

# Reports to Spring Conference 2013 Brighton

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The Federal Conference Committee (FCC) is responsible for organising the two Federal conferences each year. This includes choosing the agenda from amongst the policy and business motions submitted by conference reps, local, regional and state parties, specified associated organisations and Federal committees, and also taking decisions on topics such as venues, registration rates and other administrative and organisational matters. It works within a budget set by the FFAC.

The FCC has 21 voting members: the Party President; the Chief Whip (or substitute); three state party reps; two reps from the FE and two from the FPC; and twelve members directly elected by conference reps. It elects its own chair who must be one of the directly elected reps.

## Federal Conference Committee

### Brighton 2012

Last autumn's conference in Brighton proved to be very successful. As always, after each conference, FCC undertakes a full debrief, including an analysis of the questionnaire sent to all attendees. This time just under 400 members completed the online questionnaire. This document is incredibly useful and I would urge all members to take the time to complete it.

The cost of accommodation at conference is often raised. This is something that FCC is fully aware of and actively monitors. The average cost of accommodation (calculated from members' feedback) since 2006 is summarised below:

Accommodation	Brighton	Birmingham	Liverpool	Bournemouth	Bournemouth	Brighton	Brighton
	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Average (mean) Cost	£65	£66	£62	£62	£54	£58	£54

This year's £65 average compares with £58 the last time we went to Brighton in 2007. This equates to an inflation rate of 2.5% per annum (or 3% per annum if 2006 – also in Brighton - is used as a baseline). FCC will continue to work closely with future venues' local tourist boards and councils to try to ensure affordable accommodation is available.

Since going into Government many members have expressed a wish to hear from and question our Ministers. FCC has tried to facilitate this. There is a careful balance to be drawn between policy debates and non debate items. This something FCC keeps a close eye on. Recent results from the questionnaire are set out below:

Balance of Debate & Non-debate Items	Brighton	Birm.	Liverpool	B'mouth	B'mouth	Brighton
	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Too many non-debates minus too much debate (%)	9	30	19	12	8	6

This section of the questionnaire looks at how attendees feel about that the balance between debate and non-debate items. The responses indicate that attendees feel that the recent trend of not enough debating time since going into Government was reversed in Brighton.

Our first conference App was launched at autumn conference. This is something that we are keen to improve and develop. 25% of those that returned the questionnaire downloaded it and 86% of those would do so again. In future releases we will look at making the diary function better and more comprehensive.

## **FCC Elections**

A new committee was elected following autumn conference. It's great to see some new faces on the committee and I was delighted to be re-elected as Chair by the new committee. I will be ably supported by Geoff Payne and Sal Brinton who were elected as Vice Chairs.

Dee Doocey did not re-stand for FCC following 16 years' service. Her advice and experience will be missed. We were also sad to lose Robert Adamson, Qassim Afzal, Jon Ball, Arnie Gibbons and Linda Jack who were not re-elected. Jeremy Hargreaves and Lucy Care will also no longer be representing FPC on FCC and Jo Shaw has stood down as one of the FE reps on the committee. Each one of them were valued members of the committee and I would like to put on record my, and the committee's, thanks for all their hard work.

## **Chief Steward**

FCC has appointed Mike Ross as the new chief steward. Mike has been a steward for a number of years, most recently serving as Deputy Chief Steward. Mike has taken over from Adrian Beavis. Adrian was an extremely popular chief steward who was always willing to roll up his sleeves and help out. He took over in difficult circumstances and had to manage the difficult transition for the steward's team from opposition to Government and all the security and other issues that involved. FCC would like to place on record our grateful thanks to Adrian for all his help and support.

## **Brighton 2013**

This spring we have returned to Brighton, albeit to a different venue. I hope that having everything under one roof will create a vibrant atmosphere and be a popular choice of venue.

FCC has been mindful of the increasing costs for those attending conference. We have a difficult job to try and meet the budget set by FFAC but have decided to freeze registration fees for members this year.

We are also mindful of the amount of paper that conference generates. This comes at a considerable cost – both financial and to the environment. For a number of years those attending have had the choice to receive just a hard copy of the agenda and directory or a full pack, including all reports, consultation and policy papers. This year we have introduced another option: online only. We have decided to adjust the costs to reflect the financial saving of not receiving paper copies from the conference office. I would like to thank all those who have taken up these options, not only have you saved yourself money but you are doing your bit to help the environment. I would urge as many members as possible to take up this option.

## **Motions**

As always, every item on the agenda is still open to amendment. The deadline for submitting amendments – and also emergency motions and questions to reports – is 13.00 on 5 March.

We continue to provide a drafting advisory service, and I would encourage all emergency motion and amendment submitters to make use of it – those who have used it in the past have had a much higher chance of having theirs accepted. The deadline for the advisory service for amendments and emergency motions is 13.00 19 February 2013 and for motions to the autumn conference 13.00 12 June 2013, please do use the service; drafts should be sent to [motionsadvice@libdems.org.uk](mailto:motionsadvice@libdems.org.uk).

## **Agenda**

This conference sees the first stage of our involvement in the manifesto process. We have organised a session with members of the Manifesto drafting group. This session gives you the opportunity to feed into the start of this process - please do come along and participate.

Once again, we have also organised a number of 'Ministerial Surgeries'. They take part away from the main auditorium and are an excellent opportunity to question some of parliamentarians. These have proven to be popular with our members and I would urge you to go along to at least one.

Friday 8 March is International Women's Day and the conference rally on the Friday evening will celebrate this occasion. Do come along.

### **Glasgow 2013**

The autumn sees us return to Glasgow after a considerable time. Many things have changed since we were last there. The conference centre has expanded and the number of surrounding hotels has increased. Glasgow's cultural sector has boomed since 1990, when the city was named European Capital of Culture, and now boasts excellent attractions, galleries, museums, shopping, parks and gardens. We are working closely with our colleagues on the Scottish conference committee and are confident that Glasgow will prove to be a popular venue. Registration will open in May.

### **Future venues**

The current size of the conference and the scale of public interest it attracts make it an attractive event for many towns and cities to host, but also restricts the number of venues with adequate facilities. We have spent a considerable amount of time negotiating with possible venues and will announce our 2014 venues shortly.

### **Stewards**

As always, conference can only take place due to the massive contribution and efforts of the volunteer stewarding team, who look after the exhibition, fringe, information desk, stage and auditorium, and ensure that we all get the most out of conference.

