

campaigner

for campaigning liberal democrats

ALWAYS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



02 Devolving Power

Lib Dems in Rochdale devolve power to local Townships



05 The Greenest Party in Town

Beating the Greens and Labour in a tough by-election in Camden



08 Lessons from America

On the ground observations from the US Democrats recent success

Cut Crime Campaign

When it comes to law and order, we are well known as a party which defends civil liberties, due process and the rule of law. But we are not as well known for our effective, practical proposals to cut crime. The Government talks tough on crime, but has failed to address public anxiety about crime. The Conservatives are in a spin, with very little to say of any substance at all.

That is why this is an ideal time for the Liberal Democrats to show that we are practical, as well as principled, in our approach to crime.

Our "We Can Cut Crime" campaign will set out five steps to a safer Britain (see pages 6-7). Each of these steps would make a real difference to the quality of people's lives and would help restore confidence in our criminal justice system. Under both Conservative and Labour governments too many people have become needless victims of crime as the current system fails to stop offenders from repeating their crimes. Far too many people, particularly those most vulnerable members of society such as the elderly, live with a very real fear of crime. But it does not have to be this way.

Liberal Democrat councils (pages 6-7) up and down the country have shown that liberal policies put a real dent in crime – Charles Clarke even admitted that Liberal Democrat pioneered Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) were 'better than ASBOs.' Regrettably, Labour Home



Lib Dem Shadow Home Secretary Nick Clegg discussing crime issues with a local police officer.

Secretaries still seem addicted to generating headlines rather than concrete solutions to the problems around crime. This campaign will make it clear that there is a significant difference between us and the other two parties on crime. In this campaign we will show how a focus on what works, rather than what sounds good, can produce real results.

I hope promoting this campaign on the doorsteps over the next few months will be a top priority for all Liberal Democrat councillors and

candidates. Cutting crime is a liberal issue. We have the right policies and principles. We are in a strong position to turn the tables on the other two parties. Now we need to show the public that we care – and that only the Liberal Democrats have the real answers.

Nick Clegg is MP for Sheffield Hallam and Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary

5 steps to a safer Britain

- 1 More police on patrol - don't waste billions on ID cards
- 2 Take back our town centres - let communities close pubs and clubs that cause trouble
- 3 Make sentences mean what they say - life should mean life
- 4 Compulsory work and training in prison - to cut reoffending
- 5 Better compensation for victims - paid for by prison work

We can cut crime!



Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of "Campaigner", the members newsletter from ALDC. Campaigner is, of course, the new name for "Grassroots Campaigner", ALDC's long standing members' publication over the last decade.

We hope that you like the changes we've made to the publication - comments are always appreciated on this and all our work. Please feel free to contact me directly at any time - tim.pickstone@aldc.org

Importantly this is YOUR newsletter. If there are campaigns that you have been running, policies that you have been putting into practice or experiences that you want to share please feel free to let us know and we'll do our best to include them in the future.

Local Government Conference

An early date for your diary this year - **Saturday 23 June 2007** at the Birmingham International Convention Centre (ICC) is the "first" Liberal Democrat **Local Government Conference**. The event is being jointly promoted by ALDC and the Local Government Association Lib Dem Group and will provide a strong mix of policy discussion, sharing best practice and of training for both elected councillors and campaigners of all levels.

A flyer has been enclosed with this publication, or you can download a registration form from our website www.aldc.org. More details of the programme will be available as the months progress, but do please take advantage of our "early bird" reduced registration rate.

14 Weeks to Go...

By the time you get this publication, polling day will be less than 14 weeks away. For all of us (outside London and a few English Unitaries) this is a massive electoral test with more than half of all Lib Dem Councillors up for election, General Elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, and the first ever STV elections in mainland UK in Scottish local elections. (If you do live in London or those English Unitaries - PLEASE GO AND HELP SOMEONE WHO DOES HAVE AN ELECTION!!!)

I do not need to tell you, that **where we work, we win**. It has been proven over many years of experience in the Liberal Democrats and our predecessor parties that good community politics, year round hard work and - where we do have influence - good Lib Dem policies in action reap reward at the ballot box.

If you haven't already started you and your team need to be gearing up for a very busy few months. Don't forget to make the most of key local issues like hospital services or police cuts. Don't forget to target your message appropriately to Lib Dem supporters, potential supporters and "third party" potential switchers. Don't forget the importance of the postal vote. And don't forget to target your resources effectively. There are no points for coming "a good second" in electoral politics!

Don't forget that help is there if you need it - contact ALDC, your regional party, your regional campaigns officer - don't be afraid to ask.

Good luck with your campaigns.

Tim Pickstone is Chief Executive of ALDC
tim.pickstone@aldc.org



Power to the People!

Liberal Democrats in Rochdale deliver on their manifesto commitment to devolve power to local Townships.



Alan Taylor, Lib Dem Leader of Rochdale Council (back right) joins MEP Chris Davies (front right) and campaigners from Middleton and Heywood Lib Dems.

They spent decades trying to get power; once they had it they gave most of it away! That is exactly what the Liberal Democrats in Rochdale have done to the delight of residents. This is the result of a complete turnaround in Council Policy following the Liberal Democrats successful election results in May last year. Rochdale is split up into 4 areas - called 'Townships' - giving more power to them became the central plank of the local party's manifesto for the elections last May. This has been a successful time locally for the party - having regained the Parliamentary seat in May 2005 and the successful election results gave them the mandate to deliver on their promises. They have now taken overall control of the Council after the resignation of a Labour Councillor, having run the Town under Minority Administration - strengthening their grip.

The vital part of running a new administration is to hit the ground running, the whole of the Lib Dem Manifesto had been checked with Council Officers to see whether it was achievable before the election. This made sure that everything we promised we are delivering. This included devolution, improving recycling, improving

educational attainment, delivering a customer focused Council and much more. The first thing they did was to change the Council's Cabinet - getting rid of the insignificant positions and replacing them with a Portfolio Holder responsible for devolution and one for Older People. A key advantage was the joint working between the Council Group and the Member of Parliament. Paul Rowen MP met regularly with the Council Group to make sure that they were singing from the same hymn sheet! The other was the inexplicable decision of the Labour and Conservatives last year to go into Coalition and run the administration... badly!

Back to devolution - power being devolved includes more control over roads, street lights, pavements, parks - greater powers over community centres, leisure projects, libraries and others. These powers will be administered by the Townships meaning that more decisions will be made locally. These Townships now have more power than the old Town Councils that were abolished in 1974. This policy has delighted the communities of Heywood, Middleton, Pennines and Rochdale.

