

## **Responses to our TDEG election priorities and questions from Helen Wetherall (candidate for the True and Fair party)**

Ms Wetherall answered quite a few of our questions in turn, but missed out the section on the natural environment. Her email is provided below -

Dear Tideswell and District Environment Group,

Thank you for contacting me and asking the question below which I'm delighted to answer. My answers are in red font so you can see them better.

Just a bit about me – I have a degree in applied biology and have always been a passionate champion for the countryside, its flora and fauna. I am a member of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), The Back British Farming campaign, the Derbyshire Smallholders Association and meet regularly with Ashover Footpaths and Bridleways Group Committee (Parish Council Group).

If I'm elected, I will be really pleased to meet with you to see how I might help.

Kind regards

Helen

Questions for our Candidates:

1. Will you commit to declaring that the Derbyshire Dales recognises both a climate emergency and ecological/biodiversity emergency, and that all strategic plans should take these two emergencies into account in future delivery and target setting? **Yes – definitely.**
2. If you could change or introduce one piece of environmental legislation or regulation to improve an aspect of our local environment, what would it be? **To empower community groups to be able to make local decisions on their terms and with a focus on their priorities. With allocated budgets and oversight from local regulatory agencies but with the emphasis on local decision making and without the need for applications to these bodies who act as 'gate-keepers' and in some cases blockers for initiatives that are innovative and creative.**

Questions for our Candidates:

1. How do you propose to support affordable and sustainable housing projects in our area? **We need more houses but we need them in the right place and at the right price. There are now prefabricated homes that are very high quality – eg Peaklands at Stoney Middleton (fantastic estate at the top of High Street). These homes are beautiful and can be built cheaply and quickly with sustainable materials. We need more of them and they could be built quickly.**

2. How would you ensure that issues such as energy conservation, water use and biodiversity enhancement are addressed by house builders? Are you in favour of a new, mandatory Code for Sustainable Homes (more information here). I am in favour, yes. There is too much emphasis from developers (and all big business) on profit. I was speaking to an award-winning sustainable builder in Grindleford yesterday who told me that the big building firms (4 or 5 big players) have a strangle-hold on government housebuilding policy and a vested interest in keeping the status quo. This has to stop – we need rewards for innovation and standards like Passivhaus which in the long-run will save energy costs for individuals and the country as a whole.

I have been impressed by the Redrow company housing developments that I've visited whilst campaigning. In Ashbourne there is an estate where there are mixtures of larger and smaller affordable housing and the smaller houses are not the poor relations – they are fully integrated with the same amount of thought and attention placed on them. There are small green spaces included in the development and areas where there are ponds and space for wildlife and the house building is very sympathetic to nature. I spoke to one older gentleman who was very complementary about the estate and how it has been designed with nature in mind. More of this thinking and spatial planning should be encouraged and rewarded I feel.

3. How will you upskill the retrofitting workforce to help meet legally binding net zero targets? Work closely with FE Colleges and Adult and Community Learning Services to upskill 16-18 year olds and also older return to learners or those wanting to change careers later in life. I have taught and managed in both of these settings. Also work with industry trade bodies and standards/regulatory bodies to gradually ramp up the standards over time (but with pace) and make them achievable.

4. How will you overcome the (legislative) barriers to implementing rural community energy generation and storage schemes? See my answer above – we need to loosen the powers of the overseeing bodies and increase the power (pardon the pun) of local communities to make their own decisions and give them their own budgets to do this. Nothing reckless or dangerous of course but stop the propensity of councils and other regulatory bodies to say 'no' to things and work within the art of the possible.

5. How will you enable and incentivise appropriately sited solar panels on industrial and agricultural buildings in the Peak District? See above – work with individuals and communities to install these – a loan scheme could be arranged with future savings contributing to the pay-back as well as helping individuals and communities to lower their bills.

6. How will you fund local authorities and other public agencies to ensure our communities have access to essential services? There is no doubt that money is tight and is going to be tight for a long time. However, I come from a family that runs small

businesses (I run one myself) and I believe that the economy must be built bottom up by small businesses not top down by big business (who focus on cost not value). If we can create the climate and culture where small businesses can thrive, I believe that, in time we will generate the wealth that we need. I also think the tax system is completely non-sensical and works against career progression and productivity. Tax thresholds are a good example of this and they need to be on a more graduated and sliding scale with those with the most contributing the most and being made to contribute the most. It is not a coincidence that we have the highest number of millionaires and billionaires in the UK that we have ever had and at the same time there is a cost of living crisis and massive increases in child poverty, homelessness and food bank use. This has to be addressed as a priority. One of my heroes is Dave Fishwick (Bank of Dave) – he has made his fortune but gives back so much of his wealth and time for communities and those in need. These are the values we need to be rewarding with greed no longer seen as socially acceptable.

Questions for our Candidates:

1. How will you improve public transport to travel to towns, in particular to train stations, including in evenings? *I think we need small, flexible fleets of vehicles rather than large buses with again a community enterprise element.*
2. How will you enable and incentivise tourists to visit the Peak District National Park without relying on cars? *I've seen open-top buses recently in the Peak District – not seen them before and more of these would be good. Road trains are also a good idea for people wanting to travel relatively small distances. We live in Ashover and avoid going anywhere in the Peak park on bank holidays for example because the roads are choked with traffic and there is no parking. This is not a good experience for visitors so any innovative ideas will improve the visitor experience, increase revenue for businesses and create a virtuous cycle.*
3. What can be done to improve the condition of roads? Will you increase funding to local authorities to better improve our roads and consider the management of heavy traffic through our villages? *Yes. The roads are in a terrible condition. At the junction with Chatsworth Road and Chesterfield Road at Rowsley (bottom of the hill) the road is so bad that at the weekend there was a mini with 2 burst tyres – this road has been bad all winter and spring and it needs sorting out!*
4. How will you facilitate green charging of electric cars and electric bikes in rural areas? *We have 2 electric cars and have found that there are not enough charging points anywhere in the country to be honest and when you find one you have to queue! This infrastructure should be rolled out on a continually rolling programme – I think it is being done but not quickly enough. At Hilton in South Derbyshire (now part of the Derbyshire Dales constituency) they have installed some charging ports in the local*

pub. I asked about this and apparently South Derbyshire District Council have installed these in response to a community request. If we have a couple at every pub that would be a great start. We have one installed at home and it cost about £600 so not astronomical.

Questions for our Candidates:

1. What steps will candidates take in supporting local communities, urban and rural, in developing their own circular economies? **Would `carrot or stick` approaches be more successful? See above – always carrot but with all the right checks and balances.**
2. Reducing food miles and reducing unnecessary packaging on food – is this best left to the supermarkets or is it the responsibility of Government? **Government. Supermarkets are driven by profit – government should be driven by ethics and what's best for everyone overall.**
3. What would you propose is done to improve recycling rates within the Derbyshire Dales? **Pay people to recycle their rubbish. Instead of charging them for taking rubbish to municipal waste recycling points, pay them! There would be a saving to the public purse overall, I have no doubt but it would need careful costing.**