

Lib Dems have made sure budget is fair to all



DUNCAN HAMES

MP for Chippenham

On life in Wiltshire and at Westminster

NO matter which party had won the election, the government would have faced a difficult budget this year.

The previous Labour Chancellor, Alistair Darling had promised £44bn of expenditure cuts during this parliament. Instead of taking tough decisions last year when the Comprehensive Spending Review was due, he ducked the issue and left the problem for the new government.

The alternative to getting a grip of the country's finances now is rising debts, higher interest rates, and the risk of deeper cuts later forced by the IMF or lenders, as has been found in Greece and Spain.

The Liberal Democrats have ensured that this budget is much fairer than many had otherwise feared. Those on higher incomes will shoulder more of the burden. The banks which caused much of this mess will now pay higher taxes, as demanded by Vince Cable, to recognise the government support from which they have benefited. Likewise, Capital Gains Tax for higher rate tax payers will increase to 28 per cent to prevent high earners avoiding their fair share of tax.

We have also argued fiercely to protect the most vulnerable, so the link between pensions and earnings, broken by Thatcher's Tories, will be restored. Pensions are guaranteed to increase each year by whichever is the greatest between increases in salaries, in prices or 2.5 per cent.

The Lib Dems also successfully argued for a £1,000 increase in the personal income tax allowance, which means that 880,000 of the lowest paid will no longer pay any income tax on their earnings and 23 million people on modest wages will be better off. We will work to increase this tax-free allowance over the course of parliament to reach the first £10,000 of earnings, an important step towards the fairer tax system for which Nick Clegg and I campaigned.

On Thursday I presented to the House West Wiltshire Palestinian Support Group's petition to end the blockade of Gaza. There are signs that international pressure on the Israeli government is beginning to have an effect.

In a week full of diary engagements as MP, none was so momentous as that started over dinner on Saturday when my partner Jo agreed to marry me.

My next surgeries will be 9-10.30am on Saturday at Melksham Town Hall and 4-5.30pm on Friday, July 2 at Corsham Community Centre - no appointments needed.

Successful pilot sees other towns interested in introducing card Proof-of-age scheme prepares to expand

By Craig Evry

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SIX months after its national launch in Trowbridge, a database-free proof of age card being used to tackle the problems of underage drinking has signed up more than 900 people.

Touch2id, which uses reference points on a fingerprint to store a unique binary code onto a plastic card, and now a sticker which can be attached to a mobile phone, is ready to roll out to other towns in Wiltshire, as well as outside the county.

About 500 stickers are available to young people signing up from today at the Post Office in Trowbridge or in The Shires shopping centre tomorrow.

All over-18s have to do to register is present their driving licence or passport at the enrolment point to verify their age. No data is stored as the card or sticker can be created from a fingerprint.

The fingerprint itself is not stored, just a code created from unique reference points on the print.

The card or sticker can then be used at bars, off licences, petrol stations, tattoo parlours and clubs, including Club Ice near Westbury, to act as proof of age.

All the holder has to do is press their finger into a touch2id reader, which the venue rents, and they are given the all-clear.

The 10 most recent venues to sign up include the Black Horse pub in Trowbridge and Voltz Tattoo parlour.

Touch2id founder Giles Sergeant is spreading the word about the scheme following the success of its pilot run, and has now presented the concept to a full



iphone winners with the first sticker IDs Nick Gitting, Stacey Ryan and Luke Taylor
Photo: Trevor Porter (31420)

Teens win first phones with ID stickers

FIVE west Wiltshire residents are the first in the world to use their mobile phones to prove they are 18.

The five won iPhones in a competition run by Touch2id, following the launch of the pilot scheme in Trowbridge.

The phones were fitted with Touch2id stickers, which contain a binary code created using unique points on their fingerprint.

meeting of Wiltshire Council. It is thought Melksham is the next town keen to embrace the technology.

Mr Sergeant said his idea is receiving international

Nursery worker Stacey Ryan, 18, of Studley Green in Trowbridge, said she was previously forced to take her passport out to prove her age.

"I don't drive and I have never wanted to drive, so my only form of ID was my passport and it would cost so much if I lost it," she said. "This scheme was free so I thought it was a good idea. My friends want to get the stickers now."

But Stacey still has to take her passport when she goes to other towns and cities, including Bath. Wiltshire College Trowbridge student Luke Taylor, 18, of Manor Road, Trowbridge, said he encountered problems before he won the phone.