### **Federal Conference Committee**

FCC members are here to help you make the most of conference - do feel free to ask us any questions you may have relating to the agenda and how to speak in debates. You can identify us by the badges we wear, with 'FCC' prominently displayed; there are also pictures of us (although looking at some of the photos it may be difficult to see the true likeness!) on page 2 of the Agenda and Directory.

FCC members are assigned to state and English regional parties, and SAOs. The idea is that they provide advice and assistance on submitting motions and when requested attend conferences to answer your questions. See the contact details at the end of this report, and don't hesitate to get in touch with the relevant FCC member.

### **Thanks**

The vast bulk of the hard work of organising conference throughout the year falls on the professional staff in the Conference Office at HQ: Lucy Billingsley and her team Emma Price, Siân Jenkins and Lewis Redfern. I would also like to express my grateful thanks to all the others who make conference possible: to all my colleagues on the Conference Committee; to all the staff at HQ, in particular the Policy Projects Team, led by Christian Moon, who process the motions and prepare much of the agenda material; and of course to the stewards' team.

Conference is a fantastic event to be involved in and I'm proud to chair your FCC. I look forward to seeing you in Brighton.

**Andrew Wiseman**  
**Chair, Federal Conference Committee**  
**January 2013**

Regional and SAO reps 2012-14

<b>Region</b>	
Devon & Cornwall	<b>Justine McGuiness</b>
East of England	<b>Geoff Payne</b>
East Midlands	<b>Andrew Wiseman</b>
London	<b>Chris Maines</b>
Northern	<b>Andrew Wiseman</b>
North West	<b>Qassim Afzal</b>
South Central	<b>David Rendel</b>
South East	<b>Louise Bloom</b>
West Midlands	<b>Paul Tilsley</b>
Western Counties	<b>Justine McGuiness</b>
Yorkshire & the Humber	<b>Andrew Wiseman</b>

The FCC has also appointed representatives to Party SAOs:

<b>SAO</b>	
ALDES	<b>Evan Harris</b>
ALDC	<b>Sandra Gidley</b>
LGBT+	<b>David Rendel</b>
WLD	<b>Sandra Gidley</b>
Liberal Youth	<b>Gareth Epps</b>
PCA	<b>Liz Lynne</b>
Liberal Democrat Lawyers	<b>Evan Harris</b>
EMLD	<b>Gareth Epps</b>
LDDA (AO)	<b>Liz Lynne</b>

## Federal Executive

The Federal Executive is responsible for directing, co-ordinating and implementing the work of the Federal Party, including overall strategy, campaigning, organisation, and staffing. The Federal Finance and Administration Committee (see below) and the Campaigns and Communications Committee both report to the FE.

The FE has 29 voting members: the Party President (Chair), three Vice-Presidents, the Leader, two additional MPs, one peer, one MEP, two councillors, three State Party reps and fifteen members elected directly by Conference Reps.

This report to Conference is different from our reports in the past, because rather than being just from our Chair, it is from us all. We have only just held our first meeting as an FE, which means we haven't had the chance yet to do much that needs reporting. So rather than giving you the chance to scrutinise our work, we wanted to tell you what we're planning on making out of our 2013-14 terms.

As the strategic body of the Party, FE is there to scrutinise the work of our headquarters and our leadership, and to make tough decisions on things such as the budget. We're there to look at how the Party works and make sure that we're functioning as effectively as we can to make sure that all of your (and our!) hard work goes towards winning us seats.

For this reason, we are all taking on a little extra work this year. We used our first meeting to set our priorities for 2013:

- **Engagement and Involvement**
- **Fundraising; and**
- **Internal Democratic Reform.**

**Engagement and Involvement** means supporting our local parties, regions, and states in their recruitment and retention efforts: we all know that to win elections as Liberal Democrats, we need a huge amount of volunteers and activists with a huge amount of enthusiasm – there's no safe seats for us! It also means making sure that all of these volunteers and activists know what we are doing to help – and know that there is support, training, and opportunities for them across the country. For these reasons, we're putting **retention, internal communications, engaging supporters, and working with SAOs/AOs** at the top of our list for 2013.

Just as we need people to win our elections, we also need money – for deposits, for leaflets, for tea and biscuits to keep committee rooms going – which is why we're also focusing on **fundraising**. We will be working with our fundraising team in HQ, Sir Ian Wrigglesworth the Party Treasurer, and our Finance and Administration Committee to make sure that we are reaching out to everyone we can in the run up to 2015.

Finally, we're looking at **internal democratic reform**. It might not sound as interesting as membership and communications, but we have come to the conclusion that one of the best things about our Party is how we involve our membership. If you're a member, you can become a Conference Rep – then you can vote on policy and vote for our executive committees – you can use your vote to change how we run the Party. But we know that not everyone can afford either the time or the money to come to Conference; and we know that this shouldn't mean that you don't have just the same opportunities to get involved as our traditional Conference-goers. So we will be looking into the ways in which we can get our membership more involved and give you all more of an opportunity to have a say on the things that matter. We have one thing that our Constitution writers did not in 1988 – the World Wide Web – and we see no reason why we can't make better use of that to ensure that everyone who wants to can make their voice heard in our Party.

It's a short introduction to what we want to do – but it gives you an idea of where we want to head. By the

time we leave office, there will be only 4 months until the next General Election, which means that to do the best we can, we need to start the campaign now.

Spring Conference 2013 is here – there's only 789 days to go!

## **Party Elections**

2012 saw another round of Committee Elections, which brought four new members to Federal Executive. We said goodbye to Susan Juned, Candy Piercy, and Evan Harris at the end of 2012 – and want to thank them for their contribution to FE over a number of years.

Back in July last year, we agreed that Committee Elections 2012 would mark a change towards a more electronically-based system of voting, in which Conference Reps who received their papers electronically would only have the opportunity to vote online. This amounted to approximately 45% of Conference Reps. This decision was partly based on the costs of printing and posting around 1800 sets of ballot papers, and partly on the environmental impact of the traditional method.

The turnout in committee elections for 2012 was 49% - this is marginally up on the turnout for 2010, at 48.9% - online turnout was 51%. 66% of people received a paper ballot, yet in terms of received votes, only 41.1% were from paper ballots, with 58.9% being received from the online system. It is particularly interesting to note that of those who received paper ballots and chose to vote, 36% chose to vote online rather than return their ballot paper.

These figures, in addition to comments from Conference Representatives as a whole, will influence us in 2014 as we look for the most effective and economic way of engaging our members.

