



PERSONAL MANIFESTO

DR RICHARD TAYLOR

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE FOR THE WYRE FOREST CONSTITUENCY

Independent Community & Health Concern

GENERAL ELECTION - 6 MAY 2010

The honour of being your Independent MP that you have given me for the last nine years has been a great privilege that I have appreciated deeply. I have tried to vote only when I have understood the matter under debate, and then to exercise wisely the opportunity of voting with the Government when I have believed them to be correct or at least to have the best proposals, and against them if I have believed that another Party offers the better option.

I hope you will re-elect me to continue this unique opportunity of representing you as an Independent MP without the influence of a political party whip.

I have maintained excellent links with local staff and executives in education, health, the police and at the County and District Councils as well as with Government ministers and I hope to continue to use these connections for the benefit of all local people.

I have held advice surgeries on most Fridays and written weekly reports for the Shuttle since 2001.

This manifesto is personal and is intended to give potential supporters information on how I expect to vote on major issues if I am re-elected to continue working for Wyre Forest and on a range of activities and battles I plan to fight for constituents at home and in London.

THE ECONOMY AND BUSINESS

It is important to wade through the arguments of the three main political parties raging now. The major one concerns the proposed rise in National Insurance contributions. Although I would prefer to raise money by increasing VAT on selective luxury items or income tax for those who can afford it, I agree that more money has to be found to fill the black hole in the Country's finances.

I do not think you can rule out increases in taxation but savings also must be made. I insist on curbs on bonuses for highly paid executives particularly in financial services. There must be help for businesses especially those employing less than 50 people that form the majority of UK businesses. There must be compulsion on banks to lend money to firms to help cash flow to purchase raw materials before



manufacturing and subsequent sales take place. In my contacts with local businesses the continuing reluctance of banks to lend is raised frequently and additionally the failure of the Government to address the serious effect of empty property rates or to provide help by supporting pay for short-time working that would avoid redundancy and loss of highly skilled staff before the recovery kicks in when their services will become vital again.

Action is needed to provide an infrastructure to help regenerate the economy as we move out of recession and I would like to see either central government or local authority funding provided to open more small industrial units, always in short supply, to promote opportunities for new business growth. Also, targeted training schemes, to provide opportunities for the young and those being made redundant to learn new skills, are sorely needed.

Wyre Forest suffers from poor road links with motorways and gridlock in our towns exacerbated by unavoidable road works. I have recently helped with re-scheduling road works away from peak periods for traders and businesses in Bewdley and Stourport. There is no easy answer to our road congestion and so it is essential to explore and promote more 'Park and Ride' services, to improve public transport and to wean more commuters and private motorists away from traffic black spots. Hence I am supporting plans for developing Kidderminster's railway station as an upgraded, attractive entry to Wyre Forest for commuters and tourists. The plans for this must take into account the heritage nature of the site and concerns about loss of parking and the costly installation of traffic lights on Comberton Hill that some experts believe to be unnecessary and likely to cause delays and increased risks for pedestrians.

EDUCATION

LOCAL ISSUES

My visits to all our senior schools and most of our primary schools have demonstrated many points of improvement and excellence but still some ongoing problems following the trauma of the Wyre Forest review when we changed from the three-tier system to two tiers.

Meetings with the Director of Children's Services at County Hall have allowed me to stress these concerns and of course my appreciations for vital new buildings completed and for the splendid achievements of staff and pupils at many of our schools where performance and inspection reports have improved.

I have been impressed by the efforts of students at several schools to tackle health and green issues by working seminars, by writing letters through me to Government ministers, by passing on environmentally helpful messages to their parents and, at Offmore Primary School, by their initiative to manufacture fruit smoothies on a large scale for sale during school breaks to enable pupils to achieve their five-a-day target.

I strongly expressed my disapproval for the labelling of Baxter College as a National Challenge School as under Dave Seddon and his staff it has improved out of all recognition from the Harry Cheshire School I visited in my first months as an MP. The



label was applied after one lowish level of exam results immediately after the changes caused by the Wyre Forest education review. The impressive growth in student numbers, including sixth form expansion; prove the school's success and improving popularity. It is now a joy to visit with excellent behaviour, morale and an atmosphere of interested learning. Letters I received years ago asking for help in obtaining a place at any different school have ceased.

