

# eastern Agenda



Newsletter from Andrew Duff MEP  
No. 18 Winter 2007-08

## Thank you!



**Andrew Duff helps the Environment Agency examine the health of a pike, fished temporarily from the Great Ouse at Brampton in Huntingdonshire**

the European Parliament and across the region. We all look forward to making further advances in the East of England against our opponents in the 2009 campaign'.

Andrew Duff, 56, who lives in Cambridge, is Leader of the Liberal Democrat MEPs and spokesman on constitutional affairs for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). He is vice-president of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee. Andrew has represented the region in the European Parliament since 1999.

The other candidates on the party's list are Ian Mack (Norfolk), Peter Welch (Luxembourg), Earnshaw Palmer (Thurrock), Andrew Houseley (Suffolk) and Qurban Hussain (Luton).

The elections are to be held in June 2009 under the D'Hondt system of proportional representation. At present the East of England is represented by 3 Tory MEPs, 2 UKIP, 1 Labour and 1 Lib Dem.

East of England Lib Dems need a swing of only 3 per cent to get Linda elected as our second MEP.

Liberal Democrat members have been voting in large numbers in important ballots whose outcome will decide the future direction of the party. *eA 18* goes to print before the result of the leadership election.

But we do know the result of selection contests for the party's candidates for the next European Parliamentary elections.

In the East of England, sitting Euro MP Andrew Duff has again come top of the list.

Runner-up is Linda Jack, 52, Youth Policy Adviser at the Financial Services Authority. A former councillor in Bedford, Linda has a particular interest in Middle East affairs.

Commenting on the result, Andrew says: 'I am delighted to have been so strongly supported by the party in the East of England for a third time. I welcome the selection of Linda Jack and a strong team of experienced candidates to promote the values and policies of the Liberal Democrats in

**IN THIS ISSUE ...**

**PAGE 1**

**Thank you !**

**PAGE 2**

**Think Again, Mr  
Brown**

**PAGE 3**

**Wine, space, sugar,  
passports, railways  
... and the UK**

**PAGE 4**

**Open letter to the  
candidates**

**PAGE 6**

**President Sarkozy  
comes to Strasbourg**

# Think Again, Mr Brown

According to foreign secretary David Miliband, in a recent speech in Bruges -- famously edited by Gordon Brown -- the European Union 'will never be a superpower, but could be a model of regional cooperation'.

One is struck by the sheer minimalism of the message, and by the contrast with Tony Blair who, at his best, believed in Europe as a political project and could speak warmly about the prospect of Europe as a superpower, in contradistinction to the spectre of a superstate.

The change in Labour's European policy is not only one of tone. In 2004, Blair happily signed up to the constitutional treaty. On 13 December, Gordon Brown will sign up to the Treaty of Lisbon which, at least as far as the UK is concerned, is a retreat from the 2004 treaty. British policy has become very negative.

The thickening of Britain's notorious 'red lines' has made it practically impossible for the EU to agree on a common approach to social security for migrant workers. This is a strange act for a social democratic government apparently committed to the single market.

The government has succeeded in diluting the scope and force of common foreign and security policy: down-grading the 'Foreign Minister', pulling the new diplomatic service away from the Commission, excluding the Court of Justice and the European Parliament.

British policy is most reactionary in the field of justice and home affairs. Here, the UK will now be able to opt out of the otherwise common effort to enhance internal security, develop decent asylum and immigration policies, fight organised crime, and build up a common area of liberty and justice.

In another singular triumph of British diplomacy, the protection afforded everyone else by the binding Charter of Fundamental Rights will not apply to British citizens. The UK's opt-out from the Charter contaminates the whole legal system of the EU and jeopardises the development across Europe of a superior, modern rights regime.

It is amazing that Labour's red lines go more or less unchallenged at Westminster. Luckily the new Liberal Democrat leader will be an ex-MEP who will have the inestimable advantage of knowing how Europe works. Both Chris Huhne and Nick Clegg argue persuasively that British politics need to come to terms with European integration. They share a clear-headed and confident vision of Britain's membership of the European Union as being central to the national interest.

