

Reports to Spring Conference 2012

NewcastleGateshead

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Federal Conference Committee

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 (currently Andrew Wiseman), who must be one of the directly elected reps.

A tremendous amount of hard work goes into organising conference, both by the staff and volunteers. Much of this goes on behind the scenes unseen by those attending conference. I would like to express my thanks to everyone that is involved in the organisation of conference.

Security at Conference

Security issues around conference have, once again, taken a considerable amount of time and effort to negotiate. The measures in place have been based on a thorough risk assessment and are aimed at being proportionate. While there were discussions with the police over accreditation, there was no requirement for it at this conference. Although once again we will face increased security arrangements. This means you can expect it to take longer to get into the conference centre. Please ensure you leave yourself sufficient time to get through security before the start of a session you wish to attend.

The increased security includes metal detectors and bag searches. While we cannot avoid the increased checks we will do what we can to speed up the process. In particular, please think about what you bring into the conference centre, the less you bring the quicker the process will be.

Please see the relevant section in the Directory for the full procedures.

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 6th March.

We continue to provide a drafting advisory service, and 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 21st February 2012 and for motions to the Autumn conference 13.00 20th June 2012, please do use the service; drafts should be sent to motionsadvice@libdems.org.uk.

Agenda

This year there are a number of motions from the FPC although no policy papers. These motions link into the mid term review process.

Once again, we have also organised a number of 'Ministerial Surgeries'. These are proved to be popular with those who have attended them. They do not take part in the auditorium and are an excellent opportunity to question some of our Government Ministers. I would urge you to go along to at least one.

Conference rally

The conference rally – *Meeting the Challenge*, is on Friday, between 6.30pm and 7.30pm. Nick Clegg will be joined by Tim Farron, Simon Hughes, Kirsty Williams and some of the members of the Leadership Programme in what we are sure will prove to be an interesting and entertaining event.

Ask FCC for help!

This conference we are combining the FCC helpdesk with the information desk. FCC members will be available to answer any questions you might have about conference procedures such as advice on filling in speaker's cards, submitting motions to future conferences, and so on. I hope you make good use of this service.

Future venues

The current size of the conference and the scale of public interest it draws 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 2013 venues very shortly.

Autumn conference this year will be in Brighton between Brighton, 22 - 26 September.

Access

The Conference Access Group continues to make conference as accessible for all as possible, expanding its work to tackle obstacles facing those with a broader range of disabilities. If you are interested in the work of the Group, please feel free to contact Robert on robert@robertadamson.info.

Stewards

As always, conference can only take place due to the massive contribution and efforts of the volunteer stewards' 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 the inside front page of the Agenda.

FCC members are also assigned to the state and English regional parties, and SAOs, to liaise with them during the year, provide advice and assistance on submitting motions or otherwise getting involved in conference, and appear at particular 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 in head office: Lucy Billingsley and her team Emma Price, Siân Jenkins and Michaela

Hayward-Lee. 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 Chris Fox, the party's former Chief Executive, Tim Gordon, the current Chief Executive and Tim Snowball, Chief of Staff at HQ; to 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.

I look forward to seeing you in NewcastleGateshead.

Andrew Wiseman
Chair, Federal Conference Committee
January 2012

FCC Regional Representatives	
Devon & Cornwall	Justine Mcguinness
East of England	Susan Gaszczak
East Midlands	Arnie Gibbons
London	Dee Doocey
Northern	Sal Brinton
North West	Qassim Afzal
South Central	Sandra Gidley
South East	Chris Maines
Western Counties	Justine Mcguinness
West Midlands	Linda Jack
Yorkshire & the Humber	Robert Adamson

FCC SAO Representatives	
Agents & Organisers	James Gurling
ALDES	Jeremy Hargreaves
ALDC	Jon Ball
DELGA	Arnie Gibbons
WLD	Dee Doocey
Liberal Youth	Geoff Payne
PCA	Sal Brinton
Liberal Democrat Lawyers	Geoff Payne
EMLD	Qassim Afzal & Linda Jack

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 Federal Conference Reps.

Introduction

The past six months – as seems to have become standard for the party recently – have been busy not only for our ministers in government, but also for our members and their representatives on the FE. We have, since our last report, moved headquarters, changed Federal Treasurer, lost a Chief Executive, and gained a new one – all without major incident.

During this time, a lot of our FE meetings have been taken up with projects that you, Conference, have passed – from the strategy motion from last spring, to the Leadership Programme that came out of the *Improving the Diversity of our MPs* motion at the same conference. These projects have been key not only to the work we're doing towards the next election, and also to the work we're doing in coalition now. As I said in September – we have begun to consider how the party should take a more strategic and longer-term outlook to how we conduct ourselves in government and better reflect the will of our members – and the FE's work on the mid-term review is a big part of that.

As well as seeking to ensure that the strategic aims of the Liberal Democrats are reflected in government, the FE is also committed to supporting community politics in practice throughout our wider party, specifically as we campaign this May's elections.

We all know that last year's results were not what we would have hoped for – but there's no doubt in my mind that the London mayoral contest, along with elections for the GLA and councils around the country will give us the chance we need to turn things around. We held our own in Feltham & Heston, despite the efforts (and overbearing billboards!) of UKIP, and I know that with your help, we can do even better than that in May. The FE is committed to ensuring that Brian Paddick, and all of our candidates across the country have the best chance of succeeding.

Of course, doing our best at elections is tied up in our members being able to do as much and as well as they can. We might not have the cash or the resources of the other parties, but we do have the activists, we do have the talent, and we do have the enthusiasm. And these things got me to thinking that if we wanted to do more, the most important thing to do was to *be* more – be bigger.

This is why the FE is taking the initiative to drive our new membership campaign. As you will already be aware, we are working hard on encouraging anyone and everyone to get out there and get recruiting. The FE is also working hard on giving you the training and materials you need to become an effective recruiter. I am determined that we create the inspiration and motivation for people to get out there and promote the Liberal Democrats, and explain with passion why it is that people should join us.

Of course, if I told you all the answers now, it would rather spoil the conference speeches – so as we look forward to conference and beyond, have a think about why you're a Lib Dem. Think about why you're proud to be a Lib Dem, and why you should be proud to tell other people that they should sign up too. But most of all, think about how much better going forward together will be when there are more of us to go forward with.

Government-related Activity

Strategy Motion

Our joint response with the FPC to the *Strategy, Positioning, and Priorities* motion passed at Spring Conference 2011 is included in the dedicated report on page 16.

This report deals with the party approach to the mid-term review process, and the Constitutional provisions for coalition-building in response to the difficulties with the Triple Lock.

Campaigns

Connect

The transition from EARS to Connect as the preferred provider of campaigning software has been of great strategic importance to FE. Because of this, we have been monitoring its roll-out across the country, and are pleased to say that the change has been smooth, widespread, and relatively painless for all involved!

At our meeting in January, we were informed that Connect is now in use across Britain with more than 200 local campaigns covering more than half the country using it. At the time of writing, more than 750 campaigners are using Connect with more starting to every day. Connect has already been used to better analyse the information local campaigns collect to find likely prospects for recruiting new members and volunteers and improve our targeting. Regional Parties have started to establish region-wide networks of volunteers using the Virtual Phone Bank to contact voters in strategic by-elections and provide support to key areas.

Training provided online through the Online Skills and Resources site (OSKAR) has been used by more than 500 campaigners and twice weekly virtual classrooms are being held to give users a chance to ask questions directly of the Connect Team. New short courses to be trained live will soon be available for use by local parties and regions and in Winning Teams sessions. Printable PDF guides are available for users to download and the integrated Help Wiki is being updated on a regular basis to address frequently asked questions and requests for support.

Local users are supported by a growing network of 25 regional volunteers, in turn supported by the Campaign Development Team in Liberal Democrat Headquarters.

Legacy data from EARS has been successfully imported and remaining data is being migrated into Connect on a regular basis. The electoral roll is being updated and the processes for handling this improved. Additional information to help campaigning has been sourced and is being loaded into Connect as other data processing priorities allow.

Connect will continue to develop over the course of the Parliament and in the coming weeks new modules will be launched, including upgraded events and volunteer management, casework and an upgraded suite of

polling day tools. Tools already in use, including the Walk Manager and List Building tools, will also be upgraded to take account of user feedback and additional functionality that becomes possible with additional and improved information.

As a committee, we have been excited to see how this new system has positively affected our campaigning efforts, and we look forward to seeing it rolled out nationwide and used successfully for all our campaigns.

Regionally-based Campaigns Officers

Following the agreement with the regions via the English Party Chair at September 2011 Conference, the Federal Party agreed to underwrite 50% funding of 7 full time equivalent, regionally based Campaigns Officers where regions were able to co-fund. Such posts – some part time and some full time - have been appointed in seven English regions with an 8th about to advertise. One region has determined that it is self-sufficient and discussion with the remaining two is ongoing.

The posts are federally employed and managed through the Elections and Skills Department. The job description in each region has been developed by mutual agreement, interview panels have contained regional and federal representatives, and joint regional and federal reviews are included in the plan. The core roles include seat support and delivery of a regional campaign and development plan. Some regions have also added media, fundraising, or training to the core role.

In addition to these roles, a Regional Fundraiser is set to be appointed in the coming days, jointly funded by the Federal and English Party. This post holder will seek new donors in the regions who will raise money to pay for these posts. It is then anticipated that regions will be assisted in developing ongoing relations with such donors.

2012 Elections

Before beginning on elections this year, we would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who worked hard in Feltham and Heston throughout December to ensure we held our own – and held our place! Despite what the media may have been predicting, we did better than probably even we expected – so congratulations and a tremendous thank you to everyone that got involved.

Moving on to 2012, this May's election round includes all up council elections in Scotland and Wales, elections by thirds in Metropolitan areas, the London Assembly and Mayoral election, at least two other Mayoral elections (Liverpool and Salford), and mandatory Mayoral referenda to determine whether a mayoral election will follow in November in 10 further major cities.

Election support is in place for these elections through the Elections and Skills Department, ALDC, and state parties with regular monitoring, template literature, issue based campaign materials, and limited targeted central financial support from Federal and state parties.

Given our performance in local elections in 2011, our focus for this May has been on earlier selection, more considered targeting, and an earlier start to doorstep contact. Record numbers attended Kickstart training in Birmingham in November and additional Kickstart programmes were held in Wales and Scotland.

Whilst council by-elections over past months, along with increased levels of campaign activity in many areas, are positive signs of progress, this round will present major challenges in all areas. We in the FE will all be

working hard to continue improving our results – and we hope you'll all be joining us between Conference and the 3rd May when we go to the polls.

Candidates and Diversity

Leadership Programme

Recruitment for the Candidate Leadership Programme (for individuals from groups that are currently under-represented in the Parliamentary Party) ended in December 2011 and a group of 40 excellent candidates have been recruited on to the Programme.

The full report on the recruitment process was presented to the Federal Executive by Baroness Sal Brinton and then circulated to all the regional candidates' chairs, regional chairs, DEG members, and SAO groups. More than two-thirds of participants are female and a third are from BAME backgrounds. A significant number of participants are disabled, openly LGBT, under 30 years old and/or identify as being from a low socio-economic background. A booklet featuring all the various Leadership Programme participant profiles has been produced and can be accessed via the Party's main website.

The first Candidate Leadership Programme residential weekend took place from 13th–15th January in London. The training focused on leadership styles, fundraising, and best practice tips for selection, and participants also had one-to-one sessions on personal development plans and the opportunity to discuss potential seats. Nick Clegg, Simon Hughes and Jo Swinson all attended at various points during the weekend to meet the participants and pass on their personal advice and tips. In addition to the initial training, all participants have now been paired with an existing Liberal Democrat MP in order to get a better insight into the role and benefit from their advice and experience.

The next Leadership Programme training session will take place at Spring Conference on Friday 9th March, and will focus on public speaking.

