

EDWARD McMILLAN-SCOTT JOINS ALDE

Edward McMillan-Scott MEP (Yorkshire & Humber, UK) has joined the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group in the European Parliament. He will continue to sit in the parliament's Bureau as an independent Vice-President to maintain the balance for other groups.

McMillan-Scott made a stand against the Conservatives' controversial new ECR group last July, winning re-election with cross-party backing as the first-ever independent Vice-President against the ECR candidate. For this, he was expelled by his party – he appealed - but on March 12 he joined the UK Liberal Democrats.

First elected as an MEP in 1984, McMillan-Scott was leader of the Conservative MEPs between 1997 and 2001. He was elected Vice-President in 2004 and then re-elected in 2007 and 2009. His current portfolio includes democracy and human rights, relations with national parliaments and chairing the Audit Panel.

In a statement to the ALDE group in Strasbourg on Monday May 17, McMillan-Scott said:

“Britain has become a more European nation with the advent of national coalition politics, fixed-term parliaments and the real prospect of a fairer electoral system. The creation of the Conservative/LibDem coalition was the best day of my political life since my first election. I was a liberal Conservative and am now a conservative Liberal. This government represents the best of both traditions and will be moderate on Europe.

“Europe is in a crisis and needs political leadership based on fairness. The Lisbon Treaty gives the European Parliament the opportunity at last to act decisively in most policy areas and to shape others. The liberal group, ALDE, is on the winning side in 90 per cent of the votes: it is having a pivotal, principled influence on the way the EU develops. The liberal family has ministers in 10 EU governments and eight EU Commissioners in Brussels.

“Before Easter, I met the leader of ALDE Guy Verhofstadt and agreed to join the liberal group in the European Parliament after the British general election. I have always worked closely with liberals on my priorities, democracy and human rights worldwide and I share their strategic priorities for the EU during this mandate. I shall vote with them with confidence, while exercising my judgement and my 25 years' experience as an MEP. My constituents will, as always, come first and have my support, regardless of party.

“During the past weeks I campaigned across the country for Nick Clegg, whom I have known and admired for many years. Nick now has a crucial influence on Britain's government, especially over my priorities - a fair economy, civil liberties, electoral reform and Europe.

“I am also grateful for the generosity of Joseph Daul, my EPP friends, and other MEPs from across the political spectrum. I hope that the Conservatives - now isolated - will find a way to rejoin Europe's mainstream. That is in the British national interest.

“I thank Graham Watson, who shaped the new ALDE group while he was leader, and Fiona Hall, leader of the British Liberal Democrat MEPs - as well as the party’s London leadership - for their courtesy and help during these last few busy weeks.”