



# Norfolk Green Party



# Manifesto

## Norfolk County Council Elections: 2013

# ► Executive Summary

*Local elections will be held on 2nd May 2013.*

*These elections give residents of Norfolk the opportunity to vote for someone to represent their community on Norfolk County Council. Our first two Green county councillors were elected in 2005. There are now six Green Party councillors on Norfolk County Council, making us the third largest party.*

*The Green Party is the only party that can be counted on to oppose cuts to services and speak up for local residents. The Green Party believes that these cuts are economically misguided and incompatible with the government's stated commitment to localism. We will continue to lobby hard for keeping well-run, responsive public services.*

## **Green Party Vision for our Society:**

The Green Party aims to provide wellbeing and prosperity for all within the limits of our planet. A caring, cooperative and inclusive Green society would provide everyone with opportunities to do valuable work, pursue their interests, interact with their community, keep learning and enjoy nature.

### **Core Value: Protecting our Common Environment**

Our society and economy are part of the ecosystem we depend on to survive and flourish. We need to protect this for our children, future generations and the other species that share it. This means recognising limits to the use of resources and to the capacity of the environment to absorb our waste. Dangerous climate change, caused by increases in human greenhouse gas emissions, is already causing thousands of deaths across the world. This is just one of the severe risks we face if we fail to recognise these limits.

Instead of constantly pushing against these limits and gambling our futures, we need to work for an economic system that aims for the safest and healthiest future for everyone by protecting the common environment we all depend on. For example, we need to work towards a zero-carbon society.

► *These core values are themes that underlie and cut across all the policies in our local manifesto. For this reason you will not find separate sections on these issues.*

### **Core Value: Equality and Social Justice**

Once we recognise that we live on a finite planet with limited resources, it is clear that we need to share these between us far more equally, locally, nationally and internationally, so that everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life. But more equal societies are also happier, healthier and have lower levels of poverty. Rather than aiming for continuous economic growth which lines the pockets of the wealthiest individuals and corporations, we need to share the wealth we have more fairly, as part of a society that cooperates rather than competes.

The Green Party therefore believes that equality and social justice are fundamentally important, and all our policies strive to promote this.

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## Making a Difference in Norfolk:

In the past four years since the last county election, we have achieved a lot. For example, the council has taken up our proposal to create a publicly owned **Energy Services Company**, to generate renewable energy from solar panels and wind turbines on council property and provide income for the County Council to lessen the impact of government cuts. We have **campaigning against day care centre closures** and ensured that these vital services are kept running.

The County Council is controlled by the Conservatives. We know that they plan to cut local services: social services, education and transport budgets are all at risk. Please support the Green Party in this election to ensure that we can continue to make an impact at County Hall for another four years.

## Key Policies:

- ▶ Continue to oppose the **wholesale privatisation of public services** and lobby the County Council to resist, to the greatest extent possible, the service cuts imposed on local councils by the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition government.
- ▶ **Involve residents and local councillors more closely in decisions** that affect their local area. Meetings of unelected bodies spending public funds<sup>1</sup> to be held in public and subject to proper representation and scrutiny by local elected councillors.
- ▶ **Increase road safety:** press for the **trial 20 mph speed limits on residential streets to be expanded** across the city and county, and encourage eco driving skills to be more widely promoted.
- ▶ **Make public transport journeys cheaper, more accessible and easier** by bringing buses under council control using powers from the Local Transport Act. This would help to ensure reliable, comprehensive and reasonably-priced bus services across the county. Providing “real-time” information on all major bus routes would also make journeys easier.
- ▶ **Support the development of local businesses and local jobs**, for example by **promoting a formal local currency for Norfolk** along the lines of the Bristol pound<sup>2</sup>, which will enable local spending to be respent in the area.
- ▶ **Endorse the principles of reduce, re-use, recycle, recover, treatment and disposal**, in that order of priority, for all policies and practices in resource/waste management across the county, **without use of incineration**. We oppose the proposed Kings Lynn Incinerator, which poses significant environmental and health risks and is not wanted by the local community.
- ▶ **Promote clean renewable energy for Norfolk**, including community energy schemes. Work with colleges to provide and promote the teaching of much needed skills relating to energy saving and renewable energy. Push for increased council investment in apprenticeships, especially in green technology, linking with the County Council’s new Energy Services Company initiated by Green Party councillors.
- ▶ Lobby for all 127 **Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)** to be included in the government’s consultation, to form an **ecologically coherent network**. This should include, in particular, the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds, with its unique chalk reef features

<sup>1</sup> Such as the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Norfolk Waste Partnership and the Greater Norfolk Development Partnership (GNDP)

<sup>2</sup> See the Bristol Pound’s official website, <http://bristolpound.org>

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# ► Introduction: Protecting and Promoting Public Services for All

Local elections will be held on 2nd May 2013. These elections give residents of Norfolk the opportunity to vote for someone to represent their community on Norfolk County Council. We have six councillors on Norfolk County Council, making us the third largest group. We have achieved a lot over the past four years, even though we do not run the council. For example, we have **persuaded the administration to set up an Energy Services Company**, to generate renewable energy from solar panels and wind turbines on council property, providing income for the County Council to lessen the impact of government cuts. To make council meetings more accessible we **successfully lobbied the administration to record meetings of full council** and post them on the website. We've come so far since getting our first two Green Party County Councillors in 2005. It is vital to keep up the momentum to continue to increase our influence at County Hall.

The Green Party are the only party that can be counted on to oppose cuts to services and speak up for local residents. We will continue to lobby hard for keeping well-run, responsive public services. Norfolk County Council is losing approximately 50% of its annual budget from central government over 6 years to date due to public spending cuts imposed by the Conservative and Lib Dem national coalition. The Green Party believes that these cuts are economically misguided and incompatible with the government's stated commitment to localism. The Labour government's policy of stealth privatisation has been continued under the Conservatives and Lib Dems. The Green Party believes that public service provision should be driven by people's needs, not shareholder profits, and that privatised public services offer poor value for money. We will continue to campaign against the cuts at a national level, but we will also continue to strongly oppose Norfolk County Council's implementation of cuts to frontline services over the next four years.

