

# MIDLOTHIAN GREENS BRANCH NEWS



Scottish Green Party

April/May 2020

## UBI: the great leveller?

**The national discussion about Universal Basic Income and its potential for radically reforming the social security system and reducing inequality was the subject of an enlightening Scottish Greens Live discussion on May 8, one of a series of online debates on key Green Party policy concerns, and still available to view.**


Taking part via Skype with Patrick Harvie were Cleo Goodman of Citizen's Basic Income Network Scotland and Jamie Cooke of RSA Scotland. They spoke for an hour on topics prompted by Patrick as well as viewers emailing and texting their questions about UBI (<https://greens.scot/live>).

### VIABILITY OF LOCAL PILOTS

Part of the discussion was in anticipation of the results of the Scottish Government's feasibility study, established in 2017, to fund four Scottish local authorities to research and explore the viability of local pilots of a Citizen's Basic Income scheme. Representatives from Fife Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council and North Ayrshire Council along with Public Health Scotland, supported by Scottish Government and the Improvement Service came together to form the Citizen's Basic Income Feasibility Study Steering Group.

This group was asked to consider how a CBI might reduce poverty by investigating the practicalities of carrying out local pilot schemes in Scotland – such as the ethical, legislative, financial and practical implementation of conducting a pilot as well as its potential costs, benefits and savings. An Interim Feasibility Report was published in November 2019 and it was intended that Final Feasibility Report would enter a process of Local Authority engagement and approval over April/ May 2020, with publication in June 2020. However, because of the current COVID-19 crisis this process has been delayed.

At the time of the publication of the Interim Report last year Project Manager Wendy Hearty said: 'It is important to stress that this is an interim report and that no firm recommendations are being made at this stage ... We are now working hard to deliver a final feasibility report with fewer uncertainties and



**During this time of social distancing Midlothian Green Party is holding both social and branch meetings via Zoom.**

**The next social is on June 2, the next business meeting on June 11.**

As an SGP member you'll receive an email detailing the necessary information on how to take part in these events so keep an eye on your inbox!

clear recommendations on appropriate next steps.'

While we wait for the Final Feasibility Report to be published we can read the April 2019 Citizen's Basic Income Network document 'Exploring Basic Income in Scotland', a cross-disciplinary project, funded by Scottish Universities Insight Institute and led by academics from the Heriot-Watt University, University of Edinburgh and Citizen's Basic Income Network Scotland. This substantial publication deals with the pros and the cons of UBI and can be found here: <https://cbin.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Exploring-Basic-Income-in-Scotland-FULL-REPORT.pdf>).

# Scottish Food Coalition: it's not just about eating!

One of our committee members, Daya Feldwick is also a Good Food Nation ambassador with the Scottish Food Coalition – campaigning for a better food system.

She has submitted the following account to their call for examples of current crises, highlighting the broken food system and measures we must take to fix it, now!

'My experience of C19 lockdown confirms the argument in favour of small local shops and how they reacted much better than supermarkets. Being independent /community-run, they have demonstrated greater flexibility as they were able to respond much faster to the changes and their community's needs.

I was super impressed with the Penicuik Storehouse, how fast they organised and coordinated the collections and deliveries around town. While people were saying they could not get any slots for the 'big four', the Storehouse staff & volunteers

were working hard in the shop, stocking up, packing, and out delivering groceries every day. They also had a table outside with a plastic screen (at least two weeks before supermarkets even started using them!), enabling people to collect orders or make a purchase without having to enter the small shop.

The supermarkets were slow to react; first running out of food then overstocking and wasting, also waiting for weeks to receive orders from some distant head office and then take time to implement across the numerous branches, with staff confused, abused and overworked, often on short-term, low paid contracts.

This is something we need to remember and demand change to the food system for the future.'

## Scottish Food Coalition

Five measures we are calling for to immediately strengthen our food system...

### LOCAL FOOD

We believe short supply chains go further. We call for investments in regional food economies and helping to provide access to resources such as land, as well as training and development opportunities.

CALL 01



CALL 02

### WORKERS' RIGHTS

We are calling for appropriate compensation and the fair treatment of key workers in the food sector to value the vital role they play. This requires a shift away from precarious employment contracts and a recognition of the role food workers play in rural development.

