

21 April 2010

IN BRIEF: THE PARTIES POSITIONS ON KEY EU POLICIES

Below is a summary of the parties' basic position on EU policy.

	Labour	Conservatives	Lib Dems
EU referendum?	On the euro	On further transfers of power to the EU	On UK membership of EU and the euro
Joining the euro?	Mixed messages	Never	Yes
Crime and Policing?	Status quo	No new EU powers, opt out	More integration
European public prosecutor?	Against	Against	Mixed messages
Immigration and asylum	Partly in favour of more EU integration	Against more integration and asylum burden-sharing	More integration, in favour of asylum burden sharing
EU Defence	Possibly more cooperation	Against, no EU defence procurement	EU defence procurement
EU Foreign policy	Keep EU diplomatic service separate from national issues	Keep EU diplomatic service separate from national issues	Keep EU diplomatic service separate from national issues
Reform of the EU budget	Vague CAP reform promise, maintain UK rebate	Vague CAP reform promise, maintain UK rebate	Vague reform promise, mixed messages on CAP and UK rebate
EU financial supervisors	In favour with reservations	Against if transferring powers	In favour with reservations
EU employment policy	Status quo	Opting out of parts "most damaging" to economy	Status quo
Common Fisheries Policy	Fundamental reform	Fundamental reform	No mention in manifesto
Environmental policy	Support EU action, and current targets	Support EU action and current targets	Support EU action and raise targets

FUTURE EU REFERENDUM

Labour: Has committed to a referendum on a decision to join the euro.

Conservatives: Promise to amend UK law so that any “proposed future treaty that transferred areas of power, or competences, would be subject to a referendum – a ‘referendum lock’”. The ‘referendum lock’ would also include a decision on whether to join the euro, and decisions on whether the EU should acquire more powers through any of the Lisbon Treaty’s so-called ‘ratchet clauses’ (which allows for transfers of powers without Treaty change).

Lib Dems: Promise a referendum on the euro, and commit to a referendum on whether the UK should remain in the EU at all. The manifesto states that the party supports calling an in/out referendum “the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU”.

Our assessment: When it comes to flip-flopping on the referendum question, the Lib Dems are in a league of their own. The party broke its 2005 promise to support a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty by abstaining in the key vote which ratified the Treaty in 2008, calling instead for an in/out referendum. Weeks later, however, the Lib Dems abstained in the Lords from voting for such an in/out referendum when an amendment to that effect was put down, and instead voted in favour of the Lisbon Treaty. The in/out idea then appeared to have been dropped with former party leader Sir Menzies Campbell saying in December 2009 that there was “no public appetite” for such a vote since the Lisbon Treaty was now ratified.¹ But the pledge now seems to have re-appeared in the manifesto. Whatever the party says on the EU and the referenda question must therefore be taken with a pinch of salt.

Depending on how tightly they define ‘a transfer of power’, the Conservatives’ ‘referendum lock’ could give voters a stronger and much needed sense of ownership over key EU decisions. However, defining the terms for what will trigger a referendum and deciding who will make the final call on such a decision is a major challenge for the party – and could prove controversial with the party’s backbenchers and activists if not perceived as going far enough. There will be a number of potential EU proposals which could generate calls for the ‘referendum lock’ to kick in – some more credible than others – including the creation of a European Monetary Fund, treaty change to allow for revised eurozone rules, increased EU powers over member states’ budgets, and the creation of three new EU financial supervisors.

The Labour government’s decision not to hold a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty – as promised in 2005 – constitutes a clear and unequivocal broken promise, as the EU Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty are virtually identical.² The party makes no effort to repair the breach of trust this caused in their manifesto.

JOINING THE EURO

Labour: Appears committed to joining the euro. In February this year, Peter Mandelson said “I think in the longer term it would be in Britain’s interests to be part of the eurozone”³ and insisted that “Don’t ask me when. It’s not going to be soon, but

¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8388475.stm

² <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/comparative.pdf>

³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financetopics/financialcrisis/7216087/Britain-should-join-euro-despite-Greece-crisis-says-Mandelson.html>

we will do it”.⁴ The manifesto states that “there will be no membership of the single currency without the consent of the British people in a referendum”.

Conservatives: Say in their manifesto that “a Conservative government would never take the UK into the euro.”

