

East Gosforth FOCUS

Serving local communities
across
**East Gosforth
Ward**
All Year Round
Edited by
**Dominic
Raymont**



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Major Gosforth Traffic Scheme Gets The Go-Ahead Moor Road North & Surrounding Streets To Become No Entry From Church Road

The council has confirmed its decision to prohibit all motorised vehicles from gaining entry from **Church Road** into **Moor Road North, Belle Vue Avenue** and **Rectory Grove**.

This started as part of the "DIY Streets" initiative jointly run with the council's sustainable transport partner Sustrans. Originally changes were to be made to only Moor Road North in an attempt to stop rat-running down the street. However once it became clear that the preferred option was to close the road to traffic it was decided that Belle Vue Avenue and Rectory Grove had to be given the same "No Entry" protection.

Focus editor Dominic Raymont said, "This issue has split the area. Many on the streets concerned welcome the proposals but there are sizeable minorities on each street that are against. Similarly the plans have alarmed a lot of residents of **St Nicholas Ave, Grove Park, The Grove, Rectory Road** and **Rectory Terrace**, as it will inevitably lead to more traffic going down those streets. It shows that schemes like this merely move the problem rather than sorting it out."

Dom continued, "My colleague **Councillor Henry Gallagher** has written to the Highways Department asking for help to be sorted out *now* for those streets that will be adversely affected. Henry suggested measures such as better speed enforcement and signage. However the response was that the council will not make any other changes until an issue is proven to exist. **This leaves the surrounding streets waiting till the changes occur before anything will be done. This is too late!**"

While a lot of residents on Moor Road North have welcomed the changes there have been a number of misjudgements in the area:

- Removing the roundabout at the park entrance has appeared to increase the speed of traffic.
- This same new junction is ugly, (we've asked for the planting to be done) and there seem to be a few areas that flood.
- Changing the junction at The Grove to give Moor Road traffic priority has also helped to increase speed on Moor Road North and South.
- There have been a few accidents at The Grove junction.
- Round the corner the pedestrian refuge between Rothwell Road and the park has been removed. We have asked for it to be reinstated.



Councillor Henry Gallagher and Dom Raymont discussing the Moor Rd situation

Is Combined Authority Divisive To Democracy?

The government has announced a form of "devolution" by creating an extra layer of regional governance called a "combined authority", under a mayor. The people of the North East are not being given a democratic vote over whether they actually wish to have one person responsible for an area from Berwick to Barnard Castle.

Ah, but don't worry - alongside the mayor, this new body will also be run by a cabinet of the same seven (all Labour) council leaders that we have now in the local authorities that make it up. There will be minimal scrutiny, so it is hardly giving "power to the people" as some have claimed.

The Liberal Democrats believe you should have had a deciding vote about all of this. In Newcastle of course we overwhelmingly rejected having an elected major three years ago.

Fair Votes?

As it looks as though it's about to be imposed on us this time, then when it comes to electing the mayor we hope that some kind of fair voting system is used. A more proportional system such as that used for the European Parliament, Scottish and Welsh assemblies and the London Mayoral election would create fairer representation and help counterbalance the arrogance and complacency of Labour's one-party state here.

We welcome the principle of devolving power from government into the regions and, although we would have liked to see more ambitious plans, we have to see these changes as a first step. So we must make the best of what is on offer. Let's hope for charismatic and challenging mayoral candidates, not just the same old, same old.

And perhaps a regional mayor could yet become a stepping-stone to a directly-elected regional assembly. If it's good enough for London, why not here?

Reducing How Much Newcastle's Democracy Costs You?

Meanwhile, having a combined authority is just another reason why we don't need as many councillors as we have presently in Newcastle. The Local Government Boundary Commission is reviewing this now. We have proposed a cut from 78 to 60. Labour wants to keep it as it is, despite 30% cuts to council staff, budgets and services. There are also savings to be had from making a smaller number of councillors work that little bit harder. This is one cut that IS justified.

Let Down By Labour

Despite our continued pressure, there's still no sign of a Council budget for **road and pavement renewal schemes** in our wards. Remember that the previous Lib Dem Council set aside between **£100,000 and £200,000 each year for every ward**, in addition to the normal repairs budget and the costs of major road schemes. We know that there's less money around these days but, despite promises, **last year the wards received NOTHING at all**. And we're more than halfway through this financial year and there's **NOTHING** allocated - meanwhile the roads and pavements get worse and the risk of costly accident claims rises.

Do you agree with us that we should have a referendum on whether to have an elected regional Mayor?

Do you think we should reduce the number of councillors? Let us know your thoughts using the contact sheet overleaf.

Working all year round for you in East Gosforth Ward

Dom's East Gosforth Notebook



There are a couple of issues affecting **Hunters Road**. There was a gap in the fence under the pedestrian bridge over the metro lines. This meant people were able to freely trespass on the lines, Residents had reported it to Nexus but no action had been taken. We reported it to them insisting immediate action was taken and the fence was repaired that very day. There is a further issue here for those people in **Hunters Court** who have garages. **Dominic Raymont** (pictured left overlooking the garages with **Cllr Henry Gallagher**) said, "Nexus have neglected the track side foliage for years and now there is a terrible amount of growth at the back of the garages (see picture). Residents believe this could be leading to the problems of damp they are experiencing. We wrote to the new Director Toby Hughes and he has intervened and assured us that a clearance will be scheduled in the near future.

