

Season's Greetings to all our Readers!



CYCLE REVOLUTION!



Your local Lib Dem team out on their bikes: (from left) Councillor Gareth Kane, Councillor Stephen Psallidas and local campaigner Stephen Howse on the cycle path they got installed on the City Stadium. The Lib Dems have pumped millions into the city for better cycle routes.

- Lib Dem-funded scheme reaps big benefits for Ouseburn**
- Cycling/pedestrian black spots to be targeted**
- Heaton Park Road project may rise from the dead**

Your local Liberal Democrat team are working hard with Council Officers to get the most for our area out of the Cycling City funds allocated to Newcastle by the Lib Dems under the coalition Government. Your local Lib Dem team are unashamedly pro-cycling and have already created the dual carriageway cycle/pedestrian path on the Stadium and dual-use cycle ways on both the Stadium and through Heaton Park.

"Cycling is healthy, good for the environment and good for local business" said local campaigner Stephen Howse "It's also very egalitarian as almost everybody can afford a bicycle. The Cycling City scheme is one of many legacies of the Lib Dems being in Government and we intend to make the most of it."

We've asked for improvements at several key junctions including Stoddart St, Newington Rd/Warwick St and Heaton Park Rd/Heaton Park View to make them work logically for cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles. We've requested contra-flow cycle lanes through Battlefield towards the city centre to make the one-way systems easier to negotiate. The stalled Heaton Park Rd scheme may also get funded.

"We are still concerned that the Council's plans for Heaton Road/Heaton Park View junction are over-complicated," said local Councillor Gareth Kane, "But the Council has not listened to our comments. We'll be keeping a close eye on how it progresses and demanding changes if necessary."



Your Lib Dem team has finally got the poor surface on the new City Stadium pedestrian path replaced after months of nagging.

Lib Dem call to cut number of Newcastle Councillors backed by Boundary Commission

The Boundary Commission has proposed a cut in the number of Newcastle Councillors from 78 to 66. The Lib Dems proposed cutting numbers further, to 60, which would have saved £200,000 per year. This was voted down by Labour Councillors in favour of keeping 78 Councillors, but the Lib Dems submitted it to the Commission independently.

"Labour has cut over 2,000 jobs at the Council, but it argues that the number of councillors should remain the same," commented Gareth Kane "This is an insult to all those who have lost their jobs – if staff have to take a hit, it is only fair that councillors do so too. We are delighted that the Boundary Commission has agreed with this in principle."

Jobs for the Boys?

After the elections last May, Labour suddenly increased the number of councillors on the Council's Cabinet from 6 to 10, each of whom gets an extra £6,400 per year. Amongst the new posts is the curious 'Cabinet Secretary', held by the Ouseburn Labour councillor Stephen Powers, which appears to have no clear responsibilities. The Lib Dems have already asked for this post to be cut to save money.

**See over:
 Labour blows £45 million on Civic Centre - while the streets go unswept**



Stephen Howse inspecting an overflowing communal recycling point at St Ann's Close.

Recycling Point Progress

A big thank you to everybody who signed our petition about mess and fly-tipping at communal recycling points. Gareth Kane has met with YHN staff onsite in Shieldfield where the problem is worst, and has gained agreement for action there, at YHN blocks in Battlefield, and Heaton Park Court. We will keep you up to date with progress.



Local Lib Dem Councillor Gareth Kane and his son Charlie took part in the climate march ahead of the Paris climate change talks, along with Cllr Stephen Psallidas and other members of Newcastle Lib Dems.

Proposal to Evict Tyne Bridge Kittiwakes

A hotel chain has submitted a planning application to install equipment on the Tyne Bridge to stop kittiwakes nesting there each spring. Your Lib Dem team has opposed the move, and asked that if it does go ahead that the applicant is required to install a 'kittiwake tower' in a suitable location to replace the roost on the bridge.

