

# Liberal Democrats - The Effective Opposition

## HOW WOULD YOU SPEND £30 MILLION?

Tynedale Council has £30 million in reserves which could be spent outside Tynedale if Tynedale Council disappears in 2 years. Liberal Democrat Councillors suggested recently that Tynedale should look at a range of options just to be on the safe side. This was rejected by the ruling Tory Group. We think the public have a right to be involved in deciding this issue. In the meantime what would you like: affordable-housing, a new swimming bath at Wentworth, other community facilities, a reduction in your council tax. **We would love to hear from you.**

To: John Prescott MP, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Westminster

The Council Tax is an unfair tax, based simply on outdated valuations of property and with no link to ability to pay. It should be scrapped and replaced with a system based on people's ability to pay.

Name:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Email:

The Liberal Democrats may contact you from time to time to keep you informed on issues you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish the information above to be used for this purpose.  
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Please return to: Philip Latham  
22 Station Close  
Riding Mill  
Northumberland  
NE44 6HE

## TOP-UP FEES - VOTE FACTFILE

- ◆ Labour's plans for "top-up" fees will go forward after they won a narrow vote in Parliament
- ◆ Of the main parties only the Liberal Democrats had every MP voting against the bill.
- ◆ Two Conservative MP's abstained and one voted with the Government.
- ◆ If all Conservative MP's had opposed the bill it would have only taken ONE Labour MP to abstain to see the bill defeated.

**SCRAP TUTION FEES**  
[www.scraptuitionfees.com](http://www.scraptuitionfees.com)  
**SCRAP COUNCIL TAX**  
[www.axe-the-tax.org.uk](http://www.axe-the-tax.org.uk)

## WHAT DO YOU THINK? PLEASE GIVE US YOUR VIEWS ON ANY ISSUE RAISED IN THIS FOCUS

### Help the Liberal Democrats



- I can help deliver leaflets
- I enclose a donation of .....
- I want to join

I enclose a cheque (payable to "Liberal Democrats" for £.....  
A donation of £5 or more entitles you to membership of the Liberal Democrats. Tick above if you would like to become a member.

Name:  
Address:  
Email:

Return to : Hexham Liberal Democrats, Freepost  
NT2899, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5BR

Fax 01434 682494  
E-mail [localibdems@hotmail.com](mailto:localibdems@hotmail.com)  
[philip@silverfox33.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:philip@silverfox33.fsnet.co.uk)

# Broomhaugh and Riding Mill FOCUS



KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Focus Team: Philip Latham and Stuart Rowlands

## Traffic Management improvements completed on A695.

The day after Councillor Philip Latham had been pressing the County Council for long promised works on extending the 30mph limit on the A695 to the west of Riding Mill, and extra chevrons on the bend at Greycourt, as well as an advisory speed limit on the bend, they all suddenly appeared!

It's also at least 3 months since it was agreed that the improvements would go head on speed control on the Slayey Road. Opinions on the precise layout and location for road signage had been sought from local residents. Again this work was suddenly begun and completed a few days before the Easter break. The speed limit starts to the east of Shepherds Dene although there had been a request for a further extension to the west.



Enquiries about the east end of the village have resulted in agreement that the 30 mph signs will be moved from the Broomhaugh boundary this year, that is before April 2005. These measures should improve safety for all who use the A695 and especially Riding Mill pedestrians.

## NEW PATH TO STATION

Thanks are due to Malcolm Chainey & Sylvia Lough of Tyne Valley rail users and the Parish Council who together coordinated the funding and organisation of the resurfacing of the path from Broomhaugh Square to the East Bound platform at the station. Also to Arriva and County Councillor Ray Thompson who provided the funding. Partnership working like this is a good way to get things done. It should be easier for wheelchair users and pram pushers to access this platform.



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## ROADMAP TO A REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Part 2 The Case for Change

Lib Dems have long supported decentralising decision-making to the lowest effective level, believing that all tiers of government should be elected and accountable. A Regional Assembly conforms very much to this principle, and would mean many more key decisions being taken here rather than at Westminster. It would be an authoritative and credible voice for the North East, enhancing pride in the region, driving economic advancement and reducing regional disparities. Quite simply, if it's good enough for Scotland, Wales, London and Northern Ireland then it's good enough for the North East too!

