

# eastern Agenda

from Andrew Duff MEP  
no 5 Spring 2002

## A Year of Real Progress

“Liberal Democrats in the East of England can take great heart from our steady advance share of votes and number of votes cast in the recent Ipswich By-Election,” says Andrew Duff



Andrew Duff campaigning with Tessa Munt, the Liberal Democrat candidate in the recent Ipswich By-Election

Andrew Duff reports

A few weeks ago, at the Royal Palace of Laeken outside Brussels, I saw Tony Blair welcome the setting up of a new Convention to consider the future constitution of the European Union. Back in the spring of last year, Mr Blair’s officials had insisted that there could be absolutely no question of such a Convention ever taking place and, furthermore, all talk of a constitutional settlement for the Union was to be suppressed.

Also at Laeken I heard Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, complaining that the EU was taking too long to develop its common European asylum and immigration policy. This is the same man who, as Home Secretary, had continued the policy of his Conservative predecessors to opt out of EU moves to create a common judicial area involving stronger external and looser internal border controls and, indeed, a common asylum and immigration policy. His colleague at the MoD, Geoff Hoon, likewise complained that the new Rapid Reaction Force an integrated EU armed force that successive UK governments had treated with contempt or derision — was now not only essential but had to be enlarged.

Thinking of our Tory friends, I was also present in the House of Commons in December 1991 when John Major, late of this parish, and Norman Lamont, his Chancellor, were asserting categorically that the European single currency project was misconceived and would never come about, but that, even if it did, it would be doomed later to fail. Needless to say, before I left Brussels for the Christmas break, I bought a small sachet of gleaming new euro coins, worth 500 Belgian francs or •12.40. They range from a large coin, value • 2 (worth £1.25) to a small coin, value • 1 cent (worth about 0.6 pence). Because they were bought in Belgium, the coins in the *Eurominikit* all sport the rotund and bespectacled features of King Albert II. (When sterling joins the euro, Queen Elizabeth II will star on all coins minted in Britain.) **On the first shopping day in January I spent these coins on two new pair of socks in the Cambridge branch of Marks and Spencers — doing precisely what Peter Hain, the Minister of Europe, is urging us to do.**



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## Europe's response to 11 September

What has happened to change the government's line on Europe, of course, is 11 September. Without wishing to elevate Mr Bin Laden into a 'Father of Europe', his actions and threats have spurred all European governments to square up to their responsibilities to build a more united Europe. Just as it did in the early days of the Cold War, the Union has responded well to the crisis, and on all fronts. The assault on the World Trade Centre was at once a dramatic coup against globalisation and at the same time a striking example of how finance and commerce are dependent both on law and order at home and peace abroad. **The appropriate response is more unity among the world's liberal democracies, not least in Europe.**

2002 starts therefore with new scenery. The geo-political context is sharper. But the goals remain the same: a strong European Union run by the best possible trans-national democracy, playing a much fuller part in world affairs, and committed to projecting its own stability and prosperity to the East and South — an enlarged Union that commands the identity of its own citizens and the loyalty of its allies.

**Liberal Democrats, especially, can feel vindicated and reinforced in our long-standing pro-Europe policies.** We are not, of course, uncritical of everything that happens in Brussels. The speed with which EU measures have been put in place to combat terrorism and international organised crime give me and my ELDR colleagues cause for anxiety on civil liberties grounds. It is essential now to make the Charter of Fundamental Rights fully binding, and vital that the Convention that is to draft the future constitutional proposals is an historic success.

## Britain's response to the euro

The power of the UK to influence these events will be much enhanced when we join the euro. I say 'when' not 'if' Britain joins the eurozone because, **whichever way one looks at the matter, inclusion carries less risks than exclusion.** Why is this? First, consumers will get a better deal. The euro completes the business of building the world's largest single market. In suppressing currency transaction, the introduction of the euro throughout the European Union removes an unnecessary cost to traders and travellers. One currency makes it easy to compare prices between countries. As Britain is one of the most expensive countries in Europe for a whole range of goods from cars to shoes, including food, British citizens stand to gain most from embracing the euro. Watch the prices of any retailer who opposes the euro. Joining the euro means an end to 'rip-off Britain'.

Next, no more sterling means no more sterling crisis. The history of the pound since the First World War has been one of exceptional volatility. At present, our manufacturing industries suffer badly because of the over-valuation of the pound. Stick with sterling, and get prepared for a sharp fall in the pound's value against the dollar or the euro (or both) followed by a sharp hike in UK interest rates, leading to more expensive mortgages. Borrowing is already more costly in Britain than in the rest of Europe. Clinging to sterling will force that gap even wider. Only the euro promises a stable framework for future long-term investment.