I will demand that the promise of funding is honoured for the rebuilding of four of our five senior schools and major refurbishments at the fifth. Although we believe this is assured money under the Building Schools for the Future scheme we can never be sure in the current economic climate that the resources will remain.

We all remember the disappointment when the plans for the development of the Sladen School site on Hurcott Road which appeared to be certain suddenly foundered when the Learning and Skills Council were found to have over committed their resources. I shall support strongly the need for the new senior school buildings whenever I can. I am aware of concerns from residents near the Baxter College site and the Wolverley High School site amongst others and I will make sure these receive fair consideration.

I have already planned to visit Kidderminster College if I am re-elected to offer help with the work to improve students experience and results there and I will support the unique Continu Trust that has done so much to foster co-operation rather than competition between the College, our five senior schools and the two excellent schools in Hagley.

I shall follow up with local schools the recommendations of the Health Select Committee's reports on Obesity and Sexual Health with particular interest in the inclusion of crucial emphasis on relationships in sex education.

WIDER ISSUES AFFECTING EDUCATION

Funding - Area Cost Adjustment

Ever since I have been an MP, local MPs of all parties have been aware of the unfairness for Worcestershire children of the method of calculating area cost adjustment that leaves children in this county with less money per head spent on them for education than children over the borders in Shropshire or Birmingham. Sadly all combined efforts have so far been unsuccessful in addressing this situation and the battle must continue.

School meals

I will support initiatives by any Party to increase the availability of free school meals for those that should have them.



Exams

I support all measures to improve standards in basic English and Maths but I will listen to teachers' continuing concerns about SATS and the inevitable emphasis these place on exam success rather than real, wider, more free-ranging learning.

I also welcome the move towards more diverse qualifications, including applied practical learning, diplomas and vocational apprenticeships and the recognition that university degrees should be but one of a number of valued and valuable qualifications available to our young people on their educational journey from school to higher and further education.

I also understand and am concerned that current nation strategies in literacy and numeracy and one to one support for targeted underachievers may be due to cease in March 2011.

These programmes have assisted greatly and must be continued or replaced with further assistance.

Tuition Fees

Let no one say a single vote never counts! At the tuition fees division in the House of Commons I was approached by Labour and Tory whips to know which way I was going to vote. In the end the majority in favour of these fees that will put students into vast debt before they can start earning was only five. I voted against these fees as I consider there are alternative ways of funding University training that would not put students into debt in this demoralising way. If we have a hung Parliament the power and significance of Independents' votes will be greatly enhanced.

HEALTH ISSUES

More elective surgery is now being done at Kidderminster Hospital both as day cases and as in-patients. With the appointment of new consultants the old divide between Kidderminster and Worcester and Redditch is breaking down and gradually, if we are vigilant, Kidderminster Hospital will be used more and more as new consultants appreciate the benefit for patients from anywhere in the county from having their treatment here.

A new MRI scanner will be available at Kidderminster Hospital making good the promise made at the time of down grading so long ago that we would get one of these as part of local improvements.

Due to shortage of staff at the A&E department in Worcester the doctors in the minor injuries unit (MIU) at Kidderminster have been temporarily withdrawn. They were there only during working hours and their presence and functions were not adequately promoted so the service did not produce the savings that should have been possible. This will have to be reactivated vigorously on their return.



Following complaints from patients, GPs and whistleblowers I was able to persistently draw the attention of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to the problems with the GP out-of-hours (OOH) service provided by Take Care Now. This made the PCT investigate these allegations which were found to be true and this has led directly to a change of provider of this service on 1 April 2010.

Complaints to me about the acute hospital services provided for us have reduced in number since the renewed emphasis on safety and quality of care following the disaster in Mid-Staffordshire, the Health Select Committee Report on Patient Safety to which I contributed and my representations to NHS Trust Chief Executives. I was pleased to be invited to accompany senior staff and directors on the first hospital safety walkabout at Redditch.