Council Leader Alan Taylor said, "We are delighted to be keeping yet another clear Manifesto commitment, in our successful election campaign we made promises and this is clear evidence of us keeping them. It is high time we put trust in the local people. These are really exciting proposals for Rochdale which will really change the way Council Services are delivered. We want Townships themselves to devolve even further, this means giving power to local communities. We would expect these communities to be given a budget to use on their priorities. Gone are the centralist days of power being delivered from their Town Hall, Councils have a reputation as delivery agents for the Government, in Rochdale this has been thrown out of the window. I would like to thank Party President Simon Hughes MP, who launched our manifesto and gave us the encouragement to follow it through. Even if that meant giving power straight back to Labour in areas of our borough – we have shown we are party of conviction. The flawed Government White Paper promised to give more power to communities – we have shown we mean what we say and follow through our Liberal agenda. If I was going to give Lib Dem Groups across the country any tips I would say form a clear manifesto, make sure you can do it and then deliver the message home time and time again through leaflets, target letters and through the local press."

Milnrow and Newhey Councillor Keith Swift who is the Cabinet Member responsible for devolution said, "We have put trust in local decision making at the top of our agenda. As many decisions as possible that affect local communities will be delegated to Township Level, making them stronger and more vibrant"

Since May, the Liberal Democrats in Rochdale



Alan Taylor, Lib Dem Leader of Rochdale Council and Party President Simon Hughes MP at the manifesto launch in Heywood Township.

have been busy keeping their other promises too. This includes establishing a new Portfolio Holder for Older People - Councillor Angela Coric is doing an excellent job, and Rochdale Council is already benefiting, having been successful in a bid for ONE MILLION POUNDS in extra funding as a direct result of the Liberal Democrats showing their commitment to Older People.

For more information on campaigning in the Rochdale Borough please log onto: www.rochdalelibdems.org.uk

Windy Homes

Lib Dem run Eastleigh's Executive Member for the Environment, Cllr Louise Bloom, outlines how the Council is promoting sustainable energy

Over the last few years we have been concentrating our efforts in Eastleigh on sustainable energy projects. These have been largely funded by our Green Energy Reserve Fund, set up by the Leader of the Council three years ago and administered by the Cabinet member for Environment (me!) and our Sustainability Co-ordinator.

One of our very successful projects was to put up a 5 kW wind turbine near to the Visitor's Centre at one of our country parks in May 2005. It acts as a demonstration of what a wind turbine actually looks and sounds like as well as providing some power for the Visitor's Centre. It has become quite a tourist attraction, had a very well attended birthday party last May; Windy Bill's Birthday Bash, and was even visited recently by Ming Campbell!

We then started looking into domestic wind turbines and the Windy Homes project was set up. We asked in our council newspaper, Borough News, for interested householders to contact us with the plan to give a grant to five of them, one in each of our Local Area Committee areas, and then monitor their turbine's outputs. We were then inundated with volunteers and enquiries from those generally interested in the subject.

We then ran a seminar with the householders and councillors to discuss the project further, including looking at all the planning issues. We later ran a similar session aimed at our Town & Parish councillors, who often act as good local opinion formers.

The first turbine is going up in mid January and the others should follow soon. We decided to go into a partnership with Wind Save, who are now supplying B&Q, as they were the simplest to install, being basically 'plug and play' and need very little maintenance. Our MP Chris Huhne has got in on the act and is currently awaiting planning permission for a turbine on his home in Eastleigh, which we will also monitor.

One of the problems we have faced is that Eastleigh is not that windy a borough. People have asked 'but what about on the coast?' (The south of our Borough goes down to Southampton Water at the villages of Netley and Hamble.) We thought that too, but wind maps showed that wasn't a good location as basically the Isle of Wight gets in the way and slows down the wind! As domestic wind turbines are very new our monitoring work will be very important and we are lucky to have a PhD student who is a former EBC employee leading on this work for us.

In order to further encourage wind turbines and indeed all sustainable energy installations, Council Leader Keith House announced in his Budget speech in February 2006 that with immediate effect all planning applications for renewable energy projects (so including, for example, CHP schemes, solar panels and thermal heating) would be free for both residential and business properties. We've now had a series of



Cllr Louise Bloom at Eastleigh's Country Park Turbine, winning a Regional Renewal Energy Award

these and there have mostly been no problems.

Behind the scenes there's an internal recharge from our Development Control unit to our Environment budgets, so the planning function doesn't lose income. That's not a legal issue - there is nothing to stop planning authorities not charging for classes of planning applications as they like.

We have publicised this in Borough News and had a lot of interest. It gives a general 'feel good' factor even to those who have no intention of actually applying for anything. It also shows how seriously we are taking the whole sustainable energy/climate change agenda and we hope we can be an example to other local authorities as well as inspiring our residents.

**Louise Bloom
Cabinet Member for Environment
Eastleigh Borough Council.
louisebloom@cix.co.uk**

westminster



The Lib Dem Local Government's Parliamentary Team reporting back to you – not just at election time, but all the year round. (l-r Dan Rogerson MP, Baroness Ros Scott, Andrew Stunell MP, Tom Brake MP)

Happy New Year! I hope you had a good break and are ready for a whirlwind of action over the weeks to election D-Day, May 3rd. Here in Parliament we are planning a non-stop few months and are kicking off the New Year with the Cut Crime Campaign.

It's time to Cut Crime!

We all know that living in a safe and supportive community is vital to everyone. This issue of Campaigner, and the ALDC website is full of 'Cut Crime' campaign ideas, tips and materials, so make the most of them! Please clear some space in your diary between the 2nd – 11th February so you can join Ming and the Parliamentary team in the Cut Crime Action Week. It is a great time to get out and knock on some doors. And don't stop on the 11th!

Local Government Bill let down

Last month Ruth Kelly finally got round to publishing her Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. And yes, the health section was a surprise to me as well! Most of the Bill is a disappointing damp squib, but it also contains some seriously worrying elements. We will be arguing for real devolution of power and resources to the lowest level – devolving quango budgets to local councils, introducing fair voting and addressing the democratic deficit in health.

Lyons, London and Green Homes

Sir Michael Lyons has delayed his report once again, and I am meeting with him next month to push our case for fair local taxation. The Greater London Assembly Bill is being examined in Committee by team member Tom Brake, and we are pressing for more devolved powers for the GLA from central government. Amazingly the budget for the Government Office for London quango is more than that of the elected GLA, and has actually grown since the GLA was introduced.

Finally, please back my motion on Sustainable Homes at the Harrogate Conference. Our homes produce 27% of the nation's carbon emissions, and are the most wasteful in Europe. We are the only party to put forward serious proposals to slash this devastating waste, whilst the others just posture and pose.

Andrew Stunell MP
Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Saving our Hospital

Hemel Hempstead PPC Richard Grayson shows how Liberal Democrats are playing a key role in local NHS campaigns



Steve Webb MP (centre) on a recent visit to Watford and Hemel with Watford and Hemel PPCs Sal Brinton and Richard Grayson

One local issue dominates all others in Hemel Hempstead: the future of our General Hospital, which has been under threat in different ways for decades. Having been born in one Hemel Hempstead hospital closed by the Tories, I have been personally determined that we should not lose our main hospital. The present threat comes from the West Herts Hospital Trust's plan to concentrate key services in Watford.

