



Lib Dem EuroFILE



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THE COALITION:

How will it work at European level?

Coalition is the norm in the rest of Europe, but the first in Britain since 1945 is still a revolution for the body politic here and those who report on it. Many have asked what difference the agreement will make to politics at a European level. **FIONA HALL**, Leader of the UK Lib Dem MEPs reports.

The first thing to remember is that the coalition government is Her Majesty's Government - it is an agreement made about a programme of government for the United Kingdom. So what Liberal Democrats do at other levels, be it local councils, devolved assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or in Brussels, is not affected. And of course, Liberal Democrat MEPs disagree with right-wing MEP colleagues on matters such as civil liberties and climate change just as profoundly as they did a few months ago.

The second thing to bear in mind is that because the European Parliament and the Council are the co-legislators at a European level, there is a certain in-built tension between them. Member State ministers, whatever their nationality and political persuasion tend to want to maintain control at a national level and jealously

guard their red lines. MEPs are in touch directly with their constituents and are more aware of the inconsistencies and difficulties which arise when there is a lack of a common European approach.

So MEPs not infrequently disagree with their own governments and take a different line even when they are from the same party. It was Liberal Democrat MEPs who supported the Labour Government on keeping the opt-out in the Working Time Directive - while Labour MEPs were bitterly opposed.

Agreeing to disagree

So don't expect it to be all sweetness and light between Liberal Democrat and Conservative MEPs, nor even between Lib Dem MEPs and UK coalition ministers. But what Lib Dem MEPs and Conservative

MEPs do agree on is that we will be the ones to decide whether we agree or not, not the British media.

We are determined to manage the process of difference and make sure that the media does not set us up against each other or use our views to undermine the coalition government.

We have therefore put in place a strong system of liaison between leaders, whips and staff so that we are fully aware in advance about those points on which we take differing lines.

We will agree to disagree in a polite manner - which indeed is how most business is conducted in the European Parliament.

FIONA HALL





COALITION:

A change that deserves a chance to work, says Phil Bennion

Welcome back to Eurofile after a two-month break, as all of us here were either General Election candidates or running campaigns. Now the landscape has changed. After a political lifetime in opposition, I'm having to get used to defending decisions instead of attacking them. I've asked our MEPs for their views on the coalition and a range of their responses are included in these two pages.

For my own part, I'd come to a clear view that a Con-Lib coalition was the best option within 36 hours of leaving my own count in Telford. A deal with Labour was a non-starter. Not because of the need for nationalists to be included but rather due to the 50 or more Labour MPs viscerally opposed to electoral reform and itching for a

spell in opposition. The "Nats" are as keen on PR as we are and would certainly have done a deal to get reform.

The Labour spin machine was in action so quickly after the coalition announcement that I suspect that their "line" was constructed and rehearsed while their negotiators were still talking. The BBC pedalled the Labour line uncritically for several days before the penny started to drop. A minority Tory government would have required a continuous state of abstention from the Lib Dems to survive. Our first critical vote against them would have precipitated a second General Election.

It must be said that the European section of the coalition agreement leaves much to be desired, but the Tory Eurosceptics are also unhappy with it. Gone is the Conservative pledge to repatriate competences from the EU back to Westminster and in its place a commitment to positive working within Europe. We would not have been joining the Euro within the next parliament in any case and a

new Treaty is also unlikely for some time. I am, however, disappointed at a general commitment to a referendum if further powers are ceded to Brussels, although the definitions are somewhat vague.

But overall, the package we voted on at the NEC is both Liberal and Internationalist. The new government feels different, already, it is a change and it deserves a chance to work.

The view from the parish pump here in rural England (and I accept that the situation is different in the devolved administrations as well as the Labour heartlands) is that a Con-Lib coalition is welcome. Indeed, most people I meet from outside of the political bubble are delighted, preferring it to a Tory overall majority. They know that the deficit must be tackled. They expect us to have both the resolve to see it through and the sensitivity to ensure that the coalition delivers the necessary cuts in a fair way. We must not let them down.

Phil Bennion, Editor

Deal has the stamp of fairness - Graham Watson

"Nick Clegg has shown the remarkable strength of character, honesty and commitment to liberal values that he first demonstrated in the European Parliament. He secured the best possible agreement for our party and country, and in particular the most vulnerable in society whom liberals always seek to protect.

"Liberal Democrats should be proud to point this out on the doorstep. We have listened to the electorate, risen above the tribalism that has brought Britain to its knees over 60 years, and ushered in an era of new politics. Self-interest has been sidelined for what is right for the country.

"Details of the agreement show that the Lib Dem negotiating team won key battles for fairer taxes, fundamental political reform of Parliament and the voting system, and has helped steer Britain in a greener and more sustainable direction. All of this would have been missing without a coalition with the Conservatives.

"It may not be the ideal outcome but one overpowering fact remains: for the first time in 65 years, Liberals are able directly to shape the policy of government. Whatever happens over the coming months and years, the Lib Dem stamp of fairness will be clearly visible on British government."

