

Focus EXTRA

NEWS FROM YOUR LIBDEM EURO MP LIZ LYNNE

Distributed FREE to 100,000 homes across Birmingham, the Black Country, Coventry, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

FLOODS RISK
Rapid Reaction Force
could save lives



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Trafficking:
New bid to act against
modern slave trade



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Birmingham Eurostar could run now



Pic: Eurostar

Eurostar needs to snow proof their trains - but should expand to Birmingham, says LibDem MEP Liz Lynne.



Eurostar has been urged to look again at running trains direct from Birmingham and the West Midlands to the Channel Tunnel. But local LibDem MEP Liz Lynne also says that any expansion plan should be conditional on sorting out the technical failures which stranded 60,000 travellers in the run-up to Christmas.

The West Midlands MEP, re-elected in June, renewed her campaign to extend the service to the region after the success of the new high speed line from St Pancras to the Tunnel. Liz said: "The failure of Eurostar to cope with powder snow was a setback but the lack of information or relief to passengers stuck for hours was a disaster.

"They must do far better and should properly snow-proof their trains. We need this service and high speed rail generally to succeed if we are to make travel sustainable in an era of climate change."

Liz Lynne said the huge demand for Eurostar showed a regional link to the tunnel was needed now: "We can't afford to wait another ten years for the north of London high speed route - and we don't need to.

"When I first became an MEP a lot of public money was spent on a Eurostar service from Wolverhampton via the Tunnel to Brussels. The trains were built, but it never ran.

"Ten years on, despite the travel nightmare before Christmas, the environmental arguments for a shift from air to rail are even more pressing."

THREE HOURS

"It would now be possible to run trains from Birmingham International to Brussels in three hours using the West Coast main line and the existing North London link."

"This service could compete with short haul airlines and divert traffic to rail, with huge savings in carbon emissions.

"I would certainly use such a service and so would the growing numbers of business people and leisure travellers forced to use short-haul flights instead of surface transport."

Fight red tape to beat recession, say LibDems

Cutting unnecessary red tape on business, especially small firms, is vital for Britain and other EU countries to beat the recession, say the LibDems.

West Midlands MEP Liz Lynne, now First Vice President of the vital Employment and Social Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, has made cutting pointless red tape on business, especially small business, a key objective in the new Parliamentary term.

Liz recently hosted a reception in Brussels for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). With so much labour market law now originating from the EU, Liz said it was vital for

MEPs and business representatives to work together.

Liz said: "I have always worked closely with the FSB and other organisations to try and protect small business from unnecessary or unworkable EU regulations."

RED TAPE BURDEN

"Red tape is always a burden but in a recession it can be the difference between success or bankruptcy."

"I have demanded comprehensive independent impact assessments on all proposed laws and for these to take into account the views of small business. I have also called for sunset clauses in all new legislation. I will continue to push my committee to look

at past legislation to see how it works in practice. If a law is not working, then it must be repealed or changed."

Liz also pledged to step up pressure on re-elected EU Commission President Barroso to carry out the promised action plan to cut the administrative burden on business by 25% by 2012.

She added: "We have had some success with the adoption of the Small Business Act at European level, something I have long campaigned for, but we must now implement this Act effectively as well as

make sure that the promised 25% cut in administrative burdens on business is reached."



FSB chairman John Wright at the event with Liz Lynne MEP

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Dairy farmers need
real help right now



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FIGHT RED TAPE to beat recession

LIBDEM MEP LIZ SAYS POINTLESS
RULES COULD RUIN RECOVERY:



Federation of Small Business Chairman John Wright and Liz Lynne MEP speak out in Brussels.

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Closure plan angers MEP who led campaign to save retained firefighters

Plans by a county council to close seven out of 19 fire stations to pay for 'modernisation' are a betrayal, says local Euro MP Liz Lynne.

The rationalisation plan by Warwickshire County Council has been deferred but not abandoned after a storm of protest during a consultation which ended in December.

The Lib Dem MEP led a successful campaign last spring to save retained firefighters from the threat of a 48 hour weekly limit in the EU working time directive.

Now she is backing a new campaign against plans to 'modernise' the fire service in Warwickshire, with the new equipment paid for by closing down seven fire stations at Kenilworth, Bedworth, Brinklow, Warwick, Bidford, Studley and Fenny Compton.

