



# Countryside

## Endorse “The Land is Ours” Campaign

(Originally passed – Autumn 1995 Conference)

Conference notes that the “The Land is Ours” campaign seeks a right of access to uncultivated land in the countryside, more common land, the sustainable use of agricultural land, and the reuse of developed land for homes. Conference welcomes the active involvement of Green Party members in that campaign, in determining its objectives, in its organisation and in its actions. Its objectives are consistent with Green Party policies and the achievement of those objectives would be a substantial contribution to the implementation of our policies. Conference resolves that The Green Party formally endorses the “The Land is Ours” campaign.

## Archaeology

(Originally passed – October 1996)

### Preamble

The Green Party already has some partial policy on archaeology (C523, C530 MfSS), Historic Buildings (LP700-1 MfSS), and ancient forests (C542 MfSS). However, archaeologists are concerned with more than just archaeological sites and historic buildings. They are increasingly concerned with archaeological landscapes, and problems with developer driven archaeology.

### Policy Statement

The Green Party is committed to:-

- 1) The integration of archaeological concerns into

all aspects of land use and development strategies

- 2) A review of Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16\*) with a view to strengthening the obligation of developers to provide adequate resources for archaeological investigation and conservation, whilst allowing archaeological concerns to be paramount in deciding how to achieve this.
- 3) A review of scheduled monuments legislation with a view to strengthening the protection it affords to sites and monuments
- 4) A tightening of the law regarding the misuse of metal detectors on archaeological sites
- 5) To promote the teaching of archaeology at all levels if education, to raise awareness of archaeology’s relevance to landscape, social, economic and other issues.
- 6) To continue, and expand, the resources available for archaeological research, conservation and management
- 7) To review the legal framework regarding maritime wrecks with a view to affording better protection to these sites

\* PPG16 – government guidance to planners recommending that they consider archaeology as part of the planning process, and that developers fund this. Is weak in getting this enacted, and has the problem that developers’ objectives take precedence over archaeological ones.

## Rural Issues

(Originally passed – Spring 1999 Conference)

## Background

1.1 The Green Party is very much aware of the problems facing those who live and work in the countryside. We consider that this sector is not valued as it should be; our land should be seen as the basis for our communal wealth and security, but instead it is valued more for just its aesthetic qualities and the land as just an economic business.

1.2 If we are to live sustainably, it is crucial that we look upon the land as our primary source of food and raw materials and farmers and growers as a most essential part of our workforce. It is also vital that we do not just take from the land but that we maintain its health and biodiversity, nurturing it as an ecological system in which all life plays its part and maintaining and restoring wild areas in which other species can flourish.

1.3 We recognise that many modern farming practices, which through economic factors farmers have been forced to adopt, cause unnecessary suffering to livestock and undermine good husbandry.

1.4 People in the UK must understand that we cannot go on depending on other countries to supply us with the bulk of our food and raw materials, just as we cannot continue indefinitely to take non-renewable resources. We all need a strong rural economy and a rural population working in the countryside to support us.

## The Rural Economy

2.1 Farmers, growers and those who maintain and manage woodland must be given proper support and stable incomes; their services are as crucial as that of

the NHS, indeed more so, since a healthily fed population would require fewer NHS services. Growing for our needs should not be regarded as just another business.

2.2 All agricultural subsidies (including any stemming from the CAP) and support should be aimed at small-scale local farming and growing, conversion to organic methods and alternative crops (e.g. willow for fuel and craft work, hemp for paper, textiles, plastics) which are necessary for our basic needs. The aim should be to grow for local consumption first.

2.3 Funding and legislation should encourage such things as community supported agriculture, organic box schemes, farmers markets and home food production; they should encourage “value added” processing of agricultural and forestry products close to their source.

2.4 Citizens income will have an important part to play in encouraging a return to land based economic activities.

2.5 Business rating concessions should be strengthened to give much more support to small-scale businesses in the countryside, villages and country towns. This and measures 2.1 to 2.4 will all have a beneficial effect on rural employment.

2.6 LETS, credit unions (including business credit unions) and community investment banks should be encouraged in the countryside as well as towns.

