

## **GREN Survey of Reading Parliamentary Candidates 2015**

We asked Reading parliamentary candidates to answer six questions on some key environmental issues, so that our members and the public can make an informed choice at the election.

We e-mailed all the candidates in Reading East and Reading West (with the exception of Mr. P. F. West (Roman Party (AVE)) for whom we failed to find contact details) asking for replies within nine days, and received replies from three Reading East candidates (Rob White, Christine Forrester and Jenny Woods) and one Reading West candidate (Suzie Ferguson). We then e-mailed a reminder extending the period by six days but received no further replies.

### **Six Questions:**

1. **Climate change targets:** Do you support the Climate Change Act 2008 and its duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline?
2. **Climate change negotiations:** The Paris 'Conference of Parties' in December 2015 is a once-in-five-years opportunity to reach a global agreement on climate change. Will you press the government to make a fair, binding global deal, aiming to keep within two degrees of global warming, a UK foreign policy priority for 2015?
3. **Cold Homes:** From 2018 landlords will be banned from entering into new rent agreements on homes which do not at least meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band E. Currently around 400,000 homes fall below this level. UK average EPC is roughly band D. Do you support a new target on landlords to improve all properties in the private rented sector up to EPC band C by 2025?
4. **Transport:** Air quality in Reading is often worse than target levels and traffic congestion is seen as a problem. While bus passenger journeys in Reading went up by 1.5 million trips last year many people find the price of fares high and some services infrequent or unreliable. Do you think public transport should have more revenue support to make it cheaper and more attractive?
5. **Airport Expansion:** Five years ago Labour supported a Third Runway at Heathrow and the Conservatives opposed it. After this election the Airports Commission is due to report on the choice between Heathrow and Gatwick for location of a new runway. Opponents believe that any benefits of a local 'hub' airport will be outweighed by the local impacts on noise, air quality and traffic, and the global implications of more flights. If the Commission recommends a third runway for Heathrow will you support it?
6. **Development Land:** The South East region is already heavily developed with a higher population density than any of the other regions except for London and the North West. The NFU says UK food self-sufficiency is 60% and falling. Urban sprawl takes productive land and low density settlements increase use of transport. Will you work to stop the sprawl – giving preference to development on brownfield sites and excluding development on agricultural land grades 1 to 3?

## Responses:

The results are tabulated ... in the order in which they were received. Yes means Yes; No means No; and N\_S means Not Sure.

We said we would publish up to 1,000 words of comment per candidate - \* means please see detailed comment below where the unedited comments from the candidates are shown.

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Party (Reading East / West)</i>	<b>1/. Support Climate Change Targets</b>	<b>2/. Support Climate Change Negotiations</b>	<b>3/. Improve Cold Homes to Level C?</b>	<b>4/. Support Public Transport</b>	<b>5/. Support Heathrow Expansion?</b>	<b>6/. Land Use - Stop the Sprawl?</b>
<b>Rob White</b>	<b>Green (East)</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Christine Forrester</b>	<b>UKIP (East)</b>	Yes *	Yes *	Yes *	Yes *	No *	Yes *
<b>Suzie Ferguson</b>	<b>Independent (West)</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N_S *	Yes
<b>Jenny Woods</b>	<b>Lib-Dem (East)</b>	Yes *	Yes *	Yes *	Yes *	No *	Yes *

### Detailed Comments from Christine Forrester (UKIP)

- 1. Support Climate Change Targets:** Yes...BUT China, America, Russia and India MUST also agree otherwise there is no point since the % caused by the UK is minimal compared to them and so making vast UK improvements will not give us the result the world needs.
- 2. Support Climate Change Negotiations:** Yes...BUT no good unless ALL countries agree and this will be the stumbling block. We don't want to disadvantage ourselves in a world market by being the only "saint" amidst a world of "sinners".