Although we recognise that councils face difficult decisions in the years ahead, cuts to such important services are still avoidable. Norfolk County Council has cut services by over £135m in three years, and is now undertaking a review to cut services by a further £125m over the next three years. This risks reducing the council to a body that manages out-sourced private-sector contracts while retaining very little in-house service capability. Already large swathes of social services, both for children and adults, have been cut. Good quality care of the elderly is increasingly important now that people are living longer. Preventative healthcare and mental health services for families and children are especially at risk.

## To help protect public services, Green Party councillors will:

- Lobby the County Council to **resist, to the greatest extent possible, the service cuts imposed on local councils** by the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition government. Where the Coalition leaves no choice (setting an illegal budget will only result in the council being taken over by the government), we will seek to **protect services for children, vulnerable adults and those on low incomes** – if necessary by a modest increase in Council Tax.
- **Oppose the wholesale privatisation of public services**, and strive to ensure that service providers are democratically accountable and motivated not by profit but by the needs of users and the broader public good.
- **Explore creative new funding sources** in order to offset some of the impact of Coalition cuts on public services in Norfolk, such as the Energy Savings Company (ESCO) initiated by Green Party councillors on the County Council to provide local renewable energy and generate income for the council.
- Continue to **represent the interests of local residents** where public services need to be improved in their neighbourhoods, for example, where there are concerns about the impacts of street lights being switched off.
- **Push the County Council to keep to their stated commitment to keeping**

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## **Introduction: Protecting and Promoting Public Services for All (cont.)**

**libraries and museums open.** For example, Green Party councillors welcome the re-opening of the Bridewell Museum and the County's decision to work with local communities to help maintain it.

- ▶ **Oppose the Academies agenda** which threatens to undermine state education provision. All schools should be good schools, and struggling schools should be given more support by the local authority.
- ▶ **Resist the policies of 'creeping privatisation'** pursued by the current council administration, under the guise of 'substantial service redesign'.

## **1. A Democratic and Participatory Council**

The Green Party is concerned about the undemocratic and exclusive way that the County Council is run. Under the cabinet system, decisions are made by a tiny minority of County and District councillors from the ruling parties, many of whom live a long way from the areas affected. Consultations with key stakeholders are often limited to large organisations with resources and influence and fail to take into account the views of smaller organisations or the residents most affected by changes. Proper council scrutiny of policies and decisions is side-lined. Increasingly, decisions about what happens in Norfolk are made by local partnerships, many of which are self-appointed and led by the private sector. Examples include the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Norfolk Waste Partnership and the Greater Norfolk Development Partnership (GNDP). These bodies can take major policy and funding decisions, even though they are unaccountable and include few elected councillors.

Similarly, Green Party councillors are worried about the governance arrangements for the proposed City Deals bid<sup>3</sup>. If this bid succeeds, an as yet unknown body - possibly a 'super LEP' with very few elected councillors - will control

tens of millions of pounds of Government funds previously held by Whitehall. We want these structures to be abolished, for the County Council to be run in a much more democratic way, and for residents and communities to have more direct involvement in decisions that affect them.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Push for a return to the cross-party committee system of local government, that existed before the last Labour government introduced the Cabinet system, and which has been reintroduced by Brighton and Hove Council under Green Party control.
- ▶ Call on the County Council to involve residents and local councillors more closely in decisions that affect their local area. Issues where strong local feeling is demonstrated should be debated in full council and account should be taken of local polls.
- ▶ Continue to lobby for all committee and full council meetings to be live streamed, or failing that to be audio recorded and filmed so that residents can view them on online.
- ▶ Continue pressing the County Council for residents to have the opportunity to raise their concerns by asking public questions at meetings of the full council.
- ▶ Call for involvement of the community in decisions on local spending through participatory budgeting.
- ▶ Press the County Council for the number of signatures required for petitions to be considered by full council to be reduced from 5,000 to 1,000, and for a senior council officer to answer questions at an Overview and Scrutiny panel meeting to be reduced from 2,500 to 750, in line with practice in Norwich City Council.
- ▶ Call on Norfolk County Council to investigate creating a new citizens' jury that will advise on how to 'future-proof' council policies. If the idea is found to be workable and affordable, the citizens 'super-jury' should start sitting during the next 4-year term of the County Council. We strongly believes that our present political system is too short-termist, and that we need to find ways of representing

<sup>3</sup> Details of the bid so far can be found on the Norwich City Council website, at <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/news/Pages/CityDealOnTheCards.aspx>

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## **A Democratic and Participatory Council (cont.)**

children and unborn future generations who are affected by the decisions we take now.

- ▶ Demand strong regulation of top-down, undemocratic partnerships in order to guarantee public participation and a good, cross-party representation of councillors.

### **Achievements:**

*As a result of a proposal by Green Party councillors, the main monthly county council meetings are now audio recorded so that residents can listen to them on the council website.*

*Green Party City and County councillors successfully lobbied for the Greater Norwich Development Partnership to hold its board meetings in public.*

*In 2011 the County Council introduced a plan to turn off street lights between midnight and 5am without consulting residents. Green Party councillors in Norwich convinced the council to consult residents in all areas where this was proposed, and this resulted in some of the city centre areas being taken out of the plan and those street lights remaining on all night.*

*Green Party councillors secured agreement from the cabinet that the new Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board meetings would be held in public and their agendas and minutes published on the County Council website. This will enable public and local member questions to be submitted as at any other council committee meeting.*

