



Sir Graham Watson, ELDR president Biographical details

Sir Graham Watson, UK Liberal Democrat MEP and former leader of the Liberal ALDE group in the European Parliament has been elected President of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform party at its Congress in Palermo, Italy on 25 November 2011.

Graham Watson was born in Rothesay, Scotland, in March 1956, the son of a Royal Naval Officer and a teacher. He was educated at The City of Bath Boys' School and at Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, where he gained an honours degree in Modern Languages. He is a qualified interpreter who speaks four European languages (English, French, Italian and German).

From 1983 to 1987 he served as Head of the Private Office of the Rt.Hon. Sir David Steel MP, then Leader of the UK's Liberal Party. He had previously been active as General Secretary of the Liberal International's youth movement, and was a founder of the European Communities' Youth Forum.

Immediately before entering parliament Graham Watson worked for the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation in their London and Hong Kong offices. His six years with HSBC encompassed a three-month stint with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He maintains an active interest in the Far East and is learning mandarin Chinese.

Graham Watson was the first British Liberal Democrat ever to be elected to the European Parliament, winning the Somerset & North Devon constituency with a majority of over 22,500. In June 1999 Graham was elected to represent the new enlarged South West of England constituency, which covers Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall, and has since then twice been elected. Gibraltar was added to Graham's constituency in June 2004.

From 1994 to 1999, Graham was a member of the Committee for Economic & Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy and the Budgets Committee. From July 1999 to 2002 he served as Chairman of the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs. From January 2002 to July 2009 Graham Watson served as Leader of the European Parliament's Liberal Democrat group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. Since 2009 he has been a member of the European Parliament's foreign affairs Committee and Chairman of Parliament's delegation for relations with India.

In November 2010 Graham was elected Vice-President of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. His Knighthood was announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2011.

Graham's publications include 'To the Power of Ten: UK Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament' (2000), '2020 Vision: Liberalisation and Globalisation' (2001),

'Liberal Language' (2003), 'EU've got mail' (2004) 'Liberal Democracy and Globalisation' (2006), 'Liberalism – something to shout about' (2006), 'The Power of Speech' (2006) and 'Building a Liberal Europe: the ALDE Project' (2010).

His hobbies and leisure interests include sailing and listening to jazz music.

Contact details:

Sir Graham Watson, President
European Liberal, Democrat and Reform party
Rue Montoyer 31
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 237 01 40
graham.watson@europarl.europa.eu



Sir Graham Watson, president of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform party © ELDR 2011