

## Dates for the diary

Saturday 24 May, **Quiz Evening**, Swindon Village Hall, 7.30 pm. Tickets £7.50 to include supper. Phone Heather Turner on 574227 to let us know you are coming.

Wednesday 28 May, **St Mark's, St Paul's and St Peter's Branch Meeting**, St Mark's Community Centre, 7.00 pm. All branch members are invited to attend. Contact John Webster on 511424.

Tuesday 3 June, **Tour of the Houses of Parliament** Leave from Cheltenham Town Hall. Contact Andy Williams on 224889

Thursday 5 June, **Executive Committee** meeting, 16 Hewlett Road, 7 pm. All members welcome. Contact Nigel Britter on 224889.

Thursday 12 June, Benhall & The Reddings, Hesters Way, and Up Hatherley **Branch Meeting**, 6 Wards Road, 7.30 pm. All branch members are invited to attend. Contact Roger Whyborn on 231458.

Saturday 5 July, **Summer Barbecue**, 6 Wessex Drive. 5 pm Tickets £5 (children £2). Contact Heather Turner on 574227.

Sunday 10 August, **Marquee at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival**, Tickets £27. Contact David Fidgeon on 224889.

For a full listing of events see the website at [www.cheltlibdems.org.uk](http://www.cheltlibdems.org.uk)

## Do you want to be a County Councillor?

We are just beginning the process of selecting our candidates for next year's County Council elections.

Twelve seats in Cheltenham are up for grabs. We hold four and will be working hard to make gains from both the Conservatives and the PAB group.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested.

Although the job is unpaid, a "backbench" councillor receives an allowance of about £8,000 a year.

If you think you may like to stand, please call the office on 224889 and we will send you a booklet explaining what the job involves and an application form.



## Autumn dinner

We will be holding a constituency dinner on **Friday 21 November 2008** at the Renaissance restaurant at Gloucestershire College's (GLOSCAT as was) Cheltenham campus in Princess Elizabeth Way. The cost and the speaker will be announced shortly.

## Autumn quiz

There will be a quiz on Saturday 25 October at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm. Tickets £7.50 to include supper. Please phone Heather Turner on 574227 to let us know you are coming.

## Focus Club Draw

The Focus Club Draw is vital for our fund-raising in Cheltenham. Since it was launched in 1986 it has contributed many thousands of pounds to the local party.

**It is also a chance to win two cash prizes every month.** We need to increase the vigour and effectiveness of our campaigning and, amongst other things, that costs money.

Please consider joining by returning the form enclosed with this newsletter today. Thanks very much for your support.

## We need your help

Even outside election time, there are always jobs that need doing, either in the office or at home. Please help if you can - training will always be provided where necessary.

- I can help in the office, stuffing envelopes, folding leaflets etc
- I can help deliver leaflets
- I can help with door-to-door canvassing
- I can help with telephone canvassing
- I have computer skills which may be of use
- I can help with fund-raising

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:** Liberal Democrats, FREEPOST SWC0744, 16 Hewlett Road, Cheltenham, GL52 6ZZ

May 2008  
The newsletter of Cheltenham Liberal Democrats  
Free Speech

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

**All the results** - detailed election results for all the wards in Cheltenham

**Winning in Europe** - Euro candidate Paul Massey has the latest news

**Cricket marquee** - book your tickets for our annual outing to the cricket festival

**County elections** - do you want to be a candidate in these vital elections next year

**Dates for your diary** - all the events that are coming up in the next few months

**Can you help?** - we need YOU to increase the vigour of our campaigning

## Tories' hopes dashed by Lib Dem election success

The Conservatives suffered a night of crushing disappointment as the votes were counted for elections to Cheltenham Borough Council earlier this month.

Having briefed the press that they were poised to gain overall control of the Council and inflict a major defeat on the Liberal Democrats, the Tories watched in disbelief as Lib Dems increased their majorities in held seats AND made gains from Labour, Tories and the PAB.

**Liberal Democrats now have twenty seats (up three) on the forty strong Council, the Conservatives seventeen, and the PAB three.**

Astonishingly it could have been even worse for the Tories. Their Council leader, Duncan Smith, only held on to his seat by 33 votes in **Charlton Kings** following an excellent campaign by Lib Dem Helena McCloskey. And in **Benhall and the Reddings** new candidate Chris Pallet came within 27 votes of deposing long-serving Tory Jacky Fletcher.

In **Pittville**, the PAB collapsed to a distant third place in a seat they held, but sadly the Tories just managed to stay ahead of Lib Dem Rowena Hay by the small margin of 84 votes.