## **2. A Resilient Local Economy**

The Green Party remains committed to maintaining, and where possible strengthening, a local economy that has been weakened by the job cuts of large enterprises. The policies of the Conservative-led County Council have exacerbated the effects of the continuing recession. We believe that locally based businesses, together with the renewable and energy efficiency sectors, are the most important aspects of a resilient future economy. Our policies will make it possible for

these sectors to prosper while at the same time protecting the environment. The Green Party believes that the controversial and ideologically based cost cutting measures pursued by the County Council, which include the loss of 2,500 jobs with more to come, will further weaken the local economy and create more hardship for working people and their families. We will seek to protect jobs while creating a home-based local economy that uses local resources whenever possible and is not overly dependent upon the whims of multinational companies, large banks and central Government.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Oppose Coalition Government attempts to deprive local taxpayers of funds to which they are entitled. For example, the government has replaced some local authority funding with a one-off grant to freeze Council Tax, making it more difficult to raise taxes locally in order to maintain services and jobs.
- ▶ Support small, locally-based businesses, including those engaged in the production and distribution of local food and craft products. Encourage the development of farmers' and other markets and independent shops, and of the increasingly important cultural, artistic and literary sectors. These aims can be achieved by opposing largescale development and by pushing for the County Council's procurement processes to be made more accessible to small, local businesses.
- ▶ Encourage the third sector of the economy (the voluntary and informal sector), and assist not-for-profit bodies made up of local people by providing selective grants and the use of local authority resources and expertise, where they exist, to aid development.
- ▶ Seek to increase local investment and the circulation of local finance through a strengthened alternative and ethical banking network, including community Banks, mutuals and cooperatives, and a strengthened Credit Union network.
- ▶ Promote a formal local currency for Norfolk roughly along the lines of the Bristol pound, which will enable money spent locally to go back into the local economy and support the

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## A Resilient Local Economy (cont.)

development of local businesses and local jobs. We will oppose the expansion of national chain stores which have been demonstrated to take money and jobs away from local areas.

- ▶ Work within the County Council to establish a register of ethical and green companies in Norfolk, to be made available to consumers, business organisations and the media.
- ▶ Press the County Council to initiate comprehensive environmental accounting systems and to submit itself to a Social and Environmental Audit of its activities and accounts.
- ▶ Encourage diversification of the rural economy to create a range of opportunities for young people. We will support non-agricultural jobs that strengthen rural communities. For example, we will continue to argue for increased council investment in apprenticeships, especially in green technology, linking with the Energy Services Company.

### Achievements:

*Green Party County Councillors initiated a huge change by persuading the administration to invest in setting up one of the biggest publicly-owned Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) in the country, Norfolk Energy Futures Ltd. The company has plans to install over 30 wind turbines on county-owned farms and solar panels on council buildings. This will create an ongoing revenue stream from the feed-in tariffs, which will help offset the government cuts to public services as well as lowering our carbon footprint.*

*We supported the cross-party efforts to successfully lobby central government for additional investment in high-speed rural broadband for Norfolk. This will boost rural employment and reduce carbon emissions from cars by enabling organisations to function effectively in rural locations by decreasing the need to travel.*

<sup>4</sup> Community Supported Agriculture schemes like Norwich Farmshare are exciting examples of how communities can be involved in producing food locally. See [www.norwichfarmshare.co.uk](http://www.norwichfarmshare.co.uk) for more information.

## 3. Community Food and Thriving Local Agriculture

We support a food supply which is sustainable and secure, ensuring nutritious and healthy food at a price that is fair to farmers, workers, distributors and consumers. Food production should be based on good animal welfare and ethical relationships throughout the supply chain. Local food markets should be an important part of the food economy. We will promote local food growing and supply chains. We will resist plans to grow crops for bio fuels or biomass energy on land suitable for food production.

### Green Party councillors will:

- ▶ Encourage the County Council to work with local agricultural experts such as Easton College and local farmers to promote the use of science in the development of sustainable agriculture and good animal welfare. The Green Party is clear that a sustainable food supply can be ensured without the use of genetically modified (GM) organisms in our food.
- ▶ Support the development of a Local Food Plan for growing food. Direct contact between growers and consumers will be encouraged through community box schemes and farmers' markets. Support a local, co-operative approach to organic food production which will encourage community supported initiatives<sup>4</sup> while maximising public involvement and marketing.
- ▶ Encourage community production of food on all suitable sites that are currently underused, with the ultimate aim of enabling all communities to have access to land they can use for growing food to meet their basic needs. Schools in particular should be encouraged to work with children to grow their own food.
- ▶ Oppose the sale or amalgamation of County Council owned smallholdings. Instead, we will work to increase their number, diversity and total area and promote council smallholdings

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## Community Food and Thriving Local Agriculture (cont.)

as a way of helping people without capital to become farmers and growers.

- ▶ Lobby for County Council procurement policies which favour local producers and suppliers with good animal welfare standards and sound environmental policies - including those who procure food rejected by supermarkets for aesthetic reasons. We will push for County Council caterers to adopt the Code for Sustainable Food and to provide for restricted diets.
- ▶ Recently the County Council bought RAF Coltishall. Whilst this was very controversial, we would now like to see the project going forward positively: it offers a publicly owned asset that can be developed for small-scale farms and allotments, renewable energy production (including a significant solar farm), heritage and tourism. We believe the council should publish a business plan at the earliest opportunity. We will critically scrutinise this plan and any developments proposed to ensure maximum sustainable use of the facility.

### **Achievements:**

*In 2009 the County Council planned to sell off thousands of acres of farms that were developed in the early 20th century. Green councillors opposed this, both because the livelihoods and retirements of the tenants needed protecting, and because the farms are public assets that should be properly managed. Sporadic sell offs are not the best way to fund public services. Instead, we proposed a vision for the long-term future of county farms as publicly-owned resources providing new livelihoods in Norfolk based on small-scale agriculture and renewable energy production. The council dropped its plans, and these assets have been preserved.*

*Green councillors successfully lobbied the County Council to procure more locally grown food for Norfolk schools. We will also push for a greater proportion of organic food.*

## 4. Education, Schools and Lifelong Learning: Access for All

Norfolk has 428 schools including 24 academies and 1 free school (at the time of writing). The Government continues to exploit fear surrounding the budget deficit to justify large spending cuts to key services. We believe this to be fundamentally wrong: children are not responsible for the irresponsible behaviour of the financial sector or subsequent government bail-outs. We will fight to maintain funding for education at all levels, from Sure Start Centres to adult education. Everyone deserves a positive, fulfilling learning experience which prepares them for life in a rapidly changing world. The County Council also currently runs the Adult Education and Guidance Service, which delivers training and qualifications to around 17,000 learners across Norfolk. Continued learning in adulthood is beneficial for wellbeing and continued mental improvement as well as for keeping skills up to date with the demands of the workplace. As such it is very highly valued by the Green Party.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Call on the County Council to ensure that nurseries are fully supported in implementing the new statutory requirement to create additional nursery places for disadvantaged two year olds. Closing the achievement gap between young children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is crucial to improving their life chances and we welcome the new rules. However, many nurseries in Norfolk are already heavily over-subscribed and will need further council support to cope with the sudden increase in childcare places.
- ▶ Continue to oppose the overt dismantling of state education through this government's Academies agenda. Often, Academy status is forced upon schools when governors, teachers and parents oppose the move. We will call on the County Council to listen to and defend struggling schools; they need to receive more support and input from the local education authority, not to have their funding passed

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## **Education, Schools and Lifelong Learning: Access for All. (cont.)**

to an unaccountable private sponsor.

