

Conference Report

Liberal 
Democrats

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Policy Motions

A Better Alternative to the Small Boats Legislation

Conference notes with concern the Conservative Government's alarming Illegal Migration Bill, which was introduced to Parliament on 7th March.

Conference further notes that:

- i) Under this policy, anyone who enters the UK via a small boat crossing will be immediately detained and deported to another country as soon as possible.
- ii) An analysis of Home Office statistics by the Refugee Council showed that in 2022 48% of those who crossed the channel were from just 5 countries, all with asylum grant rates over 80% – Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Syria and Iran.
- iii) The 1951 Refugee Convention, of which the UK is a signatory, confirms that asylum seekers have a right to not be penalised for illegal entry to a country.

Conference believes that the Government's plans to stop small boats:

- A. Are immoral, ineffective and incredibly costly for taxpayers.
- B. Will do nothing to address the criminal gangs responsible for arranging these dangerous crossings, and instead punishes the victims of human trafficking.
- C. Betray the UK's proud tradition of providing sanctuary to refugees fleeing war and persecution, and breaches our commitments under international law.

Conference further believes that the best way to stop these dangerous crossings and tackle smuggling and trafficking is to provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees.

Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Immediately scrap the Illegal Migration Bill.
2. Fix the broken asylum system by taking powers away from the Home Office and establishing a new, dedicated unit to make decisions quickly and fairly.
3. Provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees from all countries, including:
 - a) An expanded, properly-funded refugee resettlement scheme.
 - b) A new scheme to resettle unaccompanied child refugees from elsewhere in Europe.
 - c) Reuniting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe with family members in the UK. d) Expanding the scope of refugee family reunion, including enabling unaccompanied child refugees in the UK to sponsor close family members to join them.
 - d) Humanitarian visas that would allow asylum seekers to travel to the UK safely to proceed with their claims.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updates and develops policy on refugees, as well as creating new policy in response to the government's Illegal Migration Bill. This builds on previous policy as set out in the policy motion *Safe and Legal Routes to Save Lives* (March 2021).

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion.

Access to Dental Services

Conference notes with concern that:

- i) People are resorting to DIY dentistry because they cannot get a dental appointment on the NHS and cannot afford to pay hundreds, if not thousands, for private dental care.
- ii) Healthwatch England found that 41% of people are struggling to get an NHS dental appointment, with one in five unable to access all the treatments they needed.
- iii) Saturday 18 March cont
- iv) The British Dental Association (BDA) estimates that 3,000 dentists in England have moved away from NHS work entirely since March 2020 with many more significantly reducing their NHS commitment, and have warned of an “unprecedented” collapse, barring significant government intervention.
- v) 1-in-6 dentists are approaching retirement, the vast majority of local practices have already started shutting their doors to new NHS patients and some are preparing to stop taking NHS patients altogether.
- vi) Emerging ‘dental deserts’ with the fewest dentists per person and often in rural or deprived areas, has left people waiting for basic, often urgent care and is leading to millions missing appointments, as well as growing health inequalities.
- vii) Tooth decay is consistently the number one reason for hospital admissions among young children and children from the most deprived areas are already three times more likely to have hospital extractions than their peers.
- viii) The underspend of the national dentistry budget by a record £400m this year 2022/23, representing around 13 per cent of the £3bn primary dentistry budget; this is in spite of the ‘access crisis’ and increasing demand for dentistry and has been ascribed simply to practices working to a failed contract and with vacancies for dentists they can’t fill and/or a shortage of dentists willing to take on NHS work.

Conference believes that:

- a) Everyone should be able to access an NHS dentist if they need one and no one should be forced to pay hundreds of pounds for private care.
- b) The Government’s failure to address the shortage of NHS dental appointments and refusal to fund the system properly is leading to a two-tier system, with those that can afford dental care and those that cannot.
- c) The NHS dental contract is putting government targets ahead of needs of patients and sets perverse targets that are leading to poor outcomes.
- d) The number of NHS dentists is critical to tackling long waiting times and poor access to NHS dental appointments.
- e) The Conservative Government's efforts to increase the number of NHS dental appointments has made no significant impact.
- f) With integrated care systems (ICSs) taking over the commissioning of NHS dentistry from NHSE in April 2023, there is an opportunity to redress the failures of national

government by local commissioning, with a focus on prevention, health equity, and better access for the most urgent cases through wider and better integrated pathways between primary and secondary care services, including prioritising an urgent dental care system (that connects individuals from NHS 111 to a clinical triage and designated urgent care provider) and more essential domiciliary dental care for residential settings and for vulnerable groups.

Conference calls for:

1. Reform of and increased funding for the NHS dental services contract, to ensure it:
 - a) Encourages and incentivises dentists to take on NHS patients.
 - b) Meets patient need and demand rather than arbitrary targets.
 - c) Puts an end to 'dental deserts'.
2. An increase to the number of dentist training places in the UK and continued recognition of EU trained dentists' qualifications.
3. Proper workforce planning for health and social care to be written into law, including projections for dentists and dental staff.
4. The launch of an emergency scheme to ensure children, pregnant women and young mothers have access to their free check ups on time.
5. Supervised tooth brushing training for children in early years settings, such as nurseries.
6. The removal of VAT on children's toothbrushes and children's toothpaste.
7. Proper funding of ICSs to take on NHS dentistry commissioning, with a minimum of all of the underspend in the national commissioning budget in 2021/22 and 2022/23 transferred to ICSs to target local need and demand.
8. Longer-term consideration of more major reform to put prevention first, with much needed sustained investment for prevention and oral public health as part of the Public Health Grant.

Applicability: England only; except 2. and 6. which are Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on dental services, introducing a range of measures to improve access and availability of services. This built on previous policy as set out in the policy paper 137 *Save the NHS and Social Care by Stopping Brexit* (September 2019) and policy motion *Dentistry* (September 2007).

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment

The amendment added in lines vii, F, 7 and 8, adding references to the underspend on dental services, Integrated Care Systems and preventative dental care.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion as amended.

A More Caring Society

Conference believes that:

- A. Social care is an essential service, comparable to healthcare or education
- B. Everyone has a right to access high quality care, regardless of their ability to pay
- C. Carers, paid and unpaid, deserve a fair deal
- D. Children in care or at risk of being taken into care also deserve a great start in life so they have the support, relationships, skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

Conference condemns a string of broken Conservative promises on social care, including:

- I. The Conservatives' 2019 promise that no one should have to sell their home to pay for their care, when many people will have to do just that
- II. Watering down their commitment to the cap on lifetime care costs making it harder for poorer people to afford the cost of care
- III. Failing to implement the provisions of the Care Act since 2015
- IV. In 2019 committing to a cross-party consensus on social care, and refusing any meaningful engagement with other parties
- V. The 2019 pledge to fix social care 'once and for all' with all serious reform reversed or delayed until 2025
- VI. Failure to address the unnecessary occupancy of thousands of acute hospital beds by people awaiting a suitable care package with consequential ambulance delays, hospital treatment delays and unnecessary suffering, with sometimes tragic consequences, for hundreds of people each week.
- VII. Their failure to grasp the scale of the crisis in children's social care, committing less than a tenth of the more than £2 billion that the Government-commissioned Independent Review of Children's Social Care says is necessary for whole system reform.

Conference therefore endorses policy paper 150 A More Caring Society, in particular its proposals to:

- 1. Ensure everyone has access to social care, regardless of their ability to pay by introducing Free Personal Care, based on the system introduced in Scotland by the Liberal Democrat-Labour government
- 2. Build on the Liberal Democrat-led Care Act to move towards full personalisation of social care services so people have choice and control over the way their care is planned and delivered
- 3. Move towards a preventative approach to social care, so people can stay in their own homes for longer
- 4. Establish the UK as a leader in the sensitive use of emerging assistive and telecare technologies, harnessing IT, robotics, and AI to improve the quality of care and prolong independence.

5. Introduce a National Care Agency, which will set national standards and give the social care sector long term leadership
6. Deliver effective integration of health and social care services by:
 - a) Putting people first over institutional restructuring
 - b) Empowering local government to integrate services from the bottom up, rather than from the top-down
 - c) Utilise local partnerships to develop short-stay convalescence and rehabilitation provision in community hospitals, or other transitional care centres, sufficient to end unnecessary acute bed occupancy and better prepare patients to return home.
7. Introduce a long term plan for the social care workforce, including:
 - a) Introducing a real living wage for care workers
 - b) Investing in skills, professionalisation and accreditation of the workforce
 - c) Replicating NHS pay bands with clear career progression for social care workers
 - d) Introducing a national register of care workers and the creation of a college for social care comparable to the Royal Colleges for nursing and midwives
8. Deliver a fair deal for unpaid carers by:
 - a) Adding being an unpaid carer to the list of protected characteristics under the Equality Act
 - b) Providing unpaid carers with greater rights in the workplace and more broadly, for example, the right for employees to take at least one week's unpaid carer's leave each year
 - c) Introducing a range of financial benefits to those providing care
 - d) Improve how government departments and public service providers communicate and work together to support unpaid carers
 - e) Increasing the training and accreditation of skills available to unpaid carers
 - f) Giving all young carers a legally enforceable 'Education Guarantee' and a right to a normal childhood
9. Conference further calls on the Government to support the 150,000 children in England being raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, other relatives or friends (known as kinship carers), by:
 - a) Providing all kinship carers with a weekly allowance for each child they care for, equivalent to the national minimum weekly allowance for foster carers.
 - b) Giving kinship carers the right to paid employment leave when a child starts living with them on terms equivalent to those for adoptive parents.
 - c) Supporting the education of children in kinship care, such as by making them eligible for Pupil Premium Plus and amending the school admissions code so that children in kinship care are given a higher priority when a school is oversubscribed.
 - d) Creating a statutory definition of kinship care and establishing a passporting process through which kinship carers may prove to a public body that they are entitled to the support listed above.

