



GAP in the News

October 2019 Edition

Animal Sentience under threat

What an eventful year it has been so far! Brexit still threatens the loss of so many things, not least of which would be the term 'animal sentience' embodied in EU Legislation. 103,919 people signed the petition to retain that in UK legislation. The Green Party Conference saw the updated AR411 (actively promoting plant-based lifestyles) being voted in with a significant majority. The new policy brings animal rights and climate change into close harmony since the Party recognised that by significantly reducing consumption of animal products we can each make such a difference to the lives of animals and to the environment.



Alex Phillips, Green Party MEP for South East

When new members join GAP they express enthusiasm to help us protect the rights of animals. Helping on stalls at events can really make a difference since we can spread the green word far and wide. Joining marches or campaigns can also have an enormous impact. Sometimes it's the small things that can also trigger positive change: a casual conversation with a stranger on the train; writing to a restaurant that has no vegan options; choosing ethical toiletries (e.g. bearing The Vegan Society logo).

GREEN PARTY CORE VALUE 5

Our actions should take account of the well-being of other nations, other species and future generations. We should not pursue our well-being to the detriment of theirs.

And there are many more ways to promote a greener world. For instance Karen Varga, GAP Committee Member, a vegan working as a school librarian, was finding that even though some children were vegans, suitable meals were not provided. Her approaches were initially rebuffed and in desperation she asked if they could perhaps just have one meat-free Monday per month. Then Karen tried one per term but reported that "they just laughed". That was a few months ago, but Karen didn't give up and was recently informed that from September the school will be having a meat-free Monday every week. Each step helps us to reach our ultimate goal.

Green Party – General News

RESULTS OF INTERNAL ELECTIONS

Policy Development Committee incl.:
Liz Carlton & Ben Samuel (GAP)

Internal Communications Coordinator
Peter Barnett (GAP)

Congratulations to Liz, Ben & Peter.

2019 NEWPORT CONFERENCE HEADLINES

Emma Randall and Diana Newson were voted in as co-convenors of the Animal Rights Policy Working Group (17 votes from the 17 people attending). Diana attended the Food & Agriculture PWG workshop and meeting to continue to fight for the inclusion of animal rights in F&A Policy. Diana also attended a workshop and meeting of the Wildlife & Habitats PWG, a new PWG currently writing new policy around wildlife and habitats.

Work Positive

Interview with Alex Phillips, Green Party MEP for the South East of England

Ed: Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk to us, Alex. Describe your first few weeks as a Green MEP for the South East.

AP: I've now been working as a Green MEP officially for a month. However ever since I was elected at the end of May I have been travelling to Brussels weekly in order to meet the enlarged Green Group of MEPs and to set up offices in Brussels and in the UK. Once term began at the beginning of July I spent my first few weeks voting, debating and attending working-group meetings and committee meetings as well as meeting constituents and other interested parties. Every day has been packed and we really hit the ground running: during the first week of sitting we had to vote for the new President of the European Parliament. I also put myself forward to sit on the women's-rights, environment and employment committees. I chose these because I really want to advance the Green New Deal, which would see a huge amount of investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, fuel poverty relief, creating secure jobs in the South East region as well as contributing to tackling the climate crisis. It's been really uplifting but it's also been a bit of a rollercoaster of emotions. In our first week our colleague Magid was asked to leave the Parliament. He said that the person asked if he was lost and then suggested he leave because he didn't look like your average MEP. (He was wearing a baseball cap and an anti-fascist T-shirt with a swearword on it.) Magid believed that his skin colour played a role in the confrontation too. Ann Widdecombe then gave a really divisive and embarrassing speech. I felt deeply ashamed by both incidents. I also struggled with the fact that once I got inside the Parliament building in Strasbourg at 7.45am I didn't get back outside until about 9pm. That's a long time to be cooped up without fresh air and a lesson that I need to build in more balance to my working days.

Ed: You are also the (youngest ever) Mayor of Brighton! What has been your greatest moment as Mayor to date?

AP: The greatest moment as mayor was when I presented awards to the Terrence Higgins Trust's Work Positive programme mentees. Work Positive enables people who live with HIV to work with local organisations and businesses to gain skills and confidence. It also allows those organisations and businesses to widen their knowledge and understanding of HIV. It wasn't just a case of people coming up, shaking my hand, having a photo taken and collecting their award: it was much more than that. During the ceremony recipients shared with me and others attending their personal journeys during their Work Positive programme and it was incredibly emotional to hear those personal stories.



Ed: You are also a mother, so I suppose you are an expert juggler and multi-tasker.

AP: All mums are expert jugglers: there's no job more gruelling and challenging than that of being a mum. The hardest thing about this job is definitely being away from my little boy, who is only 21 months old, but I have to remind myself that I'm here doing this work for him and his generation so that they can live in peace and freedom and have all of the rights they deserve in the future.

Ed: When did you join the Green Party and why did you choose the Greens?

AP: I joined the party in 2003 following the devastating decision of New Labour to drag Britain into the Iraq War. I wanted to join a group of people who were concerned with social justice: standing up for ordinary people and making society more fair. The Green Party's policies resonated with me the most. As soon as I had signed up I got involved with the Young Greens. I became their International Liaison Officer and ultimately their Co-Chair. This led to working for Caroline Lucas when she was an MEP (and later an MP) and subsequently being elected as a local councillor, which I have now been for more than a decade.

Ed: What lessons did you learn from working in your previous role with Caroline Lucas?