- ▶ Press the council in the short-term to make the consultation and transition for academies completely transparent, ensuring that key stakeholders have genuine input into the decision.
- ▶ Work in the long-term to create a pathway back to local authority control, and re-allocation of funding, so that schools that no longer wish to hold academy status can rejoin the state education system. We will oppose free schools where they adversely affect the intakes or budgets of existing schools.
- ▶ Urge the County Council to oppose the government's proposal to scrap the national pay scale for teachers. Currently, nearly half of all teachers leave the profession within five years of qualifying, and this number is likely to increase dramatically if these proposals are pushed through. We know decent salaries are essential, both for the recovery of our local economy and to ensure the stability and continuity of our children's education. We need more teachers and better funding for schools in order to create smaller classes and raise standards.
- ▶ Push for the County Council to follow the lead of other comparable authorities in tackling child poverty by commissioning a pilot study to extend to all children the provision of free school meals - including breakfasts, which should be nutritious and cater for restricted diets. We believe this will make a substantial difference to concentration and performance and help to raise standards.
- ▶ Lobby to increase dialogue between employers and secondary schools to ensure school leavers are better placed to make informed decisions about future careers. At the same time, we also need to equip young people with the rounded education and life skills that will enable them to create their own innovative and sustainable enterprises.
- ▶ Protect funding for the Adult Education and Guidance Service and, where appropriate, work closely in partnership with other

providers to improve the quality of courses.

- ▶ Work with colleges to provide and promote the teaching of skills related to energy saving and renewable energy.
- ▶ Call on the County Council to use new powers granted by the Sustainable Communities Act to ask central government for the devolved power and the financial means to equip local people with the specific skills and education needed by local businesses and other employers. We support the campaign to create a million climate jobs nationally, and believe our approach would give the county the means to take control over its economic and environmental future through lifelong learning.

### **Achievements:**

*Green Party councillors persuaded the County Council to purchase land for Henderson Green Primary school in Norwich to have a playing field, the first investment of this kind for many years.*

*The County Council developed plans to close down the popular and excellently rated special needs Parkside School in Norwich. Green councillors worked with parents and teachers on a significant campaign which resulted in the school remaining as a Special Needs school, and it has since thrived.*

## **5. Children's Care, Health and Well-Being**

The best place for children to be raised is within a safe and loving family setting. This should be their own or their extended family unless there are issues which prevent that. The Green Party believes that every possible support should be given to enable families to achieve a safe and secure environment for their children. Where children cannot be within their own family, the next best option is secured through adoption and long-term fostering. It is not easy to provide children with a secure home, so families need to be supported in doing this. Some children will need much more intensive help to achieve a secure adulthood and this should be available as close to their home as possible. Community and voluntary groups have valuable expertise and

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## *Children's Care, Health and Well-Being (cont.)*

their full involvement in service provision should be encouraged, but specialist services for children and families should be provided on a not-for-profit basis, contrary to current arrangements.

There are severe ongoing problems with child poverty in Norfolk. 27,000 children in Norfolk live in poverty. 18% of children in year six are obese. Providing good, healthy food in schools and opportunities to participate in sport would assist in tackling poverty and obesity. The Green Party's Food and Agriculture policies particularly encourage local procurement, local food production and fruit and vegetable patches. We would encourage all leisure and sports facilities and sports clubs to introduce attractive activity sessions for children as part of their corporate responsibility and as a means of involving their parents.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Ask the County Council to lobby central government for additional financial support to fund the creation of adequate provision for Norfolk children needing a safe placement within the county. Existing County Council resources are insufficient to meet a constantly rising demand of children needing either adoption or fostering.
- ▶ Continue to pressure the County Council to invest in early intervention measures such as family support units in order to prevent later problems and stem the rising demand for placements. The County Council's withdrawal of support for services like the Unthank Family Centre in Norwich was opposed by Green councillors and has only made things worse.
- ▶ Challenge the new Health and Wellbeing Board to prioritise the health benefits for children and young people of regular walking and cycling, and encourage take-up at an early age to tackle childhood obesity and set up good habits for adult life.
- ▶ Push for the County Council to follow the lead of other comparable authorities in tackling child poverty by commissioning a pilot study to extend to all children the provision of free school meals - including breakfasts, which should be nutritious and cater for

restricted diets. We believe this will make a substantial difference to concentration and performance and help to raise standards. Schools should also be encouraged to work with children to grow their own food.

- ▶ Resist the outsourcing of children's services to commercial providers. The Green Party believes that service provision should be driven not by the profit motive but by the needs of children. When services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) are outsourced, we will seek to ensure that service quality is maintained or improved and that the skills of public service professionals are retained.

### **Achievements:**

*Green Party councillors persuaded the County Council to purchase land for Henderson Green Primary school in Norwich to have a playing field, the first investment of this kind for many years.*

## **6. Adult Care, Health and Well-Being.**

The Green Party is very concerned about the ongoing threat of cuts to social care and has been at the forefront of campaigns to protect services. Social care for adults is likely to remain a hugely concerning area of the council's activity for the foreseeable future. Successive national governments have ducked the issue of funding social care, a problem that is becoming ever more acute as older people and those with disabilities are living longer. Care and treatment for the growing numbers of people with dementia is an area needing particular attention. The Local Government Association has calculated that the imbalance between projected growth in demand for social care and proposed cuts to funding will force councils to cut all other services by as much as 80% according to some estimates. The Green Party therefore works at a national level to highlight the need for a funding solution that ensures sustainable social care services into the future. Other important changes to social care provision are underway. Personal budgets aim to give people more control over the care

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## **Adult Care, Health and Well-Being (cont.)**

they receive, while more people will receive care at home in order to reduce the need for residential care. In future, care services will be expected to work more closely with the NHS.

