

# ... **press release**



**Date:** 26 March 2011

## ***Don't Raise Our Rents***

The Scout Association launched a national campaign last week called "Don't Raise Our Rents" to try and save Groups all over the Country from having to close because of huge increases to their ground rents.

As local councils have their budgets squeezed, many have turned to Scout Groups as a way to generate income by increasing the rents or rates they are charged.

Tynemouth District is one of the many up and down the country who have fallen foul of this.

Three of the Groups in Tynemouth District own their own buildings but rent the land they stand on from the local council. As the ground rent comes up for renewal many councils around the country are taking the opportunity to impose huge increases in the cost, in some cases increasing from a token rent of a few pounds a year to thousands of pounds.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Tynemouth (Ritson's Own), the 8<sup>th</sup> Tynemouth and the 19<sup>th</sup> Tynemouth have all been having meetings with North Tyneside Council to review the situation and are all waiting to find out what will happen to their ground rents.

The three Scout Groups have been running weekly activities for young people on their current sites for a total of 133 years between them, although the Groups have run longer than that on other sites in the same area.

Those Scout Groups, together with the other Groups in North Tyneside and the rest of the country are all run by volunteers who give a total of 37 million unpaid hours of work per week to the community. Adults working in Scouting contribute the equivalent of £380m in paid services for young people annually.

Any significant increase in the ground rent would force many of the Groups, including the three in Tynemouth District, to close.

The "Don't Raise Our Rents" campaign is therefore calling on local councils to make sure that any rent increases placed on Scout groups are fair and affordable. From the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, those Scout Groups affected, along with those councils raising rents and rates, are being identified at campaign website [www.dontraiseourrents.org](http://www.dontraiseourrents.org). The website is providing a national petition for the public to sign, as well as providing Scouts and Leaders with a toolkit to run local campaigns directed at specific councils.

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**Tynemouth District Scout Council**

**[www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk](http://www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk)**

Tynemouth Scout Centre, Regents Terrace, North Shields, NE29 0QG

President: Colin McKay MBE

District Chairman: Ian Henderson

District Commissioner: Julia Stenhouse

**Patron** HM The Queen **President** HRH The Duke of Kent **Founder** Robert Baden-Powell OM **Chief Scout** Bear Grylls

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Since the launch of the campaign there has been 4,500 people sign up to the petition. The campaign has featured in the national press including the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph as well as being on the BBC news, to name but a few.

Following the success of the launch the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, asked for a briefing on the subject which included the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tynemouth (Ritson's Own) as one of the case studies provided by The Scout Association.

Commenting on the launch, Chief Scout, Bear Grylls said,

*"It is completely counter-productive for councils to charge Scouts such enormous rent increases. These crippling rises jeopardise the future of Scouting and the enormous amount of voluntary work we provide to communities week-in, week-out. We're not asking councils for money. We simply ask that they continue to recognise the importance of Scouting in their area. I hope that all those Groups affected will get involved in this campaign and help their local councils see sense."*

Tynemouth Scouts also rent a storage facility from North Tyneside Council which is used to store some of the larger items of camping equipment and items used in their ever popular Gang Show. That rent is also being looked at meaning the Scouts could have to move out. That could have a direct impact on the activities they are able to provide to the young people.

Anyone wishing to sign the petition should visit the Scout Association's campaign website at [www.donraiseourrents.org](http://www.donraiseourrents.org). Tynemouth Scouts also have information about the campaign on their own website [www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk](http://www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk).

Tynemouth District covers the whole of the North Tyneside area and is open to boys and girls aged between 6 and 25; the adult section is open from 25 to 60 plus. If you would like to join the worlds largest co-educational youth organisation, at any level, you can call the Northumberland Scout's County Office on 0191 2668822, visit [www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk](http://www.tynemouthscouts.org.uk) or the national site at [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) or e-mail [media@tynemouthscouts.org.uk](mailto:media@tynemouthscouts.org.uk) for more information.