



Lib Dem EuroFILE



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HAITI: chaos shows Europe must co-ordinate its disaster relief - ALDE

The unfolding chaos amid the tragedy in Haiti shows the need for European nations to improve co-ordination of disaster relief, say leading Liberal and Democrat Euro MPs.

The ALDE group of MEPs say the terrible scenes in Haiti show the need for the EU to set up an international system to co-ordinate the civilian and military response to the most serious natural disasters across the world within 24 hours.

US military struggling

MEPs spoke out at the European Parliament in Strasbourg as fears grew that many more lives may be lost on the stricken island due to problems co-ordinating the various relief efforts, with even the American military struggling.

Many lives have been saved by brave teams of firefighters from Britain and many EU nations digging into collapsed buildings, but the scenes of near chaos in districts lacking food or medical help quite near the airport a week after the earthquake are deeply worrying.

London Lib Dem MEP Sarah Ludford said: "The European Union's response to the Haiti relief effort has been very generous in humanitarian aid but woefully uncoordinated in disaster relief. Proposals over many years for planning and management of crises have fallen on stony ground, and now we see the result."

"How many more crises will it take before EU leaders give Europe the capacity to react to crises fast and effectively? This should be done in tight cooperation with the US especially, so in future people do not die while Brussels and 27 states trip over each other."

Sarah Ludford and other ALDE MEPs are calling for a Europe-wide team (EUR-FAST), which would allow the EU to consolidate civilian and military resources to dispatch to a disaster zone within 24 hours.

The system would be run by a permanent coordination centre which could be activated within two hours of a humanitarian

catastrophe, with access to permanent stocks of humanitarian aid and a dedicated transport capability from Member States.

Guy Verhofstadt, ALDE group Leader (left) said: "Organised individual responses in an emergency will never match a planned and coordinated European response."



"Our citizens will not understand why we do not put in place a mechanism that would allow us to intervene in an efficient and coordinated way."

Last year West Midlands LibDem MEP Liz Lynne called for an EU rapid reaction force to improve the immediate response to earthquakes, floods or fires in the wake of the 2007 floods in Britain and the extensive floods and fires in southern Europe.

Liz added: "Sharing best practice and expensive special equipment is a really good reason to be in the EU, we should do far more to take advantage of it. It is just common sense."

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Copenhagen: Abject failure or grounds for optimism?

After so many high hopes, the Copenhagen summit ended with a limited agreement between a small number of major polluters but no binding treaty or protocol. Was it an abject failure? LDEG Chair PHIL BENNION reports.

The early consensus on the Climate talks in Copenhagen was that the whole event was a total failure - with the Chinese getting most of the blame. From a narrow European perspective it may be possible to sustain that argument. Having jointly finalised the ELDR (European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party) position prior to Copenhagen with my Swedish colleagues, I remain convinced that the EU's initial ambitious position was right and did help move things forward. The EU's mistake was to expect the rest of the world to come into line without resistance.

However, a failure it certainly was, even if we can find some explanations. As Catherine Bearder MEP puts it, "For months we all hoped that Copenhagen would be the moment when the world got together and said 'we will tackle climate change.' But our leaders have let us all down."

A cop out

George Lyon MEP was equally scathing, "COP15 turned into a cop out. No matter how much they spin it, world leaders cannot, in good conscience, claim that this is a 'meaningful agreement', although you could concede it is a small step in the right direction given the risk for a complete collapse of talks."

The Chinese were always going to resist signing a commitment, as their government has only a short history of working to international agreements. One only has to think of its regular difficulties in the WTO and ongoing friction with the US on the artificially low Chinese exchange rate. The EU offer subsequently

dropped to one that would actually require a slowdown in our emission reductions, while the US offer was always derisory.

The failure at Copenhagen was almost complete. As Chris Davies MEP pointed out: "It is 17 years since reducing the problem of global warming was recognised as an imperative in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to this Convention have been held annually since 1995 to consider the evidence, develop mechanisms to curb emissions and agree targets.

