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Sector Developments

Political party manifestos and their implications for FE and Skills in England

This will be the last newsletter before the General Election on May 7, so it seems appropriate to include summary extracts from party manifestos in respect of their policies for education and skills provision. It is important to remember that these policies only apply to England, because education and skills policy in other UK countries are devolved to the national governments of those countries.

The Conservative Party

The Conservative manifesto says that:

- They will create 3 million new apprenticeships over the lifetime of the next Parliament
- FE will be 'improved' through the opening of further new National Colleges. (No prizes for guessing where the funding for these will come from)
- A university technical college (UTC) will be established 'within reach of every city' as part of an £18 billion commitment to building new schools. As you probably know are actually secondary schools offering a fairly limited number of vocational options to pupils aged 14-19. It is unclear whether the Conservative's UTC expansion plans will involve the re-opening of UTCs that have been closed (such as Hackney UTC), or are about to be closed, (such as the Black Country UTC which is currently operating at just 31% of its capacity). At present six of the current thirty UTCs are operating at less than one third capacity, with two operating at 14% and 12% respectively.
- Young people will be required to study mathematics and English to age 18.
- It will *not* be mandatory for teachers to be qualified.
- Existing levels of Department for Education (DfE) funding for 5-16 year olds in schools in England will be maintained. Funding will be increased take account of the rapidly rising school age population in England, but will not be 'inflation-protected'. Other than for expanding apprenticeships, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) funding is not protected.

The Labour Party

The Labour Party says they will introduce an education bill within the first 100 days of taking office. This will contain proposals for reforms to vocational education, apprenticeships and training, including the following:

- The introduction of a new 'gold-standard Technical Baccalaureate' for 16-18 year olds
- A requirement for all young people to continue to study English and mathematics to age 18
- All teachers will be required to be qualified (including FE teachers)
- New Institutes of Technical Education will be developed. Existing FE colleges will be expected to 'focus on training for local jobs'.
- All young people will be guaranteed access to 'face-to-face' careers advice. £50 million will be diverted from the 'Widening Access and Participation fund' to pay for an extra 1,000 trained careers advisers.
- New technical degrees will be introduced. These will be delivered by both universities and employers
- University tuition fees in England will be reduced to £6,000 per year, down from the £9,000 per year introduced in 2012. Recently published statistics suggest that graduates in England are now leaving university with debts averaging around £40,000.
- UTCs 'will be prioritised' in the planning future schools provision.
- Every young person 'that gets the grades' will be guaranteed a high quality apprenticeship. Apparently, Labour still remains committed to scrapping apprenticeships at Level 2, preferring them to start at Level 3 and to last a minimum of two years. However, no reference to this is made in the manifesto. When asked why this was, a spokesperson for the party said that the manifesto was 'only meant to provide an overview of policy'. Also, the details of which grades and which qualifications will qualify students for the

proposed high quality apprenticeship guarantee will be clarified 'once the party is in office'.

- The AS Level will be reinstated as a qualification in its own right
- There will be a 'far-reaching reform of Ofsted'. Whilst acknowledging that Ofsted has 'been a vehicle for progress in our education system', Labour says that the current system is 'too focused on a target-driven, examination factory model of education that has reached its end stages'.
- Existing levels of DfE funding will be protected for provision from birth to age 19. This includes protection in terms of both inflation and for the anticipated rise in pupil numbers. However, other than for apprenticeships, BIS funding is not protected.

More recently, Labour has announced that on 'day one', universities and colleges in England will be asked to expand their nurse training provision. This reverses the policy of the previous two governments that oversaw a reduction of around one third in the number of nurse training places, and which has resulted in an over-reliance on nurses recruited from abroad (and has depleted the numbers of nurses available in the countries that paid to train them).

Labour also says that it will abolish the 'zero hours contracts' widely used in FE. (No doubt starting with the 36 Labour MPs and numerous Labour run councils that currently employ staff on these contracts).

