

Mark Lancaster backs plans to help protect local post offices, pubs, libraries and parks

Under new Conservative plans, far-reaching new powers could be given to people in Milton Keynes to protect community assets from closure and take over the running of public buildings and community assets. Mark Lancaster, MP has given his backing to the new 'Community Right to Buy' which would allow not-for-profit community groups across Milton Keynes to take over the running of struggling local facilities, from post offices to pubs to parks.

New research has revealed that under Labour, 5,400 post offices, 200 libraries and 3,500 pubs have been lost across England. In Milton Keynes alone several post offices have been lost in the last decade.

Under the Conservative proposals:

• Community groups, such as schools, churches or voluntary groups, will be able to bid to take over the running of publicly owned community assets, if they can manage them more efficiently and effectively than the state.

• When a state-owned community asset faces closure or being sold, voluntary groups will have a right of first refusal to buy that asset for a fair price and maintain it for community use. The new rights to community ownership will cover assets owned by central government and quangos, not just town halls.

• The radical 'Community Right to Buy' will also allow community groups a first refusal to take over and run vital commercially-owned community assets when they shut down – for example, those post offices, pubs and shops whose continued survival is of genuine importance to the local community.

Mark said:

"Under this Government, local neighbourhoods in Milton Keynes and across the country have lost too many essential local services and facilities. People feel powerless to stop their communities losing access to vital services and facilities. Have seen first hand the successful efforts in Sherington to get the local pub back open, it's high time we started supporting local groups rather than hindering them, that is why I support Conservative plans to give bold new powers to people in Milton Keynes to protect and improve vital community assets and preserve the social fabric of our neighbourhoods."