"Copenhagen was foreseen as The Big One, when all the bits of the jigsaw would be brought together into a whole. The EU's goals for COP15 were repeatedly spelt out beforehand. They were a binding agreement in principle to adopt measures to prevent a 2 degree rise in temperature, to ensure the support of all major world emitters of greenhouse gases, and to agree a mechanism for review and updating of the targets and implementation.

"What in fact emerged was a piece of paper binding on no-one, which includes no specific targets and provides no roadmap to the future."

There are however a few reasons for optimism. The Chinese have already begun a renewable energy programme and their objective of reducing the carbon intensity of their economy by 45% by 2020 may well stick. Indeed, the carbon intensity mechanism offers a solution to addressing the growth of emissions in the developing world.

The reasoning behind China's blocking of the requirement for the developed world to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 must be addressed if progress is to be made at a future COP. It seems they fear they will be re-classified as "developed" in the future and become subject to this requirement retrospectively.

Chris Davies believes that there is now a serious risk of the whole process stalling completely. We are likely to see growing opposition in the EU to raising the emissions reduction target from 20% to 30% by 2020. The argument that this will merely result in "exporting CO2 and importing unemployment" will undoubtedly gain traction. Much nows depend on the performance of Connie Hedegaard as the new Climate Change Commissioner.

Fight on for binding limits

The Leader of the Lib Dems in the European Parliament Fiona Hall (also at Copenhagen) insists that we must continue the fight: "The Copenhagen Accord was stitched up by China and the US and is very weak. We have to keep up the fight to get legal commitments from all countries. The longer we put off taking action, the more difficult and expensive it will be to stop the earth from warming".

Fiona pointed out that many measures to combat climate change, such as legislating for low carbon buildings (See Fiona's article in Eurofile 1) will yield big economic benefits.



● Phil Bennion

Just as disappointed with the outcome was former ALDE group leader **Graham Watson MEP**, who was also in Copenhagen. But Graham does hold out more hope for future progress than some.

He said: "We are still just about in the game. I am pleased the Conference produced a basis upon which we can build. Europe led the way with a commitment to cut 20% of carbon emissions by 2020 and a conditional offer of 30%. If this was

not enough to drag the world to a fair, binding and scientifically based agreement, then we must simply renew our efforts. Lib Dems will be leading this campaign in Europe, Westminster and at local level."

In my view, the US offer may not have amounted to much, but at least they and the Chinese are involved and admit that we need to limit the temperature rise to 2 degrees. Kyoto had the fatal weakness of not including the

world's two biggest polluters. We must remember that there will be some attempt to flesh things out in Bonn before the next COP meetings in Mexico in November when we can at least be hopeful of progress. But this hope will not be fulfilled without keeping up strong pressure on world leaders to thrash out an effective and binding agreement. Shrugging our collective shoulders and giving up is not an option.

Phil Bennion

Disputes in Chinese delegation may have sunk Copenhagen deal

Intriguing insights from the blog of Bill Newton Dunne MEP:

By the last Wednesday of the summit, the Danish presidency had drafted a short document: the heads of government arrived and 30 of them negotiated in a private room for eight hours (the first such gathering in human history).

They included the EU, China, Obama for USA, and represented 80% of the world's population and 80% of the planet's emissions (the EU emits 14%, the USA and China emit 20% each).

The final phase was the plenary session of all 193 countries - but no decision was reached because the session was hijacked by five countries - Tuvalu, Maldives, Cuba, Venezuela, and Sudan (whose representative threw insults) complaining they had been excluded.

The outcome was very disappointing for Europe, because there were no binding commitments at all. "One step forward but not nearly enough," said Europe's negotiator. A maximum rise of 2 degrees centigrade was accepted

as the planet's goal, but China would accept no other figures.

The one hopeful outcome is "the Copenhagen Accord" This document of 12-14 paragraphs was the result of the negotiations by the 30 heads of government in private. The final plenary "took note" of it.