Police and Crime Commissioners

In our October meeting, the FE discussed the issue of Police and Crime Commissioners, and came to the conclusion that the elections for Police and Crime Commissioner should not become a political football. We didn't think that strategic policing was something that should be politicised.

When our parliamentary party voted for elected PCCs, we held the view that strong, non party-political candidates were the people we wanted standing – people that knew the area and knew how to police – not career politicians who bring a party divide to the role. FE also recognised, however, that we are a democratic party, and we would not, have not, and could not forbid any given area from standing their own candidate. It is for this reason that mechanisms and conditions for standing candidates were passed down to state parties.

This position was voted for overwhelmingly by FE, and the full wording of the motion is included below for information.

FE notes and endorses the conclusions of the CCC that:

- 1. Police and Crime Commissioners should not become a 'political football' and the Liberal Democrats have a clear strong preference not to party-politicise these positions;*

2. *Therefore, individual Liberal Democrats should be able to support non party-political candidates, and also stand and campaign in their own right without this act being regarded as bringing the Party into disrepute.*

FE additionally notes that:

1. *In police authority areas where there is no such appropriate non party-political candidate coming forward, Liberal Democrats may choose to run under the party label if that is the desire of the local parties in the police authority area.*
2. *A mechanism and criteria for how such appropriate Liberal Democrat candidates can be approved and selected must be agreed at the State Party level.*
3. *In the event that a police authority area makes the decision to stand a Liberal Democrat candidate, the rules regarding support of non party-political candidates are not applicable. It is not acceptable for any party member to support any candidate opposing an approved and selected Liberal Democrat candidate.*

FE therefore resolves that:

1. *The Federal Party will not allocate any cash resources to support the campaigns of any Liberal Democrat candidates in Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in 2012.*

Membership

Meeting the Challenge

Last month we launched Meeting the Challenge. Being a party of government has meant many changes for the Liberal Democrats, but one challenge that is just the same as it has ever been is the need to keep strengthening our party by bringing in new members. Without new members we won't have the next generation of activists to run our local parties and branches, to be council candidates and organisers.

More than that, we need to keep involving those who share our values in the development of the Party. Just as we are meeting the challenge of being in government politically, we have to meet the challenge organisationally in every local party up and down the country, the Chair's own included.

For these reasons, FE used part of their December meeting to establish a membership working group consisting of the Vice Presidents (Peter Ellis, the Chair of the English Party; Craig Harrow, the Scottish Convenor; and John Last, Chair of the Welsh NEC), the Party President and Chair of FE – Tim Farron, and the Director of Membership and Development – David Loxton. Since beginning the 'Meeting the Challenge' campaign, they have been reporting back to FE on their progress:

"We have distributed a new recruitment pack to local parties and copies of the new recruitment leaflet – 'Will you fight for Britain's future'. You can get more copies of the leaflet at the Liberal Democrat Image stand at conference. There is also material on the members' website.

"This is a vital task for all of us and I am determined that we will do more to recognize those who get involved. That's why we are going to reward the individuals and local parties that make the biggest effort to recruit more members. They are ensuring that we have a strong party for the political challenges ahead and all of us who are party officers can get involved with supporting their efforts. I've offered to do the casework of any of my local councillors for a week if they recruit ten new members!

“Nationally we will be giving recognition to individuals who recruit 10, 25 or 50 new members and local parties that add 50, 75 or 150 to their total. If your local party haven’t held your first Meeting the Challenge recruitment event yet, please make it a priority.”

Aside from these neatly divisible actions, there have been, since autumn 2011, several items that we feel should be mentioned in our report to conference.

Firstly, we have said goodbye to Richard Duncalf as our Federal Treasurer. He stepped down in January in order to take on a new role, and we all thank him for his great contribution to the party. In our January meeting, we therefore elected a new treasurer – Sir Ian Wrigglesworth was elected unopposed, and we all look forward to working with him in the future.

In our December meeting, we voted *nem con* to note and reaffirm the Registered Treasurer’s (Chair of the FFAC) indemnity for the purposes of the PPERA 2000 against any fine, costs, or legal expenses incurred as a result of a breach of PPERA by the Party. In addition, the FE has agreed that the Party should give an indemnity to the Directors of the Liberal Democrats (Trustees) Ltd (often referred to as the Party’s trustees, although they are in fact directors of a Trust Company) against any liability or costs they may incur by reason of serving as trustees, except criminal or regulatory fines or breaches of duties owed to the Party.

This year, FE said goodbye to John Barrett as its Scottish Representative, who chose to leave FE after 12 years as a member. As I’m sure many of you know, John has been unwell recently, and the Committee sends its best wishes – both for him to get well soon, and to see him back to work this autumn in Brighton! In his place, we welcome Kevin Lang, who worked for John during his time at Westminster, and was our PPC for Edinburgh North and Leith in 2010.

We also say farewell to Jonathan Davies as Vice-President for the English Party after two years of membership, and welcome Peter Ellis, who has taken over as Chair of the English Party.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to David Griffiths, formerly Chair of the Federal Finance and Administration Committee, who passed away aged 70 on the 3rd September 2011. As a candidate, an agent, and councillor, he was truly inspirational, and always sought to set others on the path to success. As a dedicated activist and loyal party member, he helped to cement the party’s support across the South West. For this, and so much more, he will be greatly missed by the party.

Tim Farron
Party President and Chair of the Federal Executive
January 2012

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 Norman Lamb MP.

Policy Development

Since the Birmingham Conference, a policy paper on Youth Unemployment and policy motions on Making Taxation Fairer, Civil Liberties and being the Greenest Government Ever have been produced and are presented for debate at NewcastleGateshead.

Three policy working groups on Housing; Sustainable Prosperity and Jobs; and Mutuals, Employee, Ownership, and Workplace Democracy have been set up since the Birmingham Conference. They will be holding consultation sessions at NewcastleGateshead and producing full policy papers for debate at the Autumn Conference.

The Inequality working group has continued its work and will also be producing a paper for 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.

Facing the Future Programme

The Facing the Future review group, chaired by myself, produced a report which was adopted at the Birmingham Conference.

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, the FPC is in the process of setting up two new working groups on Working Families and Political Reform and Devolution.

Conference	Consultation Papers	Policy Papers
Spring 2012	Housing. Sustainable Sources of Growth and Jobs. Mutualisation, Employee Ownership and Participation.	Giving Youth A Future. (Plus motions on civil liberties, tax and the environment).
Autumn 2012	Devolution of Power/Re-engaging People with Politics. Working Families.	Housing. Inequality. Sustainable Sources of Growth and Jobs. Mutualisation, Employee Ownership and Participation.
Spring 2013	Taxation. Defence. The Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain. Skills and Post-18 Education. Europe.	Devolution of Power/Re-engaging People with Politics. Working Families.
Autumn 2013	Immigration & Identity. Public Services.	Taxation. Defence (including Trident). The Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain. Skills and Post-18 Education. Europe
Spring 2014	Gender Equality. Crime and Justice. Challenges of an Ageing Population.	Immigration & Identity. Public Services. European Pre Manifesto.
Autumn 2014		Gender Equality. Crime and Justice. Challenges of an Ageing Population.

Joint FE/FPC Working Group

The FPC Officers including myself have participated in a joint working group set up following the strategy motion at the Sheffield conference. A joint report of the FE and FPC on the relevant issues is included at page 16, and a Constitutional Amendment and a Standing Order Amendment stand on the NewcastleGateshead Agenda.

Mid-Term Review

The Coalition Government has stated its intention to have a Mid Term Review (MTR) of its programme, which will be published in September 2012. However, this will not be a general re-opening of the Coalition Programme for Government.

The Government has made a series of commitments about its overall goals – for example to be the greenest government ever. The MTR will identify which of these goals the Government will have met through policies already announced, where the gaps still lie and where it needs to do more to deliver. The process is about looking to see what should be a priority during the rest of the Parliament; not about starting over again from scratch.

To contribute fully to the Mid Term Review, the Liberal Democrats are undertaking work to identify existing Liberal Democrat policies or develop new ones which will help deliver on the Government's stated goals. We will also develop our distinctive position for the future on a range of Government priorities. We can use this as a further opportunity to demonstrate what Liberal Democrats can achieve in government.

Feeding in from a party perspective are the Parliamentary Party Committees and the Federal Policy Committee and its working groups. A number of consultations have been held at federal, regional and local levels.

The policy motions submitted by the FPC at this conference set out many of the Party's objectives for the Mid-Term Review in the four key areas addressed.

Please also see the Joint FE/FPC report on page 16 which in part addresses the MTR.

Regional 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.

Region	
Devon & Cornwall /Western Counties	Julie Smith
East of England	Geoff Payne
East Midlands	Lucy Care
London	Dinti Batstone/Jeremy Hargreaves
Northern	Linda Jack
North West	Stan Collins
South Central	Sandra Gidley/Gareth Epps
South East	To be confirmed
West Midlands	Phil Bennion
Yorkshire & the Humber	Sal Brinton

The FPC has also appointed representatives to Party SAOs:

SAO	
ALDES	Lucy Care
ALDC	Chris White
DELGA	Evan Harris
WLD	Louise Bloom
Liberal Youth	Gareth Epps
PCA	Julie Smith
Liberal Democrat Lawyers	Geoff Payne
EMLD	Linda Jack
LDDA	Sal Brinton

Policy Staffing

The Policy Unit consists of Christian Moon (Head of Policy), Bess Mayhew (Senior Policy Manager), Adam Pritchard (Senior Policy Manager), and the Direct Communications Manager (Rory Belcher). Verity Harding has

moved on from the Policy Unit since the last conference to a new role as a Special Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister. We have also benefitted from the support of a secondee from PWC, Jenny Stammers, and a secondee from KPMG, Simon Tremblett. Interns since the Autumn Conference have included: John Walker, Emma Park, Stephen Howse, Lucy McDonald and Joanna Hobson.

The FPC is grateful for the hard work of all staff, both paid and voluntary.

Norman Lamb MP

Chair, Federal Policy Committee

January 2012

'Strategy, Positioning, and Priorities' Motion & the FE/FPC Working Group

The Strategy, Positioning, and Priorities Motion that was passed at Spring Conference 2011 resulted in the formation of a Working Group to discuss the issues raised.

The following text was passed by a joint FE/FPC meeting on Wednesday 11th January 2012, and addresses the Mid-Term Review and the issue of coalition-building.

The 'Strategy, Positioning and Priorities' motion passed at Spring Conference 2011 included the following:

2. *Calls for the programme of the Coalition Government in the second half of the Parliament to include Liberal Democrat priorities drawn from our manifesto and policies, and for such a programme to be agreed by the Federal Executive and Federal Policy Committee.*
3. *Calls for there to be appropriate consultation through the Federal Executive and Federal Policy Committee, when significant new Government policies are proposed, which are not included in the Coalition agreement and which conflict with Liberal Democrat policy or principles.*
4. *Calls on the Federal Executive and the Federal Policy Committee to:*
 - a. *Review, in consultation with the Parliamentary parties, the challenges of coalition which have an impact on the independence of the party, its policy position or its freedom of political movement.*
 - b. *Report back on whether the existing constitutional provisions and other arrangements are sufficiently democratic.*
 - c. *Propose recommendations, for any constitutional amendments or other protocols which may be needed, in time for debate in September 2011.*

The FE and FPC formed a Working Group (See Appendix 1 for membership and meeting dates) and the FE and FPC have agreed the following points:

1. Review, in consultation with the Parliamentary parties, the challenges of coalition which have an impact on the independence of the party, its policy position or its freedom of political movement.

