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Fund raiser returns to Tory HQ

By Richard Evans

Lord McAlpine of West Green, in charge of fund-raising for the Conservative Party for the past decade, is returning to his job at Central Office after the departure of Mr John Gummer as party chairman.

While, in theory, he has never stopped being joint treasurer, he ceased day-to-day involvement earlier this year after sharp differences of opinion with Mr Gummer.

The disagreement is believed, in some quarters, to have contributed to the removal of Mr Gummer as party chairman. As one senior source described it: "the fly in the ointment has gone."

After Mr Norman Tebbit's appointment as party chairman in Mrs Thatcher's recent Cabinet reshuffle, Lord McAlpine has agreed to return to the job. He has spent several weeks in Australia, where, apart from looking after business interests, he has been tracking crocodiles.

With a general election possibly only two years away, he faces a tough job building up the party's coffers. It is understood that crucial donations from companies have continued to slide after their estimated 11 per cent fall to £2.2 million in 1984.

Birdlife refuge

The Nature Conservancy Council has declared the entire shoreline of the Orwell estuary in Suffolk to be of scientific interest because of its rare birdlife.

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