China's tactics appear to have been interesting. It is said that Obama had to make four separate requests to see the Chinese leader before a meeting was permitted.

Leadership of the world by China - USA then emerged. The others (including the EU) felt left out. The individual European states (and the Westminster parliament) had no individual role at all.

Chinese disputes

It was also reported that there were disputes among the Chinese up to the end, about which of their team should take part in the final decisions and statements. Finally, one who would keep quiet and say nothing was chosen. When he returned home afterwards, he was removed from the job.

The implication is that China was unhappy with giving the impression that it was weak on action to fight climate change.



● **Bill Newton Dunne MEP**

What happens next?

- by end of January (this month) every country-block must send in to the United Nations "what it is prepared to do."
- a ministerial conference will be held in June in Bonn.
- the next UN world conference will be in Mexico City in December 2010

In the parliament on 26 or 27 January, Europe's negotiator will report to the European Parliament's Environment committee. It is likely to be web-streamed live to the world. Make sure you watch it.

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Lib Dems demand urgent action on climate change

Lib Dem Euro MP for the South East, Catherine Bearder is calling for tough action to protect our environment.

At a recent meeting in Angola, Catherine and other EU delegates agreed that cuts on carbon emissions and aid for developing countries were vital in the fight against climate change.

Catherine also joined Lib Dem Leader Nick Clegg and many other party members as 50,000 protestors marched through London to send a message to the Government ahead of crunch talks in Copenhagen.

Catherine commented, "We all hoped that Copenhagen would be the moment when the world got together and said we will tackle climate change. Sadly, our Governments let us down."

"The Lib Dems have once again shown that we are the only party voters can count on if they care about the environment and want something done now to stop climate change."



Lib Dem MEP Catherine Bearder and MP Simon Hughes joined Nick Clegg and hundreds of other LibDems at the Wave demo and march against climate change in London.

The New Commission - See next Eurofile for report

A number of Lib Dem Euro MPs are playing a major role in competency hearings for the new European Commission proposed by President Barroso.

As we go to press one nominee from Bulgaria has already withdrawn after a disastrous performance under questioning by MEPs.

South East MEP Sharon Bowles (right) who chairs the Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, is playing a key role. She is in charge of hearings for the three Commissioners in charge of handling the financial crisis and economic recovery, including the controversial Michel Barnier.

Eurofile will report on the new Commission next month.



All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Bowles calls for moratorium on bankers' bonuses

Lib Dem Euro MP Sharon Bowles has called for a moratorium on bankers' bonuses after Alistair Darling's Pre-Budget Report.

The Chancellor offered banks a choice - banks can either use their profits to build up their capital base or give out large individual bonuses. He went on to say that bonuses over £25,000 will be subject to a one-off 50% tax, to be paid by the bank and not the individual.

Sharon Bowles, who is Chair of the European Parliament's influential Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, said: "I am not convinced that the numbers add up and I do not like the muddying of the water between windfall tax and bonus tax."

"If banks really cared about the real economy and the very real financial difficulties many people are facing, they would not be paying bonuses with profit that has been effectively subsidised by the taxpayer. Instead, those profits should be used to boost capital and to aid lending."

"Right now, many banks are telling me that new, higher capital requirements will damage the economy. It is ridiculous that they

define bonus pools without taking into account the real economic situation and banking capital.

"Actions speak louder than words - the banks should declare a moratorium on bonuses until there is resolution of new capital requirements."

Warning

Sharon Bowles warned the British Bankers Association at their annual reception in Brussels that huge bonuses made arguing the case for 'prudence over punishment' unbelievably difficult.

She said: "Across the EU, countries have pledged several times their GDP to support banks in order that their economies survive. In the UK, the taxpayer has stumped up around £200bn to help bail out the banks. Those of us who have battled to distinguish, in law, between prudence and punishment, have had a hard time too."

"The size of deficits in many countries, including the UK, means that recovery plans will go on for many years - spending will have to

be cut. Consequently, long after banks are breathing a sigh of relief and totting up their bonus pools, the public will bear the brunt of these cuts."

