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3rd to 5th November 2005



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Submissions should be sent to **Government WORLD**, PO Box 159, Carlisle, CA2 5BG Tel: 08702 416 422 Fax: 01228 674 959  
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ISSN 1744-6996





# THE ANGEL HOTEL

## CARDIFF

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Staircase



Reception



Restaurant

The Angel Hotel is an elegant Victorian Hotel situated in the heart of Cardiff overlooking the Castle. The hotel lobby features an outstanding Waterford Crystal chandelier and grand staircase. A £3 million refurbishment programme installed air conditioning in all the bedrooms bar and restaurant areas. Off street car parking available.



## ALLC - ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

### THE ROLE OF TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

You will know that the ALLC Conference this year is being held at Cardiff from Thursday 3rd November to Saturday 5 November 2005.

The Conference this Year has as its theme "The Future of Town and Parish Councils". It will have the bonus, in addition to Keynote speakers and Members of Parliament, of the presence of Civil Servants from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). These latter two Departments are spearheading the preparatory work in advance of the White Paper on Town and Parish Councils due to be published early in 2006. It is clearly vital that there is an understanding of the way in which Central Government is thinking on this vital issue at the present time. The Conference will offer that opportunity. Both the ODPM and DEFRA will be holding workshops at which there can be informed discussions with representatives of those Departments.

It is difficult to think of a better opportunity of influencing the outcome of your Council's future. You will have the ability of a direct link to the ODPM and DEFRA. The Association is in the splendid position of providing you with the opportunity of directly lobbying the Government on your future. Your subscription to the Association of £825 per annum works out at 2.25 per day. I believe to have the means of lobbying the ODPM and DEFRA for 2.25p per day is an extraordinarily good opportunity.

There is also little doubt amongst local government experts that the eagerly awaited Lyons Report (Sir Michael Lyons formerly Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council) will impinge upon Town and Parish Councils. It is widely believed that although primarily concerned with local government finance it will inevitably touch upon the functioning of local government. There is a fundamental belief that wherever possible local government should remain "local".

Services are best delivered at local level. The electorate prefer it and it is far more likely to be well received if it is based on what the local electorate require and are given.

There is no doubt either that any local government structure should acknowledge the enormous differences both in the number of electors, acreage and financial resources of Town and Parish Council. It is neither possible nor sensible, still less economical,

to produce a solution for all Councils and apply it universally. There has to be flexibility. The shaping of any blueprint clearly needs to have an input from the Association. However, such an input is directly related to the views of your Council and made known to the Association. The Association cannot second guess what your Council wants. It can only do what you instruct it to do. It needs to know, for example, what you would want from any restructuring of local government and how you see that restructuring dovetailing into your Council. Do you want increased powers? If so what resources do you need to carry out additional powers. Have you the staffing resources to execute any additional services?

There is also, inherent in any proposals, the need to hold a constructive dialogue with your Principal Authority. There is no doubt that the most satisfactory coming together between Principal Authorities and Town and Parish Councils arrives when an officer in a Principal Authority is given specific responsibility for taking on board the ideas of Town and Parish Councils and seeing how best they can be achieved.

Your attendance at the Conference is vital. You believe in local government and the need to serve the electorate; that is not a new philosophy. Indeed since the late 19th Century that philosophy has held good. There is however now a sea change. The last General Election produced a "turnout" which was generally considered to be poor. The relaxation of the Rules of Postal Votes and indeed the concept of universal Postal Voting (after Pilot Studies) all arose as a means of ensuring greater democracy. The future of Town and Parish Councils is basic to the democratic right of the electorate to express their views. The Conference provides that opportunity.

I urge you to be part of it.

**Kevin Kiely**  
Chief Executive



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## ALLC - Conference Programme 2005

### Citizenship and Democratic Engagement

**'What can we learn from the younger generation?'**

Address by Adam Larter

Debate and workshop sessions reporting to **Conference**



All Councils are invited to involve their youth organisations or Local Education Authorities. Should you wish to do this, please contact Welters Organisation on 08702 416 422

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### Thursday 3rd November

<u>10:00</u>	Conference Registration	<u>14:00</u>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour - Social Exclusion and ASBOs</b> <b>Chief Superintendent Kevin O'Leary</b> - Central Motorway Police Group
<u>11:00</u>	'Welcome to Cardiff' by <b>Cllr Freda Salway</b> , The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor, Cardiff County Council		<b>Stephen Hesford MP</b> - Labour MP for Wirral West
<u>11:20</u>	Opening of the Conference by <b>Kevin Kiely</b> - Chief Executive, ALLC	<u>15:00</u>	Refreshments and Exhibition
<u>11:30</u>	<b>The Importance of Local Councils</b> Keynote Speech by <b>Sue Essex AM</b> - The National Assembly Member for Cardiff North & the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services.	<u>15:30</u>	<b>Environment</b> <b>Roger Williams MP</b> - Lib Dem Spokesperson for Wales as well as Food and Rural Affairs
<u>12:00</u>	<b>Local Government Strategy - The Role of Town and Parish Councils</b> <b>Mark Barnett</b> - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Head of Structure and Governance - Neighbourhoods, Parishes and Local Government.	<u>16:00</u>	<b>Communities &amp; Regeneration</b> <b>Alistair Burt MP</b> - MP for North East Bedfordshire. Alistair is also the Shadow Minister with responsibility for Communities & Regeneration
<u>13:00</u>	Lunch and Exhibition	<u>16:30</u>	<b>Freedom of Information</b> <b>Anne Jones</b> - Assistant Commissioner (Wales)
			<b>Terence Thompson</b> - Thompson Media
		<u>19:00</u>	Exhibitors Reception
		<u>19:30</u>	Informal Dinner

## ALLC - Conference Programme 2005

### Friday 4th November

<u>10:00</u>	<b>Future of Local Government in Wales</b> <b>Elwyn Llwyd MP</b> - MP for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. Elwyn is also the Plaid Cymru Parliamentary Leader and Spokesperson on Housing, Home Affairs, Local Government, Tourism and Northern Ireland.	<u>15:30</u>	Refreshments and Exhibition
<u>11:30</u>	<b>Anti Social Behaviour - Social Exclusion and ASBOs</b> <b>Lembit Opik MP</b> - MP for Montgomeryshire. Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats. Lembit is also the Spokesperson for Wales and a member of Charles Kennedy's Shadow Cabinet.	<u>16:00</u>	<b>Multiculturalism</b> <b>Keith Vaz MP</b> - MP for East Leicester. Keith currently serves on the Constitutional Affairs Select Committee and at present he is the longest serving person of Asian origin in the House of Commons in British History.
<u>12:30</u>	Lunch and Exhibition	<u>16:45</u>	Executive Committee Meeting
<u>14:00</u>	<b>Neighbourhoods Why Parishes Matter</b> <b>Richard Ellsworth</b> - DEFRA, Local and Regional Government Division - Introduction to Government Document 'Citizens Engagement in Public Services' followed by workshops	<u>19:00</u>	Formal Conference Dinner in the Dragon Suite
<u>15:00</u>	<b>Corporate Governance</b> <b>John Smith MP</b> - MP for Vale of Glamorgan CLP. Member of Welsh Executive.		

The Leader and the Chief Executive of Cardiff County Council have been invited to attend the Conference.

There will be time for question and answer sessions throughout the Conference.

Although not anticipated, this programme is subject to change.

### Saturday 5th November

<u>07:00 - 08:30</u>	Breakfast at Castells Restaurant
<u>09.30</u>	Executive Address Followed by the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Larger Local Councils
<u>12:00 - 12:30</u>	Lunch at Castells Restaurant
<u>12:30</u>	Close of Conference

### Important Notice!

#### WALES vs NEW ZEALAND

#### Rugby Union International Match

The above match is taking place on Saturday afternoon at the Millennium Stadium which is adjacent to the Angel Hotel.

Kick off is at 4pm and as a result, roads in the surrounding area will be closed to traffic between 2pm and 4pm.



**Mark Barnett**

- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Head of Structure and Governance - Neighbourhoods, Parishes and Local Government.

Mark has worked for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, or its predecessor Departments since 1984. He currently leads the team responsible for the structure of local government and the governance arrangements within local authorities.

**Alistair Burt MP**

- MP for NE Bedfordshire  
- Shadow Minister with responsibility for Communities & Regeneration

**About Alistair**

Alistair is 50, married to Eve with two teenage children and they live in Wootton, Bedfordshire. He was educated at Bury GS, Lancashire and Oxford University. Qualifying as a solicitor in 1980, he worked in

practice in London, becoming a Councillor in the London Borough of Haringey in 1982.

Away from politics the family are members of St Mary's Church, Wootton and Alistair is on the Board of Patrons of Habitat for Humanity (UK), a low income housing charity, and also on the Council of the Evangelical Alliance, a multi-denominational Christian body with over 1 million members.

He plays football and runs regularly, having competed in five London Marathons.

**Alistair's Experience**

In 1983, Alistair was elected MP for Bury North, being re-elected in 1987 and 1992. Having served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt Hon Kenneth Baker between 1985-90, he was appointed as junior minister at the Department of Social Security in 1992. He was promoted to Minister of State, Minister for Disabled People, in 1995.

He lost his marginal seat in 1997, and found a new job as a headhunter for Whitehead Mann GKR in London, where he worked in the sport and not for profit sector finding Chief Executive and Board level candidates. He and his family moved to Bedford as a result of this job change in 1998, and he was selected as prospective Parliamentary candidate for North East Bedfordshire in summer 2000, being elected in June 2001.

His political interests are centred on his busy constituency workload, taking a keen interest in the development of public services in a growing county, countryside issues affecting villages and small towns, regional planning,

transport, social division and overseas development.

From November 2002 to May 2005, Alistair was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition.

Following the General Election of 2005 Alistair Burt was appointed Shadow Minister for Communities and Regeneration. This builds on Mr Burt's background in such work. In 1994 he was appointed Sponsor Minister for Manchester and Salford, and oversaw the Government's City Challenge programme in the north-west of England until 1997, handling relationships between the Governments Regional Office, local authorities and Community Groups.

**Richard Ellsworth**

Local and Regional Government Division  
DEFRA



Richard is a local government officer currently seconded to DEFRA. He has much experience of working at the corporate centre in a variety of local authorities. Richard has probably been involved at a local authority level in most of the recent initiatives in local government with which delegates will be familiar.

**Sue Essex AM**

Sue Essex AM is the National Assembly Member for Cardiff North and the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services. Her portfolio includes responsibility for Budgeting and managing the Finances of the Government of Wales; the development of the Strategic approach to the delivery of Public Services and Local Government in Wales.



Until her appointment, she chaired the Assembly Local Government, Environment, Planning, Housing and Transport Committee.

After a degree in geography, she trained as a planner and moved to South Wales in 1971 where she worked in Local Government before becoming a lecturer in planning at Cardiff University.

Ms Essex is a former leader of Cardiff City Council and a former member of the Countryside Council for Wales.

**Anne Jones****Assistant Commissioner (Wales)**

Anne Jones joined the Information Commissioner's Office in April 2003, as Assistant Commissioner for Wales. Her remit was twofold – to develop an ICO presence within Wales which is sensitive to local needs, and to advise the main office on matters of particular concern to Wales.