Conference also reaffirms pledges in motion *Standing Up for Unpaid Carers* (March 2021) to support unpaid carers.

Applicability: England except for 8 which is Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updates and develops policy on social care, reaffirming previous policy on unpaid carers, as well as introducing a package of measures to improve the lives of carers. This builds on previous policy as set out in the policy motion *Standing Up for Unpaid Carers* (March 2021), the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019) and policy paper 137 *Save the NHS and Social Care by Stopping Brexit* (September 2019).

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

The first amendment added in lines D, VI, and paragraph 9, regarding kinship carers and children in care.

The second amendment added line 6 c regarding community hospitals and transitional care.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion as amended.

Solving the Energy Crisis for the Long Term

Conference believes that the UK needs a comprehensive energy strategy, designed to reduce costs to households and businesses, end fuel poverty, significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions and deliver energy security.

Conference notes with concern that:

- I. Domestic energy bills have risen to record levels, with the price cap increasing by nearly £800 for the average household in April, rising by £1,500 in October to nearly £3,500 and in January to almost £4,300 for the average household.
- II. While the government has introduced the Energy Price Guarantee, capping bills from October to March at £2,500 for the average household, rising to £3,000 in April, domestic energy bills are still over double their 2021 level.
- III. Citizens Advice predicted that 450,000 people would be switched to more expensive prepayment meters over the Winter.
- IV. Businesses have faced unprecedented bill increases, and still face uncertainty with the government looking set to reduce support they receive from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme after March 2023.
- V. Government investment in renewable energy has plummeted, with growth in renewable capacity in 2020 and 2021 the worst since 2010.
- VI. No UK programme directly equivalent to the EU Green Deal, which is helping to accelerate significantly the shift to renewables across Europe, has been put in place.
- VII. Although Marine Energy could potentially meet around 20% of UK electricity demand, we have no strategy for exploiting what is the richest Tidal Range Energy resource in the world, and also lack ambition for the development of Wave Energy and Tidal Stream Energy.
- VIII. Despite the removal of restrictions on on-shore wind the government has introduced restrictions on new solar farms in England.
- IX. Successive schemes to improve the energy efficiency of households and businesses have failed to tackle the problem, the government's new money for home insulation does not start until 2025 and people in higher council tax bands cannot benefit from the government's ECO+ scheme.
- X. While the government in their Autumn Statement increased the Energy Profits Levy for oil and gas profits there are still significant exemptions for oil and gas companies.
- XI. The introduction of the Electricity Generator Levy on renewable generation failed to include exemptions if profits were reinvested in new renewable projects.
- XII. New homes are still being built to relatively poor energy efficiency standards, since 2016, when the Conservatives cancelled zero-carbon homes at least 1 million built to lower standards.
- XIII. Local authorities have limited powers to support new renewable energy projects and to help people bring down their energy bills.

Conference calls on the government to:

- A. Remove restrictions on new solar and wind to accelerate the deployment of renewable power, providing more funding, and building more interconnectors to guarantee security of supply.
- B. Convert the Energy Profits Levy into a 40% windfall tax and remove the associated investment allowance, with both changes backdated to October 2021, thus ensuring that gas and oil producers pay their fair share.
- C. Allocate to the development of Marine Energy those revenues from Crown Estates' offshore wind licensing that are to be returned to the Exchequer by HM King Charles III for use in the public interest.
- D. Establish a not-for-profit company, British Marine Energy, with a task force to plan a series of Tidal Range Energy schemes commencing with a "Pathfinder" project.
- E. Ensure that the Electricity Generator Levy has allowances that permit renewable generators to reinvest their excess profits in new projects.
- F. Introduce a one-off levy on the bonuses awarded to oil and gas executives, similar to the bankers' bonuses tax in 2009/10 in the aftermath of the financial crisis which taxed bank bonuses over £25,000 at 50%.
- G. Cut the Energy Price Guarantee to £1,971 for the average household until April 2024 or average prices drop below that level, whichever is soonest.
- H. Continue the existing Business Energy Bill Relief Scheme for a further six months from April.
- I. Empower local authorities to support the expansion community and decentralised energy, including by supporting the Local Electricity Bill in Parliament, reducing access costs for grid connections and reforming the energy network to permit local energy grids.
- J. Undertake an emergency programme to insulate all Britain's homes by 2030, with a central role in delivering this programme being taken by local authorities, cutting emissions and fuel bills and ending fuel poverty, with non-domestic buildings following.
- K. Support households to cut their bills by:
 - i) Providing free retrofits for low-income homes.
 - ii) Piloting a new subsidised Energy-Saving Homes scheme.
 - iii) Graduating Stamp Duty Land Tax by the energy rating of the property.
 - iv) Giving councils the powers to develop community energy-saving projects, including delivering housing energy efficiency improvements street by street, which cuts costs.
 - v) Allow homeowners to offset spending on insulation, low-carbon heat sources, EV charging points and climate adaptation measures against their income tax bills.
- L. Establish a Net Zero Delivery Authority sponsored jointly by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the Treasury to oversee the delivery of Net Zero; coordinate cross departmental coordination; and facilitate the devolution of powers and resources to local governments.

- M. Require all new homes and non-domestic buildings to be built to a zero-carbon standard immediately, and progressively increasing standards as technology improves.
- N. Increase minimum energy efficiency standards for privately rented properties and remove the cost cap on improvements - aiming for rented properties to be minimum EPC Band C by 2025 and minimum EPC Band B by 2030 where feasible.
- O. Appoint Warm Homes and Community Energy tsars in central government to champion these causes.
- P. Accelerate the current Review of Electricity Market Arrangements process to reform energy markets to ensure that households and businesses benefit from the expansion in low-cost renewables, including by:
 - i) Decoupling electricity prices from the wholesale gas price.
 - ii) Changing how the standing charge works.
 - iii) Ending the higher costs for prepayment meter customers and giving Ministers the power to suspend the installation of prepayment meters.
 - iv) Considering a social tariff for the most vulnerable.

Conference further notes that, by taking the UK out of the EU internal energy market, the Conservative Government's botched deal with the EU has cost the UK's energy sector at least £250 million a year, weakened UK energy security and resilience, and made it harder to reach net-zero.

Accordingly, Conference also calls for much closer cooperation on energy policy between the UK and EU, helping to improve energy security and reduce carbon emissions, including:

1. Accelerating the development of an offshore wind energy grid in the North Sea.
2. Working together with EU member states to build a sustainable supply chain for renewable energy technology.
3. Installing more electricity interconnectors between the UK and neighbouring countries to ensure that any such interconnectors are located to avoid disruption to local communities and to minimise environmental damage.
4. Linking the UK Emissions Trading System (ETS) to the EU ETS, creating a larger market for trading emission allowances and thereby improving its effectiveness and also avoiding significant administrative costs which will otherwise soon be hitting UK businesses.
5. Protecting UK businesses from unfair competition by following the EU in introducing a carbon border adjustment mechanism for high-emission products such as metals or chemicals.

Applicability: Federal, except G. i-iii), H. ii) and iii), I., J., and K. which are England only

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on energy production, consumption and regulation, housing and relations with the European Union. This built on previous policy as set out in the policy paper 144 *Rebuilding Trade and Cooperation with Europe* (March 2022), policy motion *Building Communities* (September 2021), policy paper 140 *Giving Consumers a Fair Deal* (March 2021) and policy paper 139 *Tackling the Climate Emergency* (September 2019).

Amendments: Conference passed three amendments.

The first amendment added in lines VI, VII, C and D regarding the EU's Green Deal and marine energy.

The second amendment added in line L on establishing a Net Zero Authority.

The third amendment amended line F to include reference to local authorities, and amended line 3 to ensure interconnectors are not disruptive to communities.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended.

The UK's Nuclear Deterrent

Conference reaffirms:

- I. The universal liberal values of internationalism, human rights, the pursuit of peace, and the rule of law.
- II. The duty of the United Kingdom to keep its people safe.
- III. Our long-held desire to negotiate towards a world where nuclear weapons are put beyond use.
- IV. Our belief that the United Kingdom is safer and more prosperous when working with multilateral institutions, including NATO.
- V. The United Kingdom's long-standing legal and moral obligations to pursue global disarmament.

Conference notes:

- A. Our 2017 policy on nuclear weapons, policy paper 127 Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, which recommended a change in the UK's nuclear posture from Continuous At-Sea Deterrent (CASD) to a medium-responsiveness posture with no continuous deployment.
- B. That the global security environment is characterised by new levels of instability, including rising tensions over Iran and the fragmentation of nuclear arms control agreements, and has deteriorated following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.
- C. Russia's veiled threats as to its readiness to use nuclear weapons, on the battlefield or elsewhere.
- D. That the UK's nuclear weapons are declared for the defence of NATO and so play a key protective role for our allies.

