

*Your*  Liberal Britain

# **Reinventing the Liberal Democrats: how to build a party for tomorrow**

By Jim Williams & Mark Pack

*Many of these ideas in this pamphlet have emerged from the work we've seen others do successfully already, from conversations with colleagues and from the responses to our previous writings and talks. Thank you to everyone who contributed in some way to our thought processes.*

*If reading this pamphlet makes you want to help out, visit **[www.LiberalBritain.org](http://www.LiberalBritain.org)** to see how you can get involved. And if you have ideas for what we can do next, you can reach us on [ideas@liberalbritain.org](mailto:ideas@liberalbritain.org)*

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**Here's how the  
Liberal Democrats  
can be more  
successful than  
ever before**

## Foreword from Vince Cable MP

Having recently taken on the leadership of the Lib Dems I am, above all, conscious of the big gap between our enormous potential as a party and the recent, very disappointing, performance in two successive general elections. I understand the feelings of supporters of Leeds Utd and Aston Villa who know they should be up there in the Premier League but are currently languishing in a lower division.



Getting back won't be easy. But it can be done. And with the country needing better leadership as never before we have to get back.

A key step is to be competitive in campaigning and social media. There was once a time when Lib Dem campaigning inspired fear in our opponents. The relentless targeted barrage of leaflets and door-knocking contributed to numerous successes in local and national elections. No longer. Technology has moved on. We haven't.

This excellent pamphlet tells us how to raise our game; how to combine clarity and simplicity of message with the best which social media campaigning can offer. I want to see us put this pamphlet into practice. It will have my full support.

**Vince Cable**

**Leader of the Liberal Democrats**

# The one-page summary

Let's be honest: even our best times haven't been good enough. The Liberal Democrats have never had more than 1 in 10 MPs or 1 in 5 councillors. We've never even been close to being the largest party in devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales or London.

But we also all know that we've rarely been more needed than we are right now. We need to rise to the occasion: do better - and be better - than we ever have before.

We must make sure the public know what we stand for. We must energise our membership, empowering them to unlock their time and skills and to ease the burden on our over-stretched staff. We must overcome the many institutional advantages that Labour and the Conservatives enjoy in money, friendly media, and the way the electoral system works.

How? This pamphlet sets out our answers. In short, we must:

1. Set out an inspirational purpose that is illustrated by signature policies and communicated through everything we do.
2. Empower our membership to build a social movement.
3. Nurture a supportive ecosystem around the party.
4. Digitise the party, matching the way people now live their lives.

If we do this well, we'll build a larger core vote, the vital foundation for sustained success, and we'll increasingly take political power, giving us ever more opportunities to turn our beliefs into a better country for us all.

# A plan for success

## **Inspire a movement**

*– more detail on page 10*

1. Start at the finish. How do we turn our values into signature policies?
2. Integrate campaigning and policy.
3. Focus policy-making on what matters most.

## **Empower a movement**

*– more detail on page 15*

4. Empower our members: let them do what *they* want to do.
5. Challenge members to help the party.
6. Lower barriers to participation.

## **Nurture an ecosystem**

*– more detail on page 20*

7. Make the party an enabling platform.
8. Run national issue-based campaigns like pressure groups do.
9. Build bridges with groups beyond the party.

## **Digitise the party**

*– more detail on page 23*

10. Funny or die: draw on our members for innovation - and humour.
11. Relationships are hard work: we need to invest in them.
12. Data is our lifeblood: don't waste it.

## **Building a party for tomorrow**

Imagine this. The 200,000<sup>th</sup> member of the Liberal Democrats joins in 2020. She knows exactly what the party wants to achieve, and she wants to help make it happen.

Immediately upon joining she's invited to pick how she'd like to get involved first. Does she want to develop new software? Come to a meeting to learn more about the party? Help deliver leaflets? Campaign to become a councillor? Share her ideas for saving the NHS?

Whichever way she wants to go, it's all laid out for her. Online communities, digital training resources, the latest competitions and challenges. Within minutes she can be as little or as heavily involved as she wishes. She's got her own ideas, and she knows that this party contains thousands of people – both volunteers and staff - who can help her try them out. She knows that she's welcome and that she can easily fit helping the party into her own life and around her other commitments.