One of the new leader's first acts must be to sharpen the party's European policy in relation to Labour. The red lines must go.



**Andrew visits the Bundestag in  
Berlin to brief German Liberal  
MPs on the Treaty of Lisbon**

# Wine, space, sugar, passports, railways ... and the UK

The European Parliament has had a busy autumn. The current Portuguese presidency has done well to steer various controversial pieces of legislation through the Council of Ministers, and MEPs have had to work hard to keep up.

A package has been agreed to develop Europe's railways, setting the framework for more competitive prices and developing passengers' rights. Badly needed private sector investment will only be attracted to a more competitive industry.

In agriculture, changes to the sugar regime have been succeeded by ambitious and controversial plans to reform the wine sector. The goal is to encourage winegrowers to produce smaller quantities of better quality wine. A 'health check' on CAP reforms will take place in 2008.

The European Commission has also set the ball rolling on common energy policy, where a large package of measures will be proposed in January to cut demand and diversify supply. Unbundling the producers from the suppliers, and busting the cartels, is a big challenge for EU solidarity.

The proposal to set up a European Institute of Technology – of great interest to the East of England – goes forward. Europe's bid to compete with GPS, which is run by the US military, is called Galileo. The cost of Galileo caused several member states to have second thoughts about whether to proceed or not, but eventually spare funds were found in the CAP budget (due to high world wheat prices) and Galileo lives!

In the field of the environment, important new legislation affects the use of pesticides; another protects soil. And the directive to include the aviation sector in the greenhouse gas emission trading scheme makes good progress, despite the fierce opposition of BAA and the airlines.

Building the area of freedom, security and justice continues apace. It has been agreed to widen the free travel area – the Schengen agreement – to eight more countries of central Europe plus Malta.

Cyprus and Malta make it into the eurozone. Observers of the euro have noticed that the UK's banking crisis has not affected the eurozone to anything like the same extent. Much work continues to complete the single market in financial services, notably affecting credit institutions, insider dealing and transparency in the securities markets. Intellectual property rights is next on the list, although agreement on an EU patent system is still far off.

True to form, the UK government has blocked decisions on three key pieces of legislation in social policy, namely revision of the working time directive, extending rights to temporary workers, and improving the portability of supplementary pensions.

Gordon Brown's tactics in EU circles remind everyone of Margaret Thatcher. Whatever went on at that tea party?

*On BBC TV's 'Politics Show' from  
Norwich*



# Open letter to the candidates



**At a leadership hustings in Brussels, [from left] Andrew Duff MEP, Chris Huhne MP, Graham Watson MEP and Nick Clegg MP**

**Dear Chris, Dear Nick,**

Congratulations. One of you is to be the first former MEP ever to lead a major political party at Westminster.

Your first-hand knowledge of how Europe works will be an inestimable advantage as the importance of the European dimension to British life continues to grow.

I know that both of you will argue persuasively that British party politics needs to come to terms with the European integration. A clear-headed and confident approach to Britain's membership of the European Union is central to the national interest.

As leader of the Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament, I look forward to working with either of you – speaking up for Britain in Europe and for Europe in Britain.

As leader of Britain's European party, you will have the duty to try to redefine the nation's strategic interest. Not being the slavish followers of Washington means switching decisively towards the European option.

David Cameron is wide open to attack for opposing the new Treaty of Lisbon. By blocking the entry into force of the new Treaty, Cameron's Britain would be an unpopular and grudging member of an unreformed and ineffective EU – of no interest, by the way, to the USA. If the Treaty is not ratified, our EU partners will devise other strategies that will leave a Tory Britain stranded in mid-Atlantic, like one of those toxic, end-of-life ships wandering the seas in search of a brokers' dockyard.

Yet your toughest job will be to redefine UK European policy in relation to Labour. Liberal Democrats need to undertake a frontal assault on the government's absurd 'red lines' which it has sullenly protected throughout the EU's constitutional negotiations. At the recent Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), in which I represented the European Parliament, the UK got for itself so many opt-outs from key areas of integration that it has become in effect a second-class member state. Is this right for Britain?

