

# Reports to Conference

**Autumn 2020**





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# Federal Committee Reports

## Federal Conference Committee - Geoff Payne (Chair)

### Introduction

The Federal Conference Committee is responsible for organising our two annual conferences. It is an independent committee but subject to the control of the Federal Board in terms of finance and resources.

### Virtual Conference - Autumn 2020

This is our first ever virtual online conference. Following the cancellation of Spring 2020 York because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were very keen to ensure that members had the chance to debate policy, hold party committees and officers to account, question our Parliamentarians, and to meet together online this Autumn. For that reason, we have worked very hard to re-create as much of the conference experience as we can – although sadly without the seaside, pier, bars, restaurants and in-person networking. We hope that it will attract all of those who love coming to conference plus many, many more people who have been unable to attend in the past.



We have partnered with the technology company Hopin to run our event. It allows us to operate an online auditorium, fringe programme and exhibition – all the things that you will be used to if you have come to conference before.

Please do visit the online exhibition booths, go along to some of the fringe meetings and come and watch (or better still, participate in) the debates in the auditorium.

We had a very large number of motions submitted and, as ever, it was difficult to choose between them. The sheer number of submissions is testament to the amount of policy discussion and debate going on in the party.

All of the debate items on agenda are open to amendment. Amendments should be submitted through the website ([https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference\\_submissions](https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference_submissions)) and those will be considered by the Conference Committee at its meeting in September.

There are two policy areas in which we recognised things were moving very fast: our relations with the European Union and the COVID-19 pandemic. We have set a later deadline for motions on those topics and set aside time on the agenda to debate them.

There are a number of sessions where you have the opportunity to question our party spokespeople, Parliamentarians and officers. There are instructions about how to do that in the agenda.



There are two slots for debating emergency motions. Those are motions on matters that have arisen since the original motions deadline on 1st July. Again, those will be selected by the committee in September. Please submit motions for us to consider through the website.

The deadline for amendments, emergency motions and motions on COVID-19 and Europe is **1pm, 14th September 2020**.

We recognise that putting together a motion or amendment can be daunting. If you are thinking of submitting something and have it in writing, do take advantage of our drafting advice service.

The deadline for that is **1pm, 31st August 2020**. Please submit all requests through the website ([https://www.libdems.org.uk/drafting\\_advice](https://www.libdems.org.uk/drafting_advice)) and a member of the Conference Committee will get back to you.

A virtual conference is very different to a physical one. We have had to make a new set of Standing Orders in order to operate it. Those Standing Orders are identical to the old ones save for the modifications that we have to make in order for the event to work. Gone are references to voting cards and “rising on a point of order” for example. The constitution states that conference must vote on those Standing Orders and we will be doing that very early on. We need those Standing Orders to pass in order to run our event.



The one major change we have had to make concerns Speaker's Cards. We need them to be submitted much earlier than usual to plan debates most effectively. If you want to speak at conference, you must complete and submit an online Speaker's Card by, at the latest, **4pm on the day before the debate.**

If you are called to speak at this conference, the experience will be a little different to usual. You will be contacted in advance by our production staff and talked through what will happen. They will help you to make the most of your speech.

We welcome your feedback on every aspect of conference. After the event, there will be an online survey sent round to everyone who registered. We are keen to know how you thought it went so please do complete the survey.

## **York 2021**

We are hoping to return to a physical Spring Conference next year. The venue will be York. We will let you know the various deadlines once we have completed the virtual conference.

## **Thanks**

Migrating a physical event to an online one involves a phenomenal amount of work – especially when we have not done anything on this scale before. We will not have got everything right. Please bear with us and enjoy the event!



I would like to express my sincere thanks to the hardworking staff who work in the Conference Office: Susannah Murray, Wilma Robinson, Hannah Bacchus and Isabelle Pucher. Thanks are also due to Mike Dixon, Emma Cherniavsky, David Green, and other staff at Party Headquarters. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Humphrey Amos and the staff in the Whips' Office.

A huge amount of work goes into the agenda. I would like to thank Christian Moon and Andrew Burrell, the team of policy researchers, and our designer, Mike Cooper.

The Stewards Team are an essential part of conference and although not visible this time, they are certainly at work behind the scenes. I would like thank them as well as Mike Ross and Jodie Frapple, our Chief Steward and Deputy Chief Steward.

Thanks are due to Hopin, Vivid Productions, and Qwerk, who have made it all happen technically.

Finally, Conference would not be possible without the dedication of the members of the Federal Conference Committee and I would like to express my thanks to all of them too. Geoff Payne Chair, Federal Conference Committee



## **Federal Policy Committee - Sally Burnell & Jeremy Hargreaves (Vice Chairs)**

The Federal Policy Committee is responsible for researching and developing policy and overseeing the Federal Party's policy-making process. This includes producing policy papers for debate at Conference and drawing up (in consultation with the parliamentary party) the Federal election manifesto for Westminster elections.

The FPC has 29 voting members: the Party Leader, fifteen members directly elected by party members, six Parliamentarians, the Party President, two councillors, three state party reps and one rep from the Federal Campaigns and Elections Committee. It is chaired by the Leader.

### **FPC Work Programme**

The normal work programme of the FPC and its working groups was already disrupted last Autumn as a result of the General Election Campaign. The existing working groups on the Nature of Public Debate, Utilities and the Natural Environment accordingly all had their schedules put back by one conference.

The COVID-19 crisis has caused further disruption and has also required a change of focus. The Nature of Public Debate working group was due to produce its final paper



for this Autumn, but both because of the interruption to its work by COVID-19 and the difficulty of properly debating a full paper at a virtual conference, the FPC is instead presenting a motion specifically addressing the impact of COVID-19 on public debate (agenda item F7). The policy paper itself will now be presented at the Spring Conference 2021.

The Utilities policy working group is continuing on its revised schedule with a consultation paper at this conference and the full paper due to come to Spring 2021. The Natural Environment working group will now hold its consultation session at the Spring Conference 2021 and bring its full paper to Autumn 2021.

The FPC decided to bring forward to this conference a motion in response to the Black Lives Matter protests, agenda item F18 Racial Justice Cannot Wait. This was produced in consultation with stakeholder groups including LDCRE.

The FPC also plans to submit motions on the two subjects for which later deadlines have been set for this conference – Europe and the response to the COVID-19 crisis – and has already had initial discussions about the possible content. The FPC has also drafted a full consultation paper on the longer-term implications of COVID-19 which will be the subject of a consultation session in the conference auditorium at agenda item F29. The conclusions of this will



feed into the decisions we make about future policy development.

The FPC's exercise to produce an updated statement of the party's core principles and values was due to begin with a consultation session at the March conference, which had to be cancelled with the rest of the conference. We are now holding a fringe consultation session at this conference based on the consultation paper issued in March.

Comments on the consultation paper can be sent by email to [policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk](mailto:policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk) by the end of October. It is intended to agree a full plan for the rest of this work after the Leadership election is completed.

The current schedule of consultation and policy papers is therefore as set out below:

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Consultation Session</b>	<b>Policy Paper</b>
Nature of Public Debate	Autumn 2019	Spring 2021
Making Utilities Work Better for the Public	Autumn 2020	Spring 2021



Natural Resources and the Natural Environment	Spring 2021	Autumn 2021
Liberal Democrat Principles and Values	Autumn 2020	Autumn 2021

After the Leadership election is completed, the FPC will wish to consult within the party on what its priorities should be for further policy working groups for the rest of the Parliament, on a similar model to the Agenda 2020 exercise completed in 2016.

The FPC is very grateful to all those who give up a great deal of time to serve on our working groups. This is not the most glamorous role in the party, but it is absolutely vital to our democratic policy-making process.

In addition to the full policy working groups, the FPC has also decided to undertake policy development in some focussed priority areas through smaller groups producing short papers, and by working with spokespeople and other party stakeholders to bring forward motions to conference and/or spokesperson's papers. The Committee will be



consulting further on taking such projects forward with the new Leader and Parliamentary spokespeople.

In policy paper 139 Tackling the Climate Emergency the Committee specifically agreed to do some work on the issue of a carbon tax. “Given the urgency of the climate crisis..., we would review the potential for the more consistent application of carbon pricing in the UK.” We will start this work by providing an analysis of the likely impacts on different businesses and types of households of various models of carbon and energy taxation, which will allow us to put forward proposals and conference to debate them in full knowledge of the impacts.

## **Member Engagement**

The FPC has undertaken a major new member engagement initiative over the summer in response to the COVID-19 crisis. With extensive support from LDHQ staff, we have established a new Liberal Democrat PolicyLab online platform (<https://policylab.org.uk>). This has allowed us to debate how we would like to see the World after COVID-19. So far 2764 party members have registered on the site and over 750 policy ideas have been posted and discussed. This exercise will be run through the summer until late August, after which the FPC will review the best ideas put forward and bring them into the overall planning of our future work agenda (see above). We will also evaluate the performance



of the platform and think about how it can be further developed in future.

The FPC is always seeking to improve our processes to widen and deepen members' involvement in our policy development, and to improve communication of party policy, and we have a Membership Engagement group to take this work forward.

We report on each FPC meeting on Lib Dem Voice and FPC's own Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/groups/federalpolicycommittee](http://www.facebook.com/groups/federalpolicycommittee) which is a good mechanism for keeping up with the work of the committee and asking questions to us.

If you would like to suggest ways of improving how we make policy, please feel free to email on [policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk](mailto:policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk) with "Member Engagement" in the header.

## **FPC Links**

FPC is committed to communicating about its work with as many groups within the party as possible. This has been a challenge in recent circumstances, and we are considering how we can best structure these contacts. We of course continue our programme of discussions with many party bodies and are always very happy to respond to any specific questions - please do contact [policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk](mailto:policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk)



## **Policy Staffing**

The Policy Unit currently consists of Christian Moon (Head of Policy). The FPC would like to record its thanks to Dr Jonathan Everett, who has recently moved on from the position of Deputy Head of Policy, for his hard work over the previous two and half years, and in particular on the 2019 General Election Manifesto.



## **Federal Board Conference - Mark Pack (President)**

### **Introduction**

This has been a difficult year for our party and our country. We have even more reason than usual for thanking all our members, supporters and staff. It's your hard work and support that sustains the Liberal Democrats.

In June we published our Community Champions Hall of Fame. It honours the amazing efforts people are making to help their communities through COVID-19. The work of them and many others is an impressive testament to the difference we can help make to people's lives.

Many thanks are also due to all our party staff and those who volunteer to help our HQ operation. They have adapted and kept things running professionally during testing times.

As we can now start to focus more on the future, there is much we need to change. That's the lesson from the 2019 general election. It's the lesson from the Thornhill Review. It's the lesson from how the world is changing to adapt to COVID-19.

It's a big challenge and one we must meet. Because only if we do will we get more Liberal Democrats elected, and more Liberal Democrat policies put into practice.

That will include running the party in new and better ways.



As the Thornhill Review found, "Our governance structures are a mess and don't do what they are supposed to". That also undermines our internal democracy. What looks democratic on paper often is not in practice because decisions and power sit elsewhere.

So there is much to fix and much that has started. We've made a big investment in our grassroots campaigning support. There's the biggest field support team for this stage of a Parliament since Charles Kennedy's time. We made the tough financial decisions to get the party's finances on a sustainable basis. We're starting on a big investment to improve our use of technology in the party. We're drawing up ambitious plans to improve our record on diversity and inclusion. We've also begun tackling those governance problems the Thornhill Review highlighted. We're making our democratic structures more effective and more accountable.

This all means we can look forward to the restart of public elections with growing confidence.

### **Delivering our strategy**

As you can see from the consultation session on the conference agenda, we're consulting with members over a new strategy.

In the interim, the Board has identified three organisational priorities to inform our work.



## ***Elect more Liberal Democrats through building capacity and a compelling appeal***

We took some tough decisions at the start of the year to balance our underlying budget. That helped ensure we could weather the coronavirus crisis without a round of job cuts. It also means we have funds set aside to invest in specific projects to transform our capabilities. We do, however, face a lot of hard work now to restore our fundraising levels to where we want them to be.