This has been the core campaign issue for the Hemel Hempstead Liberal Democrats over the last five years, yet we have been careful not to over-politicise our work. There is a thriving community-based campaign – led by the Dacorum Hospital Action Group (DHAG) – which can rally thousands of local people for demonstrations. With such a group in existence, it would be damaging for any local party to run their own alternative campaign, and the brief efforts of the current Conservative MP (when he became their candidate five years ago) sank without notice. So Liberal Democrats have taken a leading role – with local Labour and Conservative politicians – in DHAG. We have taken roles in organising the group, engaging in everything from fund-raising to leaflet design. When there was a large demonstration and publicity was needed, we offered our Riso for the printing of leaflets, sharing the costs with the other parties and even co-operating with them delivering throughout the constituency.

That is not to say that there has been no independent Liberal Democrat activity on the hospital. As it is such a huge issue, no leaflet goes out without some mention of the hospital, making it clear that we are at the core of the community-based campaign. We make it clear whenever we can that the future of the hospital is our top priority and that we are 'working hard all year round' on the campaign.

We also promote our alternative policy on the NHS. When I am knocking on doors, I tell people that we are faced with losing our hospital because the Tories set up, and Labour have continued, a system in which unaccountable bureaucrats make decisions while ignoring the wishes of local people.

I tell them that if we were in power nationally, big decisions on the NHS would be made by locally elected people, and that way, local views would have to be acted on. When I was involved in developing the party's policies on decentralisation as the party's Director of Policy, I really did not imagine that decentralisation would be a frontline campaigning policy in a Hertfordshire New Town – but in Hemel Hempstead, because of our hospital, it plays very well on the doorstep.

One potential problem with our campaign to save Hemel hospital has been that it might have put us at odds with our colleagues in Watford, who

FOCUS LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
www.libdems.org.uk
Edited by:
Richard Grayson
Brenda Link
Feb-Mar 2004

on Highfield & St Paul's

Save Hemel Hospital

Local Liberal Democrats have been working hard with local campaigners to save Hemel's hospital.

This follows a recommendation by the unelected strategic health authority that key hospital services should be moved from Hemel to Watford.

Dr Richard Grayson, Hemel's Lib Dem Parliamentary Spokesman says, "There is still time to save the hospital and it's great to see the huge support for the local campaign."

Richard Grayson continued: "I hope all local people will get involved in the activities that have been publicised in the Gazette and Herald/Express."

Richard Grayson added: "This isn't just about the future of the hospital. It's about the future of the town. Too many of our local services, like parts of the hospital and college, are being moved to Watford."

Working to help Dexion pensioners

Former Dexion employees in Hemel have lost out on their pensions and the government will do nothing to help. This is despite the Liberal Democrats finding unspent money in the government budget that could be used to help the pensioners.

Richard Grayson has been working with Liberal Democrat pensions expert Steve Webb MP to put pressure on the government.

Richard Grayson says: "The government could help but they won't. It's a disgrace."

Working for our area - ALL YEAR ROUND!



Dr Richard Grayson is campaigning to save Hemel hospital

have been arguing that services should be at Watford rather than Hemel. However, as the local campaigns in both towns have developed, people across West Herts are realising that we are all in it together. Increasingly, the issues on which we campaign are around the overall ineffectiveness of the West Herts Hospital Trust, rather than narrower issues of concern to the two separate towns. Close consultation with the mayor of Watford, Dorothy Thornhill, and the PPC in Watford, Sal Brinton, has been essential. Even though the temptation might be there to compete, together we are stronger, and much more able to put pressure on a hospital trust that is so woefully failing to deliver what people want locally.

Dr Richard Grayson stood in Hemel Hempstead in 2005 and is again the parliamentary candidate there
rsgayson@hhlidems.org.uk



The Greenest Party in Town

Camden Liberal Democrats story of beating the Green Party National Speaker in the recent Kentish Town By-Election



Ralph Scott (centre) a few days before becoming the newly elected councillor for Kentish Town, with ward colleague Cllr Philip Thompson (left)

In May Labour-run Camden finally fell to the Lib Dem tide as we gained 13 seats – mainly from Labour (though we also took out the Tory Group Leader). And so now since May the Council has been led by the Liberal Democrats and formally operates under a Liberal Democrat-Conservative Administration.

So, to get a by-election so soon was a bit unexpected. The Labour candidate, who hung on in the Kentish Town ward was young, hard working and quite well known. Revealing something of Labour's post election blues however, she didn't appear to tell her own party she resigned and took a restricted job with Mayor Ken Livingstone.

In May Lib Dems Omar Farque Ansari and Philip Thompson were elected and Ralph Scott, the third member of the team lost by just 15 votes – all the ingredients of a two horse race. But in fact the Green Party had their sights firmly on the ward and they were just 157 votes behind. The Tories had few chances trailing with just ten percent of the vote.

We selected Ralph again quickly and got stuck into the literature campaign. Even though it all started in October, it was clear that lots of

people were pretty exhausted from the May elections and the huge effort of running the Council since – we therefore took a conscious decision to have a large campaign team and try and be as inclusive as possible.

The basic structure for us was a leaflet a week and a set of target-mail – but three weeks in, it was clear that all four parties were doing a leaflet a week and we realised that we were at risk of losing the volume battle three opposition leaflets to our one leaflet.

In addition, we decided that we needed to be very clear about what and who we were:

- the best chance to beat Labour
- the only genuine environmental party
- the only team that did the hard work in each street and on behalf of all residents.

Being in London, and flushed with success from May, help, deliverers and canvassers were not a problem and we'd like to thank the many MPs, MEPs, GLA members and Lords who came and helped. It was because of this that we managed a full canvass - twice. The first canvass had been of types of voters – Labour, Lib Dem, Green etc.

The battle with the Green's became very intense – we were clear it was between us and Labour, and the Green Party were clear that it was between us and them. It was also clear from canvassing that the Labour vote could collapse and there was all to play for. The clarity of us as the party to win was also slightly thrown by the Green Party electing their candidate as the Co-Principle Speaker (their Leader) half way through the campaign.

When we took control of the Council we appointed an Eco-Champion, Councillor Alexis Rowell and he leads a cross-party back-bench team of councillors probing ideas and working up radical ideas for the council to consider. It was our team on this small group that was to prove crucial – they had the enthusiasm, the knowledge and depth to canvass potential green voters (and our voters) and confirm our environmental credentials. Indeed the letter from Alexis, to green supporters – three pages of close text in comic sans font – was perhaps the crucial piece of literature.

There were two points at which we thought we might not win – and on both occasions it was the strong message in our literature that turned things round – the letter from Alexis was one and our eve of poll was the other. Labour foolishly suggested that they had run the council really well – 'fantastic' was the precise quote – and we picked it up and threw it straight back at them, reminding people why they had kicked Labour out.

And so it was that on 7th December we elected Councillor Ralph Scott – the Greens beat Labour and snuck into second place – while the Tories, after six leaflets collapsed to just 6%. We now have 21 councillors. North London and



Camden in particular, are looking good and greener.

