

WLD Regional Contacts

As many of you know, we are developing a regional network for WLD – here is the list of contacts so far. If there is a contact near you, do get in touch with her. If there isn't, please contact our Membership Officer, Pauline Jenkins jenkins.pauline@gmail.com and offer your services – it's not onerous!

Who	Where	Phone	Email
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WLD Executive Committee:

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WLD Office

Head of Office is Gill Chapman. Contact her at:

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Gill is usually in the office on Mondays (changed from Tuesdays) and Thursdays

On May 1st the Liberal Democrats took control of four new City Councils, regained control of nine, are now the largest party in several others and lost control in only two. Considering that we did particularly well when these seats were last fought four years ago, this is an excellent result. But what is the position of women in these councils? And what are women doing in Scottish cities where there were no elections? And in London, where results were, frankly, disappointing? WLD catches up with some of our

Women in the Cities

A Long-serving Councillor in Sheffield

Interviewed by Gill Chapman

We were all delighted when the LibDems won control of Sheffield, one of our main target councils and, of course, the home turf of our Leader. **Sylvia Dunkley** (right) has been a Councillor since 1995. Before 1994 her ward of Ecclesall had been Conservative for as long as anyone could remember, but between 1994 and 1996 all three seats fell to the LibDems and now it is one of our safest wards in Sheffield.



Sylvia admitted that, when she first became a Councillor, she really didn't know what she was letting herself in for, and her first meeting was quite a shock. Now she is in the LibDem cabinet as Cabinet Member for Streetscene, Leisure and Culture – and is described by her colleagues as someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the work of the Council. It is, perhaps, somewhat disappointing that the proportion of women in the LibDem group has not increased since Sylvia was first elected. About a third of the group were women, and that is still the case now. In the cabinet of 10 members only two are women. She is particularly concerned about how few women put themselves forward for the Planning Boards – there are two Boards of ten members each, but each has only one woman. This is particularly unfortunate because Planning has such a huge influence on people's daily lives. Sylvia doesn't feel that there is any sexism in the group – women who wish to exert influence are listened to with as much respect and attention as the men. The problem seems to be that women are reluctant to put themselves forward for the high profile roles – for instance, the media are usually present at Planning meetings as can be numbers of angry residents. Also, Sylvia knows that time is a huge problem for many women who are juggling a variety of roles and who still take on most of the responsibility at home. Reading for a Planning meeting can run to several hundred pages.

This reluctance of Sheffield women to put themselves in the limelight is borne out by the recent picture of the triumphant new Sheffield Councillors on the front of Liberal Democrat News (9th May). One third women? It doesn't look like it!

A New Councillor in Hull

Interviewed by Gill Chapman

The sitting Labour member in Pickering Ward, Kingston-upon-Hull, put out an election leaflet asking his electorate whether they really wanted to elect yet another young woman Councillor on May 1st. Apparently this was not a sexist comment, but a reflection of the fact that the two sitting LibDem women in the ward were both young and female – and they must have been doing a good job because



a third was duly elected. She is **Claire Thomas** (right), aged 33 and a University Lecturer. Hers was the fourth of five LibDem target seats in Hull, and they took all five to win control of the Council. Three of the new members are women, and women now make up almost half of the LibDem group – 15 out of 32 Councillors.

Claire says that she had not intended to stand this year but was persuaded to do so, particularly because she is female and (comparatively!) young. Her first impressions of the LibDem group are that the atmosphere is consensual and that everybody who wishes to be heard is listened to, whether male or female. There are a lot of strong women coming up fast, and Claire says that the men are very much aware of this. As far as she can tell there is no resentment – but the men make jokes about watching out for the 'Pickering Team' as she and her fellow ward Councillors are called. The leader of the Council is male, but the Deputy leader, the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor are all female.

In fact, Claire feels that gender is not really an issue – many of those with the most consensual attitude are, in fact, men. Possibly the most interesting fact about Hull LibDems is not the number of women they have but the number of young people – Claire says that the leader and a third of the cabinet are younger than she is, and they have one Councillor aged 20. Could this be part of the reason why they have women-friendly working practices? Have the new generation of young men learnt better habits from us women?