Conference believes that:

- i) Vladimir Putin's Russia poses a clear threat to our national security and that of our NATO allies.
- ii) We have no wish to see the current conflict in Ukraine escalate, yet in these circumstances NATO must retain all the necessary elements of a credible nuclear deterrent.
- iii) Abandoning the current posture of continuous at-sea deterrence (CASD) would send the wrong signal to Vladimir Putin - and to our European allies about our willingness to come to their defence, weakening the credibility of the UK's nuclear deterrent at a delicate time.
- iv) Taking a step down the nuclear capability ladder at a moment when it is so unlikely to be reciprocated will sadly do little to further our ambition of global disarmament.

- v) The challenging security environment and rising nuclear risks should embolden the UK to make a renewed push for global disarmament, and while the strategic context is challenging, opportunities which arise in the future must not be squandered.
- vi) The UK Government's approach to global disarmament has been at best counter-productive and at worst in breach of legal and moral obligations.

Conference therefore calls on the UK Government to:

- A. Maintain a minimum, credible nuclear deterrent.
- B. Maintain the current posture of continuous at-sea deterrence.
- C. Examine the option of a future move down from continuous at-sea deterrence to a medium-responsiveness posture as a credible step to demonstrate leadership on nuclear disarmament, if and when the strategic environment is more conducive to progress.
- D. Reduce nuclear risk by establishing a declaratory policy of 'No First Use' for the UK's nuclear deterrent.

Conference urges the UK Government to pursue global disarmament, including by:

1. Reversing plans to increase the cap on the stockpile of nuclear weapons; and associated reductions in transparency commitments;
2. Publicly recommitting to the UK's obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty;
3. Making global disarmament a diplomatic priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office;
4. Looking to engage further with non-Nuclear Weapon States on disarmament initiatives, including the Stockholm Initiative and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (while acknowledging that the UK cannot sign that Treaty).
5. Halt plans to reduce the size of the regular Army from 82,000 personnel to 72,500 by 2025.
6. Urgently review the overall scale of all branches of UK armed forces in light of newly established NATO commitments.
7. Given the unlikelihood of disarmament developments with Russia under the present Russian Government, Conference believes that the UK Government should also explore opportunities to pursue disarmament initiatives with other Nuclear Weapon States, including:
 - a) Engaging with other Nuclear Weapon States regarding bilateral adoption of transparency measures.
 - b) Continuing engagement with Nuclear Weapon States which are yet to engage with the proposed Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.
 - c) Encouraging remaining countries which have not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, which Russia has already ratified, to do so.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updates and develops policy on nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation. This builds on previous policy as set out in the policy paper 127, *Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons* (2017).

Reference Back Vote: A reference back was moved, with conference voting to reject holding a mini-debate.

Amendments: Conference voted against one amendment.

The amendment would have made significant changes to the motion, including support for signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and cancelling the renewal of Trident.

Vote on Motion: Conference voted to pass the motion unamended.

Towards a Fairer Society

Conference believes that every individual should have a fair chance and level-playing field to make their aspirations a reality.

Conference embraces a Liberal Democrat conception of fairness including:

- A. Access to opportunities for every individual across society regardless of their background, inherent characteristics, or where they live.
- B. Access to the social and economic support each individual and community needs to maximise their own ability to make decisions and make use of opportunity.
- C. Consistent and fair processes that enhance trust in employers, the government, and other actors across the economy, and that encourage such actors to place trust in people.
- D. A fair playing field throughout the economy where large and established players can't shut out innovators and challengers.
- E. Encouragement of vitality and non-conformity that honours people's own ambitions whatever they are, rather than a narrowly economic test of 'success'.

Conference regrets the many ways in which British society is unfair and holds back many people from achieving their full potential, in particular:

- I. Low and unstable incomes, along with poor working conditions, which have put many people under immense financial and emotional stress while those in power party behind closed doors.
- II. The current cost of living crisis, which is showing once again the lack of effective support for those who need it most across Britain.
- III. A regionally unbalanced economy, with poor skills and infrastructure investment, that freezes innovation and means that people's opportunities are often driven by where they grow up, not what they are capable of.
- IV. The failure of successive Governments to treat people with dignity and respect - with benefits claimants demonised and working rights not enforced.
- V. The loss of trust in our national institutions by the self-serving and unprincipled actions of the Conservative Government.
- VI. The unfairness in the ways that public services and contracts are allocated, leading to cronyism and queue-jumping.

Conference therefore endorses Policy Paper 149 *Towards A Fairer Society* as a range of policies to engage with the big economic challenges facing our country and move towards our ultimate aim of a fairer society. In particular, conference welcomes its proposals to:

- 1. End Deep Poverty, including a radical overhaul of the welfare system so no family ever has to use a food bank in Britain, by:

- a) Taking immediate steps to repair the safety net, including restoring the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, introducing emergency grants (not loans) and stopping deducting debt repayments at unaffordable rates.
 - b) Following this up in the longer term with fundamental reforms to the welfare system by introducing a Guaranteed Basic Income by increasing Universal Credit to the level required to end deep poverty within the decade and removing sanctions.
2. Create Real Community Control, giving money and power to local communities in England to lead their own way to growth in ways that best address their distinctive needs and opportunities - measures to achieve this include:
- a) Shifting 50% of all public spending to regional and local government including funding for skills training,
 - b) Abolishing all departmentally-led regional funding pots as part of creating a £50 billion capital investment fund; this will be distributed as “single pot” funds, on a needs-led basis to address historic underinvestment in left behind communities and regions.
 - c) Ensuring there is strengthened regional representation on key national infrastructure bodies such as the National Infrastructure Commission and the Major Projects Authority.
 - d) Allocating at least half of the absolute uplift in Research & Development funding allocation to be spent through regions.
 - e) Supporting rural areas through these measures and beyond, to ensure that often overlooked challenges for our rural communities, such as high housing and transport costs, poor quality jobs and lack of access to services can be tackled head on.
3. Improve access to skills, training and advice including by:
- a) Introducing a ‘Universal Work Service’ to replace the flawed support service currently offered through JobCentres.
 - b) Giving New Skills Wallets for every adult, giving them £10,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives; these Skills Wallets will empower people to develop new skills so that they can thrive in the technologies and industries that are key to the UK’s economic future.
 - c) Expanding the apprenticeship levy into a wider ‘Skills and Training Levy’ to help prepare the UK’s workforce for the economic challenges ahead.
 - d) Introducing a Training Tax Credit to incentivise training in the private sector.
4. Propose a new Workers Charter, with modern protections for a modern workforce including fairer flexible working rights, including:
- a) Establishing a new streamlined Worker Protection Enforcement Authority which would both enforce rights more effectively and give employers a simplified institutional contact.
 - b) Changing the law so that flexible working is open to all from day one in the job, with employers required to advertise jobs accordingly, unless there are significant business reasons why that is not possible.

- c) Ensuring that shared parental leave is offered on the same terms as enhanced maternity leave, where this is in place.
- d) Promoting alternative models of ownership like co-operatives, mutuals and social enterprises.
- e) Strengthening the ability of unions to represent workers effectively by broadening the right to collective bargaining in pay and conditions, including pay and pensions, working time and holidays, equality issues, health and safety, training and development, work organisation and the nature and level of staffing.
- f) Protecting the right to withdraw your labour, (the right to strike), whether that right is exercised individually or collectively.
- g) Implementing the Disability Employment Charter to help create a level playing field for disabled workers.

Applicability: Federal except for 2. and 3. which are England only.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on Universal Basic Income, poverty and the welfare system. This built on previous policy as set out in the policy motion *Universal Basic Income* (September 2020), the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019) and policy paper 136 *A Fairer Share for All* (September 2019).

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

The first amendment added in line 4. f regarding the right to strike.

The second amendment added in line 4. g on the Disability Employment Charter.

Options vote: Conference vote on three options on Guaranteed Basic Income, Universal Basic Income and a large scale pilot study.

Conference voted for a Guaranteed Basic Income.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended.

Constitutional Amendments

Constitutional Housekeeping

Conference notes that:

- a) The constitution currently requires the chair of the Federal Appeals Panel to select the members of the panel for every hearing, although in practice this role can often best be done by delegation to a relevant member of staff.
- b) The Autumn 2021 conference passed changes to the rules for party bodies which give conference and the Federal People Development Committee a role in deciding such designations, rather than simply leaving all such decisions to the Federal Board.
- c) The reforms previously reported to conference for the operation of Liberal Democrats Ltd have moved responsibility for oversight of the major donors protocol and any legacy fund from the directors to the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee (FASC).
- d) The Federal Communications and Elections Committee (FCEC) has left vacant its observer post at the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee (FASC) for several years, without either committee's work suffering as a result.
- e) The wording of Article 16.3 A. could be read as imposing a one-year term limit on FASC members, even though this was not the intention and is not how it has been interpreted up until now.
- f) The composition of the Federal International Relations Committee needs to be reformed to reflect Britain's departure from the European Union.

Conference therefore agrees to:

- A. In Article 22.4, change "The members of the Panel to hear a particular case shall be selected by the Chair" to "The members of the Panel to hear a particular case shall be selected by or the Chair, or by a person authorised by the Chair to carry out this task."
- B. In Article 21.1, change both references to "Federal Board" to "Federal Party".
- C. Move the sentence, "Any such company shall oversee the Party's Major Donations Protocol and the operation of the Party's Legacy Fund, ensuring that the wishes of testators are fully respected and in line with direction by the Federal Board" from Article 9.7 to the end of Article 16.2.
- D. Delete Article 16.3(v).
- E. Delete Article 15.2 I (E) and 15.2 II(C)
- F. In 15.2 I (G) replace 'six' with 'eight'.

Conference further agrees that the new members of the Federal International Relations Committee shall take office immediately and be chosen by a recount of the last round of elections.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion.

