



# Mease and Tame FOCUS

Cllr Phil Bennion Tel: 07831 136512 email: phil.bennion@btconnect.com  
Cllr Penny Bennion Haunton Manor Farm, Haunton, Tamworth B79 9HN



2007 total votes by party

Con  
1149

Lib  
Dem  
1407



Last time the Tories won one seat and Phil Bennion won the other, with Penny Bennion just losing. It is likely to be even closer this year.



**It's a two horse race**

# Phil & Penny BENNION: All year round community ACTION!



**The election race in Mease & Tame is turning into an all out battle between hard-working Haunton farming couple and Lib Dem Focus campaigners Phil and Penny Bennion and the Tories.**

The election will be held on Thursday May 5th, though postal ballots have already been sent out.

On the same day, residents will also vote in a referendum for a voting system called AV - which allows you to rank candidates in order of preference.

Dedicated local campaigner and environmentalist Phil Bennion has been a hardworking councillor and a fierce defender of open countryside from Tamworth developers.

Last time, Phil held his council seat but the Tories scraped in just ahead of Penny Bennion, who is a hardworking local parish councillor.

### Tories aim for a wipeout

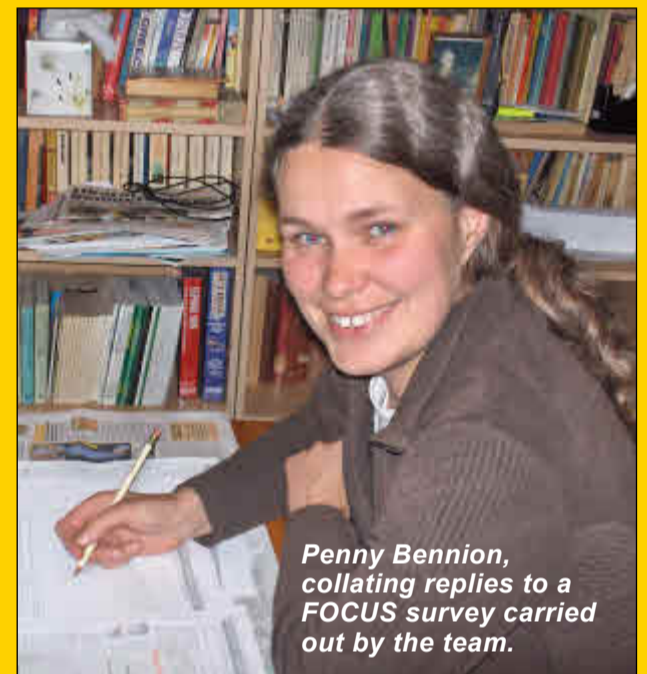
This year, after picking up both local MPs and the county council as well as the District, the Tories are trying hard to wipe out all opposition. Labour are not even standing a candidate here.

But huge cuts caused by reckless spending of almost all council reserves are about to plunge the District into the worst financial crisis in its history.

The Bennions and the LibDems are fighting back. They believe that dedicated all year round hard work and consistent principles are the best choice for residents here.

**"The last thing our ward needs is for the message to go out that we are happy with the utterly disastrous way that Lichfield Conservatives run the Council!"**

With no Labour or Green candidates, many of their supporters are switching to Lib Dem this time. It all points to a nailbiting close contest on May 5th.



**Penny Bennion, collating replies to a FOCUS survey carried out by the team.**

**Penny Bennion, 42, is a senior radiographer working for an NHS Foundation Trust and also a local parish councillor.**

"The Planning System is dysfunctional", said Penny. "It encroaches on the freedom of individuals to make minor changes to their properties, inhibits economic development, yet at the same time allows crafty, experienced developers to play the system." Penny believes strongly that Council's have to live within their means and is appalled at our Conservative-run

Council's complete failure in this respect. "Around the country, Lib Dem Councils have been the most innovative in coping with the cuts, retaining front line services" said Penny. She took a strong line recently on her Parish Council in opposing an excessive rise in the precept. She is also disgusted by the way that Labour in its national campaigns is trying to bamboozle the electorate into confusing "deficit" with "debt". She is a keen gardener and rears free range poultry on the family farm in Haunton.

