

The following is a copy of a letter written by our Deputy Mayor, Barry Hobbs, to The Prime Minister which is self explanatory

Mr Barry Hobbs
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The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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1st July 2013

Dear Mr. Cameron,

Rural Town Survival

My name is Barry Hobbs, I am Deputy Mayor of Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council in North Devon and I have been a proprietor of a local business for over 45 years. I was first elected to the Town Council in 1978 and have had the pleasure of being Mayor three times. My family have lived here for generations. During the May Elections for Devon County, Mrs Andrea Davies our Conservative candidate was re-elected with an increased majority. This result reflects her hard work and positive impact, however, our community need is beyond the County Council's remit and control.

We are seriously in need of ACTION, the people of this area, and I am sure many others, need help to survive and remain viable. We are a small holiday town and have business rates so high that many businesses are struggling to remain open. Business rates is just one factor affecting our local economy, the declining holiday trade, inflated petrol prices and public transport extremely limited means we are now becoming more and more isolated.

Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council and The National Parks are currently in discussion regarding a plan for neighbourhood social housing and whilst I agree that we need more housing for our local children without jobs they are unable to earn a liveable wage to support themselves and their families. There is also a need for private houses as we are in The National Park and planning has always been a contentious subject. We are now only a beautiful tourist spot with a population of approximately 1600. The main workforce for the area is tourism and building, over the years we have lost many cottage industries such as

- a large laundry employing approximately 30 people
- two large building firms employing approximately 50 people
- a toy factory employing approximately 20 people
- 20 advertising jobs
- 4 butchers and 2 bakers but believe it or not we do still have a candle stick maker!
- a cottage hospital comprising of 15 beds to take pressure from the main hospital which is a 50 mile round trip – another big blow to our local area
- we are now very likely to lose our ambulance service – which will mean our nearest ambulance will come from over 20 miles away (approximately 30 minutes on windy country roads) and will then have to transport any patient 25 miles to the nearest District Hospital.

Potential solution

It is never easy to please everyone but as a community we have thought of w, to to maybe alleviate this situation to benefit many people:

- Lower the business rates to an affordable level – for example two years free and then half for the next two years to really kick start the local economy and stimulate employment.
- Another option would be to allow businesses six months rate free (ie. winter months whilst there is little or no income).
- Lift the VAT threshold to enable our small businesses to be free from additional VAT charges.
- Lower the price of petrol in rural areas.
- Allow the building of private homes as well as social housing.
- Upgrade our road surfaces and signage.

This might not seem a lot to you but for us it is now biting hard so please we need help. I hope to be Mayor next year so would be very happy to welcome you to the area so you can see first-hand the immense difficulties we are facing.

Your time and consideration is much appreciated.
Yours sincerely,

Barry Hobbs