Diversity on Party Committees

Conference voted not to debate this motion.

Federal International Relations Committee

Conference agrees that in future:

The Liberal Democrats are committed to continued membership of Liberal International and ALDE and their successor organisations.

Conference further agrees that from:

1. Our delegation to the ALDE Council shall comprise:
 - a) The chair of the Federal International Relations Committee (FIRC), or a deputy drawn from the directly elected members of FIRC and agreed by the voting members of FIRC.
 - b) Additional delegates as required, elected by all party members under the election regulations made under Article 9.6(c), with the diversity requirements for those elections of a minimum of one person from each state party and one person under the age of 26 at the time of the election. Runners up in the election to be ordered as reserve delegates.
2. The Liberal Democrat delegation to the Liberal International Executive Committee shall comprise:
 - a) The chair of FIRC or a deputy drawn from the directly elected members of FIRC and agreed by the voting members of FIRC.
 - b) Any Liberal Democrat members of the Liberal International Bureau, unless they already have their own place as Executive Committee members.
 - c) Additional delegates as required elected by the voting members of FIRC.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion.

Members Code of Conduct

Conference agrees to ratify the following code of conduct, which supersedes the previously used Member Code, Registered Supporters Code and Online Code:

Code of Conduct for Members and Registered Supporters

Our Values

The Preamble to Our Constitution contains these words:

‘The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.’ ...

‘Upholding these values of individual and social justice, we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, ethnicity, caste, heritage, class, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation’ and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality.’

This applies as much to the internal working of our party as to the type of society we wish to build and should always influence how we conduct ourselves in private, public and online.

We expect our members and registered supporters at all times to behave lawfully, honestly and with integrity. They should always act with respect towards each other and particularly towards staff, volunteers and people who interact with the Party in their professional capacity.

As a member or registered supporter, you have the right to be treated fairly, equally, and within the bounds of party rules. You also have a responsibility to help ensure that these rules are upheld, and that the party can abide by its external legal and regulatory obligations. We provide a range of pastoral support services to help when things are not going right (www.libdems.org.uk/getting-support-when-you-need-it).

The Party reserves the right to refer any breach of this code of conduct which breaks the law to the police rather than/as well as dealing with it under this code of conduct.

Valuing Debate and Democracy

Liberal Democrats believe passionately in freedom of speech, diversity of thought and freedom of conscience and will always defend these principles in law. However every political party must have some shared values, and on joining the party our members and registered supporters must acknowledge that they agree with the party’s fundamental values and objectives as expressed in the preamble to our constitution, though this does not mean they must agree with every single party policy.

Within the bounds of these shared fundamental values and the desire for our party to be successful, we encourage robust and passionate debate on policy, strategy and the way in which the party functions. We also encourage our members and registered supporters to play the ball, not the person, and be measured in their criticism.

Whilst we should all treat each other with respect, nobody has the right not to be offended.

One of our fundamental values is to reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, ethnicity, caste, heritage, class, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. The party has adopted definitions of Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and transphobia in order to help people understand how our values apply to our behaviour.

Holding Party Office or Public Office

Anyone running for or holding public office must be aware of how their actions may be associated with the party and the greater responsibility that comes with higher or more prominent office. Behaviour which may be acceptable from a private individual may not be appropriate when carried out by someone who, by virtue of the post they hold, is seen by members of the public or those they interact with as representing the party.

This also applies to those elected or appointed to party office, who should strive within their leadership roles to proactively empower and support others to contribute fully to our community. Those whose roles within the party give them more power and influence should take particular care to exercise this properly and not use it to intimidate, exclude, coerce or otherwise bully other members.

If you need help in carrying out your role, you have a right to appropriate training, support and guidance. In turn, if a change in circumstances means you are not able to carry out your duties properly, you have a responsibility to notify colleagues so that suitable arrangements can be made. We encourage all parts of the party to support volunteers through the different chapters in their life, including making provision for informal or formal temporary leave from party posts in cases of illness or when an office holder faces parental or caring responsibilities.

Those who are elected as Liberal Democrats are expected to conform to both the Liberal Democrat Code of Conduct and their own electing body's Code of Conduct when acting as elected officials.

Online Conduct

The standards in this code also apply to electronic communications, online social media and written media, where members should strive to ensure their comments cannot easily be misconstrued or their actions misinterpreted. Where honest mistakes do happen, prompt apology and clarification is important.

Online interactions are often carried out in public, and all members should be aware of the extra risk of bringing the party into disrepute during public online exchanges. Those who have large or influential social media profiles should be especially wary of using these to encourage or enable others to harass, bully or intimidate individuals.

Members will be expected to fully comply with the Member's Code of Conduct in private online groups endorsed by the Liberal Democrats. Some groups will also have their own rules regarding suitable subject matter and repeated postings and members are also expected to comply with these.

Where the party runs online events, forums or similar, the party may actively moderate the online community so that people can come together, debate big ideas, learn and engage with each other in a safe, healthy and supportive way. Specific additional rules that comply with this Code of Conduct and the Party's constitution may also be set by the organiser, such as for hustings, and you will be expected to comply with them as well.

If moderators believe you are not complying with either this code or such additional rules, your contributions can be removed, you may be blocked from further participation in this event, or other events in future. Your actions may also be reported to our disciplinary process and/or the police

All moderation decisions are final, except in cases where there is a published appeals process. In such cases, you must follow that process rather than post further messages disputing a moderation decision. Moderators for official party events and groups run by the party are under a duty to behave fairly, objectively and impartially and must never use their powers to favour one side of a debate or to silence views with which they personally disagree.

Annex: Registered Supporters

For party members, details of our disciplinary process are set out on the party website and in our constitution

For registered supporters the Liberal Democrats reserve the right to revoke your registration as a registered supporter at any time, without notice, if we believe you have broken this code of conduct, or have acted in any way that is in conflict with our values. There is no right of appeal and you cannot reapply to become a registered supporter for four years.

You have the right to resign from your registration as a supporter with immediate effect at any time.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion.

Selection of Policy Motions for Debate

Conference voted to reject the motion.

Report Questions and Answers

Federal Conference Committee Report

1) Question by Andrew Hudson

Why are delegates required to pay the conference registration fee online unless they register at conference?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa (Chair of the Federal Conference Committee)

You can register and pay via non-online options. You would need to contact the conference office and request paper-based forms to be posted to you.

2) Question by Zoe Hollowood

How will FCC ensure members with gender-critical beliefs are safe at conference given inflammatory language used about them at senior levels of the party?

3) Question by Daniel Jones

Could the committee elaborate on the steps being taken to ensure conference remains a welcoming space for trans and non-binary attendees?

4) Question by Gregg Webb

What are FCC's plans to ensure that Conference remains accessible to trans members, rather than being dominated by a vocal but small trans-hostile minority?

5) Question by Olly Craven

What precautions have FCC made to ensure that trans people are safe from harassment and abuse at Conference?

6) Question by Lucy Tonge

What are FCC doing to ensure the safety of trans members at conference given the hostility of the vocal minority of GC members?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

The safety of all of our attendees is of the utmost importance to the Conference Committee; and we have in place both security and our fantastic volunteer stewards team.

It is important to point out that we should respect each other as members of the same party, regardless of our views on certain items - that is essential to how we want to operate conference. It is fine to have robust debates at Conference, that's an important aspect of conference. But on the same thread we need to be kind and respectful of each other, and consider the language, tone of what we say. We have the ability to remove people if they do not adhere to the Members Code of Conduct of the rules of Conference. Furthermore, attending Conference does not make you immune from the Complaints System, so it is

always important to remind yourself to respect your fellow members and to treat each other as you wish to be treated yourself.

7) Question by Toby Keynes

Does FCC undertake that members holding gender critical beliefs will not be systematically or casually excluded from conference debates, and chat, relevant to those beliefs?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

We welcome robust debate at Conference; however, the Conference Committee will intervene where the language may be interpreted as bullying or harassment or intended to cause upset. The policies with regards to bullying/harassment will be applied universally.

8) Question by Fraser Graham

F32 passed at Autumn conference 2020 brought in several actions to make conference more welcoming to Trans and Non-Binary Individuals. How have these been actioned?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

We have introduced optional pronouns on the online speakers cards, and will be rolling these out to the paper-based cards when we have used up the existing stock of them. Where possible we do ask for provision of a gender neutral toilet, which shouldn't be the accessible toilet. This policy was introduced at the Lib Dem HQ, where there are now gender neutral bathrooms. Furthermore, people can collect stickers for their passes for pronouns from the Conference Registration desks. For conference passes moving forward, this is in action for when we move over to looking at a new registration system to include this as an option.

9) Question by John Fraser

Should not Spring Conference have taken more than just five policy proposals to have sufficient new ideas to put in Autumn's Pre Manifesto Document?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Yes, we would have loved to have taken more motions, but are limited with the time available and other items that need to be on the agenda. This unfortunately reduced the time available on the agenda for other motions.

10) Question by Alisdair Calder McGregor

When Autumn Conference was cancelled, the all-party email stated that FCC was "...reviewing options [...] in order to allow more items on the agenda" - if this is true, why is this conference SHORTER than the previous Spring Conferences (both online AND in person)?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

This conference is equivalent in length to S19 and S18 at least.

We've seen huge increases in the cost of running conference, with many of the budget lines being double that of when we last held an in person conference. For example, this spring conference's budget is 60% higher on costs than 2019. We wanted to do everything possible to avoid passing the costs onto the members directly, and therefore FFRC gave us additional funding to cover the cost increase of Conference. Unfortunately, this did mean that we could not consider an extension to conference as this would have been too expensive.

