholesale loss of jobs.

We personally believe that increasing the energy efficiency of our nation's housing stock is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing our consumption of energy and hence carbon dioxide emissions. Households could be encouraged to improve energy efficiency with a rebate on stamp duty.

We also need to develop renewable energy. Great Britain is an island and we should encourage new technologies like biomass, off-shore wind, tidal and wave power, areas where the United Kingdom has natural advantages and should lead the world.

A Conservative Government is also committed to working with our European partners to phase out the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) over the next decade. HFCs are potent greenhouse gases used in appliances such as refrigerators and air conditioning units.

Derek Twigg MP (Lab) Halton

In December 2004, the government launched an extensive and open consultation on the review of the UK Climate Change programme. If science is correct, unabated climate change will result in catastrophic consequences. Levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, one third of the main causes of climate change, have risen by more than a third since the Industrial Revolution and are now growing faster than ever. This has led to rising temperatures; the 1990s was the warmest decade since records began. We need to make sure we take action now. The Government is showing leadership by putting the UK on a path to

60% reduction in its carbon dioxide emissions.

The UK under Labour has played a key role in international agreements and action on climate change – including Kyoto, Bonn, Marrakech and New Delhi. The UK is already ahead of our Kyoto target, five years before we have to meet it. Our goal is to reduce UK emissions from 1990 levels by 12.5% by 2010. We are already 14% below this level, and on course to be 21% below by 2010. Climate Change and Africa are the UK's two priorities during our 2005 G8 Presidency.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



3. Some would argue that the three legs of the sustainable development stool are uneven, the socio-economic being favoured at the expense of the environmental. Would you agree?

Andrew Stunell MP (Lib) Hazel Grove

Yes I would. Policy makers pay lip service to the environment, but often unless they can put a price on it, or it delivers an immediate and measurable benefit, it gets the chop in the first round of economies. That can partly be overcome by putting a price on intangibles, like carbon emissions – one reason Liberal Democrats want a 'carbon tax' (offset by other tax reductions). We also need

to have strong advocates for the environment, like the Wildlife Trust, and decision-makers with good green credentials.

The Liberal Democrat manifesto quite consciously puts the environment at the heart of our policy proposals, as we do want a sustainable balance between the economic and environmental imperatives of our society.

Graham Brady MP (Con) Altrincham and Sale West

The socio-economic aspect of sustainable development is necessarily important. It is all very well for the rich countries to talk about climate change, but most of the effective ways of cutting back on emissions would mean making power more expensive and this would have a detrimental impact on billions of people living in the developing world.

If we want to make a real change we have to develop a strategy that both the richer countries and the developing countries can live with; having aspirations and setting targets will not succeed. Taking the developing nations along with us is far more likely to achieve real change.

Steve Wilkinson CCC (Con) Bucklow

I consider that the legs of the sustainable development stool are of equal length, as indeed they must be if the stool is to stand at all.

Equal weight must be given to all three legs.

BIODIVERSITY LOSS



4. The extinction of plant and animal species across the world is taking place at an alarming rate. The UK is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and is committed to achieving "a significant reduction in biodiversity loss by 2010". Is enough being done to achieve this target?

Andrew Stunell MP (Lib) Hazel Grove

No, though I believe we have at least recognised the problem of biodiversity loss in Britain, and there are good intentions all round. However, a quick look at the North Sea shows that money and special pleading can still prevent commonsense conservation measures being followed. The UK government has a real responsibility for leading on this.

The real disaster areas are the tropics, where the much greater range of species and ecosystems is being plundered by urbanisation, commercial exploitation, and the impact of climate instability. Once again, if the UK can set a high standard at home we will be better placed to argue for strong protection abroad.

Sir Nicholas Winterton MP (Con) Macclesfield Lady Ann Winterton MP (Con) Congleton Stephen O'Brien MP (Con) Eddisbury

The Conservative Party remains committed to protecting our national and global diversity. We fully support the work of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which provides 30,000 species of plants and animals with protection in some way. We, therefore, welcome the fact that the illegal trafficking of endangered species in this country, in contravention of CITES, will now become an arrestable offence.

