



Oxfordshire Green Party

Mini Manifesto 2017

SETTING AN ALTERNATIVE AGENDA

The Green Party is the real opposition to Oxfordshire's Conservative-controlled County Council. A vote for the Green Party in the County elections in May 2017 will help make Oxfordshire a safer, environmentally more secure and more prosperous county. This will provide an alternative model to cuts and privatization. Each year, the Green Party sets alternative budgets for Oxfordshire County Council, showing year on year that services and employment provided by the County Council can be preserved, while cuts are repeatedly approved by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat county councillors. At both District Council and County Council level, these parties fail to meet the needs of Oxfordshire.

At present, some key priorities for Oxfordshire include:

Protecting our public services – continuing the fight to remain in the EU – tackling homelessness – saving Oxford from Tory rule – opposing County cuts.

Some comments on these priorities: homelessness is a shared responsibility between the County and district councils and all must play their part to eradicate homelessness. The attempts to force a single unitary council on Oxfordshire could well mean Conservative rule of Oxford – a City where the Conservative Party has no councillors and little prospect of getting any: a completely undemocratic scenario for our future which cannot be accepted. The battle for staying in the EU is not over, and we continue to campaign on the issues raised in the Brexit process. (For details see our Europe news pages: http://www.greenoxfordshire.com/europe_news)Most of these priorities raise the issue of why cuts are continuing to be made when the wealthiest and those on highest incomes are, like corporations, under-taxed:

We believe that fair taxation is essential to fund a decent society, in which everyone is included, and from which we can afford to repair pavements and roads, house everyone and meet the needs of the elderly and the vulnerable.

This mini-manifesto will introduce how some of our goals may be achieved in Oxfordshire. More details can be found in our main manifesto on the Oxfordshire Green Party website¹. ***With your vote we can resist the most vicious cuts in our vital services.***

We want you to have a choice in a referendum about the level of council tax. Just 50p extra per week per household, on average, could save many areas of services for the most vulnerable people. No one wants social services like Children's Centres to close, but their future is at risk due to mindless cuts.

BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR THE COUNTY

- Protecting and restoring social services in Oxfordshire, to protect the most vulnerable people
- Sustainable transport: more resources for walking, cycling and buses to reduce air pollution and congestion

¹ See: <https://tinyurl.com/jxk2usk>



- The Green Economy and Climate Change supporting jobs in sectors like energy efficiency, renewable energy, organic agriculture, forestry and flood alleviation measures
- Shut down the Local Enterprise Partnership and transfer its funds to the County and district councils
- (at district council level) Building homes without losing the countryside.

DEVOLUTION OF POWER IN OXFORDSHIRE

Local authorities are custodians of democracy, primary agents for conserving the countryside whilst building strong sustainable economies relevant to their communities. We seek to deliver local authority services in-house to maintain high standards and secure local jobs in consultation with trade unions.

The Green Party supports further devolution of power from central government to more local authorities and the strengthening of the role and responsibilities of parish, town and district councils. If Oxfordshire moves toward the creation of Unitary councils – we favour having three not one centralised huge council: North Oxfordshire (Cherwell and West Oxfordshire); Oxford (Oxford City); South Oxfordshire (S.Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse).

Green Councillors in Oxfordshire have for many years presented alternative viable budgets to those of all the other political parties to retain our services and defend the most vulnerable people in our society.

We offer an alternative agenda for a more positive and productive future in Oxfordshire. Below we set out our mini manifesto.

PROTECTING PUBLIC SERVICES

We propose alternative budgets for each financial year for the County Council. These proposals oppose austerity economics and the deliberate planned destruction of our public services. We know that the cuts introduced by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat County Councillors are damaging all our essential services and destroying the lives of the most vulnerable people in our society of all ages. Green County Councillors will continue to seek to protect the most vulnerable people in our County through fair and responsible use of County Council funds.

Greens will:

- Campaign to retain ALL the Children’s Centres in the County, and maintain beds for the homeless.
- Maintain a free and local NHS service opposing all privatisation and cuts to the service.
- Stop the cuts to adult social care and enforce higher standards of care in homes and other services for the elderly and those with disabilities.
- Keep ALL of Oxfordshire libraries open and explore future partnership work with local schools.
- Oppose any further closure of Fire Stations.

DEVELOPING BETTER TRANSPORT FOR ALL

Traffic congestion and air pollution over recommended limits across many areas in the county shows how we need to radically improve rail services, retain public transport.

Greens will:

- Reinstate subsidised bus service provision on non-commercial routes especially in rural areas.
- Develop a safer cycleway system with separate cycle lanes, and improve walking and cycling networks in rural and urban areas.