As reported back to Autumn Conference 2011, the FE and FPC have worked with the House of Commons and House of Lords parliamentary parties to consider the challenges that coalition is posing. It is clear that coalition has meant that the party has significantly changed the way it operates – with the loss of Short Money, the fact that a significant percentage of Liberal Democrat MPs are part of the government and are subject to collective responsibility, and that Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians are subject to a Government whip. These present a well-recognised and predicted challenge to the party's independence, its political position and its freedom of political movement and/or to the wider party's or the public's perception of these matters. We recognise this and the need for the risks and challenges to be managed effectively.

2. Report back on whether the existing constitutional provisions and other arrangements are sufficiently democratic.

FE and FPC agree that, except in respect of item 3 below, existing provisions of the constitution are sufficiently democratic.

Articles 5, 6 and 7 (see Appendix 2) of the Constitution make clear that conference clearly remains the sovereign body in charge of making Liberal Democrat party policy-making.

Arrangements have been put in place to seek to ensure that the federal committees of the party are consulted by government Ministers when appropriate and necessary on developing government policy going beyond the existing Coalition Programme where this conflicts with existing Liberal Democrat principles and policy – including on future issues of significance comparable to that of the NHS Reforms. FPC has discussed a paper on how Article 7.1 – which includes the power to make interim policy between conferences, should be used, and agreed that it should only be used sparingly.

The FE and FPC have also discussed how the party can best input into the Mid-Term Review process of government. Arrangements have been put in place to seek to ensure that there is full and wide consultation with the FPC, the PPCs and the wider party on the content of the Mid-term Review.

The FE and FPC recommend that Relevant Government Ministers and Senior Advisers will be present at all meetings of FE and FPC whilst the Mid-Term Review is being put together in order to consult with both committees about the on-going Review.

Then, in line with the conference motion passed last spring, the FE and FPC will be asked to give their agreement for the text of a final Mid-Term Review document. If FE and FPC agree the proposed document it will then be put to Autumn Conference for their agreement; on the same basis as the original coalition agreement.

3. Propose recommendations, for any constitutional amendments or other protocols which may be needed, in time for debate in September 2011.

The FE and FPC, after a review of existing arrangements, a ruling of the Federal Appeals Panel (see Appendix 3), and consideration of the events leading up to the formation of the current Coalition, recommend a change to the so-called “triple-lock” arrangements. We agree that this is necessary to ensure that the process of seeking the Party’s support for arrangements in which Lib Dems provide support to a government containing members of other parties is sufficiently democratic, whilst also ensuring that it is clear that we cannot seek to bind Parliamentarians.

Tim Farron
Chair, Federal Executive
January 2012

Norman Lamb
Chair, Federal Policy Committee
January 2012

Appendix 1: Group Membership and Meetings Calendar

Group Membership

Tim Farron – Chair, FE
Ali Goldsworthy – Deputy Chair, FE
Jonathan Davies – Vice Chair (England), FE
John Last – Vice Chair (Wales), FE
Craig Harrow – Vice Chair (Scotland), FE
Norman Lamb – Chair, FPC
Julian Huppert – FPC Officer
Jeremy Hargreaves – FPC Officer
Evan Harris – FPC Officer
Andrew Wiseman – Chair, FCC

Calendar of Meetings

16th May 2011
6th June 2011
20th June 2011
11th October 2011
19th December 2011

Appendix 2: Excerpts from the Constitution

ARTICLE 5: The Policy-Making Process

- 5.1 The Federal Party shall determine the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom.
- 5.2 The State Parties shall by their respective internal procedures determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any State Party may confer upon the Federal Party power to determine policy in any specified area or areas. Policy determined in this way by the Federal Party will not override the policy of those State Parties which have not conferred policy-making power in this area on the Federal Party. Where a State Party has conferred this power upon the Federal Party it shall not itself engage in the determination of policy in the specified area or areas until such time as the power has been revoked by it.
- 5.3 Any body that is not entitled to make policy on any specific issue may discuss and express its views upon it on a consultative basis.
- 5.4 The Federal Policy Committee (FPC), at its own decision or at the instruction of the Federal Conference, may undertake the commissioning, preparation, publication, circulation, and submission to Conference of policy papers, including options in cases where consultation has shown there to be substantial disagreement within the Party. Policy papers shall normally be preceded by consultation papers which shall set out policy options.
- 5.5 In the course of developing policy the FPC shall:
- (a) consider policy proposals submitted to it by State Parties, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties, Associated Organisations and individual members of the Party; together with the responses to the consultations carried out according to Article 5.5 (b); and
 - (b) ensure consultation generally with, including circulating consultation papers to, Federal Conference representatives, State Parties, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties and Associated Organisations. Such consultations shall include responses to references under Article 5.7.
- 5.6 Policy motions and amendments (including emergency motions and amendments) may be submitted for debate by Federal Conference (in accordance with its Standing Orders) by the Federal Policy Committee, members of the Federal Conference, State Parties in accordance with their internal procedures, Regional Parties in England, Local Parties and Specified Associated Organisations. Amendments to motions accompanying policy papers may be submitted in the same way.
- 5.7 In order to ensure that all aspects of a proposed policy are fully considered, the FPC may request any motion before a Federal Conference to be referred to the next meeting of the Conference. The FPC shall, before such meeting, circulate its reasons for acting under this Article and its comments on the relevant motion and any amendments thereto accepted for debate.
- 5.8 Subject to the foregoing procedure, all Federal policy papers and motions approved by the Federal Conference shall thereby become the policy of the Federal Party.

5.9 The FPC shall prepare (and from time to time revise) statements as to the policy of the Party as produced by the foregoing process together with the provisions of Article 7.1.

ARTICLE 6: The Federal Conference

6.1 The Conference shall consist of

- (a) representatives of Local Parties (and the Specified Associated Organisations representing youth and/or students as provided by Article 13.8);
- (b) the Parliamentary Parties as defined by Article 9;
- (c) Members of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales in receipt of the party's whip;
- (d) the Officers specified in Article 12;
- (e) prospective parliamentary and European parliamentary candidates who shall continue as members of the Conference until the end of the calendar year in which they stood for election, unless a new prospective candidate is selected for the constituency;
- (f) Elected Mayors who are members of the Party;
- (g) Elected members of regional assemblies in receipt of the Party's whip; and
- (h) Leaders of council groups of the Part on principal councils.

6.2 Local Parties shall be represented on the following basis, modified where applicable by Article 4.3(b):

Membership of Local Party	Number of Representatives
30 to 50	4
51 to 75	5
76 to 100	6
101 to 150	7
151 to 200	8
201 to 250	9
251 to 300	10
301 to 350	11
351 to 400	12
401 to 450	13

together with a further representative for every 100 members (or part thereof) in excess of 450.

6.3 Representatives of Local Parties shall be elected by all members of the Local Party concerned in accordance with election rules made under Article 8.4 for a term of one calendar year subject to the following provisions:

- (a) a representative shall cease to hold office upon:
 - (i) resignation in writing;
 - (ii) cessation of membership of the Party; or
 - (iii) unless the Local Party concerned determines otherwise, on ceasing to be a member of that Local Party or on failing to attend any meeting of the Conference without giving notice (so far as practicable) of inability to attend or without reasonable cause;

- (b) if a vacancy shall arise (or a Local Party shall become entitled to additional representation between elections), the additional representative(s) shall be chosen by procedures determined and published by the Local Party Executive Committee.
- (c) if a representative shall indicate inability to attend a forthcoming meeting of the Conference, a substitute may be elected by the Executive Committee of the Local Party concerned; and
- (d) if a Local Party is entitled to at least three representatives, and subject to there being sufficient nominations, at least one shall be a man and one a woman.

6.4 For the purpose of such elections:

- (a) each Local Party shall give reasonable notice of a closing date for nominations; and
- (b) if there are not more nominations than vacancies, a general meeting shall be invited to confirm each nominee: if it shall not do so in any particular case, there shall be a second call for nominations.

6.5 The Standing Orders of the Conference shall provide for consultative sessions of the Conference at which any member of the Party may speak, and for members who are not representatives to address other sessions of the Conference, but such provisions shall not prejudice the right of the chair of a session to select speakers.

6.6 The Conference shall normally meet twice a year, for a week in the early autumn and a weekend in the early spring; additional meetings may be summoned upon the requisition of the Federal Executive or the Federal Policy Committee or the Conference itself or 200 representatives entitled to attend the Conference . A meeting may be cancelled by the Federal Executive in exceptional circumstances.

6.7 Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Conference shall be the sovereign representative body of the Party, and shall have power to determine the policy of the Party in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Article 5.

6.8 There shall be a business session at each Conference, to which the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary party in the House of Lords, the Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament, the Federal Executive, the Federal Policy Committee and the Federal Conference Committee shall report. The business session at the autumn meeting shall constitute the Annual General Meeting of the Party, before which the Annual Report and Accounts shall additionally be laid. The Conference shall have the right to approve or reject each such report, or to refer it back with recommendations. Business motions may be submitted to the Federal Conference by the Federal Executive, the Federal Conference Committee or any other persons or bodies entitled to submit motions or amendments under Article 5.6.

6.9 The Standing Orders of the Federal Conference shall allow for meetings of Conference or Council of the State Party within whose boundaries the Federal Conference is being held, at the request of that Party, either immediately prior to, or immediately after, the Federal Conference and in the same place as the Federal Conference.

6.10 The Conference shall be organised by the Federal Conference Committee, which shall be subject to the control of the Federal Executive in matters of financial and other resources. Standing Orders for the Conference shall be made by the Conference Committee subject to the approval of the Conference. The Conference Committee shall consist of:

- (a) the President;
- (b) the Chief Whip (or nominee, who shall be a member of the Parliamentary Party as defined in Article 9.1);
- (c) one representative of each State Party, elected by its internal procedures (State Parties may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FCC);
- (d) two persons elected by the Federal Executive;
- (e) two persons elected by the Federal Policy Committee;
- (f) the Federal Chief Executive (who shall not be entitled to vote);
- (g) a representative of the staff employed by the party at federal level or by or on behalf of either or both parliamentary parties in Westminster and elected by such staff (who shall not be entitled to vote); and
- (h) 12 persons elected by the Federal Conference (casual vacancies shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations).

The persons elected in accordance with (d), (e), (g) and (h) above shall be elected in even-numbered years and shall serve for a term of two years from the date of election. The Conference Committee thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding two years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

The Federal Conference Committee, in organising the Conference, shall have due regard to the balance of state and federal policy debates in the final agenda of the Conference and in particular shall as far as possible organise the Agenda so that all matters which relate to one or more state parties but not all state parties or the Federal Party shall be considered at either the beginning or the end of the Conference.

- 6.11 The Conference may resolve to conduct a ballot of all members of the Party on any fundamental question where, in its judgement, the values and objectives of the Party are in issue or it is otherwise in the essential interests of the Party, and shall at the same time as considering the related resolution consider also a statement from the Federal Executive as to the financial and administrative implications of such a ballot. Such a ballot shall be in a bilingual form for all members of the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

ARTICLE 7: The Federal Policy Committee

- 7.1 There shall be a Federal Policy Committee ("FPC"), which shall be responsible to the Federal Conference and shall have the duty of researching and developing policy and of overseeing the policy-making process in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Article 5. It shall also be responsible for:
- (a) presenting the views of the Party to outside bodies, including political parties and groupings in the European Community and elsewhere;
 - (b) consulting outside bodies in relation to proposed policies of the Federal Party;
 - (c) approving official policy publications of the Federal Party;
 - (d) making interim policy on topical issues, subject always to this policy remaining the policy of the Federal Party only if it is approved by the first appropriate meeting of Conference on the basis of a motion to approve a report covering all such interim policy submitted to it by the FPC; and

- (e) making detailed policy of the kind needed to implement the principles and broad policy outlines contained in a policy paper or motion that has already been adopted by Conference.

The FPC shall submit an annual report for approval or amendment to Conference at its autumn meeting on its programme of policy development.

