

Skateboard



European Elections 2009

Europe Issue from the Diocese of Hereford's Council for Social Responsibility June 2009

Use Your Cross on 4th June!

Elections are coming up! Europe goes to the polls on Thursday, 4th June to elect about 750 MEPs to represent a European Union (EU) of 27 countries.

The policies of the EU have a direct influence over our lives. From the quality of the air, to the price of food on our shelves, to the number of fish we can land—all are controlled by the EU.

The European Parliament is the EU's only directly elected institution in a Europe close to 500 million citizens.

Proposals for an EU constitution will double the legislative clout of MEPs giving the Parliament a more central role at the heart of political Europe.

The latest Eurobarometer surveys of public opinion show that people in the UK continue to feel under-informed about the EU. Many voters are confused as



to what the European Parliament does and how it affects their lives. Often, little is known about candidates and the turnout at European elections in the UK is usually amongst the lowest in the European Union.

This *Skateboard* will hopefully encourage readers to participate in the elections and use their vote!

Europe itself is a controversial issue and this election represents your chance to have a say on the important changes that are happening across the EU.

As Christians, we are called to live and work for a better society. One way of achieving this is by engaging with the election process. First find out about candidates and policies and then vote on the day.

X Don't miss out: use your cross on 4th June!

Bishop urges all to vote

The Bishop of Hereford, the Rt Revd Anthony Priddis, speaking to *Skateboard* said, "As Christians we are committed to praying and working for God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven". We have to be engaged with the issues within our nation and further afield. Decisions made in Europe are vital. We need to have our say and exercise prayerful, responsible citizenship by voting.

"This is a critical time in many ways. There are so many big issues: trade, jobs, economy, poverty, environment, family life, migration, the place of legislation, Turkey – to name but a few! The vision God gives us is for His world. We must not be insular or parochial.

"Please take the opportunity and vote in these forthcoming European elections."

What's your Church doing?

What is your church doing to prepare for the European Elections? Sunday, 31st May is the ideal day to focus your prayers and thoughts on the forthcoming elections. There are plenty of resources available for churches and clergy.

X *The Conference of European Churches has produced a briefing document for churches at www.cec-kek.org and also the Methodist, URC and Baptist Church at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpolitics*

A PRAYER

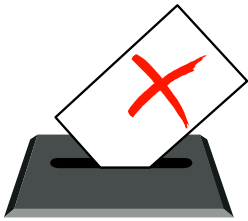
*I am only one but still I am one;
I cannot do everything
but I can do something;
What I can do I ought to do;
And what I ought to do
by the grace of God I will do.*

Amen



**INSIDE: Election Issues - Vital
Statistics - Views & Opinions**

Why Europe Counts



Since the last European Parliament elections in 2004, Parliament has gained considerable power. In most areas of community law, legislation must now be jointly approved by both the European Parliament and the Council. Furthermore, the President and Members of the College of European Commissioners, which proposes all new legislation, may only govern with Parliament's approval. Even more importantly, Parliament has final say over the EU budget.

With climate change accelerating, financial crises deepening and the challenge to bring Europe closer to its citizens still to be met, the stakes could not be higher.

A Pulpit Perspective

The Revd David Clarke, URC Minister, speaking to *Skateboard* said, "I know that bureaucracy and security are major issues, but I would not want to see human rights watered down, but rather their proper and legal enforcement. The moral struggle that went into securing these rights is not always appreciated.

"I hope we can see the EU being constructive on climate change, financial discipline reforms, debt relief and overseas development policies. I would like to see effective infra-structural development within the Union, with constructive co-operation remaining vital to reducing inequality and extremism."

More Information!

In researching for this Skateboard, we give grateful acknowledgement to the following websites, from which further resources are available:

www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009
www.eupolitix.com
www.europarl.org.uk
www.directgov.co.uk
www.cec-kek.org
www.methodist.org.uk
www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/jpitpolitics

Election Issues

PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT The EU Parliament influences EU foreign and development policy primarily through its control of the budget.