- Support the Dial-a-Ride services centrally and transport for the elderly.
- Plan with other agencies to reinstate train services e.g. Witney to Oxford line.

BUILDING HOMES WITHOUT LOSING THE COUNTRYSIDE

Affordable homes in built-up areas near facilities which people need makes more sense than developing new greenfield sites with little or no infrastructure.

Greens will:

- Prioritise building of social housing in partnership with Community Land Trusts and others.
- Encourage, through groups such as Housing Cooperatives, new buildings which are eco-friendly and well insulated.
- Partner with other groups where possible for key worker part rent / part buy schemes.
- Support the re-introduction of rent controls by national Government.

GREENER ECONOMY & SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Oxfordshire's community development needs to be sustainable, generate jobs and be eco-friendly. We recognise the value of working in partnership with conservation and campaign groups; businesses and the public to manage land, waterways and all living resources for a safe, healthy and productive future.

Greens will:

- Promote investment in eco, solar, wind and hydro energy generation initiatives, and energy efficiency, across the County.
- Encourage the green economy to flourish creating more jobs in rural and urban areas
- Preserve existing local re-cycling centres in the county which are convenient to use and will reduce fly-tipping.
- Expand Oxfordshire's Credit Unions.
- Use already allocated funding for a variety of local flood protection measures, including natural, flood alleviation and protection measures e.g. supporting Flood Action groups, increasing earlier response to flooding emergencies and supporting schemes that actually work.

LOCAL DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

A Green County Council would ensure that public consultation is no longer a sham. We believe Councillors who voted to implement the unnecessary savage cuts in essential services during the past 4 years need to be held to account.

Greens will:

- Initiate a referendum of the Oxfordshire electorate on a realistic anti-austerity budget which can deliver and restore a wide range of services essential to the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Move democratic decision making away from small caucuses of Council Leaders back to a more open democratic and varied local level of decision making.



- Plan to delegate planning, some budgets and other relevant decision making powers to different levels of local government e.g. elected Parish or Town Councils and District Councils.
- Support a three unitary councils option for Oxfordshire.

EDUCATION

The Green Party is committed to free lifelong education for all. Good state education is a process of personal development as well as training for specific skills or jobs. Innovation and creativity in teaching and learning are to be encouraged through co-operation between schools rather than competition.

Greens will:

- Resist moves to academisation and free schools and promote local governance, seeking funding to expand nursery and after school provision for working parents.
- Allocate resources to strengthen literacy and numeracy programmes, introduce free State school lunches for all primary age children and subsidise secondary school meals. This would involve re-establishing, where possible, school kitchens utilising locally sourced healthy food.
- Support teaching unions to improve education in the county and in resisting the re-introduction of grammar schools.
- Expand the 'eco schools programme' to cover all institutional improvements.

FIRE and SAFETY

Community safety is essential and the work of our dedicated fire service staff is impressive considering the changes and reductions in **funding** they have had to deal with. Green Councillors will continue to protect Oxfordshire Fire Service funding and seek to restore it to local government control.

Greens will:

- Oppose any further closure of Fire Stations and removal of the service from local government control.
- Reform the Safety Advisory Group to be more positive in supporting community events without compromising safety.

LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS and ARTS CENTRES

We aim to develop creative strategies linking different cultural services and agencies to maximise the use of public money whilst maintaining services, delivering new opportunities and retaining strong links with local communities. All of the Libraries, Museums, Arts Centres and Theatres are valuable community resources.

Greens will:

- Explore how Libraries can be retained as free community resource centres working in partnership with local schools.
- Protect free public access to all Museums and heritage sites in the county.
- Reinstate full grants to Arts Centres and Theatres ensuring their management includes elected members and representatives of our communities.



BUSINESS LINKS – Local Enterprise Partnership

The Green Party preferred approach to business is based on promoting sustainable economic development and job creation through investment in environmental and socially focussed enterprises i.e. Green Industries. We support well paid jobs but oppose mindless growth for its own sake.

Greens will:

- Prioritise programmes which support community orientated aims and discontinue others. This will include a focus on investment enhancing walking, cycling and public transport routes and systems.
- Increase the Independent Advice Service to help people access benefits they are entitled to.
- Focus County Council support on local sustainable and ethical enterprises prioritising organic food production and distribution e.g. Farmers Markets.
- Seek to balance inward investment for recreation and tourism with opportunities to enhance lives of people living in rural areas for year round use of facilities, regular employment and help to offset rural isolation.