7.2 The FPC shall consist of the following:

- (a) the Leader;
- (b) one other MP elected by and from the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons;
- (c) one MP each elected by and from members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons representing constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales respectively;
- (d) one Peer elected by and from the Parliamentary Party in the House of Lords;
- (e) one MEP elected by and from the Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament;
- (f) the President;
- (g) three principal local authority councillors, elected by principal local authority councillors of the Party from among their own number;
- (h) one Representative of each State Party, elected by its internal procedures (State Parties may appoint a substitute member should the elected member be unable to attend a specific meeting of the FPC); and
- (i) one more person than the total number elected or appointed under paragraphs (a) to (h) above elected by the Federal Conference (which shall be filled in accordance with electoral regulations) except that persons who, at the date of close of nominations for election under this paragraph, are MPs shall not be eligible to be candidates for election under this paragraph.

The persons elected in accordance with (b), (c) (d), (e), (g), and (i) above shall be elected in even-numbered years and shall serve for a term for two years from the date of election and its chair shall be elected every two years by the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons from among those of its members who are members of the FPC by virtue of paragraphs (a) through (c) of this Article. The FPC thus constituted may co-opt such persons and for such periods not exceeding two years as it thinks fit who shall be entitled to attend and speak but not vote (but so that there shall not be more than three persons co-opted at any time).

7.3 The FPC shall have the responsibility for preparing the Party's General Election manifesto for the UK and its manifesto for elections to the European Parliament in consultation with the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and with the Parliamentary Party in the European Parliament. It shall have the right to be consulted upon, and in the case of a conflict (but after consultation with the State Party concerned) to over-ride any proposal to be contained in the General Election manifesto of any State or Regional Party unless the proposal relates solely to an issue which is the specific concern of the State or Regional Party.

7.4 The FPC shall have the power from time to time to set up policy working groups (whose members need not be members of the FPC) of which it shall appoint a chair and, in consultation with that chair, the membership, with such terms of reference as it may think fit (which shall include the like obligations of consultation as those set forth in Article 5.5(b)). The FPC shall be under similar obligations of consultation in relation to the composition of a proposed group.

Appendix 3: Ruling of the Federal Appeals Panel

FEDERAL APPEALS PANEL OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Determination of Application: 2010/1

1. The Application

This is an application for the interpretation of the Federal Constitution by Mr Mike Simpson (a former Regional Party Chair) in the following terms:

“This is a formal application to the Federal Appeal Panel under Article 14.3(a) of the Federal Constitution.

It refers to the “Triple Lock” Business Motion passed at Southport in 1998.

I wish the FAP to rule on whether or not this Motion is compatible with the Federal Constitution.”

2. Procedure

- 2.1 The Chair of the FAP appointed himself as Case Manager, and determined that Mr Gordon Lishman, as one of the protagonists of the Motion referred to in the Application, should be the Respondent. Appendix 1 contains the Respondent’s very full, and equally helpful, submission.
- 2.2 As there were no factual issues in dispute, the case was determined solely on the basis of written representations.
- 2.3 The text of the Motion appears at Appendix 2.

3. The Constitution

- 3.1 Article 2.5 of Constitution provides as follows: *“No elected representative in any body in the Party shall be mandated.”*
- 3.2 Article 9.1 of the Constitution provides so far as material as follows: *“The Parliamentary Party in the House of Common shall...be entitled to make such regulations (not being inconsistent with this Constitution) as it thinks fit for the conduct of its own proceedings.”*
- 3.3 Article 6.7 of the Constitution, relating to the Federal Conference, provides so far as material as follows: *“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Conference shall be the sovereign representative body of the Party.”*

4. The Constitutionality of the Motion

- 4.1 The Motion was proposed and passed as Business Motion (the relevant passage was added by way of an amendment). For convenience, those passages which constitute the “Triple Lock” are referred to in this determination as “the Motion”.
- 4.2 The Motion provides for a schema under which “any substantial proposal which could affect the Party’s independence of political action” requires:
 - a) A 75% (*semble* of the total number eligible to vote, not just of those voting) majority approval by bother Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and the Federal Executive; or
 - b) Failing a), a two-thirds majority approval by those present and voting at a Special Federal Conference; or
 - c) Failing a) and b), a simple majority by those voting in a Membership Ballot.
- 4.3 Clearly the Conference can in general terms mandate the Federal Executive as a body, although it cannot mandate its individual members (Article 2.5).
- 4.4 The first question for determination is therefore whether it can mandate the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons (“the Commons Party”) and, if it cannot, whether the Motion is incompatible with the Constitution.

- 4.5 Given the terms of Articles 9 & 10, the Commons Party is clearly a “body in the Party” within the meaning of Article 2.5. Accordingly, the Conference clearly cannot mandate either its Members, or indeed the Commons Party as a body because all its Members hold elective office (Article 2.5). The Respondent has argued that the Motion does not impose such a mandate; it merely dictates what is to happen elsewhere depending on how the Commons Party acts. But that is a somewhat sophistic approach, and in any event is incompatible with Article 9.1 by purporting to mandate a particular procedure (a two-thirds majority) to be adopted by the Commons Party.
- 4.6 We are obliged to the Respondent for the helpful arguments at Section C of his Response. We do not dissent from his proposition that the Commons Party is in general terms subject to the Constitution, either directly or indirectly. But, as appears below, we do not believe that this is the determining issue.
- 4.7 As regards the Conference, its status as a sovereign body (Article 6.7) means, on general principles, that it cannot bind itself by a mere motion. For example, if under the Motion the Conference approved a relevant proposal by a simple majority, it would have power in the same approval to override the requirement for a Membership Ballot.
- 4.8 The Respondent correctly argues that the Conference binds itself by Standing Orders. But these are entrenched provisions, requiring for their amendment, as does the Constitution, a two-thirds majority. The logic of this is that a procedural motion passed outside this framework is not binding, as otherwise that framework is of diminished effect if not fundamentally subverted.

5. Determination

The Motion is an integrated schema, which can only apply in whole; it cannot be disentangled. For the reasons outlined above, it cannot mandate either elected representatives of the Commons Party. Accordingly, the Motion is not of binding effect, as it is procedurally incompatible with both the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the Conference.

6. Obiter

This Determination is **not** intended to constitute, nor should it be construed as, a denial of the importance of consultation with the wider Party on a proposal of the nature referred to in the Motion. The Panel agrees with the Respondent that the consultation process worked well in May 2010; it merely notes that such process was not in conformity with the details of the Motion, in that a Special Conference was not needed under the terms of the Motion. But this Determination **is** intended to uphold the principle that what are *ex facie* effectively changes to the Constitution (and/or, as the case may be, to the Standing Orders of the Conference) should be effected by a proper process of amendment thereto.

7. Publication

Under Article 14.6 of the Constitution, the Panel is obliged to publish its decisions on its interpretation thereof. This determination is clearly within the spirit of that obligation. Accordingly, this determination is sent not only to the Applicant and the Respondent, but also to the Federal President, Chief Executive, and Operations Director so that the method of publication may be determined by them.

29 July 2010

PHILIP GOLDENBERG (Chair, Federal Appeals Panel)

ALAN MASTERS (Chair, Welsh Appeals Panel)

CHRIS WILLMORE (Chair, English Appeals Panel)

FAP Ruling Appendix 1: The Response

No Glass Ceilings Resolution: Southport 1998

A Preamble and Scope

This note responds formally to the letter of 6 July 2010 from Philip Goldenberg which designated me as the Respondent in the matter which has been raised with the Panel and which refers to the “No Glass Ceilings” resolution of March 1998 as it was amended. I moved the relevant amendment on behalf of Burnley Liberal Democrats.

Philip’s note asked me “to address in particular a) Articles 2.5 and 9.1 of the Federal Constitution as regards the provisions of the “Triple Lock” Motion which relate to the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons; and (b) Article 6.7 of the Federal Constitution as regards the provisions of the “Triple Lock” Motion which relate to the Federal Conference”. Despite the phrase “in particular”, this note does not address aspects of the Constitution other than those raised in Philip’s note and any matters which are directly related to my consideration of those points. This is on the assumption that, should the Panel consider the relationship between the “triple-lock” and other parts of the Constitution, I shall have the opportunity to present evidence on those matters.

Similarly, I have to assume the correctness of my interpretations of the relevance of the specified articles of the Constitution to the “triple-lock”. In the case of Article 6.7, I believe that it relates to the requirement for a qualified majority in the context of the sovereignty of Conference. I am less sure of my interpretation in the cases of Articles 2.5 and 9.1 and I therefore assume that I shall have the opportunity to submit further evidence if the Panel wishes to consider aspects of these articles which are not addressed in this note.

B Articles 2.5 and 9.1

I accept entirely the principle of Article 2.5 in the Federal Constitution: “No elected representative in any body in the Party shall be mandated”. More widely, I strongly support the general Burkean thesis that a representative is elected to exercise his or her judgement rather than as a delegate. The amendment was not in any way intended as a challenge to that Article and it is consistent with it.

I now turn to possible ways in which the relevant aspects of the resolution might be argued to be inconsistent with the Constitution insofar as I understand those arguments.

An important preliminary point is whether Articles 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 of the Constitution **define** or **recognise** the Parliamentary Parties and therefore whether they are a “body within the Party”. The Constitution is unclear on this point - probably deliberately so. It might be helpful in terms of the wider understanding of the Constitution if the Panel were to rule on this point. However the phrase in Article 9 “(not being inconsistent with this Constitution)” suggests that the Parliamentary Parties are at least to some extent and on some issues governed by the Constitution. This view is strengthened by the statement in Article 9.1 that “Its Leader shall be the Leader of the Party as provided in Article 10”, which is a clear example of a way in which the role and responsibilities of the Parliamentary Party in the Commons are defined and constrained by the Party Constitution.

I cannot see an interpretation of the 1998 Conference resolution which suggests that members of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons are mandated in terms of how they as individuals vote on “any substantial proposal which could affect the Party’s independence of political action”, including where that proposal involves a relationship with another political party. The resolution assumes that they will cast their own votes according to their own judgement.

The suggestion may be that they are “mandated” in that they are prevented from arriving at a simple majority decision and implementing it because of the requirement to go through further stages before a final decision is reached. However, the Conference as the “sovereign representative body of the Party” (Article 6.7) clearly has the power to allow for a qualified majority and for an established process to be followed before there is a final decision on a matter. In this case, the Conference so decided. Such acceptance of the principle of a qualified majority is

demonstrated in the Constitution itself in relation to constitutional amendments and by its acceptance of qualified majorities in the context of Conference Standing Orders.

The core argument about mandating can be addressed in either of two cases: if the final decision was a matter for the Parliamentary Party; or if it was a decision for the wider Party. I believe that this matter was clearly addressed by all the participants in the debate at Southport and that they had a shared consensus view (see below). However and for the sake of comprehensiveness, I address both possibilities.

It might be argued that the decision on “any substantial proposal which could affect the Party’s independence of political action” where that proposal involved a relationship with another political party, is a matter only and entirely for MPs who are members of the Liberal Democrats’ Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons as described in Article 9.1. I disagree with that interpretation, but if it were to apply, the Conference resolution would apply only to the process by which the Party formed and expressed its views and it **could not** constrain or mandate individual Parliamentarians. Therefore, the challenge fails.

C The Constitutional Status of the Parliamentary Party

The wider question is about collective decisions by elected representatives which affect them as a group **and** which profoundly affect the Party of which they are members. I have no doubt that any MP can stand apart from such a decision and refuse to be personally bound by it. However, as Burke recognised, voters will eventually have the right to give their electoral judgement on such a stand. In modern democracies, the view of voters is likely to be profoundly influenced by the relationship between an MP and the Party which approves, selects and enables him or her to be elected.