LOCAL BATTLES TO BE CONTINUED

- *Improved emergency services at Kidderminster Hospital. The return of doctors to the MIU during day time is vital. We must persuade the OOH service providers and the Acute Trust to combine the MIU and OOH centre so we have a doctor covering both units and on site 24 hours, seven days a week.*
- *Continue to closely monitor the OOH service so that if after six months of the new provider there are concerns about safety or quality we can force consideration of a further change of provider.*
- *Watch for changes in medical practice and organisation of the NHS that might make possible the return of more and better emergency services to Kidderminster.*
- *Press again for the return of the midwife-led birth centre at Kidderminster. We lost this in 2003 because the correct protocols had not been put in place to make the service safe after the loss of acute hospital services at the time of down grading. Such units, distant from consultant units, are safe in other parts of the country and there is no reason why our unit should not be re-opened with appropriate protocols*
- *Continue to push for more elective orthopaedic surgery at Kidderminster including provision of a centre, away from the acute hospitals, for all elective surgery for the county as at Epsom in Surrey.*
- *Continue to hold to account NHS Worcestershire and the Acute Hospital Trust for the safety and quality of our health care. The recent election of three Health Concern Councillors to the shadow Foundation Trust Governing Board will strengthen accountability.*

NATIONAL ISSUES

On the Health Select Committee I initiated inquiries into value for money in the NHS to show ways that the NHS can cope with the economic downturn without immediate and hopefully unnecessary staff cuts and to expose the inadequate testing of European doctors coming to work in this country. It will be crucial to maintain constant pressure.

Returning to this Committee I will work towards new inquiries into the NHS complaints process and the effect of the European Working Time Directive on quality of care and the experience and training of junior doctors.



I will continue to promote my four Cs for quality of care within health services – Care, Compassion, Communication and Continuity. Lack of one or more of these have been at the root of all the complaints I have had about health care.

I will continue to promote better support for NHS whistle blowers that I started with my Private Member's Bill that was blocked by filibustering.

I will press unceasingly for the rapid roll out of the three-digit telephone access number for urgent care, when telephoning 999 is not appropriate. This will direct people to the correct NHS service for their needs.

I will fight for free prescription charges for those with long term illnesses as the Government appears to have hidden, since last November, a report that it commissioned about this.

I will urge the Government of whatever colour to accelerate the availability of the electronic summary care record to all who want it. I will also join efforts to promote the value of this for safety of emergency care and methods to minimise fears of breaches of confidentiality.

CRIME AND THE POLICE

Locally and nationally I shall continue to support investment to increase the visibility of police on our streets. I support the deployment of Community Support Officers (CSOs) to aid the police and believe that a bounty payable to members of the Special Constabulary on completing an agreed minimum number of hours' duty per month would improve recruitment of these useful volunteer members of our police forces. At the moment they have more powers than the CSOs, but no regular pay, and can frequently relieve full time uniformed officers for other duties. Increased police numbers visibly on the beat are vital for crime prevention and the investigation of relatively minor offences that worry people intensely but may not achieve full investigation because of staff limitations.

I shall continue my regular meetings with local senior police officers to raise constituents' concerns and direct contacts with the Chief Constable when necessary. I have forged useful links with the Crown Prosecution Service and been able to raise important concerns with them.

I shall continue to look into allegations of antisocial behaviour and disputes between neighbours that are brought to me despite these being among the most difficult problems to resolve.

THE ENVIRONMENT

I am a supporter of increased waste re-cycling and hope that the new method coming to Wyre Forest soon will make it easier for us all to recycle more domestic waste. It is ridiculous that at present we have to search plastic packaging for the recycling number on each item as different numbers can be recycled in different areas even in the same county. Hopefully this will soon be a thing of the past and I will welcome not



having to travel to the nearest tip just to dispose of cardboard boxes that somehow accumulate rapidly. I understand that some areas and households in Wyre Forest do not have the same recycling collections and if elected I shall look into this to establish uniformity and fairness.

I have visited the Lawrence industrial recycling centre on Stourport Road and was impressed with the potential of their exciting and innovative process and will back any plans for an increase in the services they offer as they have great opportunities for expansion in their impressive use of the huge old forge buildings.

I am a keen bird watcher and will support methods of agriculture and countryside stewardship that promote the return of our declining species such as the skylark and lapwing. I support the work of local and national wildlife organisations and charities. The flood prevention scheme on Puxton Marsh, as well as effectively protecting Kidderminster, is restoring the wetland habitat and is rewarding to walk around. I have been able to obtain re-assurance that this scheme does not increase the flood risk in Wolverley.

The flash floods of 2007 were devastating in several areas but at least there are plans to protect parts of Wribbenhall with flood holding measures above the housing estates. My work on the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Flood Alleviation has been a help but most credit must go to Gill Holland and the Bewdley Residents Flood Committee for fighting for and achieving these plans.

