

# **NORTH EAST**



**Come and join us**  
Let's help North East England win

**Manifesto 2016**

**The North East Party**  
**STANDING UP FOR NORTH EAST ENGLAND**

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# Why can't we be treated just like Scotland?

Why can't the people of North East England have one of the 'most powerful devolved Parliaments in the world'?

Why shouldn't the North East equally enjoy high rates of UK Government funding?

Just over our border, our closest neighbours, our fellow UK citizens, already benefit from a democratically elected, devolved government which has power to run its own education, health and social care services and a great deal more.

The Scottish Government can plan, invest, redevelop its economy and decide its own priorities leaving only a few functions – defence, foreign policy, immigration, in the hands of the UK. With generous public finances the school children of Coldstream, Jedburgh, Dunbar are able to look forward to free Higher Education, older people in need of long term care do not have to make any financial contribution and prescriptions are free.

Literally, one step to the south, if the public finances of North East England were governed by the same formula we would have more than £1 billion per annum extra to spend in our region.

Instead, our public services are already being decimated and are about to be utterly shredded through the removal of Government financial support and the requirement that this, the poorest, most highly Council Taxed region in England makes up the deficit through further tax rises and by taking responsibility for raising income from business rates.

The grotesque unfairness of this developing situation is further emphasised by the collusion of Labour Council leaders, Labour and Conservative MPs and a few members of the North East business elite in a form of 'devolution' which is nothing of the sort and would be treated with derisive contempt in Edinburgh, Cardiff, or Belfast. For the sake of a few powers returned to local government, for a smear of jam today, which will have to be returned tomorrow we are to have our region divided in two, the imposition of two unelected combined authorities and the chance to vote for two mayors which no-one ever requested.

This is the only region in England which has ever had the chance to vote for devolution. The people of North East England overwhelmingly rejected a puny offer in 2004 and a dozen years later without another referendum we are having another second rate version imposed upon us. At the same time we are told that we can be part of the 'Northern Powerhouse'; we can have our decisions made in Manchester rather than London and in order to help us there'll be a better branch railway connecting Newcastle to the interconnected cities of the M62 corridor – Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds.

Our would-be Emperors have no clothes. Too frightened of us to allow a real vote, they are surrendering our region to a future in which the North East will forever be the least of England - fewest jobs, worst poverty, our greatest export our young people, because 'there's nothing for us here.

Scotland has made such progress on devolution thanks to the challenge posed by Scotland's own political party. Scotland is not about to enjoy 'one of the most powerful devolved Parliaments in the world' because we have a benign, kindly government or even as a result of some cronies' alliance between Council leaders, George Osborne and business people playing politics. Effective devolution just over the border is due to victory at the ballot box and the mass participation of 84% of Scottish people in their independence referendum.

The North East suffers from Labour Party hegemony, but it isn't owned by it, nor does our region belong to rich individuals or any group of wealthy, influential people.

It's the people of North East England who matter and when we resist envying the people of Scotland and learn from them, when we assert our democratic rights and demand to make the big decisions ourselves, using our own fair share of the resources of this rich country, that's when we'll succeed.

Let's get up off our knees.

