

MONEY TO WASTE

An Analysis of South Lakes

Liberal Democrat Local Authority Spending

Analysis as at 25th April 2018

Forward from Councillor Ben Berry, Conservative Group Leader, South Lakeland District Council

The most serious responsibility that any council administration has is to ensure its resources are well used to fund local public services.

As custodians of resources provided by the public to fund services delivered by South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria County Council, the Liberal Democrats have not been doing this – and this document proves why.

This analysis highlights seven areas where Liberal Democrat decisions have meant public resources have not been used to best-effect in the interests of local taxpayers and service users in South Lakeland.

We have only used examples independently reported by the media or confirmed by local authorities.

These examples show that the Liberal Democrats have wasted £919,400 during their time in office and present voters with a clear choice at the local elections on Thursday 3 May – more of the same under the Liberal Democrats or a fresh-start with a new Conservative-led Council.



Councillor Ben Berry

1. New Road Car Park, Kendal

In September 2017, South Lakeland's Liberal Democrat Council closed the New Road Car Park in Kendal. Initially, the council announced its intention to create a public garden on the site at a cost of £430,000¹. Following widespread public opposition to the car park closure, the Liberal Democrat council approved a revised budget of £286,000 for 'initial work to improve common land at New Road'².

Seven months on from its closure of the site, the council is still to decide on its future use, or if car parking will be restored.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£286,000
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2. Car park ticket machines

In 2012, South Lakeland's Liberal Democrat Council was publicly criticised for its decision to purchase new pay-and-display machines in South Lakeland which demanded that people key in their registration details each time they parked. The new machines cost £340,000 and were specially purchased by the council to prevent motorists from passing on tickets, with un-used time, to other drivers³.

Following a public outcry, the council announced in November 2012 that drivers would no longer have to key their car registration numbers into new machines – making the central purpose of the machines' purchase redundant⁴.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£340,000
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¹ <https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/news/money-allocated-to-new-road-initial-works/>

² <https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/news/money-allocated-to-new-road-initial-works/>

³

http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/9911967.South_Lakes_council_defends_new_pay_and_display_parking_system/

⁴

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/10076479.South_Lakeland_car_parking_machines_will_no_longer_need_registration_numbers/

3. K Village, Kendal

In 2013, it was revealed that South Lakeland District Council had lost £100,000 of public money, which it had put into the K Village shopping centre venture in Kendal, when the company went into administration⁵.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£100,000
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4. Windermere Ferry on-shore parking meters

In July 2016, Cumbria County Council's Liberal Democrat Cabinet member for Customer Service approved the introduction of on-shore ticket machines for the Windermere Ferry⁶. The new machines led to long traffic tailbacks and delays as motorists struggled to use the new machines. In December 2017, following public pressure, the council announced that the new ticket machines, which it had purchased for £20,000⁷ would be scrapped⁸.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£20,000
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⁵ <http://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/Radio-insults-may-land-senior-Cumbrian-councillor-in-hot-water-28b576b7-fa98-4759-96b9-3ae72735e6ba-ds>

⁶ http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/15787046.Windermere_Ferry_on_shore_ticket_machines_to_be_scrapped/

⁷ <https://www.westmorlandconservatives.org.uk/news/council-double-down-windermere-ferry-ticket-machines>

⁸ http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/15787046.Windermere_Ferry_on_shore_ticket_machines_to_be_scrapped/

5. '£700 a day spin doctor'

In October 2015, it was reported that Cumbria's Lib Dem-Labour County Council was paying a 'PR guru' £700-a-day to help it cut costs and avoid bad headlines⁹. The council had earlier tried to avoid providing details on the spin doctor's costs in response to journalists' enquiries¹⁰. In total, the council spent £71,000 in consultancy fees¹¹.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£71,000
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6. Middleton Bridge 'temporary' traffic-lights

During Storm Desmond in 2015, Middleton Bridge was destroyed. A temporary the bailey bridge, costing £19,000 and funded by central government was erected pending the construction of a permanent replacement bridge by Cumbria's Lib Dem-Labour County Council. Despite the three years that have elapsed since Storm Desmond, the county council has not replaced the bridge. Instead, temporary traffic lights remain in place to allow safe access to the bailey bridge. The cost of these traffic-lights so-far to council taxpayers has been £47,400¹².

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£47,400
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http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/11528459.PR_guru_being_paid___2100_for_three_days_a_week_at_Cumbria_County_Council/

¹⁰ <https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2015/news/council-press-offices-bid-to-kill-700-a-day-spin-doctor-story-revealed-by-daily/>

¹¹ <http://test.cnmedia.co.uk/hundreds-want-to-leave-cash-strapped-cumbria-authority-1.1220640>

¹² Email from Cumbria County Council

7. Disabled parking ‘administrative error’

In January 2013, South Lakeland’s Liberal Democrat Council was forced to pay out £55,000 from the public purse after what it described an ‘administrative error’ following the scrapping of free parking for disabled residents at its public car parks in 2011¹³. The advocacy group Disabled Motorists UK warned the council three months before it introduced the changes and said ‘it could have saved them a lot of money if they had listened at the time’¹⁴.

Cost to taxpayers

Cost	£55,000
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Total cost from these seven examples of Liberal Democrat council waste

Example	Cost
New Road Car Park, Kendal	£286,000
Car park ticket machines	£340,000
K Village, Kendal	£100,000
Windermere Ferry	£20,000
‘£700 a day spin doctor’	£71,000
Middleton Bridge traffic lights	£47,400
Disabled parking ‘error’	£55,000
GRAND TOTAL	£919,400

¹³

http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/10162892.SLDC_faces___55_000_court_case_payout_to_disabled_people_after__admin_error_/

¹⁴

http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/10162892.SLDC_faces___55_000_court_case_payout_to_disabled_people_after__admin_error_/