Green Party councillors are also concerned about the Mental Health support service, which is under particular pressure and has suffered from a disproportionately high level of budget reductions. Of all the areas of care in Norfolk it is the most closely integrated with healthcare, because the NHS provides social care on behalf of the council. This means that current proposals to cut the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS budget for mental health by 20% with the loss of 500 jobs will have a considerable impact on social care provision. Those with low to medium needs are already finding it harder to access the support they need to prevent their conditions from getting worse. Additionally, the service is not well enough resourced to provide assessments for all those who need them.

From this year the County Council has new responsibilities for public health. A Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board has been set up with representatives from the County and District Councils and clinical commissioning groups. The meetings of this new board will be subject to the same rules that enable local councillors and members of the public to ask questions at council meetings. Green Party policies are designed to promote healthier living in all aspects of life, including urban and rural environments, workplaces, agriculture and food, education, transport and local economies. We will challenge the Health and Wellbeing Board to promote healthy lifestyles, a balanced diet and regular exercise for both body and mind.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Lobby for service quality to be maintained across public, private and voluntary sector providers, and services to remain focused on the needs of users, not profits for shareholders.
- ▶ Argue for a balance between the user's right to self-directed support and the need for continued support of community services. For example, we would aim to

facilitate the pooling of personal budgets to ensure that day centres are kept open.

- ▶ Push for a cap on day-care charges, which are currently funded from people's personal incomes.
- ▶ Support measures to ensure the safe transfer of users from hospital to social care.
- ▶ Seek a firm commitment from the council that services for those with substantial needs will be maintained.
- ▶ Press the council to establish minimum standards for the terms and conditions of care workers, which should include training in the skills necessary to provide the required services.
- ▶ Demand free provision of residential care for people who need it, without requiring them to sell their homes to pay for it.
- ▶ Strive to protect the many prevention services that are now threatened with devastating cuts, including day care, information, advice and advocacy, carers' support, assistive technology, luncheon clubs, sheltered housing wardens and sensory support. These services should be incorporated into a wider prevention strategy to work fully in conjunction with new council responsibilities in the field of public health.
- ▶ Push for the reversal of the planned cuts to mental health services. Drop-in services, day activities, therapies and other well-being services should be protected for users at every level of need. We will also press the council to reverse privatisations and cuts to home support for people with mental health problems.
- ▶ Propose a range of measures that would improve the health of individuals and communities, including: -
  - Working with district councils to cut alcohol consumption by reducing the number of outlets selling alcohol and reducing licensing hours.
  - Fighting obesity, which affects 25% of all adults in Norfolk, by promoting our local food initiative and making healthy, local food available in all council establishments.

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## Adult Care, Health and Well-Being (cont.)

- Promoting good mental health by encouraging users to get involved in public services and encouraging the use of council facilities for community social activities and physical exercise.
- Pressing the new Health and Wellbeing Board to prioritise the health benefits of regular walking and cycling and remove the barriers that prevent people from making these a part of their everyday lives.

### **Achievements:**

*Green councillors campaigned successfully for the day care services provided at the Essex and Silver Rooms to be continued at these and other locations.*

*We played a major role in the campaign to maintain prevention services. This has resulted in a £5 million reduction to the planned cuts and the setting up of a £3.5 million prevention fund. Cuts to the Sensory Support Service were also halved.*

*Maintaining previously threatened care services for those with substantial needs is now a council priority following focused campaigning by the Green Party, other organisations such as Age UK and local residents.*

*Greens were first to highlight the dangers of threatened cuts to the council's own Quality Assurance Service, which checks on the quality of social care. Following a six month campaign, the planned cuts were withdrawn.*

*Greens continue to raise the issue of inadequate long-term funding for social care. The council has agreed to better reflect this in its risk management and contribute to the wider national campaign by local government to find a long term solution for social care funding.*

*Green councillors played a constructive role on working groups looking at home care, integration of care services with the NHS, and the future of day care.*

*We also facilitated talks between the council and mental health care providers to ensure better and more sensitive communication between providers and service users.*

## 7. Community Safety, Policing and Fire Service

The Green Party opposed the creation of the Police Commissioner position, arguing that there are dangers associated with a single politician being given so much power over the police and that all local public services should be accountable to the people through elected councillors. However, Green Party councillors will scrutinise and constructively engage with the new elected commissioner using their place on the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel. We believe that, because crime has social causes, the PCC should prioritise crime prevention and should be working to bring the voluntary and family services together. This means early intervention and preventative work with a focus on restorative justice. Green councillors have also worked actively to protect front-line services in reviews of the Fire and Rescue service.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Lobby for the police to focus on the prevention of crime through multi-agency working on issues such as inequality, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, road safety and housing.
- ▶ Call on the police to work closely with other agencies on key issues. Norfolk Police helped establish the country's first Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC - the Harbour Centre) and the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH). Protecting services such as these, and budgets for their commissioning in the future, must be an absolute priority.
- ▶ Press for the police to develop their approach to mental health issues. With government cuts putting huge pressure on mental health services, the police will be coming across more people with mental health problems who need support. Police officers should be trained to recognise this and get people the support they need.
- ▶ Promote action to tackle domestic violence and hate crimes.
- ▶ Push for further work to build on Norfolk's

*(continued over)*

## **Community Safety, Policing and Fire Service (cont.)**

success in restorative justice, and further development of the 180 Degree Norfolk project that provides support for offenders and helps to prevent re-offending. We will aim to help Norfolk Police expand their work in preventative methods and will challenge every threatened cut to these services.

- ▶ Lobby for residents to have a say in setting police priorities in their local areas, contact with their local policing teams, and a range of opportunities to give feedback on the work of the police.
- ▶ Continue to push for police and fire services to be run as good quality public services. We will resist attempts to privatise them.

