



Hexham

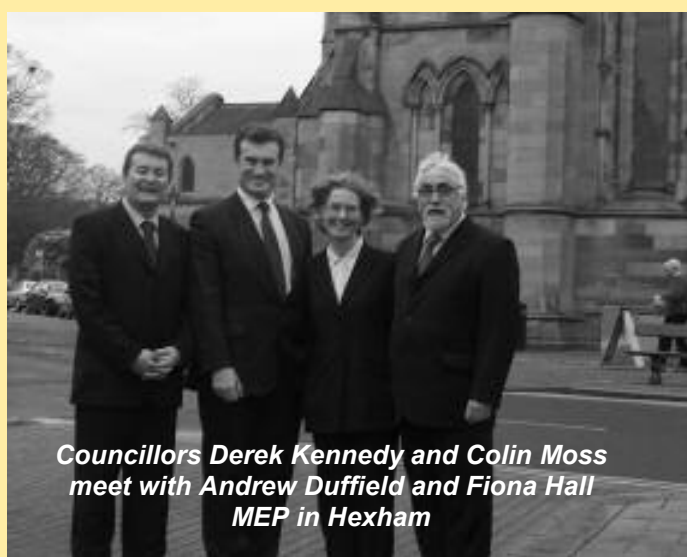
FOCUS



Winter 2004/5

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Focus Team: Councillor Derek Kennedy, Councillor Colin Moss and Victor Ball



Councillors Derek Kennedy and Colin Moss meet with Andrew Duffield and Fiona Hall MEP in Hexham

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2004: ANOTHER YEAR OF PROGRESS FOR THE LIB DEMS

- ◆ Taking control of Newcastle City Council by a resounding majority: 48 seats to Labour's 30. None for the Tories
- ◆ Pushing Labour into third place in the share of the national vote at the May local elections
- ◆ Winning 2 new seats at the European Parliament elections in June, including one here in the North East with Fiona Hall's victory
- ◆ Securing the Leicester South parliamentary seat with a 22% swing from Labour
- ◆ Slashing Labour majorities in Birmingham Hodge Hill (27% swing from Labour to Lib Dems) and Hartlepool (19% swing from Labour to Lib Dems)

Highway Robbery

Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate for Hexham, Andrew Duffield, has slammed Northumberland's Labour Administration for its cavalier attitude towards the County's Middle Schools - and now its roads as well.

In the wake of its second disastrous failure to secure "Building Schools for the Future" money from Government, the Labour controlled County Council is now proposing to slash investment in other vital services by as much as £10 million in order to fund its ill-judged education reforms.

Hardest hit is likely to be the investment desperately needed for Northumberland's rapidly deteriorating road network. Andrew Duffield, a Liberal Democrat County Councillor himself, said: "This proposal is nothing less than Highway Robbery"

"The financial implications of Labour's plans are severe and may mean council tax hikes, cuts in services and job losses among staff. Unfortunately, the Tories seem content to impose 2-tier schooling come-what-may as well.

"Liberal Democrats believe in meeting local needs and aspirations as far as possible, and will work with communities to achieve the best outcome in terms of educational provision for our children.

"A future Lib Dem County Council will review plans for school reorganisation where there is strong local demand or particular circumstances and ensure that any reforms are consistent with local needs and priorities.

"I demand that the Secretary of State honour his Government's pledge to 'Education, Education, Education.' Our children, no less than others in Britain, are entitled to a properly funded, first-class education service."



Andrew Duffield

is a Northumberland County Councillor and has been selected by Hexham Constituency Liberal Democrats to stand for them at the next general election.

Bus service reductions



Councillor Derek Kennedy

it was not viable. New bus routes were being introduced and therefore they had agreed to remove this leg of the bus service.

Derek was so concerned he organised a petition with signatures from bus users and sent it to Arriva and the County Council. He urged both parties to reconsider their decision and to re-introduce the service. He said "The decision beggars belief. The bus goes to the bottom of the lane but we can not get agreement to go the 2-minute journey to the top of the Lane. It is understandable that people are angry. I feel frustrated

In August 2004, the 803 bus was removed from the Leazes Lane area with 5 days notice given to the users of this vital service. Your councillors were inundated with calls and letters of protest.