NHS, HEALTH and PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The NHS and Adult Social Care have been under funded by Conservative/Lib Dem and Labour Governments for decades. The Green Party is committed to delivering practical help for the most vulnerable older and young people in this county. We recognise that the free NHS services are compromised through privatisation and government underfunding. Green Councillors are committed to treating the causes of ill health through prevention and early treatment rather than more expensive later interventions. By law, the NHS is required to provide fully paid care to people who need services because of ill-health, even when they do not need acute medical care. Oxfordshire NHS has been reluctant to accept their responsibility. This means that many people must use means tested Social Services for nursing home and home-based care leading to having to sell their homes. Green Councillors have also passed resolutions in Council continually pressing the Primary Care Trust (PCT) for increased provision of free care for people who need this due to ill health.

Greens will:

- Maintain key Adult Social Care Services for the most vulnerable and elderly people. This would be accompanied by the allocation of funds within our costed budget to increase prevention and early treatment.
- Review those who have been unreasonably disqualified and provide help rather than denying their rights to any services and support.
- Support maintenance of lunch clubs, befriending circles, recreational activities and carer advice.
- Help create joined up intergenerational initiatives to create local jobs and work experience.
- Allocate extra revenue to fully enable individuals to access benefits for which they are eligible. This would include seeking ways in which we can help people with disabilities, to help themselves and each other.

SERVICES FOR A FULFILLING LIFE – Not just survival

Councillors from every party except the Greens have implemented appalling cuts in services.

Too many people are suffering because of these unnecessary austerity cuts, Green Councillors are committed to creating a stronger support network for Carers, Community Workers **and** volunteers to enable everyone to have a fulfilled life and ability to participate in their community.



Greens will:

- Employ Community Development Workers either directly, or funded via the voluntary sector organisations to coordinate and assist local people; allocate resources to continue the Carer Emergency Service for when carers fall ill, and maintain the Carers Network.
- Support the Dial-a-Ride services centrally and explore reinstatement of bus services recently cut.
- Work towards restoring the posts of dedicated County Council Care Workers. This would entail supporting payment at the same rates as the London Living Wage for employees - especially Care Workers.
- Budget for provision of a County Council task force that can respond to crises including bankruptcy or fraud of private care agencies.
- Substantially increase funding to the Independent Advice Services to help people access benefits and services.

CLIMATE CHANGE and GREEN ENERGY

There are two broad approaches to tackling climate change; reduce the use of fossil fuels and adopt a lower carbon or non-fossil fuel based economy and second to adopt measures to cope with significant and damaging effects of climate change. Oxfordshire's low carbon economy is creating about £1.15 billion in sales per year and employs about 8,800 people i.e. 7% of the county economy. We are well placed to add further jobs and expand our low carbon sectors with our programme aiming to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions locally by 2020.

Greens will:

- Set annual targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction in relevant sectors, especially transport. By 2030, aim to reduce Oxfordshire's greenhouse gas emissions to 10% of the 1990 levels.
- Always seek to make County Council decisions contribute to reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- Support sustainable use of land for biofuels and food production.
- Create a chain of green spaces for recreation and nature conservation to promote health, and conserve wildlife and plants, with relevant community groups.
- Promote suitable climate change adaptation measures in cooperation with stakeholders e.g. householders, farmers, Environment Agency, District Councils & NHS to help us adapt to periods of hot weather, storms, heavy rainfall or drought e.g. flood prevention measures in planning applications.

TRANSPORT

The Green Party want to make it easier for all of us to choose the best mode of transport that does least environmental damage. Piecemeal solutions do not work, only an integrated transport strategy which allows people to move between **different** types of transport on some journeys will be effective. This also ensures road and pavement repairs are done for the long-term instead of being superficial leading to further repairs being needed.

Reducing the need for travel is also an advantage, giving people more time to enjoy life and work rather than commuting and as such we will encourage teleworking at home, internet shopping and improvements in Broadband services across the county. We encourage cycling and support businesses who offer encouragement to employees to cycle; also walking as both are the most energy efficient forms of transport but we recognise for longer journeys public and other transport is essential.



Privatisation of rail services has reduced opportunities to improve rail use however a Green council will partner with train and rail operators to improve connections particularly to towns such as Didcot and Banbury etc. many people must depend on car use because efficient public transport or healthier options are not available, traffic congestion. Air pollution and noise are of concern to us all and our Green Councillors aim to provide the safest less polluting transport options which are practicable.

Pedestrians, Wheelchair and Pushchair Users

Greens will:

- Maintain safer 20 mph residential zones throughout the county. Plan networks of walking routes with priority at road junctions
- Allocate funds to identify safer routes to schools adapting some roads to create continuous level surfaces across side roads.
- Create a culture where cyclists courteously give way to pedestrians in shared spaces e.g. towpaths, and plan to relocate cycle lanes on roads rather than pavements.
- Consult with visually challenged pedestrians when changes are made to roads and pavements to minimise obstructions.
- Increase the pedestrian area in St Giles's and decrease the area for road traffic in order to reduce traffic and air pollution and plant trees.