Oh and by the way – we did the green tax switch stall – every week for eight weeks on Kentish Town High Road – and yes it helped!

Liberal Democrats	1083
Greens	812
Labour	808
Conservatives	198

More information from edfordham@cix.co.uk
Key leaflets and letters from the Kentish Town campaign can be downloaded from the ALDC online goldmine - www.aldc.org

We can cut crime!

10 things you can do to take part in the crime campaign

- Doorstep crime survey planned on action week
- Crime material in Focus
- Crime target letter to key groups
- Crime material on local website
- Crime press release issued
- Crime email to email database
- Crime material in members newsletter
- Crime Council motion submitted
- Crime street stall organised
- Members pizza and politics night to discuss crime policies arranged



Nick Clegg MP with Leader of Liverpool Council Cllr Warren Bradley visiting Merseyside Police's Matrix Team which targets gun, gang and drug crime.

Cut Crime Action Week 3 - 11 February 2007

Sir Menzies Campbell has launched the party's "We can cut crime" campaign and a "we can cut crime" action week is scheduled for February 3rd-11th.

Crime is right at the top of the political agenda in Britain today. In almost every part of the country concern about crime and anti-social behaviour is growing. Ten years of a tough talking Labour Government clearly hasn't worked! Today's Tories under David Cameron can't make up their minds what to do about crime.

We have a real opportunity to take the lead on

crime - not by tough talk, but by promoting effective action to cut crime. That's what this campaign is about.

Cut Crime Campaign materials can be downloaded from the ALDC members only area website at www.aldc.org (you just need your postcode and ALDC membership number to log in) OR, from the Party's extranet (click on Extranet at the bottom of www.libdems.org.uk). Check out the campaign website www.wecan-cut-crime.org.uk

CASE STUDY

Liverpool

Lib Dems have run Liverpool City Council since 1998

The Prime Minister has singled out Liverpool for the quality of their work in combating anti-social behaviour. He said the city's success "provides a blueprint for action nationwide". The head of the Home Office Anti Social Behaviour Unit, Louise Casey, has said, "We want Liverpool's success to be emulated across the country"

Burglary

- Keysafe - The launch of a simple device to secure car keys/house keys to foil thieves using 'hook and cane' devices via house letter boxes. The device was distributed free of charge to 40,000 households across the city.
- Community Safety and Domestic Violence Awareness - Officers from CitySafe and volunteers distributed information regarding community safety, together with free personal attack alarms, to shoppers at a busy high street supermarket.
- Distraction Burglary Awareness Events - These events have been held across Liverpool, focusing on older and vulnerable residents who are potential victims of distraction burglary. Those attending (in numbers between 50-100) have been encouraged to take part in a community play called 'Doorstop Challenge'. The police have also provided information on crime prevention and personal safety in and around the home, and when out in public places.
- CitySafe has funded Smartwater (a water-based DNA type solution) to invisibly mark property within primary care units and Liverpool schools.
- The installation of 5200 alleygates within the city has seen a considerable reduction on burglary rates and vandalism as well as reducing the incidence of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

CASE STUDY

Newcastle

Lib Dems took control of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 2004

Best Bar None

- Best Bar None is a scheme that aims to create a safer city by rewarding safely managed licensed premises, clamping down on irresponsible drinking habits.
- Sixty-four venues have entered the scheme which has been successful in Newcastle. As a comparison, Greater Manchester is in the process of receiving 100 applications for the whole of the Greater Manchester area.

Taxi Marshals

- Taxi marshals operated at 4 taxi ranks in Newcastle city centre from December 2005. A total of four Police Officers were on duty between 9:30pm and 3:30am on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.
- Due to the success of this scheme, funding is being provided to create Safe Neighbourhoods.
- The council has introduced Safe Neighbourhoods Act wards across Newcastle. These involve partnership with police and partner agencies (Northumbria Police, Your Home Partners) at a local level to identify community safety issues.

Local Government can make a real impact on crime. Here are some of our key Liberal Democrat achievements:

- Between 2002 and 2004, when Labour were controlling Newcastle City Council, violent crime rose by 54%. Between 2004 and 2006 when the Lib Dems were in control, violent crime fell by 12%
- Between 2002 and 2004, when Labour were controlling Newcastle City Council, motor vehicle crime rose by 14%. Between 2004 and 2006 when the Lib Dems were in control, vehicle crime fell by 11%
- Between 2001 and 2004, Labour-run Manchester saw burglary increase by 6%, whereas Liberal Democrat-run Liverpool saw burglary decrease by over 20%
- Lib Dem-run Islington has seen a drop in robbery of over 25% between 2002 and 2005, whilst Labour-run Brent saw an increase of over 16%
- Robbery has increased by over 29% in Conservative-run Richmond between 2002 and 2005, whilst in neighbouring Lib Dem Kingston, robbery has decreased by almost 16% over the same period



Ming Campbell MP speaking with Neighbourhood Wardens, Police and the Localised Services Manager in Newcastle.

environment in the pubs, bars and clubs of Newcastle
tapping down on alcohol related crime and curbing

been well received by the licensed industry in
in its 3rd year of the scheme and they have only received
ster Police force area.

ty centre for 10 weeks, between 28th October and 31st
duty at four taxi ranks in Newcastle City Centre
Sunday nights (between 22:00 and 02:00 hours each

provided to continue it during peak hours.

ion and Problem Solving (SNAPS) groups based in
working and coordination of staff from the City Council,
Newcastle, the Fire and Rescue Service and other
issues and develop early, effective interventions.

CASE STUDY

Islington

Liberal Democrats have run London Borough of Islington since 2002

Enforcement

- In 2005, ASBO+ was introduced. This means that every ASBO issued in Islington comes with a support package to help stop the behaviour that led to the ASBO. Islington's ASBO breach rate has now dropped to just 8% compared to nearly 50% nationally.
- Liberal Democrat-run Islington pioneered the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs), in which the perpetrators of nuisance behaviour have to sign an agreement with the police and local authority setting out minimum standards of conduct. Breach of an ABC can be used to apply for an ASBO on the individual. In the most serious cases, breach can result in eviction from social housing. ABCs have also been extended to ABC+, with support packages tailored to prevent ABCs escalating to ASBOs.

Licensing

- The council keeps local residents informed about applications, enabling them to come forward and tell licensing committees about problems that may have been continuing for years. This intelligence has helped licensing officers and police to work with landlords, achieving a 57% reduction in alcohol-related crime. Meetings have helped to open up channels of communication between bars and neighbours, so that problems are now often resolved informally.



Leader of Islington Council Cllr James Kempton with local Police Officers

CASE STUDY

Watford

Lib Dem Dorothy Thornhill was elected Mayor in 2002 and 2006

Enforcement

- Tackling graffiti and fly posting has been at the heart of the Council's drive to deliver a cleaner, greener and safer borough for our residents and a direct response to feedback from local people who put this high on their agenda for improving the quality of the town. Operation Rianna addressed these issues through reactive methods such as removing existing fly posters and graffiti and proactive methods such as taking legal action and naming and shaming individuals or companies in the local media.
- As part of the strategy to combat graffiti, the council works with the police and local schools to identify the perpetrators. They are then made to clear up their graffiti, providing visible 'payback' to the community – hundreds of hours so far.