Liberal Democrat Party

The Liberal Democrat manifesto says that:

- The education budget will be protected 'from the cradle to college' (meaning from age 2 to age 19). The protection will allow for inflation and for the anticipated increase in pupil numbers.
- The party also says that it will spend more than the Labour Party and the Conservative Party on 16-19 provision
- Other than funding for an additional 1.5 million apprentices BIS funding will not be protected
- As with the Conservatives, more National Colleges will be developed 'to meet the needs of key sectors'.
- All teachers will be required to be qualified.
- 'Lifelong Learning Accounts' will be established to help adult learners access training courses
- A review will be set up to address VAT anomalies amongst different types of 16-18 education provider

The UK Independence Party (UKIP)

The UKIP manifesto says that the party will:

- Remove tuition fees (subject to academic performance) for students taking approved degrees in science, medicine, technology, engineering, mathematics, on the condition that they live, work and pay taxes in the UK
- Scrap the target of 50% of school leavers going to university.
- Abolish the AS Level altogether
- Insist that students from the EU pay the same tuition fees as other non-EU international students.
- Support Free Schools that are open to the whole community and uphold British values, some of which could be 'vocational schools'.
- Support high performing schools to become grammar schools, and allow them to select their pupil intake according to ability and aptitude.
- Introduce an option for students to take 'a new apprenticeship qualification instead of four non-core GCSEs', with 'certified professionals' involved in 'grading the progress of the student'.

The Green Party

The Green Party says, if elected, it will:

- Oppose the continued privatisation of further education and return control of FE colleges to local government.
- Reverse the trend whereby 45% of apprenticeships are now taken by people over 25
- Increase funding for 16-24 apprenticeships by 30%.
- Restore the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds in England. (EMAs have been retained elsewhere in the UK
- Provide the FE sector with £1.5 billion of extra funding per year.
- Connect universities with schools and colleges through nationwide Widening Participation programmes.

- Provide local authorities with the funds needed to restore a full range of local adult education programmes and to provide access to lifelong learning by supporting mature students and their families.
- Prioritise training in the skills needed to build a low-carbon economy.
- Abolish zero-hours contracts
- Abolish both undergraduate and post-graduate tuition fees in England.
- Cancel existing debt incurred by students through loans from the Student Loans Company (SLC)
- Reintroduce student grants over the lifetime of the next parliament and, in the longer run, support living costs for students whilst at university through a 'Basic Income' grant.

BIS consults on the future of adult vocational education

BIS has launched a consultation document entitled '*A Dual Mandate for Adult Vocational Education*'. The consultation is intended to address 'challenges that will face adult further education in England over the next ten years', and poses 44 questions on issues such as national colleges, higher education, specialisation and government intervention in FE. The 'Dual Mandate' is defined as being the need 'to provide both vocational education for the workplace and second chances for those who have not succeeded in the school system'. BIS Secretary, Vince Cable says that the main focus of the consultation will be on 'how to strengthen higher-level vocational education, an area in which England lags behind other countries' (which seems to imply that the 'second chances' bit of the consultation is not regarded as being all that important). Dr Cable says that 'Two trends are likely continue over the rest of this decade and beyond. Firstly, reductions in public funds for skills are unlikely to be reversed and resource allocation will increasingly be contestable. Secondly, effective delivery will increasingly require greater specialisation'.

Responding to the consultation process:

- David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) called for 'an independent commission' to be set up to help establish 'a new vision for skills'.
- Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC), called on the government to conduct a 'once in a generation' review of FE funding and to allow colleges the time to 'restructure, consolidate and to develop new business models' to help them cope with the challenges they face.
- Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), asked 'If Vince Cable believes FE provides a vital lifeline for the most disadvantaged young adults who lack the basic skills needed for work, then why is the government planning to dismantle it?'
- Andrew Harden, head of FE at the University and College Union (UCU), said 'The stark reality now is that, outside of apprenticeships, and support for mathematics and English, thousands of adult learners will have far fewer opportunities to get back into education and training'.

One observer suggested that the consultation document should include the question being posed by the thousands of college staff who are, or will be, losing their jobs as a consequence of the continuing cuts to FE budgets which is 'Does publicly funded FE actually have a future?'