Ever since flooding sewers disrupted Christmas for some families soon after I became the MP I have been on the APPG for Sewers and even though it has been terribly slow at last there are realistic plans for un-adopted sewers in some housing developments built soon after the Second World War to be adopted.

The doubters about the devastating effects of global warming appear to have been silenced and I will support the Political Party with the best policies and targets to minimise global warming as best we can. I think the Lib Dem manifesto pledges are the most comprehensive but of the other two, I prefer the Labour Party recognition that regulation is more likely to produce benefits than the Tory route of providing more information to lead to “responsible choices” with less regulation. This could well be a key battleground for the next Government.

RURAL AFFAIRS AND AGRICULTURE

I am very pleased that the western parts of Wyre Forest have returned to this Parliamentary constituency as I have always felt they should be part of “my area” and I look forward to becoming more involved in rural affairs. A walk around parts of Rock and Bliss Gate has already given me the feeling that people have not felt they really belonged in the Leominster constituency and several concerns including fly-tipping have already been raised. I shall hope to do some early advice surgeries in the area after the election.



Since the loss of sugar beet growing and processing here and the foot and mouth epidemics, thankfully in the past, I have not been approached with particular, recent, local problems during the last Parliament.

I understand that there are still serious concerns about bureaucracy and the incompetence of DEFRA in dealing with single farm payments and even getting the necessary maps correct.

I believe that the red tape and paperwork associated with animal passports and TB restrictions are time-consuming and may cause delays in sales and extra expense. Petty restrictions on immigrant workers cause difficulties for fruit and vegetable growers. Supermarkets are still effectively forcing down milk prices and this must be one of the factors bringing 'battery' milk production under consideration.

On a wider front, Government incentives to grow more crops for the production of biodegradable fuels will damage our capacity to produce food crops here even further when we already have to import 40% of our own food.

The culling of badgers, always a difficult issue, looks likely to take place in Wales but here in Worcestershire and other counties with a high incidence of bovine TB farms are to take part in the trial of vaccination of badgers. I will be very interested to follow the progress of these trials particularly if there is local participation about which I should like to hear.

TRANSPORT AND ROADS

Using train services regularly I am well aware of the improvements in time keeping especially on local routes and the Chiltern services to Marylebone. It would help me and I suspect others if seats were bookable at peak times on Chiltern trains to and from London as, even if this led to an increase in fares, these would have a long way to go to reach those charged by Virgin Trains. In the furore about MPs expenses and travelling arrangements that were so unfortunately hi-jacked by some MPs' tactless comments I drew a certain amount of flack for my defence of occasional first class travel for MPs.

Ever since I have qualified for an older person's rail card I have been conscious of the expense of travelling to London and back. I am able to go to London out of peak times on Mondays comfortably and extremely cheaply. But the return on Thursday evenings, week after week, is a trial as the parliamentary programme means it can be difficult to plan ones departure from London to be able to book a seat. Hence it has been a privilege I have appreciated, purely to obtain a seat, to travel first class on some of my return journeys at peak times on Thursday evenings when Chiltern trains are invariably packed.

Similarly bus services have to be made more attractive to change people's habits from using cars for short journeys. Free or reduced travel costs for Pensioners should be consistent across the country rather than varying from one local authority to another. Several people have pointed out that now with several bus companies providing services in Wyre Forest there is not adequate co-operation with timetables to spread the provision more evenly throughout the day. I have pointed this out but because of competition I am not sure that there is a solution.



The increasing price of fuel will encourage people to use public transport more especially if train and bus services become more efficient and user friendly. The improvements to Kidderminster railway station, mentioned above, are crucial to this aim and I hope people will engage in the consultation about this development which is open until 16 June.

Although motorists dislike speed bumps they are effective in reducing speeds in crucial situations outside schools. The stricter enforcement of speed limits is expected to cut road deaths and confirmation of this over a longer period will encourage better compliance with speed limits. I and correspondents have been exasperated by the police's inability to enforce speed limits in areas where there is only a low reported rate of accidents causing death or injury. This is like waiting to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted and another area where increased resources for the police would be welcome.