"The issue is not going to go away - enormous bonuses make arguing the case for prudence rather than punishment unbelievably difficult."



The Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee is currently debating key legislative proposals that seek to protect EU economies in the wake of the credit crunch and subsequent banking crisis. Sharon Bowles met European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet recently (above) to discuss key items on the monetary policy agenda.

LibDem victory in campaign on Palestine food labels

LibDem Euro MP Graham Watson has welcomed the decision to clearly distinguish between goods produced by Palestinians in the occupied territories and produce from Israeli settlements.

EU law states that the geographic origin of food products should be clearly stated on packaging, but leaves member states to police the system.

Until recently, a distinction was only made between "Israel" and the "West Bank", failing to take into account food produced in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers live in these occupied territories, which are deemed illegal under international law.

The South West region MEP lobbied both the EU

Commission and the UK Government for a year and a half on the issue, and in early December guidance was issued that food produced in occupied territories should be clearly labeled.

Graham believes it is an important victory for consumer choice and transparency;

"I welcome the Government's decision to, albeit belatedly, bring in these rules.

"This is not about discriminating against Israelis, but allowing consumers to make an informed choice about the produce they buy.

"It was an odd situation whereby UK rules tacitly reinforced a widely recognised international injustice. I am pleased this has been rectified"

Tory 'dinosaurs' flex muscles to deny Climate Change

A growing campaign by leading Conservatives to deny climate change and oppose moves to cut carbon footprints has angered LibDem MEPs.

Tory MEP Giles Chichester's recent comments backing climate change denial came as no surprise to South West MEP Graham Watson.

He said: "Giles Chichester's comments are in line with more and more leading Tories. They are further proof that the Conservatives have not changed, despite David Cameron's best efforts to give the 'Nasty Party' a makeover.

"I am sure it will worry the 81% of people who want to see the EU take the lead on climate change that I am the only South West MEP to campaign for action on it."

Tories put environment last

Mr Watson spoke out as a survey of 250 Conservative candidates, carried out by 'Conservative Home,' found that cutting the carbon footprint came 19th out of 19 in a list

of priorities for action if they were elected as MPs.

Graham Watson added: "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a UN body of scientists that evaluates hundreds of official and varied reports from around the world. They have concluded that there is a 90% chance that humans are causing climate change."

Time for action

"There is a 10% chance that 'global warming partisans,' like me, are wrong. But as one of my Lib Dem colleagues recently asked, what would you do if the pilot of a plane you were about to board announced that it had a fault, and there was a 90% chance it would crash?"

"Giles Chichester and other Tories would apparently still get on this plane and think about it as they took off. He wants to stall by demanding more discussion and debate, but we have had 40 years of this.

"Now is the time for action. If we do not act now, catastrophic climate change will become unavoidable.

"There could be a billion climate refugees by 2050, vicious wars over resources and weather extremes causing floods and misery in places like Exmouth. I am disappointed that Tories cannot see this.

"I hope Giles is as concerned as I am that, when it comes to climate change, his views are remarkably similar to Nick Griffin, who flew the flag for 'flat-earthers' at the Copenhagen talks."



● **Nothing going on here say Tories.**

Fight red tape to beat recession, say LibDems

Cutting unnecessary red tape on business, especially small firms, is vital for Britain and other EU countries to beat the recession, says LibDem MEP Liz Lynne.

The West Midlands MEP, now First Vice President of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, has made

cutting pointless red tape on business, especially small business, a key objective in this Parliament.

Liz recently hosted a reception in Brussels for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

With so much labour market law now originating from the EU, Liz said it was vital for MEPs and business representatives to work together.

Liz said: "I have long worked closely with the FSB and other organisations to try and protect small business from unnecessary or unworkable EU regulations.

RED TAPE BURDEN

"Red tape is always a burden but in a recession it can be the real difference between staying afloat or bankruptcy for small firms.

"I have demanded comprehensive independent impact assessments on all proposed laws and for these to take into account the views of small business. I have also called for sunset clauses in all new legislation.

