

PENNING'S MESSENGER

LOOKING AFTER DACORUM
FIGHTING FOR ENGLAND, PUTTING BRITAIN FIRST

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BUNCEFIELD

SAFETY FIRST

Accidents will happen, that's what accidents do. They arise when least expected, often in freak circumstances. Who is to say that the accidental explosion at Buncefield could not happen again? Just imagine the carnage that would occur if a vapour cloud explodes mid morning on a weekday. The adjacent roads and M1 would be full of vehicles, offices and factories nearby would be occupied by staff and local schools would house our innocent children. It seems to me to be only common sense that now it has been proved just how dangerous the risk of an explosion at Buncefield can be we should be doing all we can to safeguard our people, children and businesses.

Health & Safety investigate themselves

Enquiries and investigations will not remedy the damage already caused to our town by the explosions at the hazardous Buncefield Oil Depot. However, a rigorous investigation to identify what went wrong and how such an accident might be prevented in future is essential for the benefit of those living near to Buncefield or other such installations.

It seems to me to be basically wrong that the body that is responsible for setting and checking safety practices at these installations is carrying out the inspection and investigation in to what went wrong with these very standards and practices. Oh, and not only are the HSE investigating themselves, they are also allowed to carry out their investigations and enquiries in secret. On his recent visit to Buncefield David Cameron agreed with me 100% - we should have an independent Public Enquiry, not an incestuous white-wash.

To me this means just one thing – Buncefield should be closed. The government have refused to even place a halt on new building near Buncefield until the full results of their investigation are known. We may never know whose fault the explosion was. Perhaps it wasn't anyone's fault and was simply an accident. In any event we should not risk any lives by locating buildings, homes or people in the danger zone around the site. I plan to ask, on your behalf, for Buncefield Oil Depot to be completely closed and to be re-sited in a new, secure and safe location.

NEED HELP?

Buncefield – help and advice phone numbers:

Building repairs

Council tenants: 0800 018 6050
TOTAL UK repairs: 0800 294 4250

Financial support & assistance:

DCT Mayor's Recovery Fund: 0800 131 3351

Insurance

TOTAL UK Insurance Helpline: 0800 083 1045
Council tenants Home Contents: 01442 228 960

Health & Welfare

NHS Direct: 0845 4647
Adult Care Services: 01438 262 618

Business Support

Business Helpline: 01727 813813

SHAMELESS Birth Centre Closed

Can you believe anything at all that our Government tell us? When they closed our Maternity Unit at Hemel they told us that in its place we would have a brand new Hemel Birthing Centre of our own, staffed by midwives and providing a safe and tranquil environment for our young mothers to give birth in and be looked after. Our Hemel Birth Centre opened and was welcomed. It is now, just over a year later, closed. Our mothers face either home births or a fight through the traffic to the distant overcrowded, run-down Watford Hospital.

Local Doctors, without exception, express their concern that the Watford facility just will not cope. Young mothers-to-be are filling the local paper with letters pleading for their own local birth centre. Are the health bureaucrats listening to the mothers in Hemel? Thousands of you signed my petition to Patricia Hewitt. Thousands more of you wrote to her. I have asked her and her staff volumes of questions on the matter of Health Services in Hemel. Has she listened to us?

The constant retort from the Health Bureaucrats is that they have a financial deficit and have to make cuts to services in Hemel to balance their books. This is just not acceptable and I am fed up to the back teeth hearing it. When we in Hemel receive **£960** a head funding while Tony Blair's constituents get **£1,346** per head and even Mrs Hewitt's own locals get **£1,131** a head something would seem to me to be a little odd.

Why is it that it is always the most vulnerable in our society who have to bear the brunt of the suffering when government get it wrong? In the case of our rapidly disappearing Hemel Hospital services it is just not fair on the sick, the young, the old and the poor.