This is the party of tomorrow: a modern, fast-moving social movement. It puts the Liberal Democrat philosophy into practice. It unlocks mass participation to help our staff and to overcome the institutional biases that protect the old established parties. Funding from big business and trade unions, the favour of select press owners, the widespread continuance of first past the post: new approaches can allow us to overcome them all.

It is a party with a clear ambition to build a better Britain – and a membership both empowered and challenged to achieve it. This pamphlet sets out how we can build on what has worked, learn from what hasn't and make that a reality.

# Let's be honest

In the wake of the 2017 general election, when we attracted fewer voters than even in 2015, we Liberal Democrats must revisit the fundamentals of our approach to politics.

And let's be honest. Looking back to when we had over 60 MPs and over 4,000 councillors may seem like a golden age. But even that was still only 1 in 10 MPs and 1 in 5 councillors.

So this isn't just about Brexit or theology or coalition or tuition fees. Even our best times before all those have not been good enough. Even in our best times, we were still a small party without the powerful resources and supportive networks - trade unions, think tanks, business groups and others - our main rivals enjoy.

Yet, we all know that we've never been more needed in British politics. Other parties have vacated huge tracts of the political spectrum; they've cast aside the vital liberal values that made this country different. Free people, fair markets, fair politics and a fair chance: there's a huge gap for a party that believes in them all.

But unless we undergo radical change, unless we aim to do better than we have ever done before, then we will never have that opportunity to give Britain a brighter future. Instead, we will have let the populists win.

To make that change we need to think long-term. At the moment, general elections hold a remarkable gravitational pull on our attention. Even with some variations for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, a huge bulge of our money over a 4-5 year period both comes in and goes out in the run-up to a Westminster general election. Staffing levels build up to



them and then fall away afterwards. ‘Long-term’ plans rarely mean more than one Westminster cycle. Yet even in brilliant general elections, our support does not go up *that* much during the campaign. Our fate in general elections is mostly decided before the Prime Minister calls on the monarch – and of course, the bulk of our local and devolved government base is decided in other years anyway.

So this pamphlet sets out a plan for the long-term. One that will help even if the next general election is very soon, and also, crucially, one that also sets out an alternative to the short-termism of the general election cycle. Here is how we can make it happen:

1. The party needs an **inspirational purpose** that translates our values into something that builds long-term loyalty from an increasing number of voters (a larger ‘core vote’).<sup>1</sup> Individual policies are important, but the secret to long-term political success is to convey the party’s overall outlook and approach.
2. Our party can become a powerful, fast-moving **social movement** that uses the power of members and supporters to match the entrenched media and money resources of our rivals.
3. Our party will only flourish if it is at the heart of a vibrant **ecosystem** of campaigners, think tanks, blogs and personalities that exist beyond the party’s walls, enriching our thoughts, extending our reach and cooperating with the millions of liberals outside the party.
4. Finally, to do the above as well as we can, we must **digitise the party** and match how people now live their lives: the relationships,

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<sup>1</sup> We don’t recap the full argument in favour of a core vote strategy here. For that see *The 20% strategy: building a core vote for the Liberal Democrats* by David Howarth and Mark Pack, available at <https://www.markpack.org.uk/building-a-core-vote-for-the-liberal-democrats-the-20-strategy/>.

the communities and the possibilities that great digital engagement offers up sit at the very heart of our approach.

This big picture for a successful future is rooted in the reality of practical successes, such as the way grassroots members created the Lib Dem Pint series of events, the hugely successful Lib Dem Newbies online community and the series of projects run by Your Liberal Britain. All of us, both new members and long-standing members, can do things in new ways, do them better and do them successfully.

Your Liberal Britain, for example, challenged members to help us write a vision statement for the party: 7,000 people took part. It will be launched at Autumn Conference in 2017. During the 2017 General Election we set up a community for digital campaigners, the Online Champions group: we trained 300 members in less than five weeks, with no funding at all. They helped us gain more than 2 million views for Lib Dem content during the election, and are still going today.

This is but a small taster of what we can achieve next.

This document expands on that big picture, taking each of the above four recommendations in turn to show how we can reinvent the Liberal Democrats and build a party for tomorrow.