Derek contacted the County Council to ask for an explanation as to why this popular bus was considered redundant. The County Council and Arriva had jointly concluded that there were only 3 passengers per day on Leazes Lane and therefore

that the public and councillors were not consulted. I am sure this leg of the route is commercially viable. **It is just another unnecessary reduction in public services."**

Derek concluded, **"This episode makes a mockery of government plans to get people to use sustainable public transport."** Derek, Colin and the Town Council are continuing to press for the re-introduction of this service.

Christmas Party at Langley Castle

Tynedale Council has been debating the Council Tax budget for 2005/06. Concerns have been raised that the money allocated to the Council may be limited and therefore there is a growing need to reconsider and prioritise Council spending. We agree with this process of assessment and prioritisation and understand the need to be selective in deciding what is an essential public service and what is not. Options such as reducing the monitoring of air pollution in Hexham, reduction in food hygiene testing, reduction in Tourist Information Centres and staff redundancies are some key issues under consideration. In this context it was unnerving to receive an official invitation to a Christmas party arranged by the council, inviting the **52 councillors and their partners and senior officers and their partners** to a party at Langley Castle.

Derek was so concerned that he persuaded the LibDem group not to attend. We believe that as people struggle with the ever rising council tax it would be hypocritical to attend such a lavish function, and we would find it impossible to justify to the public. We believe that the money for this event, believed to be **£1500**, should have been redirected to public services. Tynedale Council receives circa £150 p.a. per household for council tax charges; therefore the £1500 charge is the equivalent of **10 households** paying their annual council tax bill. Derek said, "If the councillors want a Christmas party then we should pay for it ourselves, not expect the public to pay". This subject received extensive coverage in the Courant and Journal and even the **Mail on Sunday** supported our principled stance stating **"I take my party hat off to the LibDem councillors who boycotted the event"**.



Swimming Pool and Bowls Hall

As you know the LibDems have been campaigning endlessly for the Council to spend some of the £30 million it has in its reserves. The campaign appears to be producing results. The Council has recognised that the swimming pool needs expensive repairs and therefore it decided to hold a public consultation on whether the public was interested in paying for a new pool. Over 1100 persons completed the questionnaire with 65% of voters stating they were in favour of a new pool at the Wentworth Sports Centre to be built on the site of the bowls playing area, with a new Bowls hall to be built adjacent to the running track.

Derek and Colin applaud this result as it shows the Council that the public are very much in favour of improved public services and that the need to keep the £30m locked in bank vault is not necessarily the best option. There is still a long way to go until the pool is approved and built, but we will continue to pressurise the Council to provide public services that you deserve.

Junction of Cockshaw and Millfield Terrace



Councillor Derek Kennedy

Following reports of anti social behaviour on the land at the junction of Cockshaw and Millfield Terrace, Derek met with concerned residents to discuss the matter.

Derek was informed of under age drinking, vandalism and other disorders in this area by juveniles. Derek spoke with the current owners of the land and asked if they were willing in principle to consider the possibility of passing the land over to the Council? The owners and Derek have written to the council to ask that this matter be explored.

If the Council adopts the land, Derek is hoping to arrange for it to be tidied up, with the undergrowth reduced, thereby removing the hiding places for those generating the unruly behaviour. Derek said, "It is my hope we can get this problem sorted out. This area is causing a lot of unnecessary aggravation for the residents. The adoption of the land by the Council would allow the professional staff of the Council to clear this area and make it more attractive to the public. Currently the residents are very scared of using the footpath after dark due to the anti social exploits of a few juveniles. There seems to be a simple remedy to this annoyance."

FREEDOM, FAIRNESS and TRUST 10 reasons to vote Liberal Democrat

- **Put patients first** - free NHS staff from political targets and meddling
- **Free personal care** - no-one forced to sell their home to pay for help
- **Axe the Council Tax** - make taxes fair and localise the Business Rate
- **Green Action** - protect the planet, cut pollution & boost green energy
- **No tuition or top-up fees** - an affordable university for every student
- **£1 billion early years investment** - Child Trust Fund used when it counts
- **£105 a week earnings-linked pensions** - a million OAPs off means-tests
- **Free off-peak local transport** - for all pensioners and disabled people
- **10,000 more police on the streets** - cutting crime and the fear of crime
- **The war in Iraq was illegal and has cost the UK £7billion so far** - it's time for a Government we can trust



