



# Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter

Issue 52; September 2011

## Welcoming Note

Welcome to the September issue of the Mole Valley Conservative Association's Newsletter.

To unsubscribe to this newsletter, please enter your email on the homepage and select 'unsubscribe'.

Our aim is to provide you with a monthly update on the work of the Conservative Association and your elected representatives. We would value your feedback or comments.

We hope you enjoy reading the September issue.

## News from the House of Commons

### Positive polls?



With the Party Conferences making headlines at this time of year, I thought it would be a good time to look at a few polls to see how the public would choose to vote. In the last week there have been two new polls which both look positive for the Conservatives. However, as we all know, no poll can be entirely accurate but at least they give us a taste of how the public feel about the current Government.

ComRes's monthly telephone poll for the Independent shows no change for the Conservatives on 37%, Labour slightly down on 36% and the Liberal Democrats fractionally up at 12%, (Others 15%). Whilst these minute changes may not seem to be of great significance, it is worth noting that it is actually the first time that ComRes have shown the Conservatives on top since last October. The Sun's daily poll conducted by YouGov shows a slightly different picture with the Conservatives on 39%, Labour 41%, Lib Dems 8%. What is more worthy of interest is the fact that in last week's YouGov's daily poll there was a very steady six point lead for Labour. In fact, it's been three weeks since it was as low as two points.

Lord Ashcroft has been researching polls from marginal Tory seats and has written an interesting summary on the findings, which I share with you below.

### **Lord Ashcroft: Polling from marginal Tory seats shows the Party needs to expand its voter base in order to win majority**

Two events over the summer, the phone hacking scandal and the riots, looked as though they had the potential to change the political landscape. In fact, the polls have held remarkably steady, with no party's average vote share in published polls moving by more than one percentage point since June – or indeed, since January. We have become used to a pattern of Labour in the low 40s, the Conservatives somewhere around the 37% they achieved in the general election and Liberal Democrats close to the 10% mark, though with David Cameron well ahead on leadership ratings.



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These polls no doubt give an accurate account of party support in the country as a whole, but do they obscure a more nuanced pattern? I wanted to return to my old friends, the marginals, to see how different, if at all, things looked there. I commissioned a poll of 41 seats which the Conservatives hold with a majority of less than 5% – most of which featured in the target seats campaign and were captured at the 2010 election. During August, three hundred interviews were conducted by telephone in each seat where Labour were second in 2010, and 400 where the Lib Dems were second, to allow a big enough sample size to conduct proper analysis of the Lib Dem targets, of which there are only eight. In addition, I commissioned a national poll featuring identical questions, in order to produce a direct comparison between Britain as a whole and the defensive battleground.

The poll is not invalidated by the proposed boundary changes published earlier this month. Its purpose was to find out how things are looking in marginal Conservative territory: that territory will still be there, even if it shifts around a bit, and most seats will not change beyond recognition.

Our national control poll, conducted over the last weekend in August, found the Conservatives and Labour tied on 37%, with the Lib Dems on 11%. In the seats we are defending against Labour, Labour had an 8-point lead: 44% to 36%. In the seats where the Lib Dems were second, the poll put us on 41%, with Labour on 26% and the Lib Dems *third* on 18%, but this is misleading. We asked a second voting intention question, asking respondents to think “specifically about your own constituency and the candidates who are likely to stand there”, and found the Lib Dems restored to second place, their vote share rising 13 points to 31%. Reassuringly, though, the Conservative share was fairly solid and dropped just two points to 39%, giving an 8-point Tory lead in the Lib Dem targets. In the Labour targets the local voting intention question made only a negligible difference, and there was an implied swing to Labour of 5% to 6% since the general election. In the Lib Dem targets, under the more realistic local voting intention question, there was a swing of 3% from the Lib Dems to the Conservatives.

David Cameron led Ed Miliband by 15 points (42% to 27%) as best Prime Minister in the national poll, though it was notable that his lead was twice as high among men (22 points) than among women (10 points), and more than twice as high among private sector workers (24 points) than public (10 points) – though for him to have any sort of lead among public sector workers in the current climate is an achievement worth noting. Cameron's lead in the Labour targets – also 10 points (39% to 29%) – was lower than it was nationally but still a source of encouragement. In seats where the Lib Dems are second, Cameron led Miliband by 45% to 20%, with Nick Clegg on 13%.

As a party, the Conservatives' biggest strength in both parts of the battleground was being “willing to take tough decisions for the long term”: 61% of voters agreed this was true of the Tories in the Labour targets, compared to 39% saying it was true of Labour. In Lib Dem targets, 64% thought it was true of the Conservatives, and respondents were more likely to think it true of the Lib Dems (40%) than of Labour (33%). This is reinforced by recent focus group findings that Nick Clegg is given some credit in Lib Dem seats for having taken the difficult but correct decision to enter the coalition and, by association, for some of the tough decisions it has made. The Conservatives also



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led in both parts of the battleground, though by lower margins, on being “clear about what they stand for” and being “competent and capable”.

