

Witness Name: Liz Reason, Chair of Green Party Executive
(GPEX)
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits: 1
Dated: 10 January 2019

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**Witness Statement of Liz Reason, Chair of the Executive of the Green Party of
England and Wales**

I, Liz Reason, will say as follows:-

IICSA have requested that the Green Party respond to a number of queries concerning the Green Party and the recent conviction of David Challenor.

As Chair of Green Party Executive (GPEX) I am responding on behalf of the Green Party and provide responses below.

I hope that this information is helpful. Please don't hesitate to let me know if the Green Party can assist the Inquiry in any further way.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

DPA

Dated: _____ 10 January 2019 _____

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EXHIBIT [] / 1 – Green Party safeguarding policy

IICSA have requested that the Green Party respond to a number of queries concerning the Green Party and the recent conviction of David Challenor. I have copied those questions below, with responses provided underneath each question.

1. Please specify when any members or staff of the Green Party first became aware that David Challenor was being investigated by the police in relation to very serious offences against a child, and when the Green Party first became aware that he was formally charged. Please explain who in the Party knew and how they came by the information.

No members of Green Party staff were aware of the investigation into David Challenor. They were only informed after David Challenor's conviction in August 2018.

Two members of the Green Party were informed of the investigation in general terms by Aimee Challenor, David's daughter and then a Green Party Spokesperson, on 5 November 2016. Those members were Clare Phipps, then Chair of the Green Party Executive (GPEX), and Matt Hawkins, then one half of the job-share covering the External Communications role on GPEX.

Aimee informed both through a private Facebook message that her father had been charged that morning with 22 offences. Aimee said that she did not know the accusations, but was aware that the majority of them were sexual. The message did not mention that the sexual accusations concerned a child.

2. The organisers of Coventry Pride have stated publicly that they were made aware of the criminal proceedings against David Challenor in November 2016. If the Green Party was not similarly aware by that time, please explain why not.

On 5 November 2016 Matt Hawkins received the notification in general terms described in response to question 1. On the same day, Matt Hawkins, then one half of the job-share covering the External Communications role on GPEX, emailed three Green Party staff members, all of whom were in the press team.

In the email, Matt Hawkins informed the team that a close relative of a Green Party spokesperson had been arrested and asked the staff members to contact him if anyone got in touch with them concerning the matter.

Aimee Challenor and David Challenor were not mentioned by name, and the cause of the arrest was not specified. This was the only notification passed on to Green Party staff.

3. Please set out what actions were taken, if any, by members or staff of the Green Party once information about the criminal proceedings against David Challenor was received.

The response to question 2 sets out the only action taken by either of the two members made aware (in general terms) of the criminal proceedings against David Challenor at the time of his arrest. As soon as the party became aware of his conviction, David Challenor was expelled from the party with immediate effect.

4. Please specify whether Aimee Challenor or Tina Challenor told anyone else in the Green Party about the criminal proceedings against David Challenor, and if so when.

This is covered in the response to question 1. To the best of our knowledge, the notification described in this response was the only notification made by Aimee or Tina Challenor.

5. Please set out whether there was any discussion about the suitability of Tina Challenor, David Challenor's wife, standing for office as a councillor in the Binley and Willenhall ward in Coventry in the 3 May 2018 local elections when she was a witness for the defence in the criminal trial.

There was no discussion of this suitability, as neither the local or national party were aware of the criminal proceedings against David Challenor, and the role of Tina Challenor as a witness in them.

6. Please explain why David Challenor was able to be registered as the election agent for Aimee Challenor in the May 2017 and May 2018 elections, when he had outstanding criminal charges against him relating to child sexual abuse.

The decision to appoint David Challenor as election agent in May 2017 and May 2018 was taken by Aimee Challenor alone. Neither the local or national party were aware of the criminal proceedings against David Challenor, so this appointment of an agent by a candidate did not raise any red flags.

7. The Inquiry understands that the Green Party has instructed an independent consultancy, Verita, to undertake an investigation into the circumstances surrounding this case, and that a final report is due to be produced by mid-November 2018. Please provide us with a full, unredacted copy of the final report, and any other key documents found by Verita which you consider relevant to the Inquiry's Westminster investigation.

This report has provided to the Inquiry in full (attached to this letter).

8. As a separate matter, the Inquiry has also considered the documents previously provided by the Green Party in response to an earlier request. We are grateful for your cooperation. We have noticed that in 2014 (see enclosed) an email was received by the Green Party office from an alleged victim accusing **WM-F28** **WM-F28** of child sexual abuse. Please explain what actions, if any, were taken in response to this email.

We can find no record of this email on our systems, or of action taken as a result. All members of staff mentioned in the email are no longer with the Green Party. We are conducting further enquires.

9. Please comment on any further matters relating to the above points that you consider relevant to the Inquiry's Westminster investigation.

As soon as Green Party staff and current members on Governance bodies were made aware of the conviction of David Challenor in August 2018, a number of actions were instigated in response:

Disciplinary: David Challenor was expelled from the Green Party. Aimee and Tina Challenor were both suspended from the Party, pending internal investigation. Aimee Challenor has now resigned from the Green Party. The Party commissioned the investigations consultancy Verita to consider the matter and in full and to provide a report to the Party.

Safeguarding: The Green Party's safeguarding policy, adopted in 2016 and previously sent to the Inquiry, is being reviewed. This review will take recommendations from the Verita Inquiry into account, along with recommendations commissioned from an external safeguarding consultant.

Spokespeople: The Green Party has started a review of its system for appointing and managing spokespeople.

Guidance to candidates: The Green Party has prepared new guidance for all Green Party candidates in local and national elections, stressing that all potential criminal matters involving themselves or family members should be reported in full to the Party at once. This guidance provides examples of matters that should be declared.