

SE2 Martin Osborne - Senate Co Chair

Proposer:	Martin Osborne (Brighton & Hove Green Party)
Agenda item:	A Reports

Report Details

It's been a eventful year as Senate Co-chair, a position that is not always easy but always rewarding nonetheless! It has been a pleasure to work with keen activists in Wales and the different regions of England and also to learn more about organising events and supporting projects. Furthermore it has been a wonderful opportunity to work more closely with other members of the EC and especially the amazing Vicky, who joined as the other Senate co-chair after Spring conference.

During the year my main aim has been to set up the regions in order to establish a stronger mechanism for engaging with the grassroots and to ensure that there is an intermediary body who can facilitate an ongoing conversation between the local young greens members and the EC. When I took over in Nov 2017, the Senate had become slightly inactive for a few months and so firstly we got things started up again. Although working as the sole Senate Co-chair as there was no other interested person in sharing the role until later, we still were able to fill positions. Several regional officers were appointed during the end of 2017 and start of 2018, some being co-opted directly by the Senate after a call out to the membership, others elected by the areas themselves. Some areas proved more difficult to fill, however, with a lack of engagement from call outs or challenges with communication to the current Senate representatives meaning that progress in those areas was stalled.

After getting young greens in position, the next step has been to build a committee to help run the region/nation. We tried to get AGMs arranged in each area and there has been some success with this. The South East, North East and London were all reasonably well attended but Yorkshire and the Humber and East of England ended up being below quoracy. Attempts to organise AGMs in the other regions have been stalled for a number of reasons and has relied heavily upon the expertise of previous young green activists to organise these events. In areas where communication has been less well established and where there is a lack of previous event organisation know how, it has been a huge challenge to get this event organised. Organising an AGM is a big event and requires a lot of planning, engaging with membership etc. which can take time. More certainly can be done in ensuring that all future Senate members have the skills and feel confident in organising an AGM and this should be one of the things that should be added to an official Senate training programme which I'd like to recommend that any future Senate develops.

In addition, the plan has been to bring motions to the regional AGMs to get the new regional constitutions ratified. The older constitutions were brought in when the groups were originally affiliated but have become outdated. SPC helped to draft a template constitution and this was adopted by the South East, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber. The other regions need to accept this when they hold an AGM.

Senate meetings have been held for most of the months and have mainly been a chance for the Senate representatives to share best practice/ideas and for the Senate co-chairs to pass on information. The atmosphere has been friendly but an important tool to use in developing the region/nation. It is recommended that these meetings continue to provide an open platform to discuss issues and because different Senate representatives are always at different stages in their membership journeys and can learn from the experiences of the others.

In my opinion, what the next Senate needs to do is focus on replicating the successes of the South East.

They have been able to really activate the membership by regularly engaging with them through social media, emails and phone calls and following up with a series of special events, opportunities to train and action days. The tour of panel discussions and the summer gathering have been specific examples of incredibly successful events and part of the "South East model" which should be adopted by all areas. Details about this model and documentation have been produced by the South East Young Greens committee and include in a Google drive which all Senate representatives can access.

In order to try and help out with some of the issues I've put a motion in for convention which is aiming to amend the standing orders and allow the selection of Senate representatives for any vacant areas at convention so long as the amount of young green members from the area is above quoracy threshold. This will hopefully enable the Senate to have a more complete body that represents all of the membership and mean that effort isn't wasted in continually sending out messages to try and co-opt whenever a role becomes vacant.

Going forward there is a real need for coordinated action with the rest of EC. The two bodies have traditionally been considered as two separate bodies, with the overlap as the two co-chairs sit on EC. The Senate have been left to do a lot of the ground work including membership engagement, arranging action days/events and running the regional social media accounts. However, the Senate would make much more progress if EC took local organising as the main priority. There is still room for Senate to flourish but it needs alot of TLC from EC to relaunch it in a success form. It is pleasing to see that next years EC will be made up of many former Senate members and so now is an ideal chance to push forward. Best of luck to the next Senate co-chairs and I'll happily be in contact and ensure a smooth transition to the next Senate occurs.