## Bennion lobbies Lib Dem minister over HS2

**Phil Bennion says serious problems with the HS2 high speed rail plan, especially poor connections, make it hard for environmentalists to support.**

- The station in Birmingham has no connection to other main lines in the city.
- The Birmingham Interchange is nearly a mile from the current International station. Driving to it along congested roads would be pointless.
- It terminates at Euston, with only a spur to Eurostar at St Pancras, limiting the ability to win short haul air traffic.
- Only the first part of the route is being considered, whereas the main benefit is to Britain's northern cities. The whole route should be assessed in one go.
- The 250 mph design speed with very gradual corners is too high for proper connectivity.
- An extra station north of the conurbation is needed.

Phil Bennion said: "There are also still fears the junction with the Leeds line might move and threaten the Hopwas area. I have raised my strong concerns directly with Lib Dem transport minister, Norman Baker. Unless major changes are made, HS2 is too compromised to support."



## The looming Tory Cuts!

**Local Liberal Democrats have repeatedly warned since 2007 of a looming Lichfield Council budget crisis, caused by reckless Tory district councillors.**

**Now the chickens are coming home to roost!**

Despite Council Tax rises every year, the Tory - run Council ran down reserves, earned by selling council houses, to fund prestige projects like the Garrick Theatre. These reserves are now almost used up. The District Council now faces a

budgetary crunch just when the Coalition is freezing Council Tax. The Garrick is a community asset. But it is also a millstone round the neck of local taxpayers, needing a large subsidy - £550,000 last year - roughly equal to the sum taken from reserves.

**Once our reserves are gone which other services will be cut?** The Tories are keeping quiet, hoping to sweep away all opposition at this election ... before unleashing the Axe.

### From our local Lichfield District Manifesto:

- Restore sanity to the District Council's finances.
- Improve the council's poor record on affordable housing to let and to buy, explore the use of Exception Sites to provide some affordable housing in rural areas where it is wanted.
- Green up our District to save money and improve our environment, demanding that all new build uses the highest

energy efficiency standards, not just the legal minimum.

- Ensure the District Council enforces on-street parking control in villages and lanes, not just urban areas.
- Reopen local rail links to relieve traffic congestion.
- Defend our Green Belt.
- Stronger action to bring empty properties back into use.

**A record of Action ... a promise of More!**

### Five key Lib Dem achievements in Government:

- 880,000 low earners taken out of income tax ✓
- £2.5bn "pupil premium" to benefit schools ✓
- Banned cowboy wheel clampers ✓
- Abolished Labour's expensive ID cards ✓
- Labour's Post Office closures scrapped ✓

# Three great reasons to vote **BENNION** on May 5th

## 1 Hard work all year round

Unlike most councillors, **Phil and Penny Bennion** make a point of working hard all year round, taking action to improve services in our ward.

Major successes in recent years include their campaigns to improve public transport in Mease and Tame Ward. Phil's

tireless lobbying persuaded the County Council to introduce an hourly daytime bus service in 2005.

Another longrunning problem for commuters was Tamworth Station car park being full by eight in the morning. Phil suggested both double decking the car park and providing a second car park north of the

station when Anker Valley is developed. The main car park was eventually given a partial second deck last year, but spaces are yet again becoming tight. Using Focus surveys, keeping people informed and dealing with people's problems have been the hallmark of the Bennion and Focus team approach.



## 2 Defeat Tamworth overspill housing threat



**Phil Bennion is proud that this ward has kept out more urban sprawl from Tamworth during 12 years as District Councillor.**

Cllr Bennion has led the opposition to Tamworth advancing into our countryside for even longer. He said: "I'd like to thank those who helped the fight, particularly the **Tamworth Northern Alliance**, without whom we would have lost. The Conservative-run Lichfield

District Council was ready to accept the North Tamworth plan in 2005."

He has put forward alternatives to housing sprawl at every level of planning, from County Structure Plan to Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework. He has also objected to the Tamworth Local Plan and appeared in person to argue against large housing development north and west of Tamworth at enquiries.

He said: "I generally take a liberal view of planning, particularly where small businesses are trying to compete, or where householders wish to do little or no harm to others.

"However, urban sprawl is the biggest threat to our area and is unsustainable. Planning must support, and sometimes balance, liberty and enterprise, but we must oppose the kind of development that has wasted so much good rural land."

## An ill wind, or an idea whose time has come? *Phil Bennion writes:*

Energy is vital to our economy and society, but relying on fossil fuels is no longer an option; a position shared by both supporters and opponents of wind power. Since it became known that a wind energy firm was proposing to erect wind turbines on my land three years ago, I have received many suggestions as to how we should secure future energy supplies.

Most opponents of onshore wind used to tell me that they favour nuclear, but nuclear fuels are also scarce. Now the Fukushima disaster has led many countries to reassess nuclear fission. Nuclear fusion is still at the research stage.

