



Diana Wallis MEP

Liberal Democrat *Yorkshire and the Humber*

Dear Friend

I am writing to you to update you on my work as your Member of the European Parliament.

Much has been written about the local elections and their aftermath, but I thought it worth mentioning what happened in Yorkshire & the Humber. In this region we ended up with more seats and more councils. If the results were repeated at next year's European Parliament elections we would double the number of Liberal Democrat seats and at the next General Elections we would pick up several Westminster seats in this region. Well done to everybody involved.

You will have seen in the press several stories about MEPs' expenses. I am disappointed, frankly, with the actions of some of my colleagues. Liberal Democrats have long recognised the need for people to know how their money is being spent and so we want to see much greater transparency when it comes to the expenses of MEPs. One of my responsibilities as Vice President of the European Parliament is transparency, but I am being frustrated by the actions of the other two parties in the European Parliament, who are blocking real transparency.

This incident is one of many where the Conservative and Labour parties, in some sort of old pals act, are blocking reform and which makes it clear to me the importance of having as many Liberal Democrats as possible in the European Parliament after next year's elections. It is not only about transparency but also environmental issues, consumer rights, human rights and competition issues, where Liberal Democrats are trying to lead the way.

Best regards

Diana



Newsletter

An end to dodgy practices

New laws that protect consumers from rogue traders, aggressive salesmen and dodgy marketing practices have now come into force in the UK.

The Unfair Commercial Practices Directive has banned 31 activities, including prize draw scams and aggressive doorstop selling, as part of a new package of EU consumer protection measures.

Diana: "People in the region should be able to shop more confidently throughout the EU without getting ripped off."

"I was particularly pleased, back in February 2005 when this Directive went through the European Parliament, to be successful in getting an amendment agreed to deal with telephone and related 'prize' scams."

"These scams are a real headache for many people across the region. Not only are the calls an unwanted nuisance, they can also end up costing a lot of money for vulnerable and unsuspecting people."

"The law will apply not only in the UK, but throughout the EU, so scammers will not be able to hide away in other European countries. This is good news for British consumers."

Diana's support for an EU wide missing child alert system

Diana is supporting the call for the introduction of an EU wide missing child alert system.

In a Written Declaration co-sponsored with four other MEPs and launched in the European Parliament in Brussels in April, Diana is calling for a system which will immediately supply to relevant news media, border authorities, customs and law enforcement agencies, the details of:

- The missing child, with a photograph if available
- Information relevant to the disappearance and/or the suspected abductor(s)
- A telephone number to call with information (116 000 where operational)

"Given the nature of our borderless EU I think this is an idea worth supporting and a good example of where Europe-wide action can really add something", Diana said.



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Diana meets Prince Charles on his visit to European Parliament

In her capacity as a Vice President of the European Parliament Diana met Prince Charles on his visit to the European Parliament in February.

Diana said: "Coming on the back of the European Commission's recent published proposals on how to reach the target of cutting 20% of greenhouse gases by 2020, Prince Charles's speech in the European Parliament on climate change was very timely."



Defining EU policy in the High North

One of Diana's key responsibilities as a Vice President of the European Parliament is for the EU's Northern Dimension which includes matters relating to the Arctic.

Over the past eighteen months Diana has spoken right across northern Europe arguing that the EU needs to take a greater interest in the Arctic and start to develop its own cross-cutting policy.

"The Arctic has been brought into sharp focus as something of a 'nexus' of gathering issues: pollution, climate change leading to the opening of hitherto closed seaways, security of energy supply, sustainability, rural development and migrating fish stocks."

With this background in mind the Diana recently hosted a seminar on Arctic Governance in the European Parliament which brought together academics, scientists, elected representatives and others to discuss whether there needs to be a stronger regime in the Arctic, along the lines of a treaty or charter as exists in Antarctica.



The documents from that meeting can be seen at www.alde.eu

A poster for an ALDE seminar titled "ARCTIC GOVERNANCE". The poster features a blue background with a white ice formation on the left. Several polar bears are standing on the ice. One polar bear is holding a red sign that says "VOTE". The text on the poster includes: "ALDE SEMINAR", "ORGANISED BY EP VICE-PRESIDENT DIANA WALLIS", "IN COOPERATION WITH ALDE MEPS BILYANA RAEVA AND ANNELI JÄÄTTEENMÄKI", "ARCTIC GOVERNANCE", "IN A GLOBALISING WORLD: IS IT TIME FOR AN ARCTIC CHARTER?", "Keynote speaker: Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs", "Wednesday, 7 May 2008", "From 16.30 to 19.00", "Room ASP 3G3", "European Parliament, Brussels", and "Please register at nathalie.maillard@europarl.europa.eu before Friday 25 April 2008". The ALDE logo is at the top left of the poster.

Palestine visit

In March Diana took up an invitation to speak to law students at Birzeit University on the Palestinian West Bank. Whilst there Diana took the opportunity to meet various people whose lives are disrupted by the ongoing Israeli occupation.

"Despite what I saw, all those people with whom I met retained an amazing sense of resilience and willingness to keep going and try to build something in what are clearly very difficult circumstances. However, unless there is some clear progress on reducing the obstacles for people to move about freely then Palestinians will lose all faith in any possible peace process."

