



# **The Manifesto of the North East Party 2015**

## **The North East Party**

# **The North East transformed**

**We want a fair share of prosperity and better opportunities for all North East people. In future we want to live in an enterprising region which plays a positive part in the UK, Europe and the World.**

- 1. ‘One strong voice for the region’ – with your support at a referendum 12 powerless unitary authorities and ineffective ministers replaced by one elected, accountable North East Government.**
- 2. ‘A fair share of the country’s prosperity’. Council tax will be scrapped and replaced with a fair property tax based on up to date property values returning £500 million to North East people per annum.**
- 3. ‘A fair deal within the UK’ – an extra £1billion per annum for services with free care for older people just the same as Scotland.**
- 4. ‘This land is our land’ – an extra £1 billion per annum for investment in North East enterprise and jobs from a new affordable land tax.**
- 5. ‘World class integrated public services’ – with standards driven by empowering local communities, service users and the people who work for us.**

**Every commentator is predicting that the Parliament elected on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 will be ‘hung’. No Party will have an overall majority and there may have to be considerable negotiation with smaller parties in order to create an effective Government. In these circumstances a few, or even one, North East Party Members of Parliament could hold enormous power to bargain for the new legislation that the North East needs.**

**The North East Party is very new but very serious about making a difference very quickly. Please give us your support.**

## **What we’ll do**

**1. 'One strong voice for the region' – with your support at a referendum 12 powerless unitary authorities and ineffective ministers replaced by one elected, accountable North East Government.**

There is no democratically elected leadership of the North East of England and major decisions about our lives are taken far away in London by people who know little of our region.

The North East Party will pursue devolution of major Government functions to a North East Regional Government run by a 50 member Assembly elected by a system of proportional representation. Devolved functions will include Education, Employment, Health and Social Care, Social Security, Economic Development, Transport and Planning together with the budgets to run them and some taxation powers.

Establishment of Regional Government will be subject to a referendum of North East people.

If it goes ahead the Regional Government will support the establishment of a range of democratically elected independent Community Councils throughout the North East Region. The boundaries of each Community Council will reflect community identity and each one will be expected to demonstrate high standards of local accountability and advocacy.

This stage will present an opportunity for people to challenge current regional boundaries in relation both to Cumbria and Yorkshire.

Over time each Community Council will be expected to take on responsibility for the scrutiny of all public services, preparing a Local Plan, local planning decisions and a budget for public works.

Critical to the work of scrutiny will be partnership with service users and the people who work for us and a direct line to Regional Government to ensure that high standards are driven by the people who use them, pay

for them and work in them.

The North East Government will take responsibility for delivering the functions of the abolished 12 unitary authorities. The North East Government will integrate the North East NHS within its effective and efficient approach to service delivery.

Other major functions will be re-organised on a regional basis in due course – for instance we will seek the creation of one North East Police Authority and elected Police and Crime Commissioner.

Devolution of some of the biggest decisions to a directly elected North East Regional Government will strengthen commitment to a UK Government which will retain ‘reserved functions’ in respect of macro-economics, foreign policy, defence, international development, immigration and some taxation.

The North East Party will seek the abolition of the unelected House of Lords and its replacement with a fully elected revising chamber.

One elected government for North East England will provide the region with a legitimate and coherent voice. Democratic devolution will ensure that decisions about the North East are made in the North East on an inclusive basis, engaging all those elected to office in a constructive and collegiate approach to the issues which face us.

A North East Regional Government will give our region the bold, proud voice that we need to ensure that the UK Government and Europe treat us well.

Abolition of 12 local government hierarchies and NHS integration will provide both a challenge and an opportunity for first class managers who will be allowed to manage and in turn will be held accountable both by elected politicians and the people they serve.

## **2. 'A fair share of the country's prosperity'. Council tax will be scrapped and replaced with a fair property tax based on up to date property values returning £500 million to North East people per annum.**

Council Tax is unfair because the rate of tax actually falls the greater the value of the property on which it is levied.

This situation is made far worse by the failure of successive governments to revalue homes for Council Tax so owners of homes now worth many millions pay a fraction of their property's value while those whose property values have hardly increased pay comparatively much higher rates.

Council Tax Band 'D' in Durham costs £1686, in Westminster £681.

Labour, Conservative and Lib Dem politicians are responsible for ordinary residents of North East England paying many hundreds of pounds more Council Tax than people in houses worth millions in London.

We would scrap the Council Tax and replace it with an annual 1% levy on the value of all houses (subject to a £50,000 threshold). Thus the owner of a £200,000 property would be charged £1500 per annum based on £150,000, the owner of a £2million property would be charged £19,500 based on £1,950,000 and the owner or tenant of a property worth £100,000 would pay £500.

The vast majority of North East people would retain more of their own money to spend. In total, North East households would be better off by more than £500 million providing for a major increase in spending in every community on the things that people decide for themselves they need.