Continued cuts will 'wipe out adult education and training within the next five years'

The answer to this question might be 'no'. Since 2010, the FE sector in England has had to deal with adult skills budget cuts of around 35%, which NIACE says has resulted in the loss of more than one million training places. Following on from this, the AoC has published data predicting that next year's 24% cut will mean that another 190,000 adult training places will be lost, and that if the cuts to FE budgets continue at the same rate, by 2020, publicly funded adult education and training provision in England will have ceased to exist altogether. The ongoing loss of adult provision means that older people who become unemployed, and those faced with having to work beyond retirement age, will find it more difficult to access the support they need to re-train. In addition, because schools and academies have been encouraged to establish their own sixth form provision, colleges with a strong focus on adult learners will find it difficult to replace their adult provision with provision for younger pre-19 students.

Responding to these concerns, a spokesperson for BIS acknowledged that total FE funding had been reduced, but argued that priority 'had been given to the areas where the most impact can be made'. (With these being defined as 'apprenticeships, traineeships and support with English and mathematics'). The spokesperson went on to say that colleges 'had responded well to the need to find other income streams for skills provision' adding that it was 'this approach that will help them succeed' (with 'succeed' in this context probably meaning 'survive').

16-18 Education in England has lost out by £1.2 billion since 2010

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has published a report entitled *'Moving on up- developing a strong, coherent upper secondary education system in England'*. The report says that funding for 16-18 education in England fell from £7.7 billion to £7 billion during current parliament, and that 'if the education budget for 5-15 year olds had been spread evenly across the whole of the 5-18 age range, funding for 16-18 year olds would have been £1.2 billion higher'. The IPPR report follows a similar report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) that says that 'the area of DfE spending that has suffered the largest cut has been 16-19 education, where spending has fallen by 14% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2014/15'.

Further reduction in HEFCE allocations to FE and Sixth Form Colleges

The number of people starting HE courses at FE colleges is now 57% higher than in 2010/11. However, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has announced that next year, FE and sixth form colleges delivering HE programmes will receive £3 million less in HE funding. This represents a 4% reduction on the £64 million allocated in 2015/16 and a massive 48% reduction on the £118 million allocated in 2012/13. A HEFCE spokesperson said that allocations to colleges were lower 'because students now paid higher tuition fees'. HEFCE has also announced that the Council will make £11.02 million available to help 'improve collaboration between universities, schools and colleges'. However, of this, just £714,772 will be allocated to FE colleges, which is less than 6.5% of the total.

Bid to end VAT anomaly frustrated by the dissolution of parliament

At present, schools and academies can reclaim the VAT on expenditure on their sixth formers, whereas sixth form colleges can't. This effectively allows schools and academies to spend, on average, £335,000 more per year than sixth form colleges. The Sixth Form Colleges' Association (SFCA) says that this is unfair, since schools are given a competitive advantage, and has engaged in a long-running campaign to end the anomaly, during which they gained the support of a number of leading politicians and public figures. The estimated cost of exempting sixth form colleges from VAT is estimated to be in the region of £31 million per year but, on the day before Parliament was dissolved, Education Secretary for England, Nicky Morgan formally wrote to the SFCA, saying that the DfE 'could not afford' the end the tax. The SFCA deputy chief executive James Kerwin described this as 'cynical' and went on to say 'we hope the next government will move quickly to address this longstanding anomaly in order to ensure young people receive the same level of investment in their education, irrespective of where they choose to study'.

As yet, there has been no similar campaign in respect of reclaiming VAT on expenditure on 16-18 provision in FE colleges. Hopefully, any change in VAT exemption rules for sixth form colleges will include FE colleges too, but it would probably be unwise for anyone to hold their breath waiting for this.

Employer Ownership of Skills is 'an expensive, failed project'

Following a review of the flagship Employer Ownership of Skills project, figures released by BIS reveal that employers involved in the pilot delivered only 37% of the 10,000 apprenticeships and 90,000 non-apprenticeship qualifications the initiative was supposed to deliver. The AoC has now called the £340 million scheme (which the government described as 'a significant and high profile public investment') an 'expensive, failed project' and has demanded that MPs who form the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the next Parliament carry out a urgent inquiry into what they say has been a 'waste of scarce funds'.