A New Councillor in Liverpool

By Lynn Williams(left)



A few years ago I made a comment to experienced Lib Dem Councillor Richard Oglethorpe that I would like to be a councillor before I was forty. He never asked me at time which party I planned to stand for, but he obviously stored this information up, because in January 2007 I was invited to Richard's house and, to my surprise, was asked to stand as the candidate for the Speke/Garston by-election that March. I was thrust into the world of Community Politics but unfortunately failed to win the seat.

Then this year I was asked if I would like to be nominated to stand for Mossley Hill and Aigburth. I had been helping Ward Councillors Tina and Ron Gould and Dave Antrobus out on issues relating to young people and ASB. I was very honoured to be asked, and immediately became a part of what I can best describe as my new family. Being part of such an experienced and knowledgeable team has been great. As a fulltime working mum of two and new

elected councillor, finding a work life balance I know will be difficult and the advice I have received from Tina has been invaluable. After being in the minority for years as the ward's only female councillor, Mossley Hill has now got Girl Power!

Being in Elected on the 1st of May for me was exciting but somewhat overshadowed by Liberal Democrat losses in the City. However, we do still have control of the Council, and 17 out of our 46 Councillors are women.

I can best describe my experience so far as a Baptism of Fire. Only eight days into politics and I was offered an Assistant Executive Members position. I now feel the twenty years working for the Liverpool City Council in various managerial roles, gaining an insight into its vision will now prove very useful. I am really looking forward to the challenges ahead.

A Women's Team in Glasgow

by Helen Watt



Belying the traditional image of Glasgow as a bastion of male dominated, Labour oriented politics, **Katy Gordon** (right), PPC for the target seat of Glasgow North, has a surprisingly high number of women in her support network.

From Lorely Burt MP as her mentor, Elspeth Attwooll MEP to help with funding, Cllr Mary Paris as link to the council group and Jo Swinson MP as a key source of local campaigning advice and encouragement right through to the volunteer activists who act as her chief fundraiser (Danica Gilland), EARS Officer (Sarah Thomas) and party chair (Ann Laird), this formidable team is attracting more people to the campaign every month.

Katy began campaigning as PPC in this Labour held seat following the Scottish elections in May 07, where she had already worked part of the seat as PSPC for Glasgow Kelvin. In the past year, from a very low base, Katy has succeeded in delivering 3 constituency wide leaflets (to 32,000 households). She has also been building her network of leafleters, which is nearly 100 strong now, canvassing nearly every week and has impressed party HQ with the thousands of pounds she has raised so far.

In the autumn, Katy led a successful campaign to save 2 local post offices in the constituency and this April was celebrating another successful hard fought campaign to prevent a nightclub being built in Glasgow Botanic Gardens. This campaign was led by the 3 councillors in her constituency and both successes have been well received by local people. Katy said:

"I have been delighted by how fast my team is growing, the willingness of supporters to fund the campaign and we are learning more every day. Winning the first campaign I have led was a huge boost and has gone down really well with local people. If my campaign continues to grow and Labour to self destruct, I fully expect to become the first non Labour MP in Glasgow since Roy Jenkins time!"

A London Assembly Member

By Caroline Pidgeon (right)

Fighting any seat is hard work. Taking on a target GLA 'super constituency' is even harder - needing even more energy and hours in the day to campaign and to motivate members and helpers on the ground. The Lambeth and Southwark constituency has some of the wealthiest and some of the poorest parts of central London. For me one of the interesting things about this campaign was that the three main parties all selected women to fight the seat.



Whilst the media was obsessed by the Boris-Ken show, we focussed our energies on trying to win the seat which I came within 2.4% of winning in 2004. We focussed on simple issues - saving local post offices and police stations, campaigning for the cross river tram and for value for money from council tax. We ran a superb campaign - delivering around 200,000 letters, hundreds of thousands of leaflets and newspapers, canvassed many hundreds of households - and achieved around 37,000 votes. Sadly this was not enough to win the constituency due to the high turnout. However I was lucky enough to have been selected third on our top-up list and therefore was elected an Assembly Member on 3rd May - representing the whole of London!

So my first few days and weeks at City Hall have been very interesting. Dee Doocey and Mike Tuffrey - my fellow Lib Dem Assembly Members - have been showing me where things are and how the Mayor's Question Times and committee structures work - it is certainly very different from local government! Looking at the 25 Assembly Members, what struck me was how unrepresentative the Conservative group is - only 1 woman out of 11 members.