# 1. Inspire a movement

It is time for the Liberal Democrats to lead. It is not enough just to want to fill the huge void in British politics. We must be the force that gives hope to the millions who look at British politics in dismay.

How? We must set out an **inspirational purpose**. We need to lift our eyes above the horizon, beyond Brexit and the battles of today, to show the future which the Liberal Democrats are for – and how our values are the route to that future.

We then need a **story** that people recognise about how to make that vision a reality: a story that people want to tell in turn. A story that explains how we got here and what we need to do next; that speaks to how people *feel* at the moment, not just what they think. We need to show we share their frustrations, their hopes, their concerns. Above all, we need to tell a story that provides hope for the future.

And we need **signature policies** which demonstrate practically to voters how our approach will make their lives better. Finally, everything we say and do must communicate these so that we overcome the debilitating response, 'I don't really know what you stand for'.

Here's how to do it.

## 1. Start at the finish

Most voters feel they have an instinctive understanding of what the Conservatives and Labour stand for (whether they find it appealing or repelling). Far too few feel that about us. As a result, our core support is so low and our vote is so fragile, requiring such hard work simply to stand still.

So, we need to start by setting out our **inspirational purpose**. We exist as a party because we have a vision for the future that is both needed and different from what other parties offer.

The Your Liberal Britain vision writing competition has provided one possible answer to our inspirational purpose. Whether it is, as we hope, this or another version that the party adopts, it then needs condensing into a **simple, powerful message of hope** that we want to communicate to the British people. And we all need to devise **signature policies** that bring it to life for voters, connecting it with the issues that matter most to them in their day-to-day lives.

This is the reverse of our usual approach. We run extensive policy making processes that take 18 months or longer to turn a decision to run a policy group into a final adopted policy. Then when an election comes we try to meld those together into a coherent message which we hope conveys our vision of the future.

The problem with that is partly speed – for example, in the 18 months from today which it would take a policy working group to work, the Article 50 clock will have ticked down to zero, and we could well see at least one general election and possibly two changes of Prime Minister.

What's more, this approach is also back-to-front. We focus on the details and hope a big picture can later be drawn. It's like making a puzzle by drawing on the separated individual pieces, hoping they fit together to make a good picture.

What we need is the reverse therefore of our usual approach: do the big picture first, then create a series of **signature policies** which will get attention and communicate the big picture - and only then fill in other details as required.

That sequence not only will produce better results, it means that members – and our democratic processes - can be properly engaged all through the process, rather than, as happens currently, member involvement dropping off sharply when it comes to trying to draw up that big picture and a matching strategy. With this new way of doing policy, member involvement – including the vital role of debates at conference and grassroots motions - will be strengthened and more meaningful.

The party's Agenda 2020 process took an important step in this direction, starting a narrative and a message that Your Liberal Britain has built upon in writing our proposed party vision statement. We need to go further. We need to ensure that our purpose, our story and our messages sit at the heart of both our campaigns and our policy-making.

## **2. Integrate campaigning and policy**

Once we have a set of signature policies that communicate our message, we then need to ensure they are an integral part of all of our work. Every slogan, every press statement, every public action we take, every election leaflet we print, every membership newsletter we distribute: all need to answer positively 'does this help communicate our signature policies and our message?' (One way to help answer that in the affirmative is to run campaigns across the country specially designed to communicate what we stand for, a subject we return to on p.21).

As we campaign on those signature policies we need keep on checking that they are both credible and relevant from a policy perspective and also usable and effective from a campaigning perspective.

That will require the **policy, campaigns and communications** arms of the party to collaborate day by day, week by week: not just when it comes to picking which policies go in our manifesto, but all the way through from designing policies to communicating them. And that constant dialogue

needs to take place at party conference too, making grassroots members a full part of the cycle.

### **3. Focus policy-making on what matters most**

This emphasis on signature policies is a very different approach to policy making from our current method. Currently, we essentially try to address every major area once a Parliament and then at election time hope we extract from them a big picture and signature policies (with slight variants to this basic back-to-front cycle for Welsh and Scottish elections).

Instead, our policy making should keep on coming back to the signature policies – improving them, checking they are still working, updating them for new circumstances or evidence and creating new ones if they are failing.

