



# BROXTOWE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

## Members Newsletter

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the members newsletter for the Broxtowe Liberal Democrats. This is being distributed to all our members and helpers, and to many of our identified supporters. It's been a very busy time for all of us recently, and this newsletter shows some of the many activities that we have been involved in. In particular we have been getting ready for the Annual General Meeting in November and we'd be delighted to welcome as many of you there as possible. If you're not a member at the moment why not join up? The recommended membership is just £5 per month (but with a minimum of only £1 per month). Some of our members are very active, others help simply by paying their membership fees. Whatever level you wish to be at, we'll be delighted to welcome you on board. As a party we are funded wholly by our members. We have no rich foreign donors and no unions to support us. We are also the most democratic party, where every member really can have a say on party policy.

### Web Site

The Broxtowe Lib-Dem web site has been completely rewritten. Until now the preparation and development of the site has been an internal affair for the local party, but we have now contracted out the work to a company called Prater Raines, who specialise in preparing web sites for the Lib-Dems. This means that the site is easier to update than ever before and also that it will draw stories from the area and the region to ensure that it is always up to date.

The site now has a members only section where articles and documents will be stored. This will help in ensuring that members are as informed as possible about what is going on locally. Of course this level of service doesn't come free and the party has committed itself to paying for it. However we're very much hoping that we can find twelve members to each donate the cost of one month each year. Could you give an extra £20 per year to the local party to be used specifically to pay for the web site. If so please contact our party chair Brian Taylor.

### AGM

The high spot of the autumn will be our annual general meeting. This will take place on Friday 25th November, starting at 7.30pm, at XXX

The AGM is open to all members, helpers, friends and supporters. We'd be delighted to see as many of you as possible there. There will be an opportunity to discuss the party's role in the coalition and also our work on the borough and county councils locally.

At the AGM we elect our officers and representatives for next year, so why not consider whether you can take on a role for us as well.

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## Housing Developments in Broxtowe

One issue that our borough councillors are currently wrestling with is where and how much new development should be allowed in the borough. This is an incredibly difficult decision.

The various councils working together around Greater Nottingham have commissioned research about the likely demand for housing around the area over the next 20 years. Four separate models came up with very similar figures, and so most people accept that about 52,000 houses need to be built in that period.

Under the Labour Government's desire to control everything they decided to dictate exactly how many houses were built where, and so a figure of about seven thousand houses was imposed on Broxtowe. This was in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The coalition government have abolished these requirements and have left it to local councils to decide how much they will allow to be built in their area.

That's the good news. However less well publicised is that the councils plans have to be approved by an independent inspector and must be based on evidence. In other words, the councils around Nottingham have to show between them how they will be meeting the demand for new houses. As a result most of the authorities around Greater Nottingham have continued to work together, although Rushcliffe have gone their own way and have indicated that they will only agree to about half the numbers calculated in the RSS.

One of the many problems in the RSS is that it has created a line in the sand. Any council which now accepts more than the number of houses set there will be seen to have failed, and so even though Broxtowe want to set a much lower figure (about 4,000 new houses which can be accommodated within existing brown field locations) there is a very real danger that our plans will be declared "unsound" unless we can show where the shortfall would go.

Being unsound is not a mere technicality. If this happens then developers will be able to apply to build pretty much anywhere that they want, and they will prefer to build on the green belt given that these sites are far easier to build.

One other factor that needs to be considered is that under the New Homes Bonus the amount of money that councils receive from central government is now directly linked to the number of new houses that are built in each council area. This year Broxtowe had lower new build numbers than any other council in Greater Nottingham and so received less money than all the other councils.

## Autumn Conference

This autumn's Liberal Democrat national conference in Birmingham was the biggest, and probably the best, conference that the party has ever had. The party leadership has obviously listened to the messages coming from the electorate in May and there were a number of specific changes that they have made. The key lesson learned seems to be that there must be much more emphasis as a party on what we are achieving in Government, showing the benefits that having the Liberal Democrats in Government bring.