Getting elected to the Assembly is a great honour. I am looking forward to campaigning with our local parties and council groups across London to ensure that we make a difference to the communities we represent and that Lib Dems go from strength to strength across the capital.

You can follow Caroline's campaigning on www.carolinepidgeon.org

Federal Committee Elections!

The elections for these committees are now held every two years. We need more women to put themselves forward to ensure a female perspective is voiced. Currently there only one third of the membership of the Executive and the Policy committees are women.

Please think about this now, and if you even slightly interested contact the office for the name of someone near you to talk to. Or talk to us in Bournemouth

From the WLD Officers.....

From Claire Jackson, Chair

It was good to be able to go to Crewe to support Elizabeth Shenton, our excellent candidate for Crewe and Nantwich. Lizzie Jewkes from our executive has also been to help a few times and handed over a cheque from us.

This practical support for women candidates is something we would like to do more of over the next couple of years; and will complement the work by the Campaign for Gender Balance who are working hard to support women through the selection process.

Our executive is also active in finding ways to support women at all levels in the party, such as at our Training day in Bath. In particular having very strong representation by women in councils is essential. If you would be able to help us organise an event in your area please get in touch with me via the office.

To continue our work we need to attract on-going although limited funding from the party. A full funding review of party organisations is taking place and we hope to use the opportunity to make a case to support our activities for the future. In the mean-time we plan to raise more of our own funds and are running our garden party again this year.

We are sure that you all share our grief at the death of the tireless prison campaigner, Pauline Campbell. Pauline was a trustee of the Howard League for Penal Reform, and took part in protests outside many prisons following her daughter's death in Styal prison in 2003. WLD members campaigned with Pauline during our Women in Prison campaign and she had kept in touch with us since then.

We are in the middle of up-dating our website and would welcome your comments or your ideas on what should be there. Do get in touch with Gill in our office. The web site is not only there for our members but also needs to be of interest to potential Lib Dem voters and of course all women who are members of the party.

From Gill Chapman, Head of Office

I have enjoyed getting to know some of you through phone calls and emails during my first three months in the job. Most of you should have had two 'Email Updates' from me, and some of you have opted to have information from our partner organisations forwarded to you. These include the Fawcett Society, the Women's Resource Centre, the Women's National Commission and our own Campaign for Gender Balance.

If you have not heard from me this means we do not have an up-to-date email address for you. PLEASE email me with your correct address if you think this may be the case.

Special Interest Register: Please also contact me if you have any special interests or areas of expertise which you think might be of use to WLD. Be assured that your name will not be given to anybody else without your express permission.

<http://www.flocktogether.org.uk>: if you haven't looked at this site, do! It's an excellent way of finding out about elections and meetings in your area.

WLD Bath Forum

Saturday 28th June 9.45am to 4pm

Conference Sessions: *Twenty Years On – Women in the Party and the Country
Women and The Environment*

Training Sessions: *Getting more involved, building confidence & skills*

Venue: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath. 10 minutes walk from station, three minutes from Charlotte Street car park.

Disabled access and toilet

See www.brlsi.org for map

Cost: £17.50 per head, including tea, coffee and lunch. Please register in advance using form included with this newsletter.

WLD Garden party

Saturday 25th August 2.30 to 5pm

We had such a great day at the Garden Party in the New Forest last year that we are doing it again! With delicious cream teas, mouth-watering cakes and an idyllic setting it promises to be another thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Venue: Fordingbridge, New Forest, Hampshire

Cost: Adults: £7.50 Family Tickets: £15

More details from Gill

Please nominate a woman in your constituency for the

Patsy Calton Award!



We have had a somewhat limited response so far to our second annual Patsy Calton Award competition. We are sure there must be many women in your area who are worthy of recognition from us for their contribution at any level of the party, as an activist, a councillor or a parliamentarian. Please take a moment to think about who you could nominate.

Unsuccessful nominees from last year CAN be nominated again this year!

Patsy was an activist, a Councillor, a Parliamentarian, a teacher, a mother and an inspiration to us all. She died tragically early, just after being elected to parliament in 2005. Patsy's energy, enthusiasm and achievements were phenomenal, and our Award is a way of both remembering her and encouraging other women to become more active in the Party. Nomination form enclosed.