## **FE Elections**

In our January meeting, we elected a number of people to serve on our sub-committees and as FE reps to other committees. The full list of appointments is available on the Members' Website. We particularly welcome the reappointment of Sir Ian Wrigglesworth as Party Treasurer, James Gurling as Chair of the Campaigns and Communications Committee, and Robert Woodthorpe-Brown as Chair of the International Relations Committee. We also welcome for the first time Peter Dunphy as Chair of the Federal Finance and Administration Committee.

## **HQ Reorganisation**

After Autumn Conference 2012, Tim Gordon and the management team at Headquarters oversaw a large scale reorganisation of departments and staff. There are now five directorates:

- Elections & Field – Hilary Stephenson
- Political Communications – Tim Snowball
- Digital – Steve Pitman
- Commercial – Tim Gordon
- Finance and Operations – Nigel Bliss.

During this time, we sadly said goodbye to David Loxton, Director of Membership and Development – who had worked for the Party for the past 28 years; and to Deidre Razzall who had been editor of Liberal Democrat News for the past 14 years. Both new and old Federal Executives recorded a vote of thanks for their incredibly amount of work with and for the Party, and wished them all the best in the future.

The reorganisation was designed to ensure that our headquarters could work increasingly flexibly towards shared core objectives – namely winning votes! We were pleased to support the changes, and are looking



forward to supporting the work of the new directorates in the run up to County, Euro, Metropolitan, and the General Elections.

### **(S)AO Review Group**

At Autumn Conference last year, our (S)AO Review Group met with the Party's (Specified) Associated Organisations to look at where representatives of these organisations were doing well, and where they thought that they could do with a bit of support. FE made the decision last year that the existing relationship between formal Party structures and (S)AO groups was not ideal – and that a more mutually beneficial system where FE worked to support and encourage (S)AOs would be helpful. Representatives from a large number of these groups confirmed this.

Our standing group will therefore be working to more closely engage with (S)AOs and their membership. To this end, the March meeting of FE is being largely dedicated to meeting with (S)AOs. We expect to be able to report to you on our progress in this area in autumn.

### **Lib Dem News/Ad Lib**

With the Headquarters Reorganisation, we said goodbye to an old fixture of the Liberal (and then Liberal Democrat) Parties – Lib Dem News. As we hope you have seen, Lib Dem News has been replaced by a monthly glossy magazine called Ad Lib.

The change was desirable for a number of reasons: a shrinking pool of subscribers; the retirement of Deirdre Razzall; a changing media environment that has seen news websites, blogs, social media and 24/7 TV news diminish the need for a weekly newspaper to pass on news to members; and the ability to create more content of interest to members with the greater space that a magazine allows.

The intention was to create a new magazine that kept the best of Lib Dem News while allowing us to do much more. In the first issue, Editor-in-chief Phil Reilly described the tone of the new magazine as: “The Liberal Democrats are a family. We share deeply held convictions on life, liberty and society, and we love nothing more than to argue politics and policy long into the night. But we’re more than just like-minded individuals. We campaign together, help each other and socialise together. We respect each other and we tease each other. We share wisdom and we make mischief. Ad Lib aims to reflect all that in words and pictures.”

In its first three issues Ad Lib has carried interviews with Nick Clegg, Jo Swinson, Shirley Williams, Meral Ece, Tim Farron, Lord Avebury, Cllr Mike Priestley from Conwy, former Liverpool council deputy leader Flo Clucas and newly selected PPC Layla Moran; policy features on a wide range of issues, including women’s prisons, European policing and justice co-operation, Page 3, public art and the mid-term review; behind-the-scenes accounts from the coalition negotiations and the leaders’ debates; reports from a host of by-elections; as well as recipes, book reviews and Desert Island Discs selections.

The response has been very positive. Not only have we increased subscriptions by several hundred since Ad Lib’s launch, but a Lib Dem Voice survey found members were overwhelmingly positive about the change (47% positive vs 19% negative).

We intend to produce Ad Lib for many years to come. To do so we have to expand the loyal subscriber base we inherited from Lib Dem News. The early signs are promising, and we hope that in the months ahead many more members will read, enjoy and subscribe to Ad Lib. It is written for and by Liberal Democrat members and it is dependent on their support for its success.

### **2013 Budget**

In December, we approved the budget for 2013 as recommended by FFAC. There were a couple of provisions in this budget that we wanted to bring to Conference's attention.

Firstly, the budget for 2013 removes the use of unpaid interns by Liberal Democrat Headquarters. The unpaid internship scheme that had been operating has now been replaced by employing two interns at a time on the minimum wage for terms lasting 3 months. As a Party that has long campaigned for increased social mobility and fairness in the workplace, we are incredibly pleased to be able to make this announcement to Conference.

Secondly, diversity spending will be maintained against a general backdrop of cost-cutting. Our support to the Leadership Programme will continue undiminished and a new phase will start as those trained hopefully begin to move into strategic seats. In addition, the new staff member responsible for Ad Lib will work towards achieving coverage for the party in specialist media, including that aimed at women and ethnic minorities.

Finally, our fundraising team in HQ, working with Sir Ian Wrigglesworth, the Party Treasurer, launched in autumn our Legacy Programme. This scheme encourages members and supporters to write the Party into their Will – the proceeds from which will be used for increasing campaigns expenditure.

### **FE/FCC Working Group**

One of the results of the 2013 budget was a request from FFAC that FE encourage FCC to look at the income and expenditure related to spring conferences. FE considered the request and came to the decision that in order to best balance the considerations relating to spring conference, a cross-committee working group should be set up.

In our January meeting, FE appointed James Gurling (Chair of CCC, FE Rep to FCC) to Chair the Working Group. We also appointed Ali Goldsworthy (Deputy Chair) as an FE member and Welsh Rep, Craig Harrow as an FE member and Scottish Rep, Qassim Afzal (FE Rep to FCC), Peter Dunphy (FFAC Chair) as the FFAC representative, and Lucy Billingsley from the Conference Office. Andrew Wiseman (FCC Chair) and Geoff Payne (an FCC Vice Chair) have also been appointed to the Working Group.

This group will be consulting widely within the Party to make sure that members have the chance to make their voices heard. It is our intention that the group should bring forward proposals to a joint meeting of FE and FCC in June, and, if necessary, put a joint motion to Conference in Autumn 2013.