11) Question by John Grout

How does FCC feel the process for asking and publishing questions at Conference can be improved?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

At A22 Conference we amended the standing orders with regards to conference to allow flexibility to the reports questions deadline - this would allow people to submit questions closer to the deadline where needed.

What we can look at doing, with the Conference Communications Group (CCG) is publishing the questions submissions information across various platforms, including the Facebook group, social media and via email updates to members.

12) Question by Lucas North

The Young Liberals have now held 4 successful hybrid conferences. Why has the federal party failed to do so?

14) Question by Lucas North

The Young Liberals have previously offered access to the software we developed for hybrid events. Do FCC plan to take us up on this offer to allow better hybrid participation in conference?

15) Question by James Bliss

The Young Liberals have successfully managed several hybrid conferences over the past couple of years, with those online able to speak and vote. Why has FCC been unable to do this?

16) Question by Joe Toovey

What work is FCC doing on hybridisation and enabling online attendees like myself to contribute fully to Conference, including in debates as we could previously?

17) Question by Lucy Tonge

Why are FCC still not making fully accessible hybrid events a priority? The Young Liberals have now held 4 on a much smaller budget.

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Whilst this conference is not fully hybrid, we do have our online offering where people can remotely attend and vote on items at Conference. We are aiming to use this conference as a proof of concept for rolling out further hybrid options in the future. The challenge is that for the size of the Conference that we have it becomes very expensive and we need to ensure that the revenue raised from hybrid attendance will cover the increase in costs to deliver a hybrid option. This falls in the remit of the innovation working group.

18) Question by Lucas North

You chose not to take the federal levy motion at this conference. Does this mean you agree the levy should be scrapped?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

No.

The FCC has no position on the federal levy. The Federal Levy motion was not included in spring conference as there was simply not enough time and would have meant it replacing one of the policy debates. Furthermore, the draft received was considered by the committee not to enact any significant changes and thus it was felt that it could be held/resubmitted for Autumn conference

19) Question by Janey Little

What is the purpose of the Innovation Working Group established by FCC and what sorts of projects will it be looking at?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

The IWG has been established by the FCC to look at how we can introduce new ideas and concepts to Conference - this will include work around hybridisation of conference, but also a longer-term consultation exercise looking at what we may want from or at conference in the future. How can we bring on board new ideas and events which will enhance the offering to our members. At present only around 5% of members attend or engage in conference and we want to see this increase. The Group works on a number of different options and ideas, and seeks to engage with members - both those who attend conference, but also importantly with those who do not currently attend conference, to see what we can offer that might attract them to attend.

20) Question by Mark Johnston

What's the cost to the party budget of subsidising this conference? What's the net financial position across both conferences, spring and autumn, for this year?

Answer by Nicholas da Costa

In terms of Spring 2023, we budgeted for a loss of £68,500. A significant increase in costs of around 60% across almost all areas has significantly impacted this in 2023 compared to previous years. We are now expecting to only make a loss of around £28,000 due to increased interest in the event and additional cost-savings achieved. Autumn 2023 is

forecast currently to make around £125,000. However, taking into considerations additional costs, such as staffing conference (Spring and Autumn) is currently expected to make a loss of around £40,000.

21) Question by Gareth Epps

Delays in receiving drafting advice have been experienced. What is being done to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Answer by Nicholas da Costa

FCC is made up of volunteers, so we are reliant on the members of the committee being able to support drafting advice services. I am looking further into the drafting advice service to see what we can do to improve it, including introducing an internal dashboard so that we can track when/how feedback is being provided. We'll have some updates after this conference.

22) Question by James Bliss

Other federal committees (like FB formally and FPC on an ad hoc basis) have a seat on the committee for the Young Liberals, would you support adding one for FCC to help with engagement of young party members and to help develop the next generation of committee members?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

I am happy to discuss this with the Committee and see what options we could explore, including working with Vice-Chair Cara Jenkinson, who Chairs the Conference Communications Group which has responsibility for membership engagement.

23) Question by Gareth Epps

Why is there no opportunity to ask questions of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee at this Conference?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Questions to the FFRC are usually asked via the Federal Board, as the FFRC reports to the Federal Board. The Constitution and Conference Standing Orders set out which committees report to Conference (and whilst FFRC has submitted a report, it does not have a reports slot.) The Autumn Conference FFRC report will likely be more substantial as it will include the annual accounts, and thus be an opportunity to ask questions. If members wish FFRC to have a reports slot to both Spring and Autumn that would require a Constitutional and Standing Orders Amendment.

24) Question by Katherine Macy

Why are the names on the passes so small and can we have pronouns automatically included (by an optional box) next time?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Thank you very much for the feedback about the name passes, we've tried a new design. I would be grateful if you could please feed that into the post-Conference feedback request and we can then look to action that. Regarding pronouns, we will be looking to introduce this for future conferences. We did have pronoun stickers available at the FCC helpdesk and the conference registration desk for people to add to their badges as well.

26) Question by Katherine Macy

How can the access fund be better supported and widened to all individuals, not just those with disabilities?

27) Question by Sean Bennet

How can financial accessibility to conference be better supported and advertised to members during this cost of living crisis?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

The access fund is an amazing resource, but it is very small. I would encourage as many members who can to please donate to the access fund so that we can make it go further, and support more members. It is important to note that the access fund is not limited to applications relating to disability, but also for people who may not normally be able to afford conference. It can also be used towards childcare costs as well, so if parents or carers are coming to Conference they can apply to the fund to cover childminders, etc. We do need to do a better job of promoting it, but also at the same time, we need to do a better job of encouraging people to donate to the conference access fund.

28) Question by Olly Craven

How are you ensuring that disadvantaged groups can take part in your committee without being discriminated against or subjected to discriminatory rants from other members?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Holding meetings on zoom (or similar platforms) means that it is easier for members to take part in meetings without financial costs, etc., which may dissuade them from attending in person meetings. It also meant that, for example during the heights of the COVID pandemic people who were clinically vulnerable were still able to take part in FCC matters.

Furthermore, on the Conference Committee, I think there is broad acceptance and understanding that we need to work together as a team, and even though we may disagree on some things, we respect each other, we respect the staff and our members and that we work together as one team.

If we can't work together, then we wouldn't have a conference.

29) Question by Michael Berwick-Gooding

Please can you state how many members registered for Spring 2022 Conference? Please can you state how many were MP's or members of the House of Lords? Please can you state the total of those who registered were employed by our Parliamentarians, by the

Federal Party, by a state party or a regional party?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

Total registration for in person attendance was 1,271 of which 1,002 were members. 376 members registered online. Total member registration was therefore 1,378. Parliamentarians (MPs and House of Lords) total registered 36. Party Staff (state or regional): 27, Parliamentary staff: 10; LDHQ staff (Federal Staff): 70

30) Question by Anthony Hook

This conference clashes with Mothering Sunday / Mother's Day which for a significant number of people is an important day that they like to mark. The FCC takes into account culturally important dates when setting dates. Could it avoid this day in future?

Answer by Cllr Nicholas da Costa

We look at a number of factors when considering our conference dates; with regards to Spring we need to ensure that the dates are not too late in March, which means that they could potentially clash with the local elections preparations, and not too early so that deadlines do not clash over Christmas. An additional, important factor, is of course venue availability - as we need to access the venue on the Thursday through to Monday. We try, where possible, to avoid clashes with certain culturally important dates; however, this is not always possible.

Federal Policy Committee Report

1) Question from Andrew Hudson

When will the Homes and Planning Policy working group paper come to conference?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves (Vice Chair of the Federal Policy Committee)

The FPC has decided to do further work to revise the homes and planning paper, and intends to submit a revised paper to autumn conference this year.

2) Question from Katherine Macy

Do you prioritise lived experiences or academic/work expertise in your working groups? If you balance them, how?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Hallo Katherine, thank you for your question. Putting working groups together is mostly a question of balances between different things that different people will bring to the group - from different views on the subject matter, to ensuring different groups of people are represented. Personal, practical, lived experience of the policy area under discussion is definitely one of the key elements we try hard to ensure is represented on groups, as well as

3) Question from Lucy Tonge

What happened with the findings of the UBI working group after consultation?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

All the work that FPC and the previous group have done on UBI fed into the Fairer Society group's work, and was included in the proposals in this area which conference approved in York.

4) Question from Lucy Tonge

What are FPC doing to address the lack of diversity in Policy Working Groups?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Along with the supplementary questions, this was answered at conference. The full exchange of questions, answers and supplementaries can be viewed on the party's YouTube channel [here](#).

5) Question from John Fraser

Due to shortage of policy making via cancelled conference etc, how do we ensure sufficient new 'grass-root' ideas for Autumns Conferences 'Pre manifesto Paper'

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Hallo John - we have a very large amount of policy approved by conference to consider including in the pre-manifesto, including 'grass-root' motions. In addition, 'grass-roots' or

anyone else are very welcome indeed to contribute possible ideas for the pre-manifesto, by sending them to the policy unit.