Three strikes and you're out

- From December 2006 persistent, drunken bad behaviour in Watford is being shown the red card. The innovative 'three strikes' policy for dealing with anti-social behaviour in Watford town centre is in conjunction with Watford Community Safety Partnership, the Police, Watford Borough Council, and PubWatch .

- The three-strikes system works on the 'carrot and stick' principle. The yellow and red card warning are the sticks and the health messages and lifestyle information are the carrots.

Anti-social behaviour hotline

- A 24-hour Anti-social behaviour hotline is available to residents in Watford to report any incidents of anti-social behaviour. Called "It's Your Call" it is a joint initiative between Watford Borough Council and the Home Office.



Dorothy Thornhill, Mayor of Watford with the team who won the coveted Hertfordshire Problem Oriented Partnership Award

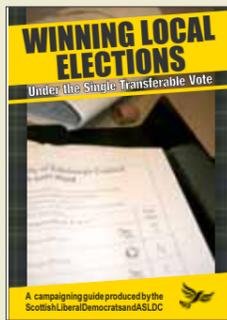
scotland

Scottish Kickstart

In conjunction with the Campaigns and Candidates Committee of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, ASLDC ran its most successful pre-election Kickstart event ever in December last year. Held in Perth, it attracted an attendance of over 140, the majority being candidates for the new multi-member council wards in which the first-ever Scottish council STV election will be held next May. The event was organised by Willie Wilson, ASLDC Convener and Derek Barrie, ALDC's Scottish Officer. As a result of the event the state of preparedness for May's elections was greatly increased.

Winning STV local elections

A free copy of a new campaigning booklet:



"Winning Local Elections Under STV," produced jointly by ASLDC and the Scottish Liberal Democrats, has been given to every selected council candidate for the May 2007 local government elections. This booklet was funded by "The Scottish Trust for Liberal Democracy."

The booklet is edited by ALDC Scottish Officer Derek Barrie with chapters by Cllr Debra Storr; Cllr Fred Mackintosh; Iain Smith MSP; Caron Lindsay and Derek Barrie. There is a foreword from Scottish Party Leader, Nicol Stephen and cover design is by Scottish Campaigns Officer, Charles Dundas.

Scottish Election Briefings

For the first time ever a specifically Scottish edition of ALDC's series of publications for council candidates "EB" is being produced. Each edition of EB is being "scottified" to make it more relevant and to highlight any differences between the Scottish and English local election procedures, regulations and timetable. This is particularly important given that the Scottish council elections are being held using the single transferable vote in 3 or 4 multi-member wards.

youth and student

LDYS

Liberal Democrat Youth and Students are currently in the process of revamping their campaigns and training packs, and associated training modules. The organisation is aiming to provide new versions of the following packs:

- Beginners Guide to recruitment & retention (for youth groups)
- Running Successful Student Groups
- Fresher's Bible
- Speaking in Schools and Colleges

ALDC members have found these packs very useful in the past, and hopefully these new versions will continue that trend. These new packs will be available from Harrogate conference onwards, and keep your eye out for the new sessions in the conference training directory.

In addition, if there are other areas where ALDC members think LDYS could assist them with campaigns and training please do get in touch. *LDYS has a large supply of campaigns material from the fresher's season in our office, available for party members to purchase. Please contact our office for details.* www.ldys.org.uk

Lesson from America

ALDC's Roger Symonds was in the USA during its recent mid-term elections.



The State Legislature of Idaho, based on Washington, even down to the replica Liberty Bell

At the beginning of November I found myself in Idaho USA, with my partner Nic and my two children, at the time of the most important mid-term elections for many years. The Democrats had a chance to take a majority in Washington in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Idaho is not a state where liberal values are in the ascendant, but there was a certain excitement about the results of these elections for the Democrats and a possibility they could make some gains, even here in the heart of 'Red Neck' America. It was pure coincidence that the visit coincided with the mid-term elections, so if you are harbouring suspicions about ALDC paying me to report on these elections, they are sadly completely unfounded. The main purpose was to see my sister and family. She left the UK in 1946 to marry an American GI. Although she and members of her family have been back to England I had never before visited her.

Idaho is amongst a group of conservative states in the North West – Wyoming, Nevada, Utah and Montana all made familiar through numerous western movies and in the novels of Zane Grey. Oregon, Washington, both less likely to be Conservative than the others, also border Idaho, famous for its potatoes.

The population of Idaho is 1.4 million, but because 'real estate' is much cheaper many people

are moving north into the state from California to live in new expensive houses in their own grounds. There are vast open spaces, but in really rugged western countryside whole housing estates are being built from scratch. There are no shops on these estates. People all drive to 'out of town' shopping malls.

Early settlers had a hard life and needed to be fiercely self sufficient and independent to survive. As well as farmers who settled there, Idaho also attracted fur trappers, miners, loggers and railroad builders.

This is the land of wide open spaces and wilderness, where 'sports' mean hunting, shooting and fishing, where sheep farmers have a problem with wolves killing their stock (although as many sheep were killed last year by domestic dogs as by wolves). By contrast this is also the land of Wal-Mart, shopping malls and SUVs, where no one walks unless they have to. Unemployment is at 4.7%.

Boise, the capital of Idaho, population 190,000, houses the State Legislature and Republican Governor, but the city has a Democrat Mayor. Boise has been stripped of its main shopping stores that can now be found in the out of town shopping malls.

A few days before the elections we visited the State Legislature building in Boise. We didn't find the Republican Governor, but we did speak to his



A Democrat, a Republican, and a visiting Lib Dem! Note the absence of Tellers.

Chief of Staff, who courteously showed us round the Governor's office. Of course Idaho politics is dominated by men, but it was a surprise to me that as early as 1898 there had been three women elected to the Idaho Legislature.

The present building took 15 years to complete and was finally finished in 1920 and is a copy of the Washington Capitol Building and constructed from marble from Italy, Georgia and Alaska.

The election campaign seemed to have been carried out mainly on TV, by delivering leaflets and by telephoning, apart from the TV advertising, in much the same way as we do it. However, recorded messages from the President and Newt Gingrich, former Republican leader in Congress, were regularly received or left on telephone answer phones. They received short shrift in the households we visited.

Polling day operations were different and in Boise, Idaho's Capital, Democrat activity was limited to telephone knocking up and 'visibility', which meant standing on intersections waving stake boards at passing motorists. Certainly when we went with my sister to vote there were no tellers, but people could register there and then in the Polling Station.

The TV adverts were almost entirely negative, with sometimes both Republican and Democrat candidates accusing each other of the same things.

I felt that the Republicans definitely had the edge in negativity. We watched one negative advert by the Republicans which had a tick list of things the Democrat Candidate stood for. Almost all the items on the list were based on really good liberal principles! The Democrat would certainly have got my vote!

