

Exclusive!

Actress, author, businesswoman, Chancellor of Exeter University and TV Presenter Floella Benjamin OBE writes for you...



It's got to be about **THEIR FUTURE**



My beautiful mother told all six of her children each day before we went to school that education was our passport to life.

We were to go to school and learn everything the teachers told us. I did just that and loved my time at school because my mum set us that goal!

To this day, I've always believed in the power of education. A chance for every child to have the best opportunity in life.

No matter who you are, how rich or poor, education gives you the chance to succeed.

Like many people, I was in despair at the priority given to education during the last Conservative Government.

Our schools were allowed to crumble and were

starved of the investment they needed.

Then came Tony Blair and "education, education, education". At last I hoped things would really change.

But here we are, twelve years on, and still the poorest children have little chance of success. Too many

a joined up, fresh and different approach to our childrens future.

children can't reach their potential in overcrowded classrooms and we are still not getting the best teachers teaching the more disadvantaged children. Tuition fees, introduced by the Government, are stopping many from attending university.

The disappointment is crushing. Our children let down again. It's got to change.

The smartest investment we can make is an investment in our future - our children.

And the Liberal Democrats really seem to get that.

I'm proud to be part of a party that really looks to the future

rather than the past. A party that understands just how important our children really are.

The Lib Dems want to give every child a chance. Their plans start at an early age.

Primary schools will be given extra cash to cut class sizes for those all important early years.

If private schools believe that a class size of 15 is right for kids, why shouldn't state schools aim for the same?

Secondary schools will be given extra funds to recruit more high quality teachers and to improve school discipline.

And finally, the Lib Dems will work towards finding a way to reduce or even abolish those unfair tuition fees. The quality of education children receive should not depend on their parents' bank balance.

Now that's a joined up, fresh and different approach to our children's future.

That's why I am supporting Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats.



Northampton **First** Spring 2010

FREE

Andrew Simpson: "Northampton is my home"

Fighting for Us Why the NHS matters so much to me

Floella Benjamin: Our children deserve better



REAL VIEWS
REAL LIFE



Making a real difference - how the Gurkha rights campaign united a nation

Welcome from the Editor



Former Mayor
Brian Markham

Welcome to "Northampton First", written by people who love and care about our town.

Northampton is a special place, with beautiful urban parks and surrounded by great green spaces. It has a rich and varied history of culture, industry and politics.

But, as a university town at the heart of England, Northampton also has an exciting future.

How do we grasp this opportunity yet maintain our heritage and quality of life? We need a person as our MP who will put Northampton and it's people first - whether that's protecting vital local services or getting help for local families and businesses hit by the recession.

In this issue of "Northampton First", we're focusing on a man who is doing just that.

We are also proud to have an article by writer, actress and childrens TV presenter Floella Benjamin on the future of education in this country.

I hope you enjoy the magazine,
Best wishes
Brian Markham - Editor

Andrew Simpson talks environment, green fields and Labour's growth agenda

"The Government can't be allowed to build without thought of what it will do to the planet, to people, and to Northampton!"

Andrew Simpson has a long history of fighting to protect Northampton's green fields. We caught up with him to ask him why it's so important.

'First' arrives on Buckton Fields to discuss the issue with Andrew. "This is why it's so important" he says, nodding at the landscape. "I don't want to see a Northampton

that's nothing but traffic jams and high rise flats."

So what is Andrew's solution to the Labour Government insisting on building 40,000 new houses around the town? 'First' suggests to him that they'll have to go somewhere. "Well actually they don't. It's a silly target, especially considering the current economic problems. Northampton quite simply doesn't have the capacity to hold that many new people." Andrew points in the direction of the Cock Hotel junction, where traffic is famously heavy. "Can you imagine another 60 thousand cars trying to get along these roads every morning? It'll be chaos. And that's not to mention the extra strain on our schools and hospitals."



"First" meets Andrew at Buckton Fields, One of the areas planned to house the Government's housing targets.



Is that the only reason Andrew is concerned? What if Northampton's services were improved?

"Well firstly that's not going to happen without serious changes. The Conservative County Council has managed itself so badly that services they are already failing are going to face further cuts. Secondly, we're facing a global climate crisis and

people need to start taking the environment seriously."