A second significant event that has happened with the national party is that the training programme for members has been radically overhauled. The party has moved up a gear in this regard and at the conference there was an extensive programme of high quality training. Hopefully members will be able to take part in some of this over the forthcoming months.

## Are You Connected?

For many years the party nationally has used a software system called EARS – the Electoral Agents Recording System. This has significant shortcomings, and as a result the party began a search earlier this year for a new system. The one that they have opted for is called Connect, and is the British version of the system used by Barak Obama and the Democrat Party in the United States. The demonstrations of this at the national conference showed that it is a far more powerful system than we have had previously, and it met with overwhelming support. We should take delivery of Connect towards the end of this year or the start of next year, and training for it will be available to all members and helpers.

Each local party will pay a licence fee to use the software, as we do for EARS at the moment. Connect is more expensive and so we are hoping that members will help us meet this. We already have a donation of £150 towards the cost (about half of it), and are hoping that twelve members will each cover the additional costs for one month each year. Would you be able to donate £10 to cover the cost of one month's licence fee? If so please contact our chair Brian Taylor.

## **Save Money, Stay Warm, Go Green**

Rising world energy prices and predictions of another cold winter make this campaign highly relevant to people from all backgrounds across Britain. Almost everyone can see the extra costs they are paying for energy each month. Almost everyone will have an older relative, friend or neighbour who is at risk from getting cold this winter. Almost everyone could benefit from following energy saving advice to help them save money, stay warm and go green.

### **The campaign**

The Lib Dems in Government and local Lib Dem campaigners are going to help people save money, stay warm and go green by tackling the dreadful legacy left by successive Labour and Conservative governments:

- A legacy of failure on housing - British homes are some of the coldest and draughtiest in Europe. Even the energy efficiency of modern homes is woefully inadequate compared to other nations.
- A legacy of failure on fuel poverty - Tens of thousands of people fall ill and die unnecessarily each year because they can't stay warm during the winter.
- A legacy of failure on renewable energy - our reliance on fossil fuels has left people across the UK paying record energy prices. This is a direct result of a failure to invest in renewable energy - instead relying on gas and coal energy generation.

The Save Money, Stay Warm and Go Green campaign sets out to tackle this dreadful legacy. The first part of the campaign has four key elements -

1. Thanks to the Lib Dems in Government, energy companies are being made to provide free and discounted home insulation to millions of people. BUT people need to apply to take advantage of this and to save money, stay warm and go green. Our campaign will highlight how local people can apply for these home improvements.
2. The Lib Dems have introduced a Warm Homes Discount worth £120 a year to help pensioners with their energy bills. Every pensioner who receives the Minimum Income Guarantee will receive this help to stay warm this winter. BUT all pensioners need to check whether they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to. Our campaign will highlight to pensioners how they can do this.
3. The Lib Dems have gathered together advice from respected organisations like the Energy Saving Trust. Following this advice can really help people save money, stay warm and go green this winter. Our campaign will make this information available to people through a variety of means – doorstep contact, leaflets and letters, website articles and press releases.
4. The Lib Dems are asking councils everywhere to do their bit to help people save money, stay warm and go green. We believe that councils can play a major role in helping their residents access discounted and free insulation. Our campaign includes a council motion text for your use.

### **Taking the campaign forward**

The first stages highlighted above are just the beginning and more Save Money, Stay Warm and Go Green materials will be made available in the coming months.

We will be looking at more new ways councils can help in the battle against climate change (whilst still saving taxpayers' money). We will be highlighting the establishment of the Green Investment Bank by the Liberal Democrats in Government. This will drive the growth of renewable energy in the UK, creating jobs and helping deliver cheaper, greener energy. It will help people save money, stay warm and go green. We will be publicising the Lib Dem Green Deal that begins in October 2012 - the biggest home insulation programme that our country will ever have seen. All Liberal Democrat-led councils have already signed up to implement the scheme. The Green Deal will create over a hundred thousand jobs and insulate millions of homes. It will help people save money, stay warm and go green.