Lib Dems: Nick Clegg effectively admitted earlier this month that the UK would have been worse off if joining the euro – as the Lib Dems advocated in the last general elections.⁵ However, their manifesto makes clear that the party remains in favour of Britain joining the euro in the long-term, subject to a referendum.

Our assessment: The Conservatives stand out with their unequivocal promise never to take the UK into the euro. Labour and Lib Dems are still committed to joining in the long term, although Lib Dems are more explicit in their pledge.

Crucially, from being in favour of joining the euro it also follows that the Lib Dems and Labour accept being part of potential future measures such as a European Monetary Fund, and stronger central EU controls over national budgets – which are rightly perceived as huge steps towards an EU economic government.

EU CRIME AND POLICE MEASURES

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has gained significant new powers over crime and police issues, and is set to come forward with a slew of proposals for more EU laws in this area. For example, a proposal allowing member states to transfer criminal investigations from one member to another, with the aim of creating a “*common European area of freedom, security and justice*”.⁶

Decisions on whether or not the UK opts into these new measures over the next five years will be crucial in determining the extent of the role that the EU and the European Courts have in affecting criminal and justice policy in the UK.

There are also a number of key decisions to be made on measures that the UK currently is opted in to – for example, on Eurojust, of which the UK is already a full participant. Under the Lisbon Treaty, Eurojust’s tasks have been expanded to “the initiation of criminal investigations, as well as proposing the initiation of prosecutions conducted by competent national authorities”⁷.

Crucially, under the Treaty, Eurojust’s remit can be expanded by majority voting, meaning that the UK could be outvoted. It is not difficult to conceive of a scenario where Eurojust’s powers to investigate are expanded to a wider number of crimes than is supported by the UK Government. A future UK Government must therefore decide on whether it will vote in favour or against a Eurojust with more powers over prosecutions of British citizens. This is particularly important since Eurojust itself has been no stranger to controversy. In December 2009, its head, the Portuguese prosecutor Jose da Mota, resigned after he was suspended for 30 days for having

⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1254179/Mandelson-insists-Britain-WILL-join-euro-despite-single-currency-crisis.html>

⁵ He told the Today Programme on 7 April 2010 that “I don’t think the euro is for now. I go even further and say I don’t think interest rates under the eurozone over the last few years wouldn’t have been right for the British economy...I accept that eurozone interest rates over the last few years would have been wrong for Britain,” see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/today/newsid_8606000/8606630.stm

⁶ <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmeuleg/19-xxv/19xxv10.htm>

⁷ (Article 85-1a)

put pressure on Portuguese prosecutors in order to stop a corruption probe involving Prime Minister Jose Socrates⁸.

Labour: Support the status quo, continued EU cooperation in this area.

Conservatives: have spoken out against new powers for the EU in the area of justice and home affairs, with David Cameron telling the Andrew Marr show, “*There are many things in the Lisbon treaty-giving more power over home affairs and justice-that we don't think is right.*” They have also been critical of the European Arrest Warrant and said they want a “proper opt-out from the charter of fundamental rights”, and a limit to the jurisdiction the ECJ has to rule over criminal justice issues.⁹

Lib Dems: appear strongly in favour of increased EU cooperation on justice and home affairs measures across the board, including on the European Arrest Warrant, Europol, Eurojust, and the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS).¹⁰ They also support “*greater action by Europol and Eurojust where justified.*”¹¹

Our assessment: This is the biggest growth area of EU powers under the Lisbon Treaty. Under the Treaty, the UK has an opt-out from all justice and home affairs measures until it decides to opt in.

The Conservatives have pledged to opt out of justice and home affairs measures under the Lisbon Treaty, although haven't specified exactly how they would do so. Determining how to treat the measures that the UK is currently opted into constitutes a major decision for the party.

The Lib Dems are clearly the most fervent supporters of more EU integration in crime and policing, and its untempered support for bodies like Eurojust is interesting given that the body's impartiality has been called into question. This, and the party's support for more data-sharing for example, does raise questions about the party's claim that “*Civil liberties and individual freedoms are part of the DNA of the Lib Dems*”¹².

EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

The Lisbon Treaty states that a European Public Prosecutor (EPP) could be established in the office of Eurojust to prosecute in cases of “crimes affecting the financial interests of the Union” (Article 86-1). This remit could be expanded to include “serious crime having a cross-border dimension” by a unanimous vote of all the member states (Article 86-4).