We believe that peaceful forms of conflict resolution should take precedence over military approaches.

We believe that the EU should live up to its principles of democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights both abroad and at home.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION Many decisions of the EU Parliament impact on the quality of life and cohesiveness of European society. Through its control of the budget, it also influences the amount of EU funds allocated to services to promote social inclusion and combat poverty.

We believe European societies should be based on the principles of solidarity, shared responsibility and the inclusion of all. **We believe** accessible, quality social and healthcare services are a necessary prerequisite for social inclusion. **We believe** each phase of life has its own value. Each generation links to and supports the next. **We believe** stewardship of the environment must include care for fragile rural communities.

MIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION The next Parliament will have a crucial impact on migration and asylum policy throughout the EU.

We believe in Europe as a welcoming society and champion of human rights. We believe the EU should encourage citizens to be aware of their own and respectful for others' cultural heritage, including its religious dimension.

We believe that trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and forced labour must be addressed as an alarming violation of human rights.

SAFEGUARDING CREATION The next European Parliament will have a significant say over policies that will both directly and indirectly influence climate change and environmental quality.

We believe that economic structures that promote ever-increasing consumption harm the earth and contribute to climate change. Lifestyle changes, as well as technological improvements, are needed.

We believe the EU should offer solidarity and help world regions suffering the most severe impacts of climate change. Many vulnerable communities are at risk of increased poverty, conflict and environmental degradation. Principles of equity and justice should inform policy.

✘ *Extracted from election briefing of the Conference of European Churches www.cec-kek.org*

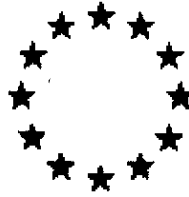
Christians Need to be Counted!

We all have the privilege and responsibility of voting in the European Elections on 4th June - but why bother? In the last European Elections only 36% of the electorate in the West Midlands used their vote. Politics is concerned with how our life as a society should be ordered and I believe that political activity is part of Christian discipleship. It is about care for the common good and the well-being of society. Many people are turned off by the political scene today and we take our democratic freedoms for granted. We overlook the values of a free society: values for which citizens of many countries would, and do, die.

The historical roots of the European Union lie in the Second World War. The idea of European integration was conceived to prevent such destruction from ever happening again. Initially, the EU consisted of just six countries and has now grown to 27 countries.

The EU has delivered half a century of stability, peace and prosperity. It has helped to raise living standards, built a single Europe-wide market, launched the single European currency and strengthened Europe's voice in the world.

Europe is a continent with many different traditions and languages, but also with shared values. The EU defends these values. It fosters co-operation among the peoples of Europe, promoting unity, while preserving diversity.



In the increasingly interdependent world of the 21st century, it is even more necessary for every European citizen to co-operate with people from other countries in a spirit of curiosity and tolerance.

It is vital that we give careful thought to what we do on Election Day. The Church is not in the business of telling people how to vote. However, sometimes the Church has to speak out and say that Christian conviction means we cannot vote for a party when that party offers policies which are contrary to the teaching of Jesus.

Finally, we need to work in partnership to build cohesive communities. This means we need to be proactive in building a better society and, when voting, resist any temptation to support extremist policies out of fear, or resentment. History shows that extreme politics flourish in a climate of voter apathy and complacency. No *one* party or candidate can ever meet a voter's exact viewpoint. Democracy involves compromise. Decisions have to be based on what will build up the future of the whole community.

We call on every *Skateboard* reader to vote on the 4th June according to Christian values. It is our chance to make a difference and to show concern for the future of our communities in Europe.

Jackie Boys
Social Responsibility Officer

A View from the Pew: A Legacy of Peace

The EU which creates controversy for many, often results in the question being asked, "What has Europe done for us?" Whether this is the right question remains debatable. Perhaps it should be, "What have we done for Europe?"

