

Rugby Recorder

Edition 3

January 2004

The Rugby Recorder wishes a HAPPY NEW YEAR to all its readers

JUST WHAT WE WANTED FOR CHRISTMAS, DARLING

The government has abandoned its plans to build a massive new airport near Rugby. Transport Minister Alistair Darling announced his decision just before Christmas. This decision was warmly greeted by local residents as a piece of seasonal good cheer. Cllr Ron Ravenhall (Lib Dem, Dunchurch and Knightlow) said that the decision was a victory for people power. Ron who is secretary of the anti-Rugby Airport Committee (ARAC) said that "It was local people not local politicians who drove the campaign that caused the government to change its mind."



What does the government's white paper say about Rugby

The white paper has this to say about the Rugby airport proposal ... "A new airport in the Midlands is unlikely to be economically justified or financially viable. In concluding not to support this option we have also taken account of the almost uniform opposition to this proposal ... and a number of important concerns highlighted during the consultation process."

"The new airport option ... would have significant negative environmental and social impacts. These include the ... loss of two villages ... increased flood risk in the Avon river corridor and concerns about potential bird strike hazard."

"This proposal aroused significant local opposition ... Such high response rates were not seen elsewhere in the consultation." People responding to the consultation were concerned about noise, road congestion, the loss of countryside and the impact on air quality. Some 87,000 people wrote to the government about this airport scheme. Another similar scheme at Stanstead only attracted 20,000 respondents. Of all the government's proposals only the scheme to build a new airport on a major site for birdlife in Kent aroused greater opposition.



Anti Airport campaigners gather at Church Lawford to meet Liz Lynne MEP

Overwhelmingly opposed

The government admitted in their white paper that "the general public ... were overwhelmingly opposed to the new airport option". Local people had written letters, e-mailed, marched and signed petitions against the new airport. Overall 87,000 had written to the government about the Rugby scheme. In one small part of Rugby over half the population



had taken up their pens. And the people were backed by the local representatives - local MP Andy King, and euro-MPs Phillip Bushill-Morris for the Tories and Liz Lynne for the Lib Dems had been active throughout the campaign. Cllr Jerry Roodhouse praised the way people from all parties came together to fight the scheme.



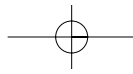
Last year's march

Not everyone is a winner

Whilst Rugby rejoices other parts of the country are deeply concerned about the government's latest airport plans. At Stanstead, which will get an extra runway, residents are concerned about the loss and damage the proposals will cause to six ancient woodlands. There are also significant concerns over noise levels from residents living close to Birmingham International Airport which is also now due to get a second runway.

The environmental campaign group the Friends of the Earth say the government has abandoned its environmental responsibilities. Tony Juniper, director of Friends of the Earth, said "The White Paper is worse than we had feared. The Government has sacrificed its environmental responsibilities ... If the aviation industry was taxed fairly rather than let it pay no fuel tax and no VAT, then we would not need any new runways."

The Rugby Recorder...the newspaper that campaigns for Rugby



RECORDER OPINION

Airport

In years to come forcing the government to abandon its proposals for a new airport near Rugby will be seen as a famous victory. This is a victory for the residents of Rugby, its villages and our neighbours in Warwickshire. Roughly a 100,000 people played their part in this and everyone who did so should be congratulated.

However we should not let our joy conceal the dismay of other areas that have not been successful in stopping new airport proposals. It is unjust that airlines are let off the fuel tax burden which the rest of the community shares. The unfair advantage given to these companies is leading to levels of growth that our environment cannot stand.

The government is right in its local decision for Rugby but its failure to act at a national level is wrong. In its lack of respect for our environment it is shameful.

Foundation Hospitals

Competition encourages greater effort in sport and is useful in business. But if there are winners in competition then there will also be losers. Competition between hospitals is wrong. If one hospital wins another must lose. Patients in losing hospitals are in greater danger and will receive worse treatment.

When governments started to praise some hospitals and name and shame others did they consider the effect on patients and staff? Too often achievement of these targets depends not on the compassion and skill of the hospitals staff but on factors outside their control. One target is to get patients discharged or admitted to a ward within four hours of their arrival in casualty. How quickly any patient sees a nurse or doctor in A&E and how soon treatment is given depends on how many other patients are there and seriously ill or injured they are. Casualty targets can be more easily achieved by shutting the hospital's doors and refusing to admit new patients!

Having decided on such poor evidence that one hospital deserves three rather than one or two stars the government has decided that three star trusts can apply for "foundation status". Trusts who want to apply can get a grant of £100,000 to help them fill in the forms. Money that is being spent not on patient care but on an internal paperwork competition. Free of central government control, foundation trusts will compete with other hospitals for contracts to provide hospital care and thus earn money for the surplus they will be required to make.

