

# Derbyshire County Council Conservative Group

ELECTIONS 2009

CONSERVATIVE

# MANIFESTO

# 2009

28 years of Hard Labour –  
It's time for change



Vote Conservative on  
4th June



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# Introduction – Cllr Andrew Lewer, Leader of Derbyshire County Council’s Conservative Group

In 1981 the Labour Party took control of Derbyshire County Council. There have been achievements since that time but there have also been many missed opportunities. More than ever it is time for a change to a Conservative led County Council, which is now within reach. This manifesto demonstrates our forward looking ideas and ambitions for Derbyshire that a stale administration of twenty eight years’ duration cannot possibly match.

The Conservative Group at Derbyshire County Council - and the numerous newly elected colleagues who will be joining us - is committed to affordable, quality public services. We believe in efficiency and we can be relied upon to tackle waste, duplication and pointless bureaucracy wherever we encounter it.

Conservatives across Derbyshire are seeking your support and are ready to work hard for you. We do not take you for granted, as Labour has done for so long. We do not live in the past but we respect our county’s heritage. We believe in strong communities. It is people, not targets or strategies, which shape the places where we live and they way we live in them.

Twenty eight years is too long for one party to be in control of the Council. It is unhealthy for democracy. It prevents new ideas and new people from having the chance to enact them. We do not ask for your support simply to have change for change’s sake. We are confident that you will be as excited by our ideas for a modern Derbyshire as we are. We are ready to deliver value for money quality services for you.



*Andrew Lewer*



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# Council Tax, Finance and Property

A Conservative County Council will be vigorous when it comes to cutting out waste and increasing efficiency across the board. At the same time we will also seek to enhance the quality and range of services that mean the most to the people of Derbyshire. In some of the most difficult economic times for many years, we will be

mindful of the pressures on people's domestic budgets and respect the fact that the money that the Council spends is taxpayer's money. Such funds, therefore, need to be spent by the Council as carefully as any of us would spend our own wages.

Our key priorities in this area are to:

- Carry out a comprehensive review of all of the Council's Services and Budgets and seek out greater efficiencies from staff and their working practices
- Keep Council Tax low
- Press for the early implementation of a correction to the Government's accepted shortfall - amounting to several million pounds - in the Derbyshire Police Authority's and our Fire Authority's Government grant but also to keep their current budgets under control
- Examine ways in which the Council's extensive property portfolio can be rationalised and these assets 'sweated'
- Seek cleaner, greener and cheaper ways of heating, lighting and building (or renovating) Council owned properties
- Pledge not to increase business rates by the optional 2% being suggested by the Government



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# Roads, Pavements and Public Transport

Derbyshire's roads and pavements are in a poor state, they are known for it all over the region. We live in a large county, one with an extensive network of rural roads and yet also some of the nation's most important arterial links. We can do better and a Conservative County Council will

seek more external funding to make capital investment in new roads, provide more efficient investment in road maintenance (including grass cutting) and give greater support for public transport (especially via enhanced Community Transport schemes).

Important priorities in this area are to:

- Review the standard and quality of road resurfacing, especially on rural roads, and speed up repairs to potholes (and improve the quality of such repairs)
- Deliver an enhanced programme for the management, supervision and maintenance of drains, gullies and culverts within the county, many of which are in need of urgent attention
- Review the operation and location of speed cameras in order to restore the public's confidence in them, ensuring when they are used it is where appropriate and for safety, not as revenue raisers
- Promote an increase in the number of 'quiet lanes'; strengthen the protection of green lanes and bridle paths and speed up the implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, especially with regard to access to the electronic mapping of the County's footpaths
- Support and encourage the use of bus and train services, with additional support for Community Transport schemes, acknowledging their key role in tackling isolation, particularly for the elderly and those in rural areas
- Encourage biodiversity in the County and look to expand access to the countryside for residents, particularly in the heavily populated areas outside the Peak District National Park
- Make our roads safer, through more training for young drivers and especially motorcyclists and by keeping ineligible HGVs off small and unsuitable roads



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# Safety, Law and Order

Our residents need to feel safe and to be safe. Being told that our 'perception' of crime is the problem rather than the actual levels of anti-social behaviour, vandalism, violence and theft is not good enough. A strong

partnership with the Police is essential in this regard; a Conservative County Council would ensure the public's voice is heard and their concerns over law and order and community safety are addressed.