The decisions on what policies to develop next should therefore no longer be driven by a Parliament-long schedule of policy making. Instead, they should be driven by regularly asking two questions: ‘how well are our current signature policies working at communicating what the party stands for?’, and ‘what do our campaigners say they need?’

We can find the time to concentrate on the big picture and signature policies by **deprioritising other policy making**. We don’t have to cover every policy area every Parliament. Instead, we should concentrate on the priorities to get them right.

Alongside that we need to be **nimble**: using smaller, faster moving policy task forces to fill in the key gaps when required – such as when a new policy area dominates the government’s agenda or a new party campaign on a topic is set to be launched (see page 21) – and drawing on the expertise amongst our membership to build expert groups around our spokespeople and to evaluate our members’ many innovative ideas.

Our policy-making structures are hugely stretched. That may make doing something new and different seem daunting. It does involve time and effort to build these new resources and ways of working. But it's a direct investment in being able to do more, and do it better, in the future.

To get there, prioritisation is vital to hone our limited resources on the efforts that will bring the most long-term impact. And building a social movement, as we argue in the next section, will unlock far greater resources than it required to build in the first place.

### **Why do we need to do this?**

Even when we've been doing relatively well in the past, we've still not cracked communicating our values in ways that build a large loyal core of support which matches the other parties.

For example, in 2005 the party secured its best haul of MPs at the general election. But that was still less than 1 in 10 of Parliament, and the reaction after the election? Widespread frustration across the party because – as cooking analogies were then in vogue – the party had all the right ingredients (popular individual policies) but failed to create a good recipe out of them.

This is a long-running problem. We need radical action to address it.

Liberal Democrats love debating policy detail and this has its role. But a step-by-step careful comparison of policy details between parties isn't how most voters decide who to support. It's the bigger vision, the benefits that our policy details will deliver, that matters – and that's why it has to be central to our approach.

## 2. Empower a movement

The Liberal Democrats is a party of over 100,000 thinkers, artists, analysts, leaders and activists – all keen to make a difference.

We Lib Dems all want to put this energy to use, but we struggle to find the time. The result is that **over-worked, time-strapped staff** have few opportunities to tap into all this talent and that many members feel under-utilised and under-valued. And to make matters worse, we have a way of running things at the national level where it is often a matter of staff or nobody – and with few staff, no matter how dedicated or skilled, as our staff are, that means nobody.

But we can flip this problem around. Rather than being too short of time to engage members, we can engage our members to **unlock tens of thousands of hours** of volunteer labour, freeing up staff to excel at what they're best at. Just as the most successful local parties have built up a movement of volunteers supported by staff, so too the party overall needs to change to bring the best out of both.

It can be hard to engage members well. We have to ask people to do things they want to do just as much – if not more – than we ask them to do important, boring things they don't want to do, no matter how vital to the cause. And it will only work if we empower our members to be creative and entrepreneurial; if we challenge them to find solutions to complex problems; and if we always show them the result of their labours.

The Liberal Democrats should aim to create a modern, fast-moving social movement, powered by a **membership connected, empowered, and challenged by the party** to help achieve our ambitions. Here's how to do it.



## 1. Empower our members

The best way to build a powerful social movement is to give our members a **fulfilling experience** in the party. That means one thing above all: letting them do more of what *they* want to do. We need to train them in what works, we need to give them tools, skills, opportunities and communities – and we need to stand back and see what they do with them.

(Don't panic! We can still ask them to go leafleting. In fact, they'll be more willing to do important tasks that motivate them less if also given the chance to do the exciting things they want to do.)

It may sound obvious but it is a very different approach to always be thinking 'how can we do this in a way that lets more members get involved in helping?' – and followed up by 'are we doing this in ways that improve our diversity?'

With **greater diversity** come better-functioning organisations – a lesson from the business world applicable to us and a lesson that brings to life our beliefs in giving everyone the chance to be who they want to be.

That means, for example, recognising that the local constituency party is not always the best route in for members to get involved. There will always be variations in how local parties operate. There will always be some members for whom the usual time or place of meeting isn't convenient. There will always be some members for whom the geographic focus is not their main interest.