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Respect for human rights key to deal, says Liz Lynne

Speaking before the special Birmingham conference, West Midlands MEP Liz Lynne urged members to back the coalition because of the 'cast iron pledges' written into the agreement.

Liz said: "I have always been a conviction politician. Like many, my main concern is that the policies and principles we fought so hard for in the general election can be reflected in a new government.

"After the election, two things did become clear. Firstly, there was no possibility of a workable deal with Labour and the Nationalists, the maths didn't add up and most Labour leaders were not interested.

"Meanwhile, Nick and the negotiating team were winning concessions from the Tories on many key manifesto pledges. They did a fantastic job. The final agreement is remarkable for its cast iron commitments - on fairer taxes, on schools, on a green economy and political reform. Not everything we wanted, but huge steps forward.



"I am particularly pleased that we persuaded the Conservatives to agree to end Labour's policy of imprisoning innocent children in asylum centres, which is cruel and wrong. The agreement makes clear that basic human rights will be respected. The new coalition has already announced the end of ID cards, which Labour refused to do.

"Politics is ultimately about getting policies and principles carried through into government. This coalition gives us the chance at last to show what Liberal Democrats can do to win real change."



History is made as conference votes for coalition by a huge majority. Pic: Ben Jephcott

"Come into my parlour' said the spider to the fly. But the Lib Dem fly comes armed ..."

says CHRIS DAVIES

There are great risks: "Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly." But the Lib Dem fly comes armed and cannot be devoured - at least until the next election is called.

The deal that has been thrashed out incorporates significant Liberal Democrat objectives. We will, of course, have to compromise and accept some Conservative ones too. That's the price to be paid for agreement between two parties.

A deal with Labour was not credible. A government would have survived the first crucial votes but it would have been worn down by attrition. Vote after vote would have been lost in the months that followed until the government collapsed in disarray. We would not have the strong, stable government able to make difficult decisions now required, and little or nothing to show by way of achievement.

We have not got a commitment to a proportional voting system, which is bad news, but we don't have the votes in Parliament to secure it. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas. I hope the other political reforms agreed, and the hugely enhanced credibility that our party now gains, will stand us in good stead for the future.

I have known Nick Clegg for 12 years. We had next door offices for five years in the European Parliament. I voted for him to be leader. I like him and I trust him. I have no doubt that the deal secured by his team is as good as we were ever likely to get.

The way ahead will be rocky and uncertain, but today I am proud to be a Liberal Democrat and I am looking forward to the journey.

LibDem European Group

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Macmillan Scott: 'Coalition includes best of both traditions'

Edward McMillan-Scott MEP (Yorkshire & Humber, UK) joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group in the European Parliament on June 9.

He will continue to sit in the parliament's Bureau as an independent Vice-President to maintain balance for other groups.

McMillan-Scott made a stand against the Conservatives' controversial new ECR group last July, winning re-election with cross-party backing as the first-ever independent Vice-President against the ECR candidate. For this, he was expelled by his party – he appealed – but on March 12 he joined the Liberal Democrats.

Edward McMillan-Scott said: "Britain has become a more European nation with the advent of national coalition politics, fixed-term parliaments and the real prospect of a fairer electoral system. The creation of the Conservative / LibDem coalition was the best day of my political life since my first election. I was a liberal Conservative and am now a conservative Liberal.

This government represents the best of both traditions and will be moderate on Europe.

"Europe is in a crisis and needs political leadership based on fairness. The Lisbon Treaty gives the European Parliament the opportunity at last to act decisively in most policy areas and to shape others. The liberal group, ALDE, is on the winning side in 90 per cent of the votes: it is having a pivotal, principled influence on the way the EU develops. The liberal family has ministers in 10 EU governments and eight EU Commissioners.

"Before Easter, I met the leader of ALDE Guy Verhofstadt and agreed to join the liberal group in the European Parliament after the British general election. I have always worked closely with liberals on my priorities, democracy and human rights worldwide and I share their strategic priorities for the EU during this mandate. I shall vote with them with confidence, while exercising my judgement and my 25 years' experience as an MEP. My constituents will, as always, come first and have my support, regardless of party.

"During the election I campaigned across the country for Nick Clegg, whom I have known and admired for many years. Nick now has a crucial influence on Britain's government, especially over my priorities – a fair economy, civil liberties, electoral reform and Europe.

"I hope that the Conservatives – now isolated – will find a way to rejoin Europe's mainstream. That is in the British national interest.



First elected as an MEP in 1984, McMillan-Scott was leader of the Conservative MEPs between 1997 and 2001. He was elected Vice-President in 2004 and then re-elected in 2007 and 2009. His current portfolio includes democracy and human rights, relations with national parliaments and chairing the Audit Panel.

Triumph for Liberal parties in Dutch elections

Guy VERHOFSTADT, President of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament, has sent his congratulations to both Dutch Liberal parties on their outstanding election results in the Netherlands.

"The victory of VVD in topping the polls will bring another Prime Minister to the Liberal table in Europe and marks an historic achievement for the Party. The 31 seats that Mr Rutte's party gained in the national parliament will provide a strong base for taking the necessary, if tough,

measures on the economy to create growth and job opportunities in the longer term."