SECRET REVIEW

More anger flared after it emerged that the fire service review had been in preparation since March, but was kept secret during the county council and European election campaign.

Liz Lynne said: "It is laughable to pretend that closing 7 out of 19 fire stations and sacking 100 firefighters is an improvement.

"As well as fire stations in Shropshire and Staffordshire, I visited Kenilworth last year with my petition. It was clear that the retained firecrew are performing a vital service, saving lives. The other six stations under threat also serve scattered communities.

"It is shocking that closure plans were on the drawing board but kept secret in the election. These plans should be ruled out - delaying them satisfies no-one."



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UK miles behind on battery recycling



Local Lib Dem MEP Liz Lynne handed in her used batteries for recycling as part of the 2009 Battery Collection Day in the European Parliament on Wednesday November 4th.

The campaign day came as recent figures show that battery recycling in the UK remains well below the European average. In the UK we recycle just 5% of portable batteries, with 1,422 tonnes recycled from 30,000 tonnes sold.

Speaking from Brussels Liz said: "Our record on battery recycling is shameful and the main reason is a lack of initiative from the Government.

"At present only 5% of our batteries are recycled, compared to over 25% in other European Countries such as France and Germany. In Brussels, the home of the European Parliament, the recycling rate is over 59%"

"It is vital that recycling initiatives such as this are rolled out throughout the UK. The frustrating thing is we don't need to reinvent the wheel, all we have to do is copy the recycling operations successfully operating in a number of other EU countries for some years.

Gordon Ramsey under fire for promoting cruel foie gras

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne has criticised celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay after an episode of his F word show promoted foie gras, which is made by force feeding ducks or geese. She has renewed her call for an EU-wide ban on foie gras.

Liz Lynne MEP said: "It is depressing to think that many people may now go out and buy more foie gras because of these programmes, perhaps without realizing how cruel the production process is.

"Foie gras is made by force-feeding huge amounts of grain down a pipe into the bird while it is restrained, swelling the liver up to ten times the normal size. It is appallingly cruel and causes serious harm and health problems, quite apart from their distress."

"Production is banned in the UK and was only allowed to continue in France, Hungary and three other countries as a concession to cultural traditions. I will continue to call for a ban on foie gras at an EU level until this sad and barbaric practice is brought to an end."



PIC: GAIA

Liz Lynne calls for European Rapid Reaction Force for floods and disaster

West Midlands Lib-Dem MEP Liz Lynne has repeated her call for an EU rapid reaction force to speed up the response to natural disasters after devastating floods returned to the UK in November.

She also asked for councils to urgently review policies on drainage and water management after flooding devastated Cumbria and threatened the west of the West Midlands Region, one of two regions which bore the brunt of the 2007 floods.

Liz said: "The floods in Cumbria are yet another warning that we have to get our act together, particularly as extreme weather is likely to increase due

to climate change. If, heaven forbid, Birmingham suffered a deluge like that, a foot of rain in 24 hours, we might not have enough helicopters in the UK to help the fire brigade rescue trapped people.

POOL EQUIPMENT

"Devastating floods such as Cumbria in November and our region in 2007 do not happen every year, but usually there are extreme climate events somewhere in the EU. It makes sense to pool specialist equipment and expertise so we can have a truly rapid response every time.

If we have a really serious flood in a major city, many lives could be saved."



Pic: RNLI / Bude

Liz was instrumental in the UK's bid for £33 million of aid from the EU Solidarity Fund to offset the cost of the 2007 floods which caused severe damage in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire, with parts of Birmingham also flooding.

There have also been repeated floods in small towns such as Tenbury Wells.



Liz at the scene of the reconstruction work on the Severn Valley Railway after the 2007 floods devastated the line.

RECESSION IS NO EXCUSE FOR AGE DISCRIMINATION



Local Lib Dem MEP Liz Lynne has kept up her campaign for new EU laws to ban age discrimination in access to goods and services.

Addressing a round table discussion on ageing hosted by the Committee of the Regions in Brussels in November, Liz warned that resistance to new laws was still widespread among many Member States.

Liz was in part responsible for age being kept in the text of the 2000 Employment Directive, which forced the UK to ban age discrimination at work in 2007. She has been a key figure since in lobbying to extend anti-discrimination laws beyond the workplace and drafted a key

Parliament report on this issue last year.