Anne has a background in library and information

work, and had worked in public, academic and commercial libraries in various managerial roles, including having responsibility for library IT systems and other electronic applications. She has an honours degree in French and Information Studies from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and an MSc in Information Management from Bristol University.

(The Information Commissioner is the independent regulator for the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts)

**Elfyn Llwyd MP**

Elfyn Llwyd is Parliamentary Leader of the Plaid Cymru group at Westminster. He was elected to Parliament for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy in 1992, following the retirement of Dafydd Elis Thomas (now Lord Elis-Thomas) from the House of Commons. Born on 26 September 1951 in Betws-y-coed, he was educated at Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy in Llanrwst, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth and the College of Law, Chester. He qualified as a solicitor in 1977 and was called to the Bar in 1997.

Elfyn Llwyd served on the Welsh Affairs Committee between 1992-95, 1996-97 and 1999-01. He is the Party's spokesperson on Housing, Home Affairs, Local Government, Tourism Defence and Foreign Affairs. He is also Joint Vice-chair of the House of Commons All-Party Groups on Objective One, Organophosphates and a member of the British-Irish Parliamentary body. A keen pigeon breeder, he also enjoys choral singing, rugby and fishing. His political interests include civil liberties, agriculture and tourism. He is a member of the NSPCC in Wales and was the President of Gwynedd Law Society 1990-91. A fluent Welsh speaker, he was appointed to the highest order of the Gorsedd of the Bards in 1998. He is married with a son and a daughter.

**Andrew Stunell MP**

Andrew Stunell is the Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Hazel Grove. Andrew is married to Gillian and they have five grown up children, two of whom are adopted. Gillian is a specialist primary music teacher, has taught at several local schools, and has been the musical director for several local amateur productions.

Andrew and Gillian live in Romiley, in the centre of the constituency.

Andrew is a former Baptist lay preacher and he and Gillian are now active members of Romiley Methodist Church, where Andrew is in charge of the coffee rota! Having worked on aid projects overseas as a student, Andrew has a long-standing interest in Third World issues.

**In Parliament**

Andrew has a keen interest in sustainable energy and the environment. He was the Liberal Democrat Energy Spokesperson from 1998- May 2005 and is the author of two publications setting out Liberal Democrat energy priorities, Energy: Clean and Green by 2050 (1999), The Nuclear Age: Cleaning Up The Mess (2001).

Andrew came top of the ballot for Private Member's Bills in autumn 2003, and successfully brought forward his Sustainable and Secure Buildings Bill, which was given Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament in September 2004. His Act opens the way for more energy efficient and lower cost homes, and also gives the Police powers to insist that buildings have crime resistance built into them by law, just as fire resistance already is.

Andrew has taken a leading role on the Select Committee on Modernisation, updating House of Commons procedures. On the Finance and Services Committee, he has made a reputation for a clamp down on sloppy budgeting in Parliament.

After serving as the Party's Deputy Chief Whip in the 1997-2001 Parliament, he was elected Chief Whip in 2001, and again in 2005.

**Council Experience**

Andrew was leader of the Liberal Democrats on Cheshire County Council for 6 years, holding the balance of power, and Vice-Chair of the all-party Association of County Councils in London from 1985 to 1990.

From 1989 to 1996 Andrew worked as Political Secretary of the Association of Liberal Democratic Councillors (ALDC), heading the organisation, which trains and supports the country's Liberal Democrat councillors and its large body of campaigners. One of the Liberal Democrats' leading experts on local government, he has written several



booklets on council practice and procedures. During his time in charge of the ALDC, Liberal Democrat councillor numbers more than doubled across the UK.

### Local Campaigning

Andrew has led campaigns on a wide range of local issues in Hazel Grove, including policing levels, commuter transport problems and the cuts to housing benefit for tenants of private landlords. He chaired the Liberal Democrat Working Party that, in March 2000, submitted key evidence to Government Consultants on transport and traffic issues in Stockport, calling for the completion of the Hazel Grove bypass and Stepping Hill link. The South East Manchester Multi Modal Study has been endorsed by Ministers, and a Public Inquiry into the scheme is expected to be held in autumn 2005.

Fights to save local Post Offices, to keep NHS dentists, as well as the battle to cut police paperwork and get more officers out on the beat have all featured in the last year. Andrew has also pushed for improvements in mental health care, where the take-over of services by Pennine Health Trust still has to bring dividends.

### Keith Vaz MP

Keith Vaz made British Parliamentary History in June 1987 when he was elected as the first person of Asian Origin to the House of Commons or 50 years. 12 years later, aged 42 Prime Minister Tony Blair appointed him as a Minister in his Government, the first Asian ever to be appointed to a British Government. He was promoted to be Minister for Europe by Mr Blair until June 2001. He currently serves on the Constitutional Affairs Select Committee and at present, he is the longest serving person of Asian origin in the House of Commons in British history.



Born in Aden, South Yemen, his parents came from Goa in India to Mumbai and Eventually India. His mother a teacher and his two sisters followed their father to England when Keith was nine years old. His father who worked as a Clerk in BOAC died in an accident in 1970 when Keith was 14. He went to Cambridge University and studied law. He was elected to Parliament in 1987 aged 30, the youngest Labour MP.

### Roger Hugh Williams MP

**Date of Birth:** 22nd January 1948

**Marital Status:** Married Penelope James 1973, 2 children

**Education:** Selwyn College Cambridge, 1988-69  
Christ College Brecon



#### Career:

2001 – Present: Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnorshire

1999 – 2001: Chairman for the Mid Wales Agri-Food Partnership and board-member of the Wales Agri-Food Partnership

1997: Contested Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, National Assembly for Wales

1995-2001: Lay School Inspector for Wales and England

1995: Vice-chairman of the Training and Enterprise Council for Powys

1993-2001: Board member of the European Centre for Wales in Brussels

1991-1999: Board-member of the Development Board for Rural Wales

1990-1996: Chairman of Brecon Beacon National Park (member since 1985)

1985: Chairman of Brecon & Radnorshire National Farmers' Union

1981-2001: Powys County Councillor (SDP 1981-88; Lib Dem 1988-2001)

1969-2001: Livestock farmer

#### Political Positions:

2004-Present: Liberal Democrat Party Whip

2003-Present: Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Wales

2002-Present: Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Food and Rural affairs

**Select Committees:** Welsh Affairs Select Committee

**Standing Committees:** Draft Disability Discrimination Bill (joint Select Committee of Commons and Lords)

**Interests:** Memberships: Farmers' Union of Wales; Brecon Beacons National Park; National Farmers' Union; County Landowners and Business Associates

**Personal Interests:** Walking, Reading, Cricket, Rugby

**Special Interests:** Education, Economic Development

### The Freedom of Information Act 2000.

By Terence Thompson, Investigative Journalist

Most of the work that I carry out as an investigative journalist involves covert enquiries and research, and much of the work that we do is research from behind the lines — until January of this year when things changed with the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act came in on the 1st January. Although it was originally given royal assent on the 30th November 2000, it has taken the government approximately four to five years to get the Act up and running properly.

Some local authorities have websites which allow access to information again through a publication scheme, or through a direct approach to the local authority, and in those circumstances we are able to come to a local authority as a journalist and say 'We would like to ask the following questions'. That doesn't mean that the local authority has to answer those questions — there are many exemptions that exist. If I am right in thinking, there are 43 separate exemptions, many which relate to, for instance, privacy issues and issues of confidentiality which have been applied in certain circumstances. Certainly Sheffield City Council is aware of those and a number of local authorities have applied these exemptions, but it's useful from the point of view that at least, as a journalist, we are now able to come to a local authority and get information straightforwardly, whereas in the past it was very difficult to do that sort of enquiry. And simply press offices on some occasions will say something and on other occasions we get nothing. But with the Act, we are now able to be in a position where we can approach, use the Act, and make the application by e-mail, which is the standard format which most journalists now use for that type of application. We send the application to the authority, who then have 20 working days to reply to the application. They can then ask for an extension of time, which on some occasions they do because they need legal advice, or the information is not readily accessible.

The Act is not designed as a homework service for journalists. Some local authorities were very worried that they would be swamped by loads of applications and would end up doing all our homework for us, which, as much as anything else, we are not very keen on. As a result, local authorities do have some discretion in what they reply to. If the information is readily available in other channels, for example, or if it can be located somewhere else, the local authority also has a duty to tell members of the public, not just journalists, but everybody who uses the Act, that if the information isn't readily available from the local authority where else you may be able to find it. So, for example, we applied to the police service for a piece of information recently to do with accounts and we were not aware that the information had already been published somewhere else by the Home Office. The police service involved was kind enough to point us to the correct area where we were then able to pick up that piece of information and use the information quite candidly, and that was helpful of them.

The Act has allowed a number of different areas to become much more open than was previously the case. The Act is overseen by the Department for Constitutional Affairs in London, who have the administrative guide to look after the Act. Often, where there is a problem or confusion on the Act, the DCA will be of assistance to members of the public. The DCA also publish a number of guidelines on the Act in terms of what can be sought and what can't be sought, and what exemptions can be applied and in what circumstances and where there might be a public interest perhaps.