### **Achievements:**

*Green party councillors have consistently represented the concerns of local residents regarding community safety and anti-social behaviour to local police teams, resulting in problems being given priority and additional police patrols assigned to help tackle them on numerous occasions.*

*Green Party councillors successfully submitted a motion for the cabinet of Norwich City Council to work more with the police to avoid confrontational disturbances at local demonstrations. We want to enable protests in Norwich that are peaceful, unlike recent examples in London.*

## **8. Planning and Infrastructure**

The coalition government has fundamentally changed the basis of planning by introducing a presumption in favour of development and suspending rules that required developers to provide affordable housing and pay for infrastructure and services. These changes will have a drastic effect on our county over time. Green councillors will lobby with other organisations such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) to reverse this policy, which is likely to lead to extensive development

of greenfield sites around towns and villages in Norfolk. Green space and wildlife habitats are threatened by projects like the Norwich Northern Distributor Road, which is designed to support new large-scale developments and linked to unsustainable economic growth. The Green Party recognises the need for further provision of affordable housing in Norfolk, but believes that much of this need can be met by redeveloping previously built-up land (brownfield sites) while ensuring that new developments enhance rather than detract from the character and biodiversity of our towns and villages. Communities also need fully developed services and infrastructure, including public transport, cycling and walking facilities and renewable energy production. These should be prioritised in the local planning framework.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Push for the development of real communities, not just housing. New housing developments must have good pedestrian, cycle and public transport access to local schools, shops and other community facilities.
- ▶ Argue for the full consideration of alternatives to proposed housing developments on greenfield sites, such as brownfield developments and bringing empty or underused buildings back into use.
- ▶ Call for a greater emphasis on social housing with affordable rents.
- ▶ Emphasise the need for careful management of the growth of towns and villages so that housing does not outstrip essential services and infrastructure.
- ▶ Press the County Council for maintenance and improvement of services and infrastructure, including much-needed repairs to footpaths.
- ▶ Lobby for new policies to limit the number of second homes in Norfolk, in order to preserve our housing stock for local people who need it most.
- ▶ Push for better public transport infrastructure. We reject the common assumption that improving our transport infrastructure means building new roads. Our money would be much better spent on an integrated public

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## Planning and Infrastructure (cont.)

transport system for Norfolk and measures to encourage cycling and walking. Even where cars are more necessary – for instance, in more remote rural areas – there is scope for giving financial and other incentives for car-sharing, car-train and car-bus alternatives, especially for journeys to and from Norwich (See also “Travel and Transport”).

- ▶ Call for City Deals funding to be used to create jobs in Norwich. We would like Norwich to become a centre of excellence for state-of-the-art ‘Passivhaus’ building technology, which reduces winter heating bills by 50%. This is now affordable as a build option for social housing. UEA and City College have the knowledge and expertise to provide skills and training for such an initiative and City Deals funding could make the difference. Innovative social housing with near-zero heating costs would solve the problem of fuel poverty for today’s residents and for future generations.
- ▶ Lobby for private motor vehicles to be excluded from Norwich city centre in order to reduce air pollution and congestion for residents, provide safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Achievements:**

*We worked hard with Norwich residents to ensure that plans to introduce a Bus Rapid Transport system on Dereham Road would not cause an overspill of traffic running into neighbouring streets. The council amended its plans to take account of these concerns after detailed work and lobbying by Green councillors.*

*When development proposals based on a presumption of car dependency and high-carbon infrastructure have been brought to Public Inquiries, Green councillors have been active in presenting sustainable alternatives based on clean, integrated transport.*

## 9. Travel and Transport

Norfolk Green Party has a comprehensive transport policy covering public transport, cycling, walking and car usage. These policies will provide quicker journeys, reduced congestion, lower carbon emissions as well as improvements in health and road safety. The party supports the creation of a sustainable modern public transport system and cycle network as an alternative to the continued development of road infrastructure for cars. We believe that building new roads like the Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NDR) to accommodate predicted traffic growth is a mistake. Examples from elsewhere have shown that new road projects of this kind simply generate more traffic.

### **Green Party councillors will: -**

- ▶ Call on the County Council to bring bus routes, fares and timetables under council control using the powers provided by the Local Transport Act. This would help to ensure reliable, comprehensive and reasonably-priced bus services across the county.
- ▶ Press the County Council to work with Norwich City Council to invest in pedestrian and cycle links from the City Centre and Thorpe Hamlet to Whitlingham Country Park, building new bridges over both rivers. This would enable the Sustrans Connect 2 project, which received £900,000 from the Big Lottery, to come to fruition.
- ▶ Push for rapid investment in completing a Norwich Cycling Network based on the Norwich Cycle Map launched in 2012. Redesign existing road space with cyclist-friendly features such as advanced stop lines.
- ▶ Call on the County Council to promote cycling as an effective means of transport for short journeys by providing information on cycle routes and secure cycle parking at public transport interchanges.
- ▶ Lobby the County Council to provide adequate funding for the development of pedestrian crossings, pedestrian-only walk areas and faster pedestrian responses at crossings and traffic lights.
- ▶ Promote increased road safety, for example

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## Travel and Transport (cont.)

by calling on the County Council to expand the trial of 20 mph speed limits on residential streets across the whole city and county.

- ▶ Push for assistance for householders and businesses to clear a walking pathway outside their properties in winter by providing snow and ice clearing equipment.
- ▶ Propose that the County Council encourage more walking with the help of websites and mobile apps – e.g. <https://walkit.com/cities/norwich/>
- ▶ Call for the creation of more pedestrian-friendly ‘play streets’ and rural ‘quiet lanes’ initiatives.
- ▶ Press the council to encourage and support car club and car-sharing schemes, e.g. Norfolk Car Club.
- ▶ Push for flexible and demand-responsive rural bus schemes to connect with the regular bus network.
- ▶ Encourage the council to improve the financial incentives for everyone (especially council staff) to walk, cycle, use public transport or car-share for their daily journeys to work – for example by extending the ‘car-free days’ scheme at County Hall.
- ▶ Strive to enhance the public transport experience, for example by lobbying the council to seek ways to provide free or cheap Wi-Fi access points at bus and rail stations and some bus-stops.
- ▶ Press the County Council to review and rationalise the provision of information services aimed at making public transport journeys easier, for example by providing “real-time” information on all major bus routes and integrating this with real-time information about other, connecting modes of transport.
- ▶ Seek to reduce the need to travel through lobbying for improved landline and mobile coverage in rural areas and free or cheap Wi-Fi access points in and near local community centres and shops.