**Tim Farron MP (Chair)   Alison Goldsworthy (Deputy Chair)   Brian Orrell**  
**Caron Lindsay   Chris White   Craig Harrow**  
**Daisy Cooper   David Rendel   David Williams**  
**Elaine Bagshaw   Fiona Hall MEP   Gerald Vernon-Jackson**  
**Gordon Lishman   James Gurling   Joanna Shaw**  
**Jock Gallagher   John Last   Kath Pinnock**  
**Keith House   Kevin Lang   Baroness Falkner**  
**Lorely Burt MP   Martin Tod   Peter Ellis**  
**Qassim Afzal   Ramesh Dewan   Sue Doughty**

**FE Membership**  
**January 2013**

## APPENDIX 1: LIAISON LIST

<b>Regions</b>		
Devon & Cornwall	<b>Daisy Cooper</b>	<a href="mailto:daisy_cooper@live.co.uk">daisy_cooper@live.co.uk</a>
East Midlands	<b>Caron Lindsay</b>	<a href="mailto:caronmlindsay@gmail.com">caronmlindsay@gmail.com</a>
East of England	<b>Chris White</b>	<a href="mailto:chriswhite@cix.co.uk">chriswhite@cix.co.uk</a>
London	<b>Jo Shaw</b>	<a href="mailto:joannashaw2011@gmail.com">joannashaw2011@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Martin Tod</b>	<a href="mailto:martin@martintod.org.uk">martin@martintod.org.uk</a>
North East	<b>Gordon Lishman</b>	<a href="mailto:gordon@lishman.co.uk">gordon@lishman.co.uk</a>
North West	<b>Qassim Afzal</b>	<a href="mailto:qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com">qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com</a>
South Central	<b>Elaine Bagshaw</b>	<a href="mailto:esbagshaw@gmail.com">esbagshaw@gmail.com</a>
South East	<b>David Williams</b>	<a href="mailto:Cllr.dwilliams@richmond.gov.uk">Cllr.dwilliams@richmond.gov.uk</a>
West Midlands	<b>Jock Gallagher</b>	<a href="mailto:jyg@cix.co.uk">jyg@cix.co.uk</a>
Western Counties	<b>Keith House</b>	<a href="mailto:keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk">keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk</a>
Yorks & the Humber	<b>Kath Pinnock</b>	<a href="mailto:kath.pinnock@gmail.com">kath.pinnock@gmail.com</a>

<b>Specified Associated Organisations</b>		
Agents' and Organisers' Association	<b>David Williams</b>	<a href="mailto:cldr.dwilliams@richmond.gov.uk">cldr.dwilliams@richmond.gov.uk</a>
ALDC (Association of Lib Dem Councillors)	<b>Gerald Vernon-Jackson</b>	<a href="mailto:geraldvj@gmail.com">geraldvj@gmail.com</a>
	<b>Chris White</b>	<a href="mailto:chriswhite@cix.co.uk">chriswhite@cix.co.uk</a>
ALDES (Assn of Lib Dem Engineers and Scientists)	<b>James Gurling</b>	<a href="mailto:jgurling@btinternet.com">jgurling@btinternet.com</a>
EMLD (Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats)	<b>Ramesh Dewan</b>	<a href="mailto:rameshdewan@yahoo.com">rameshdewan@yahoo.com</a>
LDLA (Liberal Democrat Lawyers' Association)	<b>Kevin Lang</b>	<a href="mailto:Kevin_lang15@hotmail.com">Kevin_lang15@hotmail.com</a>
LGBT+ (Previously known as DELGA)	<b>David Rendel</b>	<a href="mailto:davidrendel@btinternet.com">davidrendel@btinternet.com</a>
Liberal Youth	<b>Elaine Bagshaw</b>	<a href="mailto:esbagshaw@gmail.com">esbagshaw@gmail.com</a>
PCA (Parliamentary Candidates Association)	<b>Jock Gallagher</b>	<a href="mailto:jyg@cix.co.uk">jyg@cix.co.uk</a>
WLD (Women Liberal Democrats)	<b>Jo Shaw</b>	<a href="mailto:joannashaw2011@gmail.com">joannashaw2011@gmail.com</a>

<b>Associated Organisations</b>		
ALDTU (Association of Lib Dem Trade Unionists)	<b>Daisy Cooper</b>	<a href="mailto:daisy_cooper@live.co.uk">daisy_cooper@live.co.uk</a>
Chinese Liberal Democrats	<b>Ramesh Dewan</b>	<a href="mailto:rameshdewan@yahoo.com">rameshdewan@yahoo.com</a>
Green Liberal Democrats	<b>Chris White</b>	<a href="mailto:chriswhite@cix.co.uk">chriswhite@cix.co.uk</a>
Humanist and Secularist Liberal Democrats	<b>Caron Lindsay</b>	<a href="mailto:caronmlindsay@gmail.com">caronmlindsay@gmail.com</a>
LDDA (Liberal Democrat Disability Association)	<b>Brian Orrell</b>	<a href="mailto:brian.orrell@libdems.org.uk">brian.orrell@libdems.org.uk</a>
LDEA (Liberal Democrat Education Association)	<b>Martin Tod</b>	<a href="mailto:martin@martintod.org.uk">martin@martintod.org.uk</a>
LDER (Liberal Democrats for Electoral Reform)	<b>David Rendel</b>	<a href="mailto:davidrendel@btinternet.com">davidrendel@btinternet.com</a>
LDCF (Liberal Democrat Christian Forum)	<b>Sue Doughty</b>	<a href="mailto:sue@suedoughty.plus.com">sue@suedoughty.plus.com</a>
LDEG (Liberal Democrat European Group)	<b>Peter Ellis</b>	<a href="mailto:peter.ellis@libdems.org.uk">peter.ellis@libdems.org.uk</a>
LDFAF (Lib Dem Friends of the Armed Forces)	<b>Gerald Vernon-Jackson</b>	<a href="mailto:geraldvj@gmail.com">geraldvj@gmail.com</a>
Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel	<b>Sue Doughty</b>	<a href="mailto:sue@suedoughty.plus.com">sue@suedoughty.plus.com</a>
Liberal Democrat Friends of Kashmir	<b>Qassim Afzal</b>	<a href="mailto:qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com">qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com</a>
Liberal Democrat Friends of Pakistan	<b>Qassim Afzal</b>	<a href="mailto:qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com">qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com</a>
Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine	<b>Keith House</b>	<a href="mailto:keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk">keith.house@eastleigh.gov.uk</a>

Liberal Democrats for Peace and Security	<b>Kishwer Falkner</b>	<a href="mailto:falknerk@parliament.uk">falknerk@parliament.uk</a>
Liberal International	<b>Daisy Cooper</b>	<a href="mailto:daisy_cooper@live.co.uk">daisy_cooper@live.co.uk</a>

## Federal Policy Committee

The Federal Policy Committee is responsible for researching and developing policy and overseeing the Federal Party's policy-making process. This includes producing policy papers for debate at conference, and drawing up (in consultation with the relevant parliamentary party) the Federal election manifestos for Westminster and European elections.

