

Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —
Evesham Branch

January 2024

From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

Wishing all members and supporters a Happy and Healthy New Year. We hope that 2024 will bring peace and less conflict than 2023. The world feels very unstable but, ever the optimist, I felt very heartened by the images from Germany of the mass protests, opposed to far-right extremism. The year 2024 is going to be a year of elections around the world with over fifty countries going to the polls. In the UK there will be

local and ten mayoral elections in May, and it is anticipated that the General Election will be in November. However things materialise, we hope for a change of government and that 2024 will be a successful year for the Labour Party.

The executive has started to make plans for the year ahead and Brian is working hard with Matthew and Neal to learn from other CLPs and produce a campaign plan which we will share shortly.

January branch meeting

We opened the year with a well-attended and successful branch meeting where we welcomed speakers from Citizens Advice. Thanks are extended to Claire for arranging this and for stepping in for the speaker who was unfortunately unwell. The speakers stressed that Citizens Advice is impartial, independent, confidential, apolitical and their services are free. They detailed how the organisation operates in Evesham, Pershore and Droitwich. The speakers provided an interesting insight into how they offer support to residents and how the work has developed in response to government cuts. Claire explained how Citizens Advice stepped in to fill the gap when the government withdrew legal aid for education matters, family law, financial and property matters, and employment tribunals in 2012. The statistics they shared on the scale of the support they provide; helping people to gain charitable support, make foodbank referrals, provide food vouchers and make applications for the Household Support Fund demonstrate the difference they are making in our community, particularly when 56% of their clients have disabilities and health issues.

As a follow-up to this I am delighted that we have managed to secure Diane Bennett from Caring Hands as speaker for our February meeting on February 14th. We will send out a reminder, but we will have a foodbank collection at the meeting, so Diane doesn't leave empty handed!

These meetings will provide members with information about how the cost-of-living crisis is

impacting on local people and will support us to be well informed when we are campaigning.



Speakers from Citizens Advice at our January meeting

In the second half of the meeting Brian outlined how he is developing the WhatsApp call to action to members to like and share Facebook posts. This strategy is extending our reach on social media and is key to gaining visibility with the groups we are targeting to campaign (see our Call to Action below). Labour need to get the under 50s out to vote. The accuracy of polling is spurious, but it is only in the over 65 group of voters that the Tories lead Labour (by seven points) and much of that support is being lost to Reform. In a recent poll for The Times, Labour led the Conservatives by 16 points in the 50-64 age group, by 47 points in the 25-49 group and by a whopping 62 points in the 18-25 group! (source YouGov for The Times 16-17 January) so we need to do whatever we can to reach out to younger voters.

Get Political II

January kicked off with another hugely successful "Get Political II" gig on January 6th. Despite recovering from major surgery Mary assembled a fantastic line up of three bands, The Gathering, The Whipjacks and the returning Bleeding Hearts alongside the inimitable Elvis Legsley. These fun-loving musicians provided us with wonderful entertainment throughout the evening and the tickets sales and raffle for a weekend family ticket for the Dubs in the Middle festival and a House of Lords bottle of whisky led us to raise just short of £800. This is magnificent and will support the branch with future campaigning.



Huge thanks are extended to Mary who worked tirelessly to arrange the venue, bands, raffle and ticket sales and also hosted some of those who had travelled to play. Dave confirmed that Elvis had left the building to attend an Elvis convention in Birmingham the following day. Thanks too, to The Valkyrie who provided the venue and security for the event and of course to the musicians who all played for us for free. We hope to repeat a similar event in the future.



Reading Group

At the meeting on January 18th, kindly hosted by David Haslam, the group continued discussion of a wide range of environmental issues, using ideas from the 'New Ground' magazine from SERA, Labour's environmental association, which was celebrating its half-century in 2023.

This time we concentrated on the contributions from Wales and Reading Local Authority, where Labour has control, and Scotland where it does not. We considered how far the initiatives described have possible relevance (or existing parallels) to our local area and how far they provide ideas for national or local election campaigns. Among the many issues discussed were:

- 20 mph speed limits in urban areas
- Community schemes for green energy generation
- Decarbonising public buildings, such as hospitals, schools, and libraries
- Council-owned bus companies
- Deposit return schemes for bottle recycling
- Retro-fitting and renovation of houses and other buildings

To counter the Conservative clichés of 'woke' and 'anti-motorist', we discussed how changes that benefit the environment can be presented more positively. There is a clear need to invest in new technologies and create a 'just transition', in stark contrast to the damaging de-industrialisation of the Thatcher years.