Andrew Duff- 'Joining the euro means an end to 'rip-off Britain''.

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Andrew with Pat Cox, in a lighter moment at the European Parliament

Anti-Europeans cling to the myth that Britain is sovereign over her monetary affairs, and that all freedom to shift policy to suit our national conditions will be lost if we enter the euro. The facts are rather different. The Bank of England sets interest rates more to react to international circumstances than to suit domestic conditions. Indeed, as the Governor of the Bank has admitted, there is no coherent 'one size fits all' policy even for the UK: what suits the City of London is uncomfortable for the North or Scotland.

**So why not join the euro?** Out of ignorance, yes; out of sentimentality, certainly. But ask the British people a sensible question in a referendum, argue the case, decorate the pro-euro campaign with the country's more popular politicians and most successful businessmen and women — and look forward confidently to the answer yes.

**Liberal Democrats in the East of England must be in the vanguard of this campaign.**

# Ipswich - Avoiding the Squeeze

by Tim Huggan

**The Ipswich By-election on 22nd November, showed what can be achieved by the Liberal Democrats in seats where we are traditionally squeezed by the Labour and Conservative parties.**

The extremely tight timescale of the campaign meant that we had to get our message across quickly and forcibly, it also meant that with relatively limited manpower during the early stages of the campaign we had to target our message carefully to areas that we could deliver quickly.

The first aim was to establish ourselves as a serious political player in a seat that we usually came a distant third. We achieved that objective by the sheer volume of leaflets we managed to deliver during the first two weeks of the campaign where we outdelivered the other two main parties. This forced the main parties to channel their energies on attacking us rather than fighting each other.

It was during the last week of polling when the press started taking notice of us and we started to achieve real momentum. Alas polling day was just too soon to see us overhaul the Tories into second place but **it showed that the Liberal Democrats can do well anywhere we are well organised.**



Simon Hughes and Tessa Munt campaigning for more police officers during the Ipswich By-Election

## The Result

Chris Mole	Labour	11881	43.4%	-7.9%
Paul West	Tory	7794	28.4%	-1.7%
<b>Tessa Munt</b>	<b>Lib Dem</b>	<b>6146</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>+7.2%</b>

# Britons Abroad

by Caroline Coates



Caroline Coates (furthest right above) with the fellow East of England Liberal Democrats on their visit to the European Parliament

Encouraged by Andrew to learn more about the workings of the European Parliament, a party of constituents embarked upon a two day familiarisation tour, via Stansted and Charleroi. The visit was arranged by Guillaume and Bernardo in Andrew's Brussels office.

By quirk of fortune, it just so happened that on our first morning, 8 November, Andrew was presenting a paper to the 52 members of the ELDR Group which set out their position before the meeting of the European Council at Laeken on 14-15 December 2001. Andrew's work was very warmly received, and indeed attracted a declaration of unprecedented warmth from a Nordic lady. The paper was scrutinised in detail, and we heard an interesting debate on the proposal to give MEPs the right, by ballot, to make legislative proposals. As things are, it is always the European Commission that puts forward proposals which then come before the Parliament and Council. We had the opportunity to see the Leader of the Group, Pat Cox, in action; and I am sure he will now make a first class President of the Parliament.

Neil Corlett, a member of the ELDR staff, later briefed us on the organization of the Liberal group. We then moved up the street to the Commission's headquarters to learn about regional economic development and the structural funds.



Andrew at a press conference in the European Parliament with Francesco Rutelli and Pat Cox.

On the second day we visited the impressively distinctive hemicycle and heard about the procedures for getting Commission proposals through the Parliament and on to the statute book. The 626 seats fill up the chamber, and seating an expanded legislature after enlargement is posing a problem in itself.

Being such a serious and erudite group, we could not possibly say that the evening dinner hosted by Andrew in an old and traditional Belgian restaurant was the highlight of the visit, but it was jolly enjoyable.

Our party appreciated the time and effort put at our disposal. I hope that when the next visit is organised more Lib Dems from the East of England will take up the offer to see the European Parliamentary process in action. The lasting impression I have is of a youthful, bustling and enthusiastic environment. Was it the architecture? The staff? The challenges? Who knows. But it makes (most of) our national politicians appear pretty jaded.

