



No 117: Liberal Democrats - keeping in touch with you *all year round*

## TORIES SET TO SELL OFF COUNTY FARMS

For decades would-be farmers have had the opportunity to bid to become a tenant of a county council-owned farm, giving them the first crucial step into the farming industry.

This is now under serious threat. The County Council's Tory rulers have dropped the long-standing policy that ensures that when the county sells off a farm for development, the acreage is replaced, keeping a total estate of around 9000 acres for future tenants and future capital growth.

Liberal Democrats are opposing the change which could see almost half the estate sold off for housing within the next few years and not replaced. Speaking to a leading farming

newspaper, John Cordwell said: "Not only would this mean less openings for young farmers but in the long term it would deprive the county council of a valuable source of finance for its future needs. The great success of the rural estate has been to maintain the estate as a source of income for taxpayers whilst providing a service to the rural economy. The farms provide jobs, stimulate small business in remote rural areas and support policies of biodiversity and wildlife management."

Desperate to raise funds to meet their unachievable election promises the Tories do not wish

to back down on this and have already said in a radio interview that they intend to sell off 3000 acres.

The County's Liberal Democrats are supported in their concerns by the National Farmers' Union who have said that the estate faces a slow death as the council looks to cash in on its capital assets.



### Footpath Claim

A County Council committee has recommended that the path from Knapp Road to the Oatground should be added to the official public footpath map. The application was made by John Cordwell supported by local residents. The intention will be formally advertised and if there are no objections the addition will be confirmed, the footpath sign restored and we should expect the path to be maintained to the same standard as the Oatground.

● A length of footpath at the Potters Pond end of Marchesi Walk, applied for by the Town Council, has reached the more advanced stage of being formally advertised.



### Health Provision Changes

In our last issue, District Councillor Paul Smith outlined the Health Authorities' cost-cutting plans to tackle a large overspend. A number of decisions have now been taken by the Primary Care Trust Boards:

- Not to transfer all midwife-led births and other in-patient admissions from Stroud Maternity Hospital to Gloucestershire Royal. It has been accepted that affordability is not a sufficient reason for this centralisation which would be against the national aim of giving more local access to services. *So, for now, Stroud Maternity Hospital appears to have been saved.*
- To serve the Berkeley Vale area through a new health and social care facility at Dursley, including a number of in-patient beds, and by developing primary care and social care teams at local population centres. Berkeley Hospital, Sandpits Clinic in Dursley and the Symn Lane Clinic in Wotton would then close.

At a meeting in Wotton Town Hall, Paul insisted that the new facility in Dursley would have to open before any of the present ones closed. He added that the Symn Lane Clinic was too valuable to the people of Wotton and the surrounding area to be closed.



### Identity Cards

A Liberal Democrat motion to the County Council opposing the Government's intention to introduce ID cards was overwhelmingly approved by the council.

## Cutting Speed and Saving Lives

● A hardening of Government attitudes on speed limits means that a recent request from Wortley and Alderley residents for a speed limit in Wortley will not be met. The rules say that Wortley is too small.

John Cordwell, who successfully pressed for the 30 mph limit in Alderley some time ago has been told that even this would be marginal now.

● Recent incidents and near misses in Waterley Bottom have led to a call for signs warning of horses and walkers in the narrow lanes, John has taken this up with the County Traffic Manager and has also asked whether the whole of the valley could be a 20 mph zone.

## ENERGY WASTE EXPOSED

John Cordwell was shocked to discover that the County Council no longer monitors energy use in its buildings. He told fellow councillors "This is essential information needed to find out where energy savings can be made, both to protect the environment and to save money that could be spent on vital services".

John is pressing the Tory-controlled council to put money in next year's budget to make a start on this. He added "In the past we used to spend over £150,000 per year on energy conservation measures and it paid for itself through the energy saved."

● The County Council is looking at the possibility of turning off large numbers of street lights during the

## Christmas-under-the-Edge

The Wotton Chamber of Trade is holding its Christmas Event on Saturday 2nd December from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with the **shopping streets closed to traffic from 3:00 p.m.** There will be stalls and many other attractions. Watch out for further details.

## Coffee Morning

On the same day, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon the annual Christmas Coffee morning for senior citizens will be held at the Civic Centre. There will be free coffee, mince pies and entertainment.

If you will have any difficulty getting there, please ring Janet Walshe on 843060 for transport.

*Janet would also like to hear from anyone prepared to provide some mince pies or to help on the day.*

## Christmas Hopper

June Cordwell has arranged for the Wotton Hopper to make free Christmas runs on Saturdays 2nd, 9th and 16th December.

night to combat rising energy prices. It would also reduce by around 2500 tonnes the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions they are responsible for each year. It will have to be done selectively to make sure safety and security are not affected.

● The County Tories have refused to sign up to the Gloucestershire Energy Strategy Action Plan and its modest targets for renewable energy.

## ACTION SHEET - Tell us what needs doing!

If you know of a local problem which needs attention, if you have a good idea for our area, or want to comment on something you have read here, please get in touch with your local Liberal Democrat action team, using this space to have your say.

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

e-mail.....

Your opinion:

### CAN YOU HELP US?

helping deliver Focus (just a few helps!)

displaying a poster at elections

making a donation

join the growing number of local members (minimum £6)

**TO HELP YOU**

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or to Cotswold Liberal Democrats  
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# Liberal Democrats

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