Bernie Fisher gained **Swindon Village** from the PAB and had the biggest Lib Dem majority of the night. Other gains were in **Up Hatherley**, where Roger Whyborn defeated the Tories and in **Oakley** where Martin Dunne beat Labour into third place.

Lib Dem group leader (and now Leader of the Council) Steve Jordan doubled the Lib Dem majority in **All Saints**, and in **St Peter's** John Rawson saw the majority soar from 12 votes in 2006 to 261.

Steve says: "This was an excellent set of results from an outstanding set of candidates. Everyone worked really hard and richly deserved this success."



● New leader of the Council **Steve Jordan** says: "Although the Lib Dems have formed the Cabinet on the Council, we have pledged to make sure the whole council gets a say in the key decisions.

"When one party does not have an overall majority it is particularly important that every member of the council can make his or her voice heard and influence what the council does. We promise to restore the proper authority of the full council."

## Summer barbecue

We are holding a summer barbecue on **Saturday 5 July** at 5 pm at the home of John and Pat Morris, **6 Wessex Drive**.

Tickets are £5 per person (children £2).

Please let Heather Turner know if you are able to come on 574227

# Abolition of 10p tax rate hurts the poor, says Martin

**Our MP Martin Horwood has repeated his vote against the Government's doubling of the 10p tax rate for the lowest paid.**

But Labour MPs has voted for provisions in the Finance Bill dealing with the doubling of the 10p tax rate, without guaranteeing there will be an adequate compensation package in place to help those on low incomes who are losing out.

The debate could have seen an embarrassing defeat for the Government. But Labour rebel Frank Field MP withdrew his amendment demanding

compensation be put in place for low earners who lose out under the proposals. 45 Labour MPs had signed his amendment before it was withdrawn.

The Field amendment was withdrawn because

Labour MPs accepted the Government's promise of a compensation package for those who lose out. In a letter sent on Wednesday 23 April, Chancellor Alistair Darling said he would use the minimum wage, tax credits and winter fuel payments to compensate the estimated 5.3 million families who will suffer financially from the abolition of the 10p rate. But the Lib Dems claim the Government's promises are full of holes and the MPs have been taken in.

Martin first voted and spoke against the change in the tax regime last year during last year's budget debate when Gordon Brown

was still Chancellor. In the debate he said: "At the heart of the Budget is essentially a tax con. The Chancellor of the Exchequer gave away some £8 billion by cutting the basic rate of tax from 22 to 20 per cent., but largely offset that by doubling the starting rate of tax from 10 to 20 per cent....a budget that doubled the rate of income tax for those on the very lowest incomes".

Martin voted against the proposal again this week. "Labour MPs cheered the Budget last year. It seems to have taken them a whole year to work out what Gordon Brown was doing and even then their rebellion collapsed at the last minute leaving many questions unanswered" said Martin.

***"This was a budget that doubled the rate of income tax for those on the very lowest incomes"***

The unanswered questions and get-outs in the Government's

promises include:

- What is going to be backdated in the compensation package? In Parliament the minister was specifically questioned on this and could not say.
- How do the Government expect people on below average incomes to pay today's bills with money they won't get for another six months?
- How long will the compensation package last for? Will it just last for one year, as some government measures do? The effect of the tax change, of course, will be permanent.



## Would you like a tour of Parliament?

Martin is always delighted to welcome constituents to Westminster and arrange a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament for them.

Whether you want to come along with a few friends or family members, or would like to organise a group to come from your school, place of work or organisation, just let Martin know on 224889 or email martin@martinhorwood.net.

Martin says: "It has been a pleasure to see so many constituents up in Westminster - do come along if you can."

There is no charge for tours but places are limited so please let Martin have as much notice as possible.

## News in brief

### Could you hold a house meeting?

Formal meetings are not necessarily the best way to get our message over to local people. For example, Martin Horwood has held a number of extremely successful informal house meetings around the town since his election in 2005. Martin says: "These are an excellent way for me to meet constituents in a relaxed setting. If you would like to host one in your home please give the constituency office a call on 224889."

### Executive meetings

The Executive meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7 pm, usually at the Lib Dem office, 16 Hewlett Road. If any member would like to come along, please let the office know on 224889.

### Your email address

It is quicker and cheaper for the party to communicate with members and supporters by email. Please let us have your email address so that we can send you news about social events and political campaigning. Send it to: cheltlibdems@yahoo.co.uk Thank you!

# Winning in Europe in 2009

*Cheltenham Councillor and Lib Dem PEPC, Dr. Paul Massey, writes about next year's European Elections*

On Thursday 11th June 2009, the UK will go to the polls to decide who will represent us in the European Parliament. We won't be alone. Across Europe, 496 million citizens in 27 EU member states will elect 736 MEPs - all by proportional representation - making this the biggest trans-national election in history.