Our key priorities would be to:

- Tackle anti-social behaviour (including violent crime and domestic violence) through early intervention and involve the parents of offenders in this. We would increase funding for the Family Intervention Projects and focus them upon correcting unacceptable behaviour - not making excuses for those responsible. In addition, we will address the needs of the wider community who suffer from the irresponsible actions of a small minority
- Work to relieve the feelings of isolation experienced by older people in Derbyshire through crime and intimidating anti-social behaviour
- Tackle binge drinking and public under age drinking. Many regard our town centres as 'no go' areas at night; this must stop. We will work with the Police to ensure that those who cannot conduct themselves in a responsible manner through excess drink or through drugs are punished and rehabilitation encouraged
- Work with partners to prevent re-offending and work with the Police in targeting repeat offenders. A small number of criminals commit a huge number of the total crimes in the county, often in and around their own neighbourhoods; we intend to press for concerted action on these people



# Schools and Young People

We have some excellent schools in Derbyshire but we also have some that are not delivering for our children. Every child in Derbyshire deserves a good education and an enjoyable childhood. A Conservative County Council will continue to modernise our schools, primary and secondary, and will do so on a fair and balanced basis across the whole of Derbyshire, not just in certain areas,

as has been the case in the past. We believe that excellent teaching and discipline are the keys to success in education. We will support teachers and parents in knowing what is best for the children in their care. We will open up as wide a range of opportunities for learning and acquiring skills and qualifications as possible.

Our key priorities are to:

- Concentrate hard upon support for - and recruitment of - the best staff for the least successful schools in the County so we can turn them around
- Ensure fairer funding for all schools, regardless of geographic location
- Work with the Local Planning Authorities to identify a site in the south of the county for a secondary school to relieve the mounting pressure on John Port and Chellaston Schools
- Review the travel to Faith Schools policy
- Support national initiatives, seeking to ensure that the Headteacher and Governors have the ultimate responsibility for discipline in the school; no more 'Appeals Panels' that undermine Heads' authority
- Work with the community and local businesses to formulate relevant curricula for finding pupils suitable opportunities for key skills and entry into apprenticeships and / or higher education
- Support a wide range of out of school activities, including the Scouts, Guides, Cadets and Outward Bound courses
- Work with schools to promote flexible opening of their facilities to the wider community outside of school hours
- Assess the effectiveness of Children's Centres while protecting the valuable and helpful services they can provide
- Reconsider ways of providing more effective children's services in rural areas
- Work closely with young people to deliver the youth services THEY want and to make the Derbyshire Youth Council more effective as a tool for promoting democracy as well as allocating resources
- Ensure that the Safeguarding Children's Board is more accountable
- Instigate a thorough review of Children's Homes, adoption and fostering services and looked after children's provision to ensure all current working practices are safe, sound and are achieving improved results



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# Social Care for the Elderly and Vulnerable

With a rapidly growing ageing population in Derbyshire, the mounting challenges for providing quality care for the elderly and for other vulnerable people are clear. Nevertheless, not only continuing to provide care but improving the quality and availability of that care is one of

the Conservative Group's very highest priorities. We will retain care homes but we will look closely at different management methods for them. We shall press for those using services to have enhanced levels of choice and flexibility than is presently on offer.