Significant changes are underway at party HQ. Three directors have departed this year with our thanks for their many contributions. Mimi Turner has joined us in a new post of Director of Strategy, Research and Messaging. Our elections committee, the FCEC, also has a new chair in Cllr Lisa Smart.

Much hard work has gone into a new spirit of partnership between the federal party, ALDC, state parties and the English regional parties. This sort of coordination means we can make the best use of our resources. It's also the way to avoid many of the problems identified in the Election Review.

We have also piloted the PolicyLab, a new way of engaging members in our policy development. The virtual autumn conference is another important innovation. As we learn what works best, we can use technology to involve more people and make the party stronger.



Alongside that, we need to understand our key voters better. That way we can create compelling messages that help win elections. Much more on that to come in future reports.

### ***Work to improve diversity across all characteristics***

Both the Thornhill Review and the Black Lives Matter protests remind us of the importance of improving our diversity.

Our Westminster Parliamentary Party is the most diverse ever. But much else needs doing to maintain that improvement and spread it across the whole party.

We have prioritised this area of work in budget setting and staffing decisions. An integrated long-term strategy is being drawn up. We have been changing the ways we recruit applicants for key federal party posts. We've changed the Party Awards to better reflect the range of diversity we want as a party.

The Party Bodies Review Group has a new remit and membership. It is looking at how we best support party bodies, many of whom are crucial to our diversity work. Too often party bodies feel neglected and unsupported. We must change that.

Our recruitment, appraisal and promotion systems for party staff are changing too. Making them more professional and effective is good in its own right. It's also a way to ensure inadvertent discrimination doesn't creep in.



We are also setting criteria to judge whether historical figures are appropriate to feature in current activities.

Improving our record on diversity is about bringing our values to life. It means giving more members better chances to contribute. It means getting more diverse teams which, as the research shows, make for better teams too. It's what we need to do to be liberal. It's what we need to do to be successful.

The Board has an important part to play in that and we should be held to account. Success also requires all other parts of the party to play their part. The Board would be very happy to hear how it can best support wider change too.

**Improve the efficiency of the party and engage people across the party better**

The Thornhill Review sets a big challenge to us all to change how we do things. One sign of that change was sharing the full report with all party members. That means you can hold the Board to account for how we're doing on implementing it.

The Board has welcomed the report in full and we're working on the implementation. As we work through the details, we are in regular dialogue with Dorothy Thornhill.

Running the party better won't only make us more successful. It will also strengthen our internal democracy. Because it will mean that democratic debates and decisions are followed by effective action. As the Thornhill Review



highlights, too often previously effective action didn't happen. Or the real decisions got made elsewhere.

At the heart of getting this right are the relative roles of the leader, CEO and President/Board. The three-legs of the stool, as the Thornhill Review puts it. We're working up a clear allocation of decision-making responsibilities between the three legs. As the review recommends, it shifts power away from a leader acting unilaterally. It strengthens the roles of the other democratic parts of the party.

We've also been improving the way the Board itself works. Some of that can sound mundane but is important. Things like having proper papers, setting out options to choose from and distributed in good time ahead of meetings. That makes our Board discussions better - and more meaningful.

As a result, the Board has more power over what happens, such as by making substantive financial decisions.

The federal party has moved over to a clear quarterly rhythm for setting objectives and tracking progress. That's good for how LDHQ operates. It's also enabled proper oversight by the Board.

The Board - itself over 40 members - is piloting a new 14-strong 'Steering Group' made up from its members. (Details are on the Federal Board page on the party website.) This is a bit like an officers group and created under existing powers in our rulebook, with the Board



retaining the power to 'call in' decisions, similar to how a scrutiny process works in many other organisations.

If it is a success, it's likely that some formal rule changes will be desirable too. For example, several of the members of the group hold party posts which are indirectly elected. There's an important case that more of them should be directly elected. The Board will be consulting at conference over this and other proposed party reforms; see the separate consultation session in the conference directory.

We have also moved to a professional approach for key tasks such as the CEO appraisals. Board members now elect two people to do the appraisals and reviews alongside the President. Again, that strengthens the link between discussions among Board members and things changing. We are lucky to have such a talented new CEO in Mike Dixon, whose positive impact is already palpable.

With the help of Mike and his team, other key elements of good management are being put in place. That includes a proper risks register and a financial reserves policy.

Alongside this, there are now reports for members before and after each meeting of the Board (and now also for the Steering Group too). These appear on the AdLib section of the party website. When major decisions happen they also go in all-member emails. A regular series of 3-4 webinars a year with the President and CEO has also started.



We have made a major investment in improving the party's technology. This is so that we all have the tools and information we need to campaign and operate effectively. The first stage will focus on the party's main website. There will be widespread consultation over future steps. We'll also ensure we make good use of the many expert volunteers who are keen to help in this area.

We also need to ensure we have an effective complaints process. It should never be the Board's role to get involved with specific cases. But we do have a responsibility to ensure the rules, processes and resources are right.

Many thanks to the Disciplinary Processes Sub-Group, party staff and our trained volunteers who make the system work. A new casework management system is being introduced. The system's rules are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose. More details are contained in the separate report on the complaints system.

## **Thank you**

The Board's work, and what successes we've had, would not be possible without the work of the staff who directly support our activities, especially Jack Coulson, and before him Adam Hanrahan, who is our company secretary and Georgia Potter who works as executive assistant to both the CEO and President. Thank you to them and to all the other staff and volunteers who have helped our work.



## **Vice President - Isabelle Parasram**

In Spring, 2019, I was first elected to the role of Party Vice President. I was then re-elected in Spring, 2020. As my role was created in response to The Alderdice Report - which stated that race equality should be a top priority for the Party - my responsibilities initially centred around engaging with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Over the past year, my work has also been shaped by my professional skills and interests as well as the way that society and politics has developed. So my work now covers the broad spectrum of diversity and inclusion - albeit, with a particular focus on BAME issues.

My original title (Vice President BAME) was revised in order to make it easier to convey the import of what I am doing and to enable stakeholders to identify where my role sits within the Party hierarchy. I now sit on the Strategy Group (the subsection of the Federal Board that guides the direction of the Party) and a number of other bodies/Committees within the Party, alongside doing the core political work that I do as Party Vice President, Patron of the Liberty Network and Trustee of The Paddy Ashdown Forum think tank.



My goals for this role fall into the categories of:

- a. External outreach
- b. External campaigns
- c. Identifying talent
- d. Structural/organisational change
- e. Recognising member contribution
- f. Internal campaigns

all in relation to minority groups.

Alongside my dedicated, professional and talented team, I have achieved much under each category. The totality of it is difficult to set out herein, so more information about what I have been doing can be found as per the social media links detailed at the end of this report.

I have listed my goals below and have provided some examples of how I am going about achieving them. My overarching aim is based upon principles from the Constitution: "To promote equality based upon race, colour, religion, age, disability, sex and sexual orientation."



## **1. To facilitate external outreach towards minority and underrepresented groups**

- ✓ Chairing opening session of the European Liberal Forum conference
- ✓ Windrush Day video for broadcast
- ✓ Windrush Day interviews for broadcast by Redeeming Our Communities charity
- ✓ Post COVID-19 equality strategy letter to Government - advising Christine Jardine's office
- ✓ Diversity in school curriculum letter to Government - advising Layla Moran's office
- ✓ George Floyd killing/President Trump's response - letter to Government - advising Christine Jardine's office
- ✓ Coronavirus - support for BAME people letter to Government - advising Christine Jardine's, Layla Moran's, Munira Wilson's offices
- ✓ Keynote panel at the New Wine Conference of 2000+ UK churches
- ✓ BAME issues in education letter to Government - advising Layla Moran's office

## **2. To run external campaigns on issues affecting minority and underrepresented groups**

- ✓ Chairing race equality webinar with Doctor Victoria Showunmi



- ✓ Chairing health inequality webinar with Professor Ajit Lalvani
- ✓ Interviewing Julia Ogiehor for broadcast
- ✓ Interviewing Nukey Proctor for broadcast
- ✓ Interviewing Josh Babarinde for broadcast

Coronavirus inequality article for LD website:  
<https://www.libdems.org.uk/bame-coron>

### **3. To identify talent from amongst minority and underrepresented groups**

Introducing potential candidates to the Party

### **4. To facilitate internal structural/organisational change to the benefit of minority and underrepresented groups**

- ✓ General Election/Alderdice Review - implementation planning with the CEO
- ✓ Diversity Principles Options Paper for Federal Board to decide upon
- ✓ Chairing Leadership hustings
- ✓ HQ's Diversity and Inclusion toolkit – review
- ✓ Gladstone membership cards - interim advice
- ✓ Update to Liberal Democrat MPs



**5. To recognise member contribution of minority and underrepresented groups**

Thanking/encouraging members, supporters, candidates

**6. To run internal campaigns on issues affecting minority and underrepresented groups**

- ✓ Employment law advice webinar at Green Lib Dems Conference - ALDTU/Green Lib Dems
- ✓ London Region BAME Equality Share, Plan, Act workshop\*
- ✓ Local Party BAME Equality Share, Plan, Act workshop\*
- ✓ LDLGA BAME Equality Share, Plan, Act workshop\*

\* - linking community/faith/charity groups and key influencers with the Liberal Democrats to catalyse positive social change via the media, lobbying, education and micro action.

In order to continue to be effective in my role going forward, I have the following short-term goals:

- g. To grow and develop my volunteer team – I currently have a team of about 20 people, all of whom are dedicated, professional and talented. I am grateful to them for their tremendous efforts in developing our work.
- h. To fundraise - my role is currently unfunded and there is no budget for expenses; I will be



appointing volunteer fundraisers to assist me with this.

- i. To promote my work – I will achieve this through networking with key Party influencers and making external media contacts.

Further information about my role and the projects I have been working on can be found as follows:

<https://www.libdems.org.uk/vic-president> (Profile)

[www.facebook.com/isabelleparasramlibdem](http://www.facebook.com/isabelleparasramlibdem) (Facebook)

@isabelleparasra (Twitter)

[IsabelleParasram](https://www.linkedin.com/in/isabelleparasram/) (LinkedIn)

<https://www.instagram.com/isabelleparasram/> (Instagram)



## **Federal Finance and Resources Committee report - Anthony Harris (Chair)**

### **2020 Financial Progress and 2021 Outlook**

Due to the cancellation of spring conference, and the current COVID crisis in our country, this report summarises the spring report (see Party website) and updates it for autumn conference. After the events of late 2018 we dedicated ourselves to controlling expenses more tightly, managing our fixed costs more closely, and committing to stabilise HQ staffing numbers.

FFRC have now agreed a revised budget with the Federal Board and, opportunistic investments in one-off transformations of our capability aside, our focus is now on maintaining a balanced budget with a focus on internal communications with initiatives to expand diversity, improve technology, and further develop support at the grassroots level.

Systems for financial forecasting and reporting, business expense and purchasing controls, have now been operational for eighteen months and are working well. FFRC continue to provide strategic and detailed oversight of any financial measures we deem necessary to ensure that Party finances remain robust. With these controls and oversight in place, I remain confident in our ability to



control our finances and spot upcoming problems much earlier than was possible in earlier years.

My thanks to Fern McLurg, our Financial Controller, and the HQ finance team for their continuing hard work and attention to the financial detail.

As I have mentioned many times before, elections (both local and general) are good for us and coming out of the 2019 General Election we have done much better than we might have expected. The generosity of our donors, good husbandry of our campaigns and finance team, and the excellent financial oversight of our new chief executive Mike Dixon, has allowed us to enter 2020 with a cash surplus and a zero deficit.

We expected 2020 to pose a financial challenge because we knew it would be a 'fallow' year with little political activity but COVID has meant 'zero' political activity and of course many donors have been looking to their own finances while paying little attention to contributions to (any) political parties or charities. The future with respect to COVID is still unknown and is putting pressures on finances everywhere which makes the full economic picture for 2021 unclear but FFRC will continue to monitor our budget and fiscal outcomes carefully in real-time so that we continue to manage our Party finances in a prudent fashion.

We are now working to a revised budget which should stand us in good stead as we enter 2021 and beyond. In lean years, we must continue to look to the generosity of



our members and I wish to express my special thanks to all members who contribute via their donations and membership dues. Thank you!

