



Annual Conference 2011 | Manchester | 2 - 5 October



Event: Eric Pickles speech

Venue: GMEX conference centre, Manchester

Date: 3rd October, 15:30

'Partial to the odd scone'

George Osborne the Chancellor referenced Eric Pickles in his 'we'll ride out this storm together' address to Conservative conference, saying:

"Economic advisor to Gordon Brown. I'm not sure I'd put that on my CV if I were Ed Balls. It's like 'personal trainer to Eric Pickles.. Although I have to say, when it comes to chasing down council waste, no-one runs faster than or Eric."

In his own speech this afternoon to the Tory faithful, Eric Pickles the Communities Secretary vowed to do exactly that - scale back the waste of the State. Pickles demonstrated why he was voted the 4th most liked MP amongst members of the Party when he delivered a straight talking 'man of the people' speech in language that everybody could understand even if there was little new policy announcements or substance.

Hidden amongst his colourful references 'to show girl sensation Amber Topaz', 'chicken chow mein', 'Mills and Boon' and 'civic sex snooper' was however a serious attack on the Unions and how they cost the tax payer a 1/4 billion pounds a year.

In addition, he reiterated Cameron's pledge of selling off the Government's disused land and empty offices, and use it to build one hundred thousand more homes.' An announcement that sounds very familiar to me.

But in reference to the ongoing National Trust and Telegraph scare-mongering NPPF 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' debacle Eric had the following to say.

"The planning system also has is role to play in building more homes and boosting local growth. But it doesn't have to be at the expense of the countryside or local democracy... Labour's Regional Spatial Strategies planned to bulldoze the Green Belt. Well, we will protect it."

"You won't be surprised to learn that me and Mrs Pickles are partial to the odd scone and warm beverage in National Trust Tea Room. But the planning system needs to be improved...We need a

system which is quicker and provides greater certainty for local firms and local residents. But it is not a choice between countryside or concrete."

Echoing the Prime Minister he continued, "Our countryside is one of the best things that makes Britain great, and we'll protect it."

One of the few policy initiatives to come out of his speech was in fact a proposal to provide £60m to support councils to build and improve official traveller pitches.

He ending by saying that: "You can feel that power is shifting - back to you, back to your communities, back in the right direction."