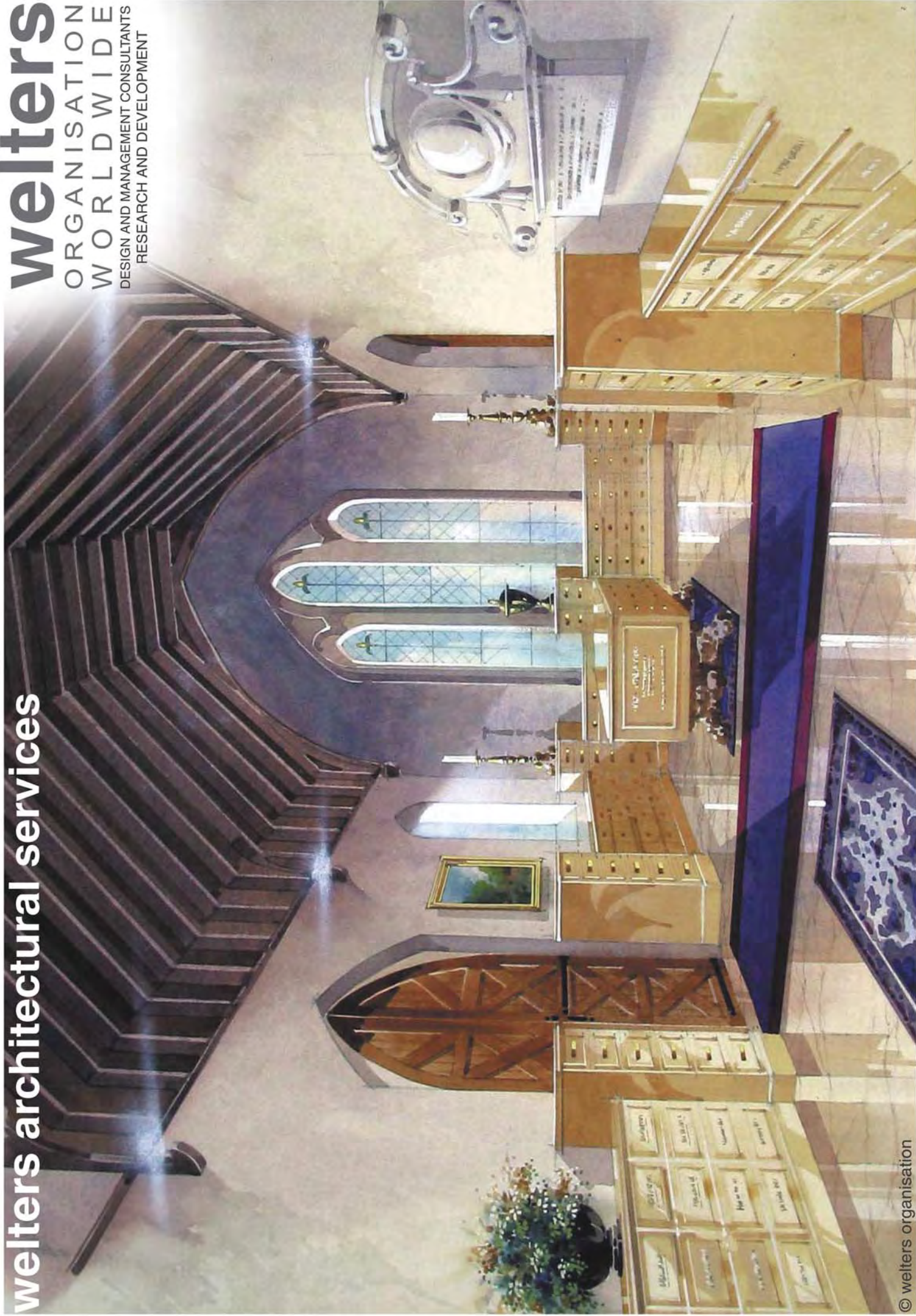
The Act is also overseen by the Information Commissioner's office, which is independent and based in Cheshire. So if we are refused information initially from a local authority, we then ask that local authority to review that decision. There is a time period of 40 days in review and then at the end of this period, we can, if the review is still unsatisfactory and we are getting no further, go to the Information Commissioner, ask the Commissioner to adjudicate on a decision made by a public body. If a public body asks, 'Have you cremated a particular individual?', and you come back to me and say, 'We are not going to tell you as we are using the exemption that this is private and confidential information', we then ask you to review that decision. If after review, you still won't give us that information, we can then ask the Information Commissioner, at that stage and time, to make a decision.

We have been working extensively with the Information Commissioner for the last six months and that has allowed us to refine how we get the information, because initially when we were making our first batch of applications, they were very wide-ranging. Now we have tried to narrow that down considerably so that we only get the information that is relevant and we cut out the chaff. Previously, we were finding that some local authorities were sending us 'an inch-worth' of paper if we asked a particularly wide-ranging question. We would look at the mail in the morning and we would either have a very large attachment or a very large bundle of papers to go through and I have to thank any local authority who has responded to any of our requests in that respect. It has been rather useful at times, but maybe less paper next time!

I tend to now find that when I go to a local authority and I say I am journalist, people clam up or refer you to the press office and you are often left in the dark trying to get answers, and press offices are not always the best places to go. Whereas with the Act now, we are getting direct responses from people who work on the front line.

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## Multiculturalism in Britain

By Keith Vaz MP for Leicester East



It is now almost three months since that fateful day that changed Britain forever. Everyone had been warned that an attack on London was inevitable - still no one can prepare, or fully predict the consequences of a terrorist attack. As well as shocking the nation it has plunged the country into a deep analysis of its community relations.

It is time to pause and consider the consequences of the London attacks and to see what lessons can be learned about our multi-cultural society.

Since the London bombings the Asian community has faced a backlash. There have been racially provoked attacks, stigmatisation of people in turbans and other ethnic dressing, and harassment in the street. The Muslim community collectively has had to deal with extensive scrutiny. In some quarters Muslim leaders are blamed for not taking full responsibility for the members of their mosques and what they say and what they do. They have also been told that they are not dealing adequately with some unseemly elements in the mosques up and down the country.

The Asian community itself is now in a state of internal turmoil. Some do not feel that either politicians or religious leaders can help them dispel their feeling of disillusionment about their identity and uncertainty about their future.

Education is an example. Immigrant communities put great effort into education. Yet completion of a degree gives little guarantee in finding sufficient employment for young people for the minority communities. Ethnic names, attributes and accents are blocking success at interviews and in job situations despite the legal provisions in place to prevent such discrimination.

This fuels the resentment and makes it increasingly likely that young men and women will feel detached from the society they live in and feel little remorse when they turn on it. It is crucial that we seek the answers as to why youngsters born and brought up in Britain turn into terrorists. We must tackle the disillusionment and the feelings of not belonging. Ethnic minorities still feel that they are on the outside, looking in, and not gaining access to the opportunities that are there.

Integration and race relations in Britain have perhaps not been as successful as we like to think. We have come far, much further than for example many of our European neighbours, but we have got a long way to go to achieve real equality.

The recent comments made by the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality about 'ghetto-isation' and Britain 'sleep walking its way to segregation' have met with a chorus of criticisms not just from community leaders but also from the same Ministers who appointed them. Areas of high concentration of ethnic minorities are not ghettos in the American sense of the word. People choose to live in the inner city areas because they want to live around strong cultural influences and near their friends and family. Over time people from ethnic minorities will move out to the suburbs, this is happening now with the first generation of immigrants and it will continue to happen and their children will be more and more integrated with other communities. Change takes time.

There is still anger and bitterness in the Asian community, especially the Muslim community, about Iraq. This has been the single foreign policy issue that that fuelled the anger. But we must remember it is severely disillusioned minds that resort to suicide bombing, causing death and devastation. Not just angry people.

Is the conclusion to be drawn that we are locked in an absence of hope; it is certainly regrettable that the attacks were committed in the name of Islam. However if 7/7 would have happened ten years ago some members of the ethnic communities would have stopped wearing their turbans, ninja outfits and scarves for fear of repression. Today they are standing tall, shoulder to shoulder with white people, fighting prejudice head on.

Before it is too late we must take strong action and deal with this situation collectively as a nation. We must safeguard Britain's diverse, multicultural society of which we are so proud and which is the envy of the world.

### Keith will be speaking on Multiculturalism at 4pm on Friday 4th November at the ALLC Conference and Exhibition in Cardiff.

**Government WORLD want to hear your comments regarding all aspects of this magazine - please sent your letters, articles, pictures etc to:**

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**Thursday, November 4th. Scene:** Blackpool. Outside the Imperial Hotel. It is Masfield weather.

*I'll take a look at the sea again, at the leaden sea  
and the sky,  
And hear the keening wind again, and the plaintive  
seagull's cry.  
Then it's back to the big Imperial, where the  
atmosphere is dense  
With the buzz of talk and a warming toast for the  
Blackpool Conference*

Indeed a very rich atmosphere at Blackpool's Imperial Hotel; people arrive, some early, most late, sorting out their name tags and finding out their room numbers, picking up their programmes and going into a huddle about the contents. Everything perfectly organised - though not to the point of exaggeration.

A perfect opening for a Conference: anticipation, with a dash of confusion and just a hint of illusion.

The afternoon workshops are lively. Derek Kemp opens proceedings with a rabble-rousing talk on Local Government Finance, where there is a growing discontentment with the current system. For some of us this is the flagship debate of the Conference, and Derek homes in on this at once, with searching questions to his participating audience, drawing out our thoughts on the subject and highlighting the areas of concern. Muscle-building for tomorrow's opening debate.

The same is true for the workshop on Anti-social Behaviour. The ASBO procedure is seen as a little daunting by some, as if it were a cake on display but not to be eaten. Martin Lee, Head of Operations for the Nuisance Strategy Group of Manchester City Council gets straight into showing us how to eat that cake. Through the presentation of hypothetical cases, he breaks down the steps to making ASBO's work for us. It's a pretty fast moving delivery, though, and we



Martin Lee and Lesley Pulman talk about ASBO's



have to stay nimble if we want to follow everything. He is ably assisted by a remarkably brave young woman, Lesley Pulman, whose almost single-handed battle against the local jobs around her Manchester home, won her the accolade of recognition from the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, has a harrowing tale to tell. She has been on the receiving end of some serious 'anti-social behaviour' (a euphemism for what in her experience was unbelievably malicious and terrifying behaviour), but fought back through police apathy (their hands were tied), through incessant intimidation, until she finally got on top of the situation. Judging from the audience, this is another area of deep concern for local governments: how to get these damned ASBO's to work for us, not against us.

So far so good for the organisers and helpers, The Keith Welters team, and Barbara Rothwell and friends.

In the evening, reception, social-grooming, dinner, bed - in that order

### Friday, November the 5th. Scene: The Conference Hall in the hotel

All fireworks left at the door? This is the day of the debates. It's a new idea to have a debating panel, where the panellists each present their case, then as they field questions from the floor, we get to watch them have a go at each other. Will it be like Any Questions? Depends on how clearly the issues are presented and how bold the members of the audience are feeling.

After the charming Maxine Callow, the Mayor of Blackpool, formally opens the Conference, we start proceedings, with a flagship topic.

### The Subject

1. Review of Local Government Finance  
In which three eminent proponents, all politicians, debate the merits and de-merits of party policy on local government funding. This is in the backdrop of the Lyons Review, and the recent news of the North East region referendum fiasco.

As this debate, for many, will be the key local-government issue of the Conference, we give it quite extensive coverage, and even include transcripts of the introductory speeches - a must for aficionados of political debate - not to mention keen language analysts.



**The protagonists:**

Mr David Hansen: MP LAB  
 Mr Eric Pickles, MP CON  
 Mr Matthew Green MP LIB DEM  
 Steve Reed UKIP

David Hansen, in ebullient mood, kicks off with an extended eulogy to the present Council Tax system, which, for him, represents the best value for money he could ever get, thanks to the extra devolution of power and the extra provision of cash provided by the Labour Government. With the considerable dexterity of an experienced Parliamentarian he manages to reiterate this theme several times, in cosy, tinsel-wrapped language, while at the same time reminding everybody of the Conservatives' Poll Tax fiasco. That, he pointed out, was what could happen if you did something without having the people behind you. This was to illustrate the last of, what seemed to be his three main points: a) The Council Tax got better with Labour, but is not perfect, and b) changes need to be made. Therefore, c) we must 'look to the future' - which means, presumably, waiting to see how the recommendations of the Lyons Review can be implemented.

(The Lyons Review, has made recommendations to the government on how to relocate Government organisations, and their personnel, out of London, with the dual purpose of relieving a congested South East, and making a start to developing the regions as prosperous centres in their own right, wrapped around 'core cities'. In the light of the bad news from the North East, the Government may be feeling the need to reconsider some of the recommendations.)

Eric Pickles, for the Conservatives, wastes no time in picking up on this. Amiable pugnacious, his low, avuncular voice picking confidently through what he sees as holes



in David's claims about the Council Tax, he ambles on at a leisurely pace. Then, like a bear that has just caught its dinner, he moves in on the devastating referendum result of the day before, where John Prescott's dream of regional assemblies turned into a political nightmare. (What was it David had said a

few minutes before about making sure you have the people with you?)

