

Lib Dem Leader praises Tyneside Cyrenians' "considered and effective approach"

Innovative horticulture project - NE4 VEG – impresses Lib Dem Leader

Thursday 10 September 2009 - Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, today visited the award-winning Newcastle-based charity Tyneside Cyrenians to see for himself the success of an innovative gardening project.

'NE4Veg' is an education and training project based in an old walled garden at Tyneside Cyrenians' Bentinck Road hostel. The project provides volunteering, training and employment opportunities for a wide range of people - in both the community and those who come to Tyneside Cyrenians for support and help. Basic knowledge and skills in horticulture are taught to local community groups and support is provided for other small local gardening projects. As part of the training, individuals and groups have opportunities to grow their own food on allotments.

NE4 VEG is one of a number of projects created and managed by Tyneside Cyrenians which are designed to help vulnerable and homeless people. These include 'Brighter Futures' a construction skills training centre which offers qualifications in brick-laying, plastering and carpentry and 'FareShare' a food redistribution project. Service users engage with projects as part of a rehabilitation and stabilisation programme. The charity offers a comprehensive range of services ranging from direct access hostels to specialist support services for those who are substance dependant, abused or exploited.

Liberal Democrat Leader Nick Clegg said:

"During the depths of this recession it is especially important not to forget those people who are already vulnerable and face difficulties getting a job."

"I was keen to visit NE4 VEG run by Tyneside Cyrenians to see first hand their excellent work in providing training and skills to homeless people."

"This example of tackling the root causes of homelessness and unemployment is exactly the considered and effective approach needed to deal with some of our society's most challenging problems."

Stephen Bell, Chief Executive of Tyneside Cyrenians said:

"We're delighted to have the opportunity to welcome Nick Clegg to see our work once again. NE4 VEG is a great example of an innovative and forward thinking project which provides genuine interest and training opportunities. We firmly believe that vulnerable people have to regain self esteem and purpose if they are to settle into stable lifestyles. All of our work is geared towards this objective."

The Charity is bucking the general economic trend; within the last five months Tyneside Cyrenians turnover has increased by 50% to over £6m.

The Charity now employs over 160 people, has a volunteer team extending to over 130 and benefits over 800 individual people weekly, a recent increase of around 300, through its work and support.

In addition, over £5 million capital investment has been carried out in the region on a number of projects. These include the Virginia House, a flagship stabilisation project, Brighter Futures which specialises in construction skills training and Oaktrees, an alcohol dependency rehabilitation centre.

Tyneside Cyrenians is currently the National Charity of the Year and has recently received Star Status in the Sunday Times 'Best Companies to Work For' 2009. The charity is renowned for its pioneering work in enabling vulnerable people to re-engage within society and has been recognised through a plethora of awards in recent years.