



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

No: 605/2012

Date: 26th September 2012

Lib Dem Conference: Garcia stresses importance of lobbying MPs

The Gibraltar Government presence at the Liberal Democrat party conference in Brighton this week has served to renew contact with old friends of Gibraltar and to lobby new ones. The conference provided an opportunity to exchange views on Gibraltar with members of the UK Government, Members of Parliament, of the European Parliament, the devolved assemblies and others.

The Government considers that it is very important to maintain a presence at the party conferences of the three main parties in the United Kingdom and to continue to lobby UK politicians and keep them informed.

On Sunday, the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo hosted a very well attended reception for delegates attending the conference in Brighton. Those present included Deputy Leader Simon Hughes MP and Gibraltar and South West MEP Sir Graham Watson.

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia as well as Ministers Neil Costa and Steven Linares had more than one opportunity to chat to the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg MP. The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Ed Davey MP exchanged views with Dr Garcia and Mr Linares on electricity generation issues and the delegates also had a long conversation with the new Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, Tom Brake MP.

A number of Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament and Councillors came to the Gibraltar stand to express their support, including senior Lib Dem MP Alan Beith.

The Gibraltar delegation also took the opportunity to meet Councillors from the Government of the Falkland Islands and with the External Affairs Minister of Jersey in order to discuss matters of mutual interest.

A number of briefings were held for international delegates and diplomats. This included a confidential discussion on the workings of the UK Coalition Government which included the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Moore, and former leader Lord Paddy Ashdown. The Gibraltar team was also present at a round table discussion on Northern Ireland, which was chaired by long-standing Gibraltar supporter Baroness Harris of Richmond, where there was an opportunity to meet the Northern Ireland Minister for Justice, David Ford.

Commenting on the conference, the Deputy Chief Minister and Liberal Party Leader Dr Joseph Garcia said:

"The Liberal Democrat conference in Brighton provided an excellent opportunity to network among UK politicians, to resume old contacts and to make new ones. It is important to keep the Gibraltar lobby alive and well-informed as you never know when we will need to count on their support again. This cross-party support of MPs was very important in defeating the shared sovereignty agenda of a decade ago. The Government would like to thank Albert Poggio and the team at the London office for their support."