One thing's for certain - Andrew really cares about this issue. He reformed "Friends of the Racecourse" and is a long time supporter of Greenpeace, on top of his decades of campaigning for Northampton's green fields. Anyone trying to build on Northampton's green fields is going to hear from Andrew Simpson!



Andrew discusses the housing plans with Bill Newton-Dunn MEP

IN PICTURES... "Northampton First" takes a closer look at Andrew Simpson's wider Campaign scrapbook



1983: Andrew arrives at University where he was later President of the Students Union

1999: Andrew celebrates being re-elected to represent Kingsley Ward



1999: Andrew campaigns against tuition fees with young Lib Dems

2003: Andrew on a march against the Iraq war



2006: Campaigning against Conservative closure of care homes

Andrew Simpson

“If it wasn't for the NHS, I wouldn't be here today...”



Andrew's Mum, 1958
Outside Westminster
Children's Hospital

Andrew is the frontrunner to be our next MP. So what will he do for our community? We get the inside story!

Kingsthorpe Councillor, close friend and budding reporter Sally Beardsworth caught up with Andrew and took a few minutes of his time to talk about his life, his childhood and his ambitions for Northampton.

Sally: Hello! I'm glad we finally got the chance to do this, Andrew.

Andrew: Yeah, me too - thanks.

Sally: Let's get straight to it. You're standing for election to Parliament. What, in your mind, is the single service that the Government should protect above all?

Andrew: The NHS. Without question. We all know someone who's gone into hospital, who needed care or support, and who would not possibly have been able to afford that service privately. I owe it a special favour – and so do countless other people across the country.

Sally: “A special favour”?

Andrew: Mm. If it wasn't for the NHS I wouldn't be here at all. I was born by caesarean a month early in 1965. I had breathing difficulties and was put in an incubator - they gave me a 50/50 chance of survival and I was christened in hospital because they thought I might not make it. My mum lost a lot of blood and was very ill - she needed transfusions to survive. Undoubtedly the care we received helped us both pull through. As a family we couldn't be more grateful because we recognise how crucial the healthcare the NHS provides was in giving us a chance of survival.

My mum trained as a nurse and has spent a lifetime working in hospitals and in the caring profession. It's these values that I was raised with - contributing to the

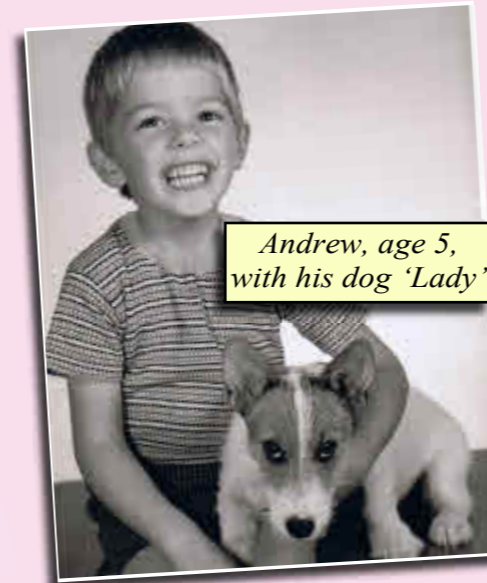
“I was christened in hospital because they thought I might not make it...”

community and helping others - simply to give people a fair chance in life.

Sally: Sounds like a lot to live up to! What was your childhood like?

Andrew: Very lucky. I had deeply loving parents. Like all young couples, they started out without much money but put all their savings into buying a run down bungalow in the countryside. For my sister and I, it was an idyllic place to grow up.

I loved the natural environment and the countryside. I grew vegetables and kept chickens and my parents always let us take in stray animals of varying sorts - once we took on an abandoned goat! I planted loads of trees and as a teenager worked in a local garden centre.



Andrew, age 5,
with his dog 'Lady'

Sally: A goat?

Andrew: Yup, we called him Billy.

Sally: And what did your father do?

Andrew: He was one of the last people to do national service, which he did in the RAF. He trained as an engineer and taught others before going self employed in the 1970's. I inherited a bit of my dad's love of engineering - I restored an old Volkswagen beetle over the summer of 1983. It was my first car.