The rationale for the scheme assumed that employers would be more likely to invest in skills development if they were given greater 'freedom and leverage over the use of government funding'. However, it soon became clear that employers were reluctant to use their own cash to fund training activity, preferring instead to make contributions 'in kind' (mostly in staff time). It also became clear that without continued public funding, many of the projects were unlikely to continue. The review also revealed that most projects failed to produce the 'transformative, unique innovations' that were initially anticipated, and that five of the six projects that were supposed to generate in excess of 300 apprenticeships, were in fact led by an intermediary apprenticeship provider, rather than by an employer (or group of employers). Despite these criticisms, many of the businesses that were involved in the pilot have called for its continuation. Toby Peyton-Jones, human resources director for Siemens said 'the employer ownership of skills has set the right policy direction for the future', and claims that the pilot is 'working well despite difficulties'. Mr Peyton-Jones went on to argue that 'the demand-led direction of travel was right' and that the government should 'not try to reverse what is probably one of the most important innovations in the skills arena for decades'.

FE policies have been based on ‘instincts and prejudice’

The new Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER), based at the London School of Economics has been established to ‘generate a step-change in understanding the nature, significance and potential contribution of vocational education to individuals and the wider economy’. It will receive £1 million per year from BIS for the next three years to help fund research, which, apparently, will be different to the research carried out by FETL and the ETF. Speaking at the launch of the CVER, Skills minister for England, Nick Boles said that ‘policies on further education have for the past two decades been based more on instincts or prejudice’, and that he was now ‘looking forward to learning the real factual answers to questions, so that future FE reforms can be more surely rooted in evidence’.

Play Misty for me

The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) is an independent charity that was set up last year to promote innovative thinking amongst leaders within the FE sector. The remit that it has given itself is to carry on the work of the now defunct Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), using £5.5 million of the service’s residual budget. FETL has recently allocated the first FETL research grants of up to £100,000 to institutions and the first FETL research fellowships worth up to £40,000 to individuals. It has funded the university chair at the Institute of Education and sponsored the first FETL annual lecture (which was on the intriguing, but slightly abstruse, topic of *‘Leaders or Leadership? The Century of the System’*).

Following on from this, FETL has now launched its first publication, entitled *‘Remembered Thinking: On further education and leading’*. The treatise includes contributions by Labour peer Helena Kennedy QC (*‘Widening Participation’*), Liberal Democrat peer Margaret Sharp (*‘Colleges in their Communities’*), and Conservative former FE minister John Hayes (*‘I’m with you for the long haul’*), along with contributions from other ‘leading figures within the FE sector’. In her own contribution to the publication, FETL president Dame Ruth Silver says that ‘the FE sector must look to the future instead of looking back misty-eyed at the past’. She goes on to argue that there never was a ‘golden age of further education’, and that ‘making direct comparisons with the past is questionable’. She concluded her contribution by saying that there were ‘two kinds of folk around us: those who long for the past and those who desire a future’, and presumably for the avoidance of doubt, said that ‘we at FETL, are firmly of the latter camp’.

Extension of FE loans is put on hold

Meanwhile, back on earth, the consultation launched by BIS on plans to extend the FE loans system in England to 19-23 year olds, and those studying courses at Level 2 and below, has been put on hold. The government currently pays half of the course cost for 19-23 year olds studying courses at Levels 2 and Level 3, but under the new proposal, these students (as is the case with those aged 24 and above), would have been able to access loans from the Students’ Loan Company (SLC), but would have been required pay for the full cost of their course from the loan. Commenting on the delay, Skills minister for England, Nick Boles said that he believed it would be better ‘to consider the implications of these changes alongside plans for the overall funding for skills provision in the future’. He went on to say, ‘for this reason, we will *not* be going ahead with our plans for the extension of loans at the moment, but will look again at these proposals in the next Spending Review’.

He did however announce changes to the existing 24+ loans scheme, saying that, from 2016/17:

- The ‘concurrent study rule’, which prevents students from undertaking two loans-funded courses at the same time, would be removed, as will the ‘repeat study rule’, that prevents a learner from undertaking loans-funded courses of the same type and level.
- The rule limiting a learner to a maximum of four loans over their lifetime will remain, but the government will ‘continue to monitor this, and if necessary, consider amendments in the future’.