However, we do believe that the present Government needs to do more to stop illegal imports of meat from entering this country, which can spread disease to livestock in the UK, and bush-meat, which often comes from endangered species. The next Conservative Government would immediately begin trials of new technologies designed for greater and more effective scrutiny.

Graham Brady MP (Con) Altrincham and Sale West

Of course, achieving a significant reduction in biodiversity loss by 2010 would be good, but it strikes me that if this Government is no good at anything else, it is extremely good at setting targets. The extinction of plant and animal species is happening at an alarming rate and that trend will not be halted by setting a target.

Biodiversity is affected by almost every decision the government makes... thousands of them every day. Like planning decisions that erode our green belt and which enable developers to squeeze large houses onto tiny plots and squeeze out plant

and animal life in the process.

One great omission from the Government's current legislative programme was a marine wildlife conservation bill. The absence of any marine equivalent to the Sites of Special Scientific Interest, despite the fact that more than half of our biodiversity is in the marine environment, is scandalous. The Common Fisheries Policy has been an environmental disaster. It has caused a degradation of the marine environment and has destroyed much of the fishing industry.

Steve Wilkinson CCC (Con) Bucklow

As a major supporter of the Econet initiative, I believe this will benefit Cheshire's wildlife by the creation of wildlife corridors to

assist in the protection and creation of habitats to maintain the county's biodiversity.

PERSONAL PRACTICE



5. Have you and your family made any environmental commitments this year?

Derek Twigg MP (Lab) Halton

I personally shall continue to be committed to recycling household and green waste. I am also in the process of restoring (as best

I can) a long hawthorn hedge that runs the length of my front and back garden and is a haven for birds and wildlife.

Andrew Stunell MP (Lib) Hazel Grove

We recycle everything (nearly!), have recently signed up with a 'green energy' company, run just one small car, and have installed a high efficiency gas boiler. I travel more miles by train than by car, and we take 'low energy' camping holidays! Last year my Sustainable and Secure Buildings Act became law, and so my commitment for 2005 is to make sure the next government uses it

to stop the waste of energy from our homes. I find that most people know the mpg of their car, but have no idea how much carbon dioxide their house emits. Your readers might be shocked to hear that their home is twice as bad as their car when it comes to damaging the planet.

Graham Brady MP (Con) Altrincham and Sale West

I take the stairs rather than the lift and walk as much as possible. Usually my family and I take walks in the countryside on Sunday afternoons, whether it's a trek over the Peaks or a gentle stroll through Dunham Park. We are also keen users of the Metrolink and it is our usual way of getting into Manchester. My New Year's

resolution in 2005 is to continue to do as much as possible to persuade the Government to restore the Phase Three development. After all, Tony Blair originally promised that it would be funded and I intend to keep my New Year's resolution even if the Government does not keep its promises.

Molly Hale CCC (Lib) Hoole and Newton

My family and I will continue in our efforts to seek to live in such a way as to minimise any adverse effect on the environment. We will continue to re-cycle, reduce and re-use, continue with our home

composting efforts and aim to reduce our energy and water consumption wherever possible.

Steve Wilkinson CCC (Con) Bucklow

In common with many other people I am increasingly aware of the impact that our everyday lives have upon the world in which we live.

Get in Touch

If you feel inspired to contact your local MP regarding environmental and conservation issues, here's how to get hold of them!