'Regionalism is dead!' Eric acclaims gleefully. He argues further that the still-intact RDA's, as un-elected Government quangos, could not be considered as players in the reform of local government funding and that therefore alternatives must be considered. He feels that governments, since the war, have been so obsessed with change that they might have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. There was once a perfectly good system in place. Small is beautiful, County level and lower tier local government finance is close to the Conservatives' heart.

His message, let's get as close to real local democracy as we can.

Sounds good, but as Mathew Green, the only speaker there today with goods on the shelf, points out, Eric is happy to pick other ideas to pieces, but offers none of his own; that is, in the specifics of local government fund-raising. As with David's Party, so too with Eric's: too much thinking and waiting but no clear policy.



In contrast, Mathew, earnest and fast-talking, dashes through a sometimes fumbled description of how the Lib-Dem policy of local income tax could be the Sleeping Beauty of tax systems, that is, the fairest of all. Though not, so far, as witty as David, perhaps, and not as sage as the

wise Eric, Mathew does at least have something to offer us, which he seems to believe in. And that's what we are here for.

One or two questions from the floor warm them up, and bring out some finer detail. Councillor Martin Bax of Frome, asks David why the Government is so opposed to local income tax. 'It isn't,' says David. But David, speaking for himself, does have some reservations:

1) a hard-working family of four in one house will find themselves paying four taxes; somebody retired, however, in a large house, will pay nothing because they have no earnings. 2) people working in a city but who live in a dormitory town, will find themselves paying above the average. 3) not sure if the system would be as simple as it is claimed to be, collecting it, up to Central Government, then fed down again.

But again he points out that the government is not ruling it out as part of a hybrid system.

Steve Reed of UKIP asks the panel what they think of a local purchase tax as an idea for raising money. Both Eric and Mathew think it would be too complicated in our general system as it is. Eric thinks that it can only be considered in



the light of Balance of Funding and Resource Equalisation, which are complicated matters under consideration. Mathew seems of the view that, like all money raised from taxpayers, it would need to be re-distributed. But David feels it would stay 'where the shops are instead of in the communities'. And in any

case, he is against taxing people on what they spend. He gives the example that somebody on £15 000, buying a fridge, say, would have to pay the same tax as an MP on £57 000. David makes it clear that he frowns on VAT for this reason and blames the Tories for increasing VAT when they were in power.

**The final phase of the Conference summarises the activities, discusses the merits of each discussion, and summons everybody to respond to the new opportunities.**

**ASSOCIATION WHAT DO WE EXPECT.**

Sadie Mason, on taking her seat formally as the new Chairman of the Association, was quick to identify the main theme of the forum; the Association had tried to move forward over the last year, and with some success, 'But, at the end of the day, this is your Association and to go forward with confidence, we need to hear your voice'.

It was clear, even from the first day of the Conference, and in this session, too, that the members were in absolute accord with the sentiment - they wanted to have their voice heard. But she, they, and the other officers of the Association all agreed that for this to come about, everyone was going to have to pull together and pool ideas. There was a lot to be done; the thing was to identify what.

Sadie, in her light, cheerful voice, spoke optimistically of



Cllr. Patricia Lindsley, former Chairman of the ALLC handing over to Sadie Mason

the steps that had been taken to make things happen. The Association was getting itself better organised, with a new Chief Executive, a management team and a business plan. Now it was for members to say what they felt they needed, what they expected, in terms of services, information and advice. It was important that the members and their officers should 'share the same hopes and aspirations', but they had to be identified. She mentioned an initiative of her own local authority, Seaham, which had lobbied district for devolved responsibilities, and was actually getting somewhere. As always the problem would be whether the money would cover the service. Still it was a step in the right direction. Larger local councils have been angling for greater autonomy for years, and there are signs that the Government, as well as the other parties, are beginning to hear those distant voices. This Association wants to be behind every one of them. The need now is to find both how the Association can best empower the members and how the members can best empower the Association, for the Association needs the input, the ideas and the energy of the members. And within this, how can members work together and help each other. Bill Jeffries believed that it was not just a pressure group we're looking for; what is needed most is access to

Government. He commended David Hansen's efforts over the last two years (as many people had done in the social intervals - according to Barbara Rothwell, 'David put ALLC on the map'). Nevertheless, he felt the members still needed access to government. 'We need answers to questions. It seems we hit brick walls most of the time.' Bill sees it quite clearly: members should be able to leave Conference, discuss with their councils, get back to meetings where they can give CE and Chair items to take to government, so they can get back to the people in the street and let them know what's happening. If we push in the right direction, he says, we might be more successful that we were with NALC, who didn't seem to help us much. This what ALLC is for. Kevin Keighley mentioned that a meeting between ALLC and NALC with the possibilities of a joint forum - not a merger - which should prove a power for lobbying central government. From the floor, fighting talk from Karen Davies of Holywell.

'So far government has totally ignored us. Hopefully, now we've got David with us, some proposals will be carried through. When we're seen as having the ear of government other councils will join us. We're an Association to be reckoned with. Let's get our act together.'

For Tony Robertson, from the floor, the need is to be innovative and to work together to be capable of becoming 'more than the sum of our parts'

The tone is one of optimism and determination. The insistent demands return again and again; working more closely together and getting the ear of government.

Somebody mentions Nick Raynsford. Why can't we get access to him? Yes, they did have him with them a couple of years or so ago. But what about now?

Practical Betty Batchelor wanted to know how isolated councils can make contact with others. Jane Smith thought that the formation of clusters of councils might help achieve this.

All told there was an upbeat feel to the meeting. People seemed to feel they were getting somewhere with the idea of communicating with each other, maintaining close and constant contact with and through the Association, and having a united voice.

Thanks and appreciation were offered to James Sheerin for his legal service, which he thought many more people would take advantage of if they knew they existed. Again a question of communication.

Government World was mentioned as a primary element in the Association's drive to express itself. It was there to stimulate ideas and comment, to disseminate information, and to act as a united voice for the Association.

'Communication is the key,' said Sadie, as she asked the panel and the floor to extend appreciation to Keith Welter for his provision of the magazine and the well-organised Conference.





# The European Debate

## Rex Oswin comments on the 2004 ALLC Conference debate on Europe

In his introduction, David Hansen made the point that Europe is more relevant to local government than we might realise. How right he is!

The backdrop against which we discuss our role in Europe is huge. What drives our reasoning in the European issue - short-term advantage where our locality stands to gain some small grant or other for a year or two, or a considered long-term view of what we see as desirable several decades hence? Who or what would European integration benefit - our children and grandchildren, our businessmen and ideologists, our own sense of completion?

### One World

Somewhere in our social mindset we may have come to feel that greater social integration and homogeneity is somehow predetermined in the way of things; that the 'progress' of civilisation necessarily means that the larger, centralising units naturally subsume the smaller units as it becomes possible to do so. From individual, family groups to small tribes, and townships, we move on to become absorbed into cities, then nations, then super-states, then One World.

By the nature of the process, with the growth of complexity, the smaller must become less differentiated at each transition to enable better central control.

To some cynics it is not a big issue whether we are full members of Europe or not. It has been said the gods only exist as long as someone believes in them. Perhaps that is true of Britain. Are there any believers still? The lead should come from politicians. But they seem to be the same everywhere. If ours were of higher moral character, more patriotic, more courageous, more open, more visionary than the ones we've had in recent times, perhaps then, it would be worth keeping Britain independent. Truman is reported to have said in 1945, "It will be just as easy for nations to get along in a republic of the world as it is for us to get along in a republic of the United States." Americans haven't got round to that idea yet. But perhaps it applies in our case. Couldn't we have just as fair local government in a country of half a billion, as we can get here in our own country of nearly 60 million? If all we get from our own government and Opposition is hollow promises and increased bureaucracy, and if we're already running mostly on Brussels law, with nobody about to do anything about it, would it not be better to jump out of the pond and into the lake? Except, that would be doing exactly what Tony Blair wants us to do. Could it be, he's right!?

Others favourable to European integration are so, not from cynicism, but from conviction. They embrace the idea of being citizens of Europe and feel the trend reflects Christian/ humanist ideals of the 'brotherhood of man', and is an inevitable consequence of human culture. They

reason that national or racial groupings invite hatred, rivalry and war, where union of peoples brings solidarity, harmony and prosperity. These views support our signing up, just as the negative reasons do - by not belonging to this huge

European state, we risk being strife-ridden, shunned, and impoverished.

In contrast, those who oppose Britain being absorbed into Europe are not convinced that mega-states guarantee universal brotherhood - except through coercion - in which case it is a different thing entirely from the real feeling. They are not convinced that mega-states promote harmony or eliminate war - the USA, Russia, China, have experienced some of the largest and bloodiest civil wars in history, not to mention participating in a few international ones. A mega-state, to control so many diverse millions, may feel it



needs very strong centralised government, coercion and social engineering to bring about social harmony through homogeneity. Once we do sign up, our laws, our history, our independence and control over our affairs, our whole identity will be sacrificed for ever.

So, in Ann Robinson style, we pose the question; Do we cling like limpets to the rock of independence or take a chance with the tide? Do we remain captain of our own sturdy tugboat, or climb aboard the Cruise ship to Paradise?

The speakers addressing this issue are Bill Cash, Conservative MP for Stone, Gordon Marsden, Labour MP for Blackpool South, and Steve Reed, UKIP county chairman in Somerset.

Bill's first point is that the issue is essentially about who governs Britain; the British Parliament or Europe? He naturally favours the former. We know Bill Cash to be a rebel; he has shown this only too well in his earlier and notorious defiance over the Maastricht Treaty, as well as more recently when he protested Michael Howard's acceptance of Identity Cards. His view is that we should never sign away our sovereignty. We should rather educate the Europeans into understanding that Britain is quite happy to be a good neighbour and club member, but will

remain independent and sovereign at whatever the cost. It becomes apparent as he continues that Bill is speaking for himself and his own battle to reform our European agreements, not for the Conservative Party as such.

Gordon Marsden wonders if sovereignty is as important anymore. He suggests that Britain hasn't enjoyed true sovereignty since the Suez crisis, when the Americans, by forcing a run on the pound, forced Eden into a humiliating withdrawal of troops from Egypt. (Gordon was merely making a point, of course But sovereignty is a real thing and it is where we are all coming from. Although the hostile action of a false friend inconvenienced us at that time, and showed us who was boss, we are still in business, flying the flag, less than we ought to, and doing quite well. And it's unlikely the Americans will kick us out of Iraq - until payday comes, at least).

Gordon, using much the same arguments he used in his September article for the Parliamentary Monitor, purported to offer his views 'from many perspectives', as a historian and as a Blackpool man and as a person with a special interest in the states on the periphery of Europe, some

**...as one out of 25 and more states, what kind of influence are we really likely to have?**

of which he has visited: the ex-communist states, Turkey, the North African rim states. His case is that if Britain remains a small state on the edge of Europe, we'll have no say in, and no control over, the greater issues. As fully participating members we will be in a position to influence wide-scale issues, like environment, immigration. For Gordon, we need Europe and should be an integral part of it. Outside Europe we'll have no influence, we'll lose jobs, and we'll lose business.

