

TEN QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

Replies from Nick Startin, Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for Salisbury

1. What is the view of candidates on the NIC rise, being discussed by all parties?

I agree with our party's line on this which is to abolish the upper limit for National Insurance contributions but raise the lower National Insurance limit to the personal allowance rate. In the long term we aim to merge national insurance into income tax.

2. How would candidates tackle the scourge of late payment facing small businesses?

The policy in our manifesto is to introduce legislation to penalise late payment. This is a very necessary measure given that late payments put much more financial pressure on small businesses than large companies.

3. Should small businesses be given the right of appeal against a decision by a bank to reject their loan application?

I think they should. Banks do not always get this right!

4. Can candidates outline how they would ensure that small firms get a fair share when it comes to public sector contracts?

Where feasible I would like to see small, local businesses (particularly those with a good environmental track record) get priority when it comes to public sector contracts. We need to recognize the needs of the local community as a whole and small businesses are a vital piece in the jigsaw.

5. Do candidates support the proposals for a Post Bank?

Yes, we favour the introduction of a network of local community banks which would also provide a new source of finance for small businesses.

6. Would candidates declare a moratorium on employment regulations?

Yes, I think that too much employment regulation (beyond statutory requirements such as Health and Safety, environmental regulations and the payment of the Minimum wage) does not help small businesses to develop.

7. How would candidates halt the onward march of the big supermarkets?

This is hugely important to me. Our manifesto has a range of measures to reduce the dominance of the supermarket such as:

- *Vigourously enforcing monopoly legislation against the existing, largest chains*

- *Introducing a supermarket Obudsman*
- *Prohibiting new out of town retailing*

We would amend planning laws to allow appropriate small businesses to operate in residential areas and ensure all large new retail developments include spaces for local businesses. We would also re-orient the tax burden for businesses by increasing the main rate of Corporation tax from 28% to 30% and reducing the small firms rate back to 20%.

8. Do candidates think that parking restrictions and charges should be lifted at certain times to encourage trade in the high street?

No.

9. How would candidates ensure the police took crimes against businesses seriously?

I think this is particularly important for small businesses and government should do more to legislate on this.

10. Do any of the candidates have any real experience in running a business?

My background is in secondary and higher education but I have various friends and family who run small businesses. I recognise how important small firms are to the local economy and I also recognise how time-consuming and demanding running a small business can be.