The FPC has 29 voting members: the Party Leader, four other MPs, the Party President, one peer, one MEP, three councillors, three state party reps and fifteen members directly elected by conference reps. It must be chaired by one of the five MP members and is currently chaired by Duncan Hames MP.

### Change to Chair of FPC

Since the last written report to Conference, there has been a change in the chair of FPC. Jo Swinson MP stood down as chair in September on becoming a Minister in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. The FPC would like to record its thanks to Jo for her work as chair over the previous seven months.

There are also two new Vice-Chairs of the Committee, Duncan Brack and Cllr Dr Julie Smith. I look forward to working with them and with Dr Julian Huppert MP who is continuing as the MP Vice Chair. FPC would like to express its thanks to the two former Vice Chairs, Jeremy Hargreaves and Evan Harris.

### Policy Development

Since the Autumn Conference, consultation papers on Defence, Education and Skills, Europe, Political and Constitutional Reform and Tax, have been produced and are presented for discussion at Brighton.

These groups anticipate bringing full policy papers to the Autumn Conference.

The FPC is very grateful for the contribution made by the chairs and members of working groups who voluntarily give a great deal of time to assist the Party's policy development process.

Dr Julie Smith is currently leading some work on the way we run policy working groups to see how they can be more effective.

### **FPC Work Programme**

The *Facing the Future* review group produced a report which was adopted at the Birmingham Conference in 2011.

*Facing the Future* maps out a programme for policy development for the rest of this Parliament to ensure that we are in a position to present a distinctive, relevant and forward-looking manifesto at the next General Election. This programme will be taken forward by FPC working in co-operation with the Parliamentary Party Committees through both full policy papers and stand-alone motions to conference.

The table below sets out the latest forward schedule of policy development work in the light of *Facing the Future*. This is obviously subject to further decisions by conference and is more likely to change in the later part of the Parliament.

In accordance with this schedule, the FPC has recently set up a new working group on Immigration, Asylum, and Identity chaired by Andrew Stunell MP.

Conference	<u>Consultation Papers</u>	Policy Papers
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Spring 2013	Taxation. Defence. Political Reform. Education and Skills Europe.	
Autumn 2013	Immigration, Asylum & Identity. Public Services.	Taxation. Defence. Education and Skills Europe Balanced Working Life. Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain
Spring 2014	Gender Equality. Crime and Justice. Challenges of an Ageing Population.	Immigration, Asylum & Identity. Public Services. European Pre Manifesto.
Autumn 2014		Gender Equality. Crime and Justice. Challenges of an Ageing Population.

### General Election Manifesto

The FPC has now appointed the Working Group for the 2015 General Election Manifesto. This will comprise:

David Laws MP (Chair)  
 Nick Clegg MP  
 Duncan Brack (Vice Chair)  
 Sharon Bowles MEP (Vice Chair)  
 Duncan Hames MP  
 Cllr Dr Julie Smith  
 Dr Julian Huppert MP  
 Baroness Brinton  
 Lord Shipley  
 Tim Farron MP  
 Jenny Willott MP  
 Jo Swinson MP  
 Munira Wilson

The manifesto working group and the FPC plan to undertake an unprecedented programme of engagement in the party during the development of the manifesto, starting with the consultation session at the Brighton Conference. I hope to be able to say more about this in my report at conference and during the consultation session.

### FPC Links

To encourage policy debate across the party we have FPC representatives taking responsibility for promoting policy debate within each of the regions of England and to attend regional conferences where appropriate.

<b>Region</b>	
Devon & Cornwall	Julia Church
East of England	Geoff Payne
East Midlands	Lucy Care
London	Mark Pack
Northern	Stan Collins
North West	Stan Collins
South Central	Dinti Batstone/Gareth Epps
South East	Kelly-Marie Blundell
West Midlands	Lucy Care
Western Counties	Duncan Hames
Yorkshire & the Humber	Duncan Brack

The FPC has also appointed representatives to Party SAOs:

<b>SAO</b>	
ALDES	Lucy Care/Mark Pack
ALDC	Stan Collins/Mark Pack
LGBT+	Evan Harris
WLD	Louise Bloom
Liberal Youth	Gareth Epps
PCA	Chris Rennard
Liberal Democrat Lawyers	Geoff Payne
EMLD	Gareth Epps
LDDA (AO)	Kelly-Marie Blundell

The FPC also has representatives on the Parliamentary Party Committees:

<b>Committee</b>	
Co-Chairs Liaison	Duncan Hames MP
DCLG	Stan Collins
DECC & DEFRA	Duncan Brack & Andrew Wiseman
DWP	Kelly-Marie Blundell & Louise Bloom
Education & Culture	Evan Harris
Health	Prateek Buch
Home, Justice & Equalities Monday	Geoff Payne & Lucy Care
International (inc Foreign, Defence, DFID)	Peter Price & Julie Smith
Political & Constitutional Reform (inc Scotland, Wales, NI)	Dinti Batstone & Evan Harris
Scotland Only meetings	John Edward
Wales Only meetings	Peter Price
Transport Wednesday	Lucy Care

**Member Engagement**

In addition to the formal consultative mechanisms of the policy process, and the specific arrangements around the Manifesto, the FPC is keen to do more to help party members to have an input to policy discussions. A review of how we can do this is being led by Gareth Epps. We have already tried some new initiatives to stimulate policy development in the party, for example the 'Pizza and Politics' pack that was prepared as part of the work of the Tax policy group.

**Policy Staffing**

The Policy Unit consists of Christian Moon (Head of Policy), Adam Pritchard (Senior Policy), Bess Mayhew (Senior Policy Manager and Communications Manager), Rory Belcher (Direct Communications Manager) and Ed Simpson (Direct Communications and Research Officer). We have also benefitted from the support of a secondee from PWC, Kevin Norton, and a secondee from KPMG, Andrew Johnson. Volunteers since the Autumn Conference have included: Simon Marlow, Alex Matthews, Rosie Gray and Jessica Mace. The FPC is grateful for the hard work of all staff, both paid and voluntary.

