

## MP leads fight against houses target

The campaign against central government plans for mass housebuilding across South Gloucestershire is being led by Northavon MP Steve Webb and the Lib Dem team.

The campaign was launched when a Government panel proposed a dramatic increase in the number of



houses to be built in the area over the next 20 years. Plans developed by councillors across the South West had suggested an extra 23,000 houses by 2026 – already a huge increase - but a Government inspector has proposed a figure of over 30,000.

Areas especially badly hit are likely to include Yate/Sodbury (which could be faced with an extra 5,000 houses) and Green Belt land between Emersons Green and Pucklechurch. The inspector also rejected plans to increase the Green Belt around Thornbury which increases the threat of development north of the Town.

There will shortly be a period of 'public consultation' on the plans, and Steve is urging local residents to make their views known.

Steve said: "Whilst there is a need for more affordable housing for local people, we simply cannot cope with massive over-development on the scale proposed".

**Left: Steve Webb MP and Cllr Chris Willmore (speaking) tell hundreds of local residents about housebuilding plans at a recent meeting.**

## Frenchay - the fight goes on

With plans for thousands more houses in South Gloucestershire, the proposal to close Frenchay Hospital looks even harder to justify, and local MP Steve Webb has confirmed that the fight goes on.

The MP is focusing on the issue of ambulance journey times to the proposed 'super-hospital' at Southmead, and has already raised the issue in the House of Commons. He will also be meeting the chief executive of the local ambulance trust to register his concerns, and has submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Trust to find out what analysis they have done on the impact of the changes.

Steve said, "In an emergency the extra journey time from Frenchay to Southmead could make the difference between life and death. We have been fobbed off for too long on this issue and I am demanding answers".

## Getting hold of Steve is

*easy*

use whichever is best for you

- ✓ you can e-mail: [steve@stevewebb.org.uk](mailto:steve@stevewebb.org.uk)
- ✓ you can write to Steve Webb MP, Poole Court, Poole Court Drive, Yate BS37 5PP
- ✓ you can phone the constituency office on 01454 322100

Steve holds regular surgeries and appointments can be made by calling the constituency office. To keep updated with what Steve is doing for the area you can check out his **website** at: [www.stevewebb.org.uk](http://www.stevewebb.org.uk) or for a more informal update see his **blog** at [www.webbsteve.blogspot.com](http://www.webbsteve.blogspot.com)

You can also find Steve on 'Facebook' (on the Bristol network).



## Green campaigner

Steve Webb MP has been given the key role of speaking in Parliament on environment and energy issues for the Lib Dems.

He is currently leading for the Lib Dems on Parliamentary debate on the Climate Change Bill. The Liberal Democrats are supporting calls for a bold target of an 80% cut in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. These have so far been blocked by Labour whilst the Conservatives have abstained.

Steve's current campaigns include:

- **excess packaging** – cut the unnecessary packaging on much of what we buy
- **flooding** – a major campaign for improved flood prevention in South Gloucestershire
- **Severn tidal power** – the Government has at last agreed to a study into options for harnessing the tidal power of the Severn.

Steve meets climate change campaigners



## Green Belt saved

Steve joined local residents to campaign against a giant composting plant that SITA wanted to build in Green Belt between Pucklechurch and Westerleigh.

SITA has now withdrawn this application and is looking for an alternative site.

Steve said: "I pay tribute to the many local residents and councillors who campaigned so effectively against the plans. I was pleased to play my part in the successful fight. We need composting facilities, but not an industrial scale plant in Green Belt."

## Flood risk



Flooding by the Frome, putting young cyclists at risk. Steve is working with local councillor Dave Hockey to make sure action is taken.

## Fighting post office closures



Earlier this year residents were shocked to hear of Post Office plans to close sub post offices at Tytherington, Old Sodbury & Station Road, Yate.

Steve Webb immediately took action, contacting thousands of households with leaflets letting them know about the plans, including a petition form and how to respond to the consultation.

He persuaded Post Office management to visit the area, and worked with town and parish councils to set up public meetings where residents could make their views known.

Steve has also contacted South Gloucestershire Council and urged them to look at whether they could help keep the post offices open. As we go to press we are awaiting final decisions from the Post Office.

Steve said: "Successive governments have undermined the post office network, with over 3,000 offices closing when the Conservatives were last in power."

"Now the present Government is trying to close another 2,500. It is time they realised that post offices are at the heart of local communities and need to be built up, not closed down."

If you support Steve and the Liberal Democrats and the work that we do for local residents, please return this form to: Steve Webb MP, FREEPOST (BS9293), Bristol BS35 4ZZ