The EPP is clearly very significant. If the UK were to ‘opt in’ to the measure, the EPP could launch a prosecution of British citizens in the UK without the approval of the UK's prosecution services.

However, even if the UK does not ‘opt in’, the EPP could still go ahead if nine member states decide to use the EU's ‘enhanced cooperation’ procedure. Under this scenario, UK citizens could still face prosecution by the EPP in one of these nine EU

⁸ *EUobserver*, ‘Eurojust chief quits over power abuse scandal’, 17 December 2009; <http://euobserver.com/9/29174>

⁹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091203/debtext/91203-0011.htm>

¹⁰ Lib Dem 2010 General Election manifesto

¹¹ Lib Dem 2009 European election manifesto

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/apr/13/nick-clegg-liberal-democrats-manifesto>

member states, with the EPP issuing a European Arrest Warrant to extradite British citizens to face the charges and the UK authorities powerless to prevent it.

Conservatives: Have repeatedly said they would oppose the creation of an EPP.¹³

Labour: The Labour government has said that it has “*consistently opposed the creation of a European Public Prosecutor*” and stated that it will not opt in to such a measure.¹⁴

Lib Dems: Have sent out mixed messages. While at times saying that they oppose the EPP, their Home Affairs spokesman Chris Huhne defended the creation of the EPP during a debate on the Lisbon Treaty in 2008, saying that he saw a role for the prosecutor in trying cases in UK courts involving fraud against the EU’s budget. He said, “*We are talking about a prosecutor, and a prosecutor is still somebody who has to make a case in a court, and that court would be a court of the member state. Therefore, all the normal judicial process that we would guarantee here in the UK would be present.*”¹⁵ Huhne’s comments suggest that a Lib Dem government would consider opting in to the measure.

Our assessment: The creation of an EPP is hugely controversial and the Lib Dems are the only party which hasn’t clearly ruled out the UK opting in to it. Apart from sending out mixed messages, the Lib Dems’ strong support for Eurojust, out of which the EPP would operate, also suggests that the party would take a far softer stance on the EPP than the Conservatives or Labour.

IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM ‘BURDEN SHARING’

Within the next few years, the Commission is set to propose measures for the harmonisation of treatment of asylum seekers and possibly the creation of a European Asylum Support Office, to assist member states in coping with a rise in asylum seekers.

Proposals are also in the pipeline for a burden-sharing provision to ease the stress on border member states, such as Malta and Italy, under which member states ‘re-distribute’ asylum seekers amongst themselves, possibly in accordance with their population size. The proposal could also include fiscal transfers to compensate member states that accept a large number of asylum seekers.¹⁶ The proposals have already received the backing of the European Parliament.

Labour: Earlier this year Labour opted out of an EU Directive laying down common standards for the treatment of asylum seekers, suggesting they are not wholly in favour of EU wide action in this area.¹⁷

Conservatives: are opposed to burden sharing between Member States¹⁸ on EU asylum, and opposed to harmonising policies on legal migration with other EU

¹³ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091203/debtext/91203-0013.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100225/text/100225w0012.htm>

¹⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080129/debtext/80129-0016.htm#080129146000137>

¹⁶ See, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/022-55223-124-05-19-902-200905061PR55222-04-05-2009-2009-true/default_en.htm

¹⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/feb/24/home-office-opt-out-asylum-eu-directive>

¹⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/6399333/Britain-forced-to-take-more-asylum-seekers-under-EU-common-asylum-plan.html>

countries, believing such decisions should be taken at national level. Also opposed to common EU criteria for handling asylum applications.¹⁹

Lib Dems: state in the manifesto that they are in favour of a coordinated EU-wide asylum system, including sharing of responsibility between member states, stating in their manifesto that they will, “*Push for a co-ordinated EU-wide asylum system to ensure that the responsibility is fairly shared between member states.*”²⁰

Our assessment: The Lib Dems’ manifesto seems to suggest that the party is in favour of burden sharing between member states. Quite apart from the possible benefits of such an arrangement (and there are benefits), this is a hugely controversial proposal in many member states, as it would require some countries, including possibly Britain, to accept more asylum seekers than they currently do.

The Conservatives appear unambiguously opposed to any moves in this area, while Labour has very much ridden the fence during its time in office.