**Duncan Hames MP**

**Chair, Federal Policy Committee**

**January 2013**



## F

The FFAC committee, elected in January 2013 for a two year term, continues to monitor and report regularly to the Federal Executive on the Administration of the Party and its Finances (construed narrowly as the monies raised and spent by the Federal Party). As previously agreed the Committee now meets jointly with the Management Board of POLD (the Parliamentary Office of the Liberal Democrats). A subgroup meets on a monthly basis to review the management accounts and cashflow.

### **Federal Finance Administration Committee**

#### **2012 results**

Expenditure was £581,000 below budget due to a number of posts being kept vacant and very tight control of non-staff costs.

Against this income was adversely affected by the non-receipt of a number of substantial donations that had been expected around the year-end and are now expected in 2013. By their nature, it is always difficult to be precise about the timing of such receipts. Conference and direct mail appeals incomes were below budget but other sources of income were broadly on budget

Overall the draft figures for 2012 indicate a deficit for the year of around £327,000 (against a budgeted surplus of £207,000).

During 2012 the Party was notified that it is the residuary beneficiary of a substantial legacy (of the order of £400,000). The bulk of the assets of the estate have now been realised and a significant proportion of the legacy should be received shortly.

The receipt of this large legacy led to the launch of the legacy campaign at last autumn's conference. Monies received will be held in a separate fund controlled by the Party's Trustees (though included in the Federal Party's accounts) to ensure that the legacy fund is used for the long term benefit of the Party. In early 2013 the first legacy (£129,000) was received to give the fund a good start to its existence.

#### **2013 budget**

For 2013 the budget has been split between an Operational and an Elections Fund. This split is to ensure that core operations are only funded from core income and that specific identified fundraising is directed to Elections Fund expenditure.

Although new innovative ways to maximise conference and appeals income will be introduced in 2013, the Operational Fund budget is based upon the conservative assumption that income in those areas will be no greater than that achieved in 2012. As the budget is for a break-even result any additional income will be used to reduce the accumulated deficit.

To balance the Operational Fund budget has meant making difficult decisions with the result that expenditure has been cut by more than £100,000 from the level achieved in 2012, whilst at the same time increasing expenditure in key areas such as support for Regional Campaigns Officers.

The Elections Fund is also budgeted to broadly break-even with any additional income ring-fenced for campaigns purposes.

The budget is included in Appendix 1 attached.

The party continues to meet the financial reporting requirements of the Electoral Commission on accounts, elections and donations with the very good co-operation of the vast majority of our volunteer Local Party and Regional Treasurers. We would like to place on record our continued thanks for this very good work.

Consolidated Local Party accounts (including branches) for the 2012 calendar year that exceed £17,500 should be approved by Local Party Executives and submitted to Party Headquarters before 15<sup>th</sup> March in accordance with the **revised accounting requirements** issued by the Electoral Commission for the 2012 accounts.

In conjunction with the Commission's new requirements we have issued a new electronic format to help Local Parties produce their accounts ready to be submitted to the Electoral Commission if necessary.

The declarations of donations made to the Party, statements of accounts submitted, and the Party's Campaign Expenditure Returns are all made public and can be viewed on the Electoral Commission's web site at <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/>

These published records show that the Party continues to receive more in personal donations from more individuals than the Labour Party most of whose funds come from large Trade Unions.

Over the Christmas holidays one of the Party's donors was challenged with the Electoral Commission. The EC found no evidence to support the allegations made and gave a clean bill of health to both the donor and the process undertaken by the Liberal Democrats to assess the permissibility of these donations.

### **Membership and Fundraising Services**

The trend through 2012 was encouraging, with both the rates of renewal, direct debit payment and membership growth improving over the previous year.

In particular, local parties which focused on membership achieved significant results. Areas such as Shropshire and Thornbury & Yate demonstrated that membership growth is achievable where an effort is made.

The key challenges for 2013 are to improve member retention, in particular for people in their first year of membership, and to provide better support local parties in their recruitment activities.

**Duncan Greenland**

**FFAC Chair**

**January 2013**

## Appendix A

### 2013 Outline Budget & 2012 budget

	2013 Outline budget £	2012 Budget
<b>Income</b>		
Appeals income	605,000	710,900
Fundraising income	1,503,000	1,865,754
Federal levy	800,000	820,248
Conference	1,650,000	1,650,000
Lib Dem News	114,000	108,000
Cross charges to state parties	623,000	570,145
Policy Development Fund	455,000	450,000
Connect income	111,000	111,175
Other income	175,000	179,685
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	6,036,000	6,465,997
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<u>Staff costs</u>		
Office of the Chief Executive	1,080,000	1,195,753
Elections & Skills	678,000	652,032
Membership	531,000	491,032
Finance & Resources	260,000	258,942
Commons Whips	75,000	75,076
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2,624,000	2,672,835
<u>Departmental non-staff costs</u>		
Office of the Chief Executive	607,000	725,988
Conference	575,000	605,050
Elections & Skills	1,127,000	1,145,056
Membership	275,000	329,833
Finance & Resources	668,000	754,094
Commons Whips	33,000	32,962
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	3,285,000	3,592,983
Total expenditure	5,909,000	6,265,818
<b>Surplus for the period</b>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	127,000	200,179

## Parliamentary Party (Commons)

This has been yet another busy term for the Commons parliamentary party. In my report to Autumn Conference, I made reference to the coalition's Programme for Government. Two and a half years ago, our parties came together in the national interest and formed a coalition at a time of real economic danger. The deficit was spiralling out of control, confidence was plummeting, and the world was looking to Britain with growing anxiety about our ability to service our debts. The mid-term review which was published in early January allowed us to take stock of the progress we have made in implementing the Coalition Agreement that we signed in May 2010. It also gave us a chance to look again at our progress and set out more reforms, to build on those already under way, to secure our country's future and help people realise their ambitions. The Government has announced that it will look again at the support we give to families struggling with the cost of childcare; to build more houses and help to make home ownership a reality for more people aspiring to get their first step on the property ladder; to invest in our transport network for the long-term; to find a solution to the crippling costs of long-term care for the elderly and to bring dignity to those in old age; and to limit the powers of the state and to extend our freedoms.