3. **Improve Cold Homes:** Yes...BUT we have planning rules/laws on listed buildings which make it difficult to improve a low EPC. (e.g. double glazing etc.)
4. **Support Public Transport:** Yes...BUT it should never have been privatised by LABOUR. Even Margaret Thatcher left the rail in Public ownership, but Blair in his "wisdom" privatised it but effectively had to renationalise Railtrack due to safety problems (e.g. Reading-Paddington railway deaths)
5. **Heathrow Expansion:** No...The need for passengers entering London airports requires study. Many regional airports have capacity to increase a little, however if we take back control of our borders and had managed migration then the need for increases in air traffic could be held back.
6. **Stop the Sprawl:** Yes...Brownfield and alternative land uses is one answer, however if we manage migration then the need for new homes will reduce.

#### **Detailed Comments from Suzie Ferguson (Independent)**

5. **Heathrow Expansion:** I cannot give a serious Yes/No answer to this until I have had a chance to review both the environmental impact assessment for additional runway at both locations and seen more about the arguments for and against. We do need to support jobs in this area, but not if the environmental cost is too high.

#### **Detailed Comments from Jenny Woods (Liberal Democrat)**

1. **Support Climate Change Targets:** YES – Liberal Democrats have always been the party of the environment. We have written its importance into our founding constitution *“We believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long term continuity of life in all its forms.”*

In the last parliament, we created the world’s first Green Investment Bank, to help drive the green economy and reach emissions targets; in the next parliament, we want to expand the Bank’s remit and increase its borrowing powers to enable even more green investment.

In fact, in recognition of the importance of limiting carbon emissions, Liberal Democrats want to push even harder than the target set in the Climate Change Act 2008. In our manifesto we set out “Five Green Laws” that we want to pass in the next parliament. One of these is a Zero Carbon Britain Act to bring net UK greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.

2. **Support Climate Change Negotiations:** YES – Liberal Democrats are proud to be an internationalist party and to work with other countries across the world to tackle climate change. Ecosystems cross political boundaries and pollution does not respect national borders. Challenges like global climate change are too large for individual countries to take on alone.

We will work to secure agreement on a global climate treaty at the 2015 Conference. To make this a fair, global deal we will push for this to be supported by a well-financed Climate Fund to assist poorer countries tackle and adapt to climate change.

- 3. Improve Cold Homes:** YES – insulating homes to improve energy efficiency also improves quality of life and health, as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, so we support the target to improve rented properties to band C. We describe this support in our manifesto in another of our planned “Five Green Laws”, the Green Buildings Act. We are setting ambitious targets to improve not only all social and private rented homes but, to help those who are economically-disadvantaged, we will also set a statutory target to bring the homes of all fuel-poor households to Band C, our planned target is to achieve this by 2027.
- 4. Support Public Transport:** YES – Liberal Democrats wish to improve the take up of public transport and to encourage people to cycle and walk more to improve air quality. Our manifesto describes plans to introduce a new national bus pass for 16-21 year olds which will give them 2/3 off the price of travel and we will continue to support free bus travel for pensioners. Another way we intend to improve emissions through our “Five Green Laws” is through a Green Transport Act which will set a requirement that every new bus should be an Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle from 2030.
- 5. Heathrow Expansion:** NO – Our manifesto sets out our opposition to any expansion of Heathrow, Stansted or Gatwick and to any new airport in the Thames Estuary, because of local issues of air and noise pollution. We do not wish to see any net increase in runways across the UK.
- 6. Stop the Sprawl:** YES – within Reading there are many brownfield sites, for example along the Basingstoke Road and within town centre redevelopments which can take many thousands of homes for local people. In our manifesto, Liberal Democrats set out how we will require Local Authorities to create 15 year plans for using such sites for housing development. Locally, it is also important we avoid building on flood plain.

We also recognise that there is enormous pent-up housing need in the UK so, to prevent urban sprawl, we wish to see this met through new garden cities to be built along the Oxford to Cambridge railway line, properly-designed around public transport and environmental considerations. Both locally and nationally, it is important that a significant fraction of this new housing be in the form of affordable homes.