Walking or cycling to work and to school should be encouraged by developing safer routes, and bringing into use more disused railways, canal tow paths and dedicated tracks, not just lined-off tracks on main roads for cyclists. With the Health Select Committee I have visited some European countries that encourage cycling far more than we do with proper protected cycle routes and lock-up cupboards for parking cycles securely in town centres. There are lessons to be learned to persuade many more of us to take to two wheels for convenience and our health.

TOURISM AND RETAIL

In the Severn Valley Railway and the West Midlands Safari Park we already have two major tourist attractions, and with the developments around Weavers Wharf and the Kidderminster town centre Wyre Forest is becoming an attractive place for shoppers: we must encourage them to become tourists as well.

To this end I have held regular meetings with representatives of the SVR and the Railway Museum, Bewdley Museum, Hartlebury Museum, the Kidderminster Carpet Museum Trust, the Churchill Forge, the District Council, the Historical Society and sometimes with representatives of county tourism bodies and British Waterways to work towards an Industrial Heritage Trail.

I pay continuing tribute to all those volunteers working so positively promoting these assets We have all the components and with the renovation of the Stourport docks and Lichfield Basin, and the real prospect of a unique Carpet Museum we could offer a fascinating tour for people who have finished their shopping and wish for a glimpse into our industrial past.

- *Archives of the carpet industry and equipment and relics are extensive and include a working Jacquard loom, the forerunner of the computer made of wood and card.*
- *Steam railways are always fascinating and the Engine House at Highley although just outside Wyre Forest is an extra attraction.*
- *The Stourport dock basins where the canals enter the River Severn present an interesting short walk and soon will be linked to Stourport town centre more conveniently.*



- *Bewdley Museum, now with a safe future, has recently been enlarged and improved and is a memorial to some of the ancient Wyre Forest crafts. The adjoining gardens and developing orchard are well worth a visit too.*

From the retail point of view I am told that we have less empty properties in Wyre Forest shopping centres than in other comparable towns and the opening of Debenhams has been a welcome addition. Visiting Kidderminster on Thursdays and Saturdays particularly it can be seen to be a thriving centre.

PENSIONS

I have had many letters about the problems for pensioners recently. Even if they have any investments the income from these is impossibly low during the recession. The state old age pension does not keep up with the cost of living or wage rises, and taxes and fuel costs increase at a greater rate than pensioners can cope with. I will continue to support any moves to ensure that the basic pension is increased and rises every year in line with average earnings or prices.

The Social Care White Paper is at last offering to address the problems of home and residential care for the elderly and disabled who need help and I will support plans for a National Care Service equivalent to the NHS. I will help discover ways of funding this so that those, whose only financial reserve is their home, are not forced into selling it to pay for the care they need.

Secondly pensions from firms that have gone into receivership or that can no longer meet their commitments have put a large number of people into acute difficulties. The Government has attempted to address the problem but far too slowly, and in the case of Equitable Life, many pensioners have died before payments have been agreed, let alone made. I shall continue to press for rapid and satisfactory outcomes.

DISABILITY AND ALLOWANCES

I have been alarmed by the number of people coming to see me at my advice surgeries who have been moved off Incapacity Benefit onto Jobseekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance. The qualifications for the first are complex and very difficult to grasp and the medical assessments for the second allowance in some cases were hopelessly inadequate and led to unnecessary appeals, which had overturned the decisions, in some cases on repeated occasions.

The basic fault for some of the people who brought their cases to me was that the medical assessor involved had not taken into account medical details from the clients' GPs or consultants. At a meeting with other MPs and the responsible Minister I suggested that there should be an extra box on the computer screen that the medical assessors must complete to confirm that they had read and understood the medical evidence submitted.

A few days before the end of this Parliament I had a letter of thanks from the Minister for my suggestion saying it had been acted upon immediately. I will now scrutinise



with great interest to see if there is a decrease in the appeals against these faulty medical assessments.

IDENTITY CARDS

Talking to people I find the views strongly against these appear to be softening from the widespread objections expressed earlier. Some people are still vehemently opposed. Others can see a benefit if it means that the ID card becomes the only document that is needed for identification as our wallets and purses are already bursting with plastic, card and paper and if any of this could be eliminated it would be helpful. If re-elected I shall take further soundings before a decision is put to the House of Commons.