"I will continue to push my committee to look at past legislation to see how it works in practice. If a law is not working, then it must be repealed or changed."

Liz also pledged to step up pressure on President Barroso to carry out the promised plan to cut the administrative burden on business by 25% by 2012.

She added: "We have had some success with the adoption of the Small Business Act at European level, something I have long campaigned for, but we must now implement this Act effectively, and ensure the promised 25% cut in administrative burdens is reached."



FSB chairman John Wright at the event with Liz Lynne MEP

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Commission accused of double standards on meat imports

Lib Dem MEP George Lyon, UK farming spokesman, has accused the European Commission of double standards after it ruled out making EU traceability rules compulsory for meat imports from third countries.

Mr Lyon has previously called on the Commission to compel non-EU states to enforce the same level of traceability as is required across the EU now that EID (electronic tagging of livestock) has come into effect.

Recent checks in Brazil found that checks on meat for export fell woefully short of those imposed on UK farmers, at huge cost.

However, in answer to a Parliamentary question, the EU Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou ruled out applying equal standards.

George Lyon MEP said: "In this answer, the Commission is guilty of double standards. The Commission claims electronic tags are necessary to protect farmers and consumers from the threat of diseases like foot and mouth - but then does not expect the same standards for third countries that export to the EU.

"This is not a credible argument to me, to farmers or the wider industry.

"The UK Government and devolved authorities must now put UK farmers on a level playing field with other farmers across Europe, whose Governments have committed to funding the introduction of EID.

"The SNP led Scottish Parliament in particular are refusing to fund Scottish farmers, who should not have to operate at a financial disadvantage to competitors."

Ministers must investigate reports of serious technical problems with electronic tagging equipment to record movements of sheep, says LibDem MEP Liz Lynne.

Electronic tagging was introduced in January, but there are already many reports that both the fixed and hand held tagging readers are very unreliable.

Some estimates put the cost of tagging each sheep at £1.50. Livestock markets also report that the fixed tag readers, which cost up to £20,000 each, often break down. Some markets have warned of serious difficulties at the spring lamb sales if the problems are not fixed.

Liz said: "I urge ministers to see what can be done. I do recognise that tags will potentially allow sheep breeders to keep more detailed records, but it is absolutely vital that the equipment works and is not prohibitively expensive. It would not be fair if large producers reap the benefits while small farmers go under. Many hill farmers in particular are struggling.

"The EU Commission must also monitor the way the tagging system is working and if necessary make changes."

Ludford deplures closure of Kurdish party in Turkey

The decision of the Turkish Constitutional Court to close the main party representing the Kurdish minority, and to ban its leading MPs has been condemned by Lib-Dem Euro MPs as a backward step for democracy.

In a debate in the European Parliament with EU High Representative for foreign affairs Catherine Ashton, in the wake of last month's ban on the Democracy and Society party (DTP), **Lib Dem European justice & human rights spokeswoman and London MEP Sarah Ludford** said:

"The need for urgent and substantial reform of the constitution to entrench human rights and democracy at the core of the Turkish state and society has been demonstrated yet again by the DTP ban.

"Although EU accession can act as leverage to ensure full democracy, the country deserves this for itself."

"Radical change in the law governing political parties to make court bans more difficult must be part of such reform. "A country where political parties can be outlawed at the drop of a hat is not a country that fosters democratic openness and the rule of law."

"It is greatly disappointing that Prime Minister Erdogan and the AKP party have not criticised the ban, considering that their own party narrowly escaped such a fate in 2008."

The ALDE Group called for a plenary debate because the move threatens Turkey's democratic credentials and chances of being allowed to join the European Union.

The ban followed allegations of ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, branded a terrorist group. But Sarah Ludford opposed the move after meeting Akif Wan, UK representative of the Kurdish National Congress. She said banning the DTP would only help extremists arguing for a return to war in the South East of the country.:

She added: "Reports claim that the prison conditions of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan have worsened and that he is deprived of space and light. If true, this could bring a reaction from the Council of Europe Committee on Torture, which would harm Turkey's reputation. There is no justification for inhumane detention conditions."



