

NW Regional Conference Motion

Energy in the North West

(Submitted by the Copeland & Workington Local Party committee)

Conference:

Reaffirms the Liberal Democrat priority to tackle the imminent danger of irreversible climate change, recognises that global warming due to continuing growth in greenhouse gas emissions is the major environmental threat faced by human society, and remains committed to working towards a zero-carbon Britain with a leading role for Cumbria and the North West.

Conference notes:

The decisions by the present government to cut support for renewable energy and home insulation and their failure to reduce or control damaging air pollution.

Conference also notes the apparent lack of a coherent long-term energy policy for the UK, thus creating growing dependence for energy supply on other countries, increasing the danger of power outages in the winter months, and reinforcing the difficulties of leaders in renewable and non-polluting energy industries to plan effectively for the future.

Conference believes:

That it is essential that a long-term strategy be set out by government to ensure future provision of adequate energy supplies for industrial, commercial and private purposes, whilst enabling the shift from polluting to non-polluting energy sources as rapidly as possible, including legally binding targets to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2040 and to zero by 2050.

Conference also recognises that there will be an ongoing requirement for further development of reliable sources of base-load electrical supply in addition to local renewable resources, for the medium term future, in order to meet the demands of major industrial users. The priority should be to phase out all existing power stations dependent on fossil fuels at the earliest opportunity. Such base-load electricity supply is provided with the least damaging carbon effect by the construction of nuclear power plants on appropriate sites.

Conference therefore proposes:

- a) That the UK should work to increase renewable energy resources to generate at least 60% of electricity from renewables by 2030; should provide continuing government support for solar (PV) and offshore wind in appropriate locations, and should assist with major investment in other leading relevant technologies including energy storage ('battery capability') and tidal power.
- b) That the present proposed limited programme of constructing new nuclear power stations should be supported in suitable locations, including West Cumbria ('Moorside'), subject to stringent environmental protection and safety measures. It is also proposed that any new nuclear power stations should be sited close to existing or former nuclear installations rather than on other untried sites.
- c) That the continuing development of the West Cumbria Energy Coast initiative should be encouraged, with possible future expansion, as the entire Cumbrian coastline has exceptional potential for diverse methods of generation of electricity on a low-carbon, renewable basis.

Conference further considers that:

- a) At a time when electrical power is likely to become the principal energy source, West Cumbria is uniquely capable of playing a major part in the maintenance of existing electricity supply and the development of new electricity generation resources. Local labour and industry has a longstanding involvement with nuclear power, there are already extensive wind-farm and increasing solar installations in place, and new training facilities for workers in these areas of technology are being progressively developed.
- b) Any development in West Cumbria of new sources of electricity, including nuclear and renewables, will require substantial investment in improving road and rail infrastructures, and also protection of the World Heritage area of the Lake District National Park and surrounding environmentally sensitive areas such as the Whicham Valley and the Duddon estuary. There should be a commitment to place underground as much as possible of the transmission lines required to serve the Energy Coast.
- c) These proposals will not only help to ensure environmentally-friendly electricity supply for the North West region; they will also have a major beneficial impact on the economic and social prospects for the relatively deprived western areas of Cumbria.

To be proposed by Roger Putnam and summated by Elizabeth Barraclough (Copeland & Workington Liberal Democrats)

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Delivering the Northern Powerhouse

This Conference

Notes with dismay the ever-widening gap in economic performance of the North and South of England, leading to worsening indicators of poverty, youth unemployment, and social alienation across the North, particularly in the declining industrial towns of the NW, and is concerned that this gap has been widened by a long term pattern of central government investments in transport and infrastructure being disproportionately directed towards London and the South East;

Welcomes the Coalition Government's initiation of the Northern Powerhouse project, and their creation of City Regions with devolved powers and budgets, and the opportunity now provided for rebalancing with new investment in transport and infrastructure, as well as the development of more bespoke public services in the North West region,

But views with deep concern the new Conservative Government's decision to 'pause' vital transport projects serving the North, and the evidence this gives of their lack of commitment to reducing inequality and promoting prosperity in our region;

Believes the Northern Powerhouse and in particular plans to improve east-west rail and road transport links between Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Hull are vital to closing the economic performance gap between the North and the South, and therefore:-

Resolves to

- 1) urgently press the Chancellor of the Exchequer to include within his forthcoming Autumn Statement a commitment to fund 'HS3', as a vital rail and road project serving communities right across the North,
- 2) Press the current Government to clearly restate its commitment to closing the North/South performance gap and investing long term in the Northern Powerhouse project, with further devolution of decision-making and budgets to democratically accountable councils in the North West,
- 3) work with Liberal Democrat council groups and MPs across the NW to campaign for a more equitable programme of national infrastructure investment which recognises both the historic shortfall and the pressing current needs of the region for better transport links across the Pennines,
- 4) write to Liberal Democrat Parliamentary spokespeople with responsibility for economic and regional policy informing them of the urgent need to press in Westminster the NW Region's case for infrastructure investment.