**Come and join us in the North East Party. Let's help North East England win.**

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# The North East Party

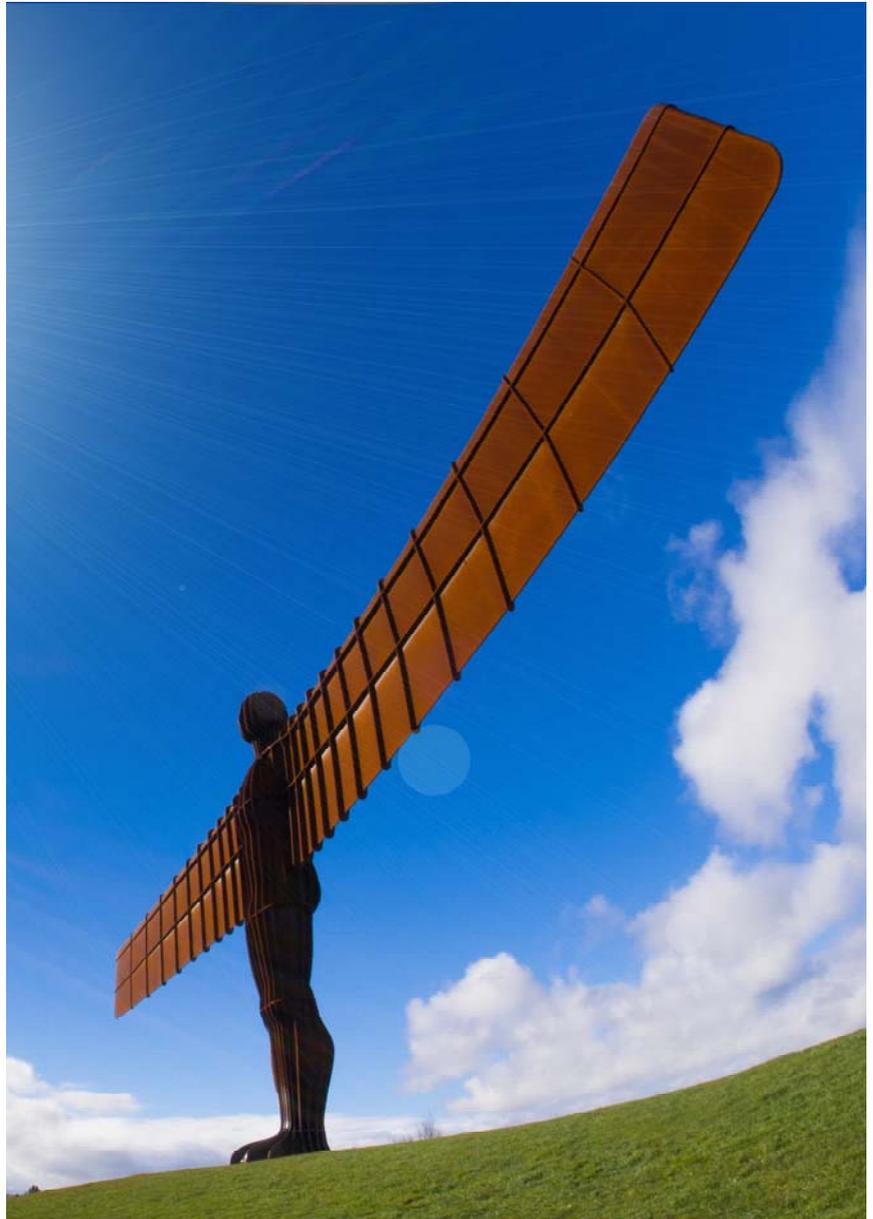
The North East Party (NEP) is a registered political party formed in 2014. We have members across North East England from Berwick to Darlington and Redcar.

NEP is a democratic organisation accountable to its members via monthly meetings open to all and at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) which elects its officers and Executive Committee (EC). The EC meets monthly and reports to each members meeting.

NEP has a developing branch structure. All branches are entitled to be represented on the EC. We currently have branches in Easington, Tees Valley and Newcastle upon Tyne and are seeking to establish them in Northumberland, Sunderland and everywhere else in the region.

There are currently ten NEP Councillors on Peterlee Town Council, one NEP Town Councillor on Horden Parish Council and one NEP Councillor on Shotton Parish Council.

At the General Election May 2015 we stood candidates in the following four constituencies: - Newcastle North, Easington, Stockton North, Redcar winning 2138 votes between them.



NEP is currently applying to join the European Free Alliance (EFA), a European network of regional political parties which share democratic and regionalist principles.

## Aims

NEP stands up for the best interests of the people of North East England. We want everyone who lives here to enjoy the full benefits and opportunities of a prosperous society, with world class services as part of a global community. We believe that everyone in North East England has the right to participate democratically in developing a better future for their community and our region. The North East has a fine history based on hard work, innovation, culture and entrepreneurial skills and we are determined to enable our region to flourish again.

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**NEP is proud of the UK and stands candidates for Parliament in order to pursue the best interests of our country and our region.**

# **NORTH EAST**



We believe that Parliament must continue to have reserved powers in respect of fair taxation, fair distribution of resources, foreign policy, international development, immigration, defence and strategic financial issues.

On the other hand we consider that all other decisions relating to Health, Welfare, Transport, Planning, Education, Training, Energy and Economic Development need to be taken here in North East England by those who are directly accountable to the people of North East England.

NEP wants to sweep away the outdated and inefficient structures of local government and integrate public services under a small, lean and powerful regional government subject to a referendum of all the people of North East England.

At local level we want to energise parish, town and neighbourhood councils with new powers to assess the needs of their communities and plan for their future with new rights of equal access to power, wealth and opportunity and new avenues for advocacy for world class services.

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# North East Party Principles

Our principles have evolved from discussion and debate since our inception at a public meeting in November 2013 and take considerable inspiration from the 'Nolan principles' of public life and the 'Martin Bell' principles of political representation .