Sally: A long way from Politics?

Andrew: Not at all, politics gets into everything! Plus, both my grandfathers were involved in politics in different ways. My mother's father was elected as a Conservative Councillor – but became very disillusioned. He died before I really got to know him as I was only 10 but I think he would have been a very interesting person to discuss politics with.

“I have two wonderful nephews who I love to see when I can...”

My father's father was a very senior civil servant - actually some of his activity is a bit of a mystery because he was in Berlin at the height of the Cold War. He kept his



work close to his chest but he got an OBE for his years of public service. I spent many hours talking politics with him - his insights were a key inspiration for me.

Sally: And what do you do in your spare time?

Andrew: I relax by keeping fit, watching films and spending time with friends, family and my long suffering partner! I have two wonderful nephews, who I love to see when I can. If I had a little more time, I'd love to finish restoring another Volkswagen Beetle sitting in my parents' garage, but I think that will be a long time away yet!

“Three quick questions...”

What do you find most satisfying?

When I can see I have made a real difference to someone's life and they say “thank you”.

I have faith in people and believe we would all benefit if we put more trust in each other and made the effort to help each other more.

When people are inspired to get involved in their community and change things for the better I feel I have done a good job.

What have you achieved as a councillor?

I love representing the people of Kingsley. I've dealt with hundreds of issues over the years – often it's the smaller ones that really make a difference. Getting rubbish cleared or a light fixed can make a huge impact.

I've led initiatives to make the area safer, including CCTV cameras on Kingsley Park Terrace. I've campaigned for more recycling which the Lib Dems have now introduced and re-formed 'Friends of the Racecourse' to protect the park and consult on it's use.

What do you want to achieve as an MP.

To put “Northampton First” not party politics. Northampton is my home and will remain so. I chose to live here because of its rich history, wonderful parks and welcoming people. The town is a real hidden gem but it, and the people that live here, have been neglected. Northampton just needs a bit of polishing to shine!



Standing up for our boys and girls in uniform

They put their lives on the line for us, so why do our troops get such a bad deal?

Colour Sergeant Nick Cowan spent 23 years serving in the British Army. Now he's leading the One Common Cause campaign for a better deal for Britain's soldiers.

"I was proud to wear my country's uniform and serve" says Nick, who left the Army in 2007 after a spinal injury.

"I served with a lot of amazing people, but it became clear that we were being short changed by the Government."

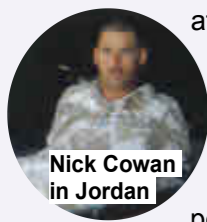
Many members of the armed forces have come forward with stories of the raw deal they've got - equipment shortages, poor pay and bad housing are all big issues.

"I began campaigning for a better deal while I was still serving," adds Nick.

"It was the fact that so many military families were struggling to get housing after leaving the forces

that kick started my first campaign.

"Now **One Common Cause** is fighting to get a better deal for personnel leaving



Nick Cowan in Jordan

the forces."

"It has been great that the Lib Dems have taken on the issues - pay, equipment and housing - and are actively campaigning to get a better deal for all the people serving our country."

Lib Dem Leader Nick Clegg visited British troops in Afghanistan last year. He has seen for himself the difficulty our troops face on the front line.

Nick Clegg was one of the first to speak out about poor pay and equipment shortages for those serving in Afghanistan.

Nick Clegg said, "It's appalling that many soldiers who put their lives on the line for us are paid a pittance.

"It's even worse that they aren't being given the equipment they need to do the job."

"I received one letter from a soldier's fiancée telling the story of how she had to go shopping to buy the equipment her partner needed.

"It's got to change. It's time to give our soldiers the better deal they deserve."

To find out more about the campaign for a fair deal for our armed forces, visit www.NickClegg.com/armedforces or find **One Common Cause** on Facebook.



Winning a fair deal for the Gurkhas

Many "Northampton First" readers gave their support to the campaign to win a fair deal for the Gurkhas.

For over 100 years, Gurkhas have served valiantly in the British Army. Gurkha soldiers have fought for our nation around the world.

But few people realised how badly Gurkhas were treated by our own Government.

