

**Shropshire Council Candidates Response
to the Shropshire Environment Alliance 28th May 2009**

Electoral Division: **Burnell**
Candidate: **Pat Stokes-Smith**
Party: **Liberal Democrat**

Thank you for the invitation to respond on this very important issue.

1. How will climate change affect the county of Shropshire and what, in your view, are the urgent actions that the Council needs to take?

Ha! I think this is the test question on what I know about climate change.....correct?.

- More severe weather events – flooding, wind, heat, cold (if we lose the Gulf stream)
- Less reliable and more expensive power supplies
- Less reliable and more expensive food supplies from outside the County and abroad due to bad weather and transport/oil price increases
- An increase in “fuel poverty” due to scarcity/rising costs of oil
- More demands on public transport due to scarcity/rising costs of oil
- Ultimately an increase in population due to climate change migration e.g. from Australia

Urgent actions I would promote:

- Preparation for severe weather by ensuring that vulnerable and/or isolated residents and properties are identified and the necessary support and emergency services are available and ready
- Ensure that development planning from the outset involves all agencies who may advise on or be involved with the potential effects of severe weather
- Seek all means to actively encourage local and residential small scale micro-generation of power
- Seek all means to actively encourage increased local food production by businesses and residents
- Ensure that information about who may qualify for help is more generally available to all, so that those who may be in “fuel poverty” can request and receive support (in confidence)
- Work with local public transport providers to ensure that it is reasonably priced, reliable, adequate and “connected”.

2. If elected, will you vote to include climate change issues in the list of the Council's top ten priorities?

Yes certainly, if this was the only approach available, but I would want the Council to consider action on climate change and sustainability as fundamental to all their provision of services from policy to procurement to delivery. The Council also has a role in putting pressure on central government to take more action to support its delivery of sustainable services.

3. What further steps should the Council take to raise public awareness and educate people about environmental issues so that they can achieve sustainable lifestyles? *The Council should:*

- Make public statements of commitment to take action and lead by example as in 1 above.
- Ensure that its own buildings reduce their carbon footprint significantly
- Ensure that all its services very obviously put sustainability first
- Take the opportunity provided by the new unitary structure to adopt best practice for waste management whilst effectively engaging both residents and business (reduce/re-use/recycle)
- Ensure that planning decisions are clearly seen to take sustainability into account in terms of location, carbon emissions and fuel efficiency
- Engage residents in climate change and sustainability issues and action, for instance by publishing statistics and clear targets in an accessible way that encourages participation
- Emphasise the financial and economic benefits to both businesses and families
- Widely publicise available grants and sources of information
- Join with local groups and partners to set up a County-wide award scheme to publicise initiatives, including innovation by local businesses, groups and individuals.
- Publicise the work of local environmental groups and partnerships more widely
- Work with and engage children and young people through schools, colleges and youth groups and actively promote and publicise their ideas, activities and contributions

4. What ideas do you have to help people in villages to live, work and stay there so that they are not merely dormitory or commuting satellites?

- Seek all means to create more local employment with better paid jobs
- To this end, demand that providers improve broadband access and speed
- Further develop sustainable tourism as an important part of the local economy
- Increase access to Council services and contact with support services through IT
- Promote and actively encourage local shops and services
- Promote and actively encourage local food production
- Retain and extend the services (to the community) of small rural schools
- Ensure that a variety of housing is available for a range of incomes and that new homes are very energy-efficient
- Work towards reducing the cost of energy and the carbon footprint of existing homes and businesses by publicising grants and the free advice services provided by local groups
- Take steps to discourage car use and on-street parking in village and town centres to improve the quality of the environment for residents and visitors
- Support the establishment of a university within the County to encourage talented young people to remain here

Pat Stokes-Smith