Of course the big issue in these elections nationally was the Iraq war, but local politicians campaigned mostly on the economy, taxes and land sales. Voting in the mid-term elections means selecting candidates in a 'first past the post' system, but voters were not electing just a candidate to represent them in congress.

The sample ballot form for "Boise County

General Election on 7th November 2006" showed 17 positions and 52 candidates to choose from. Parties represented were of course Democrats and Republicans, but in some cases people stood for Independent, United, Constitution and Libertarian Parties.

Also on the ballot paper were referenda. The most interesting and controversial of which was:

"Shall Article III of the Constitution of the State of Idaho be amended by the addition of a new Section 28, to provide that a marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognised in this state?"

Electors were required to vote 'yes' or 'no'. The number "28" must be just one of those bizarre coincidences as this is the same number as the now removed clause 28 in the Thatcher Education Act of the 1980s.

The result of this ballot was 70% of voters in favour of this discriminatory and divisive change.

It could be that this motion appeared on the ballot paper because it was a way of getting the right wing Republican vote out. There was a danger that because of the disastrous American involvement in Iraq (now almost 3,000 American troops killed and 15,000 wounded) that Republicans would stay home.

The officers elected on the Boise ballot, which makes our ballot papers appear very simple in comparison, were:

For State Offices:

Representative in Congress, State Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Controller, State Treasurer, Attorney General, Superintendent of Public Instruction

For Legislative District Offices:

State Senator and State Representative positions A and B

For County Offices: County Commissioner (First District), County Commissioner (Third District), Clerk of the District Court, County Treasurer, County Assessor, County Coroner

For all these offices the candidates were listed and electors had to block in small boxes in pencil next to the names. Below each section of candidates there was a 'Write in' box where people can write the name of anyone not on the ballot paper and cast a vote for that person. I suspect that some strange characters get listed here, but I'll bet Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck feature quite prominently.

There were also two 'Propositions' (referenda) on the ballot paper. One to increase K-12 Education funding for local public schools by adding 1% to state sales tax and a second to limit the acquisition of private properties for regeneration and economic development. Both "Propositions" failed.

The Idaho Secretary of State publishes an 'Idaho

Voters Pamphlet' setting out the Propositions, arguments for and against, contacts for the Political Parties, a list of the contacts for the 44 counties and voter qualifications and registration.

We brought back some election literature from Idaho. In the election for Governor, Jerry Brady, the Democrat candidate said that he would "cut taxes and Government spending" - the same promise as the Republican candidate 'Butch' Otter.

Do we have anything to learn from the electoral system and campaigning in Idaho?

- I was surprised that people could register to vote in a particular district on the day of the election
- Having referenda on the ballot paper is a good idea when you simply want to get a mandate for political decisions such as where money should be spent, but issues such as capital punishment, abortion, civil partnerships, immigration are too complex for simple yes/no answers.
- The 'write in' line is similar to 'RON' (Re-Open Nominations) which some Student Unions use and means that people can make a positive statement rather than not voting or spoiling the ballot paper. In the past someone was actually elected by 'write in', but did not want to hold office, so that area was not represented for four years!
- The campaign across the USA, judging by the TV coverage and local campaign literature is much more personal and negative than it is over here. Lib Dems should resist TV advertising.
- An automated message from George Bush featured in the Idaho campaign. This type of call is really an oral 'blue ink letter'.

Altogether Idaho is a great place to visit. The people have an openness that you don't find here, but the attitude towards guns is very different - the casual mention of three guns carried in an unlocked SUV was not an exceptional statement.

There are similar issues to grapple with - poor public transport, large out of town supermarkets and malls, goods brought from across the world (cheap Venezuelan apples have destroyed Idahoan orchards), and a huge waste problem. These problems are exacerbated by untrammelled market forces, big business and capitalism leading to cheap, unhealthy fast food and cheap petrol.

This is a position that the Lib Dems in Britain must avoid if we are to get a grip of Climate Change. Ten days in Idaho where an appendix operation costs \$10,000 and a prescription \$249 - made me even more convinced that we must value, nurture and save our NHS.



Roger Symonds (seated here in the Governor of Idaho's chair)

is Council Training & Support Officer of ALDC
roger.symonds@aldc.org



europe



Photo caption: Sarah with campaigning comedian Mark Thomas outside the Houses of Parliament

Protesting Protest Ban Law

London's Lib Dem Euro-MP Baroness Sarah Ludford has been joining campaigning comedian Mark Thomas to take part in 'mass lone demos' outside the Houses of Parliament.

This series of individual demonstrations is taking place to highlight the absurdity of the Labour government's ban on protests in or near Parliament Square without prior police permission.

Sarah obtains the requisite authorisation for a 'lone protest' licence which police cannot refuse as long as the application is made at least six days in advance. She said:

"I'm sorry for the rather bewildered PC who has had to cope with a flood of paperwork, but his grumbles should be directed at number 10. This law preventing peaceful protest and freedom of speech is ridiculous, and its compliance with European human rights laws questionable."

"Curbing freedom of expression is only one of many ways in which Tony Blair's government has become increasingly authoritarian. It's no joke when the power of the state is used to crush dissenters."

wales

Councillor Day

Last Campaigner reported on the success of our latest councillors day – this work is already being followed through with reports on the successes of our 4 Welsh Lib Dem led councils being circulated and used for defence/promotion.

Local Government Finances

Since the last edition, the Assembly has agreed its budget for Welsh public services. This was subject to a last minute deal between Plaid and Labour to get the Labour minority administrations budget plans through. Welsh Lib Dems were holding out for an extra £7m to cushion schools against demands for efficiency gains. Bizarrely, Labour and Plaids alternative to this was to exempt schools from some of the 1% requirement – which just imposes more and more demands for better services but for less money on other council services – such as social services or cleansing.

The Local Government settlement from the Assembly is not one of the stronger recent settlements. Although it doesn't feature large scale data or formula changes, as recent settlements have, and thus the spread of increases is less than normal, its showing quite clearly the effects (which they don't impose on themselves) of the Assembly government demands that they make 1% efficiency savings across their services.

Website Tools

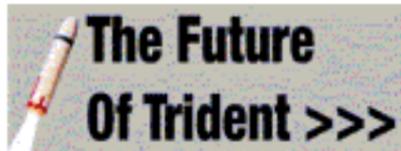
The Lib Dem's Head of Innovations Mark Park asks "are you making the most of your website?"

For more and more voters the first point of personal contact with their (prospective) council candidates is the internet. Whether it is in response to a web address on a leaflet, following a link from an email or the result of sticking a candidate's name into a search engine, more and more people are using the internet to find out about candidates before deciding who to vote for.

The internet is no longer a minority interest; in fact, more people have internet access than vote in elections. And this means that having an effective and professional internet presence is no longer optional for candidates. It is essential.