Bearder slams Christmas Eurostar chaos

South East MEP Catherine Bearder has challenged Eurostar bosses over the disastrous handling of their Christmas rail service.

Many passengers were angry after being trapped in the channel tunnel for up to 16 hours with no light or power after a five trains broke down due to powder snow.

"The dreadful conditions these passengers were forced to suffer are totally unacceptable," said Catherine. "When I met with Eurostar I tackled them on their lack of planning and told them this must not happen again."

A police operation to block sections of the M20 when the Eurostar is closed also made the travel problems worse for many drivers in the South East. Catherine Bearder added, "This police operation is meant for emergencies, but seems to be causing gridlock all too often."

"I was shocked at the apparent lack of planning from Eurostar. As a former councillor I am well aware of the emergency planning that is expected from organisations like Eurostar, and they failed to do it."



Lib Dem MEP Catherine Bearder has challenged Eurostar over the disastrous handling of their Christmas service which left many passengers trapped for hours in the Channel

Eurostar have commissioned a comprehensive independent inquiry into what went wrong headed by respected former GNER boss Chris Garnett. The results are expected in February.

Catherine added: "Given that Eurostar have received a huge amount of taxpayers' money, I have demanded that Eurostar present the findings to the European Parliament."

Diana Wallis monitors Kosovo elections

LibDem MEP Diana Wallis has recently returned from witnessing the conduct of Kosovo's municipal elections and hailed the process and results as an important step in building an inclusive and multi-ethnic society.

Diana was part of a European Parliament delegation that went to see the first local elections organised by the Kosovo authorities.

Diana commented: "These elections were superbly organised by the Kosovo authorities, and carried out in a largely peaceful and good-natured manner."

"I was particularly heartened to see that Kosovo Serbs turned out to vote in higher numbers than expected. It's crucial for Kosovo's future that all communities contribute to building a stable and secure society - and this election represents a further step towards that goal."

"The tight result in Gračanica's mayoral race is a particularly exciting outcome in which an ALDE associate party - the Serb Independent Liberal Party (Samostalna Liberalna Stranka, SLS) - has done particularly well."

Liberal Parties are active in both Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo, providing a route for cooperation and understanding between them.

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Dash for Gas could put the lights out, warns Chris Davies

Lib Dem Euro-MP Chris Davies wants European action to stop the UK running out of gas in future cold snaps.

During the New Year cold snap, the National Grid started reducing gas supplies to industry as supplies of gas ran low.

Indeed, Eurofile editor Phil Bennion received several reports of businesses having gas supplies rationed and having to shut down production and send workers home.

Business customers were sacrificed in a desperate attempt to maintain supplies to homes and power stations.

Britain's gas reserves beneath the North Sea are now producing reduced volumes, and greater reliance is being placed on supplies from Norway and Eastern Europe.

Chris Davies says that the Government's decision to approve plans for many new gas power

stations make Britain more vulnerable. He claims that in future years the country may be left dependent on the goodwill of Russia for vital energy supplies. And he wants the European Union to step up its efforts to improve energy security.

All eggs in one basket

Across Europe, 50% of planned new power stations will run on gas, 24% on coal and only 8% will use renewable energy sources.

Chris Davies said: "We are putting all our eggs in one basket by building too many gas power stations. It's a cheap option now, but we shall pay a high price for it in the future.

"If there is ever a cut back on supplies the UK is at the end of a long pipeline from Russia. We must have strong European rules to ensure fair play between EU countries."

The MEP is the leading supporter in the European Parliament of carbon capture and storage technology that will allow the use of coal fired power stations without releasing CO2 into the atmosphere.



● Chris Davies MEP

LibDem MEPs lead fight to expose BNP accounts scandal

BNP Leader Nick Griffin is under attack after his own auditors refused to sign off the BNP's financial records.