Cycling

Greens will:

- Continue to extend cyclist priority over motorised traffic at junctions. Make cycle routes as continuous as possible prioritising commuter routes to reduce traffic speeds for improved cycle safety.
- Work with Sustrans to extend safe direct off road routes e.g. support community path via Farmoor along the B4044 and the Eynsham to Oxford cycleway.
- Increase cycle parking facilities which do not block pavements
- Support initiatives where people can repair bikes at reasonable costs e.g. Broken Spoke and Bike Doctor.
- Encourage greater take up of use of electric and other bike hire from a variety of locations including Park and Rides.

Public Transport

Greens will:

- Continue subsidies to essential uneconomic bus routes, consulting with Parish and District Councils on the provision needed.
- Encourage the use of cycle rickshaws and other pedal and electric assisted vehicles for alternatives to other public transport.
- Aid smooth-running of public transport by closing off Longwall Street and Hythe Bridge Street to through private traffic except disabled drivers. With access permits available for delivery vehicles.
- Commission a feasibility study into a modern lightweight electric train system for Oxford City.
- Work with bus companies to explore the feasibility of putting bike racks on buses.

Railways

Greens will:

- Strongly resist any cuts in train services or closures of routes and stations.
- Promote and support opening of new stations, currently disused railway lines from Witney and Carterton to Oxford and Cowley.



- Seek to coordinate integration of rail and local bus services.
- Support the development of potential Oxford to Stratford and Oxford to Cambridge rail links. Work with rail companies to ensure more bicycles can be carried on trains without advanced booking.
- Oppose the HS2 high speed rail development.

Canals and Waterways

Greens will:

- Resist attempts by the City Council or any other body to force residential moorings to move frequently as canals offer an underutilised means of housing and transport.
- Promote, increase and protect residential moorings with good facilities as a form of affordable housing.
- Investigate potential to develop greater use of canals as a means of transport and recreation throughout the county.

Powered Cycles, Motorbikes and Scooters

Greens will:

- Will seek to plan and implement across the county an adequate number of charging points for mobility and other electric vehicles in recognition that this mode of transport will increase steadily in popularity.
- Plan for more motorbike and scooter parking provision.

Private Vehicles

Greens will:

- Introduce further charges in Park and Ride sites to increase facilities and consider decking to increase capacity rather than the creation of new Park and Ride sites.
- Ensure sizeable new developments are well served by public transport and wherever possible encourage these to be car free.
- Extend the network of speed cameras, when finance is available, to reduce traffic speeds campaigning for extended Local Authority Powers of Enforcement to allow money from parking fines to be utilised locally helping to maintain highways.
- Support extension of Controlled Parking Zones(CPZ's) where residents want these seeking provision of parking spaces for those who undertake essential work e.g. builders, health visitors etc and ensure that pavements are not obstructed by no less than the 1.2m standard width.
- Initiate tree planting to help minimise traffic noise and pollution.

COUNTRYSIDE POLICY

The Green Party recognises that we have a responsibility to future generations in all areas of Oxfordshire to protect and improve habitats, rights of way and maintain biodiversity. Working in partnership with conservation and campaigning groups, the public and businesses to enhance and revitalise sustainability of economies in both rural communities and urban areas.

We will work with Natural England to link the current protected areas into a wider network of sites to expand conservation principles. Natural Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty require a special combination of access for recreation and tourism. People need this access to the countryside for its positive benefits such as recreation, health and a re-connection with nature; we will ensure adequate funding to protect and maintain existing rights of way making sure legislation is properly implemented whilst also creating new ones. We aim always to stop further destruction of wildlife habitats, the soil, landscape, ancient monuments and our countryside heritage maintaining Oxfordshire's beauty and natural resources.



Greens will:

- Oppose to development on the Green belt and Flood Plains
- Encourage development of land based livelihoods.
- Campaign for the County Council to adopt a Green Infrastructure Strategy based on the Cambridgeshire model to reverse decline in bio diversity, mitigate and adapt to climate change, promote sustainable growth and support healthy living and wellbeing.
- Treat all farmland and open country as potentially environmentally sensitive land.
- Work to ensure Planning Policy continues to provide strong protection against mineral extraction in any areas.

Wildlife, Habitat and Species Protection

Green Councillors will support sustainable rural communities and take effective measures to protect the environment. We will work to maintain a healthy environment, vigorously protect wildlife rich sites and extend a basic level of habitat protection to the whole countryside.