Bill Cash, however, paints Europe as corrupt and inefficient. He is dismissive of the arguments, which he had already touched on earlier, contending that we put more money into Europe than we ever get back, that Europe needs us as a major trading partner at least as much as we need them. That there'll be the added bonus that we'll be free of straitjacket laws and corrupt practices. As for influence, as one out of 25 and more states, what kind of influence are we really likely to have?

Steve Reed, of UKIP, is the only speaker with a prepared speech, which he delivers in fine Roman style from the podium. He is adamant. Britain should quit the European Union once and for all. In withering tones he manages to accuse the Conservatives of treachery, Labour of Utopianism, Europe of totalitarianism - and even gets close to presenting himself an extremist - though only in comparison with the other two, because he advocates full withdrawal.

Bill Cash, he believes, is fooling himself if the Conservatives

will get anyone in Europe to listen to them. And that's because nobody else in Europe wants to contemplate withdrawal. At least, he thinks, Mr Marsden is honest in that he makes no bones about his commitment to Europe. For Steve, the European Community Act should simply be repealed, and all political connection with Europe severed (political, not trade or cultural). We then revert to a full

sovereign British state, and this, he declares, is the first thing UKIP will do once they achieve power.

A few asides from Bill Cash indicated that he thought Steve shouldn't hold his breath on that one.

There were no great revelations, in fact. Each man argued his position in his own style. Questions from the floor were fielded predictably. Why no referendum on Maastricht? I tried, says Bill. I had half a million signatures. But all to no avail. Major wouldn't budge. Hitler, says Gordon, had lots of referendums and plebiscites, but what good did they do? You need to understand the questions. Questions! echoes Steve, in a voice that would shame Lady Bracknell. The Wilson referendum was fiddled and interfered with worse than the Danish and Irish ones. We have to watch ourselves on this upcoming one.

All good stuff. Bill Cash with his gravitas gave us what we expected, and left us with the feel that someone was fighting against accepted opinion. Gordon's historical references to Hitler's referenda might have scared us all away from even thinking about them. Hitler had them?! Oh, dear. But Gordon was pretty sound on his platform. What is best for us and Europe is pooled sovereignty. He sees nothing sinister in banding together for the greater good of all. He is not suspicious, even as a historian, of long, unforgiving memories, and is on quite firm ground when it comes to the idea of a united Europe that has power to make a difference on the world stage. Steve, proudly stands his ground in scorning anyone who wishes to do his country down. Who is the weakest link?

Quote of the day: "A nice guy whose belt snaps"

A little sermon. It must be obvious by now that we like to have a go at incumbent governments and politicians when we can. After all, we are mostly on the receiving end. It's nice for us to get back at them when the opportunity comes. When we listen to politicians speak, it is with some admiration. We listen out for indicators of all kinds that can help us see what they really intend with their words, what sustenance we can hope to draw from them. We are not surprised that they present their party perspective on issues but at the same time, we like to see a bit of independent thinking. We like to know if the protagonist of a party view is of that persuasion himself, and if he isn't, why not. We know politicians are professional wordsmiths, modern sophists, and it is an accepted part of their role to use words to serve their particular purpose, to sound sincere, to press home the right messages through repetition of selected collocations, to mock opponents at every opportunity, to hide meaning and even to use words to say nothing. We enjoy observing their skills in this, as they and we know. But every so often a politician opens his mouth and puts his foot in it. If he's lucky it will not be noticed.

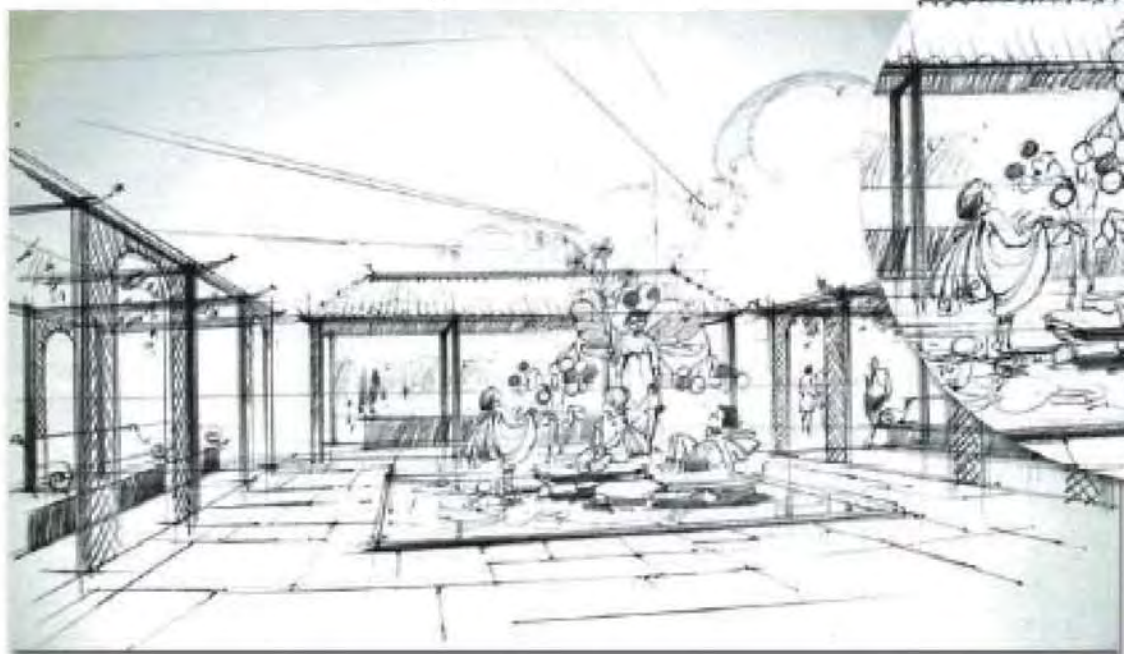


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# Corporation of London Baby Garden



welters organisation worldwide designed, manufactured and fully installed the impressive "fairy and pond" centre feature memorial sculpture and surrounds to The City of London Cemetery for the new baby memorial Garden.

The design also incorporates welters underground burial chamber systems.



Pictured below: Keith Welters (Designer of the memorial garden centre feature and burial chambers) with Dr Peter Hardwick at the opening day of the Baby memorial garden for The City of London.





# THE LADY OF TAVISTOCK

**Rex Oswin talks to a special lady, who at the age of 86 still holds her own in the world of local government**

**86-year-old Betty** Batchelor has become so well-known over the years in her attendance at Local Government Conferences that one wonders whether a Conference would be quite the same without her. And when she's there it isn't as an old trouser watching how the younger ones get on but as an active Councillor. There she was, at the last ALLC Conference at Blackpool, in the thick of it, asking her questions in that light, crisp voice of hers, and ready to question the answers if they weren't up to scratch. There's more to a Conference than just the business at hand, key though that is. There is also a spirit to such conferences, a spirit that reflects the conviction of so many people around the country willing to work hard and commit themselves to local democracy, willing to make each Conference count.

Few could be more representative of that spirit than Betty Batchelor, who has, for some seven decades, devoted herself to a principle, and stuck to it, and continues to do so for her local government in Tavistock.

I wanted to find out more about that principle, but also more about the lady that so many people respected and whom I had seen at the Conference only at a distance. I knew that she had been a dedicated Labour stalwart for most of her life and I looked forward to savouring the times she had lived through. Every year, every decade of a long, active life like that is better than money in the bank. It was hers.

So it was arranged that I should call her and chat.

From the start, her bright, friendly manner and her genuine interest in my questions and observations put me at ease. It was soon apparent, too, that Betty was much more a voice of the present than an echo from the past. She was willing to indulge me in a little wander down memory lane, but she is a very contemporary woman, with a sharp eye on the events of today.

Nevertheless, I was told a lot of people didn't know much about Betty, I considered such a long life would be full of incident. I was not wrong. Here's the backdrop.

Betty Batchelor was born in Plymouth in June 1918. Both her father and mother were radical, by which Betty means that they were firmly attached to the Labour cause. Ed Reeby, her father, worked as an iron-caulker in Plymouth's Devonport Docks and was a long term Trade Union member; her mother, a cook by trade, and an active member of the Co-operative Movement, was also a lifelong Methodist. These were the early influences on Betty as she grew up. She was born into what might be regarded as an auspicious time. The War was in its last stages and people were looking forward not only to peace but also to more initiatives for social change from Lloyd-George's Coalition. The Methodists, a campaigning religion, championing the



causes of the poor, happened to be sympathetic towards the reformist approach of the now-declining Liberal Party. That Party had itself been in some way a mother hen to the emerging Labour Party, and now the Labour Party was flexing its own muscles and getting ready to stand on its own feet as a Parliamentary contender.

Betty started school at Plymouth Central School when she was 5 and came out at the other end a mature 16-year-old.

'They were happy times, mostly,' she recalls. 'I say "mostly" because there were unpleasant aspects about it at times. 'What aspects were those? Caning, slapping?'

'Oh, no. There wasn't much of that at my school. Some children got their knuckles rapped by a ruler sometimes. One teacher used to say I was intelligent but talked too much. A bit like now...' She laughed, and continued. 'What I meant to say was that, you know, circumstances change but people aren't much different in themselves. The sort of things I mean are what people talk a lot about now but didn't make much of an issue of then - things like bullying, prejudice and so on. It isn't new'

Like most of us, she can recall teachers that had an effect on her. She fondly remembers the French teacher, 'a kindly young woman from Normandy. I still remember bits of French I learned with her.'

We agreed that teachers could make or break a child. 'I know some teachers are not very nice at all,' she said. 'But I was lucky, I think.'

She remembers two other young teachers of History and of Geography. 'They set up 'circles' of further education, which children could attend voluntarily. I learned so much

about my local region from my Geography teacher that even now driving in my car, I can recognise places she described and explained to us children.'

The school is now part of Plymouth University but 'it was a fine school and much respected'. One of its more famous pupils (apart from Betty) was a certain Angela Rippon.'

But if Betty's memories of her school were pleasant enough, even more so were those of her family and social life. 'We were a good solid Devon family,' she says. Her dad was the encouraging, jolly sort. Her mother, a Tavistock woman, was the guiding light of the family. They were churchgoing people - her mother more so than her father, who inclined to be eclectic. Gentle people, but both were quietly indignant at the plight of the lower classes. There was injustice in the land and they and their friends in the Movements wanted to right it.

'And we children in those families had our own organisations. I was in the Co-operative Comrade Circle and attended all the meetings. That's what we called going to "night-school". It was very interesting and we learned about Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers, that sort of thing.'

Both parents were ever supportive, Betty remembers. 'My parents were not restrictive. None of this telling me where or where not I should go, or telling me I have to be back at a certain time. Of course I would have obeyed them had they done so because I loved them and respected them. But they respected me, and that meant they trusted me.'

Just as well. Betty was an outdoor girl.

'I was a bit of a tomboy as they called adventurous girls in those days. I was a keen cyclist from the age of 13 right up to my 40's and over the years I cycled the length and breadth of Britain more or less. I had legs, I can tell you, though I'm not sure if cycling doesn't tell on the legs in later life.'