The biggest Tory weakness was the lack of a perception in the Labour targets that the party is “on the side of ordinary people”. Just 27% thought this of the Conservatives, compared to 46% who thought it true of Labour. In Lib Dem circles the news was not much better, with 31% saying it was true of the Conservatives and 42% thinking it true of the Lib Dems, two points ahead of Labour.

Both nationally and on the battleground, voters named the three most important issues facing Britain as the economy and jobs, the NHS, and controlling immigration, with the deficit and the debt slightly further behind. There is an important lesson here. Though the government argues, quite rightly, that getting the deficit under control is a prerequisite for sustainable economic recovery, voters often struggle to see the connection. It seems to many that we are pursuing deficit reduction at the expense of growth and job creation (and other things they think are important) rather than as a means to it. In both Labour and Lib Dem targets, the Conservatives had a huge lead (27 and 39 points respectively) on having the best approach to the deficit and the debt. But on the economy and jobs, the Conservatives were only 9 points ahead of Labour in Lib Dem targets and 7 points *behind* in Labour targets. The Tories also led on immigration, welfare, defence, Europe, and (by less than we are used to) crime. Labour had opened up a 29-point lead in their own target seats on the NHS – particularly disappointing given that we had come within striking distance on the issue in the run-up to the general election. In Lib Dem targets the Conservatives were 16 points behind on the NHS, but were 2 points ahead on education – despite a 15-point deficit on education in Labour targets.

When it comes to the cuts, the proportion saying they are “too deep and too quick” was similar in Labour targets (49%) to that in the national poll (48%) – though slightly lower (42%) in the Lib Dem battleground. Overall, though, this figure was equalled in the Labour battleground by those saying that they are “necessary and unavoidable” (37%) or “do not go far enough” (12%); in the Lib Dem battleground, 57% agreed either that they are necessary or insufficient.

Economic pessimism slightly outweighed optimism both nationally and in the Labour battleground: respondents thought that “in three or four years’ time, the economy will be no better, or even worse than it is now” rather than that “the right decisions are being made and things will improve significantly over the next three or four years” by a 5-point margin in the country as a whole and by 7 points in Labour targets. In Lib Dem targets, people took the optimistic view by 50% to 46%. Judging by recent focus group discussions, this fairly close division between the two points of view is more a reflection of widespread uncertainty than any firm view that the economy is heading one way or another.

On the broader question of whether Britain is heading in the right or the wrong direction, the news from Lib Dem targets is good: respondents here said “right direction” by 53% to 43%. This compares to a 2-point margin for “wrong direction” in the national poll, widening to 5 points in the Labour targets. There were some striking differences of opinion within this picture. Overall, men said “right direction” by a 9-point margin, while women said “wrong direction” by 14 points; ABs



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and C1s said “right direction” by 6 points, while C2s said “wrong direction” by 18 points; those aged 65 and over said “right direction” by 18 points, while those aged 18 to 24 said “wrong direction” by 25 points.

On the ground, the campaigning battle appears to voters to be intense but, in Labour targets, quite closely fought. Nearly half said they had had literature from Labour or the Conservatives over the last few months, and a fifth said they had had a personally addressed letter. In Lib Dem targets the numbers saying they have heard from the Tories were similar, but the Lib Dems’ incessant leaflet-mongering (which we should take our hats off to, however annoying we may find it) apparently continues: 54% said they had had Lib Dem literature, a quarter said they had a letter, and a fifth said the party had knocked on their door in the last few months.

Overall, then, it is clear that things in marginal Conservative seats where Labour are close challengers, things look slightly more uncomfortable for the Tories than in the country as a whole. This makes sense: these are often places where there remained a good deal of suspicion towards the Conservatives at the last election, even though a plurality were persuaded to vote Tory as it was time for change, and where economic uncertainty will be felt most keenly. But given all these factors, Labour should be disappointed not to be rather further ahead. Part of the explanation is that however uneasy some may be about what the coalition is doing, few if any believe that Labour offer any real alternative plan – hence the perceived gap between parties on willingness to take tough decisions. This combines with quite clear views about the relative merits of the party leaders (which I explored in depth in [The Leadership Factor \(pdf\)](#)) to sustain Conservative support and prevent Labour making greater headway.

Things in Lib Dem territory evidently look rather better – the solidity of the Tory vote, combined with the defection of some Lib Dem voters to Labour, produces a swing to the Conservatives that suggests we should be looking to make gains from them in 2015. A more optimistic view of the economy in these seats also augurs well. But the contest with the Lib Dems is clearly not over. In case Conservatives with Lib Dem opponents were in any doubt, the party remains a much more potent force at a local level than its vote share in national polls suggests.

So the news from the marginals is mixed. Things could be very much worse. But we need the Conservative voting coalition to expand if we are to win an overall majority at the next election – a theme to which I will return.