We, therefore, need to provide multiple routes into involvement, giving members ways to get involved directly with national campaigning and providing even the smallest local parties with multiple ways of growing and contributing.

As Bryan Walker and Sarah Soule put it, “Someone with authority can demand compliance, but they can’t dictate optimism, trust, conviction, or creativity”.<sup>2</sup> That’s why inspiring and empowering is the way to go.

## **2. Challenge members to help the party**

Amongst all this freedom, the job of the party should be to provide direction. Once we’ve set our ambitious goals for Britain, let’s challenge the membership to work out how to achieve them. Once we’ve determined our powerful basic message, let’s challenge our members to help our staff communicate it.

**Crowds may not always be wise, but they are creative.** There are hundreds of thousands of good ideas waiting to happen in our party. The job of the party should be to inspire those ideas, identify them, and put them to use.

Too often we ask members to help on the basis of ‘I’m in command and I’m ordering you to do this because I know it’s the best thing to do’. It’s understandable if at times of pressure people revert to this occasionally. But the problem is that often it’s the norm: we tell people targeting is vital without taking the time to teach them about the evidence; we insist more leaflets must be delivered without remembering also to share our reasoning and examples of success; and so on. Even in a normal workplace ordering without explaining is far from ideal; in a voluntary organisation it’s far worse.

We need to become a **learning organisation** where the default outlook is to explain, persuade and listen: guiding people towards the best ways to help, not assuming we already know best and everyone should fall in line.

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<sup>2</sup> *Changing Company Culture Requires a Movement, Not a Mandate*  
<https://hbr.org/2017/06/changing-company-culture-requires-a-movement-not-a-mandate>

### 3. Lower barriers to participation

We put huge barriers between members and their participation. That isn't only a matter of our complex internal structures, it's also the way we lock away so many resources and skills behind barriers.

Want to become a councillor? Great. But please pay up to join ALDC and get your party to pay up for Connect and sign up to Google Drive to get other messaging support and... It's a blizzard of barriers: things you need to find out, people you need to know, the money you need to hand over, acronyms you need to learn.

It doesn't have to be like that. We can adopt **a mantra of simplification**, always looking to make processes simpler, information more readily accessible and resources free at the point of use (it's a model we love for the NHS, and for good reason).

Complexity breeds if left unchecked because it so often seems like the 'logical' answer to a new problem is to add another rule or process or body to account for it. That's why we need a relentless culture of asking 'how are we making things simpler? How are we fitting what we do into the realities of how people now live their lives?'

Here is one super-simple example that shows how little we do this at the moment. Conference motions are not written in plain English but formal language, they are often very lengthy and they do not even signpost clearly what the key elements are. When the crunch vote is on whether or not to remove some words from the middle of line 58, that is a telling sign that key information is often buried to non-veteran eyes. Each motion could come

with a short, plain English description of what it is about. In fact they do now<sup>3</sup>: because party members decided to make it happen.

**Why do we need to do this?**

We don't have the money that other parties have. We don't have the large core votes that other parties have. We don't have the friendly media owners that other parties have.

But we do have our members.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.markpack.org.uk/151068/lib-dem-bournemouth-conference-motions-guide/>

### 3. Nurture an ecosystem

There is more to a successful political party than the official actions of the party itself. Think tanks illustrate this clearly. A half-worked out new idea makes for a thought-provoking pamphlet for a think tank, but the same idea makes for a newspaper scare story for a political party. Helping a party is more partisan than helping a think tank. That is why think tanks are better than formal party activities at exploring new ideas and at working with a broad range of people and institutions than the formal policy-making processes of political parties.

A similar inherent advantage of the unofficial is seen with internal communications. If you want to let party members know about a new policy, for example, it is really hard to do that well if you only use official channels. Official channels can't really say much about the weak points, the risks and the controversies in a new policy unless you want it to be welcomed by wall-to-wall negative media coverage. Yet all those are valuable pieces of information for members – and that is why unofficial communications (such as *Liberal Democrat Newswire* and *Lib Dem Voice*) have such an important role to play in empowering members.

Political parties are at their strongest when they are not on their own. Too often the Liberal Democrats are just that. We need to change it. Here's how.

