

Buzz

Prospective parliamentary candidate quizzed by Amnesty International

PROSPECTIVE

Parliamentary Candidate Anna Soubry was invited to the Beeston Amnesty International Group's monthly meeting earlier in the month to take part in a discussion on human rights issues. She found herself quizzed by a well-prepared group of 14 local Amnesty members about her views on Amnesty issues ranging from the unlawful detention of prisoners to the use of weapons manufactured in Nottingham that find their way into the hands of repressive regimes and child soldiers around the world.

Before the quizzing, Anna introduced herself and gave a brief resumé of her career to date. Amnesty International focuses on the abuse of human rights and Anna spoke of how, in her career as a criminal lawyer, making sure that all rights were respected was something dear to her heart.

Anna had familiarised herself with Amnesty's current issues, in particular violence

against women and the plight of refugees who are not allowed to claim benefits in this country.

Asked her view on ending unlawful detention, Anna said she was opposed to locking people up without charge. "How can it be right to detain someone? This country is deeply hypocritical – this is what we do all the time. We believe we are a great democracy, then we lock someone up to make sure they don't speak out. Trying to strike the right balance is difficult.

"The Government now has even more power to lock people up without charge, and I find that very scary."

She continued: "Everything has a cause and an effect. If we wind things back, we can look for the cause. Yet do we hear of people going back to look for the root causes of terrorism? I think not."

Beeston Amnesty Chairman, Andy Jack, pointed

out that in many cases, the highly valuable commodity of oil influenced the way a country behaved, even with regard to terrorism. Amnesty, however, did not concern itself with the politics of any particular country, but only with human rights abuses.

Nottingham is home to the world's second largest manufacturer of small arms, a company of international renown, and Miss Soubry was asked how she felt about the arms trade in this country. "It provides jobs," she said, "And for that reason it would be difficult to get it stopped."

She was asked whether she thought companies currently manufacturing arms should be encouraged to switch to manufacturing something else instead, and replied: "There's merit in balance, and in building up our stock of arms in this country we keep things in balance. The arms trade is difficult. If elected, I would work for world peace, but

I wouldn't fight against the arms trade.

"It's better that we make them," she said.

Anna thinks the next government will bring in a different type of politician, who are more prepared to speak out against the party line.

There followed more discussion on a range of ongoing Amnesty issues, and the evening ended with a general discussion amongst the group as to whether prisoners should have the right to vote. There has been talk by the Conservatives to say that the country's criminals should forfeit the right, but Anna said she was not sure she agreed, believing that, for example, long-term prisoners should be allowed to vote as part of their rehabilitation process.

Snippets

More community safety funding to tackle anti social behaviour

BROXTOWE Borough Council has successfully bid to the Home Office for additional community safety funds to 'accelerate partnership working'.

It has received £41,700 to be spent on three projects before the end of this financial year: a partnership project to communicate what is being achieved in tackling crime and disorder issues with particular emphasis on anti social behaviour; adding to a special marketing campaign to promote partnership action to address crime and anti social behaviour, with particular emphasis on engaging young people in an innovative and positive way; and increasing community confidence by addressing environmental eyesores in hotspot areas where anti social behaviour is prevalent. These include lighting and CCTV on Broadgate Park, Beeston and graffiti removal in Stapleford South West, Beeston West and Beeston Town Centre.

Temporary closure of Beeston Library

BEESTON Library will be closed from Monday, March 1, to allow a number of improvements to be made to the layout of the building and the organisation of the stock. These improvements will include the installation of self-service equipment.

The library will re-open on Monday, March 22.

Broxtowe Conservative Ladies Coffee Club

THE next meeting of the Broxtowe Conservative Ladies Coffee Club is on Thursday, March 4 at 10am. Meet for coffee before the speaker commences his talk at 10.30am.

The speaker this month is Bill Wheatley, who is going to give a talk about 'Attenborough'. The Coffee Club meets at the New Conservative Club, Station Road, Beeston.

The Free Ranger...

Our monthly columnist shares his thoughts with us...

THE Free Ranger lives in Attenborough, but asks to remain anonymous so that he can share his opinions freely about local matters that affect all of us.

Please remember, however, that the opinions he expresses are his own, and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you wish to comment, please write to the address on page 2.

Nothing is free (even parking)

GIVEN the apparently parlous state of the economy

and the prospect of increased taxes it seems we already have a tax revolt on our hands in Beeston associated to free parking. First we had the work place parking levy being brought in by the City Council and opposed by my friends at County Hall (I call them my friends, as apparently my less-than-complementary comments on flogging off care homes did not go down well in some quarters).

Then we have the Borough Council proposing to bring in car park charges in Beeston. Now we have what has been dubbed the home-place parking levy proposed by the County Council for Beeston Rylands, but it is in fact a residents parking scheme.

Such a home-place parking charge on the surface may be a sensible move, and for once I am going to agree and say our county councillors (Messrs Kerry and Jackson, the latter in charge of county transport) have been right to defend it. It will allow parking to be controlled in the Rylands, limit the illegal parkers and free up road space to allow the traffic to flow more easily, all at little cost to the council tax payers. I am told by a source at County Hall this may be a trial for a wider implementation of such schemes to alleviate common parking problems in busy residential streets.

However, the debate seems to fall back to should

we have to pay to park near our homes. Well, parking is never free. It may seem free at the point you pull on your hand-break, but someone is paying. If you have a driveway, you probably paid a bit extra for your house over one without a space, and if you have built a drive then you will have paid for the paving as well. If you park in town, the car park does not build or maintain itself, the council will have to pay for its upkeep and operation to avoid misuse; similar for your employer's spaces. All of which have a cost to your employer or on the council tax. If you park on the road, the road may have been provided at a specific width to allow parking, so the cost of the

space and road width has some money linked to it. If the road is not wide enough and needs to be policed to stop illegal parking, this again has a cost.

So if you can cure a parking problem at little cost for those who will directly benefit, such a small home-place charge could be quite a progressive option. I understand residents parking permits are common in the City and have been successful and popular in other towns. Let's not forget car parking in many areas just creates dead space, think back 50 years. How much space in our towns has gone to provide somewhere to store our steel boxes, at what expense. Parking is never free – you just don't realise you are paying for it.

Toton Sidings

Finally, I feel I must comment on the devastation to the scrub woodland that occurred at Toton where the new landowners have cleared all the trees that have grown since the sidings were abandoned. I understand such clearance is a standard tactic amongst developers, as it makes for an unsightly area, more open to development. You have to wonder if the railway sleeper recycling plant that was proposed a few years back was perhaps with hindsight not such a bad thing as originally feared, as it may have stopped this clearance.

We shall never know.

Bookwise 42 Chilwell Road, Beeston
(opposite the Methodist Church)
Opening hours: Mon to Sat
9.30am - 4.30pm

Supporting
Music for Everyone
Nottingham Cerebral Trust:
Registered Charity No 517015

Beeston Library may be closed
for the next three weeks, but we
are open with quality books,
sheet music and CDs.

Music
for everyone
www.music-for-everyone.org