

## Green House

### Annual Report 2014 - 2015

#### Introduction

1. Green House is a green think tank, founded in 2011. Its primary aim is to advance education and undertake research in the politics and economics of ecological sustainability. It does so primarily by publishing reports on relevant topics, and also by holding events, running a website including shorter pieces or blogs on topical subjects, intervening in media debates and maintaining a supporters network (which currently includes about 820 supporters).

This report details our activities over the financial year from April 2014 to the end of March 2015. It was a year in which GH significantly expanded its activities and took major decisions which will impact on its activities and development over the next few years.

#### Post-growth project

2. At our winter meeting in January 2012 we made a decision to focus our work in the medium term into a coherent project held together by what we believe is the conceptual starting point for the creation of a fair and sustainable society – the recognition that the drive for economic growth is no longer either possible or necessary or desirable, but in fact is driving increasing inequality and ecological damage. We call this the 'Post-Growth Project'. It includes not just a restatement and refinement of the arguments against 'growthism', but the first (to our knowledge) outline depictions of what a post-growth UK might look like in terms of its economic and social policy systems.

We published two initial reports in the Post-growth project in 2012-13:

- *'Green House's 'Post-growth' Project: an introduction'* by Rupert Read.
- *'Joined up Economics: The Political Economy of Sustainability, Financial Crises, Wages, Equality and Welfare'* by Brian Heatley.

We followed that up with three further reports in 2013-14:

- *'Smaller but Better? Post-growth Public Services'* by Andrew Pearmain and Brian Heatley.
- *'The Paradox of a Green Stimulus'* by Molly Scott Cato.
- *'Can't Pay; Won't Pay: Austerity, Audit and Odious Debt'* by Molly Scott Cato;

3. Early in 2014-15 we published three more reports from the project:

- *'The Politics of Post-Growth'* by Andrew Dobson.
- *'Post-growth Common Sense: Political Communications for the Future'* by Rupert Read.
- *'How to Make, Do and Mend our Economy: Rethinking Capital Investment in Construction and Industry, the Scale and Depth of the Challenge of the Green Transition'* by Jonathan Essex;

and in October 2014 we published, in association with the London Publishing Partnership, a book bringing together all of the reports listed above (with some additional editing and amendments):

- *'The Post-Growth Project: How the End of Economic Growth Could Bring a Fairer and Happier Society'* edited by John Blewitt and Ray Cunningham

This is the first book published by Green House, and its publication was supported by a grant from the Network for Social Change. Much of our work since its publication has been on publicizing the book and the project and building on and taking forward the intellectual work behind it, e.g. through the publication of short 'Gases' and through events linked to the project.

### Other publications

4. While our main concentration was on the Post-Growth Project, we published a number of shorter pieces, sometimes linked to but independent of the project, but in other cases responding either to specific calls for evidence to public inquiries or to current political or economic debates. These were:

- *'Why do capitalist economies need to grow?'* by Bill Blackwell (September 2014)
- *'What's the point of the EU? The World War I Centenary and the myth of the EU's 'peace mission'* by Ray Cunningham (September 2014)
- *'Growth, capitalism and 'Green Economy': A response to 'Why do capitalist economies need to grow?'* by Victor Anderson (December 2014)
- *Green House evidence to the Parliamentary Committee on Political and Constitutional Reform* by Victor Anderson (December 2014)
- *'CapGlobalCarbon'* by John Jopling (February 2015)

### Videos

5. Green House is now maintaining a video site on Vimeo. This was effectively launched in June 2015, but includes videos made before then but originally hosted elsewhere, including a number of short videos from the March 2015 event listed below.

### Events

6. We held a number of events over the course of the year, sometimes in partnership with other organisations, sometimes organised solely by Green House. Again, some were linked to the Post-Growth Project, but always also functioned as self-standing events for people with no existing knowledge of the project. They are listed here in summary form; more information is available on our website.

- 20 March 2015, Panel debate and public discussion, Europe House, London, on **Green growth or de-growth? Alternatives to Austerity in Europe**. Held together with the Green European Foundation and the

Belgian think tank Oikos. Speakers: Jean Lambert, MEP, Tomislav Tomasevic, Jonathan Essex, Aurelie Marechal, Dirk Holemans, John Blewitt

- February 11, 2015, Panel debate and public discussion, Aston University, Birmingham, on **The Post Growth Project: the Regional Dimension**. Speakers: Andy Dobson, Jonathan Essex, Karen Leach, John Blewitt.
- January 20, 2015 Panel debate and public discussion, Brighton, on **The future of local government in Britain** Speakers: Rupert Read Jason Kitcat, Alison Plaumer.
- November 5, 2014 Book launch and debate, House of Lords, London, on **Britain in a post-growth world**. Speakers: Jenny Jones, Rupert Read, Zoe Williams, Aurélie Maréchal, Molly Scott Cato MEP
- April 30 2014 Report launch and debate, House of Commons, London on **The Politics of Post-Growth**. Speakers: Michael Meacher MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Molly Scott Cato

Additionally, Green House members were frequent contributors to events of all kinds held by other organisations (including for example the annual General Strategy meeting of the Green European Foundation). For the first time, we took a stall to publicize and sell our publications at the Green Party's autumn conference in Birmingham.