Liz said: "Discrimination against older people is rife in our society, whether in access to financial products, in the built environment or in healthcare.

"The recession is not an excuse to show older people the door, or deny them equal access.

"Negotiations are currently going ahead but many Member States are reluctant to sign up to a strong directive, despite pressure from the European Parliament. I would urge anyone who has been the victim of discrimination on the grounds of their age to speak out and back these proposed new laws."

120,000 protest against horse cruelty

LibDem Euro MP Liz Lynne hosted a reception in the European Parliament at which a petition, signed by over 120,000 EU citizens, was handed over to the Commission calling for action to implement EU animal welfare rules for long distance transport of horses.

Over 100,000 horses are transported long-distance across the Continent to slaughter every year in inhumane conditions, causing exhaustion, dehydration, injury and death.

Liz Lynne has long campaigned for better conditions for the horses and has tabled a written declaration in the Parliament to push for an end to the needless suffering.

Liz said: "There is now overwhelming evidence that EU rules meant to protect the welfare of horses during long distance

transport are being flouted, resulting in inhumane conditions.

"Horses are being packed like sardines into steel lorries where temperatures can be above 40 degrees and might be transported for thousands of miles with no food or water, causing injury or death.

ENFORCE RULES

"It is vital we keep up the pressure to ensure that existing rules aimed at improving conditions for these horses are properly enforced, with punishments to match.

"I would urge people who are concerned to write to their MEP and



Roly Owers, chief executive of World Horse Welfare, at the handover with Liz Lynne MEP.

ask them to sign my written declaration in the Parliament on this issue which will help to end the unnecessary suffering these animals are subjected to."

Liz Lynne welcomes WI group to Parliament



Liz Lynne met a large delegation from one of Warwickshire's most active Womens Institute groups on an information visit to the Parliament in Brussels. Group President Barbara Munton, visit organiser Teresa Quick and 25 members from the Great Alne and Kinwarton WI toured the Parliament and then heard Liz Lynne outline her work as MEP representing the county and the region.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barroso challenged on Age Discrimination

LibDem MEP Liz Lynne challenged EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso to do more to tackle age discrimination in the workplace in the first ever "Question Time to the President" session in the European Parliament.

Liz said: "There is evidence that when times are tight age discrimination is more common. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their job in the recession. While we must not forget this affects a broad range of people, it is a particular travesty for many skilled older people who may never work again."

"Age discrimination is the last thing that people should have to overcome when they are looking for a new job."

EU fund could be a lifeline to sacked Ericsson staff

A recently reformed EU budget could throw a lifeline to the 700 workers facing the sack at the Sony Ericsson research plant at Coventry, says local LibDem Euro MP Liz Lynne.

Ericsson unexpectedly announced that they are to abandon their showpiece Ansty Park site in Coventry next year and relocate research and development activities overseas.

Now local MEP Liz Lynne has urged the UK government to apply to an EU fund to help the 700 staff facing redundancy to find another job.

Liz Lynne, who is Vice President of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee, said: "This is terrible news for Coventry and for the 700 workers affected. The recently reformed EU Globalisation Adjustment fund could offer real help to staff in finding other work but the UK has so far failed to apply."

"EU money could be used to fund up to 75% of the cost of retraining programmes as long as the UK government funds the rest. This would offer a real chance for ex-staff to get top quality retraining and help to find work suiting their skills."

"Many other EU governments have been applying to this fund, which has been changed specifically to help deal with the financial crisis."

"The UK Government should immediately apply for assistance from the fund - to help Ericsson employees and also for every other major company that is shedding jobs in the UK."

New bid to fight evil of human trafficking

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne has launched a new bid in the European Parliament to step up action against human trafficking gangs and to protect victims of the modern day slave trade.

Her move followed the recent conviction in Hereford Crown Court of eight people who controlled a large number of trafficked Chinese women forced to work as prostitutes in Birmingham, Leamington Spa, Kidderminster and Worcester.

Liz Lynne has teamed up with three other Euro MPs to launch a new Written Declaration on the issue in the Parliament.

The text calls for Britain and other EU countries to allow victims of trafficking gangs or forced labour to have access to temporary residence permits while they rebuild their lives and see if they can help prosecute the criminals that exploited them.