- 1.** Abide wholeheartedly by the spirit and letter of the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by Lord Nolan in 1995: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.
  - 2.** Be guided by considered evidence, our real world experience and expertise, our constituencies and our consciences.
  - 3.** Be free from the control of any Party Whip but respect the democratically agreed policies and principles of the North East Party.
  - 4.** Be non-discriminatory, ethical and committed to pluralism.
  - 5.** Make decisions transparently and openly at every stage and level of the political process, enabling people to see how decisions are made and the evidence on which they are based.
  - 6.** Listen to people, consulting our communities constantly and innovatively.
  - 7.** Treat political opponents with due courtesy, challenging them when we believe they are wrong, and agreeing with them when we believe they are right.
  - 8.** Resist abuses of power and patronage and promote democracy at every level.
  - 9.** Claim expenses, salaries and compensation openly so the public can judge the value for money of our activities.
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## Combined Authorities and Elected Mayors

It is clearly sensible for local authorities to come together to share the management of services, to reduce bureaucracy, inefficiency and expense. However the North East Party deplores the way that both Labour Local Authorities and Conservative Government have colluded to impose a second rate form of governance on our region. It is an undemocratic disgrace that the people of a region which voted decisively against a Labour Government's inadequate offering in 2004 have not had the opportunity to vote on the 'Northern Powerhouse' of 2016. It is completely unacceptable that local authority leaders and unelected business elites have been able to abrogate power to themselves, that our region has been arbitrarily divided in two and that the people of North East England are denied the rights, powers and resources made available to our fellow UK citizens in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The one democratic element in what is being imposed is the opportunity to vote for two elected mayors in the North East Combined Authority and Tees Valley areas respectively. NEP are very well aware that the deposit required for the elections to be held in May 2017 is likely to be so large that it will discriminate against small parties such as ourselves. However we are determined to stand excellent candidates in both elections, in order to challenge the UK based parties who have so failed our region and to try to ensure that North East people will have the opportunity to vote for candidates who will put the interests of the North East ahead of political allegiance, self interest and institutional inertia.

## Europe

The North East Party set out our commitment to a Europe Referendum in our General Election Manifesto 2015.

It is important that people have a chance to vote on our membership of the European Union. In particular we are keen to promote our vision of a democratic Europe properly reflecting the principle of subsidiarity to region and nation states. Unfortunately the current negotiations amount to little more than a squalid attempt to buy off the Euro-sceptics within the Conservative Party and will go nowhere near the major democratic reform that we seek. North East Party members will vote according to their consciences at the forthcoming European referendum.

## A fair share of the Country's prosperity

We don't seek special favours for the North East, all we want is a fair share of the resources of our wealthy country. In part this would be derived from a Fair Property Tax.

The current situation is scandalously unfair.

In 2016/17 people living in the least expensive homes (Band A) in Sunderland will pay £935.15 Council Tax, those in the middle band D will pay £1402.72. In 2016/7 people living in Westminster, in homes worth in many cases 100 times the value of those in Sunderland will pay £785.62 Council Tax.

This cannot be justified in what is supposed to be a fair society committed to equal opportunities. Council Tax is inherently unfair because the rate of tax actually falls the greater the value of the property. The situation is made far worse by the failure of successive Governments since 1991 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.

The North East Party would scrap the Council Tax and replace it with an annual 0.75% levy on the value of all homes above a £50,000 threshold. Thus the owner of a home worth at today's rates £150,000 would pay an annual bill of £750 returning hundreds of pounds to the pockets of hundreds of thousands of North East people. When collected nationally and fairly distributed across the country this would lift North East England's annual revenue funding to a similar level to Scotland.

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Local Elections 2016

# Thinking of Voting Labour, Conservative or UKIP?



**THINK AGAIN!**

The Local Elections come at a time when the people of North East England are facing a 'perfect storm':

Massive cuts to Government support for public services and the welfare state.

Massive reductions in Revenue Support Grant for local authorities.

A shift in costs and responsibilities for elderly people and other disadvantaged groups to local authorities - when the North East in particular has an ageing population.

The increasing requirement that local authorities raise revenue from Council Tax when this institutionally unfair and outmoded tax already leaves North East people facing the highest Council tax bills in the country based upon the values of property 100 times less than homes in London and the South of England.

The increasing requirement that local authorities raise revenue from business rates across a region which has the lowest business income and the smallest growth of new business in the UK.

Couple these centrally driven factors with Labour local government inertia, the self-interest of North East business elites and a 'Northern Powerhouse' which barely extends beyond the M62 corridor and the future for North East people is bleak:

We face more redundancies, fewer job opportunities, inadequate investment, public money squandered on bureaucracy and duplication, more poverty, poor health and social dislocation and the North East rooted to the bottom of the pile as the least regarded, worst supported region in the UK.

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## A ray of hope



The North East Party is very small but we are already showing what can be done. In Peterlee, although one of our members, Mary Cartwright, is the Mayor, our 10 Town Councillors do not even hold a majority of seats. However in our first year, through hard work and committed attendance we have been able to:

Reduce the Council Tax.

Raise investment in new schemes which will make the Town better to live in and to visit.

Save public money by cutting Councillors 'perks'.

Make efficient use of Council resources.

