



News from Westminster

1st March 2007 Phil Hope MP

CORBYP AND EAST NORTHANTS PARENTS – GET READY TO MAKE YOUR CLAIM



Phil Hope MP at a recent Skills event with Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown MP

Many families including children will benefit from tax credits here in Corby and East Northants.

I want all families in Corby and East Northants to get the support they are entitled to.

In order to make sure tax credit payments are correct, you have to renew their claim each year.

Renewal packs are being sent by post over the next few months and will include advice on what families need to do and by when.

Many claimants will only need to check the information on their Annual Review form.

Others will have to complete, sign and return an Annual Declaration form.

Tax credit payments will continue while your award is being renewed.

However, it is important to return any information required by the deadline of 31st August 2007 or payments will stop.

More information is also available on the HM Revenue & customs website at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/renewals> or on the Tax Credits Helpline: 0845 300

What's it worth?

Tax Credits can make a real difference

- **Nine out of ten families with children are entitled to child tax credit.**
- **Tax credits have helped lift 700,000 children out of poverty since 1997.**
- **From April this year, there will be an £80 increase in the child element of Child Tax Credit.**
- **That makes the child element of Child Tax Credit worth £1,845 a year from this April.**

PLP debates housing

At the weekly PLP meeting, which takes place every Monday when Parliament sits, Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for Communities, led a lively debate on the future of housing in the UK.

Housing is something I and my Labour colleagues are very passionate about.

I want to see even more decent homes in Corby and East Northants.

In 1997, we inherited a social housing stock that needed more than £19 billion of repairs and maintenance following two decades of Tory neglect.

This has meant that over one million homes have now been brought up to a decent standard, with many more due to be improved over the next few years.

Ruth Kelly recently announced that she is establishing a housing advisory panel, which will bring a wide range of expertise as part of the ongoing debate about housing reform.

Fairtrade Fortnight

Monday marked the start of Fairtrade Fortnight to raise awareness for ethical shopping in the UK which promotes trade from the developing world and helps poor farmers.

If a product carries the Fairtrade mark a producer in the developing world will receive a minimum price that covers the cost of production and a premium that is invested in the local community. Between 2002 and 2007 this Labour Government will have given more than £1 million to the Fairtrade Foundation to help it promote and extend its Fairtrade mark.

I am proud that many people in Corby and East Northants have committed their support to buying Fairtrade products. By buying these products we can all do our bit to promote trade justice throughout the world.

The Labour Government is committed to concluding the Doha trade talks this year. Doha would allow poorer economies to grow and lift millions of people out of abject poverty. I will keep you updated on progress.

Tories can't pay for "new" border police

Labour has challenged David Cameron over his claim that the Tories would create a "new" border police force.

David Cameron's has said that the Tories would establish a "new 10,000 strong force" to police Britain's borders. However, if you read the small print, this force appears not to be "new" at all but merely a reorganisation of existing forces which would divert much needed resources into a costly re-branding operation.

Cameron should come clean about what he is really proposing. How many of this "10,000 strong force" will be new police?

How would the Tories pay for this "new" force when they are committed to £28 billion of public spending cuts in this year alone?

Or will David Cameron admit that this force is not "new" at all, but simply a rebranding of existing forces which will be renamed under a typically empty piece of rhetoric?

The fact is the Tories can't pay for this "new" border police force. David Cameron claims he will divert the money from ID cards to pay for this force, but there is no magic pot of cash sitting in the Home Office for him to switch.

If David Cameron really wants to protect Britain's borders he would be better off dropping this proposal for a costly and distracting reorganisation of our existing forces and instead follow the advice of John Stevens, the chair of his own working group, who believes the case for ID cards is "overwhelming".