"Alexander Pechtold's D66 party also did exceptionally well in more than tripling their score of parliamentarians. I look forward to working with both parties in the months and years ahead."



Change that works for Europe & for you

Compensation for Equitable Life victims is a triumph for justice

Lib Dem MEPs have hailed the new Equitable Life Bill, as announced in the Queen's Speech, as a triumph.

Equitable Life, the world's oldest mutual insurer, faced near-collapse in 2000 after making promises it could not afford to keep. As a result, policyholders were subjected to large cuts to the value of either their prospective or current pensions.

According to the Equitable Members Action Group, 15 Equitable Life victims die each day in the UK, many in poverty.

The Equitable Life Bill will give the Treasury the authority to make payments to policyholders or dependents that were denied the right to compensation by the previous government.

South East Region MEP **Sharon Bowles** said: "I am delighted the coalition government has brought

an end to the gross injustice suffered by Equitable victims.

"I campaigned for a long time on this issue and have heard many stories from people entering retirement with far less money than they were entitled to. Sadly, many have died in poverty.

"It is a scandal that it took so long to do what was right and will always be a stain on the previous government's record. I hope all those entitled to compensation receive it post-haste."

Diana Wallis MEP worked for months on the European Parliament's report on the Equitable Life issue. She said progress in this area was one of the key reasons she supported the Coalition Agreement.

"It was clear that this was a wrong of the former Labour government; long overdue to be righted. I will remember our visit to the Treasury

as a multi-national, cross party Committee of Enquiry to be greeted as 'Mr Balls visitors group!' Revenge is sweet, but never should a committee of Enquiry from the European Parliament be treated with such condescension again.

"To be fair, it was Tory colleagues who helped us ensure a proper outcome for the victims at a European level in the face of outright hostility from Labour members."



Sharon (left) with Equitable victim and EMAG activist

High hopes for liberals in Slovak elections

ELDR President Annemie Neyts-Uttebroeck MEP, visited Slovakia in May to meet Richard Sulík, leader and head of list, and the leadership of the Slovakian Freedom and Solidarity Party (Sloboda a Solidarita in Slovak).



Mrs Neyts discussed the prospects for the liberals in Slovakia in the upcoming parliamentary elections on Saturday 12 June as well as the application

for membership, which Freedom and Solidarity has submitted to ELDR.

Mrs Neyts said: "I believe that Freedom and Solidarity will have a good chance in the elections for the Parliament of Slovakia on 12 June.

"The party has a clearly liberal manifesto, strong candidates and a refreshing campaign."

"The Bureau of the ELDR Party will welcome membership of Freedom and Solidarity once the elections confirm the current polls and the party enters the Slovak parliament."

As we go to press opinion polls give the Freedom and Solidarity party a good chance of entering the Slovak parliament with between 9 and 11 per cent of the vote.

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Gaza flotilla: 'Time for action not words' says Davies

Israel's attack on the Free Gaza flotilla in international waters was described as "the actions of a rogue state" by North West Euro MP Chris Davies.

The Liberal Democrat MEP, the only British parliamentarian to gain access to Gaza during Israel's assault in January last year, said that words of condemnation needed to be backed up with actions. Chris Davies has called on the Coalition Government to halt plans to

change the law to prevent any threat that Israeli politicians might be arrested for war crimes if they visit the UK. Foreign Secretary William Hague has announced that the government was reviewing the law on universal jurisdiction that enables private prosecutions to be brought for international crimes.

Davies commented: "Israel treats words of condemnation from Britain and its EU partners with contempt. It regards them as a sign of weakness. Once again Israel has demonstrated through its deeds that it is a rogue state. The time is long overdue for us to take action that demonstrates our outrage at its behaviour in ways that it will respect."

London MEP **Sarah Ludford** struck a more conciliatory tone; "As a thriving democracy, Israel must heed the UN Security Council call for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent inquiry into this violent clash between Israeli armed forces and activists. Anything less will do immense further damage to both Israel's reputation and its security."

"An independent inquiry must fully examine the actions of all parties, including claims of weapons possession and use by those on the aid boats, and establish the precise facts and responsibility for the chain of events in this terrible incident."

West Midlands MEP **Liz Lynne**, a member of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council, expressed outrage at the killings. "It appears this was an appalling attack by heavily armed soldiers on a humanitarian mission in international waters, which must be condemned utterly. I have long called for an end to the counterproductive blockade of Gaza by Israel and hope that once again a majority of MEPs will unite against this disproportionate action taken by the Israeli authorities."

The European Union has repeated its call for Israel to lift its siege of Gaza immediately and without conditions.

Editor Phil Bennion reports from Berlin that Liberal International Executive passed a resolution on Gaza tabled by the Lib Dems on Friday by 36 votes to 2.

The resolution, drafted by our delegation leader Robert Woodthorpe Browne, used some of the text from this article. Simon Hughes brought the resolution to the attention of Parliament yesterday and a vote is expected on a resolution in the European Parliament this week. Tony Blair has indicated to the Financial Times that he is expecting the Israelis to agree to a significant relaxation of the blockade.