Concerns have been expressed that without an extension of the loans system to 19-23 year olds, the ongoing cuts to adult FE funding will mean that many young adults will effectively be denied access to FE courses for the foreseeable future.

‘Warning signs’ the FE Commissioner says college governors should look out for

The FE Commissioner has written to all boards and principals with a list of ‘potential early warning signs’ that a college is heading into difficulty. These ‘warning signs’ are based on Dr Collins’ observations in the ‘20 or so colleges’ he has visited since November 2013, which he says, ‘were apparent well before an

intervention was triggered'. His list includes examples of issues 'where an early questioning of the principal and/or senior team might have prevented the situation from becoming worse'. Dr Collins says that the document is primarily aimed at encouraging colleges to acknowledge their weaknesses and do something about them, rather than just 'waiting around to be given a financial notice of concern from the Skills Funding Agency or an inadequate Ofsted rating'. Dr Collins' list of 'warning signs' includes the following:

- Financial forecasts that are repeatedly 'significantly different to out-turn'
- Management accounts that show significant swings or variations
- Borrowing that, as a percentage of college turnover, exceeds 60%. (Dr Collins suggests that 40% 'would be more reasonable').
- Staff costs that exceed of 65% of turnover. (He suggests that 60% should be the maximum).
- Lack of evidence of a systematic engagement with employers'
- Student attendance rates that 'are below 85 to 90%'
- Student surveys or focus groups that show levels of satisfaction below 90%.

Dr Collins also said governors should be concerned if:

- They are discouraged from meeting and discussing the college's performance with students and staff
- Minutes and ensuing actions arising from senior management team meetings are not published and/or do not cover the key issues faced by the college.
- College re-structuring is occurring regularly, rather than occasionally'.
- Walking around the college, they see a high number of empty classrooms and class sizes below 15.

Evaluating the role of the FE Commissioner

Intervention by the FE Commissioner is usually invoked in the wake of:

- An Ofsted inadequate inspection rating
- An inadequate assessment for financial health from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
- A failure to meet minimum performance standards set by the SFA or DfE'

BIS has now published a report entitled '*An Evaluation of the Further Education Commissioner-led intervention process*' which says that intervention process is now 'firmly embedded as part of the FE landscape' and claims that 'the creation of the role of FE Commissioner has sent a clear message to the sector that poor performance will not be tolerated'. The report provides details of the 19 interventions made by the Commissioner at the time it was published and concludes that 'progress made by all institutions in intervention has represented a significant reputational and fiscal return for BIS and provides good evidence of a successful first phase of delivering the intervention policy'. However, the report also calls for 'more clarity on how the intervention process might be brought to a close'.

Whatever happened to Chartered Status?

Whilst impoverished in terms of government funding, the FE sector has always been rich when it comes to being on the receiving end of new (and usually short-lived) government schemes and initiatives. For example, in July 2012, BIS unveiled plans for high achieving FE colleges to be granted 'Chartered Status'. The following year, the Institution for Further Education, (IFE) was set up as a not-for-profit company that would launch the new kite mark, and then administer applications from colleges wanting to be awarded it. Conservative peer Lord Lingfield was duly appointed as chair, and former senior civil servant Ed Quilty as chief executive. In March 2014, Lord Lingfield said that he expected negotiations on Chartered Status to be 'completed within months'. However, it appears that to date, the IFE petition for Chartered Status is still to be considered by the Privy Council. Since there are no plans for it to be considered any time soon, it would seem that the process for gaining Chartered status has ground to a halt, with many observers suggesting that this is a reflection of the level of importance given to it by both the government and by the FE sector. When asked to comment on the delay, a BIS spokesperson enigmatically replied 'We are satisfied with current progress in this matter', a response which probably speaks volumes.