This reflects the fact that the Burkean principle preceded the development of political parties on modern lines, which leads to a number of tensions in cases where parties exercise power in relation to approval, selection and conduct. For instance, parties seek to ensure that its candidates will be members of that party; that they have participated in the Party’s work; that they will support a party manifesto; and that their continued adherence to their party’s principles is a pre-condition of re-selection (see, for instance, Articles 11.3 (a) and (b) and 11.4 (a) (i)). None of these constraints are held to be unconstitutional because they do not directly affect the performance of Parliamentary duties and the casting of individual votes. Nevertheless, they exert considerable power over MPs’ behaviour.

Over time, parties in the UK have taken a stronger role on matters which involve the relationship between the Party and the Parliamentarians who are approved, selected and supported by that Party. Indeed, in the overwhelming majority of cases, MPs were, are and will be dependent on the Party for their election.

To the best of my knowledge, all British political parties now have constitutional procedures to elect the Leader of their Party. This is the subject of Article 10 of the Liberal Democrats Federal Party Constitution.

Article 9.1 of the Federal Constitutions (The Parliamentary Parties) specifically determines, in relation to the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, that “***Its Leader shall be the Leader of the Party*** as provided in Article 10”. It further says that “It shall be entitled to make such regulations (***not being inconsistent with this Constitution***) as it thinks fit for the conduct of its own proceedings.....” (my bold italics in both quotations). Articles 9.2 and 9.3 make similar provisions in relation to the power of the Parliamentary Parties in the House of Lords and the European Parliament to make regulations. This is a case in which MPs are regarded as being bound by a decision of their Party. That decision has a substantial effect on their work as MPs.

Under what circumstances can a group of MPs collectively take a decision which binds their Party as well as themselves? To the best of my knowledge and belief, no-one regarded the negotiations to form a coalition in this case or at other times in Scotland or Wales as anything other than a decision which would bind the Party to support the position arrived at by Parliamentarians. Such a decision is in effect one which commits and binds the Party.

Article 7.3 of the Federal Constitution gives the Federal Policy Committee “the responsibility for preparing the Party’s General Election Manifesto for the UK.....in consultation with the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons”. This is traditionally a power which has been assumed to be the prerogative of MPs in general and the Leader in particular. This provision has not, to the best of my knowledge, been challenged since the debate in which a similar provision was accepted by the Liberal Party Assembly. Clearly, the Manifesto is intended substantially to affect the conduct of MPs in that party in the following Parliament.

The context of the debate on 14 March 1998 was that all participants assumed that the Party had the power to take decisions on the strategy of the Party, including the strategy followed by members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons. The motion which was put forward by the Federal Executive, with the full knowledge and agreement of the Leader, Chief Whip and other Parliamentarians contained the following words:

(Conference notes) “The success of the Liberal Democrat MPs in pursuing this strategy of ‘constructive opposition’ in Parliament.....

Conference resolves:

1. **To continue this strategy** based upon the Party’s independence and distinctiveness.....” (my bold italics).
- 2.

The motion was based on the paper “No Glass Ceilings” published and circulated by the Party to all Conference delegates in advance of the debate. In the Preface to that paper, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown MP, wrote:

“At our Conference this Spring, when we debate **our party’s strategy, positioning and tactics**, we will be beginning that third phase

The **decision that we take will determine our Party’s course**, not just for this Parliament, but for the next decade.

But how we make that decision will be almost as important as the decision itself.

The Liberal Democrats are now the only Party who could hold such an open debate. And we should be proud of that.

.....

But I am certain that, if as a Party, we remain resolute and united, our ambitions for Britain can be realised. And if we are prepared to take risks, **to work with others when necessary**, then everything we have been campaigning for can become a reality” (my bold italics throughout).

These quotations demonstrate that it was the view of the Party Leader that:

1. The Conference debate was about strategy and positioning and included the Parliamentary Party’s role in implementing that strategy and positioning;
2. The debate would lead to a decision which would determine the position of the Party, including the Parliamentary Party in the Commons; and
3. The area covered by the debate and its decision included arrangements to “work with others”. In context, that phrase clearly related to the Parliamentary Party working with others in Parliament.

The introduction to the paper by Helen Bailey, Vice-Chair of the Federal Executive, repeated these assumptions, referring to “the wider political and strategic situation of our party” and “the **decisions** facing the party” (my bold italics).

The final section of “No Glass Ceilings”, addressed to Conference representatives, said that “we must **decide** whether to change our strategy or to continue with it” (my bold italics).

In summary, my view is:

- The resolution agreed by the 1998 Spring Conference did not mandate members of the Parliamentary Party to vote in any particular way. It only defined the next steps of the process of reaching a decision in ways which were entirely consistent with the Party’s Constitution and normal usage.

- If the Parliamentary Party is subject to the Party Constitution and therefore “a body within the Party”, the resolution simply defined the process leading to the final Party decision.
- If the Parliamentary Party is not “a body within the Party”, then Article 2.5 does not apply.
- In neither case were individual Parliamentarians mandated on how to vote at any meeting.
- At the time of decision, it was the settled view of the Party that decisions on these matters should be taken by the Party through its own due processes as defined by the Party in general and its sovereign Conference in particular. That view was not challenged at that time and has not been challenged since. Indeed, the process worked well in May 2010 and, as was recognised by the Leader, the President and many others, it enabled the Party to take an important decision in a timely manner which gained and demonstrated the wide support of Party leaders and members.

D Article 6.7

My understanding is that the challenge to the 1998 resolution is based on the thesis that a sovereign body cannot bind itself.

I do not accept this thesis. A sovereign body can clearly bind itself and does so whenever it agrees rules of procedure. It can of course change those rules at a later date if it so chooses, but a rule holds unless and until it is changed. The Conference could at any time and by a simple majority decide not to be bound by its earlier decision; that fact does not negate its decision for the time being to be bound by a particular rule.

The case of a qualified majority seems to me to be a particularly clear-cut case. The overwhelming majority of an assembly might wish to have a procedure which required a qualified majority to agree certain sorts of decisions and might well agree to abide by that procedure even when a simple majority had been attained.

I also suggest mildly that it may be embarrassing for the Party if the Federal Appeals Panel were to rule that a sovereign body cannot make such rules in the light of the Party’s insistence on the requirement for a qualified majority for dissolution of the new Parliament.

In Article 6.11, to which I referred in drafting my amendment, the Conference is given the specific power “to conduct a ballot of all members of the Party on any fundamental question where, in its judgement, the values and objectives of the Party are in issue or it is otherwise in the essential interests of the Party”. It seems entirely reasonable that the Conference should resolve in advance to use that power on an issue where a “substantial proposal which could affect the Party’s independence of political action” is being made and there has not been a substantial majority of Conference representatives in support of that proposal. In taking that decision, Conference decided in its sovereignty that a majority decision of Conference short of two-thirds would not be put into effect unless it were supported by a majority of members voting in a ballot pursuant to Article 6.11. That decision is an entirely reasonable and valid expression of its sovereignty.

Gordon Lishman
July 2010

FAP Ruling Appendix 2: Text of Motion

No Glass Ceiling (Party Positioning and Tactics Paper)

Conference welcomes the Party positioning and tactics paper *No Glass Ceilings*.

Conference Notes:

- a) The success of our strategy in the last Parliament which resulted in the election of more Liberal Democrat than Conservative Councillors, the breakthrough into the European Parliament and the election of 46 Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament; our strategic positioning was confirmed by the 1995 Federal Conference in Glasgow
- b) The Party's success during this Parliament in obtaining long-standing Liberal Democrat objectives such as the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly, PR for these elections and for the European Parliament, the establishment of the Electoral Commission on an alternative proportional system for Westminster elections, the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law and progress on legislation for Freedom of Information
- c) That the Liberal Democrats have become the only effective opposition in Parliament campaigning for better provision of public services such as education and health and a welfare system that protects the poor.
- d) The success of the Liberal Democrat MPs in pursuing this strategy of 'constructive opposition' in Parliament, and the centrality of this strategy to the achievements outlined above.

Conference Resolves:

1. To continue this strategy based upon the Party's independence and distinctiveness, being prepared to work with others at local and national level where we agree and to oppose where we disagree
2. That one of our important aims is to complete the task begun in May 1997, of the Liberal Democrats replacing the discredited, reactionary Conservative Party as the official Opposition as a step to the strategic goal of a genuinely liberal and radical Liberal Democrat Government
3. That any explanation of the subjects covered by the joint Cabinet Committee will only be carried out after a genuine consultation with the Party and the express consent of the Parliamentary Party
4. That we will seek to involve those from all other parties who support constitutional reform and a more liberal and democratic Europe in the current constitutional reform process
5. To commit the Party to campaigning vigorously to bring to an end to the undemocratic First Past the Post system of voting and replace it with a proportional system, preferably the Single Transferable Vote.

Conference notes the absence of specific constitutional provisions which clearly define the Party's approach to gaining positive consent to proposals for an important change in strategy or positioning.

Conference agrees that:

- i. In the event of any substantial proposal which could affect the Party's independence of political action, the consent will be required of a majority of members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and the Federal Executive, *and*
- ii. Unless there is a three-quarters majority of each group in favour of the proposals, the consent of the majority of those present and voting at a Special Conference convened under clause 6.6 of the Constitution, *and*
- iii. Unless there is a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at that Conference in favour of the proposals, the consent of a majority of all members of the Party voting in the ballot called pursuant to clause 6.11 or 8.6 of Constitution.

Background Briefing No Glass Ceilings was produced by the Federal Executive in response to the consultative session on Party Development at the Eastbourne Conference of September 1997.

Federal Finance & Administration Committee

The FFAC committee, elected in January 2011 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).

2011 results

The draft figures for 2011 indicate a surplus for the year of around £204,000 (against a budgeted surplus of £200,000).

The final figure will depend upon the valuation of the closed pension scheme and the result of discussions with the Party's auditors regarding the accounting treatment for the HQ office move.

This apparently satisfactory result for the year disguises significant variances in both income and expenditure, most of which were anticipated in the report to autumn conference in Birmingham. On the income side the Party benefitted from the substantial receipt from the Methuen Fund, which offset shortfalls in other areas. The Trust comprised of a number of trusts set up in the 1920 for the benefit of the party, which have now been wound up.

Staff costs were significantly below budget due to lower than expected costs of restructuring the campaigns department and a higher than anticipated saving from keeping posts vacant. These offset a higher cost of pension contributions as a result of identifying an underpayment relating to certain staff in previous years.

Overall, non-staff costs were kept within budget.

As reported to last autumn conference, the net effect of the HQ office move was to reduce costs in the year. This was the combined result of writing back the dilapidations provision, the receipt of a donation specifically to finance the move, and provision for the payment of the surrender premium on the Cowley Street premises (of which half was paid in the year and the balance will be paid in 2012, though it will all be accounted for in the 2011 accounts). Certain costs associated with the move were expensed.

Similarly, the report to autumn conference referred to the costs of the campaign management system of which one third were capitalised and two thirds expensed in the year.

2012 budget

Despite considerable cost pressures the 2012 budget is, once again, for a surplus of approximately. £200,000, which, it is anticipated, will result in a further significant reduction in the accumulated deficit.

Efforts have been made to reduce overheads so that a greater proportion of resources can go into campaigns including the network of regional campaigns staff jointly funded with the regions. At the same time the Party is maintaining its commitment to diversity with its support of the Leadership Programme and its investment in its new campaign management system.

To finance this, the Party continues to invest in its fundraising capacity. The revenue from our Autumn Conference continues to make a significant contribution.

The budget is included in appendix 1 attached.

Grants to Party bodies

	2012 budget	2011 budget
	£	£
ALDC	87,378	93,753
Liberal Youth	16,000	16,000
WLD	4,000	4,000
EMLD	2,000	2,000
Total	109,378	115,753

The small reduction in the ALDC grant is part of a drive to increase ALDC income by encouraging all councillors to join the organisation through group membership. This work is being supported by the Federal Party and has been agreed with ALDC.