## **Compliance**

We are grateful to all our local party treasurers who continue to assist us with complying with the PPERA regulations. Local Party compliance has improved significantly since the 2017 snap election and it is definitely an improving picture particularly in terms of our working relationship with the Electoral Commission.

I would like to welcome Kerry Buist who has joined us as our head of compliance. She is already making an impact and I know that many of you will have noted the improved level of communications and relentless chasing! Seriously, thank you to treasurers, agents, chairs, and other party officers who deal with finances for your hard work. My thanks also to the entire compliance team, including data protection, for helping to keep us all on the straight and narrow. All donations are checked for legal permissibility by the Party's compliance officers and by the Registered Treasurer.

Donations are also assessed for reputational risk by the Party Treasurer and approval for donations above £25,000 is sought jointly from the Chair of FFRC (the Registered Treasurer), the Chief Executive, and the Chair of Liberal



Democrats Ltd. If this approval lacks unanimity it is referred to the Party Leader for assessment. Declarations of donations, statements of accounts, and Party campaign expenditure Party are on the Electoral Commission website.

## **Party Business**

Conference is asked to adopt the audited accounts for 2019 (included in this reports pack). Conference is further requested to agree to the following for 2021:

1. To encourage further membership growth by freezing the current membership rates of £72 (recommended), £12 (standard minimum), £6 (minimum for those in receipt of or entitled to state benefits), £6 (minimum for members paying via Young Liberals), and £1 (minimum for members paying via Young Liberals in their first two years).
2. That nothing in this motion shall prevent a State Party from setting via their internal procedures higher recommended or minimum subscription rates or from introducing additional concessionary rates.
3. That the Federal Levy remain at 55% for 2021.
4. That the Federal Party borrowing limit remain at £2.2 million – to include overdraft facilities, commercial and personal loans, but to exclude trade creditors and inter-party balances.



5. That the President and Chair of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee for the time being, on behalf of the Party and with the specific prior agreement of the FFRC, may agree the terms of any overdrafts, and that such delegation will also extend to the operation of the Party's bank accounts.
6. That the President and Chair of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee are hereby indemnified by the Federal Party of the Liberal Democrats for any personal commitments made to the bank but only insofar as they relate solely to this resolution.



## **Financial review - Anthony Harris (registered treasurer)**

As was reported in the last published accounts, the Federal Party ended 2018 with a significant deficit primarily due to a lack of any major political events (general elections or referenda). The year 2019 could not have been more different and included European Elections, a major round of Council Elections, and a snap General Election. These events contributed to a significant uplift in membership and donor income in the year. Restructuring initiatives, necessary to balance the 2018/19 budgets, significant enhancements in financial oversight, and cost saving measures implemented over the course of 2018 and 2019 have been transformational.

The Federal Party ended the year 2019 with a surplus of £4,712,016 and the brought forward negative reserve of £1,079,502 has been transformed into a positive reserve of £3,632,514.

### **Brexit and COVID-19 Review**

The United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union on 31 January 2020 and entered into an Implementation Period which is scheduled to end on 31 December 2020. However, the terms of the future trade, and other relationships, with the European Union are not yet clear, and it is therefore not currently possible to evaluate all the potential implications on the Party and the wider economy.



In order to manage the uncertainties associated with Brexit, the Registered Treasurer has assessed the potential impacts of Brexit and has put in place measures to monitor the on-going impacts. To date, Brexit has had a positive overall impact both on donations received and on membership numbers.

As regards the recent emergence of the global coronavirus (COVID-19), the full impact is still unknown. It is therefore not currently possible to evaluate all the potential implications on the Party.

However, the Party believes it is well placed to address the potential impacts of both Brexit and COVID-19 on its activities and on the activities of its donors, recognising that the uncertainties caused by these major events may bring changes to the way that each operate in the short to medium term.

At the time of signing these financial statements, the Registered Treasurer has not identified any impacts of Brexit or of COVID-19 which might require a material change to the current activities of the Party, nor which would require any adjustments to the financial amounts presented in the financial statements at 31 December 2019.



## Income and Expenditure Account

For the year ended 31 December 2019

<b>Income</b>	<b>£2019</b>	<b>£2018</b>
Donations	<b>19,615,866</b>	2,624,986
Membership and subscription fees	<b>2,315,018</b>	1,312,671
Conference income	<b>658,481</b>	467,336
Notional income	<b>93,100</b>	54,301
Grants	<b>687,704</b>	542,277
Interest receivable	<b>15</b>	11
Recharges to party bodies	<b>1,048,291</b>	1,052,793
Other income	<b>199,465</b>	148,224
	<b>24,617,942</b>	6,202,599



## Expenditure

Fundraising expenditure	<b>78,722</b>	76,172
Conference expenditure - direct	<b>386,953</b>	394,506
Notional expenditure	<b>93,100</b>	54,301
Depreciation and amortisation	<b>38,146</b>	48,513
Campaign expenditure	<b>12,494,806</b>	694,057
Staff costs	<b>3,493,263</b>	3,172,248
Premises & office costs	<b>1,468,952</b>	1,041,610
IT & polling costs	<b>580,644</b>	534,156
Interest payable and similar charges	<b>109,120</b>	62,984
Grants to party bodies	<b>630,300</b>	314,860
Services to members	<b>254,791</b>	-
Expenditure recharged from other party bodies	-	61,567
Audit fees	<b>40,074</b>	16,750
Other expenditure	<b>237,054</b>	65,777
	<b>19,905,926</b>	6,537,501
<b>Surplus/(deficit) before taxation</b>	<b>4,712,016</b>	(334,902)
Taxation surplus/(deficit)	-	(7)
<b>Surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>	<b>4,712,016</b>	(334,909)



## **Federal Communications and Elections Committee - Lisa Smart (Chair)**

Our key aim remains getting more Lib Dems elected at every level.

We have focused our work this year on learning what worked and what didn't work in recent elections and planning to increase our capacity and target our resources effectively so that we can win more elections in future.

### **Electing more Liberal Democrats**

**In the last year:** as many of the recommendations from the General Election Review fall within the remit of FCEC we have taken our time to understand them and how best to implement them.

We have further advanced our thinking on Winning at Every Level which looks at our integrated approach to targeting and our priorities for the bumper set of elections in May 2021.

We have commissioned a review of the Unite to Remain project and an update of the Defectors Protocol.

**Next year:** we look forward to welcoming the new Director of Strategy, Research and Messaging to their post and to working with them to plan for the future.



Items on our work programme over the next few months include:

- the 2021 local and state elections
- by-election strategy
- the use of data within the party

We will continue to keep a watching eye on the ongoing parliamentary boundary review.

### **Improving Diversity**

**In the last year:** we have been focusing our efforts on understanding and planning to implement the General Election Review. The review has clear recommendations around Black and Ethnic Minority voters which we explored in some detail with Dorothy at our June meeting. We will be ready and waiting to support any pieces of FPDC's work to implement the Alderdice Review, should elements of it touch on FCEC's remit.

**Next year:** we will appoint a new chair of the Joint States Candidates Committee who will work with the regional and state parties on getting a strong, diverse group of candidates in our most winnable Westminster seats.

### **Improving Party efficiency and reform**



**In the last year:** the committee has conducted all of its business online this year.

We have introduced a work programme so that committee members, the Federal Board and staff know when work is planned and decisions due to be taken.

Meetings start and end on time. Papers are issued one week in advance of the meeting to allow committee members time to read and reflect.

**Next year:** FCEC will make a recommendation to the board on how to implement the GE Review's recommendations around the role of the Chair of a GE Campaign.

Internal communication will be explored further when the new Director of SRM is in post.

### **The 2019 General Election Review**

The 2019 General Election Review has formed the basis upon which we have developed much of our work since its publication in May. We have taken our time to understand the review and how best to implement its recommendations.

Our June meeting was entirely devoted to the review and we are grateful to Dorothy for spending time addressing our specific areas of interest.



The committee is working with staff on how best to implement the recommendations.

## **Responding to Coronavirus**

Coronavirus has impacted the way the party can campaign, most noticeably by severely limiting the amount of in-person contact our candidates and activists can have with the electorate.

The postponement of May 2020 local government elections to May 2021 means that, as things currently stand, we are due to see the largest round of elections for almost 50 years. If plans remain unchanged, every part of England, Scotland and Wales will see an election for at least one level of government. The widespread nature of elections will have a knock-on impact on our targeting of resources.

At the time of writing this report, the outlook for the party's ability to campaign using traditional methods is unclear. Advice to campaigners that they can resume leaflet delivery, taking into account their local context, has been issued. The advice regarding door to door canvassing remains unchanged.

Given the uncertainty, campaigners are advised to campaign in ways that aren't impacted by the need for social distancing e.g. phone canvassing, emails, online campaigning, leaflet and direct mail delivery (taking relevant guidance into account).



## **Federal People and Development Committee - Mary Regnier -Wilson (Deputy Chair)**

The new FPDC committee has frankly, been able to do little but take stock so far. But we have done that comprehensively, despite tumultuous circumstances both before and after the new committee took office.

Work has continued within the membership department on technical projects such as the roll out of Lighthouse, although a planned member outreach project had to be cancelled due to Covid. This will happen later in the year, and we will be attempting to develop a new model of member journeys through the party, acknowledging the many different ways that members want to engage and be engaged. We need to offer clear and easy pathways to involvement at a local, national or specific interest level.

Coronavirus has changed how we provide training and all areas of the party have responded well to this challenge. We have a great training offer - the focus over the next year needs to be on ensuring it is easily accessible and delivered to the areas and people that need it.

Despite progress in some areas the party continues to face challenges in improving diversity at all levels and there must be a focus on real change and opportunities at all levels over the next year.



## **Electing more Liberal Democrats**

**In the last year:** recruitment and retention efforts have continued and met targets over the year, helped by the influx of members over the GE and the leadership election.

Online training has been used to continue to upskill members with ALDC, LDHQ and Women Lib Dems all providing training often reaching a different and larger audience to in person events.

**Next year:** the next year will be challenging - disappointing GE results and the failure to stop Brexit will have a substantial effect on our ability to attract and more importantly retain members. Without these campaigns, we have to find other ways to make members feel there is value in being a part of the Liberal Democrats, building on the success of the Coronavirus community action programme

## **Improving Diversity**

**In the last year:** The committee has completed its “deep dive” and has a comprehensive grasp of the size of the diversity issues in the party.

A diversity survey of local parties has been completed and a diversity toolkit published to help local parties.

**Next year:** We will work with the party bodies review group will empower SAO's (which often represent diverse groups) to better engage their members and grow their membership and activities. Work planned to record more roles within Lighthouse will allow greater transparency of



diversity at different levels of the party and a proposed Audit of local party practice/capabilities will help to identify where this is not the case so that HQ and regional parties can provide support where it is most needed

## **Improving Party Efficiency and Reform**

**In the last year:** The Boost guide is a comprehensive manual for engaging members that was published in March.

Lighthouse is our new membership system that has been rolled out very successfully over the last year, and received positively by Local Party Officers.

These two, used in conjunction, should help local parties to engage their membership and get them actively involved in campaigns.

The Covid response and leadership election has allowed many local parties to engage with more members

**Next year:** We plan to restart the member experience project towards the end of the summer.

This will inform work on a new model of member engagement, recognising the different branches of activity that will inspire members to get involved.



There must be work done to fix technological problems with the flow of membership data into Connect which enables local parties to actively contact their members.

An audit of Local Parties is planned to identify areas of particular strength and weakness and the new membership manager will roll out the Launchpad training events to upskill LPO's.

The GE review confirmed - that active and engaged members are key to success and should be more valued and more enabled to contribute.

The Launchpad events will be a part of ensuring that the best practice in member engagement which exists in some areas can be spread more widely across the party

The focus on implementing the recommendations of the Alderdice review will mean FPDC must work with the VP, LDCRE and RDC to ensure better representation of BAME people within our party.

## **Responding to Coronavirus**

Coronavirus has caused huge disruption to the training the party offers, but also huge opportunities, and both HQ and ALDC training providers have adapted well.

Online delivery of training makes it accessible to a wider group of people. But also provides challenges in deliverability for others and we remain alert to this.