In 1795 the philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote his essay *Perpetual Peace* which seemed, alongside Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, to remain a utopian dream.

The Roman saying, "If you want peace prepare for war" had been the mantra in Europe for a long time, resulting in two savage world wars fought in Europe, causing an unparalleled death toll among the military and civilians.

The rise of nationalism between 1918 and 1939 was very much the result of economic factors brought about by reparations against Germany together with the Depression of the 1930s.

In the aftermath of the Second World War the vision of a united Europe arose and if perpetual peace were to be the only achievement, then it could be argued this would be sufficient to justify our involvement in Europe.

What have we done and what should we do? VOTE to ensure that peace in our time, as Neville Chamberlain said in 1939, becomes a reality and continues into the future for our children, grandchildren and generations yet to come.



How committed are candidates to promoting peace and justice, pursuing effective policies to help the world's poorest people and protecting the environment?

Think before you vote!



Skateboard offers the following principles for voters to check against the policies of parties and independent candidates:

- ✗ Does the party recognise the equal value of all persons?
- ✗ Will the party be able to represent all of the local community regardless of their race, colour or faith?
- ✗ Will the party work for the common good of all, not just one section of the community?
- ✗ Will the policies promote harmony, justice and cohesion so that no individual or group is marginalised, demonised or treated unjustly?
- ✗ Do the policies feed on the fears of one group over another?
- ✗ Will the policies promote the rich diversity of cultures in the community?
- ✗ Will the policies promote good community relationships, respecting the culture, language and faith of all?

Voting in the Last Elections

Parties in the 2004 election	Votes 2004	% votes 2004	Seats (7 in total)
Conservative Party	392,937	27.3	3
Labour Party	336,613	23.4	2
UKIP	251,366	17.5	1
Liberal Democrats	197,479	13.7	1
BNP	107,794	7.5	-

Parties in the 1999 election	Votes 1999	% votes 1999	Seats (8 in total)
Conservative Party	321,719	37.91	4
Labour Party	237,671	28.00	3
UKIP	49,621	5.85	-
Liberal Democrats	95,769	11.28	1
BNP	14,344	1.69	-

Our MEPs Write

Much of the Diocese of Hereford lies within the West Midlands region. Four of our current MEPs responded to Skateboard's request for a comment.

"The European Union was established to ensure the divisive conflict of World War Two never happens again. Today, the European Parliament retains the Christian principles of cohesion and understanding at its heart. Labour MEPs have worked hard to eradicate intolerance and have introduced legislation to combat discrimination. Yet extremists, who thrive on low turnout, now threaten to divide our local communities by gaining seats on June 4th. Your vote is your voice – so make sure you use it."

Neena Gill MEP

On behalf of UKIP MEPs exposing the EU, reporting truth and advocating independence:

The EU makes 75% of your law, claims "Empire" status, has 784 MEPs of which we have 10%, costs us £54.4 billion annually, has 27 states and expanding with "Ever closer political union" and we are the second largest contributor! Despite what they say at elections, the Lib/Lab/Con support it! Please support us and say "No." The UK is better off out."

Mike Natrass MEP

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne has represented Herefordshire as a campaigning MEP for ten years and is standing again as No 1 candidate for the LibDems. Liz believes this June's European elections are important because so many of the challenges that we face, whether tackling the current economic recession or the threat of climate change, require international cooperation with fellow European Union Member States. Liberal Democrats believe we are stronger together and poorer apart.

Liz Lynne MEP

On June 4th Conservatives will put forward positive policies in areas that concern people in Herefordshire. Defending our rural way of life; tackling climate change; overcoming global poverty; buttressing our position in the global economy by avoiding protectionism and strengthening our capabilities in technology and innovation. We also want a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, and a vote against the centralised Europe it would create. If Conservatives keep 3 regional seats, Anthea McIntyre from Ross-on-Wye will join sitting MEPs Philip Bradbourn and Malcolm Harbour to represent the Hereford diocese.

Malcolm Harbour MEP



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