Cheltenham is part of the South West England electoral region, which also includes Gibraltar. The region is currently represented by 7 MEPs: 3 Conservatives, 2 UKIP, 1 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat (in the person of Graham Watson MEP). However, the expansion of the EU has meant that most countries have had to reduce the number of MEPs they elect, to prevent the European Parliament becoming too large and unwieldy. Therefore, South West England and Gibraltar will be electing six MEPs next June.

This poses us some challenges as a party. Our headline goal is to increase our number of seats in the region from one to two. But winning two seats out of six is significantly harder than winning two seats out of seven. So what's our plan?

Firstly, we have selected our candidates well in advance and have already formed our campaign team. Our candidates are:

1. Graham Watson MEP (Who will cover the whole region)
2. Kay Barnard (campaign co-ordinator in Devon)
3. Justine McGuinness (Somerset & Dorset)
4. Humphrey Temperley (Cornwall)
5. Paul Massey (Glos, Wiltshire and Avon)
6. To be selected (Robin Teverson was originally elected by members, but has withdrawn)

The candidates are already getting active in their respective counties. We hope to have briefed every constituency executive on our campaign plans by the autumn. Then we will begin to focus more on fundraising and media exposure.

Secondly, we have to bear in mind that the South West is a huge region, with over five million people. This means that it is impossible to build up meaningful canvass data about how people are likely to vote (bearing in mind that many people who support us in Westminster elections don't support us for Europe, and vice versa). It would also be prohibitively expensive to try to



target every voter with an extensive literature campaign. Therefore, segmentation (working out from demographic data which groups of people are likely to support us) and targeting our messages on these groups, will be vital. Our regional campaigns team are already working on this.

Thirdly, we have done a lot of thinking about our campaign issues. We are, of course, a firmly pro-European party. However, we must avoid being painted by our opponents as being uncritical supporters of European institutions that seem remote and out of touch to many voters. Instead, we will focus on those areas where the EU has made people's lives better, especially where Lib Dem MEPs have been at the forefront of those efforts. The environment, and climate change, will probably be our strongest issue. Even the "little Englanders" of UKIP can't pretend that

climate change will stop at national borders, so some kind of international agreement is essential to tackle it. This shoots the UKIP fox straight away, because they've got no idea how they'd deal with environmental issues if the UK withdrew from the EU. And as it happens the EU is doing rather a lot to combat climate change: starting with the Kyoto protocol and more recently developing emissions trading schemes.

We also need to make sure that we connect the big issues to local issues that people can relate to. So, in the case of climate change, we point to last year's flooding in Gloucestershire to illustrate why we need a body like the European Parliament in the first place, in order to co ordinate the international response to climate change and reduce the risk of future floods.

We can also take advantage of the appalling record of our opponents. In 2004, UKIP successfully harvested a large protest vote to take their two seats. Fortunately, having been elected on a platform of getting Britain out of the EU, they have largely failed to engage in the legislative process and therefore have no real achievements to present to the electorate this time round. The British people aren't daft. Whatever they feel about the EU, they do not want to elect politicians who take the salary and expenses but then do no work. As for the Conservatives, I can do no better than repeat this recent editorial from the Western Morning News:

*"There will be no point in voting Tory in 2009 if you want anything done in Strasbourg. The West Country would be better going back to sending large numbers of Liberal Democrats to Europe if it wants politicians who can achieve things"* (Western Morning News, 11 Feb 2008)

Finally, it is highly likely that the local elections scheduled for next May - in our case, to Gloucestershire county council - will be put back to June so that they can be held on the same day as the Euro elections. This should lead to higher turnout, which tends to benefit

**continued overleaf**

## Winning in Europe in 2009

us as a party. However, we will still be fighting an uphill struggle against the campaigns of our opponents, which we can expect to be heavily negative. As such, any help that members and supporters can give - in particular by giving donations towards the £140,000 that we think the regional campaign will cost - would be very gratefully appreciated.

Hopefully, that has given you a flavour of our European campaign. You'll be hearing more from us as June 2009 gets closer!

## Nick Clegg visits Cheltenham

**LIB DEM LEADER Nick Clegg visited Cheltenham last month.**

He spoke to young people involved in the MAD (Make a Difference) youth council to listen to their points of view.

Nick arrived by train and highlighted the rail services which have been under threat from our station because of controversial plans for a new Parkway station. He also visited flood victims in Warden Hill and a site uphill at Leckhampton where new housing is being forced into the countryside and is likely to make flooding worse. He spoke and answered questions at a packed public meeting at the University of Gloucestershire's Park campus.