Liz Lynne said: "I believe this new EU Parliament Declaration is needed. We must encourage more international action against human trafficking and modern slavery and do more to help the victims."

There are credible estimates that between 600 000 to 800 000 men, women and children are trafficked across borders each year, between 1,000 and 4,000 into the UK, and many are forced into prostitution.

HIGH PRIORITY

"We need 369 signatures from MEPs in order to adopt the declaration and get a debate held in Parliament on further action."

Liz added: "The recent court case in Hereford highlights the need for police to give trafficking a high priority. We need more co-ordinated international action and an increased focus on helping the victims, not less."

"The Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking

concentrates more on the victim and every EU state needs to ratify it.

EU member states must also implement Directive 2004/81 on residence permits for the victims of trafficking; the UK has still not opted into this."

Liz has campaigned against human trafficking for many years, as shadow rapporteur for a European Parliament report, the author of a written declaration and a number of parliamentary questions on the issue.



Liz Lynne MEP launching the Blue Blindfold publicity campaign on trafficking with Detective Chief Superintendent Nick Kinsella and Chief Constable Grahame Maxwell (right).

20 years since Berlin Wall came down

The 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the extension of democracy to much of Eastern Europe were remembered at a special session of the European Parliament in early November.

As part of week long celebrations, pieces of the original Berlin wall were placed on display around the European Parliament in Brussels.

Liz said: "To have parts of the original Berlin wall here is a stark reminder of the struggle that so many of our European neighbours and indeed some of my MEP colleagues faced, to win their freedom."

"We must never forget the impact that this wall had on the lives of so many. Not only was it a physical barrier which separated families and friends, it was a symbol of repression and division which haunted a generation. These celebrations highlighted to me just how much progress we have made towards a united and free Europe in recent years"



Learn the lessons on dementia care

West Midlands MEP Liz Lynne has called for healthcare providers to learn the lessons from other European countries and share best practice on care for patients with dementia.

Liz's call comes as the Alzheimer's Disease Society warned that many sufferers spend too long in hospital when being treated for unrelated conditions.

Liz said: "We must heed the Alzheimer's Society's recent warning and learn lessons from other EU countries on how to deliver better care for people with dementia."

In particular, I believe we should improve staff training in the dispensing of drugs to older people.

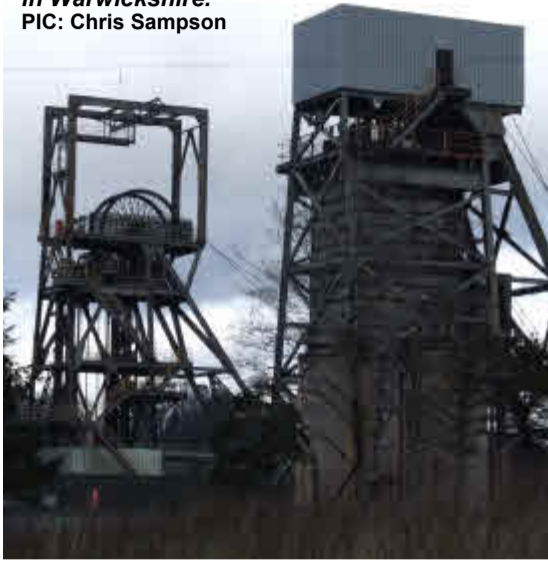
"It is extremely worrying to me that up to half of patients come out of a stay in an acute bed in a worse condition overall than when they went in"

Liz Lynne has also called on local NHS trusts to provide more community and intermediate care beds as a way to cut costs and improve care for patients with dementia.

"Clearly it is not good for patients to stay in an acute ward for longer than necessary, but it is not always possible to send them home. Intermediate care beds are a less stressful environment where staff can concentrate more fully on care needs and are clearly more suitable once acute treatment has been received."

£1bn Carbon Capture trial points to green future for coal - MEP

Carbon capture could secure a green future for Europe's largest coal mine, Daw Mill in Warwickshire.
PIC: Chris Sampson



Lib Dem Euro MP Liz Lynne has welcomed a plan by the European Commission to spend a billion pounds on six pilot schemes to develop carbon capture and storage technology.

The trial projects to trap carbon emissions at power stations in the UK and elsewhere would involve funding up to £180m each as part of the EU's economic recovery programme. Legislation supporting the plan has been led by Liberal Democrat Euro MPs in the European Parliament.