We are working with the council regarding the derelict house on **Briarwood Avenue**. The house does have an owner who appears to live elsewhere. **Dominic Raymont** said, "Sadly no matter how unsightly the house and garden are, the council cannot take action unless there is a danger to the public. Action was taken recently as one of the utility companies had broken into the house in order to retrieve a meter. They sadly left the garage in a dangerous state and the council had to take action to shore it up."

We have asked for action to be taken against traders who are constantly creating a mess at **Back Rothwell Road**. Shops are piling their rubbish up on the land behind their shops. This is unsightly and a potential health hazard. The shops have received a letter reminding them of their responsibilities to the community.

Sunderland house builder Gentoo should have begun the demolition of the old Social Services building on **Lansdowne Terrace East** by the time you read this copy of Focus. The building of 8 town Houses will commence in late January 2016. **Councillor David Slesenger** said, "We have written to ask them to ensure they fulfil their obligation to maintain the protected trees on the site. We have also asked them to ensure they keep local residents informed of works that might affect access." No word yet on the planning permission applied for regarding building of dwellings at the back of the **High Street**, which would create more traffic for the back **Rothwell Road** area. We still await the news of what the new owner of the old Fire Station building intends to do. However we could have three separate building programmes running simultaneously affecting this same area.

Councillor Peter Leggott reports that the care home at the top of **Hollywood Avenue** near M&S is in the process of closing. The owners say that it is no longer economically viable. "Obviously we will keep an eye on further possible developments at the site which would of course greatly concern the local residents," said Peter.

Following an accident which led to a car hitting a garden wall at the junction of **Stoneyhurst Road West** and **Rectory Road** we have asked for the road markings to be refreshed at the junction. This may become a bigger issue once the No Entry zone in the Church Road area is implemented as this junction will probably see an increase in traffic volume.

A number of residents have mentioned areas of the ward where the roads are now suffering from flooding incidents. For example around the bus stop between **South Gosforth metro station** and **The Grove**, and on **Briarwood Avenue**. Work is being done to try and alleviate flooding at the bottom of **Moor Road South** near to **Moorfield**. We have reported all incidents that residents have raised with us, plus others we have noted whilst we walk around the ward.

Council Corner Why Don't We Keep More Of Gosforth's Money?

The Labour administration at the council is selling off council assets around the city. Our area of Gosforth has some of the most prized buildings (and the land they sit on) and they therefore sell for a premium price.

Local residents then have to endure perhaps months of disruption as buildings are demolished and rebuilt, or extensively modernised.

At the November council meeting **Councillor Henry Gallagher** suggested to the administration that a mere 5% of the sale of council assets should be returned to the council ward in which they are situated. This would allow the local Ward Committee to use these funds for the benefit of the local community in which the council's former asset was located.

Ged Bell the cabinet member responsible said that that the council keep the proceeds centrally stating the funds would be, "...continued to be focused on priorities that look to benefit all of its residents."

"In other words - *not* Gosforth!" **Henry** told Focus. With the sale of the old Fire Station going through at auction for £525,000 this would have meant the City Council getting a massive £498,750 with just **£26,250** going to the Ward Committee. The council recently sold the Craghall Nursing Home site on Matthew Bank for £845,000. That would have kept us a further **£42,240** (£802,760 to council coffers). That money would mean we could help pay for the proposals being put forward for big schemes at **Gosforth Central Park** and the **Garden Village bowling green**. Help to pay for infrastructure changes at the **Christon Road** park to try and head off anti social behaviour. How about planters to brighten up the place around **South Gosforth, High West Jesmond** etc. Or of course to help pay to fix the crumbling pavements on the likes of **Saint Nicholas Avenue**."

The FOCUS team will continue to press for our area to be given a fair allocation.

**Money Lost To Our Area So Far =
£68,490**

Dom says - "Here is how to contact our 3 councillors with any issues you have."



Peter Leggott
Tel: 285 8255
Email:
peter.leggott@
newcastle-
libdems.org.uk

David Slesenger
Tel: 285 3337
Email:
david.slesenger@
newcastle-
libdems.org.uk



Henry Gallagher
Tel: 07947655396
Email:
henry.gallagher@
newcastle-
libdems.org.uk

You can of course contact me direct using the following email address:
dom@newcastle-libdems.org.uk



Over to you

What are your issues? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve our area Let us know.....



Return To:
Focus team, 29 Keyes Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE2 3RA

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

If you return this slip the Liberal Democrats and their elected representatives may use the information you provide to contact you. Some of these contacts may be automated. You can opt out of communications at any time by contacting us.

Come to our councillors surgeries. We are at the Gosforth Garden Village Hall on the 3rd Monday of every month from 6-7pm, and Gosforth High Street (with our other Gosforth colleagues) on the 1st Saturday of each month 10am till noon