FURTHER EU DEFENCE INTEGRATION

A strategic defence review on the direction of defence priorities is to be held in the UK in 2010, whichever party is elected at the General Election. This review will have to assess future military spending, and increased European cooperation on this issue will be a key part of the discussion. The Ministry of Defence’s recent Green paper on this issue stated that “*stronger European defence co-operation offers many opportunities...The UK will greatly improve its influence if we and our European partners speak and act in concert.*”²¹

Labour: In favour of member states pursuing ‘permanent structured cooperation’ (which would see a minimum of nine member states moving ahead with developing common military capabilities). An example of where the Labour government has said it could use such cooperation has been in producing new equipment to be used for military operations, to spread the military burden between member states.²² Labour is also in favour of the European Defence Agency, which promotes EU cooperation in defence procurement.

Conservatives: state in their manifesto that they’re more in favour of bilateral cooperation with countries such as France²³, who have a similar approach to defence spending, rather than EU-wide cooperation²⁴. They have also suggested they could pull out of the European Defence Agency (EDA). The party is generally more Atlanticist than European in approach to defence, and stress that Nato should remain the cornerstone of defence in Europe, rather than further EU integration.²⁵

¹⁹ http://www.conservativeeurope.com/media/weekahead/6/180607_weekahead.pdf

²⁰ Lib Dem 2010 General Election manifesto

²¹ http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/790C77EC-550B-4AE8-B227-14DA412FC9BA/0/defence_green_paper_cm7794.pdf

²² http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/80512-0002.htm#80512-0002.htm_snew42

²³ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9edb4714-2bbe-11df-a5c7-00144feabdc0.html>

²⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100315/debtext/100315-0008.htm#10031531000171>

²⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080220/debtext/80220-0010.htm#08022083002255>

Lib Dems: are in favour of more European cooperation on defence procurement²⁶, describing the European Defence Agency's attempts "to develop a single market in defence procurement across the European Union" as "greatly in the interests of this country".²⁷

They also said in their manifesto that they want to "Reinvigorate Franco-British and wider European defence co- operation to ensure procurement costs are kept low." However, they have pledged to scrap the Eurofighter project, which is a joint project with other EU governments, which is seemingly at odds with this overall commitment.

Our assessment: The Conservatives clearly stand out in their resistance to moves towards more EU defence integration, and their pledge to pull out of the EDA.

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE EU EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

New EU Foreign Minister, and former leader of the House of Lords, Catherine Ashton will set up the EU's new diplomatic service, the European External Action Service (EEAS), in the next few months. This turns the Commission's overseas delegations into official EU embassies, which is politically and practically tricky, given the diverging foreign policy goals between member states.

Labour: are keen to ensure that the new diplomatic service does not encroach on issues of member state interest.²⁸ Support EU enlargement to Croatia and the other western Balkan countries, as well as Turkey.

Conservatives: Having reached a settled position on the Lisbon Treaty, they have pledged to work with Catherine Ashton and the EEAS – like the other parties, the Conservatives say they want to maximise British influence where possible and avoid the EU straying into the realm of member states' foreign policy.²⁹ Like other mainstream UK parties, support further EU enlargement to areas including the Western Balkans and Turkey³⁰.

Lib Dems: a commitment to make the EU use its weight more effective in its manifesto, and to make Britain's voice stronger by speaking through the EU.³¹ Committed to ensuring Foreign Office and EEAS' activities remain separate.³²

Our assessment: Not much difference between the parties.³³

REFORM OF THE EU BUDGET

Negotiations on the EU's seven-year budget for the period 2014-2020 are due to begin in 2011. Any future UK Government will be faced with two harsh realities: 21 out of 27 member states are opposed or strongly opposed to deep cuts in agricultural spending – a long-standing UK objective – and virtually every single EU country wants to scrap the UK's rebate from the budget, worth around £2 billion a year.

²⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/nick-clegg-we-are-spending-billions--on-weapons-we-dont-need-1751555.html>

²⁷ Lib Dem Foreign Affairs Spokesman Ed Davey, speaking at an Open Europe debate, 17 March 2010

²⁸ House of Lords Debate, 25 Jan 2010, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2010-01-25a.1187.2>

²⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/7045354/More-than-50-EU-embassies-open-across-the-world.html>

³⁰ Conservative 2010 General Election Manifesto

³¹ Lib Dem 2010 General Election Manifesto

³² Lord Dykes, Lib Dem Foreign Affairs Spokesman, House of Lords Debate, 25 Jan 2010,

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2010-01-25a.1187.2>

³³ <http://services.parliament.uk/hansard/Commons/bydate/20091203/mainchamberdebates/part004.html>

Labour: Has said they are committed to reform of the EU budget³⁴, stressing changes to spending priorities, away from farm subsidies to action against climate change.³⁵ Gordon Brown has previously said that he's in favour of repatriating regional policy to the UK. Labour has also indicated that further enlargement of the EU could mean further spending, and a bigger UK contribution, as the EU budget would have to be altered to reflect new member states.³⁶

Conservatives: William Hague has said that EU partners "*will find us tough negotiators, and harder negotiations than the Labour government have been on things like Britain's rebate*"³⁷. Objectives seem to centre on keeping the rebate, fighting an increase in the UK's contribution and move money from the CAP³⁸ to items such as R&D and the environment – although the language in their manifesto on the CAP is not particularly strong.³⁹

Lib Dems: Have also said they are committed to ensuring that the EU's budget does not increase significantly.⁴⁰ They appear to be in favour of maintaining the EU's regional spending⁴¹ and split on CAP reform. While the Lib Dems are vaguely arguing in favour of CAP reform in their manifesto, Lib Dem Scottish MEP George Lyon, who was responsible for drawing up a key report on the CAP for the European Parliament, recently vowed to keep on "*defending the CAP budget from deep and painful cuts*".⁴² Similarly, the Lib Dems have in the past argued in favour of scrapping the UK's rebate from the budget, and their MEPs have voted in favour of a resolution to end it⁴³. In its manifesto, however, the party states it doesn't want to abolish the rebate in the "current context".

Our assessment: Judging from their manifestos and what they've said recently there's actually not much difference between Labour and the Conservatives on EU budget policy. Notably, a commitment to wholesale CAP reform is absent in the Conservatives' manifesto.

The Lib Dems have in the past called the UK's rebate 'unjustified' – but have toned down that language in their manifesto, most likely because abolishing the rebate would effectively mean increasing the UK's contribution to the EU budget (unless a new corrective mechanism was invented).

EU FINANCIAL SUPERVISORS AND REGULATION

The EU is in the process of agreeing a slew of proposals for more and tighter regulation of the EU's financial markets, which include a controversial proposal for the creation of three new EU supervisors that would oversee the insurance,

³⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091201/debtext/91201-0002.htm#09120144000504>

³⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100322/text/100322w0027.htm#10032239000652>

³⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmgeneral/euro/090706/90706s02.htm>

³⁷ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9edb4714-2bbe-11df-a5c7-00144feabdc0.html>

³⁸ *Telegraph*, Tories would increase cash to EU if farming subsidies are cut, 26 August 2009

³⁹ See for example, <http://www.ecrgroup.eu/download/publications/euro-election-manifesto.pdf>, p.21

⁴⁰ *Lib Dem 2009 European election manifesto*

⁴¹ *Lib Dem 2009 European election manifesto*

⁴² <http://ictsd.org/i/news/bridgesweekly/74020/>

⁴³

http://www.votewatch.eu/cx_vote_details.php?id_act=2526&euro_vot_valoare=&euro_vot_rol_euro_grup=&euro_vot_rol_euro_tara=&vers=1&order_by=euro_parlamentar_nume&order=ASC&last_order_by=euro_parlamentar_nume&limit=0&offset=0&nextorder=ASC&euro_tara_id=6&euro_grup_id=3&euro_vot_valoare=&euro_vot_rol_euro_grup

securities and banking sectors. The supervisors would have binding powers over national regulators such as the FSA – although details of the proposal are currently subject to negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Separately, EU member states and the European Parliament are currently engaged in intense negotiations over the EU’s so-called AIFM Directive, which would impose stricter rules on hedge funds and private equity firms.

Labour: Are in favour of a ‘single rulebook’ for the EU’s financial market and support the creation of the new EU supervisors provided that these bodies cannot make decisions that will impact on member states’ fiscal responsibilities, i.e. requiring British taxpayers to recapitalise a bank.