Carbon capture and storage (or CCS) involves separating the CO2 from the coal or gas at power stations and pumping it

as a liquid deep underground for permanent storage in rocks beneath the North Sea that used to hold oil or natural gas.

Liz Lynne is LibDem MEP for the West Midlands region which includes Europe's largest and most efficient coal mine, Daw Mill in Warwickshire, which produces over 3 million tonnes of coal a year and employs 680 people.

BIG STEP FORWARD

She said: "This huge EU sponsored project for full scale trials is a vital step forward. The world depends on the use of fossil fuels for most of its electricity and we need to get carbon capture technology to work if coal can

have a future in a carbon free economy.

"We need to take drastic and immediate steps to cut carbon emissions by every means. I am a strong supporter of wind, solar and tidal power, but it can't provide all the energy we need for many decades.

"I am not in favour of nuclear power, the risks of terrorism and pollution are too great. We have huge coal reserves in the UK and here in the West Midlands, and an efficient deep mining industry. If we can mine coal and use it in a way which does not cause global warming or pollution, then that could be a way forward."

Bone health checks could save billions

A drive to detect and prevent broken bones caused by Osteoporosis could save billions of pounds and deserves a higher priority, says MEP Liz Lynne.

The LibDem MEP has backed calls by the International Osteoporosis Foundation for the NHS and other healthcare agencies in the EU to step up prevention and treatment of the disease, which affects one in three women and one in five men over 50.

Liz Lynne said: "There can be enormous gains in quality of life and huge cost savings from simple changes in the way this bone thinning condition is looked for, prevented and managed."

"The shocking truth is that up to one in five people die within one year of a hip fracture, and up to 80% of patients at high risk have not been identified or treated. Early detection can prevent fractures and prevent huge costs of care afterwards."

Pressure needed on Israel to kickstart peace process

Local MEP Liz Lynne has called for pressure on the Israeli government to be stepped up to restart the stalled Middle East peace process and end the suffering of civilians.

The LibDem MEP was guest speaker at a meeting of the Justice for Palestinians Group West Midlands held in Leamington Spa in November.

Liz Lynne is a member of the Delegation for Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council in the European Parliament and as a human rights campaigner has repeatedly called for an end to the Gaza blockade and the disproportionate use of violence by Israeli troops.

She has also condemned the firing of rockets on Israeli civilians from inside Gaza and urged Hamas to renounce violence.

Liz Lynne said: "Gaza has dropped off the news agenda, but the horrendous suffering continues.

"Very few repairs have been made because of the ban on construction materials and people are living in abject poverty, often without water. Allegations of war crimes must be investigated not swept under the carpet."

Liz said she believed the proposed upgrade of the EU-Israel Association agreement on trade co-operation should remain suspended until Israel recognised its obligations under international law.

She added: "The EU has contributed billions of Euros to help the Palestinian people, both in emergency humanitarian situations and to help build a structured and stable society in the Occupied Territories.

As Israel's largest trading partner, I believe there is a greater role for the EU, and specifically for the European Parliament, to play in promoting diplomatic peace negotiations and kickstarting a peace process."



PIC: The devastation in Gaza as recorded by Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine. The ban on cement has prevented many repair works

EU fund could help local projects against violence

Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne has urged local community groups working to fight violence and protect victims of abuse to consider applying to an EU fund that might be able to help.

The West Midlands MEP was keynote speaker at a seminar for 45 potential applicants to the European Union's 'Daphne III' programme to assist projects to combat violence and exploitation and share best practice. The seminar, organised by West Midlands in Europe, was held at Newman University College in Birmingham. The College successfully bid for comparison research funds last year.

Liz said: "I am a strong supporter of the DAPHNE fund, which could help projects tackling the abuse of women, children, men and victims of exploitation such as human trafficking."

"In Sweden, which has a population of 9 million, there are over 90 shelters that can cater for trafficking victims.



Liz Lynne at Newman College with Dr Bruce Johns and Vice Principal Kathryn Southworth.

Here in the West Midlands, we have a population of over 5 million and yet we have no shelters designed for this."

SHARE BEST PRACTICE

"Through the DAPHNE programme we could fund work to look at what Sweden is doing right and what we could do better.

"We must do all we can to let people in the West Midlands region know about this fund as well as others and encourage local bids.