Betty, at 16, was drawn into the milieu that was to shape her political career over the following decades. She became a member of the Labour League of Youth and also of the Co-operative Comrade Circle, which was for people from 15 to 25.

I asked her if she had ever had any qualms about going along with her parents. Didn't she rebel against their view of life, as we're told children ought to do?

She saw though this. 'My parents were firm where it mattered. They used to say they didn't want to spoil me - me being the only child. But they gave me as much freedom as they could. You might think this is a contradiction, but I think that in those days kids were a little more independent than they seem to be today, perhaps because it was such a different society with different norms of behaviour from today. I don't know. But, anyway, in spite of that, there was a kind of link between parents and kids that we don't seem to get today with the post-war generation gap.

I know my parents used to take me with them to their meetings from a very early age. It was very sociable affair, adults and kids together, I remember. We kids played while the adults debated things beyond us. But as I grew older, I began to understand more of what was going on.'

What was that?

'When I got older I began to see things more clearly. My father and my mother were quite passionate in a subdued

way - I mean they didn't rant and rave; passionate about wanting to improve conditions of the working class at that time. They wanted votes for everybody, proper education

**I was as womanly as you can get, believe me, but I found I hankered after the jobs that were usually set aside for men**

for children, and end to poverty, clean and new houses - that kind of thing.' That is where Christianity and Labour came together. I'm not one for philosophy, but that seemed a more credible cause than any other I could think of, and that's why I went for it.'

My parents were an inspiration and always looked out for me. One day I was feeling a bit down and went upstairs to mope in my bedroom. Soon, in came Dad to tell me that my bike was ready - tyres pumped up and brakes adjusted, and that I should get out and get on with seeing the world. Words to that effect. I remember he was smiling and hearty and so well-meaning. I did as he advised and ended up having a jolly good day. It's a small thing but I remember it.

When Betty was 16 she passed her entrance exam to work for the Plymouth Co-op Society and chose to go into sales in the trade of ironmongery rather than do a desk job. 'It was a challenge in those days,' she says. 'I was as womanly as you can get, believe me, but I found I hankered after the jobs that were usually set aside for men - I suppose because they offered a bit of scope. It was the same when later I got involved in local government; there was always the assumption that women councillors would be involved in work to do with children. But I made a play for highways and roads and got away with it.'

On the day World War 2 broke out Betty was on a cycling trip with friends. Somebody broke the news to her group when they were relaxing on Slapton Sands, near Tor Cross, coincidentally the very place where American troops would later be training for the D-Day landings.

Was she shocked at the news?

She says, 'We'd all been making our protests against fascism, both in Spain and later in Germany. It was obvious to most of us that there wasn't going to be peace in spite of Chamberlain's bit of paper. Of course we all wanted peace. But, you know, you can see what's coming.'

During the war, Betty worked with the Defence Telegraph Network. Essentially this was facilitating communications in the United Kingdom. It was during the war, in 1943, when she was 25, that Betty married the man she loved for the rest of her life, a Royal Navy stoker called Len Batchelor. After demob he worked in the Dockyard.

Happy life?

'Oh, yes. If my parents had tried not to spoil me, Len was the opposite. He spoiled me rotten, and I loved it.'

A moment passes.

'Not that he was the only one I went out with before I was





married,' she adds with a small chuckle. I try to imagine how it must have been in Portsmouth in the war years.

What about the bombing? Did you get any of that?

'Bombing! Portsmouth received constant bombing. It was a port full of ships. But there were some particularly intensive raids. Our family suffered damage from three huge bombing raids. The last raid, we were completely bombed out. The house was demolished.'

How did people behave in such circumstances? Did human nature shine at its best?

'Well, I'm not sure if shine is the right word. What I think is that, in retrospect, you could see how class distinction broke down. Everyone suffered from the bombing whatever class. Everybody mucked in to alleviate the damage. I don't mean only those middle class people with socialist convictions, but all middle classes.'

So the war brought out the best in people?

'Well, not always.. I know people like to look back on things with rose-coloured glasses but I don't, necessarily. In spite of the spirit bonding that we thought most people showed, there were the nasty types. There were the spivs, the pillagers, the opportunistic criminals. I tell you. People are basically the same.'

So, how do you rate the British in wartime? Was the Blitz spirit just a myth?

'Well, I have to say that, in spite of the nasty types, I believe the majority of ordinary people did their best and mucked in. That was my impression!'

So you have faith in people?

'People, as I've said, don't seem to change. The circumstances change. And I think that affects behaviour. But you still have bad people as well as good people. That's all I can say.'

In all this time, from 16 to her early twenties, Betty Batchelor had continued to attend the many conferences of the time. The war was on but the people of the Labour

movement had hopes and expectations, as they'd had at the end of the Great War, before the Depression and the rise of Fascism dashed them. When the Second World War ended finally, the time had come for change. And those changes were sweeping.

**People don't seem to change.  
The circumstances change.  
And I think that affects  
behaviour.**

What do you feel about this period, the war and its aftermath?

'Well. My hero was Attlee. He ran the country while Churchill attended to the war. And he oversaw the others: Ernest Bevin, Aneurin Bevan, Herbert Morrison. They had all been working and planning for the future. When the end of the war came and Mr Attlee won the election we were over the moon.'

And it all happened. William Beveridge, a Liberal, produced his idealistic report and the whole Labour programme began to fall into place.

These were great times for Labour and for the rest of Britain. The magnificent Welfare State, covering Health, Pensions, Unemployment, and so on.

Not all running smoothly for Betty though. She'd been bombed out in the war and she and her husband had been living with her mother until the chance came to rebuild their bombed out home. Betty had faced up to this, as had many others who had suffered the loss of their homes and possessions. She continued to serve on voluntary committees and do her bit.

But misfortunes had come one upon the other. In 1946 Betty lost her first and only baby. In 1947 her husband and she did manage to build their house. But three years later her husband fell victim to an illness which became more serious as time passed.

Eventually, Betty had no choice but to take a job to support herself and her husband. She was able to land one finally as a lady superintendent at the Farley rusk company in her area.

This gave her a degree of security and she was able to take care of herself and husband. She was also able to enter public life once again, and soon became active in local government, throwing herself into committee work where she distinguished herself to the extent that she was even short-listed for selection as Labour MP.

Did you try for it?

'No, I'm afraid. In those days you could only risk it if you could afford it or if your job was safeguarded. Neither applied in my case.'

And the better times?

'I came into my prime in the late Fifties and most of the Sixties,' she says. I was always rather mature for my age and, this may sound strange, I think when I entered my forties I finally arrived at my right age group.

And I haven't moved from it since. I haven't changed in confidence at least.'

She recounts an incident which she thinks of as a turning point. In 1966 the English football team visited Plymouth to put on a token match with Plymouth Argyle. At the mayor's

reception later the World Cup was on display. In a social encounter around the cup it happened that Betty's mother was introduced as Mrs Batchelor's mother. Hitherto it had always been the case that Betty had been introduced as Mrs Reeby's daughter.

'That was a turning point for me,' says Betty. 'I knew I'd arrived. My mother was just as pleased.'

Ten years later, after Betty had been representing council for many years in many capacities, misfortune came once again. By 1977 her mother had become very ill. On top of this Betty had to report to her mother, her greatest champion over the years, that she had lost her seat on the County and on the City councils.

**I think when I entered my  
forties I finally arrived at  
my right age group. And I  
haven't moved from it since.**

A year later, at the age of 60, Betty moved to Tavistock with her husband. 'It was a bit like coming home', Betty said. Naturally I knew Tavistock well, being so close to Plymouth, but it was where my grandparents had lived and where my mother came from'.

When did you get active in local government there. Was it hard to get started?

'Not, really. People were kind and I think they saw me as a Tavistock person, really. I did voluntary work for the council, but it was only in 1983 that I became a councillor proper. And I've been one ever since, and very proud I am to be so.'

Betty had another knock in what she calls her 'up and down' existence. Her husband died in 1986.

But life brightened for once again, a few years later, when in 1995, at the age of 77, Betty became the Mayor of Tavistock.

This was a wonderful achievement, you must have been very proud.

'Oh, I was. of course. This didn't mean that I wasn't still a councillor. That's what I've been and still am. But I can't deny it was a real honour for me because it meant there were people who liked and respected me. And it was a kind of pinnacle to a long career I think.'

Over her many years as a Labour Party activist, Betty has come into contact with a good many well-known political figures. She had mentioned the wartime heroes already but I wondered if she'd care to talk a little about some of the post-war figures she admired.

On this, she was comfortable but made it clear that, although she met many larger than life figures and was often able to chat with them in the familiar way people adopted at Party meets, she was not on intimate terms with them.

Nevertheless, she remembers the impression some of them have made on her, and is proud, too, that she has been remembered by some of them for her services to the Labour Movement. She has received the Labour Party's award for Meritorious Service, the Co-op Movement's Long Service award, and Tony Blair's personal message on her



80th birthday is especially cherished.

What qualities did she admire in politicians - courage, integrity, vision, intellect? What makes a good leader?

'Thinkers and administrators are admirable', she says. 'But doers are most important. You must get power or you can do nothing. Herbert Morrison was an advocate of this; so were people like John Smith and Tony Blair.' Another 'doer' she has high praise for is Barbara Castle (who brought in seat-belts and breathalysers. 'We've had a good number of strong Labour women - Edith Summerskill, Betty Boothroyd, and Margaret Beckett among them. But I think I'd rate Barbara first. She was a 'go-getter'. She could take on anything and get it done'.

What about the other qualities?

'Well, we all admire integrity in people, but in politics you've got to be practical; you can't be naïve. But I do admire people in the Party who stand up for their Labour principles as they see them - people like Clare Short, for example, or Mo Mowlam'

Betty became a close friend of one such politician, Michael Foot, whom she's known since 1937. 'He is a man who has always put integrity and principle first. But he is a realist, too. When he saw it was in the interests of the Party to do so, he was quite ready to resign its leadership in 1983.

Possibly from her own experience in her own marriage and that of her parents, she has a particular regard for married teams in politics, exemplified by Nye Bevin and Jenny Lee, Niel and Glynis Kinnock. And Tony and Cherie Blair.

'It's better, I think, when spouses share the same interests.'

What about the world today and the way the Government's running things? What kind of things bother you?



'I do get the feeling sometimes that we rush into things. But I suppose that's the speed of the world; it's a harder world to manage. It's also harder to believe in things. It was easier in earlier days when you didn't know all the horrors that were coming.'

Have you found it hard to adapt to the many changes over the years?

'We adapt. We have to adapt. We have to manage change, that's what my party is all about. Obviously, many things are different now. People didn't have what they have today in material things or in technology. They had different attitudes to many things. But we can't just stand still.'

You've talked about your childhood. What about modern youth?

'They're much the same as they used to be. They have their challenges just like the rest of us. Sometimes I think we aren't as tolerant towards them as we might be.'

You don't think we should bring back the stocks, then?

'Not really! I'd be in them more often than not.' (another chuckle)

Oh, yes. You did say that you were a bit of a rebel.

'A rebel against the Establishment, not against the principles I was brought up with.'

You said you could be quite a difficult person.

'I don't mind if people think I'm difficult. In some things you have to be.'