Will foundation status help St Cross? Will winning the competition mean that grieving relatives urgently summoned to the bedside of a dying patient are no longer wheel clamped at Walsgrave?

Where is the co-operation needed between all arms of the health service if we are to win the battles against disease. Market forces, which can be so destructive, must not be used to plan our National Health Service.

IRAQ

In Iraq Saddam Hussein used to torture and kill people who opposed him. How very different things are in Britain. Here the leader of the Conservative Party gets a six-figure salary, half-a-million pounds office allowance and a chauffeur driven car. All these are paid for through taxes to help him oppose Tony Blair.

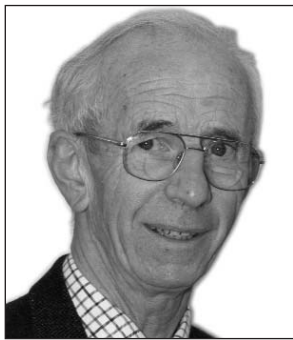
Last March the United Nations weapons inspectors said they needed more time to complete their work in Iraq. President Bush ordered them out of Iraq so that US forces could bomb and invade it. They have not been allowed back since. Tony Blair backed Bush to the hilt. What a mistake.

Did the leader of the official opposition challenge these decisions? Not then. Now and much too late the conservatives are calling for an official judicial inquiry into the causes of the war. Whatever they are saying now before the war only a handful of tory MPs like Ken Clarke were bold enough to oppose it.

British forces acted with bravery and professionalism. They were successful in securing the objectives they had been given. But that does not mean that Tony Blair was right to send them into action.

Every single Liberal Democrat MP voted against the war before it started. Their foreign affairs spokesman Ming Campbell showed true grit when he broke off his chemotherapy to come and vote in person. Unlike the tory leader Charles Kennedy just draws his MP's salary. Although he is not paid to be leader of the opposition no wonder opinion polls show that more and more people think that the only real challenge to this government is being provided by the Liberal Democrats.

Seeing the Doctor



Richard Gunstone writes

"More choices for patients" say politicians but we already have important choices:

Before 1948 the first choice was "Can I afford to pay for health care?" All politicians claim to favour health care free at the point of delivery, but both parties in government have imposed charges which hinder care and are expensive to collect.

Now the first choice is "Do I need to seek medical help? My symptoms may get better by themselves." If you decide to seek a doctor's advice do you choose when to go?

Now? But Saturday afternoon is for "emergencies only". Never will I forget listening to a father one Sunday morning about his son, ill with meningitis since Saturday. "I did not call my doctor yesterday because he was angry last time I called him." Patients' fears are a better criteria of an emergency than a doctor's anger.

"Where?" Most GPs work in a team with doctors, nurses and others so surgeries are bigger, fewer and further apart than previously. This brings inconvenience for some, but more facilities for all.

There is already a shortage of general practitioners which may get worse before the increased number of medical students qualify. Soon

many GPs will decline "out of hours" work so Primary Care Trusts will "purchase" this service just as it contracts with NHS trusts to provide hospital services. Perhaps this emergency care will be via hospital casualty departments.

I believe that future plans must cover the following essential points

- The service must be free at the time of need
- Arrangements must be made for patients who need to be seen at home
- Governments must try to stop re-organising the health service. (There have been 18 reorganisations in the last 20 years)
- Governments must stop imposing targets unrelated to clinical need
- Doctors must protect their right and duty to see their patients free of financial and political interference

Govt plans fees hike

The government is planning a three-fold increase in the cost of going to university. Currently universities are banned from charging more than £1,125 a year for full-time degree students. However the government intends to lift this cap on charges and allow universities to set their own fees. In the short run fees would be limited to £3,000 a year - but some university vice-chancellors want to charge much more. Sir Richard Sykes, the boss of London's leading science institution, Imperial College, wants to charge as much as £15,000.

How will this hit today's youngsters? The *Rugby Recorder* went back to college to find out. Jennifer Sutton's mum works for the NHS and currently has her fees paid for her but she told us "If I had to pay I would think again about going to university. I am worried about people getting deeper and deeper into debt. How could graduates get a mortgage if they leave heavily in debt? Everyone will end up paying twice - once through taxes and once when they have to pay back their fees."

Media and History student Sheila Marquis said "I already have financial problems. What the government are planning would just make it harder." The mother of one student explained to us that she was worried that the government's proposals would hit middle of the

road people most. Her daughter was studying fashion & design and was the first in their family to go to university. Her sales rep mother was earning just enough not to get any help with the fees. "I think they should put up income tax instead" she told the *Recorder*.



Will the government wipe the smile off their faces? Students Sheila Marquis (left) and Jennifer Sutton (right).

