

Edward's letter to Tamsin Dunwoody Dear Ms Dunwoody

Congratulations on becoming the Labour Party candidate for the Crewe and Nantwich by-election, albeit in the sad circumstances of your mother's passing away. She was a formidable lady and an excellent constituency MP; she will be missed.

As the Conservative candidate for Crewe and Nantwich, I am looking forward to locking horns with you in what will be a very short election campaign. Let's fight the sort of honest and frank campaign that Gwyneth would have been proud of.

So it is in that spirit that I am writing to you to ask your views on a range of important issues. In the interests of fairness, I am very happy to make my views clear on each of them.

1. *Do you support the abolition of the 10p tax rate?*

I think it's completely unacceptable to increase taxes on the lowest paid workers in the country. People who do the right thing, by going out to work to earn their keep, should be rewarded, not punished. By increasing taxes on the poorest, Gordon Brown has shown he has no idea what it's like to live on a low income.

2. *Do you support the Government's national identity scheme?*

I oppose ID cards because I believe they would be an expensive waste of time. The Government has not explained how they would reduce the threat of terrorism, or improve public service delivery. They would be an affront to our civil liberties.

3. *Do you believe that students should have to pay variable tuition fees?*

Personally, I do believe that if we're going to have a world-class higher education system, we're going to need to pay for it, so tuition fees are going to have to stay. But I think we need to do more to help students get by, and the abolition of the 10p tax rate hurt students with part-time jobs as it hurt many other workers.

4. *Do you agree that – whatever Gordon Brown says – violent crime and anti-social behaviour is rising locally?*

Violent crime has almost trebled in the local area and as the Chief Constable says: "every night of the week Cheshire officers and our community support officers are engaged in a constant battle against anti-social behaviour and alcohol-induced violence".

5. *Do you believe that the pre-charge detention period should be extended in terrorism cases?*

I do not believe that the Government has made the case for extending the pre-charge detention period beyond 28 days. Instead, they should rely on using intercept evidence in court and post-charge questioning.

6. *Do you think there should be a referendum on the renamed European Constitution?*

I firmly believe that Gordon Brown broke his manifesto promise to hold a referendum on the European Constitution because he thought he would lose. The British people deserve the referendum they were promised.

7. *Do you agree with the reorganisation of local government in Cheshire?*

The creation of the new Cheshire East unitary authority means the abolition of both Cheshire County Council and Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council. I believe that power should be devolved as far as possible to local communities, and I opposed the changes as an unnecessary restriction of local political accountability.

8. *Do you believe that the net level of immigration should be reduced?*

I believe that this Government has failed to give local public services the support they need to cope with a rising population. As a result, there is pressure on the local council budget, on housing, on the NHS and on local schools. So we need to plan properly for increases in population, and reduce the overall level of net immigration.

9. *Do you agree that we need to expand the number of good school places, and that parents should be given far greater choice of where to send their children to school?*

I believe that that is exactly what we need to do. This year, one in five parents missed out on their chosen secondary school. Nearly 60,000 parents made appeals against the school to which their child was allocated, but only a third were upheld.

10. *Do you support the suspension of the Government's post office closure programme?*

I think the post office closure programme needs to be suspended immediately. There is nothing inevitable about the closure of local services like post offices, small shops and pubs. The Government and local politicians need to do all they can to keep these important services open.

I would be grateful if you could reply to these important questions as soon as possible. It is extremely important for the people of Crewe and Nantwich to know what sort of choice they face.

Given the public interest in these matters, I am releasing a copy of this letter to the

media.

Yours sincerely

Edward Timpson

Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Crewe and Nantwich

Tamsin Dunwoody's selection is yet another sign that the Labour Party is taking Crewe and Nantwich for granted

The British people were denied a general election when Tony Blair decided to hand over to Gordon Brown. Now the Labour Party seems to think it can hand over the constituency of Crewe and Nantwich from Gwyneth Dunwoody to her daughter, Tamsin.

Tamsin Dunwoody lives 175 miles away in South West Wales

Tamsin Dunwoody lives in 175 miles away from Crewe in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. Her address on the electoral register is: Cwarre-Dduon, Ambleston, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 5DR.

Claims to local links: we've heard it all before

In accepting her nomination as the Labour Party candidate, Tamsin Dunwoody said: "I will be a local champion and stand up for the people of Crewe and Nantwich" (*Labour Party press release*, 3 May 2008). But she has said this when she stood for election before – in her real home patch, Pembrokeshire, South Wales. Then, she said: "As someone who lives in the community, works in the community and whose children go to school in the community, I have a very real belief in a strong voice in Cardiff for Pembrokeshire" (*Western Telegraph*, 6 May 2003).

Standing up for Crewe, or standing up for Crewe and Nantwich?

In her press release, Tamsin Dunwoody on several occasions refers to being the MP for Crewe and Nantwich, yet the only issues she mentions refer to Crewe – not Nantwich, and not the large rural parts of the constituency (*Labour Party press release*, 3 May 2008).

No acknowledgement of local disaffection with the Labour Party

After Labour's massive defeats in the local elections up and down the country, in the North, and in Crewe and Nantwich, some Labour politicians have tried to face up to the reasons for the Party's defeats. Not Tamsin Dunwoody. In her first address to the voters of Crewe and Nantwich, she ignored concerns about the cost of living, the 10p tax band, the loss of local services, and impact of recent immigration upon local services like the NHS and schools. When she did make passing reference to local issues, she launched a cheap attack on the local council regarding the regeneration of Crewe, and talked about anti-social behaviour (*Labour Party press release*, 3 May 2008). She failed to mention the fact that

under Labour, violent crime is up 192 per cent in the local area (Home Office, *Crime in England and Wales*, various years).