Martin Horwood said:

"I'm delighted that Nick visited Cheltenham and in particular that he listened to the views of young people. Tory cuts to the youth council and to housing and homelessness advice services in the town are appalling. They are aimed at some of the least powerful people in the community."

## CBC Election results 2008

### All Saints

Green	61
Labour	40
Conservative	461
JORDAN Steve	811

### Battledown

McCLOSKEY Paul	442
Labour	64
Conservative	1013

### Benhall

Conservative	945
PALLET Christopher	918

### Charlton Kings

McCLOSKEY Helena	940
Labour	71
Conservative	973

### Charlton Park

Conservative	1285
WOODWARD Margaret	607

### College

Conservative	692
SURGENOR Lloyd	997

### Hesters Way

FLYNN Wendy	779
Labour	67
Conservative	351

### Lansdown

MEYER Leone	428
Conservative	759
Green	92

### Leckhampton

COLEMAN Chris	950
Conservative	1210

### Oakley

DUNNE Martin	661
Conservative	403
Labour	224

### Park

Conservative	1273
STEWART Phillippa	607

### Pittville

Conservative	625
Labour	64
Green	65
HAY Rowena	541
PAB	318

### Prestbury

JONES Jennifer	253
Conservative	539
PAB	1098

### Springbank

Conservative	366
WHEELER Simon	752

### St Mark's

Labour	108
Green	83
Conservative	423
WEBSTER John	622

### St Paul's

Conservative	257
WHEELDON Paul	493

### St Peter's

Conservative	477
Labour	89
RAWSON John	738

### Swindon Village

PAB	367
FISHER Bernie	875
Conservative	282

### Up Hatherley

Conservative	793
WHYBORN Roger	1115

### Warden Hill

McVEIGH Fran	530
Conservative	1245

**New Council:** Lib Dem 20, Tories 17, PAB 3

# Martin urges radical reform of MPs expenses

**CHELTHENHAM MP Martin Horwood has met the Members' Estimates Committee of the House of Commons to urge radical reform of the way MPs' allowances are handled.**

Last year Martin appeared on the Channel Four 'Dispatches' programme that highlighted many discrepancies between best practice in the private sector and the way money is handled in Parliament. He was one of four Liberal Democrat MPs to lobby the committee today, including campaigning Lewes MP Norman Baker.

'I was astonished by some of the practices I found in the House of Commons when I was elected and how much they differed from what I had known in business and in the charity sector. The idea that I could apparently spend hundreds of pounds a month of taxpayers' money on food without ever providing a receipt for it was one of the best but there were many others. And the whole thing was cloaked in secrecy so public suspicion and cynicism was almost guaranteed. I actually think most MPs work hard and try their best to stick to sometimes confusing rules but the whole way the system is designed makes scandal likely. It needs drastic reform.'

Martin is already sending summary details of all the allowances he has claimed to all voters in Cheltenham in a leaflet distributed along with his new annual report to constituents. 'When I met the Committee, I argued for more openness in particular. Many older MPs are still very nervous about all this but frankly openness is the best possible defence against abuse of the system. There won't be any more Derek Conways if we're all open about what we're claiming for.'

Martin argued specifically for:

- Complete public access to all details of MPs expenses and expenditure, with very few exceptions such as personal addresses and individual staff salaries.
- Removal of office rents, office IT and staff salaries from the personal 'allowance' system altogether. These should all be managed as they are in business, with reasonable budgets agreed in advance based on considerations like square footage of office space needed or the length of service of staff. They might then vary between MPs, that's only fair when costs really do vary. Office rents in Cheltenham really are higher

than, say, Cornwall or Scotland and staff should be paid increments if they have stayed in a job and gained in experience and value to the team.

- Reform of allowances relating to MPs' second homes and in particular the ending of the system whereby MPs can claim against mortgage interest as well as rent. Mortgage payments may not cost the taxpayer any more but in a rising housing market MPs can gain huge personal gains from being helped to buy a second home. That should stop.
- Tougher sanctions against the very few MPs like Derek Conway who are caught seriously abusing the system. In business, gross misconduct means you lose your job, not just get suspended for a few days.
- All daily expenses such as subsistence to be within a daily allowance and all backed up by receipts.

Martin strongly argued against removing any part of the personal expenses regime and giving MPs a pay rise instead. 'I told the committee that would be the worst possible response to current criticism', he said

## Trip to London and tour of the Houses of Parliament



Tuesday 3 June

£12.50

Contact Andy on 01242 224889 for further details

## Join us in our marquee at the Cricket Festival

# A day in the sun

On Sunday August 10, Cheltenham Liberal Democrats are hosting a marquee at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival for the 15th year in a row.

