

Birmingham Conference report back

This year's Lib Dem Autumn Conference was held in Birmingham and was attended by several Cheltenham delegates. There was plenty to see and do, including: fringe events, training and of course voting on motions and listening to the key speeches.

The atmosphere was extremely positive and buoyant and no matter how much the media tried to dig around there were no splits or controversies, they discovered that we are a party that is pulling together and working hard.

The two slogans used in Nick Clegg's speeches were 'in government, on your side' and 'it's not easy, but it's right' - both of these sum up the message from the conference.

We have not taken the easy route, but we have taken the right one. The country is in the midst of difficult times and it needed a strong government, we stepped up to the mark to help provide that.



Community politics was a key message from the conference.

What we are good at is knocking on doors, speaking to local people and helping them and their local communities, this is what we do well and we need to do more of it.

As well as the leaders speech there were key speeches from

Forthcoming social events

Jon's supper club

Wednesday 9th November
7.30pm the Kemble Brewery Inn
- £8 per person Contact Jon Walklett at walklettjon@gmail.com

Arguing politics

Friday 25th November - location and topic to follow

Skittles Evening

Saturday 3rd December from 7.30pm St James's Hotel, Ambrose Street - £6 per person including light buffet

Quiz Night

Saturday 31st March 2012 Bar Open from 7.15pm - Quiz Starts at 7.30pm Swindon Village Hall. £7.50 includes supper

government ministers including Sarah Teather, Minister for Children and Families who emphasised the importance of early years education and from Chris Huhne, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, talking about the 'Green Deal' and the need to tackle fuel poverty.

Fringe events varied from Amnesty International talking about the problems women are facing after the Arab Spring, the 2012 Olympics, Hugh Grant talking about the phone hacking scandal, meeting our future energy needs and reforming the NHS.

Several Cheltenham delegates also attended the many of the excellent training sessions that the party provides including: literature writing, getting our messages right, how to campaign now that we are in coalition and an introduction to our new database software (Lib Dem Connect) which is used successfully by the Democrat Party in America.

Quiz Night

Saturday 23rd June 2012 Bar Open from 7.15pm - Quiz Starts at 7.30pm Swindon Village Hall. £7.50 includes supper

Unless otherwise indicated, for more details on these events contact Heather Turner on 574227 or pandhturner@blueyonder.co.uk

Can you help?

If you have some spare time and would like to come in to the office in Hewlett Road and help with stuffing envelopes and sticking on labels, please give **Andy Williams** a call on **224889**. Even a few hours here and there is very warm welcome.

The media were out in full force, which has not always been the case for our party conference. Both BBC and Sky had mini studios and there was a huge presence by regional media. This meant that the party got a huge amount of media coverage, some of it was not always an accurate description of what was really happening.

At the school Nick and Martin Horwood

November 2011

The newsletter of Cheltenham Liberal Democrats

Free Speech

New County Council boundaries revealed

The Local Government boundary commission has announced new boundaries for Gloucestershire County Council.

The Council will be reduced from 63 to 53 members and there will be now ten county councillors in Cheltenham, each representing a division made up of two borough council wards. The new divisions are:

All Saints and Oakley
Battledown and Charlton Kings
Benhall and Up Hatherley
Charlton Park and College
Hesters Way and Springbank
Lansdown and Park

Leckhampton and Warden Hill
Pittville and Prestbury
St Mark's and St Peter's
St Paul's and Swindon Village

At the last county elections in 2009 the Liberal Democrats won five out of twelve seats in Cheltenham. Analysis of the last two sets of borough elections suggests that the new boundaries give us potential for gains.

As ever, that will depend upon a lot of hard work between now and the elections in 2013.

We are planning the process for selecting candidates and for drawing up new branches based on the new divisions.

Nick Clegg in Cheltenham



On 7 October, Liberal Democrat Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, visited Springbank Primary Academy school in Cheltenham, ahead of his visit to the Cheltenham Literature Festival. He joined a class to talk about their favourite books and joined a reading group.

He also joined local Liberal Democrats at a lunch at Spice Lodge, kindly hosted by Mohammed Rahman.

At the school Nick and Martin Horwood

spoke with headteachers Claire Morrison and Shirley Clarke about the pupil premium - the bundle of extra cash the Lib Dems promised in their General Election manifesto for the least well-off kids in areas like Hesters Way and Springbank.

Next year it will be worth more than £800,000 to schools in Gloucestershire.

It can be spent on whatever the school wants: smaller class sizes or out-of-hours clubs or special teaching.

Our manifesto in practice

Liberal Democrats should be immensely proud of what they have achieved in Government, as well as the huge influence the party has on the Coalition and its agenda.

Going into the election the Liberal Democrats made clear that they had four key priorities: fairer taxes; a fair start for children with extra funding for disadvantaged pupils; a comprehensive clean up of our politics, including a fairer voting system; and a green, sustainable economy.

Thanks to our involvement, the

Government is already delivering on each of these.

There are also a large number of other Lib Dem policies and pledges that are starting to make a real, positive difference to people's lives because of our role in the Coalition Government.

These include everything from the rolling back of the surveillance state and giving people back their civil liberties, to prison reforms, fairer pensions, the ending of child detention and the scrapping of the third runway at Heathrow.