In addition to these commitments, the Government brought forward their plans for a single-tier pension. The brain child of our Pensions Minister, Steve Webb, these changes will see the greatest ever overhaul of our pensions system for fifty years and will simplify an increasingly complex and unfair system. Having already delivered the 'triple lock' for pensioners, Steve's reforms will ensure that working people have access to a simple and decent pension; one which for the first time ever, treats men and women equally. The system also extends this equality to self-employed people and will ensure that no matter your profession, the same value will be placed on the contributions of a carer or stay-at-home part, as is already placed on a City high-flyer. Steve made a statement to the Commons, setting out these changes and was magnificent. It is a rare thing for Quentin Letts – the Daily Mail Sketch writer – to compliment an MP but even rarer for him to be complimentary about a Liberal Democrat! Letts went as far as to say, "This was a masterly performance on a policy which addresses a long-overdue hole in the nation's financial planning. Not bad for any government, let alone a coalition."

Another statement, which caused something of a stir in Westminster was that made by the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg in response to Lord Justice Leveson's proposals for reform of the press. In a break from Parliamentary convention, Nick made a statement to the House as Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat leader; following David Cameron's statement on the same issue, as Conservative party leader. As Liberal Democrats we have long believed in a free press that holds the powerful to account and isn't subject to political interference. A free press does not mean a press that is free to bully innocent people, or free to abuse grieving families. People who feel they have been mistreated by powerful newspapers need to know there is somebody prepared to stand up for them. We still don't yet know what the final shape of a reform of the press will look like but we do know that the status quo is broken and indefensible. As Liberal Democrats, we are fighting to ensure that the careful consideration between the freedom of speech and the equally important, right not to be abused, is struck in a fair and balanced way.

In November 2012, the Energy Bill had its Second Reading in the House of Commons. The Bill will be a flagship piece of legislation, which sets out our plan for energy supply for the long-term. The Energy Bill introduces positive reforms to deliver affordable low carbon energy and protect the UK's energy security for future years. In supporting low carbon energy through the use of a diverse energy mix, including renewables, nuclear, and Carbon Capture and Storage. These reforms will give greater certainty for investors, diversify the energy sector,

and create hundreds of thousands of jobs in low-carbon energy projects. The Bill is currently being considered at Committee Stage but having already been through the House of Lords, it will not (hopefully) be too long before it reaches the Statute Book.

Similarly, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill represents a delivery of party policy, which would never have been secured without our presence in government. Marriage has never been a static institution and I am confident that these reforms strengthen its place in UK life. A government should never prevent people from marrying without good cause and loving someone of the same-sex has never struck me as a good cause. I pay tribute to my colleagues, Lynne Featherstone and Jo Swinson for securing this victory and ensuring that the right of religious groups has been protected through the quadruple lock.

One of the most challenging days of coalition management and of recent times was the one on which it was necessary to issue different whipping instructions from most of our coalition partners in relation to the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill as it related to the Boundary Review. As I reported at autumn conference 2012 this was an unfortunate consequence arising from the acts of Conservative backbenchers in wrecking the Lords Reform Bill. Voting with the Labour Party and other small parties meant the vote was won. Obviously it was necessary that we should carry out the actions that we had said we would at the point the Conservatives ended their commitment to Lords reform. That said, as a tactic it is one that is best to be used sparingly, the politics that it has to disrupt the daily workings of government is substantial.

### Parliamentary Party Organisation

You will be aware that when we formed the coalition, the parliamentary party decided to structure itself differently, forming parliamentary party committees under each of the Government departments. Some committees were merged but each joined with our spokespeople in the Lords, to form co-chairs and each saw formal links with our local government base and FPC representatives. Following on from the Government reshuffle, which saw a number of co-chairs promoted, a reshuffle of co-chairs also took place. Printed below are the list of our committees and their new Commons co-chairs.

Business, Innovation and Skills	Gordon Birtwistle MP
Communities and Local Government	Annette Brooke MP
Constitutional and Political Reform, Cabinet Office and Leader of the House, and Scotland	John Thurso MP
Culture, Media and Sport	John Leech MP
Education and Young People	Dan Rogerson MP
Energy and Climate Change	Mike Crockart MP
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Roger Williams MP
Health and Social Care	John Pugh MP
Home Affairs, Justice and Equalities	Julian Huppert MP
International Affairs (Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Development)	Martin Horwood MP
Northern Ireland	Stephen Lloyd MP
Transport	Alan Reid MP
Treasury and "chair of chairs"	Stephen Williams MP
Wales	Mark Williams MP
Work and Pensions	Greg Mulholland MP

Finally, having become Danny Alexander's PPS in the September reshuffle, Lorely Burt stood down as chair of the parliamentary party in October 2012. Paul Burstow has taken over as our new chair.

### **Parliamentary Office of the Liberal Democrats (POLD)**

In my last report, I informed you of the creation of the Parliamentary Support Team (PST). This team of pooled staff are tasked with helping Liberal Democrat MPs to respond to the vast increase in casework and communication, since the formation of the coalition. Under the management of Jamie Saddler, Head of the Parliamentary Support Team and Victoria White, Deputy Head, Tom Brooks, Ben Rathe, Bradley Tully and Giles Derrington, have done a tremendous job in quickly establishing the unit and supporting the subscribing MPs and Peers, and their offices. They are now in the process of running a review with the aim to make their service even better. I would like to place on record my thanks to them all – and those who work to support them; their work has exponentially improved our ability to quickly and straightforwardly explain what our Government is doing.

I would also like to put on record my thanks to the staff in the Whips Office for all their hard work and commitment too. Hollie Voyce, Head of Office and Jack Fletcher, our new Deputy, work with Ben Williams, my Special Adviser, to support the parliamentary party in Parliament. Our recently departed intern, Joe Edwards, who was on a placement from Hull University, also requires a specific mention. Joe was one of the most engaged, willing and enthusiastic placements we have ever hosted and having left at Christmas to return to Hull, is sorely missed in the office.

And finally, so as not to be accused of missing them out, I would also like to pay tribute to my deputy, Mark Hunter and to Jenny Willott. I would also like to thank our party whips, the two "Sir Bobs" – Sir Bob Russell and Sir Robert Smith and Mr Ian Swales.

**Alistair Carmichael MP**

**Chief Whip, Parliamentary Party (Commons)**

**January 2013**

## Parliamentary Party (Lords)

It has been an extremely eventful few months for the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party in the Lords since I last reported back to you in September. As a group, we have worked together with our colleagues in the Commons, our Ministerial team and staff to produce significant improvements to legislation which has come before us.

Many of the improvements which we were able to make we did off the floor of the House through discussions with relevant Ministers and officials. As a result they often gained little publicity. They do, however, demonstrate the practical advantages in terms of the quality and content of legislation of having Liberal Democrats in government.