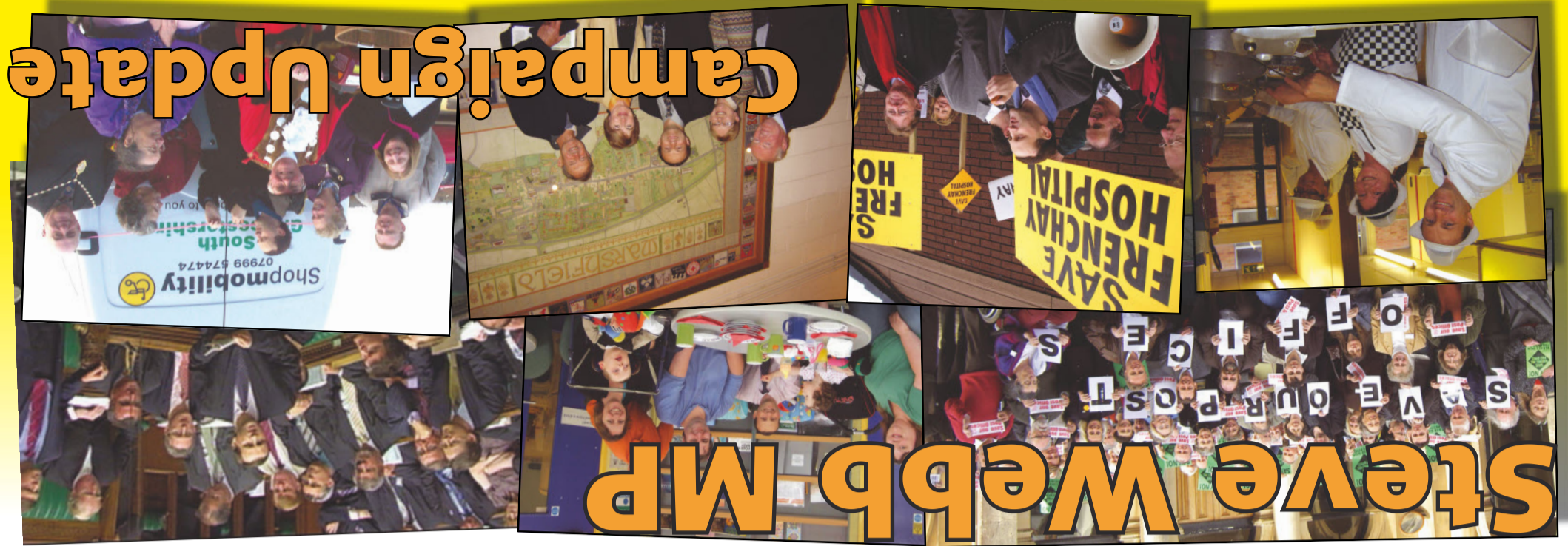
- I can deliver leaflets in my area occasionally
- I will display a poster at election time
- I would like to join the Liberal Democrats and enclose a cheque (payable to Liberal Democrats) for £\_\_\_ (min £10 for membership)
- I would like to make a donation towards local campaigning (payable to Thornbury & Yate Liberal Democrats) of £\_\_\_

Name .....

Address .....

Phone/email .....

**If you like what Steve's doing, please help him do it!**



## Holding the Prime Minister to account

Steve has been able to challenge the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, at Prime Minister's Questions three times recently.

**Fuel prices and home insulation** – With soaring fuel prices, Steve wanted to know why the Government was cutting back on the 'warm front' home insulation scheme which helps people with loft insulation and new central heating. In reply, the Prime Minister pointed to other measures that the Government was taking to get fuel companies to support energy efficiency. **VERDICT** – with high fuel prices here to stay, the urgent need is for more action to improve home energy efficiency.

**Pensions** – Steve highlighted the fact that many women in their 60s could get a boost to their

state pensions, but many had little idea how the scheme worked. The PM said the Government would 'do their best' to make sure that women were made aware. **VERDICT** – the Prime Minister's response helped Steve to put pressure on the DWP to improve publicity about these schemes.

**Open prisons** – with the prison system bursting at the seams, Steve highlighted concerns that higher-risk prisoners were now being sent to open prisons such as Leyhill. The PM simply said that 'security checks were made'. **VERDICT** – now that the Prime Minister has been publicly alerted to this issue, the justice ministry is likely to be asked to keep a close eye on admissions to open prisons.



Steve on his feet in the House of Commons, speaking up for local people

## Broadband success



Steve with Hill resident Thomas Jenner-Fust, during the successful campaign to extend broadband to Hill. This is one of several rural areas where Steve has helped bring in broadband.

## Public transport

### Trains

With local and mainline train services plumbing new depths, Steve has had face-to-face meetings with senior managers at First Great Western to demand improvements.

As a regular rail user himself, Steve has told the company that he will press for its franchise to be withdrawn unless standards improve rapidly. He is also backing plans for a 'turnaround' facility at Yate station which could lead to more frequent commuter services.

### Buses

Steve is in regular contact with bus companies and with the Council over the cost and unreliability of local bus services.

After Steve took the lead by raising in Parliament the issue of bus fares for young people, the Council followed by exploring setting up a concessionary fare scheme for teenagers.

He is also pressing for changes to the law which would enable the Council to take a much tougher line with bus companies over their fares, reliability and routes.



## Steve's Pension Campaign nets local women £30,000... with more to come!

Local MP Steve Webb's dogged campaigning on pensions has now secured more than £30,000 in underpaid state pensions for local residents, with more money in the pipeline.

The MP has campaigned on three main issues:

- **pension protection for women at home with children** – Since 1978, most women who spend time at home with children should get protection on their state pension record, but Steve has discovered that thousands of women have not been given this 'home responsibilities protection'. He has now secured a pledge from the Pensions minister to trawl through Government computer records to try to find the women who are missing out.

- **options for topping up partial pensions** – Steve has highlighted a little-known scheme whereby people drawing incomplete state pensions, and who have gaps in their National Insurance record between 1996 and 2001, can often top up their pension at little or no cost to themselves. He has advised many local residents and is meeting ministers to secure better publicity for the scheme.
- **married woman's stamp** – Many women paid National Insurance at a lower 'married woman's rate' for much of their working life without fully realising that they would draw little or no pension when they retired. Steve has now taken two 'test



Steve discusses pensions with a Yate resident

cases' to the Parliamentary Ombudsman to see if the lack of advice such women received amounts to maladministration.

For further information please contact Steve directly via e-mail on [pensions@stevewebb.org.uk](mailto:pensions@stevewebb.org.uk) or by contacting the constituency office.