At our next meeting on 15 February, we will be joined by local Green Party representatives to explore local environmental issues with them. As a result, space will be limited, so if you intend coming to the group for the first time, please e-mail peter.daw@hotmail.co.uk in advance.

Film Group

Mary and Dave Tasker are hoping to host a film night in February when Mary is fully recovered. If you are interested in attending, please e-mail david.tasker@eveshamlabour.org to make sure you get the information.

Council news from District Councillor Mary Tasker



I was invited to participate in Wychavon's Budget Scrutiny group to scrutinise the proposed budget for 2024/2025

We had three main meetings over a seven-week period,

these focused on

- 'Supporting people'. Capital Programme money plan and Revenue money plan.
- 'Sustainable Environment' covering fees and charges and earmarked reserves.
- 'Strong Economy and Places' covering Central and support costs, shared services, fees and charges.

Being part of the group offered me the opportunity to scrutinise how tax-payers' money is being spent, and what the priorities are within Wychavon. I may be the only Labour councillor, but I am still able to influence and offer advice on improvements to provide the essential services people need and ensure that finances are used wisely. It was a very busy time, but I felt that the process helped develop my personal and professional skills. Our recommendations have been sent to the Executive Committee for approval with additional recommendations for the Scrutiny group for next year to develop the process.

It was a rewarding project and I feel I have helped to make a difference within my community. You don't need a big group to make a difference just the willingness to work hard in collaboration with others. I feel that Labour is making a difference.

Evesham Town Council Bengeworth by-election



On 11 January there were two by-elections for Evesham Town Council, one in Bengeworth and one in Evesham South. Our thanks are extended to Mary Campbell who stood for Labour in

Bengeworth. The turnout was low, as anticipated, (only 12.7%, 599 votes) and Mary came as runner-up (191 votes) to the Conservative candidate Robert Hale (236 votes). We thank Mary for standing and providing the opportunity for supporters to vote Labour. The outcome, given the low turnout, shows us that there is support for Labour in this ward and it is an area that we should target in future campaigning.

Brian Chilvers is 90

On 17 January our oldest rocker and "The father of the branch" turned 90! Congratulations, Brian, and many happy returns. Members of the exec turned up to surprise him with gifts and cake which was particularly enjoyed by Billy, his grand dog.



From the Chair: Matthew Rea

We certainly got 2024 off to a great start, what with the fabulous Get Political II gig (I think this is going to be a regular event) and a really well-attended January branch meeting. It was good to see some new faces, and everyone really enjoyed the Citizens Advice talk.



There is a new sense of focus too, now that we know we're in an election year and soon things are finally going to change for the better in this country. Add to this the branch has a real buzz about it – all the hard work of last year is paying off with very high levels of member engagement and a feeling that we can make a real difference.

As for the Tories: each day my jaw drops as they lose the plot in ever more unbelievable ways. It seems that their only strategy now is to get a plane off to Rwanda and give away some targeted tax cuts at the expense of further degradation of already broken services. They defend this all as "what the electorate voted for" whilst various factions either argue for more extreme right-wing measures or foment for yet another leadership change. My expectation is that the next round of by-elections and the daily news trend revealing fresh corruption and infighting will put beyond any doubt that they are a lost cause. Recent polls consistently show that the public has more faith in Labour than the Tories on almost every political issue.

Back at base, Keir Starmer asks us to be ready for a possible May 2nd election and a deadline has been set for the manifesto to be ready early in March.

The shadow cabinet are daily engaged in planning the first 100 days of leadership, ready to hit the ground with a series of priority bills to be urgently pushed through parliament.

Here in Droitwich and Evesham the challenge remains significant (must be all those SAGA members that Rishi has written to), but we will play our part and put up the best fight we can. Both Alex (CLP Exec) and I have applied as potential candidates in the hope that we can have a local representative. For now, our primary goal is to sharpen our campaign strategy and get out on the streets; this will need us to mobilise as much resource as possible in the next two months so I urge you to respond to our "Call to Action" on the next two pages.