Conservatives: No mention of EU financial regulation and supervision in the manifesto, but Mark Hoban, Shadow City Minister, has said that “We want measures to be taken to improve the quality of supervision and co-ordination across Europe, but we do not want that to impinge on the regulatory and fiscal sovereignty of individual member states”, which, if strictly interpreted, would mean that the Conservatives would oppose the new supervisors.

Lib Dems: Pledge in their manifesto to “Work through the European Union for stricter international regulation of financial services and banking”, which is an indication that they might take a softer approach to EU financial regulation/supervision.

Our assessment: As virtually all decisions on financial regulation and supervision are decided in the EU by Qualified Majority Voting, the parties actually have very little room for manoeuvre once in government. Rather than theoretical positions, it’s more interesting to look at how much energy and political capital the different parties would be willing to spend in negotiations with EU partners in order to achieve horse-trading deals and coalitions. Here the pre-election discussions offer few clues apart from a general anti-banker sentiment and the Labour government’s record (which is not convincing). An early indication of this will be the decisive EU negotiations over the AIFM Directive which will take place in May or June. These talks will no doubt be perceived – in the City and in Westminster – as a battle over the UK’s national interest, e.g. its financial sector, and the outcome will be judged accordingly.

EU SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Labour: Has said it will not seek to renegotiate EU powers over social and employment policy and are therefore in favour of the status quo.

Conservatives: Have made a pledge to negotiate on EU “social and employment legislation with our European partners to return powers that we believe should reside with the UK, not the EU”. What this means in practice is not entirely clear, but in debates William Hague has hinted that it will only involve the parts of EU employment policy “most damaging” to the UK economy, and in particular the public sector (working hours and on-call restrictions in the NHS).

Lib Dems: The party appears in favour of the status quo, but also in favour of revising the Working Time Directive, for instance.

Our assessment: If the Conservatives restrict their policy to only EU employment laws with a damaging impact on the public sector – primarily the Working Time Directive – their proposal is actually far less radical than it first appears. Other member states already have exemptions from the WTD for their public sectors, and

both Labour and the Lib Dems are in favour of revising the Directive's rules to make them more tailored to the NHS and the rescue services, for the very same reason.

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Labour: Says in its manifesto, "We will push for fundamental reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy."

Conservatives: Say in their manifesto, "We will fight for wholesale reform of the Common fisheries Policy to encourage sustainable practices, give communities a greater say over the future of their fishing industries, and bring an end to the scandal of fish discards."

Lib Dems: Makes no mention of fisheries policy in its manifesto, but has elsewhere argued in favour of reform of the CFP to "give local fishermen and other stakeholders a real say in the management of their own regional waters".⁴⁴

Our assessment: The parties seem all to be in favour of reform of the CFP, although none of them is suggesting a complete opt-out. It's peculiar that the Lib Dems are making no mention of the CFP in their manifesto, given its strong presence in fishing communities in the South West.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The EU is responsible for various targets for reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy sources. In the wake of the failure of the Copenhagen climate change conference, the EU faces some tough decisions about whether to increase its emissions reduction target from 20% by 2020 on 1990 levels to 30% by 2020 unilaterally, or continue to work to increase other countries' targets, in exchange for such an increase.

Labour: Strongly in favour of a significant role for the EU in environmental policy. In favour of current targets and in favour of increasing carbon emissions targets from a 20% reduction by 2020, on 1990 levels, to 30%, but only as part of a global deal.⁴⁵

Conservatives: In favour of a strong role for the EU in environmental policy, and of the 20% targets on renewables.⁴⁶ In favour of increasing carbon emissions targets from a 20% reduction by 2020, on 1990 levels, to 30%, but only as part of a global deal.

Lib Dems: Have said they will push the EU to adopt a zero emissions target for all new cars by 2040, and extend targets to other vehicles. Also in favour of unilateral adoption of increasing 2020 emissions target from 20% to 30%, even without global support.

Our assessment: All parties strongly support EU action to tackle climate change, with the key difference being whether the EU should unilaterally increase its 2020 carbon emissions targets – which the Lib Dems want.

⁴⁴ <http://www.libdems.org.uk/siteFiles/resources/PDF/Policy%20Briefing%20-%20Rural%20Living%20Oct%2009.pdf>

⁴⁵ Labour 2010 General Election manifesto

⁴⁶ http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2009/11/William_Hague_The_Challenge_of_Climate_Change.aspx