Throughout the conversations we had, Betty surprised me in this ability to look back over the many years and make comparisons, but always from the viewpoint of today. Yes, she has her favourite things from the past. She likes the big swing bands, she remembers a favourite actor, James Stewart - (He had such a gentle manner to him). She loves Hollywood musicals. But she's perfectly at home with the entertainment values of today.

'I'm a populist, not a highbrow,' she says. 'I like soap operas. I think they help get social messages across. But I also like to keep up with events through the news and similar kinds of programmes. And I read the print off the newspaper most days.'

So, in all this, how does Betty Batchelor see herself in the big picture? She had intimated that she was a world citizen as well as a local patriot - and not too keen on the 'N' word - (Nationalist).

Are you Devonshire woman before an Englishwoman?

'I see myself as Celtic.'

Hmmm!

What do you like about being a councillor and what do you hate about it?

'Well, I don't actually hate anything about it, although I definitely do not like writing... in fact, yes I can say I hate writing.'

And what is it you like about it.

A pause. 'It makes me feel that I am part of the wider scene.'

And what is special about being a Tavistock councillor?

'I think we're all proud of being custodians of the beautiful Abbey and of the fact that Tavistock is the home town of Francis Drake. That's quite romantic, I think.'

And is it all a bed of roses? All the ambitious people float upwards towards bigger government while the decent people stay and take care of the garden?

'Oh, don't you kid yourself. Some people like to be a big fish

in a small pond. We have our work cut out keeping things running fairly. But we have a good team at the moment.'

Well, we're getting to the end now. A couple more questions. You told me that you favoured Britain's wholehearted commitment to the European Union. And yet you are dedicated to your own small patch in Devon, trying to win as many concessions as possible for it from big government.

**Socialism is a way of life, they say. And I believe that Socialism and the Christian values that run through it will bring people together, wherever they come from.**

Isn't there some kind of contradiction here?

'Not at all. Just because I love my part of the world and I love what I am able to do for it, it doesn't mean that I regard the rest of the world as alien. It is the values that connect people more than artificial borders. Local governments are everywhere and Europe today seems very similar to us. In some respects I feel as close to Brittany as I do to Northern Ireland, or Yorkshire, for example.'

Socialism is a way of life, they say. And I believe that Socialism and the Christian values that run through it will bring people together, wherever they come from.

OK. Last question. The Blackpool Conference. Was it good?

'One of the best, I think. A bit of debating instead of just listening. Pity we missed out the singsong at the end of it, though.'



## Calne Town Council Young Peoples Town Council (YPTC)

In the year 1993, Calne Town Council approached local schools to request nominations for pupils to act as representatives on a Young Peoples Town Council committee. This Council would follow the format of the regular Town Council Meetings, with elected Members, raising and debating issues of interest to the Young People in Calne. YPTC Members are encouraged to provide reports to Town Council Meetings, and attend meetings to support their ideas.

Officers and Councillors from the Town Council support the Group, advising on procedural practices and providing administration assistance, in addition meetings are regularly attended by Youth Support Workers, who lead Workshops. Various agencies and groups are also invited to assist when a topic requires specialist knowledge

The YPTC is very pro-active and during its history have the following achievements to their credit:-

- Fund Raising events
- Attendance at the National Youth Council Conferences (the current council is pleased to include in their numbers the vice chair of this group)
- Winners of the Nationwide Building Society Award for Voluntary Endeavour
- Students spearheaded a clean-air campaign, which was instrumental in the building and opening ahead of schedule of a relief road which reduces the previously extremely heavy traffic through the town.
- Campaigned for safe bike routes to schools
- Provided ideas for signage along a local river route.
- Supported plans for a 'Drop-In Centre', to keep youngsters off of the streets.

The present YPTC numbers 20 students with ages ranging from 10 to 18 years, representing both Primary and Secondary schools. This age range ensures that all young peoples views can be addressed, and that the Council will be sustainable for the future.

Calne Town Council is delighted with successes achieved by this group, and look forward to seeing current members continuing to represent their town in the years to come.

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## MOVING THE PARISH/TOWN AGENDA FORWARD

**A view from Councillor Tony Robertson who, probably uniquely, is Leader of both a large Town Council (Maghull, Merseyside), and Leader of his local Metropolitan Borough Council.**



Having been a Maghull Town Councillor for 20 years (17 as Leader), and a Sefton Borough Councillor for 6 years (15 months as Leader) and also having a number of small to medium sized Parish Councils in my Borough ward, I have built up a wide experience of the relationship between the first and second tiers of local government and the problems faced by both.

Firstly, I am a Parish Council junky. I love them in all their shapes, sizes and diversity. Yes, I can get frustrated with them at times but I also get frustrated by the straight jacket of local government generally in our overly centralised society. However, I have come to a number of conclusions and they will not be popular with some, I would bet.

Quality Councils? Yes, I think this scheme has generally been a good move. Maghull is not yet Quality Council but we aspire to be one. Why do I support this scheme? Well, my view is that it is a move towards modernising Parish and Town Councils, some of which, let's be honest, are stuck in a time warp of the 1950's and 60's. I believe that all Clerks need a good grounding in the powers, legal standing etc., of their Councils, something that is clearly not the case everywhere at present.

Decentralisation? Yes, a good thing but if Parishes are really going to take on responsibilities from the second, third or unitary tiers of local government, then they need the professional advice that probably only qualified Clerks can give. My view is that the Parish Councils' movement needs to be pressing government for more powers so that local people take local decisions. I really don't see much of a place for parish councils who are not taking some responsibility for running things in their community in the future.

Having identified a couple of either opportunities (as I see them), or threats (as maybe some others would), how do we move forward to ensure that Parish Councils are treated seriously by big brother Whitehall and the other tiers of local government? In many ways the larger the Parish Council the easier the solution seems to be. If you have a fulltime Clerk and staff, then by nature you probably have a reasonably professional organisation that can respond to opportunities or challenges. However, the smaller the Council, the more difficult the solution becomes. For example, your Clerk is part-time and may not have any relevant qualifications or skills. They may not wish to work the extra hours to enable you to pursue an objective or project and/or the advice they give may not cover the issue in enough depth. Projects can then stagnate because there is no one to push them on etc., etc. I think you get my drift.

So, having said that all Parishes should be embracing a more professional outlook and taking on powers and budgets from above, how do we actually do this especially in the small to middle sized councils? A chat with a fellow Parish Councillor who also chairs our parish councils' umbrella group (10 Councils ranging from large Maghull through to tiny Little Altcar) in Sefton Borough came up with an interesting and potentially innovative way forward. How about starting a process involving the 9 Parish Councils in the Borough that only have part-time Clerks to look to a future where we could have say, 3 full-time professional Clerks who could serve say, three Councils each?

Could the Borough Council help with training up such people? Could we then bring such qualified people in as the part time Clerks move on? Well, it's certainly an idea and with true partnership on all fronts it may work. I leave it to others to have a brew on this idea.

As for the larger Councils like Maghull we are in a 'limbo' land of the governments' making and which presently shows little sign of being resolved. The 41 Best Value Councils get a grant from the O.D.P.M. to assist with the cost of adhering to the statutory requirements. However, bearing in mind that the government issued a Statutory Instrument exempting any other Parish or Town Council being brought in to the statutory regime, the whole issue of Best Value Parish & Town Councils is clearly not a sustainable one. If, as I think an improved 'Quality Council' regime should be the future test of competence for any Parish Council, then let's get on with sorting it out.

I really do think that Parish Councils have a bright future running local communities but that future needs a clearer/better legislative backing teamed with genuine local powers. It can be done, so please big brother government, let's have a debate about how we get there.

**Councillor Tony Robertson,  
Leader of Maghull Town Council  
Leader of Sefton Borough Council**

## Maghull and District Youth Council From the Beginning

Back in 1990 Maghull Town Council wished to improve facilities for local young people and decided that giving them a voice was the best way of doing this. The Town Council wrote to each of Maghull's three secondary schools and asked them to send a number of young people along to a meeting at the Town Hall. At this meeting a Councillor, Youth Worker and Police Officer gave their views on how things could be improved. The young people listened and agreed to meet regularly but their future meetings were for them alone, adults attended by invitation only.

At the outset it was understood that if local young people wished to create a Youth Council they could do so, but it would be their decision, their work and their Council. There was no risk of adults stepping in and taking control if they did not like the direction in which the Youth Council was headed. The Town Council would offer them all the support it could and would listen seriously to any requests made, but for it to work well the young people had to feel it was their Youth Council to do with as they wished. It was also very important that when the Town Council agreed to implement a Youth Council idea it was done so quickly. Young people are not interested in waiting around, listening to excuses about procedures and budgets, etc. They want action, and action now! Anything less and they quickly conclude that they are being patted on the head and ignored, again.

It was soon realised that the Youth Council could never be truly independent while it relied on the Town Council to implement its ideas. So, it was resolved to give the Youth Council an annual budget to do with as they wished and have a Youth Projects budget, under the control of the Town Council, which they could apply to for grants. There was also an understanding that any really large projects would have to be added directly to the Town Council's budget and would therefore take a little longer to come to fruition. Once this situation was resolved the Youth Council developed gradually, finding their way, learning which ways were the most productive and which were not.

Whenever issues that affect young people arise the Town Council asks the Youth Council to help out. Special sub-committees have been set up to deal with particular questions and representatives from the Youth Council are always included. The Youth Coffee Bar Management Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Town Council, has two voting Youth Council representatives on it. They are included in as much as possible and so a good working relationship has developed. Councils are no longer strange to them.

Councillor Andrew Blackburn and Councillor Nickie Smith have attended most of the Youth Council's meetings over the years, but this was because they are invited, they are not entitled to attend. They are used as a source of information. They never discourage them from any projects but tell them where to find out the information they need, but they then have to do the work for themselves. Nickie was one of the first youth council members and has undertaken many roles such as secretary, chairperson, and is now a Councillor on Maghull Town Council having

been elected in May 2005.

*(Cllr Blackburn and Cllr Smith are the Honorary President and Vice-President of the Youth Council)*

Here are some of the achievements of the youth council over the last ten years:

- In 1996 and 2004 they surveyed local young people in schools, youth groups, local parks etc to find out what local young people wanted in the area.
- As a result of the 1996 survey a youth coffee bar was created in Maghull Town Hall. Youth Council members gave a presentation to the Maghull Town Council and the twenty thousand pound project began. The youth bar is now extremely busy and has been well equipped with a hi-fi system, television, video, dvd, pool table, play station, and two computers one of which is linked to the internet. The youth council members continue to manage this project.
- Obtained an arts grant from the European Union to hold dance, batik and drama workshops.
- Produced a newsletter and youth directory, which was given to every young person in all three local high school and youth groups.
- Held discos and live band nights for young people to attend.
- Produced an information pack to help other areas set up a youth council.
- Been involved with local events over the summer with the youth service. e.g. "Arts in the Parks".
- Participated in the local Round Table Carnival.
- Presents the "Youth Award" annually, to someone who has helped young people on a voluntary basis, at the Town Council's Civic Award Ceremony.

The Youth Council's influence is getting greater as it becomes more involved in all aspects of the community and works together with the Town Council on campaigns. They are a very determined and hardworking group which will continue to have many more achievements!!