Whilst online events provide huge possibilities for members to engage with each other, the relative lack of spontaneity in these events will mean less opportunity for the random connections that can often be so fruitful. Online communication is not the best way to initially engage people and a continued reduction in doorstep canvassing and in person meetings will impact the opportunities that local parties have to both attract new members to the party, and to turn those new members into active campaigners.



## **Federal International Relations Committee - Jonathan Fryer (Chair)**

Shortly before lockdown, FIRC established its priorities for 2020-2022. We shall continue to participate fully in the activities of the European Liberal Democrats (ALDE) and Liberal International, but FIRC acknowledges the additional need to engage more closely with other European bodies now that Brexit has happened, such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well as with Diaspora communities in the UK, who often have specific foreign policy concerns.

The ALDE Council (Bratislava in May) and LI Congress (Sofia in June) were both cancelled but it is hoped that normal activities will resume next year. In the meantime, LI in particular made good use of webinars to invite speakers from around the world to contribute to its debate in key areas, including Climate Justice, Human Rights, International Trade and Countering Disinformation. Baroness (Sal) Brinton is now the LibDems' member of ALDE's Board and Robert Woodthorpe Browne will remain on LI's Board as a Patron.

The Party's International Officer, Isabelle Pucher, was furloughed for several months and her intern returned to Sweden, but it is hoped activities in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and our partners in the Africa Liberal Network and the Western Balkans can



resume before too long. Councillor Linda Johnson has obtained a place at the next ALDE European Women's Academy.

FIRC has established a closer working relationship with the Federal Policy Committee as well as being available for advice to parliamentarians in both Houses. Its sub-group on Europe post-Brexit (CEUB) has been working on future scenarios and China has become a major object of the Committee's interest.



## **Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee - Helena Cole (Chair)**

The most important thing that the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee achieved over the last year was the commissioning of the Thornhill Report including deciding on members of the panel and having two members of FASC on that panel. We continue to review monthly how the actions are being implemented and I am currently happy with everything which is done and planned.

In addition, this year FASC has overseen a successful audit with much improved financial controls, reviewed a much improved risk register, and discussed the recommendations from the ICO audit.

Over the next year FASC is reviewing the disciplinary process, continuing to review risk, look at HR policies and processes and controls in all their guises. The new committee was established in Jan 2020 and is looking forward to its 3 year term.



# Parliamentary Reports

## **The Commons - Alistair Carmichael MP (Chief Whip, House of Commons)**

After a disappointing General Election which saw the loss of Tom Brake, Stephen Lloyd and Jo Swinson from our ranks and the election of a Conservative Government with an 80-seat majority the prospects for any political change in this parliament looked bleak. The Government used their majority to meet the 31<sup>st</sup> January Brexit deadline and seemed to have a momentum that would be difficult to arrest.

However, since the week of the cancelled Spring Conference and the advent of the global pandemic, the current political environment has once again been completely turned on its head and the rigour from opposition parties continues to grow during these unprecedented times.

With the national interest of the upmost importance, our Parliamentary group made the easy decision, along with other parties, to put party politics aside and give the Government appropriate support to react to the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite the early noises of good intentions and a collaborative approach, the poor decision-making of this Government has been truly



exposed. The Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party has been the voice for the millions of people who are being left behind by this Government. Your parliamentary party in the House of Commons has worked as a united and effective team during this time. In particular, the performance of Munira Wilson as a newly elected MP and our Health Spokesperson deserves special praise. Her mastery of the detail and handling of issues such as the position of people in care homes and the availability of PPE has attracted praise from across the political spectrum.

Given the unparalleled circumstances and sudden changes in Parliamentary practice, not to mention the hours of queuing in the Rees-Mogg 'conga line', I want to take this opportunity to commend all my colleagues and their staff for their exceptional work during the last 4-5 months. Considering the temporary changes in staffing and the speedy adjustment to hybrid proceedings, each office and section of POLD ought to be extremely proud in their contributions to the Party. I was very pleased that the Speaker granted my emergency debate on proxy voting, giving carers like our own Jamie Stone the opportunity to represent their constituents from a distance. Thank you to Jamie and others for fighting on this issue.

Measures in response to the Coronavirus have rightly been at the top of the Parliamentary agenda, with the majority of UQs and Ministerial Statements on this issue. Each



department has been heavily affected and none of our respective portfolios have gone untouched.

The two main legislative responses to the pandemic have been the Coronavirus Bill, which gave sweeping emergency powers to send the country into lockdown back in March, and the Business in Planning Bill, assisting businesses adapt to the pandemic. Liberal Democrat MPs who spoke to these vital pieces of legislation stressed the importance of protecting civil liberties and limiting the Government's ability to take advantage of these new powers for inappropriate means. We will continue to press these concerns as we enter new stages of the pandemic.

Besides these measures, our group has also been vocal with regards to the millions of people up and down the country who have been excluded from the Chancellor's financial response. Jamie Stone took the initiative to start and chair the Excluded APPG which seeks to fix this imbalance by speaking up for groups such as the self-employed and freelancers who are deeply struggling. Whilst we welcome some of the schemes brought forward, the Prime Minister's vision of a grand 'New Deal' quickly unravelled after the new measures only amounted to 0.2% of GDP. Ed Davey made sure to criticise the Government in the Chamber for their serious lack of ambition, as this crisis lends itself to fundamentally restructuring our economy to meet the demands of the climate emergency and the next technological revolution.



Aside from the pandemic, other important pieces of legislation have trickled through over the months. Notably, after years of delay, the Domestic Abuse Bill finally passed the Commons. Christine Jardine was able to gain concessions in the Bill from the Government including more provisions to protect children and survivors. The House also passed vital changes to its Independent Complaints and Grievances System, a passionate issue for our MPs and specifically Wendy Chamberlain who has personally led on this issue.

Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the Brexit agenda has also been mobilised. Various bills, such as the Immigration Bill and the Trade Bill, have passed through the Commons which we believe will be damaging to our economy and our country. Despite strong amendments supported and authored by Sarah Olney to safeguard Parliamentary sovereignty, protect our NHS, maintain standards for produce, and others, the 80-seat majority has been stubborn to break. Our group will not waver from our internationalist and progressive policies, even as the UK heads into further uncertainty on the global stage.

To speak globally for a moment, Britain's relationship with China has been a common theme in recent months and I predict will dominate the upcoming agenda, especially with the harrowing information and footage coming from Xinjiang. I raised my serious concerns of genocide with the Foreign Secretary and, along with Daisy's work on the Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill and Huawei, the Lib



Dems have continued Paddy Ashdown's legacy of being tough on China and protecting human rights and freedoms.

Our MPs, in tradition with our strong local roots, have continued to champion campaigns despite obvious obstacles. Tim Farron has been doing incredible work with his Radiology APPG, bringing attention to the increasing backlog of delayed cancer treatments, whilst Wera Hobhouse has constantly been vigilant to the climate crisis, working on the Environment Bill and fighting to secure new, energy efficient homes. Layla Moran, with her past experience, knows all too well the difficulties that teachers will face in September if they are to open up fully, which is why she is remaining attentive to the Government's recommendations and plans for schools across the country.

During time of writing, we are in the middle of another leadership election as our party continues to find its feet after 2019. Whoever wins, we are confident in the knowledge that both candidates will uphold and promote our established values of a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community.

I would like to pay quick tribute to Ed Davey and Mark Pack who have successfully executed the difficult roles of Acting Co-Leaders, a job title that I am sure they are happy to leave behind. It is a challenging responsibility and they have stepped up during the tough moments for the Party.



## **POLD Staffing update**

As ever, the parliamentary party has been well-supported by our staff in the Parliamentary Support Team (PST), the Policy Advisers Unit (PAU) and the Whips Office. In the latter Office Alex McBeath has continued to serve as head of office, Lucy Kay moved across to the Press Office and was replaced by Peter Munro. We were also joined for a short time by Will Dyer who came on secondment from LDHQ. We are grateful to them all for their hard work and commitment. Their patience and good humour in often difficult circumstances is valued greatly.



## **The Lords - Ben Stoneham**

### **Summary**

In the few months since the Spring Conference, Parliament has inevitably been dominated by COVID-19. The Lords Parliamentary Party has worked in tandem with our colleagues in the House of Commons to provide much needed scrutiny of the Government's handling of the pandemic, and where appropriate, has offered detailed plans for alternative (and better) ways of managing the multi-issued crisis.

It has provided a focus around which the Group has been able to champion the party's position on various aspects of the situation. I am also very pleased that the Group has embraced the technological changes that the pandemic has brought to the House of Lords, and the Hybrid Parliament that we have at the moment is working well.

### **Leadership and party whips**

Dick Newby and Ben Stoneham continue to serve as the Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the Lords and Lords Chief Whip respectively, whilst Joan Walmsley and Navnit Dholakia provide support as Co-Deputy Leaders. We also have an 8-strong team of whips that support the Chief Whip and the Whips' Office in their work and I am very grateful for everything they do.



## Legislative work

The pandemic has dominated the legislative agenda over the last few months, and Parliament has dealt with the passage of three emergency bills since March in response to it. In the Coronavirus Bill and the Corporate Governance and Insolvency Bill, Lib Dem Peers helped secure important concessions from the Government on Parliamentary scrutiny and appropriate powers. In the Business and Planning Bill we are concentrating on powers for local government and protections against anti-social behaviour.

A new House of Lords COVID-19 committee has been set up to consider the long-term implications of the pandemic on the economic and social wellbeing of the UK. Our members on this committee are Floella Benjamin and John Alderdice and they bring great and varied perspectives to the problems that the country faces.

Away from coronavirus, Lib Dem Peers have been scrutinising other important pieces of legislation. We have focussed on rights and information for ordinary people, be it seeking clarity on divorce law during the Divorce, Dissolution and Separate Bill; fairness in pensions during the Pension Schemes Bill; clarity on the rights of tenants to request broadband during the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill; or the right of victims to receive key information during the passage of the Prisoners (Disclosure of Information About Victims) Bill.



In the Fisheries Bill we championed the Lib Dem principle of environmental sustainability and pushed for measures that help to promote marine conservation and a vibrant ecosystem. We are promoting these same values in the Agriculture Bill, prioritising healthy and sustainable food production, animal welfare and working on a cross-party basis to ensure that agricultural and food imports meet domestic standards.

We also continue to fight against attempts by the Government to centralise power with the Executive. We pushed an amendment in the Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Bill to enhance the role of Parliament and supported cross-party efforts to vote to remove an extensive Henry VIII power from the Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill.

## **Campaigns and Visits**

Whilst the pandemic has put a stop to the Group's normal role of attending local party events, many of us have been involved in the great initiatives that local parties around the country have got going to help their communities deal with the pandemic in many different ways. We are looking carefully at the recommendations of the Thornhill Review and intend to play our part as a parliamentary group in helping the party to build again.

## **Peers**



We were hugely sad to lose Diana Maddock at the end of June. Her death brought an end to many decades of service to the party – as a councillor both in Southampton and Northumberland, an MP, Party President and peer in the Lords, where she served as deputy chief whip. She was warm, generous, supportive and utterly dependable and we shall miss her enormously. Our comfort and support goes to her husband Alan Beith, a much-valued member of the Group in the Lords.

The end of March saw the retirement from the Lords of David Steel. We pay tribute to his long service to the political life of the country, not least as leader of the Liberal Party; as one of the key architects and founders of the Liberal Democrats; as the first Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament; and as a campaigning peer. We will miss his wise counsel and depth of political experience.

## **Staff**

I would like to extend my thanks to the staff of the Leader's Office and the Whips' Office in the Lords who support us in all our work. I am very grateful to the staff in the Parliamentary Adviser Unit for all their work in advising and supporting our group in the Lords. I also want to place on record my thanks to the Parliamentary Support Team for their continually excellent work and support. I am also very grateful to the party's press office and communications team - who give support to so many of the peers who do media work.



## **The European Parliament - Caroline Voaden (Former Leader)**

It is with huge pride, and enormous sadness, that I deliver what is undoubtedly the last Liberal Democrat European Party (LDEPP) report you will hear for quite some time.