6) Question from Helen Baxter

How and when will FPC consult with the membership on the manifesto?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Hallo Helen - since conference quite a large programme of consulting members on the manifesto has started, including an email and online questionnaire sent to all members, as well as a series of events in specific policy areas. We are also discussing other possible formats, including supporting discussions in local parties and other groups to contribute to the manifesto. And of course we already published a "pre-manifesto" in 2022, as an early draft of the manifesto, to seek input on (although the autumn 2022 it was intended to be debated at was cancelled, the paper is still available on the autumn 2022 conference section of the party website, and comments on it are very welcome). We will also be publishing a further updated pre-manifesto in summer 2023, on which all comments from members are invited, and which is intended to be formally debated at autumn conference in Bournemouth.

7) Question from Fraser Graham

What steps will FPC take to ensure our next manifesto appeals to the country as a whole, and not just to 'Blue Wall' voters?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you for this question Fraser, which is a key point. FPC is very conscious of the need both to seek to appeal to voters in particular areas, but also to everyone in all areas. Ensuring we find the right balance here is something which is a key consideration in all our discussions towards the manifesto.

8) Question from John Grout

How does FPC feel the Lib Dem policy making process can be protected from the culture war we seem to be in at the moment?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you for the question, John, which FPC has had some discussion about as a result. The sorts of discussions to which you refer have not significantly featured in our work to date, unlike some other parts of the party. In discussion the committee felt that the way in which FPC works means that issues are considered pretty rigorously against whether and how they relate to the party's needs. Someone wishing to make a point based on the sorts of considerations to which you refer would have to make a strong case that the 'culture war' perspective would add some real useful intellectual value to the discussion. FPC members are certainly very alive to these issues, but the deliberate way in which our discussions

happen mean that they place a strong value on keeping them (and all factors) in perspective.

9) Question from Daniel Jones

The Party desperately needs an overarching narrative. Why is this work being delayed in favour of no fewer than six policy working groups?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you. Yes, we are indeed currently doing some work on how we can best present our policies accessibly, including through very short pithy statements.

10) Question from Gareth Epps

The Party desperately needs an overarching narrative. Why is this work being delayed in favour of no fewer than six policy working groups?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you, Gareth. Developing a clear overarching narrative from which our specific policies flow has been our major piece of work so far this year, and we aim to be bringing this to a conclusion as part of our pre-manifesto this summer.

11) Question from James Bliss

Currently FPC normally invites/coopts the Young Liberals Policy Officer onto the committee. Would you support formally adding a seat for the Young Liberals onto FPC to secure engagement of young party members and to help develop the next generation of committee members?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you, James. As you note, FPC always has the Young Liberals policy officer as part of the committee (something which other AOs do not have), and they usually play an important role in the committee's discussions. This also works very well as the kind of 'ladder' to which you refer for bringing former YLs on to the committee, with several former chairs of YLs or its predecessor organisations now directly elected to the committee.

12) Question from Fraser Graham

How have FPC been working with AOs representing diverse groups to ensure our party policies are inclusive and don't inadvertently discriminate?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

There are a number of different ways in which this happens, Fraser. Firstly, the chairs of two or three diversity AOs sit on FPC, and regularly contribute this perspective, from a broad diversity point of view as well as their own specific organisations. Secondly, as a committee we regularly work with the party bodies forum (PBF), which brings together all AOs, and we encourage all AOs to engage enthusiastically in the PBF. And finally, all our significant work

is scrutinised by our equalities impact assessment group, who feed in their comments at all stages.

13) Question from Olly Craven

How are you ensuring that disadvantaged groups can take part in your committee without being discriminated against or subjected to discriminatory rants from other members?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Olly, there are a number of things we do to promote this. Firstly, we actively promote a culture in which everyone can contribute their views and be heard equally and fairly. 'Disagreeing well' is at the core of our approach to discussions, and with a very clear focus on dispassionate discussion of policy ideas, rather than individuals or their links to particular positions. Even minor departures from this approach are clearly immediately discouraged by all committee members. Secondly, we are committed to following, and if necessary enforcing, the members' code of conduct. Thirdly, the move to predominantly online meetings has made a huge difference to the ability of a number of possibly previously "disadvantaged" groups to be able to participate fully. Fourthly, a number of committee members have particular experience and expertise in these areas, which they contribute to the way in which the committee works. And lastly, the committee had a fairly full specific discussion of your question and asked me to say that, while noting with amusement that 'rants' are perhaps not unknown, they very strongly believe that 'discriminatory rants' and their associated mindset and behaviour are not part of the way in which committee discussions happen, and that this is recognised by all members of the committee, including new ones.

14) Question from Caron Lindsay

Would you consider establishing a working group on Ending violence against women and girls in all its forms?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you for this point, Caron. This is clearly a very important point, on which the party has very clear policy which is explicitly reiterated from time to time. Policy working groups tend to be most useful for issues where there is a diversity of views within the party which need some careful discussion and working through together to find an approach which can then command support across the party. VAWG is of course much less controversial, and we will consider what the best mechanism is to build on existing policy in this area. If we may also take this question as a request for the pre-manifesto process to take the importance of this area on board, we will also do that. Thank you for raising it.

Federal International Relations Committee Report

1) Question from John Grout

How is FIRC working with partner parties and bodies abroad to safeguard hard-won LGBT+ rights against a right-wing culture war onslaught?

4) Question from Timothy Oliver

What work has FIRC undertaken with sister parties on LGBT rights in the last year?

Answer by David Chalmers (chair of the Federal International Relations Committee)

Thank you John and Timothy for submitting your questions, which I shall answer together as they focus on the same issue.

I am hugely proud of the work our party has undertaken in recent years in supporting LGBT+ rights around the world and the lead it has often taken in working together with our sister parties on furthering this important aspect of human rights.

I came into politics having been one of the co-founders of the Kaleidoscope Trust - today regarded as one of the world's major organisations fighting for international LGBT+ rights – so this issue has major personal significance. When I first stood for a place on FIRC in 2018, I did so, as plainly laid out in my manifesto at the time, seeking to ensure that the Lib Dems took into account human rights - and in particular LGBT+ rights - in our international work. I made the same commitment when standing for re-election to FIRC last year, and having been re-elected by party members to FIRC and won the election to be Chair of FIRC for the next three years, I shall endeavour to ensure that diversity and equality for all - in particular supporting LGBT+ rights - will remain a key part of our international work. I am pleased to note that several other recently elected members of FIRC are also deeply committed to supporting LGBT+ rights globally, and like myself now have a mandate to carry out this important work.

Over the past year we have undertaken several major initiatives. To combat the increasingly hostile environment in Poland which led to the setting up of so-called "LGBT free zones", the LibDems created the "Protect Our Twins" campaign in cooperation with our Polish sister party Nowoczesna, which used twinning arrangements between towns and regions in the UK and Poland to support the local LGBT+ Polish communities and help combat the anti LGBT+ rhetoric from local politicians and the Catholic Church. The campaign was picked up by our sister parties in Denmark and the Netherlands and was successful in that several of these "LGBT free zones" were withdrawn.

At the beginning of last year the Lib Dems were one of the first parties to support the ALDE Rainbow Platform – whose aim is to encourage support for LGBT+ rights across Europe.

Alongside my colleague Adrian Hyrylainen Trett, the Secretary of FIRC, I was named a Rainbow Ambassador. The LibDems were invited to produce a training program for senior officers from member parties of ALDE designed to help recruit and support LGBT+ members and candidates. Last summer, Candy Piercy and myself ran a training session in Krakow as part of this program.

The Lib Dems were one of the original signatories to the Dublin Declaration last summer - which now has 38 of our sister parties as signatories - which pledges our support for LGBT+ rights. We were instrumental in bringing several of our sister parties on board.

At recent ALDE Council and Congress meetings the Lib Dem delegation has presented motions relating to LGBT+ rights. In a motion focused on the situation in Afghanistan we ensured that the plight of the LGBT+ community was not forgotten and included support for the LGBT+ community in Afghanistan as well as LGBT+ refugees fleeing their country.

Likewise an emergency motion in Bratislava last December, which focused on support for women protesters in Iran, also mentioned the discrimination faced by the local LGBT+ community. Also in Bratislava, the Lib Dems brought forward two motions which passed with unanimous support from our sister parties. The first motion highlighted the plight and discrimination faced by LGBT+ community and visitors to the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, condemning FIFA's actions and seeking to ensure that human rights, and in particular LGBT+ rights, will be taken into account when considering future venues for world sporting events. The second motion produced together with our sister party in Slovakia, Progressivne Slovensko, called on our sister parties to recognise LGBT+ hate crime and to enact legislation to combat it. This emergency motion was prompted by the murder of two young people outside a gay bar in Bratislava two months previously. The LibDem delegation joined our sister parties for a ceremony outside the bar to remember the murdered young people - laying flowers and lighting candles. One of the participants on the training program in Krakow was the only out lesbian politician in Slovakia - who subsequently last autumn was elected to the regional and city councils of Bratislava - and who was very grateful for the training and support she had received from the LibDems. At the ALDE Congress in Stockholm in May this year the LibDem delegation will be proposing a further motion calling for a Europe-wide framework to recognise and combat hate speech - in particular against LGBT+ people.

Baroness Sal Brinton was re-elected last summer to the ALDE Bureau on a Platform of supporting and promoting diversity - including LGBT+ rights.

We encourage support for LGBT+ rights amongst our sister parties. Whilst meeting the delegation from 'Servant of the People' from Ukraine, who were seeking our support for them to become a member of ALDE, we asked their position on LGBT+ rights. Only after being reassured by their response - that they would seek our assistance as they had much to learn in this area - were we able to give them our support. We have recently been approached by our sister party Momentum in Hungary - to help them combat the populist campaign to demonise LGBT+ people, which is being led by the government of Viktor Orban.

