

F Portishead FOCUS



Autumn 2017

What Liberal Democrats are doing to improve our local community.

Welcome to Sir Vince Cable

We are delighted that Sir Vince Cable has become party leader. In him the party has a man who has been in charge of a large government department as well as extensive business experience - unlike the leader of Labour.



Sir Vince with Portishead Councillor Sue Mason.

Sir Vince, who visited North Somerset earlier this year, has already made some very incisive remarks about the Tories' mis-handling of our disengagement from Europe. He also commented on the way in which the position of Northern Ireland/the Republic seems to have been ignored until the Tories had to bribe the DUP. Sir Vince pointed out that Jeremy Corbyn detests the EU as much as Liam Fox, making for strange bedfellows! Corbyn sees the EU as a major obstacle to revolutionary socialism, of the kind at present in Venezuela.

Sir Vince wrote :

"We go into this conference bigger, more diverse and more influential than when we met last in York.

With a hung Parliament, a weakened Conservative Government and a Labour party whose great divides have only been papered

over, we can make a real difference to the future of our country. Britain needs political grown-ups, now, more than ever. We will focus on securing the long term future of our country.

We will continue to lead the fight for an exit from Brexit in a referendum on the final deal.

We will push forward with our plan to save the NHS and social care with a penny on income tax.

We will continue to campaign to reverse heartless Conservative school cuts, improve mental health services and scrap the public sector pay cap.

This weekend, we will show Britain that we are the only grown-up party left in British Politics."

Housing: A Perfect Storm

Portishead is short of affordable housing, but in order to address this, current practice seems to be that we have to accept more full price homes. In addition:

- Developers are able to build on land set aside for employment if they can demonstrate that they cannot sell or lease the land for employment;
- Government has decreed that some empty office buildings can be converted to homes without planning permission;
- North Somerset Council has still not had its housing plans up to 2026 agreed, giving developers advantages in any disputes.

For Portishead this is a perfect storm, which has given rise to many controversial decisions recently, against the wishes of the Town Council.

Your LibDem Councillors have spoken out against them, but when the matter reaches North Somerset Council, the needs of the town have been sidelined, time after time.

The Risks Of Debt

Are you feeling the squeeze trying to meet your commitments while prices are rising?

Consumers are continuing to spend, despite this squeeze. The total debt owed on credit cards at the end of June 2017 was £68.5 billion, around £2530 per household. These debts have high interest rates, making them hard to pay off. If you add in other unsecured loans, then the total is around £7410 per household - and this continues to rise.

Portishead is not immune - debt crosses all boundaries. One of the advice services in the town, Citizens Advice North Somerset, has released figures for 2015-16 showing that almost 20% of their clients reported debt problems, most with more than one creditor.

Driving us mad!



North Somerset Council have caused much inconvenience and confusion over the spring and summer with their badly timed and overrunning roadworks.

- Cabstand works - the Carnival date should have been allowed for and work prioritised - at that same time Skanska, the company involved in both projects, completed works in Weston three weeks early.
- Road closures between Clevedon and Portishead meant that people abandoned planned visits because of the B3130 works, going via Tickenham was a trip too far.
- In August essential gas main replacement along Bristol Road plus the overrun night-time Cabstand closures created unexpected problems for drivers, bringing traffic to a standstill.
- Did you know First Bus had introduced a shuttle bus to cope with Newfoundland Way repairs? No, we didn't either.

CONTACT US:

We want to know what you're thinking and how, together, we can change Portishead for the better. Call Portishead LibDems at 01275 399878 or email jim.christopherson2@gmail.com

Unaccompanied child refugees

In their election manifesto the Liberal Democrats demanded that the Government reopen the "Dubs" scheme for admitting unaccompanied refugee children to the United Kingdom. Under Lord Dubs' amendment parliament agreed to admit about 3000 unaccompanied children who are stuck in camps in Calais and other parts of France. But in February the government reneged on this decision and announced that the scheme would be closed. This would mean that just 350 children, many of whom were already here, could come to Britain. Liberal Democrat spokesman, Tom Brake, described the Government's claim that it had met "the spirit" of the Dubs amendment as simply "lies" and called for the scheme to be restarted.

To meet the original target of admitting 3000 children each local authority area would only have to take a handful. Some, such as Kent, already do take more than their share, but many others would be happy to welcome them, and are as upset as the Liberal Democrats that they will be denied the opportunity to do the right thing. However, some authorities are withdrawing their offers as the funding the government provides is £25000 short of what it actually costs. Meanwhile children are disappearing from refugee camps and becoming sex workers or victims of modern slavery.

If you want to do something about it, write to Liam Fox and ask him why compassionate Conservatism does not apply to these lost and acutely-endangered children. Then again, perhaps being compassionate is not a quality valued by to-day's "hard Brexit" Conservatives.

Fracking: Good or Bad?

Do you support fracking locally? We need energy, but we also have many environmentally sensitive sites in the district, both on the coast and inland.

Are you aware that there is a pressure group for N Somerset? View the web-site www.frackfreenorthsomerset.org.uk if you are interested.