Things changed rather substantially in the European Party after Spring Conference 2019, when Catherine Bearder delivered her last report. Then, as the only member of the Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament, Catherine had expected to be leaving Brussels within weeks, at the end of March, walking out alone as the last Lib Dem MEP.

However Brexit day on March 31<sup>st</sup> came and went, and we unexpectedly found ourselves having a European election in May 2019. Candidates were selected, campaigns were mounted at breakneck speed, and thanks to the wonders of a democratic voting system, our party had its best ever result in a European election, with 16 Lib Dem MEPs elected, representing nearly every region of the country.

We ended up with many 'surprise' MEPs too – with number three on the lists for both London and South East England unexpectedly elected, and two MEPs from the East of England, the North West and the South West.

Beating Labour and the Tories into third and fourth place nationally was more than any of us could have imagined



and fuelled a revival in our party's confidence and enthusiasm which lasted all summer.

In Brussels the group made a real impact. We were the second largest delegation in Renew Europe – our political group in Parliament – and therefore had a substantial influence on the decisions made by the group. Because we knew our time there was likely to be very short we hit the ground running, and every one of us was effective at speaking in the group, making speeches in plenary, raising issues in committees and connecting with MEPs from other countries who shared our values.

Once we secured an extension in October it felt like there was still a tiny glimmer of light at the end of the Brexit tunnel, and I was very proud to be elected leader of our 16 MEPs in November when Catherine stood down. It was the honour of my life to lead such a committed, enthusiastic, talented group of people and the party should be extremely proud of what we achieved as a team.

The loss of these 16 people to the European Parliament is genuine – I've worked with lots of teams over the years and I can honestly say there was something very special about this one. The range of skills, the passion and the sense of humour we brought to Parliament was recognised by all our colleagues in Renew Europe. From lawyers to healthcare workers, journalists to campaigners, we used our skills and experience to help each other, playing to our



strengths and working to our full capacity within Renew Europe.

Four of our team had served in the European Parliament before – Catherine had soldiered on for five years as the only Lib Dem MEP during the Brexit referendum and its hideous aftermath, which must have been quite soul destroying. During her time as an MEP she campaigned hard for the EU to do more to protect biodiversity and end international trading of wildlife and ivory.

Bill Newton-Dunn was first elected in 1979 and served over 30 years in total. He left parliament as the longest serving MEP, his unflustered ‘elder statesman’ experience and wise counsel were hugely valued by the whole team.

Chris Davies had served 15 years and came back to serve as Chair of the Fisheries Committee – a hugely important role given the iconic status the fishing industry achieved in the Brexit debate. His hard work almost managed to convince the most arch Brexiteer fishing industry apologist June Mummery that the European Parliament had a role to play in protecting the fish in our seas, and our fishing industries. We received a commitment from Renew that he would be replaced by a French marine biologist who we hope will work as tirelessly to promote sustainable fishing as Chris did.

Phil Bennion, who had previously served two years, also came back and immediately got stuck in to international human rights work. I can speak for all of us when I say how



extremely proud we were of Phil's work to recognise Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur human rights activist who has been jailed in China for over six years. Through Phil's campaigning with other MEPs across the house, Tohti was awarded the annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in October and his daughter addressed us in Parliament after accepting the award on his behalf in a very moving ceremony.

And then there were 12 newbies, several of whom joined the party in 2016 to fight against Brexit: Jane Brophy, Judith Bunting, Dinesh Dhamija, Barbara Gibson, Antony Hook, Martin Horwood, Shaffaq Mohammed, Lucy Nethsingha, Luisa Porritt, Sheila Ritchie, Irena von Wiese and Caroline Voaden.

I can't even begin to cover all the work we did in the seven months we served but here are some highlights:

- As a group we had a strong green agenda and pushed hard for Renew Europe to agree to declare a 'climate emergency' in November. Some group members had struggled with the word emergency and it wasn't clear the motion would pass in Parliament, but with our encouragement and 16 votes, Renew voted in favour.
- We made sure human rights conditions were included in a Free Trade Agreement with Vietnam.



- Lucy Nethsingha chaired the JURI committee and the hearings of all incoming commissioners, scrutinising them for financial irregularities and financial lobbying interests.
- Irina Von Wiese helped save the life of an Egyptian human rights defender who had 'gone missing' but was found alive after a debate she pushed for was held in the Parliament.
- We pushed for stronger legislation to protect bees and pollinators.
- Judith Bunting brought 39 apprentices to Brussels and introduced them to the idea of Erasmus Plus, a scheme where apprentices can spend some time working in another EU state. We will keep campaigning for the UK to retain its place in Erasmus after Brexit.
- Antony Hook wrote the Parliament's resolution on respecting human rights in Hong Kong.
- We pushed for a tougher EU line on deforestation and illegal logging.
- Luisa Porritt raised the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and got 608 MEPs to call for her release. She brought Richard Ratcliffe to Strasbourg where several of us met him and his case will now



be taken up by a friend and colleague of Luisa's from the Netherlands.

- Chris Davies forced the Council to agree not to use EU funds to promote overfishing.
- We campaigned tirelessly in our regions to try and secure a People's Vote on Brexit, marching several times in London, speaking at grassroots events, meetings and rallies and encouraging local parties to get involved.
- We also worked hard in our constituencies, visiting businesses, charities, grassroots campaigning groups, schools, universities and more, talking about our work in the European Parliament and why it matters that the UK is part of the EU.
- We worked hard to get speaking slots on local, regional and national radio stations and political talk shows to debate Brexit and inform the public about our work. Between us we covered all the major programmes including Newsnight, Today and Question Time.

The Liberal Democrats worked cross-party with MEPs from the Labour Party, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Alliance Party to lobby in Brussels on Brexit – particularly



last October when we were seeking an extension from the EU.

In January 2020 we agreed as a delegation that we would vote against the Withdrawal Bill when it came before the European Parliament, as we had all campaigned so tirelessly against Brexit. In the final debate many of the delegation gave passionate speeches to the house, which were echoed by those of other UK MEPs, and many heartfelt speeches from our European colleagues regretting the UK's decision and talking of our return to the EU. You can watch all of this online, by searching for European Parliament Plenary speeches.

Having struggled to get the UK media interested in our work for seven months, the UK MEPs were inundated with media requests in the last week of our mandate and the LDEPP corridor constantly had cameramen and reporters wandering around looking to film someone packing up their office. I would like to pay tribute here to 15 colleagues who were hugely professional and dignified right up to the last minute, despite being utterly exhausted and demoralised by Brexit.

We know most Lib Dem members share our sense of grief at losing our EU citizenship and the implications for our country, our children and our grandchildren. For the Lib Dem MEPs there was a very personal layer of grief on top of that – we had not only found the job of a lifetime, but we had so much more good work to do in the European



Parliament. Work that could help shape Europe's environmental policies, enshrine solid human rights protection in future trade deals, promote equality and rights for marginalised groups across Europe and offer leadership on foreign affairs. It was nothing short of traumatic to be torn away from all that when we had barely even got started.

Your Lib Dem MEPs were a truly impressive cohort of politicians. I know the party is proud of what we achieved in our short mandate and I am proud to have led them.

This is not the end of the Liberal Democrat European Party. We are taking a break... One day we'll be back!



## **Reports from Federal Bodies**

### **Lib Dems Ltd report - Duncan Greenland (Chair)**

Having last year passed responsibility for oversight of the Legacy Fund to the Federal Finance & Resources Committee, the residual functions of Liberal Democrats Limited continue to be to hold the lease for party headquarters, and to monitor the suitability of major donations above a £25,000 threshold as one of the four approval authorities within the agreed party protocol.



## **Campaign For Gender Balance - Candy Piercy (Chair)**

CGB Vice Chairs: Julia Cambridge and Anna Sabine

This year, the work of CGB has been disrupted significantly by the December 2019 GE and by the Covid-19 lockdown.

The year after a GE is always quiet. and this year is no exception.

### **Candidate Approval Mentoring**

The CGB mentoring team has been guiding a small number of women for approval especially for the Scottish and Welsh elections. However the English Candidates Committee is currently conducting a significant review of their process. Until the revised process is rolled out we are at a standstill on English Approvals for Westminster.

Luckily our excellent Approvals Mentoring Team, led by my Vice Chair Julia Cambridge, has always worked remotely. As a result they will be able to get back up and running very quickly once the new process is in place.

Candidate selections are again few and far between. However we shall provide mentors to assist any woman who wants one when they are going through a selection



Autumn Conference Training. We shall be running four modules at this digital conference

### **Future Women MPs weekend**

We are working with the Diversity Team at LDHQ to work out how we can run this as a digital event just after Christmas.

### **Outreach**

Our Vice Chair Anna Sabine is leading on CGB working with the Parliament Project, a cross Party initiative, which is also aimed at getting women elected to Parliament.

### **Looking forwards**

The lack of a budget from the Party continues to hold back the work of both CGB and RDC. We hope that when the current restrictions caused by the pandemic are resolved, the Party will provide proper budgets for both these organisations.



## **Racial Diversity Campaign (RDC) - Ade Adeyemo (Chair)**

The Lib Dem Racial Diversity Campaign (RDC) was formally launched in early 2019.

However, due to the Brexit referendum and the subsequent snap general election there wasn't the opportunity to get much done. A new Executive for the RDC was elected in the February 2020 Party elections.

The new Executive members are as follows:

Chair: Councillor Ade Adeyemo

Vice Chair: Dipa Vaya

Vice Chair: Josh Babarinde

Since they were elected, the new RDC Executive have held five formal meetings to develop a Strategic Plan for the RDC and to start making plans to take the organisation forward.

### **Current Plans for the RDC**

Current plans for the RDC include the following:

- 'The Big RDC Review' – A review of the barriers that BAME Liberal Democrat members, approved candidates and PPCs face on the road to election.



- BAME-only training sessions at the Autumn Lib Dem Conference (.)
- Advice, training and support for BAME Candidates who want to become Councillors, MPs, AMs, PCCs and Regional Mayors.
- Mentoring for 'Target Seat' Candidates.
- Working with the ALDC to develop BAME-specific training programmes for Members and Candidates.
- Organising RDC Candidate Training sessions, including Candidate Development Seminars and Future MP Weekends.

Initially, the Executive took the conscious decision to keep the RDC “a bit quiet”, whilst they set up the organisation. They felt that it was important to have the basic building blocks in place and to have something to offer, before going public.

### **Progress and Current Activities**

- Creation of a new RDC web site ([www.libdemrdc.org](http://www.libdemrdc.org)) - web site now live
- 'The Big RDC Review' of BAME Candidates - in progress
- Development of a Strategic Plan for the RDC - in progress



- BAME-only training at the Autumn LD Conference - 2 sessions planned

The RDC continues to work with the HQ Diversity Team, as well as LDCRE, CGB and the ALDC to develop training and mentoring schemes, to assist BAME members who wish to stand for office.

The Executive are taking a step-by-step approach – the first step being to ask BAME Members about their experiences of being a candidate or going through the candidate assessment process in order to become a PPC.

The Executive are of the opinion that it is important to start with a solid base of evidence on which they can base future plans. Evidence and findings from 'The Big RDC Review' will be presented to those who lead and run the Party, to demonstrate the need for LDHQ support and funding, both of which have been lacking in the past.

### **RDC Budgets and Finances**

So far, all of the above has been achieved without financial support or a budget from LDHQ. Currently, the RDC Executive are having to pay out of their own pockets for web site hosting (Wix), online survey (SmartSurvey) and other incidental costs.

This is clearly not a sustainable situation and it is not fair to expect the RDC Executive to carry on without financial support from LDHQ. It is now imperative that the Party



provides financial support, in the form of a budget for the RDC, if it is to achieve its stated objectives.

A lot has been achieved so far by the Executive and financial support from LDHQ is the critical next step that will allow the RDC to achieve its stated aims of training and developing BAME candidates within the Party and getting them elected.



## **The Complaints Process – Neil Christian (Lead Adjudicator)**

### **Summary**

I am asked to provide a report to Autumn Federal Conference as specified in the Complaints Procedure and Guidance at paragraph 13 of the Explanatory Notes. This sets out the information I must report to conference and I have provided a paragraph below on each point.