2.7 Every encouragement should be given to enable people who live in the country to work in the country – it is recognised that telecottaging (i.e. decentralising business by using appropriate technology) and green tourism will have their part to play in this but they should not be seen as the principle means of reviving the rural economy.

## **Planning, Housing and Land Access**

3.1 Planning regulations and other obstacles should be changed so that it is much easier to start up small scale growing concerns where those who are working the land can live on it too.

3.2 Procedures should be introduced into the planning process to cater for low impact development and to promote the use of planning conditions and agreements to secure environmentally and socially beneficial rural occupation (such as staged building, restriction on vehicle use and ownership and type of construction materials).

3.3 It should be made easier to set up value-added businesses and such things as the generation of energy on a small scale from renewable resources. Buildings for these purposes should be insulated with non-toxic material, preferably local and renewable, to the highest practical standard.

3.4 The use of special planning zones and a new land use class for low impact dwellings and permaculture use should be investigated. We should look at the Irish model of providing smallholding land for landless people who wish to seek alternative employment in the countryside.

3.5 Land value taxation and other measures should be introduced to discourage large land holdings and encourage the beneficial use of land. Large scale agricultural enterprises should be brought under the full control of the planning system.

3.6 Encouragement should be given to local authorities to use the Smallholdings Act to increase the supply of County Smallholdings. Whilst they form an important part of the farming system, they could also be further developed for sustainable, low impact and

organic techniques, for education and training, for small growing enterprises or just for those living in urban areas, so that they can connect with the countryside in its productive sense.

3.7 The current industry-led and demand creating massive house-building programme is unacceptable. New housing estates of a suburban nature aimed at attracting commuters should be avoided while affordable housing of local character for those priced out of commercial development but who wish to become or remain part of the rural economy should be given priority.

3.8 Rural communities should have easy access to green spaces for leisure just as town dwellers should. There should be a restoration of common land and a general right to roam together with education on proper respect for rural concerns.

3.9 Allotments should be maintained and promoted in rural areas, perhaps for community or school use.

## **Wildlife and Biodiversity**

4.1 The Green Party is against hunting and the killing of animals for ‘sport’. We recognise that humans have disrupted ecosystems so that some animals may undermine livelihoods or damage crops. We accept that control measures may sometimes be necessary but this must be by the most humane methods possible, preventative methods being favoured above extermination, and must not be indiscriminate.

4.2 Our care of the land should be such that biodiversity is maintained or increased. We recognise that we are only one species and that we have no right to destroy the habitats of other species, either directly or indirectly. Research funding into soil science, agroforestry and natural materials should be restored. Agroforestry in

particular has much to offer in terms of increasing biodiversity.

4.3 We are against the genetic modification of crops since this is likely to have a detrimental effect on biodiversity and wild species, as well as on our food. (We are also opposed to the genetic modification of farm animals.)

## **Education and Young People**

5.1 Village schools are a vital part of community life; they should be available to both children and, out of school hours, to adults and other groups.

5.2 The concerns of young people must be properly represented on both parish and rural town councils and their need for places to 'hang out' recognised.

5.3 The practical application of environmental concerns and country life should be part of the curriculum. All young people should know how to grow food and how their food and other raw materials are grown; they should have farm visits and practical experience of growing and then cooking food.

5.4 People living in urban areas should be encouraged to link with providers in the country; a form of twinning could be established with visits to plant trees and take part in other rural activities.

5.5 People moving into the country also need education; there should be opportunities for informal training for those wishing to work on the land or just to integrate into country living.

5.6 It is essential that low cost housing is available for young people in rural areas.

## **Transport and Services**

6.1 Rural public transport should be maintained and diversified, with communities encouraged to look for local solutions.

Community minibuses, post buses and car sharing are all possibilities.

6.2 There should be restrictions on vehicle size on country roads and some lanes should be designated as priority routes for walkers, cyclists and riders with measures taken to remove all unnecessary use of motor vehicles.

