

Being Green

Phil Mellows

So there I was in the local last night having a quick pint (which turned into three but you know how it goes) and who should be at bar but the Leader of Brighton & Hove Council! Actually he's in there all the time – well, quite often – but it was the first time I've seen him as Leader. He didn't seem any different. He wasn't wearing a special hat or anything. He just drank his beer, had a laugh with the regulars and toddled off with a takeaway pizza under his arm. He may have splashed out on extra pepperoni. I couldn't tell.

I'm pleased he was there. You half expect these people to never visit a pub again once they've reached such giddy heights. I never saw Mary Mears knocking back pints. Perhaps a Green will be different. Yes, Brighton & Hove is the first Green-led council in the country. We have always been quite green, of course. I'm not very good at it though.

I conscientiously do all my recycling but that's more about being anally retentive than consciously saving the planet. I like wind farms. But for aesthetic reasons. You don't want too much nature muddling up the landscape. You need a bit of machinery in there to give it structure. Like a good wine. And I like those electric car recharging stations with their gleaming blue lights. Some electric cars to go with them would be nice, too.

But bicycles. Bicycles, the preferred mode of green transport, are frightful contraptions. Don't get me wrong. My dad had a bike. He rode it to work. I used to sit on a little seat that screwed onto the crossbar as his knees pumped up and down either side of me. Today's bicycles are different. Or perhaps it's the riders. Dad obeyed the Highway Code, stopped at junctions, used hand signals, rang his bell. And he never, ever, rode on the pavement. All that etiquette and care seems to have gone. Speaking as a grumpy old man and committed pedestrian (I don't have a car either), cyclists these days think they own the road. Seems it's all part of being green.