The new complaints procedure has been in operation since July 2019. As with all new systems there has been a bedding in period and unforeseen issues have needed to be resolved. I will continue to work with the Disciplinary Sub-Group to the Federal Board to identify problems and resolve them. I also thank the volunteers who have committed their time and effort to assisting in this vital process.

As the first year closes I believe we are in a position to continue to improve upon the delivery of fair, independent and timely resolution to complaints made against Party members.

### **The number of cases ongoing and the number**

**concluded:** We have received 491 cases since the new system was introduced in July 2019, 283 of which are considered ongoing with 208 cases concluded.



It is worth noting that the number of complaints received is at a volume much higher than was ever foreseen when the system was being planned. We have had to adjust to manage the higher than expected number of complaints and this has included training more volunteers to adjudicate investigate and mediate.

### **Information on the nature and numbers of Complaints:**

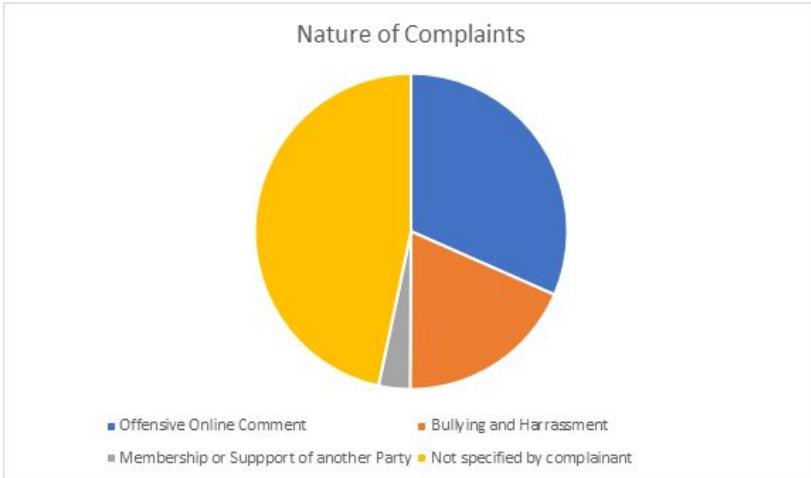
The chart below shows the volume of cases received by month. You will note that in July 2020 we have closed more cases than we received for the first time since the new system was introduced on 1 July 2019 but that July was also the month with the second highest number of new cases recorded.

No. of New Cases per month v No. of Closed Cases per month





This Chart shows the nature of the complaints as identified by the complainant. It has been identified that we need to do more to objectively categorise the nature of complaints and record this information.



**The average number of days taken to conclude each complaints procedure:** A key driver for implementing the new complaints system was for complaints to be handled promptly, on the basis of transparent deadlines. It should be noted it takes time for any case to go through the process even without delays (10 days for review by Original Adjudicator, 21 days investigation, 2 months mediation, 14 - 21 days for a panel to be set up, 7 days before a report back is received).

In the early stages of the new process, these timescales were not kept to. This has led to a delay in resolving cases



that we are working to redress. The average time to clear a case on 12th June 2020 stood at 308 days.



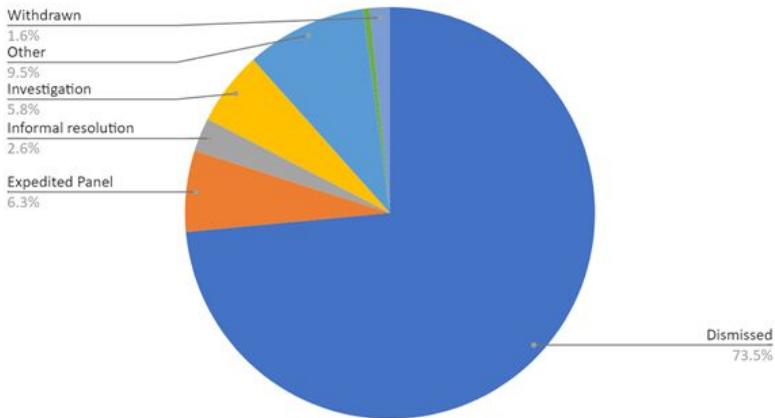
Please note the Party has invested more HQ capacity in the system from April 2020, which has significantly improved timeliness. The duration of our open cases has also reduced significantly by 142 working days. On 29th July this stood at 166. The Senior Adjudicators Team members continue to work with Adjudicators on those older cases to try and provide some resolution for the parties involved. Another problem identified was the need to keep parties updated as to the progress or delay in their complaint and a process is now in place for this purpose.

**The number of Complaints which were dismissed, referred to Informal Resolution, referred to a Complaints Panel via Investigation, or referred to a**



**Complaints Panel under an Expedited Process: The**  
Chart below sets out the decision outcomes for the 208 completed cases.

#### 4.3 Decision note outcomes



A considerable proportion of complaints have been dismissed because the complaint is not between individual members or is otherwise a type of complaint which is dealt with by another set of rules or part of the party (e.g. complaints against the decision of an RO, complaints about a local party etc.). We have created a flow chart which sets out the key types of complaint and directs complainants as to who to complain to, which is linked on the Party website, on the first page before the complaints form so anyone can see it before making a complaint. We are also intending to update the complaints form to require people to confirm



their complaint is of a type this system is designed to address before submitting it.

Many complaints are also dismissed as they are considered so minor as to not constitute complaints. We need to do more within the party to inform members before they raise a complaint on what we consider could bring the party into disrepute so that very minor complaints do not take a huge amount of capacity within the system.

**The number of Party members suspended:** The rules provide for a decision on suspension to be made by the Senior Adjudication Team under paragraph 4.2 of the Complaints procedure and guidance. There are currently 5 people suspended awaiting the conclusion of the complaint process.

**The sanctions imposed, if any, in each concluded case:** Panels have imposed the following sanctions. 1 no further action, 3 suspension of membership, 1 mandatory training, 5 revocation of membership, 1 ban from holding internal office, and 1 request for apology.

The Chart below sets out the sanctions imposed following a panel hearing. There are a number of points to consider when reviewing this information. It is a low sample as relatively few panels have been convened and reported. Panels are at the end of the disciplinary process and it has taken time for investigations to work their way through the system. The majority of panels have only started to convene towards the latter part of the first 12 months of



operation. There are a number of panels convening currently or who have convened recently but the decision has not been handed down. It is to be expected in a normal year that panels will convene throughout the year on a steady basis.

What can be seen is that the over half of the sanctions imposed are suspension or revocation of membership. This would appear to indicate that the matters making their way to panel hearings are of a serious nature and are dealt with by the panel as such.



### **The number of cases appealed to the Federal Appeals**

**Panel:** No cases have been appealed to the Federal Appeals Panel in the first year of this systems operation.



# Updates from the State Parties

## The English Party - Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (Chair)

In March this year I became Chair of the Lib Dems in England, just as lockdown hit. We have not spent lockdown being idle.

There are many serious organisation issues that need addressing within the Lib Dems in England and we have started to address these. We have:

- Produced an Organisational Strategy Paper that gives us direction and purpose.
- We have decided that our aim is to try to empower and skill up Regional Parties, so they can empower and skill up Local Parties to do the grassroots campaigning across the country that we need to be doing.
- We have regigged our budget to fund 2 day a week Regional Development Officers in each Region.
- One of their roles will be to encourage our party to become more diverse especially in our elected representatives.
- We have worked through a deal between Regions, the HQ Field Teams and ALDC to jointly produce Regional Development Plans and to work jointly on resourcing



and implementing these plans. This is a huge advance in joint working.

- We are now looking to work jointly with the Federal Party on our budgets to avoid duplication and address areas where funding needs to be directed.
- We are consulting on basic plans of what each layer of the Party should do, so that everyone understands what their roles are and how they fit into the whole scheme of things.
- We continue to jointly fund a post with ALDC to encourage more training across the country, and to train up more volunteer trainers.

So we have direction, we have purpose and we have a vision for empowering and skilling up grassroots campaigners across the country.

We have also had to continue the work that has always got to be done. We are:

- Reviewing all the General Election candidates and looking at the approval process for candidates.
- We are commissioning a company to review public social media history of potential candidates.
- We are working to resolve the backlog of complaints that have built up, and to get these resolved.

I am enormously grateful for the help and support of the officer team at the Party in England, to Prue Bray, Alison Rouse, Margaret Joachim and Richard Flowers as well as to all the Regional Chairs and other members of the English



Exec for all their hard work, commitment and professionalism.



## **The Scottish Party - Sheila Ritchie (Convenor)**

The Scottish Party went into the General Election campaign in good heart, but lost one seat. We achieved a marginal improvement in our overall share of the vote.

A review of our organisational and staffing needs was progressed and outcomes implemented.

We held our first online Conference-also our first conference since spring 2019.

We have used lockdown to regroup and plan for Holyrood 2020, which is likely to be a challenge in an unprecedented scale.

### **Electing More Liberal Democrats**

**In the last year:** We lost one prominent seat at the 2019 General Election. On a disappointing night for the Party our vote share increased by 3%.

We have held 30 training sessions, selected most of our FPTP Holyrood candidates, and are ahead of schedule on list selection.

We have eleven Council by elections scheduled for the autumn.



We have held 10 online policy roadshows as part of our manifesto preparation for Holyrood 2021.

We have issued over 200 Press releases on Covid.

We have recruited a new CEO, in Rachel Palma-Randle, a half time digital campaigner and (tbc) a Campaign Manager.

**Next year:** We have an election strategy to complete and deliver, to see more Liberal Democrat MSPs, more Liberal Democrat councillors, more field workers and an integrated national campaign to support our list candidates for Holyrood.

### **Improving Diversity**

**In the last year:** The Party's informal but influential Diversity Action Group adopted an Action Plan in August 2019, the first deliverables to be at its Autumn Conference, which, unfortunately, was cancelled because of the General Election. The Spring Conference 2020, was then cancelled because of Covid.

The entire plan, concluding with 33 recommendations, has been revisited, updated, and adopted by the Scottish Executive in July 2020.

An all encompassing Disability Policy was adopted, after consultation, in May 2020.



SLDW has been fully resurrected, and has been approved as an SAO.

The Party's All Women shortlist strategy was amended at the Party conference in July 2020, to recognise the intersectional disadvantages of minority ethnic and LGBT+ members.

**Next year:** The Party's CEO is working with volunteers to implement the proposals in both plans. They are wide ranging and not without cost, and will require to be phased in.

The Scottish members of LGBTQ+ plan to form a recognised SAO, and the Party is working with them to facilitate that.

Selections for FPTP seats for Holyrood are expected to be closer to 50-50 gender balance than has been previously achieved. Target seats for Holyrood are expected to achieve 50-50. That ends the Party's commitment to preferential mechanisms in the selection process. It's Diversity Fund will continue to increase and be deployed in support of those with protected characteristics.

### **Improving Party Efficiency and Reform**

**In the last year:** We held our first online conference, with 250 registrations, and 10 Policy roadshows to develop the 2020 manifesto.



### **Next year and the 2019 General Election Review: A**

communications plan, covering both internal and external communications, integrated with that of the Parliamentary Party is in preparation.

Most of the direct responsibility for implementation of the Review Recommendations lie with the Federal Party, as is appropriate for a Westminster Election.

The Scottish Executive has considered the specifically Scottish responses to its own consultation, and, indeed, they were passed on to Lady Thornhill, as part of her committee's process. It has reviewed and amended its election governance, and adopted the changes in time for Holyrood 2020. It has undertaken Diversity Training, built into one of its two strategy days.

In the coming year we expect resources to be identified clearly in advance, training programmes for all staff, both new and embedded, recommended processes for engaging the staff of Parliamentarians, diversity and inclusion training for all senior officers and local Party staff, and a rebuilt election committee.

### **Responding to Coronavirus**

As with much of the rest of society, the Scottish Party has identified how much can be done remotely; there has been greater member engagement, significantly greater take up of remote training opportunities, dedicated development



time, and significantly reduced travelling expenses, with an associated environmental advantage.

Staff have been mutually supportive, and have taken great care of each other, in stressful moments.

The plan to return to office work is advancing but not yet complete.

A limited number of activists have engaged with their constituencies in non political supportive fashion.