Since returning from her visit to Palestine, Diana has spoken personally to Tony Blair, the Middle East envoy, expressing her concerns and suggesting places where roadblocks could be removed as a way of boosting the Palestinian economy.

Main image: School children and teachers have to cross this checkpoint twice a day to go to school.

◀ *In Hebron, with the Mayor, Mr. Khaled Osaily, a member of Liberal International.*

Diana opens up Simone Veil's archives for public viewing

In March Diana formally opened up the archives of former European Parliament President Madame Simone Veil at a ceremony in Paris.

During the ceremony Diana pointed to examples of the documents from the archives now available publicly online, including, surprisingly, pro-European correspondence passing between Mrs. Thatcher (then British Prime Minister) and Madame Veil.

Madame Veil was the first ever President of the directly elected European Parliament, holding that office from 1979 to 1982 and is the only Liberal woman, thus far, to hold that post.

At the official opening, Diana said: "I am pleased that the European Parliament is way out in front of the Commission and Council in terms of classifying and opening up its archives. There is now available on-line a sample of the documents relating to the presidency of Simone Veil and some even from the years before the direct elections. All these documents provide a wealth of historical insight into the development of the Parliament and its powers."



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www.dianawallismep.org.uk

Liberal Democrat

Going by train kicks the carbon habit

As reported in her last mailing Diana has switched most of her journeys from Yorkshire to Brussels by train.

The new Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras has meant that journeys to Brussels from East Yorkshire have become much more convenient for her.

"I am trying to do all my journeys to Brussels by train these days. By opting for the train rather than the plane I estimate it has saved about a tonne of carbon dioxide over the past few months. Unfortunately I still have to travel by air as some places such as Iceland are just not accessible by train!"



Hull Trains' on board publication, *The Pioneer*, featured Diana in a recent edition.



Iceland is nudged closer to the EU



Photo shows Diana with Valgeður Sverrisdóttir and Siv Friðleifsdóttir, both MPs – and former government ministers – from the Liberal Democrats' sister party in Iceland.

One of the countries taking a particular beating from the global credit crisis is Iceland.



Its currency is plunging and inflation and interest rates are soaring. Such is the difficulty the economy is facing that Icelanders are starting to discuss something once unthinkable – tying their economy more closely to the European Union and the euro zone.

In April Diana visited Iceland to hear at first hand from academics, business leaders and politicians how the country was faring and the real possibility of the country applying to join the European Union. She also gave a keynote speech at the University of Iceland demonstrating how the EU in turn would benefit from greater Icelandic participation.



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Diana with staff and students at Linkage College, Grimsby. Linkage provides educational services for over three hundred learning disabled people from all over the country.

Happy to speak...

Diana spoke to the Hull group of the University of the Third Age (U3A) recently. The group was suitably enthused to start looking at setting up an EU awareness group!

If you are a member of a group and would like Diana to come and speak, get in touch with Angela in Diana's office at the bottom of this page.



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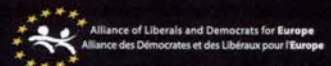
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Around the region



After an absence of a couple of years, Diana has re-established a local base in Hull by taking up space in the recently opened Hull Liberal Democrats' office on the city's Springbank.

Diana had an office in the distinctively addressed, Land of Green Ginger, from when she was first elected to the European Parliament in 1999. However the lease was not renewed when the owner wanted to turn the building into apartments.



Diana spoke to party members in Hebden Bridge in January.

Here she is with Hilary Myers the party's prospective parliamentary candidate in Calder Valley.



Delivering in Croft Baker ward in Cleethorpes with Councillor Colin Eastwell and Leonor Pidgen.

Leonor won the seat from Labour by 162 votes as the Liberal Democrats consolidated their position as the largest party on NE Lincolnshire Council.



Diana gave the keynote address at the York and North Yorkshire Third Sector and Social Enterprise event held at Thirsk racecourse earlier in the year.

◀ Diana speaking to Derek Pollard from Reeth Sports.

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Liberal Democrat

Speaking at a packed meeting at the Hartrigg Oaks Retirement Community in New Earswick near York in January.



Chatting to A level Government & Politics students after speaking at Harrogate's St. John Fisher school in February.



Pupils at New Park School in Harrogate showed off the wild flowers and bird boxes of their Secret Railway Garden wildlife project to Diana in December.

In February Diana spoke on a panel debate on women's issues, 'Women, Development and the UN', at York University.

Photo shows Diana with co-speaker, Paddy Beck (right) and Laura Payne (centre), who chaired the event.



At the Grimsby Institute.



With Diana are (l-r), graduate research assistants, Rory Dillon and Edyta Swieciochowska; Principal of the Institute, Professor Daniel Khan; Councillor Andrew De Freitas, Liberal Democrat Leader of NE Lincs Council; rear is George Krawiec, ex-Chief Executive of NE Lincs Council. (Photo courtesy of the Grimsby Evening Telegraph)



Diana attended the 'Big Dress' event festival in Sheffield's Endcliffe Park in May.

The festival, organised by the Speak network, was part of their ongoing campaign to address injustice in global trade and the fashion industry.

Diana was also able to officiate at the successful world record attempt to create the world's biggest dress.