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have made it practically impossible for the Council of Ministers to agree on a common approach to social security for migrant workers. This is a strange thing for a social democratic government to do when, at long last, there is a vast churning of mobile workers within the single market.

The government has tried consistently to minimise the scope and force of the new arrangements with respect to foreign and security policy: down-grading the 'Foreign Minister', pulling the new diplomatic service away from the Commission, excluding the Court of Justice and the European Parliament. One is left wondering why the UK agrees to a common foreign and security policy in theory while denying it the capacity to develop in practice.

British policy is most reactionary in the field of justice and home affairs, the former 'third pillar' of Maastricht which is now to be assimilated properly within the disciplines and instruments of what we used to call the 'Community method'. Here, the government tried to opt into the legislative process as and when it chose, while reserving its right to opt out at the end. This was clearly

unacceptable to everyone else. The IGC had to draft tortuous protocols which grant the UK the privilege of derogations but which protect the interests of the rest of the Union committed to genuine cooperation in the fields of civil and criminal law and to the development of common asylum and immigration policies inside a more secure external frontier.

The result is that the UK will only be able to exercise its opt-ins and opt-outs according to terms and conditions laid down by the Council and Commission. If Britain chooses to reject the logic of European integration it will find itself automatically excluded from the common effort to enhance internal security, to fight organised crime, and to build a common area of liberty and justice. Liberal Democrats should be arguing that such British exclusion is not in the national interest.

And then we have the UK opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which, as you know, is a modern code of rights and principles designed to protect the citizen from any abuse of the large powers now vested in the European Union. Fortunately, the British Protocol is juridically flawed and will be unable to stand the test of time.

But Labour's argument that the Charter jeopardises Mrs Thatcher's labour laws is nonsense. And Labour's refusal to accept the development of a superior EU rights regime directly contravenes a key general principle of EU law which says that the Union draw its rights and principles from the common constitutional traditions of all member states.

I do not say that all the EU's common policies in the field of rights, justice and home affairs should be adopted en bloc or unthinkingly by the UK. If we were to join the Schengen area, for example, we would probably have to introduce identity cards. But Labour's approach is devious, adopting intergovernmental security measures while opposing accountability to the democratic and judicial authority of the EU. And the UK's deviant behaviour destroys any positive influence it would otherwise have in Brussels.

So the European policy of a party led by Clegg or Huhne will have to be radically different to that of both Labour and the Tories. Otherwise, what are we for?

Oh, and if the party has changed its mind about holding a referendum, it would be best to say so, making a virtue of being able to change our mind and speak the truth. Better by far than Labour's disgraceful efforts to change the truth.

**My very best wishes to you both,**

**Andrew**

**An authoritative 'True Guide to the Treaty of Lisbon' by Andrew Duff is now published on his website, [www.andrewduff.eu](http://www.andrewduff.eu)**

**Also take a look at the revamped website of the Lib Dem Euro MPs, [www.libdemmeps.eu](http://www.libdemmeps.eu)**

**This includes video and audio streaming of the delegation in action in the European Parliament.**

# President Sarkozy comes to Strasbourg



**Nicolas Sarkozy descends on the European Parliament on 13 November. President Hans-Gert Poettering looks on.**

French president Nicolas Sarkozy descended on the European Parliament in Strasbourg recently to give a formal address in his capacity as a new head of state. The occasion did not allow for a proper debate on the floor of the House, but MEPs showed their usual dexterity in fine-tuning their cheers and jeers.

It was an important speech for him and for us, not least because France takes over the presidency of the European Union in July next year. All being well, Mr Sarkozy will preside over the delicate institutional arrangements that have to be made if the Treaty of Lisbon is to come into force on schedule on 1 January 2009.

The French President hopes, like everyone else, that what he persists in describing as *le traité simplifié*, will settle the union's constitutional difficulties for some time to come. Now, he says, there remain important political questions to be debated without taboo, and resolved. 'In a democratic Europe, we should be able to discuss Europe's goals and finalities.'