Straight from the horse's mouth "Cuts to local hospital will be good for us"

On 30th January this year during a debate in Parliament I asked the Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt the following: "The Secretary of State talked about fully engaging the local community. In my constituency, tens of thousands of people have been fully engaged in opposing the cuts to the acute hospital. Will the statement today mean that those cuts will be reversed or will they go ahead because of the deficits in our trust?" **Ms Hewitt** replied as follows: "As the Hon. Gentleman knows, there are financial problems in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. There has been overspending even within a substantially increased NHS budget. There has been extensive consultation in that area on a reorganisation of services that will make much better use of NHS resources, give people high quality acute and emergency care, and give them better services within the community."

So, let me see if I have got this right Ms Hewitt. You and your bureaucrats have mismanaged the money and so my constituents are to have their services closed. Your extensive consultation exercise ignored the views of the 100,000 people in Hemel because they disagreed with your proposals. But we need not worry because the closure of our maternity service, acute A&E service, Stroke Unit, Birth Centre, Inpatient Children's beds, Intensive Care Unit, paediatric services and acute surgical services are part of your plan to make better use of NHS resources and according to you will give us 'high quality acute and emergency care and give us better services in our community'. I don't think so Ms Hewitt. I am not sure who the people are that you mention benefit – but I can tell you categorically these people do not live in Hemel Hempstead.

Mike – Out and About



HEATHROW II – Coming soon to an airport near you!



MASSIVE EXPANSION MUST NOT GO AHEAD

Having previously re-branded themselves as “London Luton Airport”, Luton Airport management are now set to take on rivals Gatwick to become London’s second airport. They recently published their so-called “Master Plan” with proposals to build a second, longer, runway and two new terminals. These proposals go way beyond even the Government’s proposals. Shocked local residents have frantically contacted me, asking if there is anything they can do. Quite simply, this massive expansion must not be allowed to go ahead.

WHY IS LUTON SUCH A BAD IDEA FOR LONDON’S SECOND AIRPORT COMPARED TO OTHER “LONDON” AIRPORTS?

- By the Government’s own calculations, Luton is the least cost effective location
- Luton is the only contender with no direct rail link between the airport and central London
- It is closed by bad weather more than any other
- The airspace overhead is more crowded than at other “London” airports
- It is nearer to a built up area
- It will be built on Green Belt land

MORE CONGESTED ROADS

The local infrastructure was never built to cope with London’s second airport in our midst. Without a direct rail link to central London, the majority of passengers will be forced to travel to the airport by car. Our local roads are congested enough already.

GOODBYE TO THE GREENBELT

The second runway and the taxiways will be built on farm land – much of it currently in the Green Belt. People talk about concreting over the Green Belt. If this proposal goes ahead, you can’t get a more literal example than this!

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The Airport operator has given the impression that it is all signed and sealed. This is a ploy to discourage opposition. I believe massive, reasoned opposition can force them to scale down their proposals. If you oppose airport expansion on this scale it is vital to make your views known.

I have joined with other local MPs and have launched a petition to Parliament that calls for Luton to remain a medium haul, medium sized airport and for the Government to refuse plans for Luton to replace Gatwick as London’s second airport. You can cut out the petition below or download copies from my website www.mikepenning.com or even better write to him, outlining your particular concerns.

PETITION (Please return to Mike Penning MP, House of Commons, LONDON, SW1A 0AA)

LIMIT LUTON AIRPORT” PETITION - We, the undersigned, believe that Luton should remain a medium haul, medium sized airport and urge the Government to refuse permission for plans to make it second only in capacity to Heathrow.

By giving me your details you are agreeing to receive communications from me. I will not pass on your details without consent. Data Protection Act 1988. The information you supply will be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988. I may record your responses so that I can contact you about the issues you raise. Please write to me if you do not want your information used in this way – Mike Penning, MP.