### **Final thoughts - the Scottish Parliamentary Elections**

The Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2020 present an unprecedented challenge to the United Kingdom. Dividing and implementing an election strategy to cope with such a fluid situation is immensely difficult. We are trying to predict the impact of a non-SNP "Alliance for Independence" on the list system, at a time when we believe that most people will be wholly focussed on an economy collapsing as a consequence of both Brexit and Covid.

We will welcome all help you can give us.



## The Welsh Party - Paula Yates (President)

### Electing More Liberal Democrats

**In the last year:** The Executive Officer for Member Development has been running a campaign to encourage members to sign up for the wide range of virtual training on offer from the federal party and ALDC.

Local parties have been encouraged to identify gaps in their campaigning capacity and find volunteers to fill them so that they can work with the Membership Development team to ensure that training is provided. The Leader and the Welsh General Election Campaign Team have been working with members and focus groups to develop a clear and appealing focus and message for the campaign.

**Next year:** The Welsh party has completed a major restructuring of its staff to strengthen our preparations for the Welsh general election in 2021. The new team includes a Development Officer, part funded by ALDC, and a Digital Officer, shared with the Scottish party. It is intended that both these staff members will work with local parties to develop capacity and help to make local parties increasingly self-sufficient in a variety of campaigning skills.

### Improving Diversity



**In the last year:** Wales has played its part in ensuring the promotion of diversity in our party as well as promoting a message of diversity to the public. Welsh dates have been added into the diversity calendar and the diversity officer has maintained contact with both federal officers and local parties to make it clear that diversity is not an afterthought but is key to what we do.

**Next year:** A series of themed virtual events for members is planned to take place over the autumn, in which panels of expert guests can be questioned on issues relating to racial diversity in Britain.

### **Improving Party Efficiency and Reform**

**In the last year:** On 1 February a new constitution came into force for the Welsh Party. This reduced the number of committees and gave powers to new Executive Officers to drive forward the work of the party in their own areas of activity. These EOs chair the relevant committees and contribute to the Welsh General Election Campaign Team. The old NEC has been reduced in size to become the Welsh Board

The Leader instigated a series of face to face (and later virtual) Rebuilding to Win days at which activists from across Wales have helped to develop the message and plan regional campaigns.

We were grateful to both Dorothy Thornhill and Mark Pack for attending a Welsh Board meeting to discuss the review's



findings. The Board is committed to doing all it can to implement those recommendations which are of particular relevance to the Welsh party.

**Next year:** The Welsh party held its own survey of members' views on the General Election immediately after the event and the results of this survey fed into the GE review. A further survey of members was held after the publication of the Thornhill review, soliciting views on which of the recommendations were of key relevance to the Welsh party. A member independent of the leadership and elected officers was asked to form a small action group to consider the report's recommendations and report back to the Welsh Board with recommendations on what actions the Board should take in response to the review. The results of the members' survey are contributing to the development of these recommendations

In the meantime, the party's staff review has resulted in the appointment of a Chief Executive and, once they have come into post, it is planned that they, the Leader and the President should consider together the report's recommendations on the relationship between these three roles and their implications for the Welsh party.

## **Coronavirus**

In the early stages, the Welsh party decided to adopt a constructive approach in its response to government action and to avoid hard hitting campaigning on any issue not connected with coronavirus. As the situation has



developed, national campaigning has continued on UBI and issues of social justice and a number of local campaigns on, for example, localised outbreaks of coronavirus in meat packaging plants have been pursued. Council groups have been particularly active in supporting and publicising local arrangements to support those most seriously affected by the lockdown. Phone banks have been put in place across Wales and members have been encouraged to join phoning sessions.

The party has invested in more teleconferencing software and has encouraged local parties to use it to continue their activities once the initial uncertainty settled down. The opportunity has been taken to host larger scale members' events, including a weekly series of debates on various issues with guest speakers. These have proved popular and show great potential for widening member engagement in the future.

In the coming months, the party needs to be well prepared to take advantage of any opportunities that exist for door to door campaigning. At the same time there needs to be a massive campaign to develop digital skills within local parties, which must be a high priority for the new Digital Officer.

Next year we expect fewer deliveries; more phone canvassing; less voter engagement; more member engagement.



# Report from the Federal Appeals Panel - Alan Masters (Chair)

1. The Federal Appeals Panel (referred to as the FAP throughout) is established under Article 22 of the Constitution and adjudicates over a variety of disputes that fall outside the remit of State Appeals Panels. The FAP is made up of 18 members – 9 of whom are elected by the Federal Executive and confirmed by Conference, with 3 being elected by each State Party. The Chair of the FAP is elected by the Panel from amongst the members elected to it by the Federal Executive.

The term of the current Federal Appeals Panel comes to an end on the 31st December 2020 when a new panel elected by conference will take its place.

## **INTRODUCTION BY ALAN MASTERS THE ELECTED CHAIR OF THE PANEL**

2. The panel exists under article 22 of the Federal Party Constitution to resolve any internal conflicts falling within Article 21.3. Its composition is as set out in Article 22.1.

I was re-elected as chair for a second term in 2016.



The panel's registrar is: Eve Giles

This is the Federal Appeals Report to the end of September 2020.

In certain instances, the Chair of the Panel may provide a ruling on his own authority under the Panel's procedures. In other instances, he will appoint a panel of members to determine the issue. The rulings referred to in this report were made by either the panel or the Chair.

### **REFLECTION ON THIS YEAR AND AN APOLOGY.**

3. This has been a very busy year for appeals and a difficult year in terms of administration of the Panel. Due to a staff illness and a variety of problems arising from the "covid pandemic" and other delays, it has not been possible to keep to our timetable for determination of cases. I would personally wish to apologise for all parties that have had to wait for their appeals to be determined.



## **RULINGS OF THE PANEL**

4. The FAP can adjudicate on internal conflicts that fall within the jurisdiction of the Panel under Article 22.3 in the Constitution and our written procedures.

Disputes where there is a possibility that one or more parties' rights have been infringed under 22.3(b), will normally be determined by a full Panel

### THE FOLLOWING IS A SHORT SUMMARY OF DISPUTES AND RULING DETERMINED BY THE PANEL IN THIS PERIOD:-

1. An Appeal made by an expelled member of the Party against a ruling of the English Appeals Panel that the Appellant's appeal against a decision of the English Party to refuse him re-admission to the Party at that time, had failed.
  - i. This was the second application made by the Appellant for re-admission to membership of the Party following his expulsion from the Party on or about the 27th May 2018 for standing against an official Liberal Democrat Candidate in the 2017 General Election.
  - ii. The Panel found that Federal Appeal Panel can only act where there has been some constitutional or procedure flaw or impropriety or unfairness in the



procedure and/or breach of natural justice that would entitle the Panel to overrule/ revoke the decision and ask the State Party to look at the matter again.

- iii. The panel found that there was no mystery as to why the English Party refused the Appellant's application. The Appellant had stood against the official candidate in the last parliamentary elections, and was properly expelled at that time. The enrolling bodies' reason for refusing his re-admission was essentially that to allow him to re-join the Party, so soon after his membership was revoked would bring the Party into disrepute. The Panel could not find any grounds for interfering with the EAP's ruling and uphold their decision.
2. An Appeal made by an Appellant in respect of several issues concerning her application to be shortlisted as a candidate in the European Parliamentary elections of 2019. The Panel found partly in favour of the Appellant and partly in favour of the State Party.
    - i. In favour of the Appellants the Panel found that the Appellants rights had been infringed during the selection process and found that the Appellant was entitled to damages for loss of chance.
    - ii. Against the Appellant, the panel found no evidence to suggest that the SRO acted in any way



inappropriately to exclude the Appellant from the count. The panel found no evidence to suggest that there were any errors in the declaration of the result, except for any resulting from the English Party's decision to remove the Appellant from the ballot and therefore ruled against the Appellant on this point. The panel found no evidence to suggest there were any flaws in the STV count based on the information the SRO received and therefore ruled against the Appellant on this point.

3. An Appeal challenging the decision of the Returning Officer to re-start the Committee Elections in October 2019 due to an error in publishing before voting started some candidate's manifestoes.
  - i. The Appellant argued that the election regulations do not give the Returning Officer the power to restart the elections and invalidate any legitimately cast votes. That the Returning Officer had acted outside of his powers in so doing and that the response was not proportionate.
  - ii. The panel found that the power to invalidate the election is implicit in the powers of a Returning Officer. "If the Returning Officer did not have the power to stop an unfair or flawed election, it is



difficult to see the point of having a Returning Officer”.

- iii. Further the Panel found that since the Returning Officer was also the Chair of the Federal Appeals Panel he undoubtedly has the power to interpret the Constitution in circumstances such as this where the constitution is silent but a decision needs to be made in the best interests of the Party.

## **RULINGS OF THE CHAIR**

Disputes concerning constitutional inconsistencies and irregularities between the Federal Constitution and a State Constitution can be determined under the Chair’s authority.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE DISPUTES AND RULING DETERMINED UNDER THE CHAIR’S AUTHORITY:-

1. An Appeal in respect of the powers of the Federal Board in regard to the calling and timetabling of the leadership elections and specifically whether the Federal Board had the power to revoke the election timetable it had published on 18th January and then publish a new timetable deferring nominations until May 2021.



- i. The Chair ruled that the reference under Article 18 2 c to “shall call an election” is clear and mandatory. That the clear sensible interpretation is that the Board is required to meet and call an election, publish the notice of election and set the election timetable. However the time period doesn’t start until the Board meet, call the election and finalise the timetable under Regulation 1.
- ii. It follows that since the Board is the only body that can call the election, they clearly have a window where it can delay the election for a short period of time for pragmatic reasons such as to await local elections or some other upcoming event that would make it desirable to delay the election. Clearly in normal times a delay to await local election may be justifiable but a delay of many months and certainly over a year would not.
- iii. The Chair found that the constitution was silent on the need to delay in “exceptional circumstances” and ruled that under the powers given to him under Paragraph 22.3 and Paragraph 4.1 of the Published procedures he was able to read into the constitution the following sentence in italics set out below  
  
“18.5 Upon the calling of an election, the Federal Board shall publish a timetable for nominations, withdrawals, despatch and receipt of ballot papers and the holding of ballots and shall appoint a



disinterested person or body to receive and count the ballot papers. Where exceptional circumstances justify it, the Board may postpone or suspend an election but only for so long as those exceptional circumstances continue to justify a postponement or suspension.”

- iv. He found that due to the “covid pandemic” was such “exceptional circumstances” that justified the Board actions and therefore that the Board did have power to revoke the election timetable it had published on 18th January and suspend the election.
  - v. However he found in favour of the Appellant on the second question as to whether the Board had acted reasonably in suspending the elections to May 2021 and ruled that once restrictions cease and it becomes safe to do so, that an election should be called.
2. An Appeal against the Vice Chair of the EAP regarding the validity of a ruling made by the Vice Chair on behalf of the EAP. This was in relation to an application made by the Appellant in respect of the selection procedure for a post of Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate (PPC).
    - i. The Chair ruled that the vice chair had acted beyond their powers and upheld the appeal and quashed



the declaration of the Returning Officer and ordered that a new selection for PPC be made forthwith by the ECC under Article 18.4 and where appropriate 18.7 (a) of the Federal Constitution.

3. Appeal by the Chair of an English local party, for and on behalf of the Local Party. The matter in contention is the selection of a Parliamentary candidate, in the light of a possible imminent General Election. The previously selected candidate has recently stepped down suddenly and unexpectedly.
  - i. The appeal from the Local Party is that they wish to select a replacement PPC as soon as possible; that such candidate should be a local candidate and not one 'parachuted in' by the English Candidates Committee; and, given that the only approved local candidates are male, that the Local Party should be permitted to choose a male candidate as PPC if the members see fit to do so.
  - ii. The English Candidates Committee had told the Local Party that it (ECC) can use powers ascribed to it under the Emergency Protocol for a 'snap' General Election either to appoint a candidate, or to approve an accelerated selection procedure, and also that because the seat was designated as an All-Women Shortlist ahead of the previous selection, any such



accelerated selection process or appointment must be of a female candidate.