He proposes the setting up of a committee of wise men to reflect on possible scenarios, and to 'design the features and contours of tomorrow's Europe'. This *comité des sages* will debate the nature of European and national identities - and how to defend them.

According to Mr Sarkozy, Europeans are suffering a deep identity crisis caused by the challenge of globalised markets and alien culture. His animosity towards Islam in general and Turkey in particular is not well disguised. He speaks boldly of European spiritual values, moral order and civilisation, on which Europe's unity is founded, and of the need to protect them fiercely. No woolly liberal he.

Since it was first mooted in the summer, the Sarkozy proposal for a new round of arguments about the future of Europe has been met with growing consternation. Uppermost is the fear that the exercise will interfere in the smooth ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Evidence that the EU has not settled, at least for the next few years, its interminable rows over the balance of power will not help the fight against the eurosceptics. Fatigue is also a factor: Nicolas Sarkozy may be fairly new to this game, but most of his interlocutors in the institutions and several other heads of government have been trading in the European futures markets for many years. Where indeed shall new wisdom be found?

José Manuel Barroso, the European Commission president, has made it clear that the European Commission regards the Sarkozy proposal coolly. He wants no new institutional debate and no attempt to draw on maps the final geographical frontiers of the EU. There is an agreed enlargement process in train, now involving Croatia and Turkey, with up to six other Balkan countries on the waiting list.

A budgetary review is due to begin in earnest next year. And decisions on these matters, Mr Barroso told MEPs, would be up to the EU institutions and not to an ad hoc group of men and women, however wise. In any event, the Sarkozy committee should report not at the end of the French presidency in December 2008 but to the new Commission to be elected in November 2009.

Mr Barroso has support for his view not only in the parliament but also in the European Council, and not least from Gordon Brown. The British prime minister's recent speech to Mansion House makes an interesting contrast to that of the French President. Gone are the customary references of Tony Blair, his predecessor, to building 'political Europe'. In its place, the new prime minister wants a 'Global Europe – a Europe that is outward looking, open, internationalist, able to effectively respond both through internal reform and external action to the economic, security and environmental imperatives of globalisation'. Clearly, if the leadership of Europe were just left up to MM. Brown and Sarkozy, we would immediately lose our way.

The European Council on December 14 will have to agree on the mandate, composition and timetable for the committee of wise men and women. While nobody should seek to deny Mr Sarkozy the right to continue and deepen the European dimension of French politics, he should not be allowed to railroad the rest of the Union into following a narrow French agenda.

What happens strategically beyond the Treaty of Lisbon is still an open question. A decent exercise in scenario building for Europe in 2030 by a small group of clever people would be a valuable aid to strategic thinking. Respectable scenarios are possible with Turkey and the UK in, out, or half-way in or out of the European Union. Doubtless dear old France will always be in, still heavily engaged in its particular *crise identitaire*.

**President Poettering launches  
a Turkish reception in the  
European Parliament, hosted  
by ALDE president, Graham  
Watson**



**On a recent visit to Turkey Andrew inspects the troops on guard outside the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara.**

**Below: Eastern Region's annual conference at Mildenhall on 13 October was Sir Menzies Campbell's last event as party leader. On the left, Ming chats with Norman Lamb MP and Andrew Duff. The new leader will be announced on 18 December.**



**Congratulations to Tim Huggan who was elected to Forest Heath District Council for Manor Ward in a by-election on 22 November. The Tories had always held the seat.**

## Contacting

Orwell House  
Cowley Road  
Cambridge CB4 0PP  
tel 01223 566700  
fax 01223 566698  
mep@andrewduffmep.org

**Andrew Duff MEP**



European Parliament  
rue Wiertz  
B-1047 Brussels  
tel 00322 284 7998  
fax 00322 284 9998  
andrew.duff@europarl.europa.eu  
www.andrewduff.eu



**eastern Agenda**  
ea@andrewduffmep.org

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

eA is supported by ALDE and is published by Tim Huggan, Orwell House, Cowley Road, Cambridge and printed by Suitable Design, Meridien, Woodwalton, Cambs PE28 5YN.