# Newsfile



Andrew Duff MEP discussing the forthcoming Constitutional Convention with newly elected Liberal Democrat President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox.

## PAT COX ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Liberal Democrat Euro MP for the East of England Andrew Duff has welcomed today's election as President of the European Parliament fellow Liberal Pat Cox (Ireland).

Andrew said: "Pat Cox is the first Liberal President of the European Parliament for over twenty years. He brings Irish charm, democratic skill and a passion for European unity to the job. He is a close friend and colleague, and I know he will strengthen the European Parliament both internally and externally. He will be a President who will make the Parliament fit to face the challenge of Europe's future."

Pat Cox MEP was elected President in the third round of voting by 298 votes over 237 for the British Socialist David Martin.

## EURO-MP WELCOMES EX-LABOUR AND TORY MEMBERS

Andrew Duff, Liberal Democrat Euro-MP for the East of England, has welcomed the former Labour MP Paul Marsden and members of the Pro-European Conservative Party into the Liberal Democrats.

Andrew said: "Like many people in this country, Paul Marsden has had enough of a Labour government which is still not delivering its promises on health, transport and education, and which is seen as increasingly authoritarian on civil liberties issues. **Ministers are no longer trusted by many of their own MPs to deliver on public services.**

John Stevens and Brendan Donnelly, co-founders of the Pro-Euro Conservatives and former Tory MEP Sir Anthony Meyer, are also joining the Liberal Democrats. They follow the bold step by Paul Howell, former Tory MEP for Norfolk, who joined us last year.

Andrew said: "Many ex-Tory and Labour members recognise that **the Liberal Democrats are the effective opposition to this New Labour government.**

"They also see us **Liberal Democrats as the truly patriotic party on Europe.** Only the Lib Dems stand up for whole-hearted British participation in the European Union".

"I hope that other former Labour and Tory supporters across the East of England will come and help the Liberal Democrats make the difference in British and European politics. They will be made most welcome."



Andrew with Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot Leader, after a recent meeting.

# Mission Accomplished !

By Stuart Marritt



Andrew in Colchester with Bob Russell during the General Election

**The East of England set two primary objectives for the 2001 General Election:-** Hold Colchester and gain North Norfolk. “The Voice of Colchester” was re-elected with an increased majority! Credit should go to the campaign team led by Terry Sutton and Ian Horner, not to mention the wonderful former Labour candidate.....

**After 12 years of hard work Norman Lamb achieved an excellent result,** once again thanks to an excellent team of professionals including Nick John, Ed Maxfield and Nick Starling.

Both Colchester and North Norfolk won as a result of following very stringent plans set up by Chris Rennard and his campaign team over years rather than months. This included target letters, e-leaflets, newspapers, surveys, a strict number of press releases each week, recruitment campaigns, working to achieve a minimum voter intention database, to mention just a few things. The number of people that poured in to both constituencies from the region and beyond certainly made a difference - proof that targeting does work!

Thanks have already been made by Bob and Norman, but in a voluntary based organisation like our own, you can never thank people enough! So thank you for all the help you gave to the winning campaigns in 2001 General Election

However, if the Liberal Democrats are going to form a government, we must ensure that we have the winnable seats for future general elections.

At the 2001 General Election we had a tier of starred seats. These seats were the perceived best potential for the future, the target seats for the next election and beyond. If you look at these starred seats, for example St. Albans, SE Cambridgeshire, South Norfolk, Southend West, West Chelmsford, did they perform as well as expected? What did we expect of them?

**In the future we must ensure that in our region the starred seats are fully supported.** In 2001, a few thousand pounds was directed towards the starred seats. In 2005 or 6 we must not only give more financial backing but, make sure that they are given the direction, training, practical support and management to succeed and achieve their agreed objectives. The region's responsibility is not only to support the starred and target seats but to monitor progress, motivate and manage the seats as well as the resources.

Next time, we need to be in the position to be able to say that not only have we held two seat and won the target seats but have another three very well placed starred seats to become targets next time round! Many of the seats in the region did increase their share of the vote in the General Election. In 2004 there will be European elections and possibly elections for the upper house and before that maybe the euro referendum. What we need to do is to work right across the region to return at least the same percentage of the vote at these elections as we did last June. In these elections, it's not just about your local vote, but about what a difference Liberal Democrats make when in power or with influence. We need to use the examples from Scotland or the councils we control to gain credibility with the voters. **We know from experience, voters when seeing Liberal Democrats in action,**





Andrew on the campaign trail in Bedfordshire.