● **Chris Davies MEP**

Newton Dunn steps up campaign against fake goods

East Midlands Lib Dem MEP Bill Newton Dunn is stepping up his campaign for tougher action to stop counterfeits and fake goods.

A conference he organised at the European Parliament earlier this year on the dangers of buying and using fake goods was a sell-out success. Evidence was given showing that counterfeits are becoming increasingly convincing, and the criminals behind them are finding new ways to flood legitimate markets with their fakes. These counterfeits are poor quality and can even cause real harm to children. Participants discussed ways to inform consumers and the general public about such dangers, as well as looking at the range of policies that could be pursued in areas ranging from customs to trade to justice. Newton Dunn, who hosted the conference as a co-founder of the European Parliament Forum for the Combat of Counterfeit, Contraband and Organised

Crime said, "I was astounded by the number and range of participants at the event. The turnout really showed an issue on which I have been working for many years finally starting to have its day."

"There are so many reasons that we should all be concerned about the growing trade in illicit goods. It means job losses in legitimate industries. It affects people, it affects small businesses."

"It also means more money is going to criminal gangs, operating on our streets, and often with links to organised terrorist cells."

"Greater cooperation between law enforcement agencies can be very successful in stopping large scale criminal activity."

"Our counterfeiting exhibition in the European Parliament in June will show politicians and policy-makers the extent of the problem we face, to keep up this momentum we've achieved."

Change that works for Europe & for you

Independent garages and car repairs keep EU protection

Independent garages and repairers are celebrating after the European Commission reaffirmed its commitment to stand up for small businesses in the face of large car manufacturers and ensure a level playing field in vehicle repairs.

European competition rules, known as MVBER, require manufacturers to allow independent garages access to the parts and information they need to make repairs. This protection is a lifeline to many small businesses that would otherwise be squeezed out of the market, to the detriment of consumers and the environment.

The MVBER rules were set to expire in May, and some feared they would not be replaced. However, following a campaign led by Right to Repair and supported by Lib Dem MEP **Graham Watson**, the European Commission decided to renew the Regulation.

Watson was delighted with the news; "This news means that your local independent garage can continue to offer a competitive service for many years to come.

"This is just another example of how the EU regulations that are smeared by the likes of UKIP, actually support small businesses and cut costs for

consumers like you and I."

On May 5, the European Parliament endorsed the proposal, but called on the Commission to monitor the implementation of the rules. Watson has also called for vigilance on the part of independent repairers;

"In 2007, the European Commission was forced to take action against four manufacturers for withholding technical information. I urge any garage owners who feel they are being treated unfairly to come forwards, so we can ensure the spirit of the Regulation is upheld."

European Parliament must tighten its belt too

Liberal Democrat MEPs refused to support an increase in staff allowances and other administrative support for MEPs in the current year and next year, in a vote in the European Parliament.

London MEP Sarah Ludford said: "Families, businesses and governments all over the EU are having to tighten their belts to survive the recession. The European Parliament should do the same."

"The two biggest groups in the Parliament, the centre-right European People's Party and the Socialists, pushed through a substantial increase in the Parliament's budget for next year. The Liberal group (ALDE) took a stand against, though we were outvoted."

"The undoubted extra demands on MEPs arising from the new responsibilities under the Lisbon treaty cannot be used as an excuse year after year. That is why we voted against the proposed 2011 increase in allowance for parliamentary assistance and extra money for office-holder MEPs."



Lib Dems give small firms and shops a fairer deal

Liberal Democrat MEP Sarah Ludford has championed a European Parliament initiative to cut red tape for small businesses.

The move will mean that the 9 out of 10 firms which employ under 10 people will not have to prepare full annual accounts. They will only have to provide a record of business transactions and their general financial situation.

Sarah Ludford said: "This slashing of red tape is a ray of light for small businesses.

It gives them a break at a tough economic time: cutting costs, boosting the economy and creating jobs."

"Euro-MPs also backed a £90 million scheme where small start-up companies could receive loans of up to £20,000. Liberal Democrats are committed to protecting local businesses and high streets."

Meanwhile LibDem party leader Nick Clegg has launched a "vibrant local high streets" campaign aiming to revive local shops

as part of the election campaign earlier this year.

LibDems propose to reform business rates and job taxes, ensure banks lend to small firms and get fair treatment for small retailers.

Sarah added: "Too often supermarkets push small independent shops - 12,000 closed in 2009 alone - out of the way.

"LibDems want to see our local high streets, at the hearts of our towns and communities, thrive and prosper."

End to injustice in Europe due to language barrier

The European Parliament in Strasbourg was expected on Wednesday 16 June to pass landmark legislation giving all EU citizens rights to interpretation & translation when they are questioned by police or tried in another EU country where they don't speak the language.

The directive can then pass into EU law as it has already been approved by EU governments in the Council of Ministers. Prior to Wednesday's parliamentary vote, MEPs will debate the legislation on Monday evening (14 June).