University Funding - the big debate - what the parties are saying

Labour

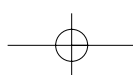
Labour want students to pay more for the university education. The current standard fee of £1,125 for a full time degree student would go. Universities would be free to charge what they wanted - although for the first few years this would be limited to £3,000 a year.

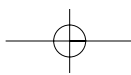
Liberal Democrat

The Lib Dems want to abolish fees. They plan to pay for this by raising taxes on everyone earning more than £100,000. They say they could use the £4 billion pounds this would bring in to abolish fees and to introduce free personal care for the elderly.

Conservative

The Conservatives want to abolish university fees too. Unlike the Lib Dems the Tories are not planning to raise taxes to do this. Many people in universities are worried that the only way they can get their sums to add up is to reduce the number of people who will have the opportunity to go and study at university.





Highest Tax Increases since Poll Tax Scrapped



A new report by the independent Audit Commission has explained why Council Taxes are rising far faster than inflation. They say that nationally this year's tax rise "was the highest since council tax replaced the poll tax".

- National policy priorities, such as the requirement to increase funding for schools by an amount determined by government

With one significant exception the auditors thought that given the pressures local councils were facing they could justify the increased taxes they were setting.

enough money to local authorities or because the local government supremo John Prescott has demanded more from them than he is prepared to pay for.

Reform demanded

The audit commission says that the government should be clearer about what it is expecting from local government and the various inspectorates the government has created should balance demands for ever higher standards with the need to keep spending to acceptable levels.

The commission went on to say that "other options need to be looked at including...return of the business rate to local control, and local income tax..."

Report does not go far enough says Roodhouse



Cllr Jerry Roodhouse who leads the Lib Dem group on Rugby Council says that the Audit Commission report does not go far enough. "We don't just want to look at local income tax" he explained "We want to bring one in.

This would be far fairer as it would mean that the amount you paid for local services would be related to your ability to pay. It would be good news for an area like Rugby where house prices are relatively high but there are a lot of people living on low or fixed incomes." Cllr Roodhouse told the Recorder that new figures put together by the Liberal Democrats show that under Labour the tax burden on the poorest 20% of household has risen whilst the top 20% pay relatively less.

Party leader Charles Kennedy says that national government must set an example in reining back spending. "When we ran an empire in 1880 we did so with just 14 government ministers. Today, following devolution to Scotland and Wales it takes 21 ministers to govern England alone."

Pensioners hit hard

"Increases of this level - with a majority of people facing percentage increases in council tax bills in double figures - have a major impact on citizens, particularly those on low and fixed incomes" they say.

Reasons for the hike

The auditors found a number of reasons for the increases including:

- Pay and price increases, increases in national insurance contributions and increased pension costs
- Additional pressures such as the need to provide social services to increasing numbers of elderly people

Police authorities in the dock

The exception was authorities that were not directly elected. The auditors found that 13 out of the 20 highest tax rises were agreed by police authorities. That is true nationally and it is also true locally. In recent year's the increase for the police tax has been higher than either Warwickshire County Council's increase or Rugby Council's increase.

Prescott and Brown must share the blame

So the main reason council taxes have shot through the roof is because either the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has not given

ASDA

Rocheberie Place is the name that ASDA are calling their proposal to redevelop the Chapel Street part of the Town Centre. The new development will create 350 new jobs at the new store. ASDA have produced a brochure outlining their plans and further copies can be obtained from Technical services at the Town Hall or from your Liberal Democrat Cllrs.

The plans are for :

- A new 87,922 sq ft ASDA store.
- 17 smaller shops.

- 440 car parking spaces including 31 allocated spaces for those with special needs, including under store car park.
- New junction and traffic lights on Corporation St.
- Linkage to the Clock Towers shopping centre.
- Cash for a shop mobility scheme.

Rugby Borough Council will be holding a special meeting early in the new year to determine this planning application (send us your comments to Rugby Liberal Democrats FREEPOST (MID15573) Rugby CV22 6BR).

AXE THE TAX PETITION

If you think the present Council Tax system is unfair you can sign the petition below and return it to Rugby Liberal Democrats FREEPOST (MID15573) Rugby CV22 6BR

The Council Tax is unfair because it costs poorer people and many pensioners a higher proportion of their income than the well off. We call upon the Government to:

1. Scrap Council Tax
2. Replace it with a fairer local tax, which is related to the ability to pay

NAME	ADDRESS / E-MAIL	SIGNATURE



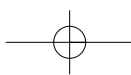
Question Time

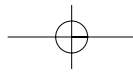
Come and meet the Liberal Democrat team of councillors at Rugby Bowling Club (off Bilton Road) at 7.30pm 19th February, 2004

This is your opportunity to meet local councillors and discuss, in an open forum any concerns that you may have such as tax increases, crime issues, health and education. Should you be unable to attend but wish to make your views known to us or want to find out more about the Liberal Democrats please forward your comments to Rugby Liberal Democrats FREEPOST (MID15573) Rugby CV22 6BR.