Staffing levels

The size of departments at the end of 2011 was:

Department	31 December 2011 FTE
Chief Executive's*	24.0
Elections and Skills	16.0
Membership & Development	15.2
Finance & Resources	6.6
Commons Whips	2.0
Total	63.8

FTE = Full time equivalent established posts

*including policy, press, fundraising, conference, and international offices

(These figures compare with the average number of staff reported as employed by Conservative Central Office in 2010 of 221 and by Labour of 277)

PPERA

Following the requirement to complete Campaign Expenditure Returns for the general election in 2010 and the AV referendum in 2011, it is back to normal for most local party treasurers in 2012. The exception will be for those in London who will need to complete returns for the Assembly election as well as the normal donation reports and accounts returns.

Consolidated Local Party accounts (including branches) for the 2011 calendar year that exceeded £17,500 should be approved by the Local Party Executive and submitted to Party Headquarters before 15th March in accordance with the accounting requirements of the Electoral Commission.

Charlotte Harris joined the Compliance Department as Paul Rustad's replacement in August 2011. Her role has been extended to cover a wider range of tasks including the filing of returns.

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 in seven of the last eight reported quarters received more in personal donations from more individuals than the Labour Party.

Membership and Development

Membership

Membership recruitment and retention work is always challenging in a post-general election year, as this is frequently a lower activity period in the political cycle. The political environment over the last year has added to that challenge. There are signs that the environment is improving as the positive political achievements get communicated more effectively, but the party has to achieve significantly more on membership at all levels of the Party in order to build a strong enough organisation for the electoral tests of the next three years.

Although a growing proportion of new members join online, the traditional activity of local doorstep recruitment and promoting membership in all campaigning activity remains vitally important. Being a party of Government is a new experience across the whole organisation and to help local parties respond to this, a new local party membership programme with theme 'Meeting the Challenge' has been launched.

New local party development packs and recruitment leaflets have been distributed to all local parties. Further material will be distributed throughout the year and there will also be activity to give greater recognition within the Party to members contribute the most to membership development activity.

Connect

The party has launched our new campaign management system 'Connect' and it is now in widespread use. Its launch has been accompanied by a comprehensive training programme with over 40 videos, virtual classrooms and individual support.

Connect is delivering better campaign management and analysis tools and new functionality that has not been previously available. The Virtual Phone Bank feature is already being put to effective use by regional networks to support key campaigns. The online delivery of the system is opening up campaign organisation to a much wider group than was possible with our previous technology. Within the first few weeks of operation Connect had a thousand users and this number is rising.

Party's Pension Fund

Slow progress continues to be made with the winding up of the closed final salary pension scheme (1975 Liberal Headquarters Retirement Fund) and it is expected that this will be completed in 2012. Following the

transfer of funds into the scheme at the end of 2010 from the 1924 HQ Retirement Fund, which had assets but no members, the scheme has a small surplus.

Liberal Democrat HQ

As referred to in the review of 2011 the Party successfully moved its headquarters at the end of August to a single floor in newly-renovated premises at 8-10 Great George Street, London SW1.

It is already apparent that the new open plan office is yielding benefits in terms of fostering much closer working relationships between departments. In addition, the new premises are much more Disability Discrimination Act compliant, offer significantly better facilities for party bodies to hold meetings and have lower energy costs (and hence are more environmentally friendly) than the old premises.

David Griffiths

It was with great sadness that the committee heard of the death in September last year of David Griffiths, who had served as its Chair from 2003 to 2006. He brought to the role his experience of working at all levels of the Party over many years.

Duncan Greenland

FFAC Chair & Registered Treasurer

January 2012

Appendix 1

Liberal Democrat Combined Federal & POLD	
2012 draft budget	
	Budget 2012 £
Income	
Direct mail appeals and standing orders	383,000
LD Calling	220,000
Fundraising income	1,844,000
POLD restricted income	130,000
Federal levy	820,000
Conference	1,650,000
Lib Dem News	108,000
Cross charges to state parties	681,500
Policy Development Fund	450,000
WFD Admin fees	119,500
ELDR Grant income	18,000
Affinity	31,000
Regional draws	11,000
Interest Receivable	0
Total income	6,466,000
Expenditure	
Chief Executive's department	2,344,500
Elections & Skills	1,797,500
Membership	821,000
Finance & Resources	1,013,000
Commons Whips	101,500
SAOs	109,500
ELDR/LI	39,000
PDF grants to Scotland & Wales	40,000
Total expenditure	6,266,000
Surplus for the period	200,000

Parliamentary Party (Commons)

I spend much of my time speaking to colleagues from across the party and attending local party events around the country. I am always struck by how eager colleagues are to hear about what we have been up to in the Commons – and how little of what we do permeates through the media. I therefore relish this opportunity to tell you about some of the things that my colleagues in the Commons have been up to, and the progress that this Government has made in delivering so many of the things that we have all campaigned on.

Before I do, it is worth considering the political landscape that we find ourselves in. Having racked up the largest peacetime deficit in living history, Labour have consistently denied the need to tackle our economic problem and proposed no end of new spending commitments, without ever saying where the money would come from to fund them. As an opposition party, you might think that they can get away with this but it fails to acknowledge the mess they left behind and only enhances their economic incompetence. The two Eds have clearly had enough of being derided for this approach and have come out fighting – with each other. It seems that even the best planned “new launch” can go wrong and in the chaos that has ensued, Labour has gone from being in a bad place on the economy to all over the place! It’s about time that they faced up to their mistakes and apologised to the country for their Government’s mismanagement of our economy over thirteen years.

Meanwhile, Liberal Democrats have been working hard to clear up this mess – taking the tough decisions that are necessary to bring the country back from recession, whilst delivering on our manifesto and clear Liberal Democrat policies. It’s amazing how many of the things that we have been calling for are now being realised by this Government.

Our manifesto delivered

Many of you will have seen the Liberal Democrat “achievements document” already: the list of all the things we said we would do and which after more than sixty years in opposition, we finally have the chance to deliver. Independent research by the University of Central London (UCL) has worked out that we are on course to deliver 75% of our manifesto by the next election – that’s not bad going considering we have only 8% of the MPs in the House of Commons.

The Localism Act recently received Royal Assent, delivering on many of the things we promised in our manifesto and putting decentralisation at the heart of what we are doing in Government. The Act abolishes the Infrastructure Planning Commission and returns decision making (including housing targets) to local people and local communities. The IPC is replaced by a quicker, more accountable system where Ministers, not unelected commissions, are able to take decisions on new infrastructure projects critical to economic growth. The Act also removes ineffective targets and gives communities the ability to make decisions on housing and planning themselves rather than by faceless Civil Servants in Whitehall. Annette Brooke as our Communities and Local Government co-chair (and ably supported by Stephen Gilbert and David Ward) did an exceptional job of scrutinising the Bill as it progressed through Parliament, and ensured that it is something that we as Liberal Democrats can be proud of. Andrew Stunell also deserves an honourable mention as the Minister in charge of steering it through the Commons.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill is one about which many Liberal Democrats have their concerns and is likely to be amended in the House of Lords (where it is currently being considered). It does, however, include some important provisions that we as a party have long called for. This Bill will enable

prisoners to work regular hours, and to contribute towards financial reparations for victims – a key part of our manifesto and a cornerstone of our approach as Liberal Democrats to reforming the way that punishment works. Tom Brake was superb in guiding this tricky piece of legislation through the Commons and spent a lot of time liaising with the Ministry of Justice in order to improve aspects of the Bill for the better. His grasp of the issues and assured political handling is one that we are most grateful for.

For as long as I can remember, our manifesto has called for Fixed Term Parliaments. We have always believed that it shouldn't be down to the Prime Minister to choose at whim when the General Election will be. I was delighted when as Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg introduced legislation to the Commons, which would end this power and fix the date of the next General Elections – and every one after that. Mark Williams, as our Constitutional and Political Reform co-chair, spent many hours trying to persuade many of his Conservative colleagues of the merits of this Bill (!) and it finally received Royal Assent in September last year. Now everyone can put May 2015 in their diaries with some certainty!

We are also on course to deliver more political reforms, with the Government publishing the Recall of MPs Draft Bill in December. The Bill aims to allow voters to force a by-election where an MP is found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing and has had a petition calling for a by-election signed by 10% of his or her constituents. A petition can be called where an MP is convicted in the UK of an offence and receives a custodial sentence of 12 months or less, or where the House of Commons votes for a recall petition to be opened. As the party which led the charge for a cleaner politics, Liberal Democrats are yet again on course to deliver on our commitment.

John Thurso has been our Commons representative on the Joint Committee Draft House of Lords Reform Bill, which was appointed to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny on the draft Bill. John has worked closely with the Lords committee members Ros Scott and Paul Tyler, and with the Constitutional and Political Reform Parliamentary committee. I would expect that we will make real progress on House of Lords Reform in the coming year.

And it would be remiss of me not to mention Vince's achievements on Banking Reform. It is great to see him take a policy from opposition and implement it as a Secretary of State. Vince explained how fundamental these changes would be to the banking sector, saying "The government is going to launch this initiative on the banks, accepting in full the Vickers commission. We're going to proceed with the separation of the banks – the casinos and the retail, business lending parts of the banks ... Moreover we're going to get on with it. Both the primary and secondary legislation is going to be completed within this parliament. It's got to be done. We can't have a position where the big banks are too big to fail." And I am confident that it will be done.

The front of our manifesto has a very clear commitment to lift the lowest paid out of tax altogether, by raising the tax threshold to £10,000. We are already part-way towards completing this commitment but Nick Clegg has been clear that this is a priority for us. Not long after we meet at conference, the Chancellor will announce his budget – Liberal Democrats are working hard to ensure that in March, we accelerate this even faster.

Don Foster celebrated a great success last week when his Private Member's Bill (started in the Lords by Lord Clement-Jones) passed through the House of Commons. It is extremely rare that Bills of this sort have any success and it is a testament to Don that he has succeeded in guiding it through the House. Don's Bill will allow small venues to promote live music without expensive licenses, and exempts them from potential criminal proceedings. This is another example of the dogged work of Liberal Democrats in Parliament and just goes to show how effective our Members can be.

Liberal Democrats in Europe

It would be remiss of me, in summarising the last few months, not to mention Europe. After all, you will have all read much about it in the papers. It is inevitable that when two parties work together in coalition, there will be disagreements. We also knew that Europe was going to be a tricky issue for us to face together as Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have such a fundamentally different attitude that it was inevitable. Nick Clegg was completely right to highlight the risks in David Cameron's approach to Europe and I know that for many it marked an important change in the way in which the coalition is able to "agree to disagree". We have always been an unashamedly pro-European party and however regrettable the outcome of the negotiations, Nick did exactly the right thing in warning of the dangers of isolation from Europe and leading the charge on reengagement.

Martin Horwood, co-chair of the International Affairs PPC led the debate on Europe from the Lib Dem green benches in December and he was assiduous in representing the concerns that we as Liberal Democrats have about remoteness in Europe. Martin focused the House of Commons on the economic and financial crisis still facing Europe, and the direct impact this has on UK; he sought positive reassurances from the Prime Minister for potential foreign investments that the UK will remain at the heart of European economic decision making; and he made the case for positive and active diplomacy on the part of the UK towards its more traditional allies in Europe, and highlighted the benefits of having Britain fully involved – not in the Eurozone – but in the overall process of European economic decision making. Martin was also able to point to the extensive work that our Ministers have done in Europe and in ensuring European cooperation. Chris Huhne, at the Climate Change talks in Durban delivered a global and lasting commitment to combating climate change, working with European colleagues to reach the final outcome. And Ed Davey as a Minister in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has worked incredibly well with his European counterparts to tackle common priorities and establish common negotiating positions on everything from the digital sector to services, to impact assessments and smarter regulation. Through their actions, Liberal Democrat Ministers have proved that the UK is stronger when working with its European neighbours.

