

North Heaton FOCUS



GREG & DOREEN help at the community litterpicking and replanting at the Coast Road

January 2015 Local news from your Lib Dem councillors Greg Stone & Doreen Huddart Happy New Year!

Council's safety go-slow

Regular FOCUS readers will know that we've pressed the council to take more action to enforce 20mph speed limits (introduced when the council was under Lib Dem leadership) in areas where speeding remains a concern - including parts of **Cochrane Park** and **Newton Road** near Heaton Manor school.

Our efforts to get new flashing driver feedback signs for key locations have been repeatedly rebuffed by the council. Over the last year we've been told that the council has put any further speed reduction work on hold pending an evaluation of the council's 20mph residential streets policy. After months of no progress GREG has asked the council's senior management when this evaluation will be completed - we have now been told it is expected by summer 2015.

To make matters worse, the council has also refused our requests to enhance road safety on Newton Road near Heaton Manor. GREG, DOREEN, and the school want safer crossings and enhanced school safety zone warnings. The council has told us the most we can expect is a few extra 20mph signs - we don't think this is good enough. Under Labour council control, road safety does not seem to be a priority. The highways department might be on a go-slow but that's not going to satisfy concerned residents.

Labour's broken High Heaton parking promise

GREG and DOREEN have been asking the council highways department for action to tackle parking congestion at the north end of the **Holystone / Weldon estate** for some time, and had secured agreement to look at this area next following the **Jesmond Park West** scheme extension. The council has carried out a survey of parking levels but to our frustration they have refused to proceed with a scheme as they do not consider the parking levels exceed the 85% threshold in the area as a whole, although some stretches and side streets like **Duxfield Road** are already over this limit. This is a broken promise after Labour canvassers told residents action would be taken to address parking problems under a Labour council. We are not letting this rest and will continue to press for action.

Our request for measures at **Etherstone Avenue** to combat UNN-related parking has also been declined as highways officers do not consider it is justified. We will continue to monitor the problem.



Still no progress on pavement budget

GREG has also been pressing the council for info on when it will release the annual funding for North Heaton's road and pavement maintenance programme. Under Lib Dem control North Heaton received an allocation of £200-£250,000 per year for road and pavement resurfacing - not a fortune, but enough to tackle 5-6 streets per year. This year, no money at all has been forthcoming from the council and our requests to see the annual highways condition inspection surveys have not been granted. It is rumoured that the total citywide allocation has been reduced to around £350,000, or just £14,000 per ward.

To add insult to injury, it is being suggested that schemes to be funded will be approved by the council's Labour Cabinet rather than devolved to wards, so it can be spent on their priorities, not those of local residents. As usual North Heaton's invisible local Labour councillor is silent on this issue. In the meantime, resident complaints about potholes, broken kerbs, and cracked pavements continue to escalate.

We have also been told by the council that they will now no longer allow painting of "advisory" white lines across driveways in areas experiencing problem parking - we have put in a lot of these at the request of residents at minimal cost. We feel this is a spiteful step from a Labour council that just isn't bothered about "pavement politics" in our area

Opposing more cuts to street cleaning

Despite a drastic deterioration in the standard of street cleaning under the Labour council administration, even more Labour cuts to street cleaning look likely in the coming financial year. The Labour cabinet member for neighbourhoods is on the record as saying residents "should do more themselves" to clean up their streets and back lanes. Meanwhile, the state of our streets is getting worse. 92% of respondents to our residents survey in the **North Heaton terraces area** agree that litter is a problem on their street. Labour's latest wheeze is to remove more litter bins from the streets to replace them with fewer larger bins "which require less frequent emptying". Doreen and Greg have asked repeatedly for a limited Saturday service to sweep up in and around our main shopping areas (**Chillingham Rd & Newton Rd**) but the council simply aren't listening. The alternative budget proposals of the Lib Dem opposition called for £1m extra investment in street cleaning and neighbourhoods, to be funded by savings on the council's energy bills and management costs. Labour councillors - including North Heaton's - voted this proposal down.



Chillingham Road and the Chillingham Road back lane in North Heaton before Christmas - simply not good enough!

Only the Lib Dems look after local issues in North Heaton

Dr Wendy Taylor MBE for Parliament!



Newcastle East Liberal Democrats have re-selected **Dr Wendy Taylor MBE** to stand for Parliament in May's General Election. Wendy slashed Labour's majority to 3,414 at the last General Election polling 33% of the vote, and is well known locally having been councillor for Dene Ward for more than 25 years, living in High Heaton, working as a cancer specialist at Newcastle hospitals, and serving as a school governor at Heaton Manor and Cragside. She chairs Newcastle's Health and Wellbeing scrutiny panel and as the council's former cabinet member for environmental sustainability has a strong interest in green issues.

Wendy says "The Coalition votes in Newcastle East exceeded Labour's vote last time, where I came a clear second to the Labour MP with double the vote of the third-placed Conservative. I will be seeking the support of voters in the constituency who are unconvinced that Ed Miliband is a credible Prime Minister and do not believe Labour can be trusted with the economy and the deficit, just as the Conservatives cannot be trusted to protect the least well off and public services. Working as cancer specialist at local hospitals for many years has given me particular understanding of the importance of safeguarding the NHS, and I will be making health, wellbeing, and adult care an important part of my campaign.

