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Lib Dems target MPs after EU polls triumph

LIBERAL Democrats who topped the polls at the European elections in Islington have reacted by declaring that the “credibility and authenticity” of the borough’s Labour MPs has been “really damaged”, writes *Emily Finch*. The party, which has no

councillors at the Town Hall and has struggled to make an impression in parliamentary elections, said its clear “stop Brexit” message had chimed with voters frustrated by Labour’s policy on Europe. Labour campaigners admitted it was a difficult night

for their party – which polled 873 fewer votes than the Lib Dems – but pledged that they would work to win back their traditional support. More than 75 per cent of people in Islington who took part in the 2016 EU referendum voted to remain.

Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate Nick Wakeling said: “This is the revenge of the Remainers. This is really our moment of establishing ourselves as the party of Remain. Labour have

■ Turn to page 4

Woman among hundreds facing bankruptcy after receiving demands

‘I WAS HIT BY TERRIFYING £48K TAX BILL’

by EMILY FINCH

HUNDREDS of people in Islington have been hit by “terrifying” and unexpected tax bills totalling hundreds of thousands of pounds. They are now asking their MPs to help them avoid bankruptcy.

Jennifer Graham, 45, from Clerkenwell, whose surname we have changed at her request, said she was told to cough up £48,000 last month in “loan charge” fees.

She said: “I don’t have that kind of money. It’s terrifying. I don’t want to live in the UK any more if this is how people are treated

“I went to give evidence in Parliament recently and there were grown men crying about how much they were told to pay. A whistleblower said they knew of six suicides related to the loan charges.”

Loan charges are retrospective tax bills introduced by the Tory government in the 2017 Budget to close a tax “loophole” for freelancers. HMRC, the government body which collects tax, has sent out 330 letters to Islington residents this year asking for money tied to

■ Turn to page 2



Fun for fundraising at St Mary’s page 2

‘Stupid boy’ who stabbed cops is jailed
– See page 6

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– See page 3

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– See page 10

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– See page 11

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But triumphant Lib Dems are warned that 'people have long memories' of their coalition past

Euro polls win 'the revenge of the Remainers'

■ from page 1

been taking Islington residents for granted for a long time and we look forward to building on that."

Islington South MP Emily Thornberry told the *Tribune* this week that Labour must campaign to remain in the EU. The party's prioritising of a general election over a second referendum on

leaving the EU had been difficult to explain on the doorstep.

She said that she was "100 per cent" certain residents would return to voting Labour.

But Pierre Delarue, chairman of Islington Liberal Democrats, said: "The credibility and authenticity of people like Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry have been really damaged.

Emily Thornberry said two years ago she wasn't going to die in a ditch for European freedom of movement and now she's saying: 'I've heard you, I've heard you.'

He added: "She's meant to be one of the leaders of the Labour Party, but then she just swivels based on public opinion and whether her position is at risk. I think there's something quite mercenary about it when we are facing potentially the biggest crisis the country has faced since the war."

He said that Islington Lib Dems had gained members "like crazy" since the EU Parliament results on Sunday. The party went from having no MEPs for London Region to three of the eight representatives the capital will be sending to London.

Mr Delarue said on Wednesday: "In the last three days we've gained 50 members."

The party, which once ran Islington Council, has been decimated in recent years in a timeline which suggests a backlash against the party's national coalition with the Conservatives. Labour has increased its parliamentary majorities, turning Ms Thornberry's con-



Jubilant Lib Dems Nick Wakeling, Kate Pothalingam and Pierre Delarue after their weekend victory

stituency from a marginal to a seat now regarded as safe Labour territory.

The Islington South MP said Lib Dems had "conspired with Tories to wreak the devastation of austerity". She warned that the "people of Islington have long memories".

Mr Wakeling, who works in finance and is a director at Community Plan for Holloway, said: "In 1999, when we took the majority of the council, it was in £800m debt, had the highest council tax in the UK and the worst education services in the UK. What the Lib Dem councillors did was they came in and repaired the finances, rebuilt schools such as St Mary

Magdalene and built the Lewis Carroll Library and the first council housing in the borough for decades."

He added: "That's what they achieved. I don't think that's reflected but that is the history."

Of his party's time in government, he said: "In 2010, the treasurer said there was 'no money' and the national debt had tripled. We were in a complete dire mess.

"There had to be a stable government. Frankly, we took the hit and have been paying the political price for a long time. We were only ever a junior coalition party who provided stability in a time of national crisis."

Kate Pothalingam, the party's parliamentary candidate for Islington South who lives in Highbury, said Labour councillors could expect to see more Lib Dems in the public gallery during council meetings from now on. The Town Hall has 47 Labour councillors, with only one opposition member from the Green Party.

She said: "We have a duty to hold our councillors to account and press for transparency. I think it's an important role. There needs to be opposition."

The three Lib Dems said they "did not know" if they would run in any future local elections.

How you voted

Liberal Democrats 19,890
Labour Party 19,017
Green Party 13,047
Brexit Party 6,508
Change UK 3,771
Conservatives 1,632
Ukip 913
Women's Equality Party 840
Animal Welfare Party 519
UK European Union Party 335
Daze Aghaji 43, Mike Shad 32, Andrea Venzon 28, Roger Hallam 26, Claudia McDowell 15, Ian Sowden 11, Andrew Medhurst 10, Kofi Mawuli Klu 9, Henry Muss 5, Zoë Delemere Lafferty 3, Alan Dennis Kirkby 3
Total number of votes 66,657

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'Labour voters will return'

EMILY Thornberry is "100 per cent certain" residents will come back to Labour after voting Lib Dem in the weekend's EU elections, writes Emily Finch.

Private polling data is believed to show that Labour still had more votes than the Lib Dems in Jeremy Corbyn's Islington North constituency, but more residents sided with Sir Vince Cable's party in Ms Thornberry's Islington South patch.

Ms Thornberry said: "The people of Islington sent a strong message, and it is one I have long been arguing myself: that we need to go back to the British people and give them the final say on

whether we leave the EU on the terms proposed, or whether we remain."

She added: "I am glad that Jeremy and others have now joined me in agreeing we must have that confirmatory referendum, and that Labour must campaign to remain."

Mr Corbyn said: "We need to secure a deal with the European Union and that should be put to a public vote.

"I would like to thank everyone in Islington who voted for Labour in these EU elections. We ran a positive campaign attempting to bring our divided country together around our goal of ending austerity and delivering the radical change our country needs."

The Town Hall could not provide a breakdown of how each ward voted, but council leader Richard Watts tweeted on Sunday that "It's worth noting that Labour won Islington North this evening."

He said this was an "extrapolation" based on "returns received on polling day from people who told us they voted Labour".

Ms Thornberry admitted the EU elections were "hard" for Labour voters who "felt this was their one opportunity to protest at the lack of clarity in our position on a second referendum. Now we are finally providing the clarity they rightly deserve, I am 100 per cent certain those voters will come back to Labour."

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