We have also concentrated on being more outward-focussed as a group, and have done this by arranging more external visits with the wider Party and outside organisations than ever before.

### Legislation and the Liberal Democrat influence

#### Infrastructure (Financial Assistance) Bill

A little-trumpeted Bill, this aims to enable up to £50 billion in loans, financial backing and other support to be made to speed up much-needed infrastructure projects. This includes £10 billion for housing which is a Liberal Democrat priority and key to economic recovery.

#### Financial Services Bill

We saw the passage of the mammoth Finance Services Bill which restructures regulation of the financial service sector to make sure the regulatory failures that led to the financial crisis cannot happen again. Led by Susan Kramer and John Sharkey, we achieved a number of amendments designed to help businesses and people in deprived areas, including requiring the new regulator to have regard to the impact of regulation on these areas.

Our influence on the Bill will make it easier to raise finance for socially beneficial products, for example, through social impact bonds, something we have long advocated. We also supported an amendment to regulate payday loans, which now allows an interest rate cap to be put in place to stop legal loan sharking.

#### Civil Aviation Bill

This Bill ensures better regulation of airports and aircrafts to help to reduce emissions and impacts on local residents, both of which have been longstanding Liberal Democrat campaigns. Due to our hard work, led by Bill Bradshaw, we ensured that measures were included in the Bill so that aviation regulators have to now look at the environmental impact of airports and aviation, areas which were originally omitted from the Bill.

#### Crime and Courts Bill

This was a wide-ranging Bill which included a significant step forward for restorative justice. It also triggered a debate on the provision in Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, which makes it an offence to use 'insulting' words or behaviour which might cause 'harassment, harm or offence.' Liberal Democrats have long campaigned against this provision and our group members were part of a cross-party coalition which removed this unnecessary and harmful constraint on freedom of expression.

#### Justice and Security

Following the September Conference vote to oppose Part Two of this Bill, the group was faced with a choice. We could have indeed simply voted against it. However, with Labour supporting the principle of closed material proceedings, such a move would have been futile. The alternative course, which group members took, was to support a raft of cross-party amendments which enacted proposals from the Joint Committee on Human Rights which substantially improved the Bill. They put in place a number of major safeguards in respect of closed material proceedings and reducing the likelihood of their being instituted.

Jim Wallace, as the Minister piloting the Bill through the Lords, played a major part in our deliberations and negotiations and Anthony Lester (a member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights) and Jonathan Marks led for us in the debates.

As I write, the Bill is now being considered by the Commons, but it appears likely that the thrust of the amendments which we obtained in the Lords will not be reversed there.

Individually, and as a group, we are extremely conscious of the need stay as far as possible in step with the wider Party. In this case, arguably the most difficult we have faced, I believe that we achieved all that was politically possible.

### **Electoral Registration Bill**

The principle purpose of this Bill is to make provision for the individual registration of electors. However, it became a major source of contention when Lord Hart – a Labour backbencher - submitted an amendment to delay implementation of the constituency boundary changes until after the next election. Nick Clegg had made it clear when Conservative backbenchers scuppered House of Lords reform last summer that a consequence would be that we would no longer support the boundary changes. As a result, the Hart amendment became co-sponsored by Chris Rennard and was supported by the group, including Ministers. In the vote, the amendment was carried by 69. The Bill then passed to the Commons who have recently endorsed the amendment, with the result that the boundary changes will not now happen for the 2015 election.

During the debate, it was suggested by a number of Conservatives that Liberal Democrat Ministers were bound under the Ministerial code to resign if they wished to support the amendment, as we were voting against “Government” policy. This however was not the case: in the absence of agreement between the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister there was not a Government policy and we were able to vote along Party lines. Although this is a precedent which I hope is very rarely followed, it was nevertheless important for it to be established. *Coalitions cannot survive if, in the absence of agreement, the larger party can dictate policy for the Government as a whole.*

This vote was not the only Lib Dem win in this Bill. Following the efforts of Chris Rennard and Paul Tyler, there will be a new ‘trigger mechanism’ which ensures the electoral register must be up to scratch before the new system kicks in, and people in line at polling stations after 10pm will now be allowed to vote.

As well as tackling difficult legislation, our peers have made many excellent contributions in more general debates in the Lords, such as Jane Bonham Carter and Anthony Lester on the Leveson report, Dee Doocey on the importance of the Olympic Legacy, John Alderdice on strengthening Mental Health provisions within the NHS, Floella Benjamin on the welfare of young people, and many more.



## **Our external work**

### Visits

As a group we have committed to helping to get the message out to the wider Party and the public by doing 1000 constituency visits before the next General Election. Many of our Peers are doing excellent work in going around to different constituencies to speak about the Party and what we do in the Lords. As group leader, Tom McNally has been setting the pace, with an extensive visit programme. We would however like to do more and are looking for opportunities to get more dates in the diary for our peers to meet with local Parties and organisations outside of Westminster.

### Media

The group has upped its game in terms of the use of social media, blogging and communications under the watchful eye of one of our new members of staff Matt Withers, a former political correspondent. He has instituted a new weekly e-newsletter called 'Letter of the Lords' which has been very successful and explains to a wider audience what we do in the House of Lords. We like to think that that this helped encourage Nick Clegg to launch his similar email a few weeks after ours called 'Letter of the Leader!' You can subscribe to our weekly newsletter by emailing [lordsmedia@libdems.org.uk](mailto:lordsmedia@libdems.org.uk)

We now have a website, [www.libdemlords.org.uk](http://www.libdemlords.org.uk), which is updated regularly by many of our peers and features interesting news and articles about the work of our peers. We are also utilising Twitter much more as a communications tool, and have increased our Twitter followers tenfold since September. Follow us on Twitter [@libdemlords](https://twitter.com/libdemlords)

## **People**

Our newly structured Whips' Office has been running on full throttle since September and has gelled well both as a team and most importantly with the Peers' group as a whole. The office is ably led by Laura Gilmore, supported by Humphrey Amos, Giles Derrington and Matt Withers to assist our Peers with their work, as well as inputting into the Party more widely. Elizabeth Plummer our Special Advisor in the Lords has also been making an invaluable contribution as ever. I am particularly grateful to all my colleagues who support the office financially - it receives no funding other than from a levy on group members.

**Dick Newby**

**Chief Whip, Parliamentary Party (Lords)**

**January 2013**

## Parliamentary Party (Europe)