Constituency	Name of MP	Political Party	Contact Address	Contact Number
Altrincham and Sale West	Mr Graham Brady MP	Conservative	Thatcher House, Delahays Farm, Green Lane, Timperley, Cheshire WA15 8QW	0161 904 8828
Ashton-under-Lyne	Mr David Heyes MP	Labour	Suite 4, St Michael's Court, St Michael's Square, Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 6XN	0161 331 9307
Birkenhead	Rt Hon Frank Field MP	Labour	hendey@parliament.uk	020 7219 5193
Cheadle	Mrs Patsy Calton MP	Liberal Democrat	Hillson House, 3 Gillbent Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 7LE	0161 486 1359
City of Chester	Mrs Christine Russell MP	Labour	Abbey House, Abbey Green, Chester CH1 2JH	01244 400174
Congleton	Lady Ann Winterton MP	Conservative	Riverside, Mountbatten Way, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1DT	01260 278866
Crewe and Nantwich	Mrs Gwynneth Dunwoody MP	Labour	154 Nantwich Road, Crewe CW2 1BG	01270 589132
Denton and Reddish	Mr Andrew Bennett MP	Labour	Town Hall Market Place, Denton, Greater Manchester M34 2AP	0161 320 1504
Eddisbury	Mr Stephen O'Brien MP	Conservative	Eddisbury Conservation Association, 4 Church Walk, High Street, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0AJ	01829 733243
Ellesmere Port and Neston	Mr Andrew Miller MP	Labour	Whitby Hall Lodge, Whitby Park, Stanney Lane, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 6QY	0151 357 3019
Halton	Mr Derek Twigg MP	Labour	Unit F2, Moor Lane Business Centre, Moor Lane, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 7AQ	0151 424 7030
Hazel Grove	Mr Andrew Stunell MP	Liberal Democrat	Liberal Democrat HQ, 68a Compstall Road, Romiley, Stockport, Greater Manchester SK6 4DE	0161 406 7070
Macclesfield	Sir Nicholas Winterton MP	Conservative	Macclesfield Conservative Association, West Bank Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 3DU	01625 422848
Stalybridge and Hyde	Mr James Purnell MP	Labour	Hyde Town Hall, Market Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1AL	01925 574913
Stockport	Mrs Ann Coffey MP	Labour	House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA	0161 483 2600
Stretford and Urmston	Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP	Labour	Morris Hall, Atkinson Road, Urmston M41 9AD	0161 749 9120
Tatton	Mr George Osborne MP	Conservative	Conservative Office, Manchester Road, Knutsford WA16 0LT	01565 873037
Wallasey	Ms Angela Eagle MP	Labour	Sherlock House, 6 Manor Road, Liscard, Wirral L45 4JB	0151 637 1979
Warrington North	Mrs Helen Jones MP	Labour	Gilbert Wakefield House, 67 Bewsey Street, Warrington WA2 7JQ	01925 232480
Warrington South	Mrs Helen Southworth MP	Labour	33 Cairo Street, Warrington WA1 1EN	01925 240002
Weaver Vale	Mr Mike Hall MP	Labour	Room 17, Castle Park, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6UJ	01928 735000
Wirral South	Mr Ben Chapman MP	Labour	52 Bebington Road, New Ferry, Merseyside CH62 5BH	0151 643 8797
Wirral West	Mr Stephen Hesford MP	Labour	140 Ford Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 0TQ	0151 522 0531
Wythenshawe and Sale East	Mr Paul Goggins MP	Labour	2/10 Alderman Downward House, Civic Centre, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 5RF	0161 499 7900

You can also contact your MP through the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.



Graham Brady MP



Cllr Molly Hale



Stephen O'Brien MP



Andrew Stunell



Derek Twigg MP



Cllr Steve Wilkinson



Sir Nick Winterton MP & Lady Anne Winterton MP

Get in Touch

Members of Cheshire County Council's Environment Strategic Panel

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Useful Websites

www.epolitix.com - if your local MP has a website you will find it on here. The website also offers up-to-date information on political issues and legislation, plus much more.

www.conservative-party.org.uk

www.labour.org.uk

www.libdems.org.uk

www.greenparty.org.uk

www.independenceuk.org.uk

www.englishdemocraticparty.org.uk

Top Ten Tips

This is your chance to influence the next four years of political policies on your doorstep – remember to make your vote count!

- 1 Visit your MP at their local surgery or even visit them at the House of Commons
- 2 Send them an e-mail or write a letter with your questions or concerns
- 3 Find out about the environmental contents of all the parties' manifestos
- 4 Find out who is standing for election in your local constituency and test them on their 'green' credentials
- 5 Add your name to petitions such as the Save Our Seas campaign
- 6 Don't forget these elections are local as well as national – quiz your local county councillors on local environmental issues too
- 7 Vote with your feet and your shopping pound – don't buy environmentally damaging products and do buy alternatives; politicians always listen to economists and business trends
- 8 Support organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts that lobby political parties on environmental issues
- 9 Ask your local MP or councillor to support environmental or conservation projects that you are involved with
- 10 Above all, don't forget to vote!

This publication has been compiled by Cheshire Wildlife Trust as a supplement to *The Grebe* magazine

For the latest news and up-to-date information visit our website
www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cheshire

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