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Politics Story

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Greens recruit former diplomat

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By [Claire Trevett](#)



Nandor Tanczos will not stand for Parliament after the election.

Photo / Mark Mitchell

Ken Graham wears a subdued grey suit, loves opera, is a Fulbright scholar and prominent international lawyer, and speaks in a cultured accent courtesy of a career as a diplomat in Europe.

Dr Kennedy Graham is also the younger brother of former National Party Cabinet minister Sir Douglas Graham.

So, despite listing "reggae" among his musical tastes, he stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb as the Green Party rolled out its line-up for the election yesterday.

Dr Graham is number nine, making him a likely prospect as an MP if the party can get around 8 per cent of the vote.

As co-leaders Jeanette Fitzsimons and Russel Norman called out the credentials, Dr Graham was the only one who came without a mention of street-level protest action. Kevin Hague had the Springbok Tour protests, and Gareth Hughes was a Greenpeace protester who was once arrested while dressed as Ronald McDonald in an anti-genetic engineering protest.

Dr Graham's environmental activism credentials were slightly more highbrow and less noisy. A former diplomat, he was involved in negotiating the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone and then fronting for it as a diplomat before the United Nations in Geneva and New York.

He later headed the UN University's Leadership Academy in Jordan and was a senior consultant to the UN's department of political affairs before returning to New Zealand.

Now he is based at Canterbury University, where he is a senior fellow, as well as lecturing in international politics and law at Victoria University and visiting lecturer at the College of Europe in Belgium.

He said he joined the Greens after deciding to return to New Zealand in 2002, attracted by their philosophies both globally and individually.

Those diplomatic skills came in useful when he had to confess his new political plans to Sir Douglas, his older brother by four years.

"You would be forgiven for thinking he was in a state of shock. But he rallied brilliantly, and very bravely."

Other than sitting MPs those above Dr Graham on the list include first-time candidate Kevin Hague, chief executive of the West Coast District Health Board.

The former head of the Aids Foundation, Mr Hague said he had co-organised the first Hero Party in 1991, was a keen cyclist, and had solar hot water heating, a composting heap, and was trying to grow his own veges.

"And I add to the diversity of the Greens list, being a gay man and also going to work in a business suit."

Of the six sitting MPs, Nandor Tanczos is the only one not to appear on the party's list. Mr Tanczos said last year that he would not be standing for Parliament again. A decision is expected within the next fortnight on whether he will leave before the election. Co-leader Russel Norman is the only non-MP in the top six, coming in at number 2.

Mr Tanczos has said he wants to wait until his Waste Minimisation Bill is passed, but standing down earlier would allow Dr Norman to become an MP, giving him more resources.

*** THE TOP DOZEN**

1. Jeanette Fitzsimons, MP and co-leader.
2. Russel Norman, co-leader.
3. Sue Bradford, MP.

4. Metiria Turei, MP.
5. Sue Kedgley, MP.
6. Keith Locke, MP.
7. Kevin Hague, West Coast District Health Board chief executive.
8. Catherine Delahunty, social issues advocate.
9. Ken Graham, international law lecturer, former diplomat.
10. David Clendon, resource management consultant.
11. Gareth Hughes, Green Party climate change campaigner.
12. Steffan Browning, organics advocate and resource management consultant for marine farming.