Forthcoming events

03, 10, 17 and 24 February:

Rally for Palestine 13.30 outside Worcester Guildhall, High St, Worcester WR1 2EY

05 February ASLEF strike: Great Western Railway.

11 February Gazebo, outside Iceland, Evesham High Street. 11:00–13:00

14 February Branch Meeting 19:00-21:00: Diane Bennett, Caring Hands (with Foodbank collection)

13 March Branch Meeting (Mental health focus)

22 March Cuppa and Cake Easter Eggs for Caring Hands (details tbc)

23 April Film Club: National Theatre Live "Nye" with Michael Sheen at Number 8 Pershore. Book your own tickets and we can arrange car sharing nearer the event.

Wanted!

Active Travel: We are looking for a representative to represent Evesham Labour on the local active travel group. Please contact us (see below) if you would like to volunteer for this.

Contacts: Matthew Rea (Chair):
Sue Wood-Griffiths (Vice Chair):
Newsletter submissions:

General enquiries:

Call us:

Facebook:

Web site:

matthew.rea@eveshamlabour.org
sue.woodgriffiths@eveshamlabour.org
newsletter@eveshamlabour.org

welcome@eveshamlabour.org

01386 293035

EveshamLabour

midworcslabour.co.uk

CALL TO ACTION



Winning elections requires team work. It isn't just about an electable candidate and some compelling policies. It is about getting people out to vote and getting them to understand why they should vote Labour, and that is something everyone can help with.

There are activities you can help with even if you can only make a small time commitment. The benefits are huge: you'll get to work with a highly-motivated group, be a part of delivering change, and have some fun along the way. To support us please contact Brian Gregory by email: brian.gregory@eveshamlabour.org or call us on 01386 293035

Action: Promoting us on Social Media.

Commitment: just five minutes per day.

Facebook can deliver Labour's message to a LOT of people, with just a few minutes of your help. Campaign organiser Brian Gregory publishes persuasive posts (words, pictures and videos) to our Facebook page weekly — but who sees them? Facebook mostly shows users posts that people have shown interest in. The more reactions a post gets, the more people it's shown to, so the more people can show interest in it... you get the idea.

You can vastly increase the reach of Labour's Facebook messages with a few clicks. All you need is a Facebook account and a WhatsApp account. We will alert you over WhatsApp every time a message is posted to the Droitwich & Evesham Facebook page, then you go into Facebook and like/share the post. If we can get fifty or more members liking and sharing, then our messages will be seen by thousands of locals. We can easily be seen to be the most active and vocal party in the area.

Next Steps: Ask to join the Evesham Labour Party Action Whatsapp community, so we can notify you every time a Facebook post is made. When you get a message in the community about a new post, then go onto Facebook and:

Like: The 'Thumbs-up' icon that shows your support (or you can choose Love-it, Angry, Ha Ha, etc.)

Comment: 'This makes me furious!', 'Why have they allowed this?' etc. You can also tag a specific Facebook friend to bring the comment to their attention.

Share: Copies the post into another Facebook group where others will see it. You can add a comment on it should you wish: ('Wouldn't it be great if we had working public services?').



Action: Mailing out Attainer letters.

Commitment: Two hours per month.



Many of those who stand to gain the most from a Labour government simply don't go out to vote — just look at the case of school leavers and young people in general. If we address this it could have a disproportionately significant impact on our electoral success, as once you get young people to vote they almost never vote Tory.

We have devised a campaign to write to all those who attain voting age between now and the election. The letters are written and we have the postal details for many of these people. What we need is someone who can fold, put in the envelope, address and post these letters each month to those in the areas who have turned 18. All the postage costs are covered from our funds.

Next Steps: Get in touch with Brian (see above) and we will deliver to you a stack of letters, envelopes and stamps, along with a list of “attainers” and their birthdays and addresses.

Action: Join the Gazebo Outreach Team.

Commitment: Two hours, twice a month, usually on a Saturday.



As we get closer to the election we will be getting the Big Red Labour Gazebo out and about around Droitwich and Evesham — we try to visit various town and village locations. We go out armed with various leaflets to explain Labour's pledges and highlight issues. At the same time, we gather real on-the-ground

feedback from locals and encourage people to get involved with our branches. This involves talking to the public and listening to what they have to say. We provide training, all the necessary Labour branded clothing, and can usually help with transport. Whilst this isn't everyone's cup of tea, it is one of the most exciting ways to be at the heart of delivering Labour's agenda for change. We usually make sure we have five or six people supporting each Gazebo event.

Next Steps: Get in touch with Brian (see above) — we will be running training sessions in the next few weeks.

CALL TO ACTION