Liberal Democrat European justice & human rights spokeswoman and London MEP Sarah Ludford, the European Parliament's 'rapporteur' who conducted the negotiations with the 'rotating' Spanish Presidency, said:

"This a double first and a genuinely historic event. It is the first – and overdue – EU measure on fair trial rights to go alongside the European Arrest Warrant and also the first EU criminal justice legislation to be negotiated under 'co-decision' with MEPs rather than decided by national ministers alone."

Cheap justice costs more in appeals

"As more people cross borders under EU free movement rights, there are unacceptable miscarriages of justice due to inadequate defence safeguards including lack of proper language provision."

"Member States are worried about cost, but cheap justice is expensive in appeals, failure to convict and loss of reputation. If we really want to catch criminals we need good justice through Rolls-Royce not Rambo prosecutions."

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

'Boiler room' fraudsters threat to target 38,000 victims

Lib Dem MEP Sharon Bowles is warning of a new 'boiler room' fraud threat, the biggest yet uncovered by the Financial Services Authority.

A list discovered by the FSA containing the names and addresses of over 38,000 people, many of whom live in the South East, is still believed to be in active use.

Hubs of illegal business activity, often dubbed 'boiler rooms', have appeared across Europe in recent years, selling fake or worthless shares to unsuspecting investors over the phone.

Sharon has pressured the European Commission to take action against Spain for not implementing the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive, legislation which would prohibit 'boiler rooms' from being set up.

Countries are often reluctant to spend money tracking down fraudsters when the victims are in other countries. Nevertheless, pressure on Spain has started to bear fruit.

Danish national, Thomas Knudsen, 31, was arrested on a European arrest warrant by Spanish police in Malaga last March and extradited to the UK where he was found guilty of conspiracy to defraud and laundering more than £2,100,000.

Sharon said: "Boiler room fraud ruins lives, robbing hard-working people of their savings. The list recovered by the FSA contains a high concentration of names and addresses in the South East.

"I am pleased the FSA has taken immediate action to inform those on the list but I am also keen to publicise this issue and boiler room scams in general, so that people can be on their guard, especially if business is done over the phone.

The FSA is in the process of writing to every person on the list warning them of the scam.

AIFM report too restrictive - Bowles

The European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee has voted through its report on the Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive - proposed legislation which will regulate the European fund management industry.

Liberal Democrat MEP and Committee Chair, Sharon Bowles welcomed improvements in the text, but regretted the Committee's decision to vote for restrictions on non-EU funds.

Sharon Bowles said: "I welcome the several workable and sensible changes introduced in this report and think that, when these are merged with the Council's report, we will be 90% of the way towards a very good text. In several areas we have secured significant improvements."

"However, I am disappointed that the rules are not sufficiently flexible for EU investors in non-EU funds and risk creating 'prison Europe'. I fear that these restrictions could severely hamper the ability of pension funds and other investors to make those vital returns which are necessary to provide for our ageing population.

"I am also concerned that some funds and fund managers in developing countries will no longer have access to finance from EU investors since the barriers for so called 'passive marketing' are too high."

"Given the ever increasing presence of China in Africa and elsewhere, I feel the EU is losing its strategic advantage by restricting itself through such measures."

Below: Sharon Bowles and George Lyon MEP discuss the AIFM directive with banking industry representatives in Edinburgh.



Change that works for Europe & for you

Lib Dems lift the lid on rail recycling

An investigation by South East region Lib Dem MEP Catherine Bearder has found that more action is still needed by many rail companies to increase recycling levels.

"The good news is that many rail companies already have green agreements with retailers or have managed to create extra space for recycling facilities onboard their trains," said Catherine. "But there's still room for improvement."

By sharing these good green practices, train companies across the South East can all learn from each other" Catherine added. "Eurostar recycles 50% of it's waste and topped the green table, so there's plenty our rail companies can learn from across the Channel too."



"It's clear that people want our train companies to do more to minimise their impact on our environment.

"Going green is good for business, but having a green brand is not enough. Rail companies must back this up with green actions."

Building standards will cut energy bills and emissions - Hall

Fiona Hall, Leader of the UK Liberal Democrat MEPs and member of the Industry, Research and Energy Committee, has welcomed the European Parliament's backing for cost optimal standards of energy efficiency for all renovated buildings. Also agreed was a tight, "nearly zero" energy efficiency requirement for all new buildings in Europe from 2021.

It is estimated that the building sector is responsible for 40% of energy consumption and for 35% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. Only 1% of the UK's housing stock is currently considered to be energy efficient.

Fiona said: "These new energy saving standards will cut energy bills for families and

businesses throughout Europe. They will also help tackle fuel poverty at source.

"Energy saving in buildings is crucial to meeting our UK and EU agreed targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and boosting our energy security. What we have passed in the European Parliament is in line with the UK coalition government's agreement to invest in energy efficiency and promote the development of new green jobs. I look forward to working with the Government on the implementation of these new measures."



