



The Future of Our Libraries

Denise Craghill commented on behalf of the Green Party on the recent consultation about the future of York's libraries. Budget cuts proposed for the next two years amount to £450,000 or 20% of current funding. The plan is to put libraries and archives into a community benefit society outside the Council without any clear details as to how this would save money and keep our libraries open. We asked the following questions:



- how can a new organisation flourish when it starts off with a 20% cut in funding?
- if the main savings to be made, as suggested by the consultation, would be by sharing buildings with other organisations, why is it necessary to outsource the service to do that?
- what guarantees would there be against further swingeing cuts in future?
- what will happen if the new organisation is unable to balance its books?
- how will the pay and conditions of library staff be protected?
- how can we guarantee that libraries will continue to be located near where people live and in public or community buildings?

Our full response is on our website.

On 9th February, a group of local citizens concerned about the proposal to put the library service under the control of an arms-length organisation held a protest outside the Central Library (York Explore). For more information about the campaign, please e-mail yorkrighttework@gmail.com, or sign the petition on the council website: goo.gl/ztqwt

Council tax and housing benefit changes

Greens in York have called for action on changes to council tax and housing benefit from April onwards. The government has cut the support grant for council tax benefit by 10% which means that people aged under 65 who are on very low incomes are facing bills of £300 per year.

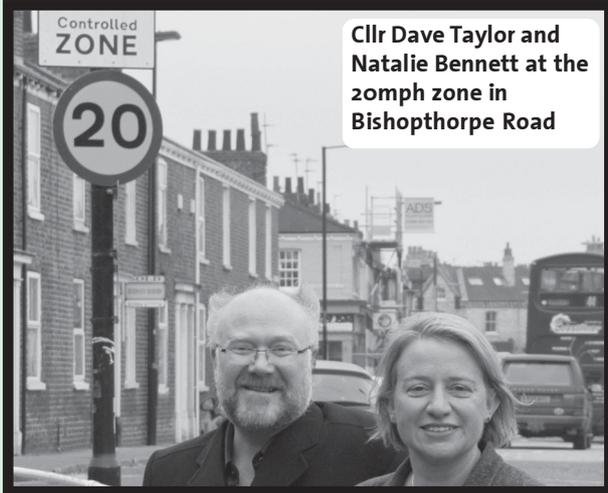
Nationally, the Green Party strongly opposes the government austerity programme which is driving

the changes. Locally, the Greens have called on the Labour cabinet to allocate money received from increased charges on empty and second homes to help low-paid people affected by higher council tax bills, which could substantially reduce the amount they are required to pay. Micklegate Green campaigner Andy Chase said: "Urgent action is needed. Those on low incomes or looking after children should not suffer to finance tax breaks for millionaires."

Greens were also amongst the participants in York's first Housing Summit in November, joining professionals and developers debating how best to meet demand for affordable, sustainable housing. Issues included the impact of growing demand for student accommodation, problems of mortgage finance, benefits changes, fuel poverty as well as land for new house building.

"We will oppose any watering down of space and quality standards – future generations will not thank us for higher energy bills, high maintenance and increased social costs just to placate today's house builders," said Green councillor Dave Taylor.





Green Leader Natalie Bennett visits York

Natalie Bennett, who took over from Caroline Lucas MP as the national Green Party Leader in September, addressed 130 people in a meeting at University of York. During her visit, Green councillors Andy D'Agorne and Dave Taylor took her on a cycle tour around York including a visit to the Arlight homeless hostel, Bishopthorpe Road zomph limit.

York Greens have welcomed the zomph scheme in the South Bank area. Green councillors helped to gain the first pilot zomph area in York in Fishergate and local Greens have supported other schemes including collecting signatures on the South Bank. We are delighted that the Labour cabinet is honouring its pledge to extend zomph schemes across the city.

Contact us!

Please use the form if you would like us to get in touch.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____ E-mail _____

- I would like to raise a local issue
- Please send me information about the Greens

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Rat Race pay for damage to Knavesmire following Green pressure

Following the "Gunpower Plod" event on November 5th, event organizers Rat Race have finally agreed to pay for repairs to the The Knavesmire and adjacent cycle track which were damaged during the event, Green Party Councillor Andy D'Agorne had demanded that it should not be left to taxpayers to foot the bill.



The event was run by a private company, Rat Race Adventure Sports, who were given the use of the Knavesmire rent-free.

Heavy cranes moving over the soft, waterlogged ground left deep ruts in the grass and also opened up dangerous holes in the surface of the Sustrans Cycle Route that runs through the Knavesmire. Both required remedial work, which was initially paid for by the Parks and Open Spaces department at the Council out of their emergency budget.

There was also a huge queue on the day for registration for the run, and many participants struggled to get in for the 6pm start on a Monday night. The timetable for the event slipped and many with small children were unable to stay for the finale, leading to the organisers issuing a general apology. Councillor D'Agorne had also raised concerns about safety at the event.

Millennium Bridge now on snow clearing route

After much cajoling, the Council now has New Walk and Millennium Bridge on its snow-clearing routes.



Green Cllr Andy D'Agorne has praised the council for the clearing of paths and cycle tracks in the area around the Millennium Bridge during recent snowfalls. He said, "When the council carried out a review of winter maintenance in 2010, I appealed for the bridge to be included in the clearing routes. The response then was that 'nothing could be done' for fear of corroding the steel structure. Now, use of small machines combined with a special non corrosive de-icing agent is helping to keep the bridge safe and passable for the hundreds of children, parents, and workers who use it each day on foot and on bikes." Meanwhile, Cllr D'Agorne has been keeping up the pressure for the lighting and CCTV camera to be kept in working order, despite the difficulties caused by floodwater damage to the system.