We have published a document

setting out how we have taken action on each of our manifesto commitments. And remember, this doesn't even include those policies which are in the Coalition Agreement but have not yet been implemented.

After all, according to a study by University College London, 75% of the Lib Dem manifesto made it into the Coalition Agreement compared to 60% for the Conservatives.

For a copy of the document, please contact the Lib Dem office in Hewlett Road on 224889 or email cheltlibdems@yahoo.co.uk

Martin steps up campaign for local green spaces

CHELTHENHAM MP Martin Horwood has stepped up his campaign to protect valued local green spaces around Cheltenham – in the face of worrying developments at both national and local level. Nationally, the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been branded a 'developer's charter' by green groups. Locally, the first details are emerging of the co-ordinated local plan by Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham councils, called the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Some of the scenarios in the JCS maps promise urban extensions on sensitive green spaces as large as any suggested in Labour's top-down Regional Spatial Strategy, which was abolished by the new coalition government. Both the NPPF and JCS are open to further revision after public consultation.

Martin has:

- Submitted a 14 page representation to the National Planning Policy Framework warning that it could 'seriously undermine localism, destroy many treasured green spaces forever and damage quality of life'
- Personally lobbied planning minister Greg Clark, including making sure the Lib Dem policy of a 'Local Green Space' designation was included in the NPPF
- Questioned Prime Minister David Cameron in Prime Minister's Questions on the fear that the NPPF will leave local councils powerless to protect vital green spaces
- Lobbied councillors and officers on the emerging Joint Core Strategy, arguing for proper weight to be given to environmental and community concerns

Martin commented: 'Both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats promised in opposition that we would give local communities the right to decide how much development they want, of what kind and where. In the

Localism Bill, we're handing real power back to communities to decide. In the natural environment white paper, we said very clearly that government wanted real value to be attached to all the benefits of green space and the natural environment. Well, the time has come to deliver on those promises.'

'At national level, we need to rewrite the National Planning Policy Framework to make absolutely clear that when local councils want to take account of community objections and environmental concerns and say no to overdevelopment, they can do so. At local level, we need to make it crystal clear to planners that many of the scenarios they are thinking about are completely unacceptable to local people. To bring back the highest numbers from Labour's discredited Regional Spatial Strategy would be a betrayal of everything people voted for at the general election.'

'With regard to the local Joint Core Strategy, I am particularly concerned at the maps – in Scenarios B, C, D - showing more than a thousand houses being built on the green land at Leckhampton, which campaigners have been fighting to protect for thirty years. This has been rejected for development again and again in local plans and even by planning inspectors. Thousands of local people in Leckhampton and Warden Hill have signed petition after petition in defence of this land, most recently supporting giving it special status as a country park area. The NPPF's new 'Local Green Space' designation would fit Leckhampton perfectly and the JCS group should now tear up their unsustainable plans and look at using this new designation to permanently protect the Leckhampton green land.'

I am also worried by two other maps – Broad locations Themes 1 and 3 – which seem to suggest undefined new developments on green land to the west of Hesters Way and Springbank. There is very good evidence that



access to green space reduces health inequalities, contributes to better air quality and enhances wellbeing. Protecting green spaces next to some of our least well-off areas like these is also important. Their voice should be heard too.'

'Much of the JCS seems to be based on self-fulfilling growth projections which are simply not sustainable. These seem to have been given overwhelming weight while the objections of local people and the need to protect the natural environment seem to have been almost ignored.'

There seems to be no acknowledgment that the countryside itself has economic value to a town like Cheltenham and that urban sprawl could really threaten our future wellbeing and prosperity. Ministers are quite clear that their intention is that local councils do have the right to balance demands for growth with social and environmental factors.

We need to make sure that national policy really delivers that in practice but, for now, we should take them at their word. Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham councils need to go back to the drawing board and produce scenarios that question these growth assumptions and do not simply give the developers whatever they want.'

Western Counties Regional Conference and AGM

Dorford Centre, Bridport Rd, Dorchester, DT1 1RR
November 19th 2011, 10 am - 4.30 pm

The Annual General Meeting will be held during the Regional Conference in Dorchester on Saturday. This is YOUR opportunity to hear about the Region's activities, approve the budget and elect Officers and the Executive Committee for 2012. Nominations are invited for:

- The President, Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and 6 Ordinary members of the Executive Committee for 2012
- County Representatives for Bristol City, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Greater Somerset and Bath & Wiltshire
- The Candidates Chair and 6 members of the Candidates Committee
- The Chair and 4 members of the Policy Committee
- Up to 12 representatives (depending on the regional membership) to the English Council, the governing body of the Party in England. This is an important role and Western Counties needs to "punch its weight" at this level.

Christmas Draw

With this mailing you should find a book of Christmas Draw tickets.

Please do buy some - the money raised supports the Liberal Democrats locally.

Prizes include a holiday voucher for £2,000, an oriental silk carpet worth over £600, silver, crystal glassware, jewellery, watches and wines and spirits.

Please return the ticket stubs and your cheque to: **Liberal Democrats, FREEPOST SWC0744, 16 Hewlett Road, Cheltenham, GL52 6ZZ**

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.