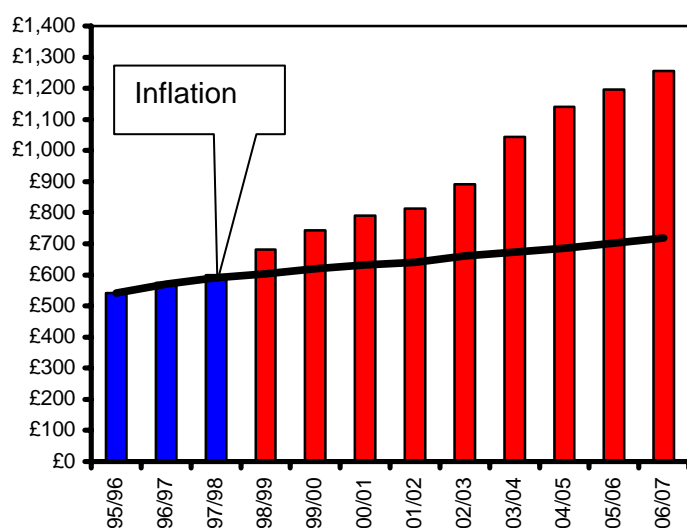
NAME	ADDRESS	POSTCODE	PHONE	EMAIL	SIGNATURE

Mike on..



Council Tax Soars Ripped-off by Gordon Brown again

Dacorum Council Tax Band D - 2 adults



The picture says it all. In 1997 when Robber Brown came into power you were paying £575 a year Council Tax on your Band D house. Today you will have to pay a staggering £ 1,255, that's £680 a year more. The Chancellor, in his unending quest to tax us more and more, seems unabated and shameless in his yearly mugging of the Hemel council tax payers. Every year he places additional burdens on the councils and then restricts the monies that he gives to them so forcing them to raise our council tax.

I am thankful for our Conservative controlled County and Borough councils who despite the constant under funding still manage to maintain the high level of standards and services we need. This

year our Police Authority faced a nightmare. They were awarded a paltry 1.4% increase in funds, way below even the rate of inflation. Such a small sum would not even cover the nationally negotiated police pay changes let alone fund additional police officers on the beat. The Authority were left with a shortfall of over £4 million and had no alternative but to cut support services and staff and dip into their emergency reserves. They did this and as a result believe that they can maintain the 2,170 police officers currently stationed on our streets, but only just. Just why is it that the hardworking people in the Hemel area have to bear the brunt of our government's financial ineptitudes?

What next? A Patio and Garden Tax?

John Prescott is, as we speak, putting together a new army of Valuation Officers whose job will be to carry out Big Brother tax snoop inspections on our homes. They will be told to note down room sizes and numbers, parking spaces, and "value significant" features like patios, scenic views or central heating. The Deputy Prime Minister can then plan for revaluations to create a stealth tax on central heating, double glazing, new bathrooms, kitchens, conservatories, garages and extensions. The stealth tax will include not just improvements inside homes, but also gardens as well. Government Ministers have already admitted in Parliament that having attractive flower arrangements or vegetable patches, could mean higher council tax bills. Amazingly, despite having no money for additional police for our town the government have managed to find some £10 million to buy a 'Big Brother' computer database to log and store this information together with photographs of people's homes.

To me, this seems totally bizarre. Do I believe our government capable of such an underhanded, tax grabbing, attack on the ordinary hardworking people of our country? **Yes I do.**

Crime

"I believe we should give our police the powers they need to catch criminals; give the courts the powers they need to convict criminals; and give our prisons the space to take persistent, serious and dangerous offenders out of circulation altogether"

Dexion Pensioners

There is still no help forthcoming from Government for the Dexion pensioners who now almost seem to have been abandoned to their fate. In reply to my question in Parliament as to when Dexion workers will receive compensation payouts, the Minister for Pension Reform, Stephen Timms, said that the Government is waiting for information from the trustees, but that in any case only "quite a small number of people are entitled to interim payments". He added: "but I hope that there will not be too long a delay for everyone else." Why are only a 'small number entitled' and why is it taking so long?

Unfair NHS parking charges

In their efforts to cut costs and raise revenue the NHS system of charging for hospital parking has got out of hand. The high costs imposed are just too much for low paid workers and vulnerable patients to bear. It can not be that difficult to change the system to help the vulnerable surely?

6,500 new homes coming to Hemel