- iii. The Chair ruled that it was clear both from the Constitutions themselves, and from previous rulings both of the party's Appeals Panels and the High Court, that there is a hierarchy of Constitutions in a common sense order, in that the Federal Constitution takes precedence over State Constitutions, which in turn take precedence over Regional and Local Party Constitutions. The assertion by the Local Party that their Committee's interpretation of their own Constitution 'trumps' the provisions of the Federal and State Constitutions, and the Snap Election Protocol adopted pursuant to those Constitutions, must therefore be dismissed.
- iv. The Emergency Protocol for a Snap General Election grants to the English Candidates Committee the power to authorise an accelerated selection procedure or to appoint a candidate. The contention that the Local Party can select a candidate without intervention must also therefore be dismissed.
- v. However, the political and intellectual rationale for allowing such an override to the normal candidate selection procedures which are prescribed in the Constitutions must be that, in circumstances which are believed to constitute an emergency, the ECC is



given the authority to act pragmatically to ensure the best electoral outcome at the imminent election.

- vi. The system of using All-Women Shortlists in designated seats, by contrast, is clearly a part of the normal 'peacetime' selection procedures, whose purpose is the broader goal of achieving a better gender balance among our elected representatives.
- vii. It is hard to see how a specific candidate selection can at one and the same time be both an emergency warranting a pragmatic intervention to secure the best short-term outcome and therefore justifying suspending normal processes, and yet also constitute 'business as usual' to the extent that it must be considered obligated to incorporate some specific feature of the normal process.
- viii. Therefore in this exceptional situation the ruling was that All-Women Shortlists could not be imposed onto the Emergency Protocol for a 'snap' General Election.



4. An Appeal made on behalf of an Associated Organisation against the former Party President and the Federal Executive relating to the suspension of the organisation.
  - i. The Chair ruled that FAP was not competent at the first instance to hear most of the allegations and directed the Associated Organisation to the correct procedure under Article 22.1 of the Constitution.
  - ii. On the limited issue as to the scope of a report prepared for the Feral Executive into the procedures of the AO. The Chair found that there can be no surprise that the report did not look into specific allegations of behaviours, since the Boards terms of reference were limited to their general concerns about the AO procedures.
  - iii. The Chair ruled that the AO had no right to demand what is in the terms of reference, that is a matter for the Board. On the evidence he ruled that there was nothing inappropriate about the terms of reference for the investigation and therefore found that there is no merit in the AO's complaint that the limiting of the investigation infringed their rights.
  - iv. Finally on the issue that the allegations were not fairly investigated and this requires an apology from the Board. The Chair found that there is no merit in the complaint that this AO was not fairly investigated. However the Chair did find an



ambiguity between the current Board position and that of the former President and directed that the Board provide further clarification as soon as possible to the AO in that respect.

## **PUBLISHED PROCEDURES UNDER 22.6**

6. Under Article 22.6 of the Constitution the Panel publishes its own procedures which are then subject to confirmation by conference. There is a need to review the current procedures, and at the end of this report is an amended version for confirmation by Conference.

The amendments have been highlighted for quick reference. In particular this year it has been necessary to update and amend our procedures to take into account in the right of members to appeal from the new complaints procedure under Article 23 of the Constitution. I should add that is has been done in consultation with the Lead Adjudicator appointed under Article 23.

There have also been other amendments to take into account matters arising this year and for the better administration of the Panel in future.



## SUMMATION

7. I have always seen the FAP primary asset is its independence from all other organisations in the Party. The FAPs primary role as to protect members' rights under the Constitution and not be afraid to make good decisions in the best interest of the Party and members where they need to be made.

I will miss this role and have been proud to serve as the Chair for the past 10 years.

I believe that the Panels record of decisions and rulings speaks for itself and would like to thank the members of the Panel who have served with me for all the time an effort that have given to the Party.

I would also like to thank the party staff past and present for all there assistance and dedication over the years in assisting the running of the Panel. There are so many I would wish to thank personally but you know who you are.

The role of the Panel is in my view crucial to the smooth running of the Party and as a guarantee of the rights of individual members within the Party - a true liberal Democrat aspiration.

I believe that the outgoing panel will pass onto the new panel and new chair, a good organisation with



good procedures and a record of excellent service to the Party and its members.

I ask members to pass this report and give confirmation to the amended procedures attached.

I wish the new panel and chair good luck for the future.

Alan Masters

Barrister at Law, LL.B, BL.

Chair of the Federal Appeals Panel



# Federal Appeals Panel Procedures<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Mission Statement

- 1.1. The Federal Appeals Panel (the “Panel”) exists under Article 22 of the Federal Party Constitution to resolve internal conflicts falling within Article 22.3.
- 1.2. In discharging its duties the Panel shall act in accordance with the principles of natural justice; and shall be accessible, transparent and expeditious.
- 1.3. Where appropriate, the Panel will encourage mediation; where necessary, it will make firm decisions by proper process.
- 1.4. In dealing with any complaint the Panel will have regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular to Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights.
- 1.5. When dealing with a complaint, members are reminded that this is an internal conflict

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<sup>1</sup> Published as per article 22.6 of the Federal Constitution



resolution procedure between the complainant, respondent and Panel and all communications must be direct between the parties and cannot be conducted with third parties.

## 2. Officers

- 2.1. There shall be a Chair of the Panel elected in accordance with Article 22.1.
- 2.2. There shall be two Vice-Chairs of the Panel approved by the Panel.
- 2.3. There shall be a Registrar and a Deputy Registrar of the Panel approved by the Panel. The Registrars shall normally be an employee of the Federal Party, and the Chair of the Panel shall consult with the Chief Executive of the Party in relation to any such appointment and either the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs of the Panel will sit on any selection process for a new Registrar.



### 3. Initial Procedures

- 3.1. Any complaint, interpretation of the constitution or request for informal advice, shall be made in the first instance to the Registrar within 6 weeks of the event, ruling or issue of to be determined subject the right of the Panel to extend this time in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.2. The Panel will be careful not to hear disputes which are in the first instance outside their jurisdiction, for instance where another remedy exists that has not been exhausted, such as an appeal to a state body.
- 3.3. The Registrar shall contact the Chair, who shall designate themselves, or one of the Vice-Chairs, or another member of the Panel as the case manager (the “Case Manager”) in respect thereof. The Registrar shall ensure that any complaint is in a form which is both coherent and acceptable to the complainant.
- 3.4. The Case Manager may give informal advice, and may recommend (and, if so, assist) with mediation; however, if the Case Manager conducts an unsuccessful mediation, they may take no further part in the determination of the complaint, and the



Chair shall if thought fit appoint a different Case Manager.

- 3.5. The Case Manager, in consultation with the other Officers, will determine;
- (a) whether or not the case falls within the jurisdiction of the Panel (and the Officers shall have power to determine that a case falls out with such jurisdiction because it is deemed to be untimely, insubstantial, unmeritorious, vexatious or where the complainant has not exhausted his remedies elsewhere); and
  - (b) the timetable and preliminary procedures for that case and a power to the Case Manager to impose deadlines (and so that any appeal must, unless the Case Manager extends this deadline in exceptional circumstances, be concluded within three months of being lodged, and may be dismissed if the appellant does not co-operate with the related timetable).



3.6. In respect of any appeal from the Complaints Procedures set out in Article 23 of the Constitution.

(a) The Case Manager will only allow appeals to continue to a Panel, where the Appellant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Case Manager that it is arguable that;-

- There was a serious failure of process or reasoning that was likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or,
- Relevant evidence which was not available at the time of the determination of the complaint, has since come to light which is likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or.
- The sanction determined was manifestly excessive or manifestly lenient in all the circumstances.

(b) If a matter is referred to a Panel it will be for them to decide whether one of the



three bullet points set out at 3.6a above has occurred as a matter of fact.

(c) The remedy available on a successful appeal is limited to remitting the case back for a fresh Complaints Panel to rehear under the Article 23 procedures, together with any further direction that is felt appropriate and necessary in that respect.

(d) Further the Case Manager can in an appropriate case and having regard to the tests set out at Paragraph 3.6 (a) and (b) above, remit the matter back on his own accord, without referring it to a Panel to determine.

(e) The Decision of the Case Manager and/or Panel will be final. The timetable and powers of the Case Manager and/or the Panel will be as set out in these procedures.

(f) Neither the Case Manager nor any Member of any Panel appointed to hear an appeal from the Complaints Panel shall have any personal connection to the parties to that Complaint or personal



involvement in the subject of the Complaint.

- 3.7. If the complainant does not comply timeously with these procedures or any directions given, the case may be determined without any evidence not supplied by a deadline.
- 3.8. The case Manager and/or the appointed Case Panel may also determine, in relation to any complaint where there is no (or no material) dispute as to the facts, that the matter should be determined without an oral hearing.
- 3.9. Subject to the foregoing the Case Manager shall have power:
  - (a) to seek further information from the complainant;
  - (b) to determine the appropriate respondent(s); and
  - (c) to determine the procedures to be used, and the issues to be adjudicated, by the Case Panel appointed to determine the case.
- 3.10. All communications must be direct between the parties and cannot be conducted with third parties.

## 4. Determinations

- 4.1. In the case of a request for an interpretation of the constitution or rules or standing orders



made under it. The Case Manager shall be empowered to make definitive rulings by their self. Such rulings shall be definitive subject to further challenge to a full panel which shall be subject to the terms of 3.5 a) above.

- 4.2. The Members (and the Chair) of the Panel to hear a particular case (“the Case Panel”) shall be selected by the Chair in accordance with, and subject to, Article 14.4.
- 4.3. Where there is an oral hearing, it shall be conducted as far as possible in accordance with the Appendix to these Procedures, a copy of which shall be given to each party in advance thereof, together with details of any proposed deviations therefrom. If any party fails to attend such an oral hearing, the Case Panel may nevertheless determine the matter.
- 4.4. Following or in the absence of an oral hearing, the Chair of the Case Panel shall produce a draft determination for approval by the other Members of the Case Panel. Such draft determination shall also be sent to the **Chair of the Appeals Panel and Registrar** by way of consultation on matters of law **and procedure** (but not fact), and the Case Panel



- shall have regard to any comments they make.
- 4.5. Such determination, or a summary thereof, shall normally be made available to all parties, and to all Members of the Panel. In the case of an oral hearing, this shall be within 21 days thereafter.
  - 4.6. The Officers shall determine upon any form of publication or other circulation of a determination and in so doing shall have regard to Article 14.6 and to the desirability of publishing any part of any decision which may be of precedential or other useful effect.
  - 4.7. The Rulings of the Case Manager (subject to paragraph 4.1 above) and the Panel are final and binding on all parties and the Party as a whole. However the powers of the Panel and Case Manager are in the form of rulings directions and declarations only, neither the Case Manager nor Panel has power to award any form of monetary compensation to any party.
  - 4.8. Where a new Panel is elected by Conference, but there are outstanding determinations before the old elected panel, the old panel will in the first instance retain jurisdiction to deal with those matters until they are finally



determined, unless due to resignation or illness it is impossible for that to occur.

## 5. Report to Conference

- 5.1. The Report will be a matter of record. A sanitised version giving the facts but not identifying the parties\* would normally be sufficient to go before Conference

(\*in the interests of protecting the parties from unnecessary publicity), together with any recommendations that have been made. Another safeguard may be that this is done during a session of Conference where members of the press are excluded.



# Appendix

## Normal Process during an Oral Hearing

1. Normally, the complainant will speak first, to put her or his case. The complainant may call witnesses as to disputed fact only, although these may also give their evidence in written form. The complainant may be assisted by a friend, who may speak for the complainant at any time. The friend should avoid simple repetition of points already made by the complainant.
2. Each respondent or representative may cross-examine a witness, the friend or the complainant, as directed by the Chair of the Case Panel.
3. The case for the complainant should not last longer than 45 minutes, unless the Chair believes that the case has not been properly put in this time.
4. The respondents have equivalent rights as to witnesses, a representative to aid her or him and time limit.



5. The complainant may also cross-examine as directed by the Chair.
6. Members of the Case Panel may ask for clarification or cross-examine at any time.
7. Each side may sum up, taking no more than five minutes.
8. The Case Panel will then consider their conclusion.

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**[1] updated 19/04/20 to refer to Article 22**