Ofqual consults on a replacement for the QCF

Following the announcement that the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is to be scrapped, Ofqual has published a consultation document entitled '*After the QCF: A new Qualifications Framework*'. In the document, Ofqual proposes that, in future, all regulated qualifications should be contained within a new

Framework of Regulated Qualifications (FRQ). Ofqual is also proposing that qualifications should no longer be required to be unitised or credit bearing (although they can be, if employers say they want this). The main features of the proposed FRQ include the following:

- A new range of descriptors for each level will be introduced, which Ofqual says will 'better reflect the full range of qualifications than those under the QCF'
- New specifications for a qualification will include its objective, any pre-requisites for those wishing to study it, the knowledge and skills assessed, how it will be assessed and how attainment will be measured. Specifications must also include the level and the size of the qualification, so that it can be aligned to the FRQ.
- Guided learning hours will no longer be used for measuring the size of a qualification. Instead, Ofqual proposes that a new Total Qualification Time (TQT) will be used. (Where appropriate, online study, work experience or other 'passively supervised' activities will be allowed to count towards the TQT).

Awarding organisations have generally welcomed the end of the QCF, but some have expressed concern about proposals to introduce the TQT as the measure for the size of a qualification.

Functional Skills are here to stay

The review body that was commissioned by the ETF to examine employers' perceptions of Functional Skills (and other non-GCSE English and mathematics qualifications) has now produced its report. The report claims that employers value Functional Skills for their 'practical approach to problem solving and for their flexible assessment'. (This is based on research which shows that '47% of employers were aware of Functional Skills and of those, 87% valued them'). The report goes on to argue that 'that Functional Skills should not be seen as a stepping stone to help learners achieve GCSE' but as an alternative to GCSE and 'a route to a qualification in its own right'. However, for this to be the case, the report says 'Firstly, Functional Skills standards have to be aligned to employability criteria and the content has to be based on what employers need for their workforce. Secondly, Functional Skills have to have flexible but assessment has to be sufficiently rigorous to give employers confidence in them'. The report concludes that 'if the government continues with its policy of investing in the literacy and numeracy skills of young people, the current arrangements for Functional Skills are a good basis on which to build'. Welcoming the report, Skills Minister for England, Nick Boles, said that the findings showed that 'the current Functional Skills system is serving its purpose'.

Concern at the delay in SFA decisions on qualification funding eligibility

The SFA is in the process of significantly reducing the number of qualifications it is prepared to fund. Awarding organisations (AOs) facing cuts in the number of their qualifications that are eligible for funding have been allowed to make a submission to the SFA outlining the case why some qualifications should continue to be funded. However the SFA says that the 'high number of submissions' it has received from AOs, along with further submissions for funding for new qualifications, has caused severe delays in arriving at decisions. The SFA was originally supposed to confirm how many of all 779 submissions for continued funding had been approved by April 1, but on that date, there were still 419 submissions awaiting a decision. The delay has caused concern amongst some AOs who say they are worried that their 'customers' may opt for alternative qualifications already approved by the SFA for public funding.

Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015

This February, the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 became law. From 1 July, Section 26 of the Act places a statutory duty on FE and sixth form colleges to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' and they are legally required to 'consider the potential for radicalisation alongside other safeguarding issues'. Commenting on the new duty, Theresa May said 'Tackling the radicalisation of young people is not, and cannot ever be, the sole responsibility of the government and law enforcement agencies. The new duty means that universities and colleges will have a legal obligation to play their part, and I hope they do so as fully as possible'. There are also strong rumours that Ofsted will make Safeguarding (now considerably augmented by the new statutory requirement to help prevent radicalisation) a limiting judgment with respect to grade given for 'Leadership and Management'.

New statutory duty to help prevent terrorism

Help for FE providers to comply with the new legislation includes the following:

- The 157 Group and Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), have combined to develop a 'toolkit' to help colleges and private providers to meet their new obligations. The toolkit contains information about the new 'Prevent' strategy and the underlying legislation and provides guidance to help providers develop and implement the strategies needed in order to meet their new statutory duties. The authors of the toolkit say that 'how radicalisation is tackled can vary from place to place and from organisation to organisation', adding that because of this, 'the case studies and advice contained in the toolkit are not meant to be prescriptive; instead they serve as a reminder of the way in which education and training providers regularly come up with innovative solutions that have, at their heart, the interest of the communities they serve'.
- The ETF has launched a new website containing guidance for practitioners, support staff, managers, and governors. Each of these groups is able to download information designed to meet their specific responsibilities and explains what training and support is available to help them with this. A spokesperson for the ETF said 'Our website has a range of materials to support people from across the sector, including material reflecting effective practice across the sector that exists already, and we will continue to build on this and refresh the resources prior to the duty coming in to force in July'.