The ticket price of £27 includes entry to the ground and our marquee, a three course lunch and afternoon tea.

To book your place at this popular event, please contact David Fidgeon on 224889.



# Election facts and figures around the country

## Projected national share of the vote (BBC)

Conservative 44%

Liberal Democrat 25%

Labour 24%

## The Liberal Democrats retained control of:

Cambridge

Eastleigh

Liverpool

Newcastle

Rochdale

South Lakeland

Stockport

Three Rivers

Watford

Liverpool was Labour's number one target. The council composition is now Lib Dem 46, Labour 39, Liberals 3, Greens 2 (total 90).

## The Liberal Democrats gained control of:

Burnley

Hull

St Albans

Sheffield

## The Liberal Democrats lost control in Pendle and West Lindsey.

Following these elections Liberal Democrats are just one seat short of overall control in Oldham (4 gains), Warrington (1 gain) and Cheltenham (3 gains).

Liberal Democrats will continue to be the largest party in Cardiff (2 gains), Sefton (1 gain), North East Lincolnshire (1 gain) and are now also the largest party in Derby (5 gains), Wrexham (3 gains), Exeter (1 gain) and on the new Northumberland unitary authority.

## Councillors elected

Liberal Democrats made 137 gains in these elections four years ago and have successfully defended those gains. We will have over 4,200 council seats.

## The BBC's figures for seat changes are::

Conservative +256

Liberal Democrats +34

Labour -331

# MEMORIES OF RICHARD HOLME

As many people will know, **Richard Holme, who was the Liberal Democrat candidate in Cheltenham in 1983 and 1987, died this month.**

## Martin Horwood and others recall memories of his influence on Cheltenham:

"Richard Holme was a huge influence on my early political life. I was a young member of the Cheltenham Liberal exec that invited him to apply for the vacant parliamentary candidacy and came to know him well as a national and local campaigner.

"He led us closer and closer to defeating the Tories in Cheltenham, 'looking right but talking left' and forever yanking me back from university to help out.

"At national level, his pioneering cross-party campaigning for the Green Alliance and the Campaign

for Free Votes was years ahead of its time but paved the way for these issues to be brought into the political mainstream. Despite all this - and the time he spent quietly advising leaders like David Steel and Paddy Ashdown - he always took time out to encourage and advise young upstarts like me with his trademark gentlemanly charm.

"When in 2005 the upstart eventually became candidate, imperfectly following where he had led, I was really touched that he came back to Cheltenham for the campaign, despite increasing frailty, to offer support and yet more wise advice."

## Tony Oliver writes:

It is thanks to Richard Holme that Heather and I joined the Liberals 25 years ago. We saw him address a packed public meeting in Pitville Pump Room during the 1983 General Election and he converted

us. He was an eloquent and inspiring speaker and over his years in Cheltenham I was lucky enough to spend many hours campaigning with him. He was a great politician who led from the front, worked hard and was admired by the public and activists alike for his charm and integrity. Richard Holme would have been a great MP for Cheltenham and helped sow the roots of Nigel's and Martin's success. We all owe him a lot and we will miss him.

## Councillor Tina Franklin writes:

I'm ashamed to say I always voted Tory until I met Richard Holme. It was his calm and positive approach that made me realise that I was supporting the wrong type of political party for me and from then on and ever since have always supported Lib Dems. A wonderful man, who will be missed by all who ever met and worked with him.

# Photo archive!



● The All Saints team (Colin Hay, Valerie Hodges and Steve Jordan with Paddy Ashdown in the Promenade. We think this was probably about 20 years ago unless anyone knows differently.

## Work for the Liberal Democrats

Based in Cheltenham a small telemarketing operation is looking for flexible and committed staff to join their team.

**Maximum of 15 hours per week, £6.50 per hour**

Flexible working hours guaranteed Full training given

Call or text Richard on 07946 614464

or email [rpinnock@cix.co.uk](mailto:rpinnock@cix.co.uk) for more information.



● If the point of a photo in Focus is to get you recognised, it was probably a mistake to wear dark glasses and a hat....



● A collection of Lib Dems at, we think, a march in Cheltenham against the Poll Tax. We can recognise Andy Williams, Alan Compton, Garth Barnes, Garry Charman and Heather Oliver.



● Parliamentary victory - Nigel Jones addresses the crowds outside the Town Hall after beating the Tories by 1,668 votes in 1992.



Don't forget to book your tickets for the cricket marquee on 10 August - just £27 for a three course lunch and ground admission.