

Malvern Hills Green Party

(covering Tenbury, Hallow, Malvern, Upton, Kempsey and surrounding areas)

Local Manifesto

2021-22



Social Care
and Justice



Climate and
Environment



Accessibility
& Travel



A Sustainable
Economy



Housing and
Community



Health and
Wellbeing

The Green Party seeks to create a more sustainable way of life and ensure social justice for all. We are committed to addressing the threat of climate change and also to ensure that every individual is able to live a decent, safe and fulfilling life – benefiting from nourishing food, clean air, decent housing, and freely accessible education and health care systems.

We support candidates in both national and local elections to represent local people and their communities and to press governments to pursue the policies that will best serve the ambitions of the whole community. We look beyond the short-term issues of the moment, offering a long-term strategy for a sustainable future.

At the local level, we are always looking for like-minded people to join us and to ensure that more Green councillors are elected to help us towards our goal of a more sustainable future. As we look towards the next county council elections in May 2021, we set out below our framework of policies.

A Sustainable Economy

We need a strong economy for our local area. But this should also have strong social and ecological foundations (i.e. an economy that ensures happy, healthy and fulfilling lives for all, but is sustainable for future generations – protecting the climate, biosphere and our planet’s other natural ecosystems for those who inhabit it after us). We also want to see a much stronger ‘circular economy’, reusing resources and minimising waste.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Encourage and support more local independent producers and retailers and promote their use by our residents to help create a vibrant local economy.
- Ensure that the local economy builds further on its strengths such as in science and innovation (including cyber-security).
- Promote stronger links between schools/colleges and local businesses, including through supporting apprenticeships.
- Press our district council to play a more proactive part in developing our arts and culture sector, building on our strong heritage in relation to music, literature and theatre.
- Support the development of a ‘green economy’ and the growth of the eco-technology business sector to become a key part of our local economy.
- Promote more local ‘green tourism’, with our district council actively supporting more festivals and investing in a Malvern Visitor Centre which would feature the rich heritage of the area.

Social Care & Justice

The Green Party prioritises the creation of a more caring and just society in which everyone feels valued, in which all voices are heard, and in which everyone is able to pursue their personal goals and ambitions. We value and celebrate diversity for all the benefits it brings to our way of life and culture. And particularly in a county where the agricultural sector depends heavily on seasonal working, we welcome the contribution of migrant workers and traveller families. We also recognise with pride the efforts that have been made in in our area to resettle refugee families from war-torn countries, who are now able to rebuild their lives in peace and contribute to their new local communities.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Press for more public investment and support for the caring services, much of the work of which is provided on an unpaid basis (e.g. looking after elderly parents and/or children).
- Improve access to, and the quality of, social care. A review (with follow-on action) is urgently needed on the effects of the drastic cutbacks that have taken place over recent years and of the quality of provision that has been transferred to the private sector from county council management.
- Work with the voluntary sector and with our councils to improve advice & advocacy services to ensure that everyone receives their entitlements.
- Campaign for a new 'early years' programme, equivalent to 'Sure Start', in our local area to provide the best possible start in life for our children through provision of childcare, nursery education, health checks and advice and family support. We have been especially impressed by the programme now operating in Edinburgh (<http://www.chaledinburgh.org.uk/maximise>).
- Promote the provision of more community-based ('social/lunch club' or U3A-type) programmes to combat social isolation and loneliness as more people live longer, often with limiting mobility.
- Press for more investment in 'police community support officers' to provide more visible police-patrolling among our communities to deter crime and ensure that people feel safer in their homes and neighbourhoods.
- Support town and parish councils to increase their democratic representativeness, community leadership role and responsiveness to their residents and communities.

Housing and Community

No-one should be without a home; the blight of homelessness and rough sleeping should surely now belong to a past age. Decent and affordable housing should be an entitlement for everyone and local authorities have a key responsibility to ensure this is indeed the reality.

Houses are more than roofs over people's head; they are homes and part of local communities. We see the community as both the focus and the main resource for our energies. We believe that a key role for local government is facilitating the development of strong and more self-supporting local communities.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Seek to ensure a mix of housing with much more emphasis on providing high energy efficient housing, ideally with a net-zero ecological footprint (sometimes known as 'passivhaus' standard).
- Encourage and support 'community-led housing' projects and initiatives.
- Support the provision of more social housing and ensure private rentals offer a fair deal to both landlords and tenants.
- Seek to ensure that new homes are built close to shops and services and where neighbour contact and social support are readily available.
- Promote the development of 'zero carbon' homes that are more affordable to run, along with increasing the energy efficiency of existing housing stock and grant support towards this.
- Strengthen district council commitments in relation to the provision of support within local communities, particularly for more isolated and vulnerable residents.
- Further develop the district council's work with local schools in promoting good citizenship and democratic engagement.

