

# North Devon Conservatives

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## **Council tax cover-up: New evidence of serious errors in council tax bills**

### ***Surge in council tax appeals in North Devon reveals systematic over-charging by Government***

Gordon Brown and his Ministers are deliberately covering up serious problems over the banding of homes for council tax, Philip Milton, Prospective Member of Parliament for North Devon, warned today. New figures have revealed that Whitehall's council tax snoopers have been forced to redo the council tax bands of thousands of homes after appeals by householders across North Devon and the country.

- Official papers from Gordon Brown's council tax inspectors, the Valuation Office Agency, have admitted that many homes are in the wrong band for council tax and families have been paying over the odds for years. Accidentally leaked minutes have confessed that if the tax errors became known, the Government would lose money and would have to pay tax refunds. This was also ruled out since it would generate "adverse press coverage... in the current climate".
- The combination of a campaign by 'Money Saving Expert' Martin Lewis, the publication of these leaked minutes and an ITV *Tonight* documentary, has produced a surge in council tax appeals. Now Parliamentary Questions have forced the Government to publish detailed figures on the changes to council tax bands.
- In the last three years, 190,000 existing homes have had their council tax band changed: 133,985 homes have moved down a band. In North Devon, 175 homes have moved down a council tax band as a result of appeals. This proves there are serious and systematic errors in the banding of homes, which Ministers have been covering up to save money.
- Wales has been used as a test-bed for a council tax revaluation. Three times as many homes moved up a band as down. Yet since that 2005 revaluation, a succession of errors has also been uncovered with the Valuation Office Agency's work. To date, 1 in 20 homes in Wales have had their post-revaluation banding corrected. A wholesale council tax revaluation has thus caused more problems than it solved.

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Philip said:

“We now have clear evidence of a council tax cover-up. The Labour Government has been caught red-handed fiddling council tax to make families in North Devon and across the country pay more. Whitehall bureaucrats know that many homes across the country are wrongly banded, but have refused to correct the tax inspectors’ errors to save the Government money and save face.

“The whole basis of our tax system is undermined if the state conspires to over-charge the public. Labour Ministers only want to reform the council tax system if it rakes in extra cash for Gordon Brown’s coffers.”

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