

North Devon Conservatives

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New plans to help people in North Devon save and run community facilities

Philip Milton backs plans to help protect local post offices, pubs, libraries and parks

Under new Conservative plans, far-reaching new powers could be given to people in North Devon to protect community assets from closure and take over the running of public buildings and community assets. Philip Milton, Prospective Member of Parliament for North Devon, has given his backing to the new 'Community Right to Buy' which would allow not-for-profit community groups across North Devon to take over the running of struggling local facilities, from post offices to pubs to parks.

New research has revealed that under Labour, 5,400 post offices, 200 libraries and 3,500 pubs have been lost across England. In North Devon, new figures show that the number of post offices has fallen by 15 in the last decade.

Under the Conservative proposals:

- Community groups, such as schools, churches or voluntary groups, will be able to bid to take over the running of publicly owned community assets, if they can manage them more efficiently and effectively than the state.
- When a state-owned community asset faces closure or being sold, voluntary groups will have a right of first refusal to buy that asset for a fair price and maintain it for community use. The new rights to community ownership will cover assets owned by central government and quangos, not just town halls.
- The radical 'Community Right to Buy' will also allow community groups a first refusal to take over and run vital commercially-owned community assets when they shut down – for example, those post offices, pubs and shops whose continued survival is of genuine importance to the local community.

Philip said:

“Under Labour, local neighbourhoods in North Devon and across the country have lost too many essential local services and facilities. Gordon Brown’s Government has closed post offices and driven local pubs into the ground. People feel powerless to stop their communities losing access to vital services and facilities. So the Conservatives
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will give bold new powers to people in North Devon to protect and improve vital community assets and preserve the social fabric of our neighbourhoods.”

Notes to Editors

Data source: House of Commons Library from Royal Mail data, November 2009.

Figures are a snapshot as of March 1999 and March 2009.

Very minor changes were made in 2006 to the allocation of some post offices to particular constituencies.

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