In our work with Liberal International we work with our sister parties around the world and also seek to encourage their support for LGBT+ rights. Last year Adrian Hyyrylainen Trett was elected to the LI Human Rights Committee where they ensured that LGBT+ rights are recognised as a priority issue. FIRC has just set up a sub-Committee on the Commonwealth and the Global South where LGBT+ rights will no doubt be a frequent topic of discussion.

In Parliament our MPs and peers frequently raise issues concerning LGBT+ rights - most recently relating to the situation in Uganda and the reintroduction of the Anti- LGBT Bill.

On trips to meet with our sister parties, such as our recent visit to the FDP in Berlin, we endeavour to meet with their LGBT + party body and make contact with LGBT+ organisations in countries we visit - such as Bulgaria last summer, where the Liberal International Congress took place. The Lib Dems have a good relationship with LGBT + organisations in the UK including the Kaleidoscope Trust, Stonewall, All Out and the Human Dignity Trust.

I hope that you will agree that as a party we have been most active and effective in our support for LGBT+ rights - working closely with our sister parties in Europe and across the world. I shall ensure that we continue to make this a priority in our work over the next three years.

2) Question from Greg Webb

Given our party's long internationalist history, how do we ensure international engagement and the benefits of cooperation are front and centre in our party's messaging?

Answer by David Chalmers

Greg, Thank you for your question.

Internationalism is one of the core values of our party and I recognise that it is one of FIRC's main roles to ensure the benefits of cooperation are appreciated throughout our party at all levels.

As the Chair of FIRC I lead our delegations to the ALDE Council meetings and Congresses and our delegation to the meetings of Liberal International. We work closely with our sister parties in Europe and across the world promoting our liberal values and seeking to influence policies that are important to us.

Our Parliamentarians in the Commons and the Lords are recognised for their knowledge of international issues – which is often strengthened by our strong relationships with liberal parties around the world. For instance in the recent debate on the War in Ukraine in the House of Lords, our peers were able to refer to their dialogue with our sister parties in Ukraine – and elsewhere in the world – which brought a unique authority to the speeches coming from our party. It is important that members and potential voters are aware of the support we give to LGBT+ communities around the world and our policy to restore 0.7% GDP to international aid, to recognise our party that shares their values.

I will admit it is a challenge to ensure that the worth of our international work gets the recognition it needs in our party. It is understandable, especially around election time, to think that international issues aren't relevant to the day to day concerns of the British public. – they don't necessarily fit on a Focus leaflet. However, as we are coming to recognise the impact of Brexit, as well as the cost of living crisis caused by Russia's brutal unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, what happens in other countries is felt across the UK in so many ways. Our policies to mend our broken relationship with the EU are relevant and should be part of our party's messaging -about standing together in good times and bad. As we work to bring us closer to the EU, we will need the support of our sister parties to ensure our policies can be enacted and are effective. It is vital for our friends in Europe to help keep the door open for us.

The recently announced LibDem EU Liaison Councillor Scheme, which we are putting together with the EU Committee of the Regions, will create a network of councillors throughout the country, who will be trained as the go-to councillors for knowledge about the EU – how to develop twinning relationships, connections between businesses, schools, culture and arts and access grants etc. We need to rebuild our connections between the UK and the EU at a local level – and in doing so keep local communities informed and aware of the benefits to be gained from cooperation with our European neighbours. As a party we have the channels through Focus leaflets, websites, and newsletters to include this international aspect of our local work in our messaging to local voters – connecting what might seem like distant institutions to the life of our communities.

The UK is a multicultural country – with different ethnic communities spread throughout the country. We now have data from the ONS showing which communities are particularly prevalent in which constituencies– we can even delve down to which ward. It would be a powerful message to inform local communities that the Lib Dems are concerned about issues affecting their home countries. Take, for instance, the recent Earthquake in Turkey and Syria. The Lib Dems are bringing a motion to the ALDE Congress in Stockholm in May calling on our sister parties to offer more support for the affected regions and make special arrangements for their countries to take in refugees fleeing the disaster. It would help our campaigns and increase our electoral support in areas with large Turkish communities, if we let them know what the Lib Dems are doing to help their relatives and families in the affected areas.

My priority for our Manifesto in the next General Election is to ensure our key international policies are front and centre, and to help our Parliamentarians connect them to the big domestic challenges of the day.

3) Question from Clare Delderfield

Against such a hostile environment how can we push for an increased number of safe and legal routes for asylum seekers to come to the UK?

Answer by David Chalmers

Thank you Clare, I'm really glad you asked this - because the lack of safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK and to Europe has been a serious issue for years, and not much has changed at all since the tragic death of Alan Kurdi. We need a fundamental review of our migration system, to issue humanitarian visas, process applications in a reasonable time scale, and resettle more refugees in the UK. We must also remember that every country has a legal obligation to assess requests for asylum on the individual merits of the case - quite rightly, so that countries cannot indiscriminately expel people en masse.

Firstly, the Liberal Democrats and our international allies will always fight to defend the right to asylum. In government, we ended child detention for migration purposes. We need to build on that success, and keep speaking up against regressive, unworkable solutions. The small boats will only stop when they become unnecessary - when we stop outsourcing border controls to transport companies under threat of fines, give people humanitarian visas, and allow them to travel safely.

We need to offer asylum seekers a safe and legal route to enter the UK - in the case of Northern France this means having an official UK representative with whom they can lodge

their applications. At the current time even people with relatives in the UK would have to travel to Paris to attempt to submit an application to join those relatives. Currently the British make it almost impossible to submit applications - denying safe and legal routes - leaving asylum seekers with often no option but to attempt the unsafe crossing in small boats across the Channel - and then blame those asylum seekers for having taken that route.

While we continue working to secure legal change, there are things we can do in our communities. Even amid deeply hostile environments, local people have come together to sponsor refugees - housing them, helping them access services and learn the local language, and supporting them to access benefits and employment. These schemes do exist in the UK, and Liberal Democrats with connections to local charities and community groups could look into how to become a community sponsor of refugees.

Parliamentary Party Reports

1) Question from Andrew Hudson

Are the parliamentary parties opposing the strikes minimum services bill?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP (Chief Whip in the House of Commons)

Yes, we have opposed the Bill at every opportunity.

Minimum service levels won't avert disruption or help to solve staff shortages in the NHS. There will still be huge overcrowding and delays which is no good to people in an emergency. Even the Government's Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, said that this legislation will make no difference to the recent strikes.

We tabled and supported a number of amendments in the Commons aimed at mitigating the damage of this disgraceful and draconian legislation. Those amendments included a Lib Dem effort to commit the government to providing minimum service levels in hospitals and other services at all times, not just during strikes.

The best way to avoid disruption is to prevent these strikes in the first place, which means the Government getting round the table with staff and employers to find a solution.

We will continue to scrutinise this legislation closely in the Lords.

2) Question from Juliet Line

Last year Lord Strasburger challenged our unlawful debate-suppressing Definition of Transphobia . Will our Peers continue to promote freedom of speech within the party?

Answer from Lord Newby (Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords)

Building a fair, free and open society is at the core of our values as Liberal Democrats. And free speech is a key pillar of that.

We will always stand up for freedom of speech. Most recently, the Parliamentary Party has done this by challenging the Conservatives on their anti-protest Public Order Bill. We did this by:

- Tabling amendments in the Lords that would limit remove new suspicionless stop and search powers and Serious Disruption and Prevention Orders, and voting in favour of them in the Commons; and
- Opposing the Bill in full due to its crackdown on ordinary people's rights to protest.

However, we need to disagree well - which means debating difficult issues openly but sensitively, in a way that respects everyone's rights and dignity. The Parliamentary Party will keep pushing for this, both within the party and beyond.

3) Question from Juliet Line

Do MPs support the new MoJ guidelines that help protect females in prison from violent male offenders, however those males identify?

Answer from Lord Newby

No one should ever be at risk of violence or abuse, and we must do all we can to ensure this doesn't happen. The Government must make prisons safer - and the best way to do this is by ending overcrowding and recruiting more prison officers. Rates of violence, self-harm and deaths in prisons are far too high and must be tackled, but decisions about where to house trans prisoners are neither the cause nor the solution.

Whenever a prisoner has a history of rape or other serious violence against women, they should never be allowed into a prison with women unless and until the prison service has confirmed that they do not pose a risk.

4) Question from John Grout

How can Lib Dems best help Parliamentarians prevent the UK from back-sliding on LGBT+ rights, especially given the current right-wing culture war around trans rights?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

As a Parliamentary Party, we have a very important role to play in scrutinising the government where necessary on their LGBT+ rights track record. We have a long history of doing this and even pushing progress forward as a result. Like tabling the amendment that repealed the abhorrent, discriminatory Section 28, legislating for same-sex marriage, and fighting to end the blood donation ban for gay men.

And we will continue to scrutinise the Government in this way - like making sure the conversion therapy ban is comprehensive and effective, and opposing their use of Section 35 on the Scottish GRR Bill.

Ultimately, the only way to stop those attacks and protect people's rights is to get this Tory government out of office.

5) Question from Greg Webb

With our diminished Parliamentary presence, what's the best way to maximise the audience for our pro-European policies as Brexit's damage becomes clearer?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

We are busy calling out the day-to-day impact of the Conservatives' terrible deal with the EU, which is doing so much damage to the UK. It's made the cost of living crisis worse and is hurting the NHS.

The four-step roadmap passed last year by Conference has been a helpful tool which allows us to articulate our plan to fix our broken relationship with Europe.