EUROPE

Among the people I meet views do not appear to have changed recently. I am aware that closer trade ties with Europe would be welcomed but most are horrified at the idea of coming under a European Constitution and increasing laws and with the prospect of losing our currency or our independence as a state of a federal Europe. People remain mystified why the apparently promised referendum never took place.

Medically, the European Working Time Directive does appear to be harming continuity of hospital patient care and also junior doctor training and experience. It was EU rules that prevented the General Medical Council carrying out language and competency tests on the German doctor who, while working his first shift in the out-of-hours service in Cambridgeshire killed a patient due to his lack of knowledge of the dose of the vital pain killing drug, diamorphine.

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

One of the most moving experiences of my time in Parliament was at the time of the vote to go to war in Iraq in 2003. I was in the No lobby with a large number of Labour rebels, a smaller number of Tories and all the Lib Dems. The atmosphere was electric as it was the first time many Party MPs had ever even considered rebelling and then they had had the great courage to defy their whips as they knew this was what the vast majority of people outside democratically wanted them to do.

Since then there have been more Government rebellions on different issues before and after 2005 and I have great admiration for the 'thinking' Party rebels, bound by their consciences rather than their instructions, many of whom, sadly, are not standing again this time.

Much as we would all like to see our forces come home, it is unthinkable for them to do so until the mission is completed so the tragic losses of life have not been in vain. The problem will be to know when local forces and police can take over to protect the victory our brave troops will have gained for them against an invisible and elusive enemy.



IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

My experience here has been from struggling to help people who appear to have genuine reasons for coming to this country either as visitors, relatives or even spouses later seeking indefinite leave to remain. There have been instances where it has taken so long for the Border Agency to follow up and complete cases that immigrants have put down family and working roots only to be told, in some cases years after their marriage that they are going to be deported resulting in devastation and heart break for them and their families.

The Border Agency has a large backlog of cases which causes the delay and if re-elected I shall attempt to identify the reasons for this and then quoting examples try to get the Government of the day to realise it has to improve the speed of case resolution.

As the country gets more over crowded there are strong feelings that immigration must be limited and more selective. I shall support the fairest measures to achieve stricter, swifter regulation. If it was possible I would like to see an independent body deciding on quotas for immigration without political interference.

It is good to know that there are many examples where ethnic groups have integrated well into local communities and that there is now a majority of individuals for whom race is no longer an issue and who accept people of all ethnic origins for their own worth. Lessons must be learnt from these examples and individuals to reduce the strife and unhappiness where racial discrimination still occurs.

AID FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

It is vital that we continue to press the Government on the need to cancel third world debt and offer financial assistance, particularly to African countries with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With education this can be lessened and with treatment the disease can be controlled as is shown by the long term survival of people in western countries.

I have been a member of an APPG that has publicised the little known fact that the Pneumococcus, a germ that can cause very serious illness but has been beaten in developed countries, kills more young children in African countries than Aids, Malaria and Tuberculosis put together. Thank goodness there is a simple vaccination against this bug that is now becoming more widely available where it is so desperately needed.

To my great relief a Private Member's Bill to tackle 'Vulture Funds' that prey on Third World countries' debts, after being delayed by filibustering was forced through Parliament into law on the last day before prorogation. This will prove of great benefit to affected countries.

I cannot forget the heroic and super human view expressed in a news bulletin by a bereaved mother after one of the terrible genocides in Africa, "Without forgiveness you can't have peace or love." What a lesson for us all!



IN CONCLUSION

I hope you will re-elect me to continue to be your totally independent MP, unfettered by major political party allegiance and domination. I look forward to the possibility of more free votes in the House of Commons next time.

Then the votes of Independents may become what A P Herbert described in his book about his own experiences as an Independent MP from 1936 – 1949, “Independent Member”, as “straws in the wind and show the party leaders which way the air of free opinion blows.”

Surely it is not an impossible dream also for debates in Parliament to actually influence more MPs’ voting intentions!

With stringent adherence by all MPs to the new rules for expenses necessary for their performance of their duties and reduction in the powers of party whips to allow more freedom of thought and voting by party MPs, the desperately damaged reputation of the House of Commons could begin to improve. I shall do all I can to ensure this happens.

“Independent mind. Independent spirit” was the admirable slogan of Cecil Eunson which served him as a long serving independent member of the Shetland Islands Council until his recent death. A motto indeed for the leavening of Independent MPs I hope to see in the next House of Commons!