All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Crucial weeks for EU Common Agricultural Policy reform

Scotland's Lib Dem MEP George Lyon has begun three weeks of intensive negotiation to ensure that the report he authored on CAP reform will pass through the European Parliament.

The May Agriculture Committee meeting was the beginning of a

process that will conclude with a vote in Committee on June 15th followed by a final vote by the full Parliament in the plenary session starting on July 5th.

The report has attracted no less than 782 amendments and it is hoped the negotiations will concentrate on agreeing compromises to strengthen the report and set out a clear agenda for the reform of the CAP.

Commenting Mr Lyon said: "There was widespread support from across the political groups for the proposals set out in my report which seeks to make the CAP fairer, greener and more sustainable.

"There are, however, still areas where clear differences exist such as whether to re-regulate the markets and bring back milk quotas, the desire to go beyond 2020 for phasing in the move from historic to area based payments, and big differences on the criteria to be used for distribution of single farm payments to member states.

"The next three weeks will be a battle to get the CAP farmers deserve. I am confident that we can find common ground on these issues and win over enough votes to get the report through Committee in June."



European Parliament backs electronic tag amnesty

Lib Dem MEPs have welcomed the European Parliament vote approving an amnesty for sheep farmers who breach unwieldy new electronic tagging regulations.

George Lyon MEP tabled amendments to the CAP Simplification Report to ensure that the electronic tagging (EID) regulations do not unfairly penalise farmers who need more time to become accustomed to the new technology and give time for a thorough review of the EID legislation.

Commenting after the vote in Brussels, Mr Lyon said: "I am pleased that the European Parliament agreed with the conclusion reached by the Agriculture Committee that an amnesty for sheep farmers is a sensible way forward.

"We must now put pressure on the Commission to back up this call.

"The three year moratorium will give time to iron out some serious practical problems in trying to implementing the EID regulations. It is only right that farmers who are still trying to get to grip with these regulations are granted a period of grace while a review of the scheme is undertaken.

"I will be seeking an urgent meeting with Commissioner Dalli to impress upon him the importance of the European Commission reflecting the view of the European Parliament and acting accordingly."



● *Phil Bennion and Ludlow candidate Heather Kidd discuss the EID issue at Ludlow market with concerned Shropshire sheep farmer Richard Huffer.*

Lib Dems fight for air passenger rights after Volcano fiasco

Lib Dem Euro-MP Graham Watson is fighting for passengers rights after millions were caught up in the huge disruption caused by volcanic ash.

The South West MEP has warned airlines that they must meet their legal obligations on refreshments and accommodation for stranded passengers. He also lodged an urgent Parliamentary Question to the European Commission after reports that some airlines were asking passengers to pay extra for alternative travel arrangements.

Under EU law, when a person books a flight, they enter a contract with the airline to get them from one destination to another. If a flight is cancelled, passengers have two options; they can take a refund and annul the contract, or ask to be scheduled onto another flight or travel by other means. When passengers choose the latter option,

the airline has a duty to provide accommodation, transport to this accommodation, and meals and refreshments where necessary.

Ryanair later backed down from their position of providing help only up to the cost of a ticket; which can be as little as €5.

Graham Watson said; "I am pleased that Ryanair reversed their unacceptable policy and followed the example of other airlines. Whilst airlines do not have to compensate passengers, they do have an important duty of care for them.

"Airlines make substantial profits in the good times and must be prepared - like any other business - to suffer losses in bad times."

"Thousands of individuals faced a desperate situation during the recent problems. EU law says that

they should not be left with hotel and restaurant bills for the privilege. Airlines must not duck their responsibilities."

Watson says that affected passengers should always contact their airline to discuss details of provisions, and address any complaints they may have to the Air Transport Users Council.

The MEP also acted on reports that TUI were asking passengers to pay the difference between their original flight and an alternative route. Watson tabled another urgent Parliamentary Question on this issue and said; "It appears to me that this requirement may not be in line with EU rules. I have asked the European Commission to investigate and will urge them to take action if necessary. The EU has given air passengers legal rights. Volcano or no volcano, they must be respected."

Animal Welfare and Health Centre will benefit farmers

MEPs have called upon the EU to create a Centre for Animal Welfare and Animal Health to help enforce and better apply European rules in all member states. The move came as part of the European Parliament's review of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010. In recent years, the EU has built up a substantial body of laws that aim to safeguard animal rights but also reduce the risk of disease spreading into the food chain.

Lib Dem MEP Graham Watson praised the steps that have already been taken; "The EU has led the way when it comes to animal welfare and animal health. The legal relationship between humans and animals has been vastly improved but we can do better."

It is hoped that the proposed centre will act as a coordinating hub for national authorities, industry

and the public in monitoring the implementation of rules and sharing of best practice.