### FOOD INSECURITY

We believe ending this through the Right to Food, ensuring people's health-happiness and enabling a thriving food culture. Immediate action can be taken to achieve this through the Scottish Welfare Fund and similar crisis support services to ensure everyone has the financial means to access food of their own choice with dignity.

CALL 03



### ENVIRONMENT

A food system that is in harmony with nature is vital to creating a sustainable Scotland. We call for measures to allow for public land ownership, greater crop diversification and strengthening community agriculture to create a food system that enhances biodiversity and feeds Scotland in a nourishing, sustainable way.

CALL 04

### VALUING OUR FOOD SYSTEM

Joined up food policy at cabinet level across all sectors, with widespread public participation in its development and implementation is key to transforming our food system. We must ensure our food system is prioritised as a policy area and valued by all.

CALL 05



Scottish Food Coalition:  
[www.foodcoalition.scot](http://www.foodcoalition.scot)

## My Lockdown Library

One thing that makes for a good book to me is that there should be some element of mystery, that is, something I do not quite understand and will bring me back to read it again later.

Similar are ones where problem-solving is the main theme (which might be why I like TV series such as *Silent Witness* and *Waking the Dead* – which I have been binge-viewing pre-bedtime during lock-down).

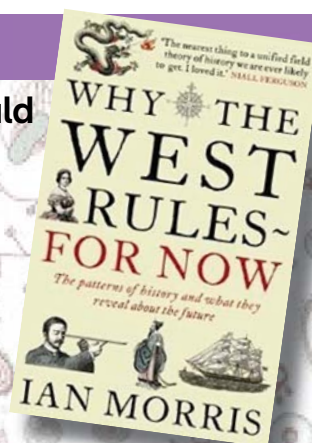
Some time before Christmas, having a Waterstone's gift voucher for £25, I was browsing with nothing in particular in mind when I came upon Ian Morris's book *Why the West rules – for now: the patterns of history, and what they reveal about the future* (Profile Books 2010).

The author believes that, while most consider the historical background prior to their period of study is relevant, they do not go as far back as is necessary. He goes back 1.6 million years.

He then defines what he means by 'East', 'West' and what is going to be his measure of success – 'social development'.

You can see the scale of this, and it results in a book of 700 pages of which 70 are notes and index. However, the way it is written and the range of areas covered makes it constantly interesting and gripping as a thriller novel. Helped by lockdown, it was possible to spend larger chunks of time reading than usual. It took me only 16 hours to read the whole book over a period of seven days.

Mike Harrison



## The new normal can't be the old normal

**As members of the Scottish Green Party it's explicit that we want radical change. We all agree that the old normal just wasn't working.**

In fact, the old normal was the problem: a global carbon economy which benefits the few at the expense of the many, it has been responsible for the destruction of the natural world which humanity relies upon, a reckless greed which has deforested millions of acres, polluted the seas and filled the air we breathe with damaging pollutants and greenhouse gases.

Early in April the website *Open Democracy* referred to the sociologist Karl Jaspers when describing where we all are now:

the chance of social levelling.

Transformational change is possible; the current crisis shows not only how essential change is, but also how achievable it can be too. The head of the IMF recently said: 'It would be a mistake to 'pause' action on climate change ... we are about to deploy enormous, gigantic fiscal stimulus ... we must do everything in our power to make it a green recovery.'

So, unsurprisingly, the American government has already gifted billions of dollars of relief to the

• 'A crisis is an opportunity  
• riding the dangerous wind'

• Chinese proverb

he described a 'liminal space, a between-times in which the old ways of living and thinking are no longer relevant, but new ways have yet to emerge to replace them.' Greens would argue that the new ways do exist, ways which have been mooted for decades but have been dismissed as dangerous or utopian by those who benefit from the old normal.

Walter Scheidel, the Austrian economic historian and author of 'The Great Leveller', which details the effects of the Black Death, has written that since the stone age four events have ushered in greater equality: revolution, war, the collapse of the state – and pandemic. His thesis is that the longer this pandemic lasts, the more damage it does to the global economy and the greater

airline industry and fossil fuel giants. Vocal and armed Trump supporters in some states are demanding the reopening of shops, businesses and bars, and the UK Government and their supporters have instigated substantial loosening of the lockdown in England, to general confusion. Could it be that they've read Herr Scheidel and fear the future?

