

GREEN PARTY WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT FOR THE 2020 AGM



THE GREEN PARTY WOMEN COMMITTEE

The committee currently has 6 active members:

- Dawn Furness, co-chair elected at the 2019 October AGM
- Emma Bateman, elected as a non portfolio member at the 2019 October AGM and then co-opted as co-chair.
- Freda Davies (Secretary) elected at the 2019 October AGM
- Nicola Watson, (Treasurer) elected at the 2019 October AGM
- Claudine Letsae (Membership Secretary) elected at the 2019 October AGM
- Julia Lagoutte (Non-portfolio Officer) elected at the 2019 October AGM



Dawn
Furness



Emma
Bateman



Freda
Davis



Nicola
Watson



Claudine
Letsae



Julia
Lagoutte

Kat Boettge was co-opted on to the committee in April But has been unable to join later meetings or events due to her commitments as a key NHS worker.

Tina Rothery was elected at the 2019 October AGM but subsequently resigned.

Lois Davis was elected at the 2019 October AGM but subsequently resigned.

Dee Searle was co-opted onto the committee but resigned when she left the party in June 2020

MINUTES OF THE 2019 AGM

Unfortunately, despite our efforts to secure them, we were not given the minutes from the 2019 AGM and so cannot present them here.

OVERVIEW

The current committee are pleased to lay out a report of their year spent working to support women in the Green Party of England and Wales, such as running events to upskill and engage them, monthly conferences on a range of topics, and weekly wellbeing sessions, the establishment of a network of spokeswomen, a podcast and a book club, and the engagement of thousands of women on twitter and facebook.

When the committee took office the major issue that needed to be addressed was the communication with Green Party Women members. As can be seen from the lack of

engagement of ordinary members in the recent internal elections, there are a great many members who feel disconnected from what goes on in the running of the party. In fact we have been told by several women in the party that they were not aware that a woman's group actually existed. We believe a proactive and engaging women's group is one of the key ways to engage and support members. Many women reached out and said our events - whether the book club, conference, or wellbeing session - was the main way they connected to the Green Party during the lockdown and rekindled their enthusiasm for the movement.

The snap general election in December 2019 led to a redirection of time and energy for committee members and the party more widely into campaigning for our local parties and candidates.

For the committee itself, the year did not get off to an easy start. In October 2019 we had fewer than 40 members signed up in the Green Party Women members space. There was no functional email list, no access to the twitter account, and no way to access the website. (we did not even have the Green Party women banner, the whereabouts of which remain a mystery to this day!).

After several months, due to the persistence of committee members and the help of Jordan Harp, the Green Party digital manager, things greatly improved.

It was a steep learning curve, but as a committee we now work extremely well together, making decisions through consensus and supporting each other and the work of the committee with a complementary selection of skills and experience.

We would like to thank Jordan Harp for his ongoing patience and assistance. We would like to thank Tina Rothery and Sam Riches for all their work in reigniting GPW after a few difficult and dormant years, and we would like to thank the many Green Party women and women outside the party who have come to our events, supported us, celebrated the return of a woman's group, and made all the graft worthwhile.

COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS

FACEBOOK [GREEN PARTY WOMEN - HOME](#)

Whilst other channels of communication were closed to us at the start, we were able to use the Green Party women Facebook page which had a good following built up by the previous committee.

We post one article per day on average covering a broad range of subjects connected with women's lives from across the world. The committee takes turns to post on the facebook page. The number of page 'likes' has grown from 2800 in October 2019 to over 3000 at present.

- 200+ followers
- Up to 3000 post engagement in one day
- On average a daily post on women's issues in UK politics and links to events to support women getting involved in wider politics or in Green Party politics.



TWITTER [**GREEN PARTY WOMEN \(@GREENPARTYWOMEN\)**](https://twitter.com/GreenPartyWomen)

As mentioned above, we were not able to access the Green Party Women twitter account which had been dormant since October 2017 due to lost passwords. Julia Lagoutte set up a new account and began gaining followers but fortunately we were finally able to reactivate the original Green Party Women twitter account in May 2020. Since then, the numbers of followers have risen over 50% from around 3,155 to over 4,800. As with the Facebook page we tweet and retweet about a huge range of issues pertinent to women from all walks of life, as well as using the platform to promote Green Party events.

- Increase of 1700+ twitter followers since April (increase of over 50%)
- average of 300 new followers a month.
- An average of 3.1% engagement rate
- An average of 14 link clicks a day
- An average of 26 retweets a day without comment
- An average of 40 likes a day



WEBSITE [**GREEN PARTY WOMEN: HOME**](https://www.greenpartywomen.com)

In October 2019 the committee began to make enquiries about putting information on the website. As with twitter, it took a long time to get a response from the people who could help us, but the determination and persistence of Nicola Watson eventually paid off because in June 2020 we finally got the new website up and running. Nicola has participated in the training on Action Network, and though none of us claim to be experts, we are getting to grips with it. We use the website to showcase some of the excellent women in the Green Party and to advertise our events, webinars, and newsletters, and as a portal for women to

sign up to Green Party women. The committee would particularly like to thank Nicola Watson and Emma Bateman for their tireless work in the sometimes thankless task of understanding



and mastering the website and Green Spaces.