"The kittiwake has recently been added to the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List, so any nest site is important, and this is the furthest inland colony of these birds in the world," said Gareth Kane "We realise that not everybody likes their presence and appreciate they do make some mess, but so do night-time revellers on the Quayside – I'm sure we can co-exist with the birds."



Gareth Kane with the retaining wall he got repaired at All Saint's Church – we've asked the Council to take better care of this beautiful grade-I listed building and its grounds.

Take Care at Xmas!

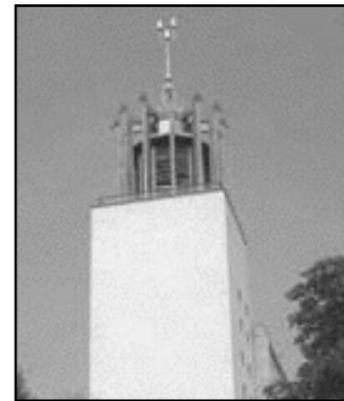
There has been an uptick in burglaries and car break-ins in the area in recent weeks. Please take care to secure your property's doors and windows, keep valuables out of sight, and note that thieves know that many car owners hide their satnav in the glove compartment. We advise people to remove them from their cars.

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Labour gambles £45 million on Civic Centre

The Labour-run Council is spending an extraordinary £45 million refurbishing the Civic Centre while they slash vital services such as street cleaning, pavement repairs and social care around the City. The Labour Party claims that the work will allow them to rent out offices to bring in £1.3 million a year – but even that poor return on their money is optimistic given there is plenty of available office space in the City centre and demand is low. In fact many office block owners are trying to convert them to student accommodation.

"The Labour Administration at the Council is literally gambling with the economic future of the Council," said Stephen Howse "If they get this wrong we're in deep trouble."



Gareth Kane got the road markings on the Stoddart Street crossing repainted to improve safety. We've asked for more substantial changes to this crossing to improve visibility.

Draft Council Budget 2016/17 Published

The Council's budget proposals for the financial year starting 1 April 2016 contain some very unwelcome news including cuts to support for vulnerable older people and children, and reductions to opening hours for the remaining council-run libraries.

Other direct community impacts will be cutting the handyman service for older people, stopping the neighbourhoods programme and reducing the local grants programme through the ward committee. The council also says: "We will consult on the Government's proposal to allow an additional 2% rise in council tax, on top of the already proposed 2%, to specifically fund adult social care."

A consultation period is now open until 31 January for residents and businesses to make known their views on the draft proposals. You can have your say by visiting:

<https://letstalknewcastle.co.uk/>



Stephen Howse, Gareth Kane (and Charlie) litter picking with the Low Heaton Community Association's Second Sunday Club.

News Shorts

- The Council is installing solar panels at St Ann's to exploit subsidies before the Tory Government slashes them in the New Year. Your Lib Dem team thinks consultation was poor and is disappointed residents won't benefit directly from the panels.
- The revised parking scheme your Lib Dem team got agreed for Pandon Court, Lort House and King Charles Tower is currently being designed – more slowly than we would like.
- We are also pushing for progress on the promise we got from YHN to improve the Milton estate.
- We are expecting a planning application to convert the yard of the old SWS building into an open plaza for food markets etc. We are working with the applicant (the owner of the Biscuit Factory) and local businesses to minimise any impacts on parking.
- A proposal for a 6-storey student block at the Formula One garage on Albert St in Shieldfield was withdrawn at the 11th hour after officers recommended it be rejected by Planning Committee. However officers expect it will be resubmitted in the future.

Lib Dem Victory on Tax Credits

Following a call by Lib Dem Lords to halt massive proposed cuts to tax credits for the lowest paid, Chancellor George Osborne announced he was dropping the whole idea. For the second time running Labour abstained on a Lib Dem motion to scrap these brutal cuts altogether, but the Lib Dems supported Labour's weaker motion to delay changes. "This was a great victory for common sense," said Stephen Howse "but Labour's politicking put it at risk."

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