6.3 Where possible, services including banking, medical and library, should be brought out to villages.

6.4 Special consideration should be given to the situation of those in remote places where cars are the only means of transport - environmental taxes should not penalise those living on low incomes in the countryside.

6.5 Speed limits in the countryside should be lowered to improve safety and reduce pollution, including noise, of those living there, and to the more vulnerable road users. Possible limits could be 50mph on main roads, 40 mph or lower on minor roads and 20mph through villages. Local people should have the power to decide limits appropriate for their town/ parish.

## **Countryside and Rights of Way Act**

(Originally passed – Spring 2004 Conference)

Conference notes that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act has resulted in the closure of many footways and a cycle route and prevented the creation of a new town footway. CROW has given local councils the right to request such closures after incidents of crime.

Conference is concerned that:

1. Pedestrians are being deprived of direct routes to school, work, etc

2. This will lead to social exclusion

3. This will transfer problems to another highway

Conference therefore urges local Green parties to call on Alun Michael MP in the light of planning law to clarify the intention of the CROW Act and to ensure that only when all alternative strategies to reduce crime have been thoroughly explored and when there are exceptional circumstances can paths be closed.

## **Protecting Youth Hostels**

(Originally passed – Spring 2006 Conference)

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This conference notes:

i) As reported by the BBC and other sources, the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) plans to close 32 hostels over the next three years.

ii) This number means one in seven youth hostels in England and Wales will be closed.

iii) Some of these hostels provide vital stops on long distance paths. In particular, Keld, which serves walkers on both the Pennine Way and the Coast to Coast long distance paths.

iv) It has been reported in *The Guardian* that the closures are to raise capital to invest in some of the more urban hostels, which are more profitable.

v) That one of the stated aims of the YHA is to help people develop a greater love, knowledge and care of the countryside.

This conference believes:

i) That in an age of cheap flights and obesity, Youth Hostels support holidaying in the UK, and healthy and sustainable leisure

activities such as walking and cycling.

ii) That they enable people of all ages to get out into some of the most spectacular parts of the UK and develop a love of the environment and the countryside.

iii) That to close one in seven hostels will undermine the hostel network as a whole, making it less affordable and convenient for people to plan long distance walking and cycling journeys.

iv) That although the YHA may be dependent on some of its urban hostels to make a profit, it should not focus on these to the detriment and closure of rural hostels.

This conference therefore:

i) Affirms its support of walking, cycling and outdoor holidaying in the UK.

ii) Calls upon the YHA to abandon the widespread closures and its apparent change of focus to urban hostels.

iii) Mandates the Green Party External Communications officer to publicise this position.

## **Badgers, Cattle & Bovine TB**

(Originally passed – Spring 2006 Conference)

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This conference notes that the Government is considering a widespread cull of up to a quarter of the UK badger population in an attempt to tackle the rising incidence of the cattle disease bovine Tuberculosis (bTB).

This conference recognises that at least 80% of bTB outbreaks are attributed to cattle-to-cattle transmission, and believe that the badger is therefore being made a scapegoat to avoid tackling the real animal welfare and intensive farming issues which are at the root of the disease.

This conference calls on the Executive to publicise the Green Party's unique political position on this issue in the media. We call on the national party and local groups to oppose any such badger cull, denounce the Government's continued persecution of the badger and promote cattle-based measures to combat what is essentially a farming problem.

The Green Party of England and Wales:

- Condemns the decision of the Natural Environmental Research Council to close three research centres in the course of reorganising the Centre for Hydrology and Ecology.
- These long-established centres at Monk's Wood in Cambridgeshire, Winfrith in Dorset and Banchory near Aberdeen have undertaken invaluable work in monitoring the impact of climate change on biodiversity.
- The reorganisation may take four years.
- The continuity of research at these sites will thus be destroyed as the teams of scientists who undertook it are disbanded.
- At a time when hard evidence on the impact of climate change is vital to decision makers this is an irresponsible decision.
- Gives its full support to Friends of the earth, the CPRE and the RSPB in calling for the intervention of ministers to review the decision in the light of the above.
- We instruct GPEX to write to the appropriate minister setting out our position.