To help people make the best use of their internet presence, the party is providing a growing range of free internet tools. Details of many of them are at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/support/tools.html> and highlights include:

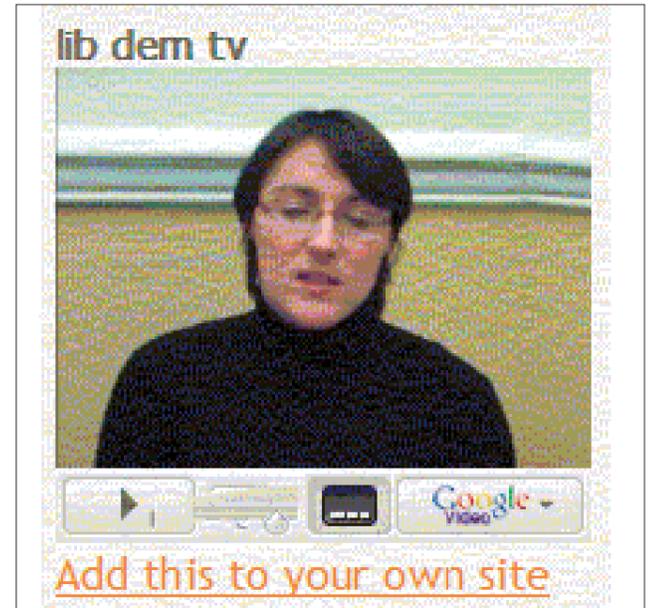
- Automatically updated campaign buttons: you can add a set of buttons to your website advertising the party's latest campaigns. They are automatically updated when new campaigns are launched, so you will always have the latest information without having to go to the effort of updating them each time yourself.



- Lib Dem TV: you can display the latest Liberal Democrat film on your website - and again it gets automatically updated with new films without you having to go to the hassle of updating it regularly yourself.

- Latest news from the party: you can have the latest party news headlines displayed on your site - with again the updating all being done automatically so you get the benefits without having to do any work.

All of these tools will help ensure your site includes up to the minute information on issues like our environmental campaigning and opposition



to ID cards, which is just the sort of information many of your local constituents will be interested in.

There are also other tools the party provides for free to help you with your internet campaigning, including:

- Email list server: setting up an email list is often a much more convenient way to communicate with people than having a long list of individual email addresses in your inbox. You can setup your own email list at <http://lists.libdems.org.uk>

- Online petition: need to run a petition on a local issue? With our single-issue website generator you can be up and running with an online petition and webpage to promote it within minutes. Just go to <http://campaigns.libdems.org.uk>

More information on how to make the best use of the internet in your campaigning is available in the Campaigns section of the party's extranet -



<http://www.libdems.org.uk/extranet>

Access to the extranet is available to - amongst other people - all Liberal Democrat councillors and up to four other key campaigners per constituency. So if you aren't yet using the extranet, why not register today and start making use of its information and resources?

Mark Pack is the party's Head of Innovation
m.pack@libdems.org.uk

aldc

Kickstart

Many thanks to the people who made it to one of the six recent "Kickstart" events organised by ALDC. The events, which took place in Perth, Guildford, Exeter, Cambridge, Manchester and a weekend residential in Birmingham provided training for activists and a chance to talk through campaign plans with staff from ALDC and the Campaigns Department.

Almost 500 people attended one of the events which not only reflects the importance of the forthcoming elections, but also the commitment of activists up and down the country.



Many thanks to all the trainers and to our friends at South East and Eastern Region Lib Dems who provided a "three for two" offer for the Guildford and Cambridge events, and to Chris Davies MEP who provided support for a number of North West "moving forward" areas to attend the residential event.

Changed Circumstances

Three events are planned for **Sunday 6 May 2007** immediately after the local elections. These events scheduled to take place in Perth (for Scotland only), Manchester and London are for Council Groups who find themselves in "changed circumstances" - either moving into control, opposition or no-overall control.

Clearly it is important to make the right decisions, and where appropriate arrangements with other parties, after the elections - but please talk these through with colleagues first. As well as the events ALDC will be running a telephone helpline right through the weekend after the elections to make sure you get the advice and support that you need.

More information on the events, which are provided with kind support from the Leadership Centre for Local Government, nearer the time.

Online Goldmine

Members will have noticed some significant changes to the ALDC website in recent months with the aim of providing significantly more material online for members to download.

The key feature of the new site is the "Online Goldmine" which provides artwork, campaign packs, clipart and more to download for Gold Members. Obviously we do need to restrict access to the site - but registering for the site is easy - you just need your postcode and ALDC membership number. If you have any problems accessing the information please do not hesitate to call the office.

G8 Grants

Many thanks to everyone who has submitted applications for "G8" grants this year. Not only have we had a massive level of applications, but thanks to some additional resources received by the Party have been able to make significant extra grants this year. In addition grants have been made available to help people run postal vote recruitment campaigns and in England, "G8 Plus" grants were made to support capacity and infrastructure improvements such as new equipment.

spring conference

Training Programme

ALDC is planning a busy programme of training at the Party's Spring Conference in Harrogate. Training takes place on the Saturday - 3 March 2007.

9.15-10.45am	Holding onto your Council seat	Canvass Analysis & Changing Plans
11.00am - 12.30pm	A taster to the IDeA Leadership Academy	Coping with a larger group and new faces
14.30-15.45pm	Council Leadership and Communities (IDeA)	Quality Effective Leadership
16.00-17.30pm	Winning in the last week	Help! No one has a majority

Two of our sessions are provided in partnership with the IDeA and we would encourage delegates to take advantage of this new service provided to LD Councillors at Conference

In addition, advice will be available from the ALDC Stand to councillors and campaigners both from ALDC staff and - for councillors - from our colleagues from the IDeA.

All ALDC training will be led by an accredited Party Trainer.

Conference Fringe

Please take time to look into the following ALDC fringe meetings in Harrogate. Again all fringe meetings are on the Saturday.

1.00-2.00pm	Working with voters from "new" European Union countries
6.15 - 7.30pm	Affordable Housing - joint meeting with LDYS
8.00-9.15pm	Countdown to the Local Elections

Full details of all our Conference programme, together with other useful events for our members will be available in our "ALDC at Conference" guide available in Harrogate and online.

advice and resources

Advice

Please feel free to contact ALDC at any time during office hours for advice and help on campaigning and council issues. This is particularly important during the run up to the elections on 3 May 2007.

Alternatively you can email us at info@aldc.org.

All candidates who we know about for this May will be receiving our services of free **Election Briefing** newsletters and election countdown emails. If you haven't been receiving them yet - then please tell us who your candidates are. Email emma.hall@aldc.org or fill in the online form on our website.

Election Law

There have been a number of important changes to election law in recent months. These include changes around: postal voting, service voters, age of candidates, twelve registered names for the party and change in the final date of voter registration.

