

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The Council Tax is an unfair tax, based simply on outdated valuations of property and with no link to ability to pay.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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Visit MickleyPlus Website

www.mickleyplus.com

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 TUTORIAL FEES
www.scraptuitionfees.com
SCRAP COUNCIL TAX
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

Stocksfield and Mickley FOCUS



KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Focus Team: Philip Latham and Stuart Rowlands

SAVE OUR SCHOOL BUSES

TYNEDALE PARENTS COULD BE HIT BY PLANS TO CHARGE FOR SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The government is planning to scrap free bus travel for those school kids who live a long way from their schools. At present children who live more than 3 miles away don't pay (2 miles if they are under 8).



Liberal Democrats Philip Latham, Fiona Hall and Andrew Duffield campaign to save school buses.

Figures obtained by Lib Dems show that as many as 600,000 school children could lose their free bus travel. Scrapping free bus travel will just make the 'school run' worse. It will add to congestion and increase Carbon Dioxide emissions.

Liberal Democrats are leading the campaign against Labour's plans for scrapping free bus travel. **And if there is a move to bigger secondary schools, pupils will be travelling further in Tynedale.**

NORTHUMBERLAND SCHOOLS REORGANISATION

LATEST OPTION PLANS RECOMMEND CLOSURE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN PRUDHOE PARTNERSHIP

The current proposal is a two tier system with primary schools up to 11 feeding an enlarged 11-18 comprehensive based in Prudhoe.

Education Chief, Brian Edwards, has talked much about involving parents in the consultation process. **If you have views now is the time to write or mail County Hall.** In the Prudhoe Partnership, the County say that only 25 letters and emails have been received in total with retaining the 3 tier system being a key issue.

Liberal Democrats are concerned that the real agenda is to reduce diversity and therefore choices available to parents and young people. Liberal Democrats support improvement in education standards but do not believe that an education system should be built around comparing

BBC Digital Service

Most people in the Stocksfield area are unable to obtain a digital TV and radio signal. The service provides extra TV and radio channels which can be received via a set top box which costs about £50.

Liberal Democrats believe that it is wrong if some licence payers do not have access to this service. The Newton transmitter should be upgraded as soon as possible.



Introducing MickleyPlus Website - www.mickleyplus.com

A new website is now on-line providing pictures, news, events, maps and information about Mickley and the surrounding area including Stocksfield and Prudhoe. It also has links to other web-sites of local interest and local businesses.



It includes news and views on the latest issues including the Northumberland Schools re-organisation, Housing Issues, Regional Assembly, Digital TV transmissions, Council Tax etc. It includes links to articles in local papers on the above issues as well as documents relating to the school changes.

Over the next few months more local businesses will be added as well as further history of the area. Please feel free to contribute to the web-site if you have any views you wish to express or you wish to publicise a local business, organisation, event etc. Any historical information, old photographs etc. would be especially welcome.

Email info@mickley.plus.com

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ROADMAP TO A REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

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 interesting 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 10th.

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 (+) Loss (-)
Pensioner Couple income £14,600	£1,102	£22	+ £1080
Teacher grade M3 £20,514 (single person household)	£826	£596	+ £230
Average UK pay £24,498 (single earner household)	£1,102	£746	+£356
Nurse grade D, £17,500 and police officer £20,436(double earner household)	£1,102	£1079	+£23
Median Household Income, £21,700	£1,102	£641	+£461
Cabinet Minister £127,791	£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



Philip Latham

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.