

Buzz

Your Opinion Sought

The Beeston Express works hard to be the local paper that the local residents want to read.

There have been a lot of changes, we like to think for the better, during the six years of its existence, but we still feel that there is plenty of room for improvement.

What we would like at this point is some feedback from our readers. We did carry out a survey a couple of years ago and tried to incorporate as many of the ideas from that as we could, but things move on.

If you have any comments you would like to make, whether positive or negative, please tell us what they are and we'll do our best to act on them wherever it is reasonable to do so.

*Thank you
The Editor*

General Election 2010

Slugging it out in south Broxtowe

by the Editor

ONE thing that we have discovered for ourselves at *The Beeston Express* is that people round here love a good bit of local controversy.

With that in mind, we have an idea to make space available in the pages of *The Beeston Express* to our Broxtowe Parliamentary candidates as the General Election draws closer.

In the new column, they can use the space to advise the constituents what their plans for particular aspects of this side of the borough of Broxtowe would be – should they be elected or get re-elected. As it gets under way, they can take each other to task if they think their rivals have been thinking a bit laterally in their interpretation of the facts and are trying to pull the wool over our eyes.

The column will operate fairly and without bias on a 'right of reply' basis.

What we don't want is party political statements or lengthy party manifestos – we all know what the national party policies are, thank you.

On behalf of the local populace and to preserve our sanity, we're going to have some rules:

- We'll welcome into the fray any Parliamentary candidates from other parties who might emerge once the General Election is announced.
- We like to think of ourselves as reasonably intelligent here in south Broxtowe and not generally susceptible to flannel, so we'll be asking the candidates to leave the flannel out.
- There'll be no room for inter-candidate mud slinging and smear campaigns. It achieves nothing. We'll be looking for a clean fight based on

facts, not hyperbole and tittle-tattle.

- Lengthy missives are likely to be cut and the Editor's decision will be final. If it proves necessary, a word limit will be imposed.

The General Election has been pencilled in for the first week in May. We'll provisionally plan to introduce this new column in the issue of February 12, and invite the candidates to prepare their opening statements. That will give them a further five issues in which to argue things out.

Meanwhile, ideas from the borough's vitally important constituents to improve the format of this new column would be welcome.

Please submit your ideas by week ending Friday, February 5, using the contact details on page 2.

Snippets

Pack your bags

GUIDES of the Attenborough and Toton District packed bags for customers at Sainsbury's, Beeston on the weekend of December 12 and 13, and raised an amazing £1200 for the District's Girlguiding Centenary events.

DJ sought

THE local radio station in Corby is organising a re-union of DJs that used to work at The Embassy Night Club in the town. They are looking for one of the first DJs to work at the club, John Philip Alexander, 27 years ago.

All that the organisers know about him is that he was married back in those days, that he had a younger brother, and that he worked in a pub or nightclub (!) in Beeston.

The re-union is on January 22 at the Grampian Club, Corby, so if you do know anything about John Philips, please contact us here at *The Beeston Express* as soon as possible and we'll pass the details on.

Readings at Beeston Library

BEESTON Library is hosting a programme of readings between September 2009 and March 2010. Special guests – poets, scholars, a novelist and a broadcaster – have been invited to select their own choice of readings and share them with an audience at the library on Foster Avenue, Beeston.

BBC Radio Nottingham's John Holmes, host of the popular Radio Nottingham afternoon show, takes the chair for Reading 4. John will read from Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* live in the library on Monday, January 25, from 7pm to 9pm.

Tickets are £6 (£4 concessions) and are available from the library, telephone 925 5168.

Between you and me...

BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer writes his monthly column for the Beeston Express to keep us, his constituents, up-to-date and informed. We would like to remind you, however, that the views he expresses are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you would like to comment on any of the issues he raises, please write to the address on page 2.

The Beeston Express has no allegiance to any political party.



How should we promote family life?

ONE of the longest-running sagas in British politics is the question of promoting family life. Everyone's in favour, every political party is eager to say that it will help, but the general perception is that family life has been in steady decline for a long time.

David Cameron ran into the traditional difficulty over this recently. First he declared that he'd encourage marriage through the tax system. Then he said well, he hoped to, but it might not be possible in the next Parliament. Then he issued a correction: it will definitely be done. But what exactly? Well, exactly what will be announced 'at a later time'

Hmm, well. There are three arguments for rewarding marriage through the tax system:

1. It's generally accepted that married couples stay together longer, and that this stability is usually good for any children they may have. Shouldn't we be encouraging it?
2. If the mother (for the sake of example) has little or no income, then if she's single she'll get income support (because otherwise she and her child would starve), but if she's married and her husband has a good income, she won't. This penalises people who have a partner with a good income, and many think that unfair.
3. If the tax system was helpful to marriages, more couples would be able to afford to have one parent at home looking after the kids, which might be good for their upbringing.

On the other hand:

1. Any government will have a certain amount of money that it has to raise in tax. If it raises less from married people, it will need to raise more from single people.
2. Is it really fair to be taxed more because you're single? Perhaps you are single because your partner has run off with someone else: should the emotional trauma be compounded by a leap in your tax bill? Perhaps you're single because you simply haven't met the right person? Should the State be nudging you to stop vacillating and choose someone?
3. Do tax advantages save good marriages? Will anyone decide to stay in a marriage because of £50 or £100 a year difference in their taxes? And if a

marriage is so stormy that it's only a tax advantage that keeps them together, might they (and their children) not be better off apart?

Moreover, many marriages don't produce any children. Should the tax benefit go to them as well (as Mr Cameron has apparently been considering), just as a reward for having hitched up? These complexities are the reason why successive Governments have eyed the problem, come up with ideas, and then quietly dropped them.

What do I think? I wouldn't change the system to reward people merely for getting hitched: there are too many snags and it would encourage fake marriages which exist only to impress the taxman. Essentially I think people should marry

for love, not for a tax break. But I do think there's a problem in family life, and I'd like to suggest something different.

I think that we should have a look at paying part of Child Benefit in child-related vouchers. There is ample evidence that children who grow up in poverty are at higher risk of many kinds of problems. I'm glad that child poverty has declined over the last decade, and I'm not in favour of cutting back child support. However, I do meet constituents with lots of kids who have very nice electronic equipment and other status symbols but whose children don't look especially well cared for. I think it would be reasonable for part of Child Benefit to be linked to child-related things (clothes, toys, baby food and so on).

The traditional argument against vouchers is that if they're only for poorer people they're discriminatory – people feel embarrassed to use them. But that doesn't apply to Child Benefit, because it's universal. And while I don't really think the State should be telling us whether or not to get married, if the State gives us money for children, isn't it fair that it should try to ensure that the money actually gets spent on the kids? Child Benefit should benefit children.

So far as I know, none of the parties are suggesting this. But I'm thinking of putting it in my own personal manifesto for the next Parliament. I'd be interested in Beeston Express readers' feedback – write to the Editor, or email me on NickMPI@aol.com