#### 1. Make the party an enabling platform

We **benefit from a lively ecosystem** of official and unofficial organisations within the party, and from good relations with friendly or interested bodies outside.

Yet rather than cultivating this ecosystem currently, for example, we force official and unofficial party bodies to reinvent their own membership

subscription infrastructures, to sell their own advertising around events they organise and do little to tell members about how they can get involved in them.

The shift that is required is to see the party's own official activities not as trying to do everything, but as providing members and supporters with tools to empower and enable them. Just as technology firms provide you with platforms to do what you wish within their terms and conditions, so the party could focus more on providing people and groups with the organisational tools and opportunities to promote our cause.

## **2. Run national campaigns in the way pressure groups do**

Electioneering is vital for a political party. It is only one part of campaigning, however. There is also campaigning outside election time, which is about securing changes in our society.

Such campaigns provide the opportunity to **communicate our values**, to build broader coalitions with liberals outside the party and even, where views agree on a particular issue, to non-liberals too. Marshalling such broader coalitions gives extra political power to securing the changes we want to see – and we need all the power we can marshal given the scale of forces arranged against us.

The federal party is moving in exactly this direction, having created a Head of Campaigns position – staffed by Rhiannon Leaman – to deliver precisely such an approach. We wholeheartedly welcome this move, and encourage members and local parties alike to support the upcoming campaigns.

### **3. Build bridges with groups beyond the party**

The party rally at federal conference often features a non-party member. The invitees to submit evidence to policy working groups frequently feature non-members. These are initial steps we can build on.

Our policy-making can feature continued active dialogue with outside experts and think tanks. We can encourage the creation of bigger and stronger interest groups that can act as bridges to those with similar interests outside the party, especially those who share our values but who currently see other parties as their more natural homes. And our national campaigns can be used to build policy bridges too, pulling on policy expertise from outside the party to detail their objectives and to make their case.

#### **Why do we need to do this?**

Even when that 200,000<sup>th</sup> member joins in 2020, our membership will still be only a small fraction of the millions of Liberal Democrat supporters in the UK, let alone of liberals in a broader sense. It would be foolish to spurn those wider sources of strength and expertise, especially when you look at how much other parties benefit from the ecosystems around them.

## 4. Digitise the party

The national Liberal Democrat digital campaign in 2017 was the best our party has fought. Your Liberal Britain is proud of the work of our Online Champions. HQ too should be proud of its digital teams - especially the ways in which (unnoticed often by the wider party) they managed to match in key seats the intensity of digital campaigning that the Conservatives sprung on us in 2015 to such deadly effect. Many local parties ran impressive digital operations, often on a shoestring.

But we were still outclassed. Labour, in particular, had more ideas, more money, more members, more ads, more laughs, more volume.

What's more, in our activities and organisation, we are still very heavily rooted in the pre-internet world. 'Modernising' how we do things has often gone little further than moving to emailed pdfs or using telephone conference calls. Voters are increasingly living in a different, digital-first, world – and many other charities, companies and more have shown how organisations too can change.

We firmly believe that the route to making the most of digital opportunities is the same as the route to becoming a social movement. In fact, it is by doing digital well that we'll become a social movement – and it's by becoming a social movement that we'll do digital well. Here's how to do it.

### 1. Funny or die

Many of Labour's innovative tools and most successful messages originated from their membership or from Momentum. As we talked about above, one of the key features of this success was that they didn't rely only on official channels and content. Drawing the net more widely brought in



more capacity, more talent, more flexibility, more risk taking – and so more success.

That's most sharply demonstrated when it comes to humour. Humour is a powerful way to get messages to spread – and really hard to do only through official channels. That's not where the best jokes sit.

**The best way to be funny online is to have funny members online.** The best way to have innovative tools is to have innovative members who code. We could go on.

To have a funnier, sharper, brighter, faster digital campaign, we simply need a larger, more interconnected, more engaged network of members online, working with staff but also doing more than staff can do alone.

Even when the staff are as excellent humourists as those running the Lib Dem Press Office Twitter account, it is only scratching the surface of what can be achieved by unlocking the potential of our membership and supporter base. That means working both through official channels and through unofficial channels, using the flexible advantages of that ecosystem we've talked about building.