He said: "I got asked for ID quite a lot as I don't look very old. It's much easier when you're going out to the bar to have it on your phone."

recognition, and he is being asked to give presentations across Europe, including to a forum chaired by the head of innovation at Visa Europe Sandra Alzetta, as well as at the European e-Identity management conference in London earlier this month, at which Microsoft's identity chief Kim Cameron, nicknamed the 'Father of Identity', signed up for a touch2id card.

Mr Sergeant said: "The feedback is the technology works, so that is good. It is very efficient and retailers love it and the young people love it."

"We are still issuing cards at the Post Office and The Shires shopping centre, so we are moving out of the pilot stage and onto the wider launch where the supermarkets get involved."

"Now we have presented to the main Wiltshire Council's AGM, other community area boards are aware and interested."

"There is the capability

for it to widen within the next few months. The big supermarkets wanted to see if it works within the local community.

"It's something that Wiltshire should be really proud of. The message we really want to get out to young people is that it is going to be expanded."

Inspector Dave Cullop, of Trowbridge police, has been a key backer of the scheme.

He said: "The outcome, we hope, of tightening up on this one particular area of licensing law - young people getting their hands on alcohol - will be a reduction of violent crimes and anti-social behaviour. More long-term we will see benefits on the health side. The overall benefits can't be quantified for years."

"This has been deployed only in Trowbridge so far. We want to get across that Wiltshire is at the forefront of something like this."

Let's just enjoy the stones au naturel



DR ANDREW MURRISON

MP for South West Wiltshire

On life in Wiltshire and at Westminster

STONEHENGE has been a feature of our Wessex landscape for thousands of years and will be for thousands more.

The attendant visitors centres, cafeteria, souvenir stalls, loos and the like will not.

So I was not too concerned to hear that as part of the savings that have to be made, the elaborate plans English Heritage had drawn up have been shelved.

To be honest I've been a sceptic ever since the quango, whose membership card I carry, approached me for support for the remarkable and massively unaffordable tunnel it proposed to burrow through the chalk in order to restore the landscape to its own particular vision of the past.

In the process English Heritage would have denied travellers on the great drove road that is the A303 a sight that they have enjoyed for millennia.

I am a frequent visitor to Stonehenge with my family. While there is no doubt that the toilets need upgrading for the ease of visitors, the rest is ephemera.

Be gone with it and let us concentrate on the stones, which are a marvel to behold.

A less well-loved landmark is the chimney at Westbury.

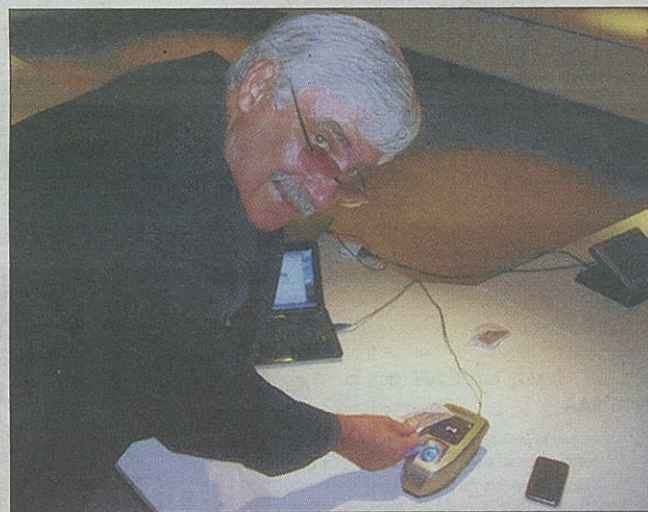
I regret the loss of employment that the Lafarge announcement last week will mean.

Although most of us surely knew it was on the cards, the loss of real manufacturing jobs and the impact on our economy are a blow. The situation brings risks and opportunities.

We will have to watch the evolving situation like a hawk to ensure that any change of use is sympathetic and that development of the site is advantageous to the town.

It was a pleasure to take part in the annual repair of the ANZAC badge above Codford.

I have yet to drive west along the A36 to admire the fruits of the edging, mowing, shovelling and tamping down chalk undertaken by volunteers from the village and soldiers from Warminster, including Australians and New Zealanders with whom this area enjoys a special bond.



Microsoft's identity chief Kim Cameron signs up for a Touch2id card at the European e-Identity management conference in London earlier this month

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