AP: Working with someone as experienced and passionate as Caroline was invaluable. She really taught me three things. The first was always to remember the detail and the second was always to find time to prepare properly - something that seems to catch many politicians out. The last one was that constituents' correspondence is the most important thing. We work for the people living in our constituencies, some of whom voted for us; but even if they didn't it's our job to make sure that their needs are met. It's vital that people back home know what we MEPs are doing for them in Europe and that we can get them the answers they need.

Work Positive

Interview with Alex Phillips (cont.)

Ed: What are your green ideals?

AP: I am obviously concerned about the environment and animals: our family is working towards being single-use-plastic free, we get about primarily by bike and I'm vegan. But many of my ideals revolve around the social-justice policies that form the bedrock of the Green Party. And that's why I'm spending my time in Brussels fighting for a Green New Deal for Europe – a radical but practical proposal to end austerity and tackle environmental concerns.

Ed: Tell us about your journey to veganism.

AP: I became veggie when I was seven when I realised that what I was eating was an animal rather than just a block of food on my plate. I turned vegan when I was 14 when I became very political. It was part of my political education. I was vegan on and off after that but have been vegan for the last six years.

Ed: How do you feel about the development of the animal-rights movement in the last few years?

AP: The movement has gone from a fringe concern to being mainstream. Just look at the numbers of committed vegans in Britain: an Ipsos Mori poll commissioned by the Vegan Society in 2018 indicated that there were 600,000 of us in Great Britain and for many of us being cruelty-free is a primary concern. In addition many more have reduced their meat and dairy consumption and use replacements such as oat milk. Since documentaries such as *Earthlings* went viral, we've seen other exposés become hits too, including the UK-based *Land of Hope and Glory*. They've inspired countless people to change their lifestyles and many animal rescues have been carried out by groups such as Viva!“. Videos of pigs being released and slaughterhouses being disrupted appear on Instagram, with vegan activists attracting thousands - if not millions - of supporters. Animal welfare has never been more relevant, millennial or accessible, and it's only going to keep on growing.

Ed: Over the next few years what do you think will make the biggest difference to giving animals their rights?

AP: It has to be the continued growth in veganism. I think that, whilst there's a lot of valid scepticism over its recent commercialisation, any step towards a more plant-based society is going to save more animals and open up the conversation around the way we treat other creatures. We've just got to hope that the interest keeps on growing. Unfortunately I think progress won't be as fast as we might like, but in a hundred years or so people will look back and be aghast that we ate animals and their produce.

Ed: Have you ever been mistaken for the other Alex Phillips*? [*Brexit party politician]

AP: It's obviously quite awkward because not only do we have the same names but we've also got the same middle initial and we represent the same region, but that's where the confusion ends.

We don't look the same, although we are of a similar demographic – white, cis, blonde, mid-thirties – but needless to say our politics couldn't be more different.

Ed: Is there a question that I have not asked that you would have liked me to ask?

AP: What's the most positive thing happening in Europe right now in regard to a greener future? And the answer to that really is this Green New Deal that we're working on. We can use it as a vehicle to transform this country, and this continent, for the better and for generations to come.

Ed: What part would you say veganism plays in the Green New Deal?

AP: The Green New Deal is about governments taking more responsibility for creating a fairer, greener world. People shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of climate change alone. But part of the GND involves creating more sustainable, stable jobs and employment, so it should go some way to supporting vegan businesses that are helping to provide communities with better job opportunities. Job creation lies at the very centre of the proposal.

Ed: Thank you so much for taking part in this interview and for being a Green voice for the people and for the animals.

Factory Farming is Illegal!

Peta Smith (Member of the Green Party and GAP)

Let me introduce you to an amazing friend of mine, Clare Druce. She cofounded the pressure group Chickens' Lib in 1973 and published a brilliant account of the group's activities in her book *Chickens' Lib* (2013). In the 1990s she was an expert witness for the defence in the McLibel case (McDonald's v. Steel and Morris 1994-1996) when the broiler and battery-egg industries were condemned as cruel. Clare has convinced me that factory farming is illegal. Present legislation closely reflects the needs of animals described in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, Duty of person responsible for animal to ensure welfare, (9,2) and The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, (Statutory Instrument N° 2078). These 'needs' are based on The Five Freedoms (derived from the 1965 Brambell report as listed below) yet animals on factory farms are routinely abused. For instance artificial insemination denies the need for animals to display natural behaviour patterns and to be protected from pain, injury and disease. Artificial insemination is not only sexually abusive but causes pain and even injury. Scientists agree that farmed animals retain their natural behavioural instincts, yet every day in the UK millions are deprived of any kind of contentment. And herein lies the legal paradox: this situation exists despite specific animal protection laws that are impossible to achieve within an intensive farming system. The Five Freedoms demand:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

So is factory farming illegal? What do you think?

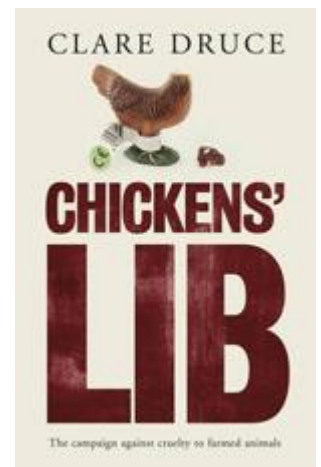
Sign the petition: [FACTORY FARMING IS ILLEGAL!](#)

Clare's book at special price from Hillside: [CHICKEN'S LIB - Clare Druce](#)

Clare's Blog <https://factoryfarmingisillegal.wordpress.com/author/chickenslib/>

Read the Green Party's development of the Act, policy AR432: [Animal Rights](#)

Further information: <https://humanebeing.org.uk/info-%2F-articles>



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