- ▶ Demand that the County Council scrap major road-building plans such as the NDR, the Postwick Hub and full-dualling of the A47 and focus instead on making better use of existing road infrastructure. We support small-scale road building projects that serve sustainable new developments.
- ▶ Support the development of local rail services in Norfolk. We would press for a half-hourly service between Norwich and Great Yarmouth and the building of new local stations for commuters - e.g. a Dussindale Halt on the Norwich-Sheringham line.
- ▶ Lobby to reinstate a full County Council travel planning team to influence travel behaviour and advise businesses about travel plans.

### **Achievements:**

*Green councillors successfully lobbied national and regional government to make new road building conditional on the delivery of bus, walking and cycling infrastructure.*

*Green councillors successfully campaigned with residents against cuts to bus services in the Hellesdon Mill area of Norwich. This campaign saved the 29 bus route, which is the residents’ only bus service.*

*Green Party councillors contributed local knowledge to add specific routes to the Norwich Cycle Map, and influenced the final design and layout to make it more user-friendly.*

## 10. Safe, Reliable Energy and Renewables

The Green Party’s objectives are first to reduce demand for energy and then to supply what is needed from a mix of renewable sources. Demand reduction is the first step in filling the impending electricity gap, which will hit us when many of our current power stations reach retirement. Demand reduction can be achieved by building a society where there is less need to travel and all homes are built to the highest standard of energy efficiency. This will protect us from the price rises and energy security issues arising from our current dependence on imported oil and gas. We would like

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## *Safe, Reliable Energy and Renewables (cont.)*

to see the County Council leading the way in energy efficiency, renewable generation and decentralised distribution. In addition to supporting onshore and offshore wind power, we would advocate solar, wave and tidal energy in order to ensure a continuity of renewable supply. These can be introduced more rapidly than new nuclear power stations, pose no risks from hazardous waste and do not contribute to climate change.

### **Green Party councillors will:**

- ▶ Encourage community-led climate action schemes such as those being undertaken by Transition Towns<sup>5</sup>. The Transition Movement has achieved a huge amount without any government funding, but access to skills development training would further enable many volunteers within the movement to do positive work. Norfolk's efforts to create new jobs and apprenticeships should harness the skills and experience of this grassroots movement. A small amount of council funding applied to training could reap great rewards in creating additional employment opportunities in the renewable energy sector.
- ▶ Call for the reversal of central government cuts to the East of England Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre, and the use of funds from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to support this service.
- ▶ Work with local companies to set up wave and tidal energy infrastructure to complement wind power. There is a significant potential for generating tidal power in many areas around the Norfolk coast. This could be done very cheaply, by taking advantage of the power lines and infrastructure already in place for offshore wind.
- ▶ Push for greater support for community-owned onshore wind and solar farms as well as micro-generation on individual homes. Communities should benefit directly from renewable energy projects built in their locality.
- ▶ Encourage the County Council to do more with the new Norfolk Energy Futures Company, which was instigated by Green Party County

Councillors. Installing wind and solar power on council-owned property is a good start. We would like to see them extend this to all schools, community centres and offices as well as any other appropriate buildings where the council can either purchase or rent roof space from other organisations.

- ▶ Oppose the planned Sizewell C nuclear power station and other new nuclear energy projects. New nuclear stations cannot be brought on line in time to meet the coming electricity generation gap, and the legacy of harmful nuclear waste will affect future generations for thousands of years. The Green Party supports people's right to protest against plans to build new nuclear power stations.
- ▶ Oppose the extraction of shale gas by the process of hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking'. This unregulated process raises many potential environmental and health concerns, including groundwater contamination, air pollution from the use of carcinogenic and toxic chemicals, earth tremors and unsustainable levels of water usage. We are calling for the County Council to lobby the Secretary of State to impose a moratorium on fracking.

### **Achievements:**

*Green Party County Councillors initiated a huge change by persuading the administration to invest in setting up one of the biggest publicly-owned Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) in the country, Norfolk Energy Futures Ltd. The company has plans to install over 30 wind turbines on county-owned farms and solar panels on council buildings. This will create an ongoing revenue stream from the feed-in tariffs, which will help offset the government cuts to public services as well as lowering our carbon footprint.*

*The County Council has taken up Green councillors' ideas to improve the energy efficiency of the council. A range of measures is now being implemented on council property, from real-time monitoring of water consumption to energy saving measures in all Norfolk schools. Green councillors challenged the County Council's opposition to wind generation off the North Norfolk coast. At first the council made strategic*

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> for further information.

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## Safe, Reliable Energy and Renewables (cont.)

*planning objections to try to prevent development of off-shore wind farms like the Sheringham Shoal, but now the council promotes the development of the East Anglian 'Energy Coast'.*

*Green councillors successfully persuaded the council to set up a cross-party working group to establish the council's position on 'fracking' and consider its potential impact on Norfolk's environment and its contribution to carbon emissions.*

## 11. Reusing Resources and Zero Waste

Green Party councillors will follow the Waste Hierarchy principles of reduce, re-use, repair, recycle, recover, treatment and disposal, in that order of priority, as the primary guiding principle behind all policies and practices in resource and waste management. This will support the County Council in working towards the goal of zero waste across the county. We oppose the incineration and gasification of waste and all other processes that render waste unusable or hazardous, and believe that the County Council should consult with communities on the creation of cost-effective, efficient and locally-based waste solutions that create jobs in resource management. We believe that there should be accessible kerbside waste and recycling collection services to minimise the risk of domestic waste incineration and fly-tipping, and flexible waste contracts to allow for the adoption of new technologies as they become available.