**Sir Paul Beresford**  
**Member of Parliament for Mole Valley**

[Feature Article](#)



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## The Boundary Commission for England Proposals: Mole Valley

The Boundary Commission for England published its initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in England earlier this month. The public are being encouraged to find out about the proposals and there is a statutory 12-week consultation period and public hearings being held in each region.



The Boundary Commission is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which has the task of periodically reviewing the boundaries of all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. In February 2011, the UK Parliament passed legislation stating that all four boundary Commissions covering the UK must conduct a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries, and make recommendations by October 2013. The legislation states that there will be 600 constituencies, a reduction by 50. This involves a reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502. Every constituency – apart from the exceptions of the two constituencies on the Isle of Wight – must have an electorate that is at least 72,810 but no more than 80,473.

Mole Valley falls into the South East region which currently has 84 constituencies but under the proposals would have 83. Eighteen of those constituencies would remain unchanged, with only minor changes to a further 23.

In Surrey, there are currently 11 constituencies. Under the new proposals, this number would remain the same and only three constituencies fall 5% below the electoral quota. Along with Reigate and Spelthorne, Mole Valley is one of these three.

However, there are no dramatic proposals to change the Mole Valley constituency. In order to address the imbalance, the Commission is suggesting the inclusion of the Ewhurst ward of the Borough of Waverley, which is currently within the Guildford constituency.

If you do wish to comment on these proposals, make sure you put forward your views before the consultation period closes on 5 December 2011. There is further information on [www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk](http://www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk)

**National news in brief**

**Clearer Food Labels to cut waste**



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The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has published new guidance for food and drink manufacturers, stating that clearer date labels should be used on food packaging to help cut waste, save shoppers money and make it easier for them to know when food is safe to eat. Under the guidance, food packaging should only carry either a 'use-by' or 'best-before' date.

'Sell-by' and 'display-until' labels used for stock rotation should be removed to avoid confusion for shoppers. The guidance for food producers outlines that 'use-by' labels should only be used where the food could be unsafe after that date. Most other foods should have a 'best-before' date only, to indicate when food is no longer at its best, but still safe to eat.

The guidance was produced in consultation with the food manufacturers, supermarkets, trade associations, consumer groups, food law enforcement bodies and Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). At least 60% of the 8.3 million tonnes of UK household food and drink waste is avoidable. That is 5.3 million tonnes of perfectly edible food per year – equivalent to £680 per household with children.

## Conference Season

The Conference Season for the major political parties is now well underway.

It kicked off with the Liberal Democrats Conference in Birmingham on 17-21 September. The Labour Party Conference is holding their Conference on 25-29 September. This is the first time the Party have held the event in Liverpool.

The Conservatives Conference in Manchester begins on Sunday 2 October and will end with a speech from David Cameron on Wednesday, 5 October.

To allow MPs to attend their Conferences, the House of Commons rose for a short recess on Thursday 15 September and will return on Monday 10 October.

## Award for Houses of Parliament Tours

The Houses of Parliament won the 'Best UK Attraction' at the 2011 Group Leisure Awards held in Birmingham.

The Houses of Parliament beat other popular attractions in their category, including Buckingham Palace, Alton Towers and the British Museum. The votes were cast by readers of Group Leisure, a monthly magazine for group travel organisers.

Matthew Morgan, Tours Manager at the Houses of Parliament, picked up the award and said: 'Groups have been instrumental in making the Summer Opening and Saturday tours of the Houses of Parliament a success. Thanks for all the support over the years... It is a very competitive category and we are delighted to have won!'

It is, in fact, their second award of the year as they also had success at the Group Travels Awards where the Houses of Parliament won the 'UK's Best Attraction for Group Visits: Short Visits'.

[Local news in brief](#)

**Sir Paul visits local Charity**



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Sir Paul recently visited the Fetcham-based charity, Surrey Association for Visual Impairment (SAVI), which helps blind and visually impaired people to lead fuller, more independent lives.

Sir Paul was impressed and fascinated with the wide range of equipment on offer and the personal attention the charity gives to each of its clients.

The charity offers help and support to all ages. Sir Paul said, "It is absolutely essential to give blind and partially sighted children the best possible start in life."

## **National Trust plans for Holmwood Common**

Many local residents are opposing the National Trust's application to the Forestry Commission for a £200,000 grant, through the English Woodland Grant Scheme, to improve access to Holmwood Common.

Several residents feel that the seven kilometre trail is unnecessary and a waste of taxpayers' money.

During the consultation period, local people had the opportunity to put their opinions forward to the National Trust, who hope that the new access plans would allow more people to visit the common without hindering anyone's enjoyment of it.

## **Mole Valley Unemployment figures down**

This summer, joblessness in Mole Valley was lower than any other Surrey district. The

figures show that in June 2011, 655 people claimed Jobseeker's Allowance – the smallest number since January 2009. Figures were at their highest in Mole Valley in February 2010 when 945 claimed the benefit.

Hopefully these figures, published by the Office for National Statistics, are a true reflection of the employment situation in the area and reflect that local businesses are doing well.