"The next call for proposals is in January, with an April 2010 deadline for applications. So bids from this region need to be prepared now."

Local groups considering a bid should contact Sophie Lainé at West Midlands in Europe by email at Sophie.Laine@westmidlandsineurope.eu or email EU Connects on euconnectsmarketing@wmlga.gov.uk

Hidden diabetes fears: take the test, says MEP

Anyone at high risk of diabetes should have no hesitation in asking for a test, says local MEP Liz Lynne after being tested herself at an event to mark World Diabetes Day on November 14th.

According to worrying research by the charity Diabetes UK there are already 255,405 people diagnosed with diabetes in the West Midlands region and around 50,000 more people who have the condition without knowing it. Diabetes has been linked to almost one in eight adult deaths in the West Midlands.

Liz said: "It is worrying that so many people in our region and up to 750,000 people in the UK may have type 2 diabetes without knowing it and this number is set to increase.

"Diabetes is a chronic, debilitating and costly disease but with early diagnosis many of the more serious complications may be avoided.



I would encourage anyone at risk to take the test which is really simple, it only takes a few minutes and could save their life.

"The traditional warning signs of type 2 diabetes are often missing or hard to detect, which makes a test even more important."

Your local LibDem Euro MP LIZ LYNNE

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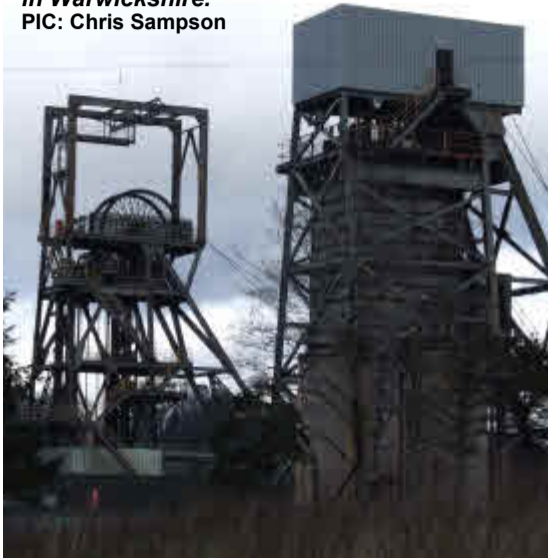
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LIZ LYNNE: Working for our region all year round

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Dairy farmers need real help now, say LibDems

West Midlands MEP Liz Lynne has welcomed a European Parliament resolution calling for immediate action on the crisis in dairy farming.

The resolution passed at a session in Strasbourg called for a range of measures to help dairy farmers, many of whom have seen the price of their milk drop dramatically in recent months. Many are now selling milk at a loss, which means they are losing money each month and relying on their savings, which is not sustainable.

Liz Lynne said: "I am horrified at the current market situation for so many dairy farmers. It is plainly wrong and completely unsustainable that many of

these farmers are being forced to sell their milk at a loss and are having to rely on their savings to get by.

"This resolution from the European Parliament, which I strongly support, calls for more help for farmers.

SUPERMARKET REGULATOR

"It makes clear that the domination of supermarkets, who sell milk at a loss to get people into their shops, is at least partly to blame. This is totally unfair on the farmers.

"The Liberal Democrats have for a long time now called for an independent supermarket regulator to look at supermarket domination and the effect this is having on our farmers in particular."



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Anyone at high risk of diabetes should have no hesitation in asking for a test, says local MEP Liz Lynne after being tested herself at an event to mark World Diabetes Day on November 14th.

According to worrying research by the charity Diabetes UK there are already 255,405 people diagnosed with diabetes in the West Midlands region and around 50,000 more people who have the condition without knowing it. Diabetes has been linked to almost one in eight adult deaths in the West Midlands.

Liz said: "It is worrying that so many people in our region and up to 750,000 people in the UK may have type 2 diabetes without knowing it and this number is set to increase.

"Diabetes is a chronic, debilitating and costly disease but with early diagnosis many of the more serious complications may be avoided.



I would encourage anyone at risk to take the test which is really simple, it only takes a few minutes and could save their life.

"The traditional warning signs of type 2 diabetes are often missing or hard to detect, which makes a test even more important."

Your local LibDem Euro MP LIZ LYNNE

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LIZ LYNNE: Working for our region all year round