### Media

7. During the course of the year we engaged a freelance editorial and publishing consultant, Gudrun Freese to help us update and strengthen our media strategy. John Blewitt has agreed to take lead responsibility for Green House's media strategy from September 2015 onwards.

### Internal meetings, finances, structure

8. We held face to face meetings of the core group in July 2014 in Weymouth and at the Green Party spring and autumn conferences, and otherwise have met over the telephone every two weeks.

9. Our accounts for the year are attached as an annex. As noted last year, the grant received from the Network for Social Change was received at the very end of the last financial year and spent (to subsidise the production and sale price of the Post-Growth Project book) during this year. We successfully applied for three more grants during the course of the reporting year: (i) a grant of £24,000 from the Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation, spread over approximately three years, mainly to pay for a part time post to run and administer Green House; the first instalment was received in June 2014;

(ii) a grant of €3,250 from the Green European Foundation towards the costs of holding a conference in London on Green alternatives to austerity in Europe (see 'Events' above);

(iii) a grant of €2,750 (plus some additional funding from central project funds) from the Green European Foundation towards the costs of a conference in London as part of the GEF's ECOPRO international project.

(These last two grants are project grants and are administered by the GEF, which receives and pays invoices for project expenses; they therefore do not appear in Green House's internal accounts, as the money does not pass through our bank account.)

10. The grant from the Polden Puckham Foundation has enabled Ray Cunningham, last year a Trustee and Chair of Green House, to devote more time to the administration of the organization. This was the rationale behind the grant application. In accordance with PPCF grant conditions and good practice within the sector, Ray resigned as a Trustee (he had already been succeeded as Chair by Rupert Read) before receiving any payments for his administrative work (some of which he was already carrying out). He is paid on a freelance, self-employed basis, in line with other freelance work he carries out for other organisations.

11. These changes in roles were agreed and enacted at the June 2014 Green House AGM. Further changes were as follows:

(i) The value of Ann Pfeiffer's all-round contribution to GH was acknowledged, and it was agreed that this should be recognized by establishing a post of Minutes Secretary, to which post Ann was elected.

(ii) Anne Chapman as elected Treasure to succeed Molly Scott Cato, who stood down.

(iii) Ray Cunningham was appointed to the new part-time paid role of Coordinator, and the contract was signed on behalf of GH by Brian Heatley as Secretary.

(iv) Victor Anderson was welcomed back to the core group of members following a sabbatical, and Molly Scott Cato stood down from the core group (and the Treasurer role) following her election as MEP, but wished to remain a member of the Advisory Group, which was universally welcomed and agreed.

(v) The other trustees remained the same through the year: Brian Heatley (Secretary), Andrew Dobson, Andrew Pearmain, Jonathan Essex (Head of Research), George Graham, John Barry and Tom Lines.

(vi) John Blewitt and Alex Warleigh-Lack had joined the core group early in 2014. Alex withdrew from this group in January 2015, moving instead to the advisory group.

12. In the course of 2013-14, Green House submitted an application to the Charities Commission to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Protracted correspondence with the CC indicated that they had substantial reservations about the application. When it became clear to us that the CC's interpretation of 'political' (and therefore non-charitable) activity would exclude many activities which we as a group believe fall within the legitimate scope of any think tank engaged in research and debate of policy matters, we decided not to pursue the application any further. However, we remained conscious of

the potential benefits of incorporation for the organization, and therefore decided instead to seek incorporation as a company limited by guarantee (one which cannot distribute profits to shareholders). Our application was approved by Companies House in June 2015. Accordingly, the voluntary association 'Green House' decided at its AGM on 26 July 2015 to wind itself up and transfer its assets and activities to the new company 'Green House think tank' as soon as a new bank account is set up. The first meeting of 'Green House think tank' was held on the same day. This is therefore the last annual report of Green House the voluntary association, and next year will see the first annual report of the new company of the same name.



*Our meeting in Weymouth, July 2014*