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chief Whip (Commons)
January 2012

Parliamentary Party (Lords)

There have been no changes to our teams of peers since I last reported to the autumn 2011 conference. Our six Lords Ministers remain in office and our 18 Parliamentary Party Co-Chairs/spokespeople remain unchanged. We have had challenging work on several Bills and headed up debates as follows:

European Union Bill

The European Union Bill received Royal Assent just before summer recess. **Kishwer Falkner, Sal Brinton, Emma Nicholson, Shirley Williams, Willie Goodhart, Dick Taverne, Anthony Lester and Hugh Dykes** participated in the bill, with **William Wallace** on the Government side.

Fixed Term Parliaments Bill

This Bill was subject to protracted ping-pong in the early part of the autumn but has completed its progress and is now law. The Bill enshrines the long standing commitment of the party for there to be fixed term Parliaments. **Chris Rennard, Paul Tyler and Jonathan Marks** worked for the Lib Dems, and **Tom McNally and Jim Wallace** also participated as part of the Ministerial team.

Police and Social Responsibility Bill

The Police and Social Responsibility Bill was scrutinised by **Sally Hamwee, Angie Harris, Bill Bradshaw, Alex Carlile, Dee Doocey, Sue Miller, Tim Clement-Jones, Monroe Palmer, Jenny Tonge and John Shipley**, with **William Wallace** on the Government team. Responding to Angie Harris's earlier amendment to create a body corporate, comprising both the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Police and Crime Panel, the Government agreed to postpone the initial Police Commissioners election until November 2012. The Lib Dems in the Lords accepted this compromise. The Bill is now law.

*The above work was completed before the autumn conference,
but was too late to be included in the last report*

Armed Forces Bill

John Lee, Martin Thomas, Sue Miller, Dominic Addington, Monroe Palmer, John Burnett participated in the Armed Forces Bill, with **William Wallace** on the Ministerial team. It has now received Royal Assent.

Education Bill

Joan Walmsley, Sal Brinton, Margaret Sharp, Mike Storey, Claire Tyler, Judith Jolly, Andrew Phillips, Floella Benjamin and Phil Willis, with **Sue Garden** on the Ministerial team, participated in the Education Bill which received Royal Assent in the Autumn of last year. Liberal Democrat Peers were instrumental in securing a number of concessions to the Bill, all of which were obtained without the necessity of votes. Guidance to schools on the issue of searching pupils has been strengthened as a result of Lib Dem pressure, as has advice to schools on the issue of same day detentions. We were also instrumental in achieving an amendment establishing that courts must have regard to the welfare of the alleged victim of an offence when deciding whether to lift reporting restrictions and for face to face careers advice for all disadvantaged children. Further concessions were won by the Lib Dems on the duty of schools to cooperate with local authorities, apprenticeships, the repayment of loans for part time students, school governance, school inspections, the

code for admissions/fair access, technology in schools, sanctions on exam boards, guidance on exclusion appeals and the linking of the two teacher databases.

Energy Bill

The Energy Bill gained Royal Assent with a handful of Government amendments being agreed in the Lords as part of Consideration of Commons Amendments. **Robin Teverson, Kate Parminter and Diana Maddock** participated in the Bill, with **Lindsay Northover** handling it for the Government.

Health and Social Care Bill

Judith Jolly, Shirley Williams, Liz Barker, Tim Clement-Jones, Claire Tyler, Meral Hussein-Ece, John Sharkey, Jonathan Marks, Phil Willis, Andrew Phillips, Tony Greaves and John Alderdice, with **Lindsay Northover** on the Government team, have participated in this Bill which is now awaiting Report Stage. There are continuing discussions and negotiations with the Government on many outstanding issues, and Lib Dem peers have proposed and supported 'probing' amendments which focus on specific areas. Some of the issues discussed include impacts of lifting the private income cap, the composition of local clinical commissioning groups, education and research in the health service and the role and duties of Monitor.

Key achievements made by the Lib Dem Peers so far include agreement by the Government to return with amendments at Report stage on the powers and accountability of the Secretary of State, and securing an agreement from the Department of Health to bring forward proposals on research. They have also confirmed clinical commissioning groups will have to demonstrate they have the systems in place to promote and fund patient research. They have further promised that a non-executive board of experts will independently oversee the patient voice organisation, Public Health England. Overall, the Liberal Democrats have demonstrated they are carefully and systematically improving this Bill for the benefit of NHS patients across the country.

Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill

This Bill completed Committee Stage on 9 February. **Martin Thomas** is leading the Bill Team, with support from **Alex Carlile, Ken Macdonald, Andrew Phillips, Navnit Dholakia, Dee Doocey, Willie Goodhart, John Shipley, Floella Benjamin, Joan Walmsley, Anthony Lester, Tim Clement-Jones, Veronica Linklater, Sally Hamwee and Eric Avebury**. **Tom McNally** and Jim Wallace are participating for the Government. The pressure on public spending has required cuts to all areas including the legal aid budget. The Bill removes certain areas from the scope of legal aid while encouraging greater use of mediation and other ways of resolving disputes. It implements the reforms recommended by Lord Justice Jackson on no win-no fee agreements and bans referral fees. It also replaces indeterminate sentences with more effective determinate sentences.

Live Music Bill

Tim Clement-Jones achieved a remarkable success in getting his Private Members Bill through Parliament and into law. The Bill enables unamplified music to be played anywhere between 8am and 11pm without a licence. The Government supported the Bill after amendments were made to the Bill at the Lords Committee stage. The Bill was then taken up in the Commons by **Don Foster MP** who successfully navigated the passage of the Bill.

Localism Bill

Graham Tope, Sally Hamwee, Tony Greaves, John Shipley, Kate Parminter, Susan Kramer, Chris Rennard and Dee Doocey worked effectively and constructively with Ministers to achieve many improvements without the need for votes. **David Shutt** was part of the Ministerial team. Concessions were achieved on many issues, including shadow mayors, council governance, the regime of the Standards Board, local referenda, further beneficial changes were also made to the EU fines provisions, the Community Right to challenge, locally agreed development plans, the 'democratic filter' and many more. This Bill is now law.

Pensions Bill

In October 2011 **Mike German and Ben Stoneham** ratified Commons amendments to the Pensions Bill. These changes included the Government concessions to ensure women who would have seen a two year increase to their state pension age will now have their wait for a reduced period of 18 months. This Bill is now law.

Protection of Freedoms Bill

This Bill has completed Report Stage. **Sally Hamwee** led the Bill team, supported by **Jenny Randerson, Sue Miller, Willie Goodhart, Floella Benjamin, Joan Walmsley, Andrew Phillips, Dee Doocey, Dominic Addington, Bill Bradshaw, Margaret Sharp, Sal Brinton and Monroe Palmer**. The Bill fulfils the Liberal Democrats' commitment to restore hard-won British liberties. It provides for the deletion of DNA samples and fingerprints of innocent people from police databases; the issue of a code of practice about surveillance camera systems; the permanent reduction of the maximum period of pre-charge detention for terrorist suspects to 14 days; the scrapping of some stop and search powers, an end to the routine monitoring of millions of people under the radically reformed vetting and barring scheme; an end to unwarranted local authority snooping; the enabling of thousands of gay men to clear their name with the removal of out-of-date convictions for consensual acts; the protection of motorists from rogue wheel clamping firms; and strengthening of measures against trafficking of people for labour and other exploitation.

Public Bodies Bill

Following earlier significant improvements to the Public Bodies Bill, largely as a result of influence from **Bob Maclennan, Anthony Lester, Ros Scott, Tony Greaves, Archy Kirkwood, Andrew Phillips** and **Roger Roberts**, the Bill returned to the Lords in the Autumn for ping-pong, at which stage **Tom McNally**, our Minister, successfully negotiated the Government's decision to drop a provision to scrap the Youth Justice Board. The Government also confirmed that they would not seek to abolish the office of the chief coroner. This Bill is now law.

Scotland Bill

Bob Maclennan, Nicol Stephen and **David Steel** will be participating in the Scotland Bill, with **Jim Wallace** on the Government side. The Bill had its Second Reading in the Lords in the autumn. There has been a long wait for the committee stage, which has only just started, whilst the Scottish Parliament considers the legislative consent motion.

The Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Bill

This Bill has now received Royal Assent. It was debated by **Sally Hamwee, Andrew Phillips, Willie Goodhart, Alex Carlile, Ken Macdonald and Monroe Palmer**. The Act deals with the few cases where dangerous terrorist suspects cannot be prosecuted before the courts. It replaces control orders with a new, more

proportionate scheme of terrorism prevention and investigation measures (TPIMs). It ends the practice of virtual house arrest, imposes a maximum two year limit on TPIMs, and ties TPIMs more closely into the possibility of prosecution.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mike German, Celia Thomas, Ben Stoneham, Archy Kirkwood, Claire Tyler and Dominic Addington took part in this Bill, with **Sue Garden** being on the Ministerial team. Lib Dem Peers have been instrumental in obtaining an explicit commitment that PIP (Personal Independent Payments which will replace Disability Living Allowance), will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure the new process is working effectively and appropriately. **Celia Thomas** also won a significant concession to halve the time seriously disabled people will have to wait to be eligible for PIP from six months to three months. As a result of the conference motion passed in Birmingham last September on Employment Support Allowance (ESA), **Mike German** tabled amendments at committee which the Government have responded to by introducing their own amendment to provide greater support for those with deteriorating conditions to ensure that they can re-qualify for the Support Group rate of ESA.

The following were the subject of Libdem debates:

Jane Bonham-Carter – the importance of the creative industries

Dick Newby – financial stability and economic growth in the EU

Ben Stoneham – the Government's housing strategy

Mike Storey – the Government's strategy for cities

The following topics were also introduced for debate by our peers:

John Alderdice – transforming water from a source of conflict in the Middle East (**Lindsay Northover** was the Minister)

Veronica Linklater – budget cuts and secure children's homes (**Tom McNally** was the Minister)

Martin Thomas – wind farms in mid - Wales and Shropshire

Dominic Addington – teaching of school sport (**Sue Garden** was the Minister)

Claire Tyler – the role of Government in promoting and measuring well-being (**William Wallace** was the Minister)

Angie Harris – the report of the Independent Monitoring Commission for Northern Ireland (**David Shutt** was the Minister)

To assist our peers in all our work, **Elizabeth Plummer** has been joined by **Bridget Harris** as a second Special Adviser. Our own party Whips Office has seen several changes. **David Macpherson**, our Office Administrator and **Tom Gault** and **Andrew Wilson**, interns, have left us. **Jeremy Hill** has been appointed as Parliamentary Research and Policy Adviser (an additional post) **Humphrey Amos** is our new office Administrator and **Hannah Stirland** is coming to the end of a six month term as an academic intern, **Carolyn Rampton**, our Head of Office, **Tom Kiehl**, Senior Parliamentary and Political Adviser, and **Jill Clements** complete our team. Our staff do splendid work for us; we give them our thanks and that of our peers, most of whom are making a generous contribution in order that they may be retained.

Rt.Hon the Lord Shutt of Greetland

Chief Whip, House of Lords

January 2012

Parliamentary Party (Europe)

It was an eventful autumn and winter for UK Lib Dem MEPs. January 2012 is the halfway point of the 2009-2014 European Parliament, with elections for a new President of the Parliament and ripple-down changes in Vice-Presidents and Committee Chairs. It's a time of uncertainty when political agreements may unravel and a minimal reshuffle can become a major meltdown.

David Cameron's minority-of-one stance at the December summit led to voices being raised in the Parliament about the appropriateness of a British MEP chairing the highly influential Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON). Fortunately, Christmas intervened, the muttering died down and in the New Year **Sharon Bowles MEP (South East)** was re-elected as Chair. She is now working both publically and behind the scenes to rebuild cooperation and re-establish the UK's reputation as a key negotiator at the European level.