ONLINE CONFERENCE AND EGM [APRIL 2020](#)

Due to the hurdles we encountered in engaging with Green Party members, in April 2020 Dawn Furness decided to organise our first online Green Party Women conference. She arranged for some excellent speakers and presentations including 'Mental Health during Lockdown' presented by Kat Boettge, who also offered free professional counselling to GPW members, and 'Women in Prison During the Covid Pandemic' by Dr Kate Paradine

The second part of the conference centred on 'Women in Leadership' during the pandemic, by Georgia Taylor, and an introduction to the '50:50 Parliament Campaign' which advocates for women to have equal political representation with men, presented by Andrea Carey Fuller. The final section was a presentation on a Green Party Women Climate Change Campaign given by the Green Party campaigns coordinator, Britta Goodman

The conference was well attended with more than 60 participants joining us online. Because of the impasse we had reached in our attempts to find a way to build our membership database, we introduced the idea of making changes to the constitution to allow our membership base to function on an opt out basis rather than an opt in basis in a similar way to that of the Young Greens. This would mean that women who joined the Green Party could be automatically added to the Green Party Women list. This suggestion was not without its critics, and after discussions with the I.T department, the plans were put on hold. This left us in the same frustrating position as previously, as sadly the offer of help from Sian Berry to get the membership database reactivated came to nought.

On the advice of the I.T. department we also looked to building up a members group using slack, but after testing it out, found that it did not suit our requirements.



THE DATABASE

After months of persistence and several emails to Mary Clegg, the Green Party CEO, the lost email database of over 6000 Green Party women members reappeared. We are delighted that we now have a way of sharing articles, interviews and events among women in the Green Party.

ONLINE CONFERENCES CONTINUED

We received some very positive feedback after the first online conference, and so have continued to organise similar online events once a month, taking a break during August.

In [May](#), our second event focussed on the link between covid19 deaths and air pollution, with World Health Organisation advocate and our first spokeswoman (on air pollution) Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, and Rebeka Popovic and Dr. Lisa Selly from Cambridge University.

In [June](#), the conference looked at campaigning against big energy producers. Tina Rothery gave an inspiring talk on organising grass roots campaigning against fracking, our co-chair Emma Bateman spoke about the fight against nuclear power and former MEP Catherine Rowett brought us some solutions for tackling climate change from her report 'Energising the East'.

For July's conference we concentrated on the launch of the Ethical Care Charter for domestic care workers produced and supported by the trade union Unison.

The [September](#) conference will explore 'Defending Democracy' with economist and former Green MEP Molly Scott Cato; climate activist and founder of 'LeadClimate', Adenike Oladosu, and Klina Jordan, Co-Chief executive of 'Make Votes Matter'.



We are well aware that entering any male-dominated arena can be daunting, and politics even at a local level can be bruising at times. In June we held an online training event for Green Party women with Natalie Bennett as a guest speaker. Natalie gave us some excellent advice on speaking in public, on presentation and how to make the best use of interviews and media opportunities.

NEWSLETTERS

The appearance of a functioning membership list has enabled us to send out fortnightly newsletters with a round-up of interesting articles and events and highlights of the work that Green Party members do. Dawn Furness has recently begun to create podcast versions of these newsletters for members who prefer to receive their news in an audio format.



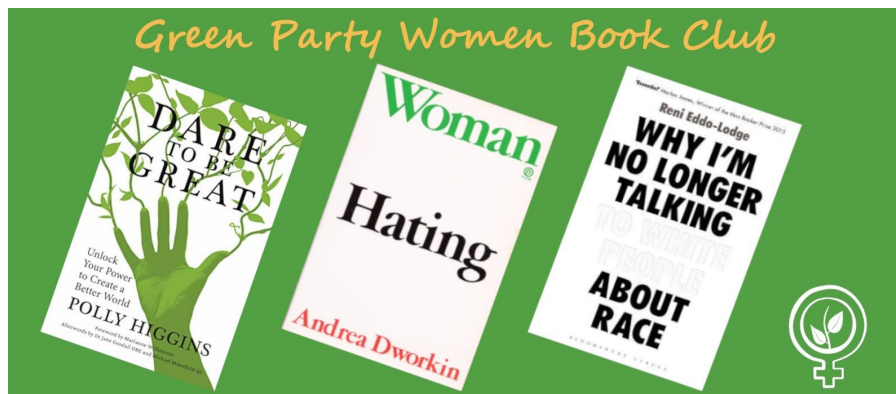
GREEN WOMEN PODCAST

Some of our members have launched a Green Women podcast. For example, in April Dawn interviewed Karen Ingala Smith about the shocking rates of violence against women. This is something we would certainly like to expand on and develop in the future. We are planning to upload all conferences and previous events to the podcast in audio, and to provide audio versions of articles written by Green women councillors, parliamentarians and activists.