### **Writ large**

Across the North East region, the North East Party aims to reduce the Council Tax and raise investment in new schemes to improve communities, create jobs and opportunities and develop world class services.

Amalgamate all local authorities under the respective two combined authorities; saving billions on the salaries of Chief Officers and the expenses of hundreds of Councillors.

Councillor Allowance and Expenses Reform . Councillors should not be given a huge salary style allowance, however, neither should they be financially disadvantaged. We should have a system that attracts the right people , a system that ensures people from all backgrounds can 'afford' to be a Councillor and a system that delivers outstanding value for money.

Challenge the big business organisations to stop trying to be politicians and start showing their mettle as business people. Private sector challenge will offer 'no strings attached' finance to business organisations who can create jobs and deliver effective training. Working alongside the Combined Authority in the interests of the region rather than both sides playing politics.

Instituting new direct elections for each Combined Authority with new avenues of advocacy for town, parish and neighbourhood councils.

Develop a mayoral system for all current Council areas. Elected Mayors and Deputy Mayors would make up the Combined Authority along with the elected Regional Mayor, thereby adding further local accountability to the system.

Creating new partnerships to support joint working between Health, Social Care and voluntary and community sector and children's services.

North East Regional Bank and Credit Union.

Establishing a new era of public openness and consultation empowering individuals and communities, creating services that are welcoming and responsive to the people who elect, who pay for and who require them.

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# Sunderland City Council Elections



The North East Party is small and has limited resources but there is no place more important for us to stand than in Sunderland. Sunderland City Council has grotesquely failed the people whom it is supposed to serve. So incompetent and uncaring have its Councillors been shown to be that the Government has had to step in to ensure that child protection concerns are investigated, to make sure that proper plans are made for the children to whom every Councillor owes a duty of care and to ensure that children who leave care don't simply become homeless.

Evidence provided to the North East Party from the very heart of Sunderland Council reveals bullying, the misuse of public funds to keep councillors docile and toeing the Labour Party line, a subservient political culture where the needs of communities are ignored in favour of priorities dictated by officials.

If elected in Sunderland the North East Party will :

**Campaign for full accountability on decisions that are made by the Council.**

Decisions are often made behind closed doors or with opposing Councillors being excluded from the decision making process. When things go wrong this is passed off without any consequences, with nobody held to account. It is vitally important that when the Council gets it wrong there is a full investigation and the results made public.

**Insist on honesty, openness and transparency amongst City Councillors.**

As we've seen from the de-selection of Councillor Copeland there are penalties for speaking out for the people who elected you rather than the people who run Sunderland Council.

Opposition Party Councillors are denied information which is vital if they are to be involved in running the City. It is vital that this is stopped and all information is made freely available to all the elected representatives who need it. There must be honest, open discussion within the Council Chamber.

**Ensure that vulnerable people in the City are looked after as a priority.**

Sunderland Council have failed to safeguard the children in their care. The Council must be challenged, probed and questioned in order to ensure that all vulnerable people are cared for properly.

**Speak out and expose bad practices within the Council (and encourage other serving Councillors to do the same).**

There is a culture within the Council wherein Councillors remain silent on issues that may not be popular with the Council hierarchy. Councillors will be encouraged to speak up and to refer concerns to an independent third party when the public interest requires 'whistle-blowing'.

**Stand up for the best interests of the people of Sunderland.**

Often Sunderland Council ignores the interests of the voting public in favour of vanity projects such as the £1 million spent on the Roker pods that provide very little benefit to Sunderland people. The residents matter and we should be fully involved in planning decisions with our views taken into account. Public meetings should be held on important issues and publicised widely so all can be included.

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# Sunderland City Council Elections

## **Vote against wasteful spending.**

In times of 'austerity' and severe cuts to services there is no place for wasteful spending. Despite some reductions being made there is still a need to promote efficiency and good practice from the top with Councillors are still able to enjoy free meals and hospitality at the annual air show - all at the public expense. This must stop.

Sunderland Council should follow the lead of Peterlee where, inspired by the NEP the Council has scrapped all 'perks' for Councillors.

Save the lives of Sunderland's children and young people.

Because the leading cause of death for 11-18 year olds is related to traffic accidents we would support the '20's plenty' campaign for 20mph to become the default speed limit on all residential and urban streets.

One person standing for the North East Party in Sunderland is local campaigner Heather Fagan.

Heather says 'Many people in Sunderland are deeply unhappy with the way the Labour Party is ruling our City. Only when people start to challenge the Labour stranglehold can positive changes be made.'

In Peterlee, people thought it would be impossible to change the same old ways of voting, the same old ways of doing things.

However, it has worked there and we can make it happen in Sunderland as well. We can make Sunderland a much better place to be.

**Come and join us. Let's help Sunderland win.**

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