Andrew Duffield congratulating Fiona Hall following her election to the European Parliament

Fiona Hall MEP

Thank you message from Fiona Hall MEP

First of all let me thank you for electing me as your Member of the European Parliament (MEP). The six months since the European Elections have passed in a flash. Representing the North East as a MEP is challenging, fascinating and humbling. My main committee is the Industry, Research and Energy committee, so I've been visiting lots of energy-related organisations in the region, from the new centre of excellence for new and renewable energy in Blyth to insulation firm Knauf in Hartlepool.

I'm also on the Development committee, which took me in September to refugee camps in Darfur and neighbouring Chad. Distressingly, the situation there has got worse on the ground despite agreements on paper. Last week I had a long conversation with the Sudanese Ambassador in Brussels about the threatened expulsion of the directors of Oxfam and Save the Children. International pressure did cause the Government of Sudan to pull back in this instance but there is so much more that needs to change there.

When the Parliament sat in full session last week, almost every MEP was wearing an orange scarf, as a sign of solidarity with the fight for democracy in the Ukraine. Not many issues unite the whole semicircle of the chamber, from far left to far right. The parliament's own "orange revolution" served as a reminder that what holds Europe together is our core commitment to peace and democracy.

www.fionahallmep.org.uk

Your Hexham Leazes Councillors

Cllr Derek Kennedy

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Derek is 37 and is married with a 3-year-old daughter. He is a qualified internal auditor working for national government. He is a member of the Development Control and the Resources scrutiny committees. derek.kennedy@tynedale.gov.uk



Cllr Colin Moss

Hallgarth House, Hexham, NE46 1XD. 01434 601274

Colin is an artist who along with his wife runs an Art Gallery and Tearoom in the town. He is a member of the Economy and Health and Culture committees.



HEXHAM WINS SILVER MEDAL

Hexham won silver medal in the 2004 Britain in Bloom competition. This is our first attempt in the national competition and this shows what a tremendous result this was. Next year we are hoping to achieve the Gold medal. The judges visit Hexham for the day and are taken on a whistle stop tour around the municipal gardens at the Abbey and the streets of the town to look at the garden displays of the general public. If we want to win in 2005 it requires the whole town coming together and putting on an outstanding display. Let's make Hexham blooming wonderful!

"NO" TO REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Government's proposals for a North East Regional Assembly were soundly defeated by a margin of 4 to 1 in the referendum in November. The Liberal Democrats have been long-standing supporters of devolving powers away from Westminster to the regions, but we have to accept that the result will have put the topic on the back-burner for some time.

However, under successive Labour and Tory governments, the economic gap between North and South has widened. So the fight for a fair deal for the North must go on – that is probably something on which "Yes" and "No" voters can agree.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

"The historical role of the Lib Dems has been to think fresh thoughts, challenge established views and think outside the box"
Peter Kellner, The Independent, 24 September 2004

"If Tony Blair's relationship with George Bush is to have any beneficial impact at all, he must use his influence now to get the White House to engage positively with the climate issue"
Charles Kennedy MP, Lib Dem Leader, The Independent, 5 November 2004

"I think the government is beginning to realise that people who get poor pensions are not people who have not worked hard. They are people who have given their all as parents and carers"
Steve Webb MP, Lib Dem shadow Work & Pensions Secretary, 10 November 2004

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E-mail locallibdems@hotmail.com

Law and Disorder

Colin spoke recently on behalf of an anxious public, about the increasing crime in the town. Colin said "The public's fear of crime has grown following crimes which have shocked the town. With the government looking to extend licensing hours despite the proven link between alcohol and crime, are we sure that 24-hour drinking will not stretch police resources to the limit?"

Recent reports in the Courant have suggested that Police officers stationed at Hexham are being re-directed to North Northumberland at the weekend to deal with other towns' problems. This strategy would appear to have a knock on effect that may leave resources in Hexham over-stretched. Colin went on to say "Alcohol related anti-social behaviour seems to be increasing. As a society we must be on our guard that it does not become an epidemic, as the social costs can be frightening". One of the LibDem's national key policies is to have 10,000 more police on the streets of the UK.