When Gurkha soldiers finished their service, they could find themselves being DEPORTED from the very country they served!

A campaign to right this historical wrong was started in 2004 by a local Lib Dem campaigner in Kent.

From humble beginnings the campaign

grew to become a political sensation hitting the headlines across the UK.

Actress Joanna Lumley, whose father served with the Gurkhas, became the face of the campaign leading the efforts to get Gordon Brown to do the right thing.

Nick Clegg's Lib Dems, who had backed the Gurkhas from day one, inflicted Gordon Brown's first Parliamentary defeat on Gurkha citizenship.

Finally the Government caved in and at long last, Gurkha soldiers will have the right to live in the UK when they retire.

Andrew Simpson said, "I would like to thank everyone locally who gave their backing to the Gurkhas. I was proud to be part of this campaign and I am delighted that the Gurkhas will now get a fair deal."



Joanna Lumley, Nick Clegg and many others played a big role in Gurkha rights campaign

Sudoku fun

Play the "Northampton First" Sudoku challenge!

Simply fill in the grid on the left so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 blocks contains each of the digits from 1 to 9.

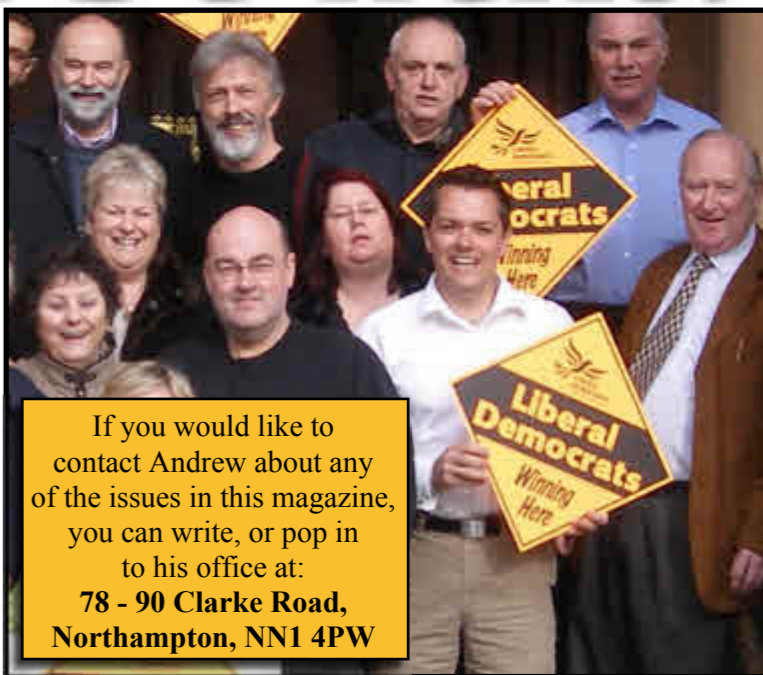
Visit our website at www.andrew-simpson.org.uk to see the answer.

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Who will be next?

Labour MP set to Lose - but who will succeed her?

Sally Keeble is almost certain to lose. She has been one of Gordon Brown's most loyal MP's. She has failed to stand up for Northampton on issues such as Post Office closures, student fees and building on green fields. The key question is who will come next?



If you would like to contact Andrew about any of the issues in this magazine, you can write, or pop in to his office at:
78 - 90 Clarke Road,
Northampton, NN1 4PW

Our quick guide to the next election in Northampton North

Will certainly lose this time around

Tony Blair loyalist Sally Keeble has backed Brown/Blair in over 99% of Commons votes. In the recent local elections, her party slumped to just 19% of the vote.

OUR VERDICT:
No chance at all!

The unknown Conservative candidate was "too busy" to run for Parliament

The Conservative candidate raised a few eyebrows when he pulled out of the race to be our next MP, claiming he didn't have time to campaign. He has re-entered the race, but has remained largely invisible and has failed to make an impact locally.

OUR VERDICT:
A close second place

Andrew Simpson has been campaigning for Northampton for Decades

Local Champion Andrew Simpson is setting the pace for change. He looks a strong favourite to succeed Mrs Keeble

OUR VERDICT:
A win for Andrew Simpson