An update will be available on the ALDC website in the (all) members area. Members are also reminded of the excellent publication "Winning Elections III - Election Law" - a "must" for organisers available from ALDC or Lib Dem Image for £15+P&P

diary

Saturday 17 February 2007

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Conference
Scarborough

Thursday 22 February 2007

London Regional Conference

Saturday 24 February 2007

East Midlands Regional Conference

Friday 2 - Sunday 4 March 2007

Federal Spring Conference, Harrogate

Saturday 10 March 2007

Welsh Spring Conference

Saturday 17 March 2007

North West Regional Conference, Oldham
West Midlands Regional Conference (check locally, date to be confirmed)

Saturday 24 March 2007

South Central and South East Regions Joint Conference, Maidenhead

Noon Wednesday 4 April 2007

Deadline for the submission of nomination papers for 3rd May elections

5pm Wednesday 18 April 2007

Last day to make a new postal vote application or amend or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy vote arrangement

Thursday 3 May 2007

Polling Day in English and Scottish local elections, and elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

Sunday 6 May 2007

ALDC Change Circumstances events in London, Manchester and Perth.

Thursday 7 June 2007

Last day to submit election expenses (Friday 8 June where declarations were after midnight)

Saturday 23 June 2007

Liberal Democrat Local Government Conference, Birmingham ICC

Monday 2 - Thursday 5 July 2007

Local Government Association General Assembly and Conference, Birmingham

Saturday 15 - Thursday 20 September 2007

Federal Party Conference, Brighton

Wednesday 12 December 2007

Local Government Association General Assembly, London

campaigner

is produced by the
Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC)

The Birchcliffe Centre
Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 8DG
Tel: 01422 843 785
Fax: 01422 843 036
Email: info@aldc.org, Website www.aldc.org

Editor: Cllr John Bridges

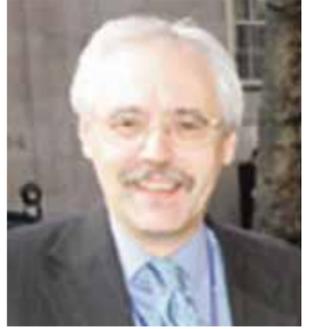
john.bridges@aldc.org
Production assistance: David Ball, Dina Ball, Emma Hall, Val Pilling and Tim Pickstone

© ALDC January 2007

Printed on recycled paper.

Policy Making Moves Forward

Leader of the Local Government Association Liberal Democrat Group Cllr Richard Kemp outlines how the Party's local government policy must move forward.



There were laughs all round when I suggested recently that there had been an outbreak of peace between the LGA Lib Dems and the Parliamentary Party following our very public differences about local government policy. In fact the differences in principle have always been small with both parliamentarians and councillors trapped in a labyrinthine policy making process which takes so long that the new policy is unable to react to events that occur in the 18 months between gestation and birth! They are also stuck with a style of policy paper only slightly improved from mediaeval dissertations at OXBRIDGE!

Since September there have been a number of discussions between us as to how to take things forward. These culminated in a 24 hour residential which discussed the philosophical and practical issues behind working in local government today. The session was attended by DCLG team members from the Commons and Lords, by LGA and ALDC leaders and by Cowley Street and research people. We are now engaged in producing two documents:

The first to be published will be produced by

LGA Lib Dems and ALDC with support from the Lib Dems on COSLA, WLGA and our Alliance colleagues in Northern Ireland. This will be in the form of a good practice guide which sets out our ambitions as liberals irrespective of the precise laws and conditions to which we now have to respond through the devolved administrations. This will be presented at a joint ALDC/LGA event at the Spring Conference and is being written by David Boyle from the New Economics Foundation.

The policy document will be presented to the autumn conference and will, as last time, encompass both a paper and a resolution.

Both of these, will however be structured very differently than those that were referred back.

In Chapter 1 we will set out the case for democratic local government and maximum community empowerment, and could include examples of life-changing local initiatives to contrast with clumsy and ineffective nationally run programmes.

In Chapter 2 we will explore what freedoms we would like councils to have, especially in terms of

handing on power to local community groups, and it could include examples of existing Liberal Democrat good practice on things like Area Committees, community delivery of services.

In Chapter 3 provide a critique of existing legislation, structures, and attitudes which prevent councils working at their optimum.

In Chapter 4 we will set out how we would empower local government and communities in England. Included in this section will be a response to whatever lukewarm nonsense comes out of the current Lyon's Review and will set out once again our proposals for Local income Tax.

I believe that we will end up with two very readable documents. Documents that can be used by the Parliamentary Party and councillors to frame the debate for a massive change in central/local power plays. But above all documents that will enable our campaigners to see what Liberal Democracy can mean in action and enable them to do and suggest things to help bring Liberal Democracy to their council.

Lorely's Law - so good the Tories adopted it!

You know a campaign is good when the Tories adopt it as their own, writes Lorely Burt MP

Campaigning on planning issues was very significant in getting me elected because it was what people were worried about in the leafy suburbs of Solihull. Tory run, they ignored protests at their sale of parkland for development to fund a new leisure centre.

The other issue, which the Council could do little about because of the Government's planning guidelines, was windfall development: the sale of large old houses with big back gardens and the erection of as many flats (oops, sorry, 'apartments') as could conceivably be crammed into the site.

Cheekily, I promised that if elected I would bring a Bill to Parliament to stop councils being able to sell off land owned by the community without a local referendum and to amend planning law to tackle inappropriate windfall development.

Amazingly, I not only got elected, overturning a 9,400 Tory majority, but I came up in the ballot for Private Members' Bills. Lorely's Law, against all the odds, received its first reading in Parliament.

Now as I learned, getting your first reading and getting your Bill adopted are two very different

things. I was also outstandingly lucky to get a full Second Reading, after which Lorely's Law (officially known as the Local Government and Planning (Parkland and Windfall Development) Bill) was voted out by the Government. Still, it got a good airing and some measures have already been incorporated into government legislation, although sadly not the key ones.

Indeed, Tory MP Greg Clark took the windfall development part of the Bill and introduced his own Bill, 'The Protection of Private Gardens' The process of windfall development was given a sexy alliterative name - 'garden grabbing' - and they were off.

The basic premise in Greg Clark's Bill is the same as my own: that under planning law, back gardens - and indeed any land within the boundary of a property - is designated as brownfield land. It seems like a contradiction in terms if you take it literally: how can something which is green be brown? Well take my word for it, it can.

Now there's a balance to be had between the need for new homes, the desire not to build on public open space and green belt, and the



ruination of the character of mature neighbourhoods by erecting blocks of flats which stick out like sore thumbs.

It's obviously preferable to increase housing density in existing developed areas than to build on greenfield sites. But these so-called apartments often don't fit the bill. Developers will seek to maximise return on their investment, so they will not only cram as many dwellings as they can get away with on a site, but unless stopped they will build so-called luxury apartments. This won't solve the affordable housing crisis which besets our children and others needing to get onto the housing ladder.

So it's a great campaign, and you can access it by logging onto <http://Handsoffourbackgardens.org.uk>. There's a model question and a motion to Council, petition form, example letter back to petition signatories, draft Focus - you name it and it's there. Full marks to Leslie Coman and Mark Pack. And it's better than the Tories' campaign. So if you're fighting Tories I'd especially recommend you get in there first. Happy hunting