Watson believes that it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the rules are applied equally across Europe. He said; "UK farmers have been raising their game in response to changes in the law. It is important that this is mirrored throughout Europe if we are to make progress and create a level playing field for food chain actors. The Centre would make sure that no-one ducks their responsibilities and all meet the same high standards. It would benefit farmers here in the UK"



Change that works for Europe & for you

Raising the role of women in EU-Turkey relations

On the initiative of two MEPs, Diana Wallis and Gesine Meissner of the German FDP, the ALDE group in the European Parliament organised a conference on gender related issues between the EU and Turkey ('A 2020 Gender Perspective for the EU and Turkey'). They were joined in the Conference by members of TÜSIAD (The Turkish Industrialist and Business Association) and KAGIDER (the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Turkey).

Diana Wallis said:

"Gender equality remains a major challenge for Turkey but it is hugely encouraging that steps are being taken in the right direction, e.g. a gender equality committee in the Turkish parliament has been established and the number of women

MPs in the Turkish parliament more than doubled in the last elections."

"It is clear that gender issues are not restricted to Turkey and a lot remains to be done within the EU. This seminar gives us the opportunity to learn from each other and to analyse some lessons taken from the DAPHNE programmes and the 2006-2010 Road Map."

The conference aimed to raise awareness of the fact that the gender dimension should be included in the EU 2020 Strategy and will contribute to better benchmarking and political visibility on gender-equality specific targets. Speakers from the UN Development Programme office in Brussels, the European Commission, the Spanish presidency, the European Training founda-

tion, Turkish entrepreneurs associations, NGOs and European networks all discussed the issues of equal access for both genders to education, the labour market, leading positions and decision making.



European Liberals in historic multi-party forum with Chinese Communist Party

An ELDR delegation attended the first ever European multi-party gathering with the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing recently.

In her opening speech, ELDR President Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck pointed out that all powerful actors on the world stage need to play a part to overcome threats such as nuclear proliferation, the reform of international financial markets or climate change.



Solutions can only be found together but not against each other.

"With political and economic

size comes responsibility", she noted and this applies more than ever to China. The interdependency of the world's economies also makes China vulnerable to systemic failures and would lead to major asset losses of the country.

The ELDR leader also underlined the importance of "competition as a discovery procedure" (a quote from Hayek) in seeking the best solutions for the political and economic development of societies.

"Only free citizens will be able to unleash their creative power to develop a society's full potential", the President of the Liberals emphasised.

During the second day of the conference, together with more than 100 representatives from different European political parties and the Chinese Communist Party, European Liberals discussed the post-crisis reform of the international financial system, climate change, and the importance of political (multi)-party cooperation in China-European relations.

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Liz Lynne wins EU breakthrough for freelance workers

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne is celebrating after a key committee in the European Parliament voted to back her call for more attention to the needs of independent professionals and freelancers.

There are now over 1.4 million freelance workers in the UK alone. Across the EU it is estimated that independent professionals make up

9 - 13% of the productive workforce.

The West Midlands MEP's proposal won support in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, where she is First Vice President.

Working for themselves

Liz said; "I am delighted the committee endorsed my call for greater recognition and support for independent professionals and freelancers. More and more people

are now choosing to work for themselves. They play a vital role in our economy and our communities.

"All too often, these independent professionals, whether they are IT consultants, translators, freelance journalists or designers, struggle to make their voices heard. They find their needs are not taken

into account by lawmakers, both in Britain and in other EU countries."

"The way that EU legislation has traditionally been produced, for example, means independent professionals and self employed people have little or no way into the policy making process.

"I hope this vote is a step towards changing that, though there is a long way to go."

Earlier this year, Liz helped set up a new European Forum for independent professionals, or freelancers and hosted their first meeting in the European Parliament in Brussels (*left*). The purpose of the forum is to help connect national and international associations representing freelance workers.

Liz added: "We have a steep hill to climb if we are to challenge the staggering ignorance surrounding the role played by independent and freelance workers across the EU."



ELDR holds conference on stabilising the euro

The European Liberal and Democrat Party (ELDR) is organising a public conference in Brussels about the present situation in the euro zone, in view of the recent crisis in Greece and other key member states.

The bail out of Greece and questions about the long-term stability of the single currency and ways to strengthen co-operation in the euro zone are the most urgent topics for EU leaders to address.

The conference, to be held on June 17th, will discuss the current developments in the euro zone and the European Liberal Democrat approach for the future stability and prosperity of Europe's economy.

The speakers include **Siim Kallas** (*left in the picture*), **European Commission Vice President (Estonia)**, who will present the Estonian perspective of the state of play in the euro zone, especially in view of Estonia's expected entry into the euro at the beginning of next year.

This event will take place on Thursday June 17th at the Concert Noble, rue d'Arlon 82, 1040 Brussels, Belgium between 12:30 and 15:00, including a networking lunch between 12:30 and 13:00. For more information about the conference and to enquire about participation please contact Robert Plummer, rplummer@eldr.eu



EU Parliament backs fight against Breast Cancer

Lib Dem Euro MP Liz Lynne and breast cancer campaigners are celebrating after the European Parliament formally adopted Liz's written declaration calling for renewed action in the fight against breast cancer.

Liz Lynne and three other MEPs from different parties launched the Declaration calling for a sustained Europe-wide campaign to beat breast cancer by implementing EU breast cancer guidelines. The disease kills nearly 90,000 women in the European Union every year, including 12,000 women in the UK annually according to the latest figures.