Greg and Doreen add: "Wendy is well known in the ward, having been the councillor for the High Heaton and Cochrane Park area before boundary changes in 2004. She is a highly respected local community champion and will make a dedicated and conscientious constituency MP. We're delighted her work has been recognised with an MBE in the New Year's Honours List!"

Result here at last GE: Labour 40% Lib Dems (Wendy Taylor) 33% Conservative 16% BNP 3% Green 1%

"But what have the **Lib Dems** done in government for Newcastle East?"

Jobs

8000 more jobs since the election in Newcastle East
3550 more apprenticeships in Newcastle East

Tax

Over 30,000 people in Newcastle East have received an £800 income tax cut. 5000 people on low incomes who were taxed by Labour now pay no income tax

Children

Newcastle East's schools are getting £11.7m extra Lib Dem Pupil Premium funding this year. More than 2000 under 5s in Newcastle East now get free childcare, and 2850 families are benefiting from tax free childcare. 2400 primary school kids now get universal free school meals.

Older people

11500 local pensioners are benefiting from bigger pension increases thanks to the Lib Dem "Triple Lock" policy which guarantees rises of at least 2.5%, or inflation or average earnings if higher

FOCUS Team Action: North Heaton News In Brief

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Cllr Greg Stone



Cllr Doreen Huddart

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Many thanks to the hundreds of residents who have returned our neighbourhood surveys in recent weeks, which has provided us with very useful feedback about local priorities. To date we have covered the whole of the Heaton area south of the **Coast Road**, along with **Denewell Avenue / Jesmond Park West** area and **Amberley / Hilden Gardens** area, and we will be covering the rest of **High Heaton** and **Cochrane Park** in coming weeks.

We are currently "crunching the numbers" and will be writing back to residents to give feedback on results for their street and neighbourhood, and what steps we're going to take in response to issues raised. Many people have said they feel that facilities for children and for older people "could be better" and we will be considering how we can improve provision. Strikingly a clear majority of people have expressed opposition to the idea of communal bins and think that the council's neighbourhood cleaning is deteriorating, not improving - we share this concern (see over!)

The People's Theatre is submitting plans for a new entrance foyer and studio annexe on **Benton Bank**. We value the Theatre as an important local asset and look forward to the scheme moving ahead, but we've also asked them to take into account parking problems - we would like to see suitable conditions on any planning permission.

GREG has attended a meeting with UNN planners & Dene ward councillors to discuss concerns regarding the redevelopment of the (old) **Coach Lane** campus site, which has been granted outline planning permission for 181 new homes. We are asking for further planning conditions on the "detailed" planning application, including measures to manage impact on the already over-capacity **Red Hall Drive** and the **Coast Road** junction. We are also asking for a signal-controlled junction at the **Etherstone Avenue** junction (with pedestrian crossing), and for a contribution for new equipment and maintenance at the **Coach Lane** play area.

The former Motor World / Charlie Browns building on **Chillingham Road** has now been demolished and construction work is starting on a new Sainsburys Local and coffee shop, with flats above. There is no progress on the vacant **Melbury Road** development plot at present - it is for sale, but we are not aware of any plans at this stage.

We are very grateful to residents who have volunteered to help to take action to improve our area. In recent weeks DOREEN and GREG have assisted residents who took part in replanting the planters on **Chillingham Road** and on **Stephenson Road**, as well as litter clearance (see pic over). We are also liaising with **Cochrane Park** parents who are helping with groundwork at the **Coach Lane** play area, and **St Gabriels** residents who are helping to clear overgrown branches behind **Broxholm Road**.

Your local Lib Dem councillors are working hard to safeguard the future of the **Woodlands Children's Centre**, which is at risk of closure if the Labour council proceeds with cuts to local Sure Start provision. We're keen to secure new services to benefit the whole community. A new playgroup is planned, and Doreen has met several organisations looking to establish projects for older people. We'd like to hear from groups / residents interested in hiring the building for activities.

We've been pressing Northumbria Water for action to reduce flood risk affecting **Cragside** residents for some time, so we are pleased that NWL have been carrying out extensive works to create a "holding tank" under the school playing field and improvements to the storm drain system. This has caused some disruption due to the need to close the road but work is ahead of schedule and should be complete in the next few weeks. We've helped to sort out some difficulties with bin collections arising from this, and are pleased that the end of **Goswick Avenue** has been resurfaced following work on site.

GREG spoke on behalf of residents of the **Heaton terraces** in court at the appeal by Pizzaholic against the refusal of a late night hours extension - the magistrates refused the appeal, which is good news. He has also helped **Thropton Terrace allotments** to secure old broken paving flags from the council depot to create new paths on site.

DOREEN is pleased that YHN have acted on our request on behalf of residents and have now installed hoops on **Benton Road** to protect the grassed areas from problem parking, which was an inconvenience and caused a lot of mud! We're also pleased that our requests to make the **Newton Road** pedestrian crossing more visible have been heeded.

Can we help you with a problem or local issue? Please feel free to get in touch! PS Please also note our new Saturday surgery times for 2015!