



Northumberland Liberal Democrats Manifesto 2017

Keeping Northumberland open, tolerant and united

Introduction

Northumberland has a proud history, outstanding natural beauty and a population with a well-earned reputation for being hard-working, tolerant and welcoming. We will build on our natural and human assets, and our pride of place, while ensuring that Northumberland is resilient in the face of social, environmental and economic change.

Liberal Democrats led the new Unitary County Council as a minority administration, bringing the old County Council and six District Councils together from 2008 until 2013. We initiated investment in important infrastructure projects such as Affordable Housing; Superfast Broadband; the Morpeth Flood Alleviation Scheme; the new Ashington Leisure Centre and the South-East Northumberland Link Road (Morpeth Northern Bypass) - all without raising Council Tax. We secured funding for rebuilding the high schools in Alnwick, Bedlington & Prudhoe. We made significant staffing reductions, particularly at management level, without affecting services.

Since 2013, the Council has been led by Labour, who have raised Council Tax each year by the maximum permitted amount. Much of Northumberland feels neglected and ignored by Labour. We believe that the time has come for the Liberal Democrats to take back control and deliver a brighter future for the whole County. Nationally and locally, politics has moved to the extremes, while the Liberal Democrats remain firmly anchored to the centre ground. If you share our views, then support the Liberal Democrats in Northumberland in 2017.



PROTECT FRONTLINE SERVICES - we will prioritise the basic services that residents rely on and not the vanity projects on which Labour have wasted millions of ££££'s.

Liberal Democrats will:

- focus resources on vulnerable residents
- protect vital local bus services by ruling out cuts to council subsidies
- protect the Fire and Rescue Service from further cuts
- protect library services, leisure centres and sports facilities
- support social and health wellbeing through the provision of high quality support services that work for and with those in need, including assisting vulnerable residents to stay in their own homes, for as long as possible
- ensure that all public-facing staff undergo dementia awareness training, including becoming 'Dementia Friends'
- ensure that the council's Adult Services are fully integrated with partner agencies
- use the council's capital programme to increase the number of affordable homes for rent
- work with social landlords in the county to identify land suitable for building affordable homes to rent
- work to ensure that residential properties owned by private landlords are of appropriate standard and brought into occupation
- work with partners to provide stimulating and challenging play areas, suitable for a range of ages and including equipment for children with physical and learning difficulties
- increase the investigation and prosecution of dog-fouling incidents and use money raised in fines to work with Town and Parish councils to introduce dog parks across the county
- increase the Small Schemes Allowance by £15,000 per council Division, ring-fenced for local decisions on minor road repairs
- increase cleaning, weed-control and gully clearing on all roads, particularly estate roads



FIGHT FOR NORTHUMBERLAND'S GREEN SPACES – we will build much-needed housing while protecting the unique character and setting of Northumberland

Liberal Democrats will:

- protect green spaces and parks by working with local communities and ensure new developments have sufficient open space
- put forward a local housing plan that focuses development on derelict, brown-field land
- work to secure funding to develop sustainable, eco-friendly homes and high-quality community spaces
- work with partners to preserve, conserve and enhance the county's environmental assets, making them accessible to residents and tourists while at the same time protecting wildlife
- protect and enhance green spaces in urban areas, recognising their importance for community wellbeing and as green infrastructure

MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES – we will make the council more open & transparent and devolve power to local communities

Liberal Democrats will:

- devolve funding and decision-making to a reformed Area Committee structure, to enable residents to tailor local solutions to local issues
- undertake a wholesale review of the Planning Committees and align them more closely with the Area Committees, to ensure more local understanding of decision-making on Planning matters
- establish a genuine partnership with town and parish councils and with voluntary and community groups to ensure that the County Council serves our residents wherever they live
- support the decisions of Town and Parish councils in relation to free car parking in their areas
- consult with residents and community groups, publish the results in full and establish a



cross-party Equalities Advisory Group to ensure that decisions are taken in the best interests of all residents

- introduce a reformed system of Scrutiny Committees at the council, to ensure that decisions are taken more openly and are properly scrutinised on a cross-party basis
- actively tackle crime and anti-social behaviour by working closely with local police
- increase funding for the Local Transport Plan by £2million
- support the re-opening of the Ashington, Blyth & Tyne line, with the proviso that steps must be taken to ensure that the disruption caused by road closures at rail crossings will be kept to a minimum
- urge east coast train operators to increase the number of trains stopping at Morpeth and Cramlington
- press for better integration of bus and rail services and better car parking facilities at rail stations
- continue to press for the dualling, in its entirety, of the A1 in Northumberland
- continue to press for the dualling, in its entirety, of the A69 in Northumberland
- work with the Borders Region and Scottish government to pursue improvements to and upgrading of the A7/A689 Berwick to Carlisle road, as per the draft Local Plan to improve the A1/M6 northern link

**PROTECT THE GREENEST COUNTY IN THE COUNTRY –
permitted development must be sympathetic and sustainable
Liberal Democrats will:**

- invest in a Green Jobs Task Force, designed to promote and develop jobs and apprenticeships in the green industries
- invest in our recycling centres and extend their opening hours
- support renewable energy schemes across Northumberland by working with local partners
- facilitate energy security by encouraging use of renewable and low carbon energy supply



- decrease the council's 'carbon footprint' across all its departments and services
- increase the use of power from renewable sources in all council buildings
- continue to invest in vehicle technology for the council's fleet, to protect vulnerable road-users and to reduce vehicle emissions

SUPPORT JOBS AND APPRENTICESHIPS – we will work with local businesses to deliver jobs, apprenticeships and sustainable growth, while ensuring Northumberland's economic voice is heard

Liberal Democrats will:

- continue to support the council's apprenticeship programme
- help small, local businesses secure valuable council contracts, by introducing a "doing business with your council" initiative
- provide more support from the council to small businesses and companies looking to relocate into Northumberland
- promote a vibrant Town Centres economy
- ensure our county remains a top destination for business and tourism, by working with partners
- support the roll-out of superfast broadband and increased digital inclusion, particularly for businesses and homes in rural areas.
- properly consult local businesses on the impact of council policies

INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE – young people are our future; we will do more to support young people's services across the county

Liberal Democrats will:

- support educational wellbeing and achievement through encouraging all schools and colleges to develop pupils' academic, practical, artistic and sporting skills



- help schools to use the Pupil Premium to close the gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers
- resist the imposition of grammar schools and promote excellence in high schools
- build new schools in areas that are the focus of development, where necessary
- require appropriate funding for education, through Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy, from developers, to be spent on schools within the relevant partnership
- press for improved resources in relation to Special Educational Needs & Disability, targeted to those schools best equipped to offer high quality services
- include a Core Strategy policy, or produce a Supplementary Planning Document, that defines a zone around all schools that excludes fast food outlets
- ensure that 'Young Carers' get the support they need, by working with partners
- work to increase the number of foster carers and adopters in Northumberland
- work with partners to ensure that national funding to support young people's mental health is used effectively in Northumberland