



FOCUS



Welsh Liberal Democrats
Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru

on Trallwn & The Common

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year - from Cllr Mike Powell

Glad Tidings We Bring – for schools.

Schools across Wales will get an unexpected bonus thanks to a budget deal made by Welsh Liberal Democrats at the National Assembly.

The draft budget was voted down by opposition parties in early November. We made it clear we wanted more money to help close the funding gap in schools as well as greater investment in jobs and the economy.

After much negotiation a deal was struck to support a revised budget which will see Welsh schools receive a much needed boost. The money is aimed largely at pupils in deprived areas which means **RCT are set to benefit by more than £3million.**

Cllr Mike Powell, a Governor at Coedpenmaen Primary and Hawthorn High Schools welcomed the news.



The Welsh Liberal Democrats have long campaigned against the growing gap in funding between Wales and England which we believe has not given our children a fair start in life.

This extra money will be based on the number of pupils on free school meals and will go directly to schools so they can decide the best way to use it to improve standards. Every school in Wales will benefit to some extent. Trallwn Infants should be just under £10k better off, Coedpenmaen Primary around £19K whilst Hawthorn High is set to gain to the tune of just over £106K."

On the subject of local schools, Coedpenmaen Primary is keen to increase its role as a hub of community activity. Mike Powell is the current Chair of Governors at the school and is a firm believer that schools should not be just about the national curriculum and a strict school day.

"Schools should provide a resource for the whole community and one of our latest initiatives is to open up the playground on Tuesday and Thursday from 4 to 6 for children to come and use their scooters safely. Other suggestions are welcome."

Seasons Greetings to young and old

Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has announced the 'Youth Contract' - a £1 billion scheme to "get every unemployed young person earning or learning again before long-term damage is done."

Youth unemployment in the UK has risen to 21.9% and in RCT there are 1505 young people claiming Job Seekers Allowance

The new package will include a works experience package for every 18 to 24 yr old who wants it, 410,000 new work places over the next three years, and incentive payments to help employers take on new apprentices.

Meanwhile down at the Bay

The budget deal that was brokered with Labour was not only excellent news for schools but will also include an economic stimulus package of £38.9 million which will help tackle unemployment and build our skills base here in Wales.



AND THERE'S MORE

As Mike Powell explains, Liberal Democrats at Westminster are delivering on their election promises to pensioners

"From April most benefits will increase by 5.2%. The State pension will go up by £5.30 a week.

This compares with the paltry 75p they were last given under the Labour Government.

It is yet more proof that, despite what the opposition would like you to think, we are delivering for you."



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Good news on Trallwn car parks



Mike has been assured that work will start early in the New Year on the car parks in West Street and to the rear of Middle Street (above) which will no doubt be welcomed by local residents.

The news is not so good with regard to the bridge over the A470. Despite constant complaints about the problem with water gathering there nothing has been done. This time the blame does not lie with the Council as the A470 and its slip roads etc. come under the remit of the Assembly Government via the Highways Agency.

Bah! Humbug!

Efforts to boost town trade too little too late.



RCT Council has got the Christmas spirit and are offering free parking in town centres. From 19th December we can shop until we drop in Pontypridd and other town centres. But is it too little too late?

Across Wales in towns such as Wrexham, Maesteg and Newport Councils are introducing free parking in town centres to encourage trade.

Charges have been suspended in Llanelli for a year whilst regeneration works are ongoing and even Cardiff shoppers are offered an hour's free parking in an effort to help struggling small traders.

Yet here in RCT what do we get? Just six days of Christmas cheer! Seems Mr Scrooge is alive and well and working in RCT.

As a result of pressure put on by Cllr Powell remedial works have been carried out on the Bridge Street roundabout to relieve the problems with flooding which have been experienced there.

The ghost of Christmas yet to come?

Plans seem to be gathering pace for a new town centre development at Talbot Green. I will of course be holding off final judgment until I see the full plans when they come before planning committee but I have expressed my opinion on the over development of the area in the past and it seems the developers have some way to go to convince some people that this idea is a good one.

The developers have a record of plans in RCT that don't come to fruition however. Valad Development formerly Scarborough, formerly Teesland were granted permission in 2003 to revamp the Taff Vale Precinct site. It did not go ahead with the proposal, apparently holding out for an injection of public money which never came.

In 2008 they won permission on appeal to build on green belt land at Mwyndy. This proposal had caused much public outcry and was turned down twice by RCT's planning committee. They have not – thankfully – pressed ahead with this as yet.

So now we have yet another scheme. A new town centre for Talbot Green complete with cinemas, eateries, flats and houses, and civic facilities.

This is all covered in the Local Development Plan which has already been adopted by RCT Council and so they would appear justified in their assumption that Labour will support this proposal. Whether or not it they will then actually build it remains to be seen.

New jobs and money being spent in the County Borough is usually something to be welcomed. But can the area sustain this amount of extra development?

Traffic congestion in the area is already a nightmare - and let's not forget that our only District hospital

is situated near Talbot Green and access to it for anyone from the Pontypridd area is difficult enough now at peak times.

Then there is the question of what this will do to Pontypridd. Labour keep bragging about their investment in the town but it seems much of it is a cosmetic exercise and will not bring in extra business. If the Talbot Green proposal goes ahead then it may well be the final nail in the coffin.

Cllr Mike Powell



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Find out more about RCT Welsh Lib Dems at www.pontylibdems.org.uk