Health and Wellbeing

Health links closely with other key areas within our manifesto. If action is taken to improve the environment (the air we breathe, the food we eat), transport (ease and safety of cycling/walking), and employment (meaningful local work at reasonable hours) we will all be healthier and happier.

The Green Party is committed to the mission of the NHS to provide universal, publicly provided healthcare free at the point of delivery. However, we also recognise that health services require strong local planning and close integration with local social care services.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Promote close working between our county and district councils and the local health authorities to ensure that community-based GP and other local health services remain publicly-run and accessible to all.
- Seek to strengthen the county and district councils' oversight and scrutiny of plans for any significant changes in local health services and holding local health service providers to account.
- Improve access to a full range of quality physical and mental healthcare for all groups, particularly those disadvantaged by other difficulties. Specifically:
 - Physical health services must be better co-ordinated and with improved access for people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and those who are homeless.
 - Local authority housing services and other local authority provision should ensure that those with disabilities or long-term health difficulties have priority access to help.
- Push for more investment and action in health education, including the promotion of healthier lifestyles and positive prevention programmes.
- Ensure a more co-ordinated and strategic approach between public organisations, for example, regarding planning policies and fast food retailing, traffic-free or 20mph residential zones, provision of walk-ways and cycle routes, and support for exercise for groups of all ages.
- Recognise and support the health and wellbeing of our armed forces personnel, veterans and immediate families.

Accessibility & Travel

The ability to travel to meet with family and friends, for work, and to access key services, is fundamental to health and happiness. Inaccessibility is a main cause of emotional distress and mental deterioration. We should all be concerned at the decline in public bus services, which has left so many people, particularly those who are vulnerable, feeling isolated in their homes, or having to spend money they cannot afford on taxis.

We wish to see more and improved public transport services both to alleviate these problems and to provide more sustainable alternatives to car travel.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Press the county council to restore its financial commitment to public bus services to the higher levels of previous years and to conduct surveys of potential bus passengers to identify routes and timetables needed.
- Support the promotion and membership of car clubs in the Malvern Hills district to provide an alternative to individual car ownership. This will also be helpful where only kerbside parking is possible.
- Campaign for more investment in dedicated cycle and foot-ways (away from the main roads), linking the district's key population centres, including one over the River Severn to improve connectivity between Kempsey, Hanley Castle High School and the Malverns.
- Press for more marked-out cycle lanes on main roads in urban/residential areas as well as on main roads in rural areas, to provide greater protection for cyclists.
- Campaign for more residential streets to be '20mph zones'. The '20's Plenty' campaign has proved very popular with local people residents, who recognise that 30mph is too fast for many local roads, especially where there is kerb-side parking.
- Empower parish and town councils to be more active in ensuring that front hedges do not overhang the footways. Also press the district and county councils to increase the frequency of routine footpath and gutter sweeping/gully emptying to make walking safer and easier.

Climate and Environment

Both Worcestershire County Council and Malvern Hills District Council have made formal commitments to becoming 'carbon neutral' as soon as possible, and have drawn up action plans towards this. The Malvern Hills plan 'Destination Zero' was first published in January 2020 and progress has been made on the majority of the actions. A key priority for our local party is to ensure the action plan remains on track and is strengthened.

As your local Green Party, we will:

- Provide more and better guidance for residents about what they might personally be able to do to play their part in reducing their carbon footprint.
- Press to ensure that 'improving the local environment' remains a top priority for both the district and county councils.
- Make constructive suggestions as to how our councils might achieve carbon neutrality in their operations more quickly.
- Promote and encourage low carbon development and design measures to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change.
- Support schemes to improve energy efficiency in homes across the district, with a priority for older housing.
- Promote low carbon means of travel – cycling and walking in particular, but also encouraging more use of our railways. Additionally, support new investment in electric vehicles (including public buses and refuse/recycling freighters) and more local car clubs.
- Campaign for our councils to establish and run electric bike loan schemes to encourage more people (including their own staff) to make cycling their principal mode of transport.
- Press our district council to work with local businesses in supporting the transition to greater energy-efficiency in both the domestic and business sectors through the provision of free energy audits and grants for environmentally sustainable projects.
- Press for increased domestic recycling by introducing separate weekly food waste collection services and by providing better information to residents about what can and cannot be placed in their recycling bins.
- Support the work of Repair Café: Malvern Hills, and its plans to provide weekly sessions and a mobile service around the district.
- Work with the district and county councils to produce a biodiversity strategy that will 'make more space for nature', for example, by creating more pollinator sites, wetlands, woodland, and wildflower meadows, which will also be important in capturing and storing carbon.