Transformational change is long overdue. To quote Build Back Better UK ([www.buildbackbetteruk.org](http://www.buildbackbetteruk.org)): 'Let's not go back to normal. It's time for a new deal that protects public services, tackles inequality in our communities, provides secure well-paid jobs and creates a shockproof economy which can fight the climate crisis.'

**So this Covid-19 virus means businesses make people redundant - from P&O Ferries to Virgin - and employees are being told to walk and cycle to work. What can we make of the contrasting messages?**

On one hand capitalist businesses are unable to cope with the 'pressures' they are placed under. On the other hand, the way we, individuals, are asked to cope is to walk and cycle. Is there a lesson here?

Yes of course there is. Businesses are artificial constructs, whereas people are real. What people do **counts**. What businesses do is ephemeral, market-driven, and of little consequence to the reality of people, persons, humanity. We can cope without business but business cannot cope without us.

Let us ride that horse of humanity now. We are in a position to say it is a Green horse. It is not just about walking and cycling but about who we are and how we get our living. Our **Universal Basic Income** is fundamental to our future. We don't need the failing P&O or Virgin businesses to be the conduit for our income.

The message we must put forward forcefully is 'democracy should not be entrapped in policies to support business; rather business should work with and support democracy'.

## News Brief

### Scottish Tory MPs are being urged to explain themselves after voting down an attempt to protect the UK food and farming sector from sub-standard imports.

Neil Parish, a Tory MP from England's south-west, had tabled an amendment to the UK Agriculture Bill which aiming to enshrine in law the principle that imported food would need to match UK farmers' quality and animal welfare standards.

However last week the measure was thrown out during Commons voting, with all six Scottish Tory MPs rejecting it.

John Lamont of Berwick, Roxburgh and Selkirk, Andrew Bowie of Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, Douglas Ross of Moray, David Duguid of Banff and Buchan, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack of Dumfries and Galloway and his predecessor David Mundell of Clydesdale and Tweeddale all voted against the measure. The bill will be the foundation of the UK's food and farming policy at the end of the Brexit transition period.

Perth and North Perthshire MP Pete Wishart, who represents a formerly Conservative rural constituency, said the Tories' rejection of the amendment was 'absolutely shameful'. He added: 'Scottish Tory MPs voting against the interests of the farmers they serve.'

Source: *The National*

### Did you know..?

To make a basic soap spray insecticide, mix 1½ teaspoons of a mild liquid soap (such as castile soap) with 1 litre of water, and spray the mixture directly on the infected surfaces of the plants. A soap spray insecticide can be applied as necessary (though it is always recommended to **not** apply it during the hot sunny part of the day, but rather in the evenings or early mornings).

Source: *Treehugger*

Please share your Tweets and Facebook posts and send in pieces for inclusion in this, **your** branch newsletter.



## My Lockdown Library

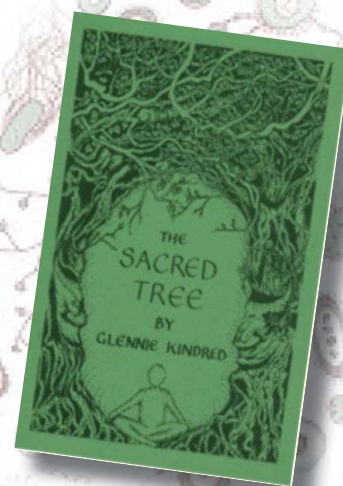
I've been reading *The Sacred Tree*, written and illustrated by Glennie Kindred, which goes into the herbal properties of trees, their spiritual qualities, the uses of wood, explanations of some of the myths and legends and the place within the Celtic calendar of thirteen of our native British trees.

Another book by the same author is *The Tree Ogham* which is the handbook for those who wish to communicate with trees. It follows the Celtic tree 'ogham system' of the ancient druids, using an alphabet of the trees.

The other most recent book I read was *Poverty Safari* by Darren McGarvey. It won the Orwell book prize and is a part autobiographical account of Darren's upbringing in a deprived area of Glasgow. He's been on BBC Question Time

and other political programs talking about poverty in Scotland.

Jill Simon



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