**usually like what they see.** Only then will we really be able to maximise the voter and number of Liberal Democrats in government, whether that Westminster, European, regional or local. The next MISSION need not be IMPOSSIBLE but realistic

Starred seats at the next General Election need to be looking to select candidates by July 2002, have at least a 40% delivery network by 2005 delivering tabloid two newspapers a year and put out at least one high quality press release a week from the PPC. If you feel that your constituency should be considered for starred seat status, please talk to a member of the regional executive.

*Stuart Marritt was the Euro Agent in 1999 and ran the Southern advance team for Charles Kennedy's tour during the General Election and currently a member of the regional executive and a candidate for the Chair of Eastern Region.*

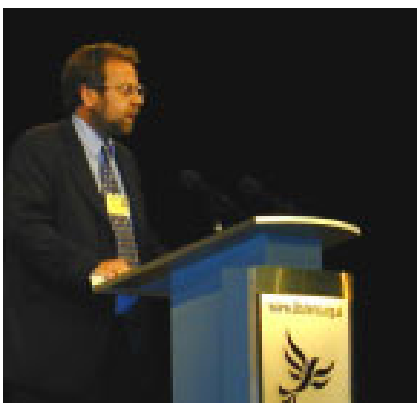
# The Region's Councillors Mobilise

Liberal Democrat councillors in the East of England are mobilising themselves on a regional basis. Last autumn the first poll took place among all councillors to elect the Lib Dem team on the East of England Regional Assembly. Chris White, leader of our group on Herts County Council, was elected leader. He says it is vital that collaboration improves between the party's local authority members. "The EERA is a forum for us to talk to each other about council matters: how are we reacting to the green paper on planning; what council tax rises are being planned in the region; how are we handling the new Cabinet system?"

White looks forward to the formation of the new regional party along the same lines as the six county European Parliamentary constituency. "The new set up will be able to engage much more relevantly in regional policy formation. It will have its own web site and media strategy. Our councillors must be prominent in the work of the new regional party," he argues. He sees enormous synergy between the aspirations of the regionalist councillors and the parliamentary work of the MEP, and hopes that future issues of *eastern Agenda* can lend space to reports of the work of EERA.

The growing success of the East of England Development Agency and Regional Assembly is spawning moves towards the creation of a real, directly elected regional assembly. It is likely that a convention will be set up during 2002 between the political parties and NGOs to take forward such an initiative. Chris White was encouraged that the East of England's Lib Dem Policy Conference on 20 October, at Homerton College, Cambridge, lent its support.

Also for the future, White hopes that the East of England will establish fringe meetings at the party's federal conferences. This will boost the profile of the region, he feels, and be a concrete expression of the new spirit of collaboration led by the MEP and councillors.



Leader of the Liberal Democrats on the East of England Regional Assembly, Cllr Chris White addresses party conference.

...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS..

## ANDREW DUFF TO SERVE ON EUROPE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Andrew Duff has been chosen by the European Liberal Democrat & Reform Group (ELDR) to serve on the Convention that will draft the future constitution of the European Union. He will be one of the sixteen members of the European Parliamentary delegation to the constitutional Convention that is due to start work on 28 February, and is Vice-President of the MEPs on the Convention.



The Liberal Democrat MEP for the East of England has been the Liberal spokesman on constitutional affairs since 1999 and was previously Director of the Federal Trust. In 1999-2000 he was a member of the Convention that drafted the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Parliament's co-rapporteur on the Charter.

In a statement, Andrew Duff said:

"It is a great honour to be a member of the Convention and to share in its historic task of building a more effective and democratic Europe.

"The participation of the European Parliament is probably the key to making a real success of the Convention. "MEPs are in the best possible position to orientate the Convention towards solving the undoubtedly complex problems raised by the fact of imminent enlargement. "We have a vested interest in building transnational parliamentary democracy. The Liberals are ready to play our full part."

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Andrew Duff MEP

### Regional Conferences in the East of England

Saturday 23rd February 2002

#### Chilterns Regional Conference

at St. Birinus School, Didcot, Oxon

Registration details 01 908 373 418

#### Eastern Regional Conference

at The Maltings, Ely, Cambs.

Registration details 01 485 540 289

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is the newsletter of Andrew Duff MEP, for Liberal Democrats in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

ea is supported by ELDR & is published by Tim Huggan, Orwell House, Cowley Road, Cambridge, and is printed by Fieldfare Publications, 52 Clifton Road, Cambridge.