**Cllr Nickie Smith**







## Seaham Town Council

### SEAHAM CELEBRATES

On 25th September, Seaham Town Council staged a spectacular day of celebrations to mark the 175th Anniversary of Seaham Harbour. Wonderful weather meant that a bumper crowd of circa 30,000 attended the Seaham Harbour Docks Open Day. There was a brilliant series of aerobatic displays starting off with the Battle of Britain Dakota Memorial Flight. This was followed by displays by Hawk and Tornado Aircraft. After this the Yakovlevs Formation Team performed followed by the Utterly Butterlys Wing Walking Team. The aerial displays were concluded by eight members of the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team dropping into a cliff top arena on the Terrace Green.

There were supporting arena acts involving displays by the Normandy Band of the Queen's Division Marching Band; a comedy car/clown routine and a display by the Derby Midshipmen Band. These were supported by the Trad Jazz Band and New Orleans Jazz Bands performing at other locations. There was also a huge fairground; a Farmer's Market and a range of static displays to keep the public entertained. Most importantly for Seaham Harbour, the town played host to three visiting Warships, HMS Cattistock (Royal Navy); FGS Weilheim (German Navy) and A950 Tug Valcke (Belgian Navy) and more than 5,000 visitors went on board to look around the Ships.

A particular highlight of the day was the presentation of the Council of Europe Flag of Honour to Seaham for its twinning achievements with Gerlingen (near Stuttgart). This partnership has been in existence for 17 years and so far has involved more than 1,000 people in both towns who have taken part in visits; stayed in each other's homes, and shared so many different cultural experiences together.



The Mayor of Seaham, Councillor Edward Bell being presented with the Council of Europe Flag of Honour for Seaham's twinning achievements with Gerlingen.



Members of the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team Dropping into Seaham



Large crowds taking the opportunity to visit the three Naval Ships In Seaham Harbour

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

One of Seaham Town Council's strategic objectives is to play a lead representational role on townwide issues. It is often immaterial whether it is a District, County Council or external agency activity because Seaham Town Council is committed to standing up for residents and fighting for their rights. In recent times the Town Council has successfully campaigned on:

- Seeking to find a solution to the minewater pollution problems which are affecting the town's drinking water.
- Pressing for improvements to the sewage pollution problems affecting Seaham's beaches and bathing waters.
- Improved health service provision from the Primary Care Trust who are agreeing to build a new Health Centre/Clinic with adjoining new Doctor's Surgery and Medical Training Centre within the town.

- Re-opening the North Dock to public access so that it can be enjoyed for recreational purposes including angling – Seaham Sea Angling Club is, in fact, the largest of such Clubs within the UK with over 500 members.
- Better road and rail transport links for the town.

### INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

#### **Working Together for the Community**

Seaham Town Council is committed to working with voluntary organisations and community groups and is always prepared to try and find new ways of improving efficiency and getting better value for money. The Council has successfully helped form "Friends of Park" Groups who act as volunteers in carrying out extensive improvements and repair works within woodland and park locations. Partnership arrangements exist with Sports Clubs who are responsible for doing "on a self-help basis" repair and maintenance works to sports pavilions from which they benefit by way of reduced rents. Control and management responsibilities for most of the Allotments sites have been devolved to Allotment Associations who have leases of their sites and are much better able to control tenants and offer better improved services. Most importantly the Associations, with the help of the Council, can access external funding opportunities to enable them to erect new boundary fencing and carry out other improvements to their sites.

#### **Promoting Responsible Citizenship**

Partnership arrangements also exist with the Rotary Club of Seaham and local Schools in respect of bulb and flower planting and clean-ups in parks and open spaces all of which are aimed at promoting the principle of "responsible citizenship amongst young people.

#### **Supporting Voluntary Organisations**

Another important role fulfilled by the Council is in providing grants to voluntary organisations and community groups in order to help with their invaluable work within the town. Last year the Council gave £4,643 to 30 organisations and the Mayor's Charity Appeal Fund distributed a further £4,850 to 17 voluntary groups and good causes thus providing better opportunities for those organisations to continue their invaluable work within the community.



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## THE HARVEST FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS AT HARPENDEN FARMERS MARKET

One of the oldest known festivals in Britain, the Harvest Festival, was celebrated at the Harpenden Farmers Market on Sunday the 25th of September by the Harpenden Brownies and Guides.

The Brownies and Guides explained to members of the public that any non-perishable items were being collected at the market and that they would then be donated to the Harpenden Day Centre who distributed them to the elderly community in Harpenden.



At the end of the day the stall was full to bursting point with a delicious array of produce.

The Town Mayor Councillor Clennell Collingwood thanked stallholders and members of the public who had been very generous with their donations and congratulations to the Brownies and Guides who made the day such a success.

**"I would like to record a special thank you to Mr Geoff Ackroyd who baked a harvest loaf specially for this occasion. The day was a wonderful community event which brought vitality to the Town Centre"**

## HARPENDEN WINS IN THE ANGLIA IN BLOOM 2005 COMPETITION

At the Anglia in Bloom 2005 Awards Ceremony held on 22nd September 2005 in Norwich, Harpenden won the SILVER GILT AWARD in the Large Town Category, and also a SPECIAL AWARD for Batford Nature Reserve in recognition of the nomination for the Best Conservation Project. Bury St. Edmunds won the Gold Award.

This is a wonderful achievement and it is thanks to all the hard work of all the organisations and individuals who were involved in the Harpenden In Bloom 2005 campaign.

A special thank you goes to the Harpenden in Bloom Working Party, all of the many volunteers, all the sponsors and everyone who participated in the many Harpenden In Bloom Competitions.

The Town Mayor, Councillor Clennell Collingwood said:

**"The Town Council are thrilled to be awarded a silver gilt award in the Large Town Category and also a special Award for the Batford Nature Reserve in recognition of the nomination for the Best Conservation Project. The Council would like to thank all those members of the community whose voluntary help and sponsorship have made this wonderful achievement possible."**

Preparations are already underway for the 2006 Competition, anyone who is interested in helping with sponsorship or would like to attend the Winter Planting Day, which is on the 30th October at 9.30am, then please contact the Town Hall.

For further information, please contact Sarah Norwood at Harpenden Town Council, telephone: 01582 768278, Fax 01582 760026, Email: [sarah.norwood@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.norwood@hertscc.gov.uk)

## Prestigious Environmental Award for Harpenden

Harpenden Town Council has received a prestigious environmental award demonstrating that Harpenden Town Council is one of the country's leaders in setting environmental standards.

The Green Apple Award will be presented at a special ceremony at the House of Commons in November. The awards are in their eleventh year and are well established as the biggest and most extensive scheme of its kind in the country. The campaign is run by The Green Organisation, an independent, non-political, non-profit environment group dedicated to recognising, rewarding and promoting environmental best practise around the world.

They are supported by the Environment Agency, The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Chartered Institution of Wasted Management and other professional

bodies and organisations.

National Organiser Roger Wolens commented "it is a tremendous achievement because the competition gets tougher and more fierce every year. Contenders are continually reaching new levels of environmental success and this campaign helps and encourages others to follow their good example with the aim of improving our environment for generations to come".

## 10th Anniversary Celebrations

In September 2005, Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve celebrated its 10th Anniversary and to commemorate this a Family Fun Day was organised by Harpenden Town Council and the Upper Lea Valley Group at the nature reserve on Saturday 10th September 2005.



Attractions at the Family Fun day included a birds of prey display, guided walks of the reserve, a basket weaving display, bouncy castle, Treasure Hunt, Bar-beque, face painting, local society exhibits and much more.

Despite the bad weather in the afternoon, the event was a great success with many people braving the

weather to take part in the event and enjoy this beautiful public space in Harpenden.



Funding and donations from Harpenden Town Council, St Albans District Council and Tesco Express, towards the celebrations enabled the event to be run free of charge for the residents of Harpenden.

Councillor Clennell Collingwood, Town Mayor attended the event and said "What a wonderful day for the community

which provided an opportunity for visitors to have guided walks around the Nature Reserve to see the work being undertaken to ensure this wonderful facility is preserved for future generations to enjoy."



For further information about Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve, please either contact Harpenden Town Council on 01582 768278 or the Upper Lea Valley Group on 01582 621017.



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## CHESHAM COMMUNITY VISION

As a keen and active partner in the 'Chesham Community Vision', Chesham's Market Town Health Check, the Council is very pleased to announce that its summary document has now been published.

The Chesham Community Vision was launched in early 2004. Over 400 residents from Chesham and surrounding communities plus representatives of more than 40 local businesses, groups and organisations responded to an initial consultation event. Over 3,000 individual responses have been captured as part of this new community-wide appraisal, completed by a broad spectrum of the community including the very young, young people, older persons, minority group representatives plus local retailers and businesses.

In late 2004 four Action Groups, Environment, Economy, Community & Transport, were created with a remit to build on the evidence from the consultation work and prepare a fresh action plan reflecting the views of the widest possible audience and forming a springboard for projects to be delivered by local community groups. This Vision document summarises the outcome of their work and offers an initial action plan, which will guide project teams as they seek solutions to the challenges facing Chesham over the next 10 years. The Action Groups have jointly produced a Vision Statement that underpins the document and is printed below.

'An active and vibrant working market town with an integrated but varied community where people support one another and can live, work, shop, visit and enjoy themselves in an environment that is constantly cared for and enhanced. A town that...

- provides sustainable employment opportunities, housing and business facilities that respect the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in which it is situated.
- encourages young and old from all areas to work together to achieve continual improvement to the facilities and future prospects of the town.
- promotes a thriving town centre which provides leisure and shopping facilities to meet the needs and wishes of residents and visitors.

- has a fully linked transport and communication system providing good services for people to travel within the town and regular connections to London and surrounding towns and villages.'

Copies of the document are available from the Town Hall or on-line at [www.cheshamchamber.com/communityvision](http://www.cheshamchamber.com/communityvision)

## Impress the Chess

The Town Council is leading on a big town effort to improve and regenerate the River Chess and Meades Water Gardens in Chesham. It is rightly considered one of the jewels in our town's environmental crown. Sadly, the whole of the

Chess, despite sterling clean-up efforts from both Chesham Environmental Group and the Rotary Club, has become a little run down over recent years. This, in the main, has been due to the many different riparian owners along the banks themselves and a lack of a coherent approach to tackle the problems. This is now being addressed and representatives of the Town Council and District Council, the Environment Agency and the AONB's Chalkstream Project Officer are working with the Chiltern Society, the Chesham Society, the Environmental Group (pictured below), the Youth Council and the Rotary Club, as well as many interested residents, to tackle the problems head-on.

Our aim is to bring back the river and Meades Water Gardens to their former glories, either through good old-fashioned volunteer labour or through professional, externally funded, assistance. If you want to get involved, contact the Town Clerk, Bill Richards, at the Town Hall. It's everybody's jewel!



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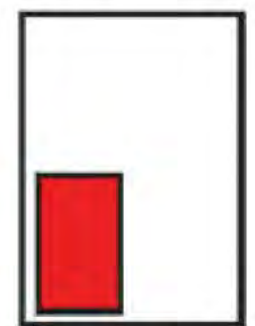
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