The Tories carp about a Regional Assembly being another tier of government, but nothing could be further from the truth. A huge tier already exists in the Government Office of the North East, One North East and scores of other unelected quangos that are responsible for spending millions of pounds of public money. These, and the two tiers of local government in Northumberland and Durham, would be replaced by the Regional Assembly and by new Unitary Authorities, thus removing one layer of government altogether! Neither is there any truth to the charge that rural areas would lose out to urban ones. With voting by PR, no area could dominate a Regional Assembly. And it's not a Euro-plot either!

The Regional Assembly should cost us less too. Though this has been estimated at £25m a year, £5m would be the existing cost of staff transferred from other public bodies and money would also be saved because of more efficient decision making within fewer tiers. The cost of just 25-35 elected Assembly members should be more than offset by reducing the numbers of highly-paid quango board members, of whom there are now hundreds in the North East. And with around only 30 members, a huge and expensive new HQ should not be necessary. Indeed, the Assembly could meet regularly in town halls and other venues across the North East - taking strategic decision making to all parts of the Region.

Interestingly, the North East currently has 30 MPs approximately the same as the proposed number of Assembly Members. It will be fascinating to see if the parliamentary constituency boundaries are used to determine the new Regional "wards" as well.

The Regional Assembly will have annual control of £350 million a public expenditure and influence over a further £500 million. As Liberal Democrats, we would like it to have more powers, but the present proposals are a reasonable start. I will do my bit to put Tory mis-information in its place and would urge all of you, through letters in the press or any other means at your disposal, to do the same.



Andrew Duffield

### Andrew Duffield

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

### DO TORIES BACK AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

They will tell you they do but at the last full council they tried to limit the % of affordable houses developers have to include in housing schemes. They should remember that Tynedale is short of at least 500 affordable houses. These are houses for the children of local people.

Liberal Democrats on Tynedale recently tried to get agreement from the Tories to back a Lib Dem plan to spend some of the £30 million held by Tynedale Council on affordable housing. Again Tories opposed this. Just what do Tories have against affordable housing?

### TORIES STILL BACK THE COUNCIL TAX

Do you know what percentage of your income must you give paying council tax this year? 10%? That is quite possible. Tynedale Tories backed the unfair tax at a recent Council Meeting. Nothing wrong with it, they say. Goes very nicely with income tax levels of 40% for those earning over £100,000.

Why not sign our council tax petition? We are on the side of the many thousands of pensioners who are rebelling against this iniquitous tax. There are no local elections in Tynedale, but you will be able to vote in the European elections on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

### LIB DEMS BACK LOCAL INCOME TAX

What difference would it make to you?

Below are some figures for a slightly lower band D council tax

|  | Council Tax Band D | LIT (at 3.75%) | Gain (+)<br>Loss (-) |
|--|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| <b>Pensioner Couple income £14,600</b>   | £1,102             | £22            | + £1080              |
| <b>Teacher grade M3 £20,514 (single person household)</b>                          | £826               | £596           | + £230               |
| <b>Average UK pay £24,498 (single earner household)</b>                            | £1,102             | £746           | +£356                |
| <b>Nurse grade D, £17,500 and police officer £20,436( double earner household)</b> | £1,102             | £1079          | +£23                 |
| <b>Median Household Income, £21,700</b>  | £1,102             | £641           | +£461                |
| <b>Cabinet Minister £127,791</b>   | £1,102             | £4619          | - £2475              |

**Note: for the purposes of calculations for this table all existing tax allowances and bands have been maintained. Liberal Democrat policies would see changes to these with tax allowances being raised and a 50% tax band for those earning over £100,000 a year which would alter these figures**

### LOCAL OPINION SOUGHT ON COUNTY EDUCATION OPTION PLANS

Councillor Philip Latham chaired a recent public hearing organised by the Community Health & Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee for parents and teachers to gather the views of local people on the outline options from the county. The report which was written after this meeting and a meeting with education chief, Brian Edwards, can be downloaded from the council website. If you want a hard copy please contact Philip Latham on 01434 682494.

Many differing views were expressed at the meetings but it is clear that both parents and teachers have positive and definite views about the proposals 'Building Schools for the Future'. Alternative options have been put forward and no doubt these alternatives will be sent to The County.

Tynedale Council was especially concerned that the plans in the initial stages seemed :

1. to take no account of the effect of school closures on the viability of small villages,
2. the stressful effects of longer journeys on young children
3. that land which might be considered as saleable by the county for housing might have an urgent community function
4. that building new large high schools on the outskirts of towns could breach the green belt.