All political parties with a turnover higher than £250,000 are required by law to submit accounts to the Electoral Commission each year.

The BNP accounts, which should have been submitted in July this year were finally handed over last month. In 2006 the BNP were fined £1000 by the Electoral Commission for the same offence.

In the financial report, the BNP's auditors said the accounts do not give a 'true and fair view' of his party's affairs and also stated that 'it cannot be said that the accounts comply with the requirements of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000'. This is the law that governs political parties in the UK.

Griffin, now an MEP, is also listed in the accounts under the heading "Staffing and Management" along with Martin and Tina Wingfield who are now on his personal staff, paid

for by the European Parliament.

North West Liberal Democrat Chris Davies MEP slammed Griffin in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Chris Davies said: "Before Nick Griffin tries to smear the reputation of others let him explain why the party he leads has failed, twice, to submit its accounts on time to Britain's Electoral Commission.

"Many suspect that money from his party's members has been used for personal gain. If he denies it then perhaps Mr Griffin could produce a set of accounts that his auditors will approve."

Davies was responding to allegations by Griffin that he was a 'lobbyist' for wind technology as he owns some shares in a wind farm company.

Chris Davies said, "I'm proud to be an advocate of low carbon technologies to fight climate change. I have never requested nor been paid a penny for my work, I do it because I believe in it."

Citizens betrayed by move to let America see bank details



Senior LibDem Euro MP Graham Watson has condemned European governments for rushing through an agreement to share customers bank account data with the US authorities.

The deal was done the night before the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, denying the European Parliament a chance to scrutinise or reject it.

After the September 11 attacks, the US Government has been able to force SWIFT, a private company, to release the banking data of certain individuals. This only became public in 2006, and was instantly criticised by Liberal Euro MPs.

In order to continue the transfer of European data, a new agreement was needed by the end of 2009.

Traditionally, this has been an area for member states to decide, but the Treaty of Lisbon gives the European Parliament a greater say in international agreements. Facing stiff opposition from Liberals in the European Parliament, it is no surprise, but also no less infuriating, that member states decided to deny MEPs a vote, said Graham Watson.

He added; "It is disgraceful for national governments to act in this way. Luckily this was only an interim agreement, and later this year MEPs will be able to exercise the

new democratic powers that the Treaty of Lisbon has brought.

"The Tories are once again to blame for this democratic debacle. It infuriates me that by lobbying European governments to delay the Treaty of Lisbon, Cameron and the Conservatives prevented democratic scrutiny of this deal.

"In October 2010, Liberal Democrat MEPs will oppose any new agreement that disproportionately and unjustifiably erodes the privacy rights of individuals.

"You can rely on the Tories to play childish party politics. But once again it is left to the Lib Dems to take action to defend our rights."

The European Liberal Family: United and Strong

Annemie Neyts, ELDR Party President, welcoming the liberal leaders at the bi-annual Leaders and Ministers Meeting in Brussels in December, expressed her satisfaction with the nomination of eight liberal commissioners.

She said: "Now Liberals have to keep being vigilant and continue the good cooperation between the ELDR Party, our prime ministers, commissioners and parliamentary group. Our parties have to remain strong and become strong."

"We obtained crucial portfolios in the European Commission that are all of interest for the EU's development", **Matti Vanhanen**, Finnish Prime Minister, commented "The liberal family was the only one that had a common strategy among the liberals in the European Council, ELDR Party and parliamentary group."

Referring to the new institutional framework, **Guy Verhofstadt**, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Group Leader commented: "The relationship between the parliamentary group and the eight liberal commissioners is even more crucial now that the co-decision procedure has been extended to many other areas (like fisheries, agriculture and the budget).

Siim Kallas, Commission Vice President and Commissioner for Administrative Affairs, Audit and

Anti-Fraud also emphasised the way to promote the liberal agenda: "Our commitment now is to find a new model of cooperation between the Commission and Parliament. There are many areas where promising steps can be taken, such as in foreign affairs and the climate agenda."

