

RAYYAN MIRZA FOR CHAIR: MY PLAN FOR CHANGE

The Green Party needs to change in three ways if we are to regain momentum lost from not winning any more MEPs this year, and elect our first MPs next year. Please read this plan and circulate it among members of your local or regional party for discussion. Then contact me on rayyanforchair@googlemail.com to arrange a visit from me to your next local or regional meeting, so members can have a real debate about where our party goes next.

1. Making GPEX Accountable to Members

The current situation

During the latter stages of the Euro campaign, our national Green Party Executive (GPEX) poured resources into London even when it was obvious our MEP there was easily going to be re-elected. Had they given more money to the North West region, we might have won a Green MEP there and stopped Nick Griffin. We also narrowly missed out on winning MEPs in Eastern and South West regions.

Anyone could have told GPEX they should have invested in more regions, but they weren't listening. To be a successful party across the country, we need a national executive that listens to *members*, rather than just to itself.

I am one of many ordinary grassroots members frustrated at the lack of openness and accountability with which GPEX has acted this year. We cannot hold them to account if we don't know how or why they make their decisions.

The changes I would call for

- 1) Film GPEX meetings and post them online on a secure members' website, with minutes, the day after they happen (excluding confidential matters like staff line management).
- 2) Host a live chat on a secure members' website once a month, at least one week after the last GPEX meeting, for members to ask GPEX questions and suggest their own ideas.
- 3) Email the membership every fortnight with a brief video message about what the Green Party is doing across the country and how members can help out wherever they are.

2. Adopting a Long-Term Strategy

The current situation

The focus of our general election strategy is to win MPs in three target constituencies next year: Brighton Pavilion, Norwich South and Lewisham Deptford. However, GPEX has adopted a 'fallback plan' in the event we do not win any MPs or only win one: to stand as many candidates across the country as possible with a target of winning "a million votes", so we can claim a "mandate" for our ideas and evidence of substantial support.

However, "a million votes" would come from 1 in 60 or just over 1.5% of the population, so would be neither a mandate nor evidence of substantial support. We only have a mandate if we win enough MPs to form a government or influence legislation. To eventually achieve that, we must expand our number of target constituencies over time, which requires the kind of long-term investment we've made in Brighton, Norwich and Lewisham.

We would need to stand over four hundred candidates to win even close to a million votes, costing hundreds of thousands of pounds in deposits, most of which we will lose. We should put that money into winning our targets and investing in local parties for the future, rather than gambling it away for an unconvincing sound bite like “a million votes”.

The changes I would call for

- 1) Focus almost all of our existing resources on our three target constituencies, because a million votes is no consolation for not electing any MPs.
- 2) Match up local parties across the country with whichever one of our three target constituencies they are nearest to, so we can easily arrange for hundreds of activists to help out there.
- 3) Raise extra funds to employ a part-time paid regional organiser in every one of our ten regions, to help local parties elect more Green councillors in 2010-2011 and build up bases of support to become future target MP and MEP constituencies.

3. Increasing Internal Democracy

The current situation

There's no point winning elections if we are not internally democratic. We can only make Britain a more equal and democratic society when we give an equal voice to *every* member regardless of how long they've been in the party, where they live, or who they know.

We have thousands of members but only a few hundred attend our Conferences, and even fewer run for internal elections. The vast majority of members can't dedicate the time or the money to attend Conference, or are put off by its old-fashioned format. Instead of expecting the vast majority of our members to change to suit the Green Party, we should be changing the Green Party to suit the vast majority of our members.

The ban on canvassing members heavily prejudices internal elections in favour of candidates who've been in the party longer or have more high profile backers, which is neither democratic nor fair. Members cannot make an informed decision about how to vote unless they have meaningful contact with candidates: this is our approach to public elections, so we should be consistent with it in our internal elections.

The changes I would call for

- 1) Policy can be discussed at Conference, with all discussion sessions filmed and posted online along with forums for further discussion, but policy should only be voted on after Conference with a secure online voting system that all members can access.
- 2) There will be only one round of nominations and voting for internal elections before Conference, open to all members, and not a second round at Conference where only the small minority of members in attendance can stand and vote.
- 3) Candidates in internal elections can directly contact members by post, phone or email, and must attend at least one online or in-person hustings event before voting opens.