## **3. 'A fair deal within the UK' – an extra £1billion per**

## **annum for services and free care for older people just the same as Scotland.**

It cannot be right that fellow citizens of the UK living one step outside the North East Region enjoy so much better public funding than us.

Well done the people of Scotland. They have stood up so strongly for themselves that they have achieved a level of funding for public services that if applied per head in our region would provide us with more than £1billion per annum.

Now it should be our turn. We demand nothing more but nothing less than parity with the good people of the UK who live just beyond our border.

How can this be funded ?

Replacing the Council Tax with a fair property tax, collected nationally and distributed on a per capita basis would produce more than £1 billion extra for the North East Region. That will do nicely .

What will we do with it?

Everything that the Combined Authorities propose to do – and more !

We'd provide free high quality care for older people, wherever they need it for the whole of their lives. That's a start.

## **4. 'This land is our land' – an extra £1 billion per annum for investment in North East enterprise and jobs from a new affordable land tax.**

The North East's best asset is its people but its second best is its land. Nobody made it, the land was here before us and when we first arrived here nobody owned it. This is actually our land, therefore we should all benefit from the taxation of it. This is a tax that no-one can evade.

The North East Region encompasses more than 3000 square miles, more than 2 million acres. A Land Value Tax on the unimproved value of land would be affordable, would promote development and we'd aim to raise £1 billion per annum to be spent on enterprise, jobs and reducing taxation to promote opportunities. Small landholdings below a threshold will be exempt.

**A Regional Investment Bank and Credit Union** would be a powerful source of finance for both new and existing business and a vehicle for savings and affordable loans open to everyone in the North East and leveraging in further assets from the private sector, UK Government and Europe. The North East Party supports a referendum on membership of the European Union however we would be completely opposed to any change which adversely affected North East business and jobs.

**Skilled workers of the future.** A fair share of the nation's assets and the establishment of an elected regional assembly with control of employment programmes will enable a major focus on helping young people to learn skilled trades to meet critical employment shortages. We will pursue 100% funding of all apprenticeship training.

**A Business Enabling Team (BET)** will be commissioned from the private sector and 'licenced to take risks' with the authority to give financial breaks as well as tailored advice and mentoring in order to support enterprise. There will be a relentless focus on science and technology and the creation of new businesses, exploiting the region's strong Higher Education base combined with a continuing effort to bring investment from the rest of the UK, Europe and elsewhere in the World, and to attract and retain able people who are committed to building a prosperous and sustainable North East of England.

**Armed Forces Covenant.** The North East Party wants to protect the pensions of all those who have served in UK Armed Forces and provide all assistance to enable them to build new careers in civilian life.

**An 'energy powerhouse'.** NEP supports development in all forms of

energy generation which contribute to the quality of North East life, are safe, clean and carbon minimising as possible and provide quality jobs.

**‘A transport megalopolis’** The North East initiated a transport revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is transport which is key to our revival in the 21<sup>st</sup>.

- NEP will demand the extension of HS2 to Edinburgh rather than making do with a link to Leeds. Re-routing some of the national mainline trains would provide new services and raise the profile of Sunderland, Hartlepool and Stockton.
- Within the region a North East Assembly will have the power and resources to dual the A1, A69 and A 66.
- We will pursue the viability of a new Tees road crossing east of Middlesbrough.
- We will link the Tees, Tyne and Wear conurbations with a new high speed passenger service via the Stillington Line, into Northumberland with the Blyth and Tyne line and into Tees Valley with a revived Metro Project.
- We will establish a North East Transport Authority with ‘smart card’ / mobile technology operating across a simple, affordable and integrated public transport system.
- We will invest in effective rail freight and road links to Teesport. The ports of Blyth, Newcastle/North Shields, Seaham, Sunderland and Hartlepool will be assisted to develop both coastal and North Sea /Baltic links.
- We will abolish Air Passenger Duty for North East airports.

## **5. ‘World class integrated public services’ – with standards driven by empowering local communities, service users and the people who work for us.**

All North East people are entitled to world class public services which offer everyone the opportunity to make the very best of their lives.

Regional Government will devolve resources from London, set our policy priorities here, integrate service development, manage its considerable resources well, work in partnership with all sectors and relish the independent challenge of empowered communities, service users and its own professional staff.

It will strive as never before to provide excellence for everyone.

In particular all our children require the very best start in life and are entitled to be heard via their own groups and assemblies from an early age.

The first thing that North East Government will do is listen to the users of services and to those who work on the front line of services to address practical day to day issues and make common sense improvements to services. We are determined that public services will operate ethically and in partnership with service users, service workers and the private, voluntary and community sectors.

# What can everyone do?



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**Vote for us**

Your vote makes you powerful. Please use it well for North East England. Vote for the North East Party wherever we are standing. Because we can't at the moment stand everywhere in the North East, if you don't see our candidate please just write in our name on the Ballot Paper.

**VOTE**

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EAST**



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