Our key priorities are to:

- Give more choice and independence to the elderly and others who access the care system by promoting direct payment schemes and accelerating their availability. We trust people to identify their own needs and know what is best for themselves
- Establish a positive and supportive partnership with the voluntary sector by genuinely listening to representatives of the sector at all levels
- Pursue an active partnership between DCC and the private and voluntary sectors for residential and nursing homes
- Maintain the current obligations to build three new Extra Care facilities for older people within the County and explore the opportunities for a significant expansion of such homes; these give freedom and flexibility to Derbyshire residents, protect their assets and prevent un-necessary disruption to their lives
- Refresh the County Council's Call Derbyshire service to prevent duplication. We shall also give callers and especially service users named case officers, who will thus be empowered and accountable for the care provided
- Support Community Transport Schemes and the Handy Van service and recognise the key role they play in enabling people to continue to live in their own homes, especially in rural areas
- Be more active in supporting the needs of family members who act as carers, especially those who have dependents who are disabled or who suffer from dementia, through extra provision of respite care



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# Regeneration and the Environment

The County Council's spending on regeneration has tended to focus on large scale projects which have not delivered the desired results. The Conservative approach would be quite different and in difficult economic times it is vital that this should be the case. We believe in people and want to invest in them. Skills, training and programmes that are tailored to individuals are what are needed to tackle some of the deep rooted problems in certain communities. Moreover, some of the long standing difficulties with worklessness and dependency

experienced by some people, at considerable cost to themselves and to all other residents and taxpayers will be addressed. We know that people can achieve more and we shall do all in our power to assist them. As well as encouraging a strong economy, we believe in a clean environment. We recognise the energy needs for our economy and will not play games with targets and ineffective methods of treating waste, generating power or protecting our landscape, water courses and atmosphere.

Our key priorities are to:

- Provide good advice in major planning applications, together with processing planning applications for schools, mineral extraction and waste treatment sites
- Increase the focus upon supporting biodiversity, monitoring the effects of climate change and light pollution, plus playing a key role in managing our built and natural heritage
- Provide a more environmentally friendly alternative to waste disposal in ever more scarce and expensive landfill sites via green technology that creates useable energy
- Promote inward investment and recognise the central role tourism has in the Derbyshire economy by reassessing the effectiveness of the 'Destination Management Partnership'
- Recognise the importance of sport and active leisure in regeneration and health by working more closely with our District and Borough partners in achieving enhanced provision
- Undertake a review of the Regeneration priorities in Derbyshire and audit the outside agencies and organisations supported by DCC
- While the current system still exists, to lobby for a fairer and more equitable share of Central Government and EU grants to the East Midlands
- See skills and training as the key areas for the County Council in tackling deprivation and worklessness
- Invest in solutions for congestion hot-spots, such as, for example, several of the County's important and historic town centres



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# Culture and Community

There is every reason why Derbyshire should be among the best cultural destinations in England and every reason why we can have the happiest, safest and most creative communities as well. Cultural activity that is relevant, accessible and inspiring will be at the heart of a Conservative Derbyshire. We want County Councillors to have the chance to make a difference in their areas and not be hemmed in by strategies, targets, jargon and an

inflexible attitude from those we have been elected to direct. Partnerships are welcome but they must add value, efficiency and opportunities to the Council's work and not be used as a shield to avoid accountability. People demand clear lines of communication and answers to the questions they ask about the services they use. We are committed to delivering this.

Our key priorities are to:

- Give every County Councillor an equal and significant amount of money to invest in voluntary, creative and community projects
- Combine the Local Studies Library and Derbyshire Records Office in Matlock into an expanded and state-of-the-art single site, while enhancing Local Studies services across the rest of the county
- Protect Swarkestone Bridge - a Grade A Ancient Monument of immense importance - and thereby alleviate the impact of heavy traffic in the villages adjacent
- Give County Councillors and local communities a greater say in local highways expenditure and the assessment of priorities
- Work hard on the Elvaston Castle and Buxton Crescent issues, which have been a concern for many years now
- Create a Cromford Canal Partnership, with wildlife and other biodiversity issues very much in mind, and support and develop the work of the existing Chesterfield Canal Partnership
- Make the Derwent Valley World Heritage site worthy of the name with a complete rethink of its aims and objectives
- Expand the Derbyshire Literature Festival and support a more ambitious programme for the Derbyshire Youth Orchestra
- Support the library service, seeking to be innovative in making libraries a key hub in local communities for the arts, heritage and learning
- Encourage the museums service to support and protect those providing museum and heritage venues outside the public sector



# Derbyshire County Council Conservative Group ELECTIONS 2009



# Vote



# Conservatives

# on June 4th

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