New Members and Positions

This spring sees two new faces in the UK Lib Dem delegation. In November **Liz Lynne MEP (West Midlands)** announced that she was standing down at the half-way point. She is replaced by the no. 2 on the West Midlands list, **Phil Bennion**. In January, **Diana Wallis (Yorkshire)** also announced her resignation as an MEP, following her unsuccessful bid as an independent candidate for President of the Parliament. The no. 2 on the Yorkshire list, Diana's husband Stewart Arnold, decided not to take up the place, which was accepted instead by the no. 3, **Rebecca Taylor**. Our thanks go to Liz and Diana for their twelve and a half years of service in the European Parliament – and we offer a warm welcome to Phil and Rebecca, who will both bring fresh experience and skills to the Lib Dem European team.

Congratulations go to **Sir Graham Watson MEP (South West)** for his knighthood and for becoming the first Briton to be elected as President of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR).

Edward McMillan-Scott (Yorkshire and the Humber) was re-elected as Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for democracy and human rights, a role that acquired added prominence in 2011 because of the Arab Spring. Edward looks forward to continuing to work on sharing with countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Bahrain the lessons learnt during the democratic transitions in Europe. He also continues to campaign actively for an end to the European Parliament's monthly commute to Strasbourg.

Our MEPs in Parliament

Sarah Ludford (London) campaigned successfully to change UK and EU law in order to stop anaesthetic drugs being exported from Europe and (mis)used as part of the lethal injection cocktail for US executions. With Tom Brake's team she co-drafted the Lib Dem submission to the UK commission on a Bill of Rights. Sarah's campaign for an EU-wide strategy to combat the steep rise in diabetes is seeing success, with the Danes focusing on the issue during their presidency of the EU in the first half of 2012.

Liz Lynne kept up the fight to ensure that MRI scanners are not affected by forthcoming European legislation on Electromagnetic Fields. Liz will be particularly remembered for her work in the Parliament on preventing needlestick injuries and her fight against every sort of work-related discrimination, including ageism. On disability issues **Catherine Bearder (South East)** is now taking up the cudgels and recently produced a report with African, Caribbean and Pacific MPs on 'The Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Developing Countries'.

December saw the approval of a new code of conduct introducing enhanced transparency requirements for MEPs and tougher sanctions. **Diana Wallis** played a major role in the negotiations on the code.

Recent successes chalked up by **George Lyon (Scotland)** on the Agriculture Committee include successfully piloting through proposed legislation allowing Member States to implement individual bans on the growing of GM crops on their land, and negotiating an agreement to end the dispute with the US on imports of hormone-treated beef. In the Parliament's mid-term shuffle George acquired additional responsibilities as Vice Chair of the Budget Committee so a busy time lies ahead for him.

Bill Newton-Dunn (East Midlands) has finished his stint as a Quaestor of the Parliament but has been kept busy working on a Regulation to remove phosphorus from detergents for household washing machines. He is pleased that the Parliament is finally setting up a committee on Organised Crime as he has long been advocating.

Andrew Duff (East of England) has been preoccupied with the fall-out from the Cameron veto and is working on how the new treaty on fiscal stability can be incorporated into the EU framework when political conditions permit.

As **Leader** of the Liberal Democrat European Parliamentary Party (LDEPP), **Fiona Hall (North East)** has worked to keep MEPs linked up to the wider party and the Coalition Government. In recent months she has been taking issue with cuts to the BBC's European coverage – hardly consistent with their public service remit – and discussing ideas of how to reform the system of scrutiny of EU affairs in the Commons so that MPs can engage earlier and more effectively with EU policy development. In the European Parliament, she has been busy negotiating the Energy Efficiency Directive, seen as key to cutting carbon emissions and making EU economies more efficient and self-sufficient as oil and gas prices rise. In October Fiona took part in observation of the elections in Tunisia, the country in which the Arab Spring began.

Unusually, this report comes from Fiona as Leader because LDEPP was between Whips at time of going to press.

Fiona Hall
Leader, Parliamentary Party (Europe)
January 2012

Campaign for Gender Balance

The Campaign for Gender Balance was established by the Federal Executive in response to the conference debate on gender balance in September 2001, and is now being run within the strategic framework of the Diversity Unit at Lib Dem HQ. It continues to form a key central initiative for supporting potential women candidates within the Party, and it implements a range of training, mentoring and support activities in order to increase the number of women standing for Parliament. The Campaign is chaired by Rosalyn Gordon.

Current approval / selection figures (as of 13th January 2012)

Total number of approved candidates eligible to stand for Parliamentary selections (excluding current Parliamentarians) - 925

No of women candidates on the approved list - 248 (26%)

No Westminster selections have taken place for this electoral cycle yet.

One of our key aims in 2012 is to ensure that all potential women candidates have all the encouragement, skills and support necessary to become effective Parliamentary candidates. We continue to work closely with the Elections and Skills team at HQ, and with the new Candidate Leadership Programme to ensure that this happens.

We continue to focus on increasing female representation in Parliament; in particular we are looking at how we can ensure that the policies and culture of the party and relevant Parliaments is conducive to electing more women Parliamentarians in addition to our on-going support for potential women candidates.

Current and planned activities

- CGB provides mentoring to women candidates at different stages of their careers, including a number who applied for the Leadership Programme (LP). We were pleased to see that 27 women have been accepted onto the programme. We view the LP as complementary to the work CGB conducts. We would like to highlight that CGB are available to assist women no matter what stage or level of support they are receiving, if they would like to become Parliamentary Candidates/MPs – our aim is to help make that happen.
- Two **Inspiration Days** were organised in Birmingham in October 2011 and Cardiff in January 2012 and we are planning another one in March/April in Durham. Inspiration Days are friendly and informal events, designed to give women members the opportunity to develop their skills, learn more about becoming active in the party and meet other like-minded women from across the Region.
- The annual **Future Women MPs Weekend** took place in December last year, providing targeted training for potential women candidates. It was a tremendous success with 16 participants from different backgrounds and experiences who benefited from a 2-day intense training course mainly focused on *planning and winning your selection campaign* and *building your winning team aiming to give attendees the skills needed to be selected in winnable seats*.
- **The Campaign will be running a training programme** at the 2012 Spring Conference. Due to the stage of the electoral cycle, these sessions will predominantly focus on key information and skills that help potential candidates to win target/winnable Parliamentary seat selections.

- **A CGB networking drinks reception** will be taking place on Friday evening, 8pm at Spring Conference, outside the Conference centre, aimed at our women members who are interested in standing as candidates in order for them to meet each other and those who can help them achieve their goals including mentors and those who are interested in helping CGB.
- CGB has led on **candidate training** within the party for women and Ros Gordon is currently reviewing its training programme taking into consideration what other training is now available within the party to ensure we maximise our strengths and where appropriate avoid duplication.
- After leading on a successful amendment to a motion at Autumn conference to ensure better representation for women in the House of Lords, Dinti Batstone and Jo Shaw are now looking to ensure that our Ministers in Government adopt conference's decision. This is an important opportunity to achieve gender balance in at least one elected House.
- Mark Williams MP (Co-Chair of the Constitutional & Political Reform parliamentary policy committee) has worked with CGB Vice-Chair, Dinti Batstone, to put in an Early Day Motion about **Women & Job-Sharing**.
- CGB Committee continues to lobby the Leaders Office on the level of female representation in the Cabinet and Government
- CGB has been putting together a **strategic plan** for this electoral cycle lead by Tamora Langley. This is almost finalised.
- One of our aims in 2012 is to **increase our pool of mentors** (both men and women) within the Party who can assist women with approval and selection. Mentoring registration forms and mentoring scheme overview information has been emailed to all mentors, and we will be following up with all candidates who stood in the 2010 General Election who have said that they are willing to do this.
- **An e-mail newsletter** is sent out every month to over 1000 subscribers, including details of training events, relevant news items and seat adverts. The CGB website has also recently been revised and updated.
- The Campaign continues to closely **monitor information regarding approval and selection figures**, to gain an accurate picture of the gender balance within the Party.

Personal thanks go to Dinti Batstone, Tamora Langley, Jo Shaw and Katy Gordon who has recently joined the committee, who have been excelling themselves in the time and commitment they have provided to CGB so far.

Sincere thanks also go to Ros Scott who has agreed to become more involved with CGB and Candy Piercy, who is Head of Training for the Campaign; and all our mentors, trainers and volunteers who generously give their time in support of the Campaign.

Rosalyn Gordon
Chair, Campaign for Gender Balance
January 2012

Diversity Engagement Group (DEG)

The Diversity Engagement Group (DEG) was established to oversee the achievement of the Party's equality and diversity priorities. The group brings together nominated 'Champions' from all sections of the Party in leading the strategic and accountable body responsible for delivering our diversity agenda and reporting back to every Federal Conference. DEG acts as a steering group for a dedicated Diversity Unit based at Liberal Democrat HQ, and is chaired by Baroness Sal Brinton.

Current areas of work

Regional Diversity Champions

- **The Diversity Unit supports a network of Regional Diversity Champions** to deliver activities at a regional and local party level.
- Regional Diversity Champions and their teams are responsible for driving through **strategic action plans** within each region, to promote and support the diversity of the local parties and candidates.
- The Diversity Unit continues to provide **advice, mentoring, training and on-going support** for all Diversity Champions.
- Champions **report back on progress** on the action plans in each region at the quarterly Diversity Engagement Group meetings.
- Most of the **2011 regional conferences** have had **diversity** on their agenda and were attended by either the DEG chair, Baroness Sal Brinton, or a representative from the Diversity Unit.

Candidate initiatives

- Recruitment for the **Candidate Leadership Programme** (for individuals from groups that are currently under-represented in the Parliamentary Party) ended in December 2011 and a group of **40 candidates** have been recruited on to the Programme. 68% of those recruited are female; 34% BAME; 10% have a disability and 10% LGBT. There are also some candidates under 30 as well as a number from low socio-economic backgrounds. The **report on recruitment to the Programme** was presented to the Federal Executive in January and then circulated to all the regional candidates' chairs, regional chairs and DEG members.
- The first **Candidate Leadership Programme residential weekend** took place on the second weekend of January in London and was a very successful event bringing together different key people from HQ and Parliament who will be assisting with this process.
- The Unit continues to run the **New Generation initiative** and **Campaign for Gender Balance** (*see separate report*), which provides targeted training, mentoring and support for potential BAME and women candidates.

Diversity awareness within the Party

- The **'Whose vote are you missing? Campaigning in ethnically diverse communities'** booklet was published at the last Autumn Conference and distributed to regional conferences, urban local parties' chairs and council leaders. It is aimed at local parties who want to increase their engagement and outreach activities with BAME communities in their local areas, and particularly emphasises examples of good practice in this area by groups and individuals within the Party.
- **Training sessions** are being offered at Federal Conference on widening participation in their area.
- A package of **diversity awareness training** will be put together, and rolled out to all Regional Executives. We hope that training will then be disseminated to local parties by Regional Diversity Champions and other trainers in the region.

Diversity monitoring

- **Approval and selection data is regularly** monitored and analysed in order to gain an accurate picture of candidate diversity within the Party.
- **Diversity monitoring forms** will soon be sent out to the Party membership
- **ALDC** have recently announced that they will be starting optional diversity monitoring within their membership, so that we have an understanding of the diversity of our representation within local government.

External engagement and activities

- The Diversity team are working closely with the Government Equalities Office (GEO) on the **Access to Elected Office Strategy**, which aims to provide financial assistance to disabled individuals who want to stand as candidates for national or local elections.
- The team actively contributed to a European Government funded project on '**Increasing Diversity in Political Parties**', which resulted in a benchmarking toolkit for parties to use to monitor and evaluate their progress in this area
- A programme of **high-profile events and visits** are being planned for 2012, planned around particular faith and community festivals

The first **DEG meeting** of the year took place in January, and the next one will be held at Spring Conference.

Baroness Sal Brinton
Chair, Diversity Engagement Group
January 2012