ONLINE BOOK CLUB AND YOGA SESSIONS

Three months ago we began a monthly online book group focusing on feminist and climate orientated literature. So far we have tackled 'Dare to be Great' by Polly Higgins, 'Woman Hate' by Andrea Dworkin and September's choice is 'why I Am No Longer Talking To White People About Race' by Reni Eddo-Lodge. The discussions have been informal and humorous and it has been a lovely way to connect to other Green Party women.

For those members who enjoy working their bodies as well as their minds (though not too strenuously), Claudine Letsae has been running weekly online yoga sessions along with Shaka Lish.



LIAISING WITH OTHER GREEN PARTY GROUPS

We have attempted to make links with other groups in the Green Party in order to work collaboratively. Dawn Furness ran a Green Party Women fringe at the Association of Green Councillors meeting in July. Julia Lagoutte is working with Faty Kane, women's officer of the Greens of Colour group, to explore how we can do more to support women of colour. A survey is currently circulating to ascertain how Greens of Colour and Green Party Women can best take this forward.

We have started a conversation with the Green Party Disability Group about ways to engage with and support disabled women in the party. We'd also like to create specific ways to support other marginalised groups of women, such as working-class women and lesbian/bisexual women within the party.

In July, Green Party women contacted Paul Weaver, The Convenor of the LGBTQIA+ group in the members space with the aim of fostering dialogue between members with different opinions within the party.

POLICY

The committee has played an active part in trying to shape Green Party policy. In November 2019 we submitted a pledge and a programme outlining a political plan for supporting women and girls. This was intended to form the basis of a mini manifesto in the run up to the general election in December.

In preparation for the Spring 2020 conference, we submitted a motion on 'Reaffirming Women's Sex-based rights'. This motion was intended to address the fact that the Green Party Rights and Responsibilities chapter has no specific women's policy.

In May, we surveyed Green Party Women members and gathered and collated suggestions in response to the request from GPRC to participate in the 'Future Political Strategy' consultation.

ELECTIONS

We took a keen interest in the recent internal Green Party elections. Two of our committee members stood for election, and we are very pleased to be able to extend our Congratulations to Claudine Letsae and Julia Lagoutte who were successfully elected to the positions of International Co-ordinator and Publications Co-ordinator respectively.

We had hoped to run our own leadership hustings but ultimately this was not possible. However, as an alternative we asked the leadership and deputy leadership candidates for written answers to a series of questions pertinent to women's rights. Whilst some candidates chose not to respond, the majority did and we shared their replies on social media and in our newsletter to encourage members to vote.



CONTROVERSY

We think that it is safe to say that 2020 has been a difficult year for most people with Climate change, Covid and austerity being just a few of the things we have had to contend with. We have focused on the positives in this report. However, it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge that there are rifts and fractures in the Green Party, as there are in other political parties, over the question of women's rights. Whilst we have focused our energies on positive campaigns, engaging events, and support-building, women's rights is an issue which people feel passionately about and compromise can seem hard to find. As a committee we believe that it is important to stand up for women and against sexism and misogyny, and that is the course we have tried to steer.

In line with both the Green Party's code of conduct and feminist praxis, we believe in the ethos of listening, dialogue and consensus. If the current committee continues, we will prioritise consulting and hearing from women in the Green Party.

CONCLUSIONS

Several committee members had extensive experience of working within the Green Party, though only Freda Davies had previously served on the Green Party Women committee. It was quite a steep learning curve for some of us, but as we got to know each other we have been able to work together amicably, and have come to appreciate each others' talents.

Looking back at what we have done over the year, we are very proud of what the committee has accomplished. We have managed to resurrect the Green Party women membership list, we have increased the number of members using the Facebook page, we have resuscitated the twitter account and multiplied the number of followers, we have set up a new website, we have held some great online conferences, and we have launched a regular newsletter, a book club and yoga sessions.

THANKS

The majority of the committee intend to put themselves forward for re-election in the hope of being able to build on our achievements. However Freda Davies has decided not to stand again this year. Freda's pragmatism, calm patience, and extensive knowledge of the workings of the Green Party have been invaluable to the committee, and we would like to extend our gratitude and thanks for all the work that she has done.

GREEN PARTY WOMEN

#TeamGPW. Nothing about us without us!