Professional politician

Tamsin Dunwoody was until recently the Welsh Assembly Member for the constituency of Preseli Pembrokeshire, in South West Wales.

Slavishly loyal to the Labour leadership

Unlike her mother, Tamsin Dunwoody used her time in the Welsh Assembly to stand up for New Labour rather than the people she represented:

- Supported Top-up Fees. In 2005 a Welsh Conservative motion, supported by other opposition parties in Wales ensured Welsh students would not have to pay top-up fees at Welsh universities. Labour Assembly Members, including Tamsin Dunwoody, voted against the motion, which also provided extra cash for universities to close the funding gap with those in England (National Assembly for Wales, Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2005).
- Refused to oppose ID Cards. Tamsin Dunwoody, along with her fellow Labour Welsh Assembly Members, abstained from a motion stating that ID cards should not be a requirement for the provision of public services in Wales. The motion was supported by the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru (National Assembly for Wales, Record of Proceedings, 7 June 2005). Despite the vote, ID cards could yet be forced on Wales by Gordon Brown's Government.
- Supported the Government's disastrous plans for police force mergers. Tamsin Dunwoody, along with other Labour Welsh Assembly Members, voted against a motion opposing the merging of the four police forces in Wales into one. The Labour Government in Westminster later abandoned its plans for the merger, wasting more than £1 million of police funds (National Assembly for Wales, Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2006; BBC News Online, *Merger Plan Cost Welsh Police £1 million*, 11 September 2006).
- Failed to protect hospitals from downgrading. Tamsin Dunwoody voted against a motion in the Welsh Assembly supported by the Conservatives to investigate the consultation process around the downgrading of hospitals in Wales (National Assembly for Wales, Record of Proceedings, 6 February 2007).
- Ignored Public Opinion on Arts Funding. In February 2006 Welsh Conservatives helped to throw out the Welsh Assembly Labour Government's controversial plans to directly fund the six leading arts organisations in Wales. Tamsin Dunwoody voted with the Labour Government and opposed the Conservative motion to keep arts funding out of political control. A poll in Wales showed that the Welsh people opposed arts funding being directly controlled by the Welsh Assembly (BBC News Online, *Government defeat on arts reform*, 1 February 2006; BBC News Online, *Arts Funding should 'be separate'*, 8 February 2006)

Tamsin Dunwoody has failed to protect local services in the past

When confronted with the news that a local hospital was threatened with closure, Tamsin Dunwoody chose neither to support nor fight the proposed changes. Instead, she chose to sit on the fence. With her constituents facing a choice between keeping Withybush open, with restricted services, and its closure, Tamsin Dunwoody chose not to campaign to protect local services, but to call for the merger of two local health boards – which was not even an option in the consultation. She was accused of “missing the point” by her opponents (*The Milford and West Wales Mercury*, 30 March 2006).

Likewise, when the Haverfordwest fire station faced a reduction in the number of full-time firefighters and the loss of its status as a 24-hour station, the local community opposed the cuts. Yet all the mealy mouthed Tamsin Dunwoody could do was to express “serious concern” – despite the fact that she was in a position to do something about it, as a member of the governing party in the Welsh Assembly (*Milford and West Wales Mercury*, 30 September 2004).

As the Welsh Assembly Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire, Tamsin Dunwoody failed to secure funding for a centre which provided help and advice for people in one of the most deprived areas of her constituency – the Mount Resource Centre – despite being a member of the Labour Assembly government (*The Milford and West Wales Mercury*, 2 March 2006).

In Neath, the local railway station closes, apart from its unlit and unsupervised side exit, earlier than the last trains that stop there. As the local Welsh Assembly Member, Tamsin Dunwoody confessed she “felt safer on the road than travelling by rail, if it meant returning home via an unmanned dark station” (*South Wales Evening Post*, December 8, 2003). Yet she did nothing about it for the commuters who had no choice but to use the trains.

Accusations of hypocrisy

Tamsin Dunwoody was accused of “abandoning her personal convictions” after she campaigned against mobile phone masts, only to vote with the Labour whips to prevent tighter controls on them. As deputy planning minister in Wales at the time, the hypocrisy was particularly acute. The proposal she voted to defeat, which was lost by just two votes, would have obliged mobile phone companies to go through the full planning process before being granted permission to erect the masts (*Western Mail*, 16 February 2006). In an earlier debate, she had said: “I echo the need for the siting of any mast, including allegedly temporary masts, to go through the full planning process” (*Western Mail*, 20 February 2006).

Tamsin Dunwoody faced claims that she had lied to the Welsh Assembly after she claimed that she had been forced to take her children out of school because of the presence of local mobile phone masts. She told the Welsh Assembly that she had “written to every single person who has any influence over this matter, including the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, to whom I have written regarding taking children out of school. My children have been taken out of school to be taught at home, and that can only be to their disadvantage”. However, it later emerged that she had not taken her children out of school, and a Welsh

Government spokesman said that it had been a “slip of the tongue” (*Western Mail*, 20 February 2006).

As deputy transport minister for Wales, Tamsin Dunwoody admitted to taking twelve separate car journeys in a single day (*Western Mail*, 2 April 2008). Yet just weeks later, she was calling for people to walk instead of drive: “for a number of reasons we are walking and cycling less than ever, and obesity is becoming an increasing problem across Wales” (*Western Mail*, 20 May 2005).