On climate change,

Cecilia Malmström, Swedish Minister of European Affairs and Commissioner designate, said: "The most important challenge is to get a politically binding



The Liberal commissioners and portfolios:

Siim Kallas (Vice President): Transport;
Neelie Kroes (Vice President): Digital agenda;
Máire Geoghegan Quinn: Research, science & innovation;
Karel De Gucht: Trade;
Cecilia Malmström: Home affairs;
Janez Potocnik: Environment;
Olli Rehn: Economic/monetary affairs;
Androulla Vassiliou: Education & culture, multilingualism and youth.

All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe

Liz Lynne calls for breast cancer screening for all women in EU

Liberal Democrat Euro MP Liz Lynne has launched a cross party campaign in the European Parliament calling for breast cancer screening for every woman in the EU between the ages of 50 and 70.

Supported by three other MEPs from different parties, Liz Lynne has put down a Written Declaration calling for the plan as part of a sustained Europe-wide campaign to beat the disease, which kills nearly 90,000 women in Europe every year.

Liz Lynne MEP was co-chair of MEPs Against Cancer in the last parliament and led the campaign to ensure it was set up again. Liz has worked closely with the European Breast Cancer Coalition of cancer charities in drawing up the proposals. The Declaration calls for every EU member state to introduce nationwide breast screening, and for the Commission to draw up a progress report every two years.

Liz Lynne said: "Breast cancer is still the leading cause of death of women between 35 and 59, and across European Union nations 331,392 women were diagnosed in the most recent yearly figures.

"We need to ensure that every member state including Britain is taking the most effective steps to fight this terrible disease and we hope as many MEPs as possible will sign this Declaration - we need 369 signatures to force a debate."

The Declaration also calls on EU Member States including Britain to provide multidisciplinary specialist breast care units following EU guidelines by 2016. To bring this about, the MEPs want the Commission to develop and fund a certification scheme to accredit specialist units to agreed standards by 2011.

Best practice needed

Liz Lynne added: "At present there is very large differences in cancer care around Europe and best practice is not being applied everywhere. The best is very good indeed, but if we are to beat this disease, every woman in the EU deserves to have a health care system following best practice. The Commission can play a key role in enabling this to happen."

"Breast screening should be carried out at the most effective time, so we also want the EU

Commission to ensure current guidelines are being implemented as well as supporting more research into the effectiveness of screening women under 50 years old or over 69.

"They should also present up-to-date, reliable statistics on breast cancer and support the development of national cancer registers in every EU country."

Liz is a strong supporter of the European Breast Cancer Coalition, an alliance of health care charities also known as Europa Donna. She backed their recent campaign to encourage women to increase their activity levels, after scientists proved that just 30 to 60 minutes of exercise a day could stop



● LibDem MEPs want breast cancer screening

Lisbon treaty is boost for European Citizens Initiatives

One result of the Lisbon Treaty is that the European Citizens' Initiative comes a step closer.

The European Citizens' Initiative enables the public to call on the European Commission to bring forwards new legislation and is something that LibDem Euro MP **Diana Wallis** has been pushing for several years. She said: "Contrary to popular myth, the Lisbon Treaty actually extends democracy to the peoples of the EU. As part of



that development, the citizens' initiative will provide a means for people to express themselves and to have direct influence on EU policy making. The Citizens' Initiative enables one

million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States directly request that the Commission brings forward an initiative of interest to them in an area of EU competence.

"However, there remain a number of decisions which need to be made about how to make it fully functional and as a result the Commission has launched a public consultation."

Link to the European Commission's page on a public consultation on the European Citizens' Initiative:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/citizens_initiative/index_en.htm

Pic: Diana Wallis MEP accepting signatures in August 2008 from across the EU collected in support of a European Citizens' Initiative.

Also shown are Vice President Gerard Onesta MEP (2nd left) and the former Vice-President Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann MEP accepting the ECI-signatures on behalf of the President of the European Parliament from activist Carsten Page.



Lib Dem EuroFILE



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