## **2. Relationships are hard work**

The key to building that engaged network of members and staff is to help them form tight bonds with each other – **offline as well as online**. Without members who know each other, online movements struggle to do more than sign petitions or send emails. We need to do the opposite: we need to become a social movement so that our members can do *more* than they do now.

Digital communities like the **Online Champions** can make this easy: challenge members to do something they want to do, and they will amaze you without fail.

But digital tools also let us promote offline communities. Your Liberal Britain's vision consultation was discussed face to face by more than 1,000 members at around 65 events up and down the country.

Finally, our Leader and the official Lib Dem social media presence should work to **build relationships** with their following online. This is hard work and requires a great investment of time. A social movement that values its members is the only way to unlock the hundreds of hours of volunteer time required.

### **3. Data is our organisational lifeblood**

We need to value data, nurture data and share data. It is our organisational lifeblood. Want to raise lots of money but not bombard people who won't give more? That requires good data. Want to turn regular voters into members? That requires good data. Want to target the key swing voters to secure marginal seats? That requires good data.

It also requires the right technology, the right compliance procedures and the right culture – one where we value how we can help colleagues through improved shared data rather than one where people hoard their own data out of fear of what others might do to it.

It won't be easy to get there. It requires better systems, better processes, better training and better leadership. But get there we must.

**Why do we need to do this?**

Widespread lip service is paid to the importance of digital and many – both staff and volunteers – work extremely hard to give that some reality. But we have no digital strategy for the party and no senior digital post in the party's staff structure. Yet digital can be for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century what the Focus leaflet was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a way to build our own media to reach audiences even when the traditional media ignore us.

As a bonus, you'll notice that getting these elements right won't just help our digital activity; humour, relationships and data all help our offline activity too.

## **It all comes down to this**

If we give people reason to believe in a better future, and if we give them a way to help make that future come true - through the party and outside it - then we can do much more than reviving the fortunes of the Liberal Democrats. We can change the direction of this country.

This pamphlet sets out our ideas for how to do that. We'd love to hear yours. We know how much we've learnt from others in coming up with the approach set out in this pamphlet – and we're sure there's plenty more to learn still.

But it's also time for action. If you take one thing away from reading this document, let it be this: no one else is going to do this for us. No saviour is going to emerge to solve all these problems. Liberal Democrats need to do it themselves.

If you're interested to help: get involved. If you've got great examples of what's worked when you've tried it: tell us.

You can reach us on [ideas@liberalbritain.org](mailto:ideas@liberalbritain.org)



### **Mark Pack**

Mark ran the Liberal Democrat digital operation in the 2001 and 2005 general elections, and was campaign manager in Hornsey & Wood Green where the team secured one of the top five results for the party in the country two general elections in a row. He edits Liberal Democrats Newswire ([www.libdemnewswire.com](http://www.libdemnewswire.com)) and is a member of the Federal Board. He's co-author of 101 Ways To Win An Election.



### **Jim Williams**

Jim founded Your Liberal Britain in November 2015. He sits on the party's Federal Policy Committee, and launched the Online Champions initiative during the 2017 General Election. He is an international development strategy consultant. He founded and ran Raabta Consultants, a research and communications company in Pakistan, from 2011 to 2015.



### **Your Liberal Britain**

A members' volunteering initiative within the Liberal Democrats, Your Liberal Britain exists to help and encourage the party become more of a social movement. We help party bodies find ways to challenge and empower Lib Dem members.

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# How to build a party for tomorrow

## Inspire a movement

*more detail on page 10*

1. Start at the finish. How do we turn our values into signature policies?
2. Integrate campaigning and policy.
3. Focus policy-making on what matters most.

## Empower a movement

*more detail on page 15*

4. Empower our members: let them do what *they* want to do.
5. Challenge members to help the party.
6. Lower barriers to participation.

## Nurture an ecosystem

*more detail on page 20*

7. Make the party an enabling platform.
8. Run national issue-based campaigns like pressure groups do.
9. Build bridges with groups beyond the party.

## Digitise the party

*more detail on page 23*

10. Funny or die: draw on our members for innovation - and humour.
11. Relationships are hard work: we need to invest in them.
12. Data is our lifeblood: don't waste it.

Your   
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Britain**



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