Many leading charities believe lives could be saved if EU guidelines are implemented properly. These call for nationwide breast screening, multidisciplinary specialist breast units in each Member State and for the development of national cancer registers. Liz's declaration also calls for the European Commission to support

studies to look at whether screening is useful for women over 69 years of age and for those under 50;

It has now been signed up to by 369 MEPs, a majority of the Parliament,

Liz Lynne said: "This is fantastic news for the campaign against this killer disease. Some countries, including the UK, have made some progress, but the EU guidelines are one of the best ways to raise standards. The current disparity in screening, diagnosis and morbidity rates between EU countries is frightening.

"According to the European Commission, some 32,000 deaths could be prevented annually if these guidelines were implemented across the EU. Mandatory screening is one of the most important ways to reduce deaths which is why it's important best practice is shared. We also need to look at whether screening can help women older than

the guidelines specify. We also need multidisciplinary specialist breast care units in place by 2016. The Commission could develop and fund a certification scheme to accredit specialist units to agreed standards by 2011.

"National cancer registers in every EU country would also be a great step forward," Liz added.

Below: Liz with campaigners from the Europa Donna alliance.



ENSUS shows the way on green jobs

The commitment to green jobs in the programme of the new Lib-Con coalition will require action on over-regulation say **Fiona Hall MEP and Ian Swales MP**, following a visit to the Ensus biorefinery plant at Wilton in Redcar, which came online earlier this year.

Ensus, the largest biorefinery in Europe, produces

bioethanol, high protein animal feed substituting for rain forest soy meal, and non-fossil carbon dioxide for the drinks industry. It has created 100 jobs on site and around 2000 in the supply chain.

Ian Swales MP, who sensationally won Redcar from Labour in May, said: "Ensus is a success story and shows how the Wilton site, where I used to work, is transforming itself with the new technologies of the 21st century.

"The British business regime is difficult for any new company trying to get off the ground. Holland and Germany are much more user-friendly. If we don't make it easy for new green enterprises to base themselves in the UK, then they will go elsewhere."

Commented **Fiona Hall**: "The message we heard at Ensus is that European-level regulation is helpful, because it gives investors certainty. But much more needs to be done at a UK level to get new green jobs off the ground. That is why support for green jobs is a key commitment from the Liberal Democrats."



All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Protect fragile ecosystems!

Lib Dem MEP Catherine Bearder, with strong support from colleague Liz Lynne, has tabled a declaration before the European Parliament calling for the EU to take more action to defend the world's endangered species and threatened ecosystems.

If you care about the environment write to your MEPs and get them to sign it.

"2010 is the United Nations' International Year of Biodiversity", lifelong green campaigner Catherine Bearder explained. "Extinction is already looming for much of our wildlife. It's vital that we do all we can now to protect our rich environment."

"The UK biodiversity indicators are mixed. Progress has clearly been made in some areas, but much more must be done to preserve the UK's rich biodiversity. The new UK

coalition government has set out clear policies on the issue.

"We also need the EU as a whole to be using it's influence to highlight best practice.

Liz Lynne added, "Europe has a rich biodiversity that needs protecting from short-sighted action and climate change. The EU must work towards a system of protection that acknowledges the true economic and social value of biodiversity and ecosystems.

"It is cheaper to protect our biodiversity today than it will be to replace it tomorrow, if it would even be possible. Extinction is looming for much of our wildlife and extinction is forever."

A Written Declaration is a written statement that launches a debate on an issue that falls within the EU's remit. If it is signed by a majority of MEPs, it is forwarded to the European Commission for action.

**ASK YOUR LOCAL
MEP TO SIGN
DECLARATION 24**



0024/2010 Written declaration on the protection of fragile ecosystems and endangered species

The European Parliament, having regard to Rule 123 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas 2010 has been declared the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity,

B. whereas in 2002 global leaders agreed to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 but it is now generally accepted that this target has not been achieved,

C. whereas tropical rainforests and other forests are acknowledged as playing a fundamental role in regulating the world's climate systems,

D. whereas the abundance of large and small vertebrates is rapidly declining in forests, particularly in the tropics, where over-hunting and human encroachment has left many forests structurally intact but potentially incapable of sustaining their biodiversity,

E. whereas the exploitation of marine and other ecosystems is contributing to depletion of many of the world's most iconic species which now face extinction,

F. whereas the European Union can internationally have a decisive say over political and economic issues affecting fragile ecosystems and endangered species,

1. Urges the Commission and Member States to intensify the EU's commitment to ensuring that the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity includes concrete measures to protect the world's threatened ecosystems and endangered species;

2. Requests urgent progress towards a system for measuring and acknowledging the true economic and social value of biodiversity and ecosystems which reflects their vulnerability, capital stock, the benefits to communities that depend on them and the true cost of their loss;

3. Instructs its President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council and the Commission

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Lib Dem EuroFILE



News from LDEG

www.ldeg.org

Editor: Phil Bennion

June 2010

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