

# LANDSCAPE

Newletter of Liberal Democrat ALTER:

Action for Land Taxation and Economic Reform

Spring 2012 Issue

## **Tony Vickers steps down, New Chairman William Davison takes his place**

*After 14 years as chair, Tony Vickers has stepped down, commenting that it is time for a change and he would like to devote more time to his work as secretary of the Professional Land Reform Group. Here is a report from the incoming chair.*

Firstly as the incoming chair of ALTER, I would like to thank Tony Vickers on behalf of everyone in ALTER for his chairmanship of ALTER for the last 14 years. He has proved an expert chair and is a hard act to follow. I would have preferred it if he set the bar a little lower for me. I am relying on his continued active support on the Exec and I will have to play to different strengths as clearly there are aspects of Tony's experience

as Chair which I am not going to improve on.

### **Website and Social media.**

ALTER's first priority must be to improve our website. The AGM agreed that there must be tutorial material on site (rather than linking off to other sites) for those new to LVT to make it clear that ALTER is leading on LVT to both to Lib Dems and the press. We also need to make our news items more press friendly i.e. shorter and simple, nothing too *taxing*.

We have recently created a Twitter link @LibDemsALTER on our website and tweeting all our news from our website and any press articles related to LVT. It is becoming a very rich source of information with the help of Adam Corlett and re-tweets by Liberal Insight. Can members please follow us on Twitter as we don't have many followers yet? It is getting us noticed; for example we already have two firms of accountants and a company specialising in advising high net-worth individuals. With any luck the reallocation of resources from

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property speculation has already begun.

A plea to members and new members to please use the website to renew subscriptions, so we can renew membership automatically in future. Can we remind the members who have not yet renewed, it would be good to add you to 25% increase in

membership since end of 2011? We know you have not given up on us as some of you attend our fringe meetings. Your subscriptions and donations are vital as they go towards funding literature, exhibition stands and fringe meetings at Federal and regional conferences.



Nick Clegg visiting the ALTER stand at Inverness, with William Davison (in shirt), Tom Inglis and Professor Roger Sandilands.

### **The Scottish conference**

Scotland is particularly important as there is considerable cross-party support for LVT North of the Border and ALTER aims to increase its activities and membership there. The Scottish Act could be an opportunity for radical reform of the system as it allows the possibilities of cutting

income tax up to 10%, the abolition of Stamp Duty and the introduction of any new tax without the need of Westminster legislation.

This was the first Scottish conference ALTER had attended in 10 years. We had a perfect position for the ALTER stand, opposite the bar, and all the Introduction to LVT leaflets went

within the first day. What was particularly pleasing was that most people coming up to the stand had little or no knowledge of LVT and we were not preaching to the converted. Tom Inglis and Andrew Duffield joined me on the stand and proved a very effective combination at wearing down even the most determined to find fault with LVT. The fringe meeting was disappointing in number attending, as it came up against stiff competition with other fringe meetings. Hugh Andrew was the Chair and with Professor Roger Sandilands of Strathclyde University and Malcolm Bruce as speakers. Malcolm Bruce is a firm supporter of LVT and as you would expect is a good speaker.

We plan to renew our efforts in Scotland at the one day Autumn conference in Dunfermline which should be well attended as it is so near to Edinburgh. With Tom Inglis and Andrew Duffield to help, I think we should be able to build on a promising start.

The challenge for ALTER is to turn this support for the principle of reclaiming land values for the community into a LVT policy. The party leadership appears to be pursuing a piecemeal approach of one-off schemes, like community land auctions and CrossRail financing. With Tory opposition to LVT, this is understandable, but that is never going to really radically reform the economy.

LVT is one of the few taxes that stimulates economic growth.

In many ways the ALTER is winning the argument. When I asked someone who approach our stand if they knew of LVT, they said "yes, everybody is talking about it." I had to stop myself saying "are they?" What a change on even two years ago ; the Telegraph said recently "The true Lib Dem obsession is to lift more of the lowest earners out of income tax entirely" illustrating how far we have come.

### **2012: ALTER Heads for Record Membership**

The ALTER membership campaign got off to a fantastic start this year. Thanks to our presence at the conferences in Inverness and Gateshead we have recruited 25% more new membership so far this year. In addition to that our stands at the two conferences had many visitors, some of whom left contact details which are being followed up in the hope of gaining more supporters.

For the first time at Federal Conference ALTER decided to hire one of the medium sized Exhibition Stand (rather than the smallest one); we were able to do so, thanks to the generosity of ALTER Executive member John Howell, who donated £60 to cover the difference in cost. All of us who worked on the stand felt this was an important factor in our success. With membership now expanding,

we should be able to finance a similar size stand at Brighton.

The other big factor is undoubtedly that Land Value Taxation is now attracting a lot of attention both within the Party and the Media; Liberal Democrats are eager to learn more about it. ALTER wants to be in a position to tell them more. We have aroused considerable interest among Scottish LibDems, not only in Inverness but many of them also dropped by the stand in Gateshead to say hello. We want to tackle Wales next; although the Welsh Assembly doesn't have tax-raising powers, that is under review and could well change. We must be prepared for that.

ALTER also wants to have a more marked presence at regional conferences and in the specialist group conferences of the Party such as ALDC. To do this we need your help. Obviously expanding our presence in this way costs money, so if you have still to pay your 2012 ALTER membership subscription, please do so now: either by enrolling on line through

PayPal or by completing the attached membership form and sending it with a cheque for the appropriate amount to me. Don't forget we set our membership fees at minimum levels, so if you can manage a little more in the way of a donation, it would be appreciated and put to good use. If you have any queries about your membership please e-mail me (CEHodgkinson@aol.com) or telephone me (01865 741116/07852 338852).

Just as important as money, however, is your time, if you can spare any. Are you able to help on our stands at Federal/Scottish/Welsh/ regional/ other LibDem conferences? Please contact us if you can assist. ALTER needs your help to get our message across to other Party members who are clearly very receptive to the idea of LVT in the present economic and political conditions. This is a great opportunity, please help in whatever way you can.

*Catherine Hodgkinson, Treasurer and Membership Secretary*

***Join ALTER and fight for tax justice***

*Visit our website at: [www.libdemsalter.org.uk](http://www.libdemsalter.org.uk),*

*Or write to:*

***Catherine Hodgkinson, Membership Secretary, ALTER,  
51 Demesne Furze, Oxford, OX3 7XG***

Printed, published and promoted by David Cooper on behalf of Liberal Democrat ALTER,

all at Oak House, Garden Close Lane, Newbury RG14 6PP