CRIMESTOPPERS
0800 555 111

You can report crime anonymously
Your call is free





US plans giant green field development

A giant US corporation is planning to develop a new town on the site of Rugby Radio Station.

US retail giant Walmart, which already owns the ASDA supermarket chain in Britain, is planning to develop the large triangle of land which stands between Crick, Hillmorton and Lilbourne. Walmart are working with BT which owns most of the land.

Masts to come down next year

British Telecom have told Cllr Jess Upstone (Lib Dem, Hillmorton) that they expect to take down many of the masts next year. Two of the masts are safe for now because they are required for the atomic clock service which must run until 2007. In Walmart's plans a smaller imitation mast will be put up in one corner of the site.

Huge Scale

Cllr Upstone told the Recorder that she was concerned that Rugby people had not yet grasped the huge scale of the development. "Part of

the plan is to build 9,000 homes - making the town of Rugby roughly one third bigger than it is now. Five primary schools and a big secondary school with around 1,500 pupils would be needed to serve the new development. But this is only part of the scheme. Most of the land between the A5 and M1 would be covered with what is called 'large footprint employment'. The developers also want a new station on the West Coast Main Line with 2,500 car parking spaces. The Rugby town station could be down graded to a halt for local stopping services only. At the Hillmorton end of the development it is proposed to build a series of six storey offices."

Newts and Curlews

Part of this site is wetland prone to flooding and home to the great crested newt and curlew. The developers admit that a full ecological study of the area has yet to be carried out.

The men behind the scheme

Warwickshire County Council first flagged this site for its 'strategic potential'.

British Telecom own most of the land.

Believe it or not Walmart is largely owned by the Walton family. S Robson Walton alone is believed to be worth \$45 billion. In 1999 they bought ASDA and Gazeley Properties, which is behind Magna Park, is their property development arm. Their proud claim is that they "have spent the last 15 years delivering warehouse solutions..."

The quiet banks of this canal could soon see a major change

RECORDER FACTS

WHEN IS A GREEN FIELD NOT PART OF THE GREEN BELT?

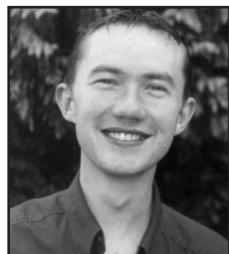
Only the land around our largest cities is green belt. So the land to the west of Rugby is greenbelt because it is part of Coventry's green belt. Elsewhere agricultural land is protected by green field policies which are not as powerful.



Air Ambulance

A new air ambulance for Coventry, Warwickshire & Northamptonshire took to the skies on 1st October, called the Diana, Princess of Wales, National Air Ambulance.

The new aircraft will respond to 999 calls within the three areas but it costs £80,000 per month to run. The new service receives no government funding, and will rely entirely on the generosity of the people of our area to keep it airborne.



Rugby's Cllr Richard Dodd who is also a paramedic will be taking to the skies on the new Air Ambulance.

Richard has established a fund raising committee in Rugby called the "Rugby Air Ambulance Fund".

Richard said "The new fund was set up in light of the service's need to raise funds to keep the helicopter in the air and saving lives. The committee has the support and includes councillors from all the political parties in Rugby who are all keen to see the new service do well. We will do all we can to help raise funds by promoting and supporting events, bringing in new fundraisers and lobbying organisations and groups to give their support to the air ambulance. I have witnessed at first hand the difference an air ambulance makes in a traumatic accident and there is no doubt in my mind that this new service will save lives."



Help the air ambulance stay aloft

If you would like to make a donation to the new air ambulance, cheques can be made payable to the "Rugby Air Ambulance Fund" and sent to Cllr David Wright, Rugby Borough Council, Town Hall, Rugby CV21 2LB

Or

If you would like to get involved as a fundraiser, or have any ideas that you think would bring in much needed funds, please contact Richard Dodd on Rugby 573138 or e-mail at richie_paddox@yahoo.com

The Rugby Recorder promotes the interests of the Rugby area and publicises the actions and views of the local Liberal Democrats (amongst others).

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Rugby Liberal Democrats are holding a FUND RAISING DINNER

For members and friends

At the Masonic Hall, Rugby

7th February 2004. 7.00 for 7.30pm

Speaker for Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance

Tickets £19.50 (available from Tom Hardgrave Tel: 01788 814456)

A raffle will be held with all proceeds to Air Ambulance
Vegetarian menu available