It is no secret that I have always supported wind power. Other opponents say it should all be offshore, which does have potential, but is very expensive. Are we willing to pay two to three times more for electricity, permanently, just to see all turbines go offshore? It is also not yet possible to erect turbines where the sea is more than 30m deep. Onshore wind is clean, virtually silent and

one of the cheapest forms of renewable energy. It has intermittency problems but all other renewables have problems too.

Tidal has some potential but limited and is still not commercially proven. Solar cells do work, but produce nothing at night and little in winter. Biomass and Anaerobic Digestion use waste and crop residues, but energy crops threaten food production.

My own view was and is that we need a balanced policy. A wide range of renewables, including onshore wind, with reserve gas power stations which can be fired up when demand exceeds supply. An International Supergrid could reduce supply fluctuations as it expands. This could reach North Africa and tap into solar power in the Sahara. We also need to invest more in energy storage so daytime solar power and extra wind power when wind speeds are high can be stored and used. Turning our economy round to use low carbon energy is crucial to our future. It is a huge task: we need to get on with it!

## 3 Fighting for hospitals and NHS



Phil and Penny Bennion have fought hard to defend our health service, both locally and nationally. They and the Focus team helped campaigners raise 5,000 signatures for a full time minor injuries unit at the Sir Robert Peel hospital (left). Now, Phil Bennion is working closely with Lib Dem MPs

and doctors fighting to change the 'damaging market based' reforms proposed by Tory Health Secretary Andrew Lansley. Phil is working on getting agreements for major amendments to the Health Bill to stop private sector 'cherry picking' and to ensure democratic scrutiny of commissioning bodies.

## PHIL AND VINCE CUT TAX!



**Vince Cable and Lib Dem cabinet ministers have stuck to their guns and forced the coalition to carry out a plan to cut tax - as proposed by Phil Bennion.**

The proposal to raise the Income Tax threshold to £10000 first saw light of day over 10 years ago when Cllr Bennion ran a survey across Lichfield District. Given a choice of several tax policies, raising the threshold to £10,000 was by far the most popular policy amongst the 1000 local people who took part. Cllr Bennion, already an enthusiast for the idea, set about trying to gain support amongst other Liberal Democrats on the national policy committee, which he has been elected to. Vince agreed, and it was included in the 2010 Lib Dem manifesto. The Coalition Agreement will see the threshold raised in stages to £10000 by the next election.

From April, 880,000 people no longer have to pay income tax. Around 40,000 in Lichfield District will pay less or no tax. Phil Bennion said he was delighted Vince had pushed his tax cut plan into effect. He said: "Its great to know 23 million people are now up to £200 a year better off. It is tough for the Lib Dem minority in cabinet. They can't win every battle, but this is a big plus."

**TAX PLEDGE DELIVERED:** ✓

### What Labour cost us ...

- ID cards: £5 billion
- Iraq: £7 billion
- Failed NHS IT system: £12 billion
- Debt interest: £80,000 per minute!
- Projected national debt: £1 trillion

### DON'T FORGET

- Lichfield district is facing a huge financial crunch, due to Gordon Brown AND to Tory councillors .
- If the Tories win, they will have a monopoly of our villages, district, county and local MPs, as cuts hit.
- We need Phil and Penny Bennion to fight for us in tough times - not Tory cannon fodder.

## Remember to use your postal votes!

Many residents have opted for a postal vote. If they have not arrived by April 26th, call the Elections Office on 301825 for a replacement.

If you have a postal vote, don't forget to send it back. But if you forget and are not away, you can still take your ballot papers to the polling station until 10pm on polling day (Thurs May 5th).



## WHO WILL FIGHT FOR OUR AREA?

Phil and Penny Bennion and the Focus team have a long record of working all year round for ALL villages in Mease and Tame. They don't just appear at elections demanding your vote. They don't just say what sounds popular. They have principles for a green, sustainable and liberal community and stand up for them. Before the Focus team began working, our rural area was ignored by Tory council leaders, who had to be forced to oppose

Tamworth overspill housing plans. With a financial crisis looming for the council, massive housebuilding to rack up council tax revenue is again a huge threat. Phil and Penny will fight for our area, and deserve your votes.



**Vote on Thursday May 5th! 7am-10pm**

Use your 2 votes to elect 2 hardworking councillors:

**Phil BENNION** LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



**Penny BENNION** LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



To make MPs work harder vote:

**YES to fairer votes** YES! TO FAIRER VOTES