### **Green Party councillors will lobby the County Council to support the Waste Hierarchy by:**

- ▶ Encouraging people to observe the Waste Hierarchy in their everyday lives by means of an effective communication strategy that develops public confidence and commitment to improving performance in waste and recycling.
- ▶ Conducting regular reviews of implementation of the Waste Hierarchy in Norfolk and the facilities available to support it.

### **Reduction of waste**

- ▶ Working with both private and public sectors to build effective strategies and procedures for the minimisation of waste and its associated costs - for example by promoting products that not only minimise material usage but are also easily upgraded, repaired, remanufactured or recycled.
- ▶ Lobbying national government to change packaging laws and regulations to minimise waste.

### **Reuse and Repair**

- ▶ Creating jobs through the promotion of social enterprises and resource recovery parks that refurbish and repair white goods, furniture, electrical goods, etc. for reuse. These should be coordinated with recycling centres and charity groups engaged in the collection and retail of reusable items.

### **Recycling**

- ▶ Ensuring that a comprehensive county-wide network of Household Waste Recycling Centres is maintained throughout the year, with an expanded range of material provision at suitable sites.
- ▶ Maximising the collection of high-quality recyclables through kerbside sorting schemes.
- ▶ Minimising commingling of recyclables through the use of bin caddy systems.
- ▶ Applying a clear labelling system to collection bins, including pictograms and signs designed to simplify the sorting process.
- ▶ Facilitating the reuse of garden waste through community composting schemes, ideally with kerbside collection and shredding services where needed.

### **Recovery**

- ▶ Initiating and supporting anaerobic digestion schemes to produce energy from food and other organic waste. Implementing a cost-effective and comprehensive food-waste collection service as part of the weekly household waste service.

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## *Reusing Resources and Zero Waste (cont.)*

### **Disposal**

- ▶ Disposal is a last resort, but where it is necessary the council should ensure the prior removal of all recyclables and hazardous materials that require specialised disposal, and the stabilisation of organic matter to minimise methane emissions from landfill sites.

### **Commercial and Industrial Waste**

- ▶ Encouraging businesses to follow the Waste Hierarchy, and creating research and develop opportunities to support businesses in reduction, re-use and recycling.

### **Achievements:**

*The Green Party has played a key role in opposing the building of a waste incinerator at Costessey, near Norwich, and is supporting the ongoing KLWIN campaign<sup>6</sup> to block another planned incinerator at King's Lynn. We have worked to bring the community together in opposition to the incinerator and put forward proposals offering sustainable and more cost-effective alternatives.*

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.klwin.com/> to find out more.

# ► Appendix 1: Coast, Estuaries and Seas around Norfolk

Coastal areas of Norfolk are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels, increasingly violent storms and other extreme weather events that are already happening as a result of climate change. Urgent action is required at local, national and international levels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, which are the main cause of climate change. But this will take time, and in the short-term we must take action to protect the coast and seas around Norfolk. The sea is not only a source of food, it is also the indirect source of the water and much of the oxygen that sustains life on land. We should therefore stop treating it as a dustbin. At present there is no protection for any wildlife or geological features in the seas around Norfolk. 127 Marine Conservation Zones have been proposed, but the government recently announced that only 31 will be put forward for consultation and these do not include the six sites around the Norfolk Coast.

The Norfolk coast has always been subject to change as a result of the action of the sea. The Green Party does not believe that large-scale, hard sea defences will be effective in protecting smaller coastal settlements in the long term. Instead we must learn to live with the combination of forces that shape our coast. Over time these will create natural lines of soft protection such as coastal marshes. This process needs light-touch management and an understanding that roads, services and settlements will occasionally have to be relocated when threatened by the sea.

## **Green party councillors will:**

- Lobby for schools, further education establishments and libraries to educate children on the importance of the sea for humans and for wildlife, and raise the profile of the problems caused by its exploitation and pollution.
- Campaign for all 127 Marine Conservation Zones to be included in the government's consultation so that the zones form an ecologically coherent network. The Cromer

***The County Council does not have direct responsibility for coastal issues, but the threat to Norfolk's coasts and seas is increasing while the establishment of Marine Conservation Zones creates an opportunity for positive action. The Green Party therefore believes that this is the right time for the County Council to consider this important issue, which has implications for council service provision. By developing a clear policy on coastal issues the council can improve its capacity to influence national government policy. For these reasons, we have included this appendix in our manifesto.***

Shoal Chalk Beds, with their unique chalk reef features and a new species of purple sponge, should certainly be included.

- Press the government to set a clear timetable for the designation of the Marine Conservation Zones not currently included in the consultation.
- Encourage fellow councillors and MPs to change their attitudes to MCZs, through the consultation process, and pressure them to work with those organisations (such as the Wildlife Trusts and The Marine Conservation Society) that are trying to increase the pressure on government to change its stance.
- Push for all levels of local, national and European Government to resist any attempts by minerals companies to dredge anywhere near MCZs, to resist unsustainable fishing that could ruin these sites (especially banning bottom trawling), and ensure the cables from offshore wind farms are not used as an excuse to postpone their designation.
- Promote a long term goal and coordinated approach to wildlife and geological protection covering all of the existing

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## **Appendix 1: Coast, Estuaries and Seas around Norfolk (cont.)**

Areas of Natural Beauty but spreading out to the seas around Norfolk.

- ▶ Support the research and development of tidal and wave power energy, provided they do not interfere with important wildlife habitats - especially near potential MCZs, and we support a new look at a tidal barrage in Yarmouth to protect The Broads and its river system from high tides and storm surges and provide hydroelectricity at the same time.
- ▶ Advocate a ban on any new development around the coast within 2km of the high water mark and areas defined where managed retreat is the best policy. Your Green Party Councillors and candidates will work with those agencies, district councils and voluntary bodies to develop this policy and call for a close examination of the roads and other services that the County Council has a responsibility for in the coastal area.
- ▶ Argue strongly that, where existing communities are at risk from managed retreat, the government should provide full reparation or compensation in these cases.
- ▶ Push for protection of large settlements to be carried out when the best computer modelling techniques can demonstrate that there will be no or only very limited effects on other parts of the coastal systems. These techniques are not an exact science and the results must be impartial and not influenced by big business, government or politicians.