Greens will:

- Oppose badger culling, snaring and hunting and strive to make it a general offence to cause cruelty and suffering to wild or other animals, extending prosecution to those committing such acts in the same way as for domestic animals.
- Provide a programme of activities to stop bee colony collapse.
- Maintain funding for Road Verge Nature Reserves which allow wildlife to move through an inhospitable landscape in some areas.
- Work to address the problem of some non-native wild plants and genotypes of British species which have a negative impact on plant populations in the county.
- Support Nature 2000 network of Special Areas of Conservation to continue protecting bio-diversity in grassland and wetlands.

Food and Farming

The agricultural industry forms an important part of the rural economy supporting diverse wildlife habitats whilst producing food and other produce and generating jobs. In the larger towns and city allotments, open spaces and gardens are essential to our health and wellbeing.

Greens will:

- Support sustainable farming systems and promote organic and local farms and allotments to encourage growing and sale of good food to local communities and schools. Discourage and aim to phase out 'factory farming' and farming systems which are highly dependent on fossil fuels.
- Oppose the use of neonicotinoids which are a serious risk to all pollinating insects.
- Support strategies which reduce pollutants of soil and watercourses.
- Encourage farming and land management which conserves woods, orchards, agro-forestry, hedges and other trees.
- Support sustainable diversification and multiple use of agricultural land and buildings for renewable energy, tourism, recreational pursuits and small scale labour intensive or family farms.

Woodlands, Forests and Trees

These all play a vital role in the landscape protecting the land from soil erosion, enhancing water quality, providing habitats, storing carbon, opportunities for employment and providing us with renewable quality supplies of timber, fuel and food.



Greens will:

- Protect existing woodland from change and fragmentation.
- Liaise with the forestry Commission and other bodies to protect woods and plantations currently in public ownership.
- Seek to prohibit destruction of ancient woodland.
- Rigorously protect public rights of access wherever this is compatible with wildlife protection and good forestry management.

Land Tenure

We will seek changes to land use policies and advocate a move to Land Value Taxation to free up access to land. The Greens support the introduction of Land Value Taxation in the long-term, which will be calculated to take into consideration the economic effects of having to conserve wildlife habitats, archaeological sites and other landscape features. This would help to reduce the current inequality in the ownership of land and buildings and would help both new entrants into farming and also local people to access affordable housing.

Planning and Recycling

We will seek to strengthen the planning controls for larger scale developments recognising also that planning decisions are best made at the appropriate local level e.g. Elected parish, town district or unitary councils. We will seek to ensure ecological criteria are given full weight in local planning decisions; these should also be integrated into the use of Community Infrastructure Levy.

Greens will:

- Encourage the re-use and recycling of materials and aggregates from building works and demolitions to ensure minimum waste and minimal new quarrying.
- Budget to retain recycling centres in the county convenient to localities to reduce fly-tipping.
- Strengthen the independent planning inspectorate to address appeals and planning controls for large scale or damaging land use changes to the countryside and watercourses.
- Rigorously oppose fracking as this damages the environment watercourses and communities.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Greens will:

- Seek to provide adequate funding for management of designated sites e.g. Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Conservation, Scheduled Monuments etc.
- Pressurise the government to rigorously strengthen Green Belt Legislation to revitalise the countryside and enhance 'green wedges' into the city.

FLOODING

Flooding is a serious problem aggravated by climate change

We are committed to using the funds allocated to the proposed 'Oxford Relief River' also known as the 'Western Conveyance' (£125 million) to fund smaller flood protection measures within Oxford and other urban settlements. We are strongly committed to utilising strategies which preventing flooding; Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) are an essential part of any flood prevention strategy. For these schemes to continue to work over the long-term, regular maintenance is essential. Green councillors in Oxford city are already aware of SUDs as a key issue in flooding and water-logging, but it is an issue for the whole county.

Greens will:

- Increase advice and support to residents and businesses on flood resistant measures for their properties.



- Continue to encourage and support local Flood Action Groups whilst also refining and developing effectiveness of the County Council response to flooding emergencies.
- Work with all agencies to look at river catchment to increase tree planting, wetland capacity and restrain development on Greenfield sites limiting permeability.
- Strongly advocate use of techniques and materials such as permeable paving, grass-crete, soakaways, infiltration trenches etc. as key to helping prevent flooding and water logging in the county.
- Maintain highway SUDs and promote a rolling programme of SUDs renewal in partnership with district councils or residents.

***With your vote Greens can resist the most vicious cuts
in our vital services***

Please vote for the Green Party

Thank you