Further help

One of **Click's** associates, Selina Stewart has been closely involved in developing both the ETF website and the accompanying guidelines for implementation of the new statutory duty. Selina has said that she is happy to help should you need to discuss any of the issues raised by the legislation. She can be contacted via Kate (either on 07966 153729 or at kate.mulleady@click-cms.co.uk).

ATL advises caution in promoting 'fundamental British values'

In the wake of the 'Trojan horse' affair, all schools and colleges in England are now required to actively promote 'fundamental British values'. However, at their annual conference, ATL members voted to monitor the policing of the requirement because of concerns about 'unintended consequences' such as 'how the values might be interpreted by a future right-wing government'. Concerns were also expressed that Ofsted will be 'gauging the views of pupils in order to assess how well schools actively promote these values'.

And finally...

It seems only fair to end this edition with some extracts from the election manifesto of the Monster Raving Looney Party. These are as follows:

Education

- We will ensure schools place more emphasis on the 'Four R's (reading, writing, and rock and roll).
- We will make class sizes smaller by standing children closer together and giving them smaller desks.
- We will introduce selection and streaming in evening classes.
- Children who bunk off from school will be required to do community service as truancy officers.

Youth

- Actually, we don't have any policies on youth. We think they're probably better off without politicians interfering with them.

Health

- Free prescriptions will be made available for all, since it shouldn't cost anyone to be sick.
- Complimentary medicine should be made available on the NHS. (We're not so sure about complementary medicine)

Defence and Foreign Policy

- We believe that foreign policy is best left in the hands of our established Premiership football teams
- We will get rid of Trident. This will save a lot of forking about
- All bombs and guns will be kept in a fridge to stop them going off.
- All weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) will be made highly visible so they can be found more easily.
- We will extend political asylum to animals fleeing from persecution, particularly Spanish donkeys, French horses, Tunisian camels and Dutch veal calves.

Food and agriculture

Tel: 0121 643 8988

- All food sold in fast food establishments will be required to be clearly marked 'May contain traces of real food'. All vegetables sold in supermarkets, will be clearly marked 'Strictly for oral use only'
- We will fund research into why crop-circles never appear in turnip fields.
- We will pump 'Euro Wine' lakes through the Channel Tunnel to a pond or reservoir near you.
- All GM foods will be made illegal and GM will be restricted to making cars.

Taxation

- If we really do have to have income tax, we will incorporate it into the National Lottery, so at least taxpayers will stand a chance of winning their money back.
- All taxpayers will receive Nectar Points on any tax they pay
- Stamp duty will be abolished. Stamps are expensive enough without having to pay duty on them.

Law and Order

- All police officers will be issued with mountain bikes, except those in the Flying Squad who will be issued with space hoppers. We are not happy about policemen sleeping on roads
- We will solve the problem of prison over-crowding by releasing all the innocent prisoners.

Transport

- All urban streets will have pram lanes.
- We believe that it is unfair that only zebras should have their own crossings. We shall give all animals their own crossings, starting with leopards.
- In order to prevent congestion on motorways, we will close all the motorways. In order to reduce congestion on other roads, cars will be required to run on Veno's Cough medicine.

Sport

- Hunting with dogs will be reintroduced, but will be made fairer by allowing only one dog per fox.
- Supporting Manchester United will be made a criminal offence for those living south of Crewe.
- To make the game fairer, footballers in the top four Premiership teams will be required to play every second league game wearing carpet slippers. Also, the size of the goal mouth being defended will be increased in direct proportion to the amount of money spent by the club on the team's players

Alan Birks – April 2015

*As usual, the views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those held by **Click CMS Ltd***

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