To give some recent examples of what we've been up to:

- We are currently opposing the Conservatives' Retained EU Law Bill in Parliament. It is an undemocratic power grab which could see thousands of vital regulations ripped up - including crucial environmental protections. Many of these laws were first secured thanks to the hard work of Liberal Democrat MEPs.

- Layla Moran, our Europe spokesperson, has been leading a campaign to get the UK into the Horizon Europe scheme - which will be of huge benefit to the UK's science and research sectors.
- My colleagues in the Lords have been running a national campaign on paperwork-free travel for musicians which has been supported by Sir Elton John.
- Earlier this year, research from our Parliamentary team found that, because HMRC staff have been diverted to dealing with the impact of Covid and Brexit, billions of tax is going uncollected - this made the Financial Times' front page.

It's not just in the UK Parliament that we've been campaigning on the impact of the Conservatives' botched Brexit deal.

- Our local councillors and team at the Local Government Association have been calling out the damaging effect of worker shortages - from local pubs to restaurants, from hospitals to care homes.
- In the Scottish Parliament, our MSPs who represent fishing communities have been advocating for access to compensation funds.
- We are the most pro-European political party. We've always been passionate about close British-European cooperation.

6) Question from Richard Gadsden

Following the decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal in *Forstater vs CGDE*, the Equalities Act is being interpreted to protect discriminatory and transphobic beliefs if disguised as "gender critical". What are the Parliamentary Parties doing to amend the Equalities Act to overturn this disgraceful decision?

Answer from Lord Newby

We believe the Equality Act is working well. It is an important piece of legislation and it shows that we can protect both hard-won women's rights and trans rights, and the two are not in conflict.

Similarly, the Act's protections against being discriminated against for your beliefs are crucial. That's a fundamental liberal principle and always has been. It's part of the European Convention on Human Rights, it's part of our constitution as the Liberal Democrats, and it's part of the Equality Act too.

However, freedom of belief is not the same as freedom to act on those beliefs with impunity. As the Employment Appeal Tribunal in that case stated: Those with beliefs like this can not "misgender" trans persons with impunity. Trans people are protected against discrimination and harassment under the Equality Act.

As a Parliamentary Party, we will continue to stand up for all LGBT+ people against discrimination and harassment.

7) Question from Katherine Macy

In the lead up to the next election cycle how can we make sure we're championing liberal policies like trans rights and pro international policies and not just being an anti Tory party?

Answer from Lord Newby

Liberal Democrats will always champion our values. That includes standing up for minority rights and internationalism.

We see this in many of our current campaigns, like:

- Restoring international aid spending to 0.7% of our Gross National Income;
- The global fight for LGBT+ rights;
- Protecting the Human Rights Act and reaffirming our commitment to the European Court of Human Rights; and
- Banning all types of conversion therapy.

Ultimately, though, we can only truly champion individual rights and our international responsibilities by removing the Conservatives from Office. As a smaller party, we're limited in the amount of media coverage we get - so when we do get covered we are often focusing on issues that voters on the doorstep tell us are their priorities. Those are NHS waiting times, the cost of living and sewage - which is why some members may have seen more coverage of our work in these areas than in others.

8) Question from Timothy Oliver

What have the Lords and Commons groups done in the last year to promote the rights of all LGBT people in Britain?

Answer from Lord Newby

Some of the highlights of the past year include:

- Renewed push for a ban on conversion therapy and for that ban to extend to trans and non-binary people - including by Layla Moran and by Sal Brinton.
- Paul Scriven's debate on human rights abuses in the Gulf ahead of the World Cup, which heavily focused on LGBT+ rights
- Liz Barker came in on a question and supported restoring the pension rights of LGBT veterans who were discharged or dismissed as a result of the pre-2000 ban on homosexuality in the Armed Forces

9) Question from Fraser Graham

What was the parliamentary party's response to the blocking of the Scottish GRR bill Section 35, and how do we prevent future abuse of Section 35?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

The Scottish Parliament has passed a bill to make the gender recognition process easier, with support from MSPs of all parties following extensive consultation and scrutiny. This is a devolved issue and it's right that the Scottish Parliament has the power to decide its own laws on it.

By making the decision to block this legislation through an unprecedented use of Section 35, the Conservatives have undermined a cross-party decision of the Scottish Parliament. That puts the future of our union at risk. The UK Government should be bringing people in our family of nations together, not artificially pushing them apart.

Although most of this debate is happening outside of Westminster, the Parliamentary Party has made clear that Liberal Democrats oppose this use of Section 35. Alongside my fellow Scottish Lib Dem MPs, I supported a cross-party motion that aimed to stop Section 35. The overwhelming majority of Scottish MPs supported this motion.

Ed Davey said at Scottish Conference that those who believe in devolution should oppose Section 35, and called on the next First Minister to challenge this.

10) Question from Joe Toovey

In this climate of increasing hostility to LGBT+ and specifically to trans rights, what work are the Parliamentary Parties currently planning in this area?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

Our party has a long history of standing up for LGBT+ rights, from being the first party to openly oppose Section 28, to our instrumental role in legalising same-sex marriage.

But there's still more to do. Some of the Parliamentary Party's current campaign priorities include:

- Introduce an 'X' gender option on passports.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identification, end the culture of disbelief for LGBT+ asylum seekers and never refuse an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting the decriminalisation of homosexuality around the world and advancing LGBT+ rights.
- Ensure that LGBT+ inclusive mental health services receive funding and support.
- Address continuing inequalities in health services access faced by same-sex couples, and continue to improve LGBT+ healthcare overall.

Of course, one area that we've long campaigned on is banning conversion therapy.

The UK Government has now said that they will finally ban conversion therapy.

But we've yet to see any details or timelines for the Government's plans, and we need to make sure the conversion therapy ban protects all LGBT+ people, and that any loopholes around people "consenting" to conversion therapy are properly closed. I know that Layla has already been incredibly vocal on this, which is likely to be a big priority for the year to come.

11) Question from Lee Dargue

Mental Health has long been a priority for our Party, for those in need of support, care, or treatment. Are our members (including elected ones) getting as much consideration?

Answer from Lord Newby

Liberal Democrats take mental health seriously. We have long believed that mental health should be treated with the same urgency and priority as physical health. Which is why we provide our members with support through the Health Assured 24/7 helpline.

For more information: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/getting-support-when-you-need-it>

12) Question from a member in Lewisham

How will you ensure we don't appear to just oppose projects that help growth, incl. HS2, 5G Masts and most housing?

Answer from Lord Newby

We want to invest to build the economy of the future. We are committed to a responsible and realistic package of additional infrastructure investment, which will prioritise significant investment in public transport, including converting the rail network to ultra-low-emission technology (electric or hydrogen) by 2035, and a continued commitment to HS2, Crossrail 2 and other major new strategic rail routes.

We believe that a programme of installing hyper-fast, fibre-optic broadband across the UK – with a particular focus on connecting rural areas is crucial.

In addition, we would like to see an emergency ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings, cutting emissions and fuel bills and ending fuel poverty. As well as capital investment in schools and hospitals to support capacity increases and modernisation and £5 billion of initial capital for a new Green Investment Bank, using public money to attract private investment for zero-carbon priorities.

We will ensure that the National Infrastructure Commission takes fully into account the climate and environmental implications of all national infrastructure decisions.

13) Question from Candy Piercy

What is the view of the Lib Dem Parliamentary Party on the decision to ban the use of TikTok on UK government phones?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

This step is long overdue - but the broader picture is a Conservative Government which doesn't take the threat posed by China seriously.

The Integrated Review - published just this week - treats China solely as an economic threat. The Government ban on Tik Tok is a clear sign that China poses far more of a challenge than that.

The Conservatives still fail to recognise that what is going on in Xinjiang is a genocide. It's shameful. They are weak on China - from its aggression towards Taiwan to its dismantling of democracy in Hong Kong.

14) Question from Candy Piercy

Can a donor to a political party credibly chair the BBC?

Answer from Lord Newby

We have been clear that Richard Sharp's position is "untenable" and have blamed the Conservative Government for "systematically attacking the independence of the BBC".

Richard Sharp has spent recent months wrapped in controversy around his role in an £800,000 loan for Boris Johnson. The Chairman of the BBC is head of the BBC Board and responsible for maintaining the independence of the BBC.

We need leadership at the BBC that upholds our proud British values and can withstand today's consistently turbulent politics and Conservative bullying tactics.

The BBC should be a champion of freedom of speech and must overhaul their current rules and judgement on impartiality. They can't continue to play by rules that are so one-sided. The Conservative Government has systematically attacked and undermined the independence of our BBC. That's not in the best interests of our country and our democracy and we will fiercely stand up against this.

15) Question from Candy Piercy

What can the Parliamentary Party do to protect disabled people from the impact of new Government plans to make it harder to claim benefits?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

Disabled people no longer receive sufficient financial support. The move to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) from Disability Living Allowance has introduced a number of barriers to people getting the support that they need.

While we welcome the recent suggestions that the Government will end the work capability assessments, the system as it is will be in place for years and we remain wary of the suggested alternative approaches.

The most important thing we can do as a Parliamentary Party is push to change the law. As such, we welcome Conference's decision to back [motion F12](#) and affirm our policies in this area. Policies such as restoring the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, introducing emergency

grants (not loans) and stopping deducting debt repayments at unaffordable rates.

We are also seeking to advance other proposals, including but not limited to reinstating the independent living fund, increasing the role of, and funding to, Local Authorities to deliver support and to implement the Disability Employment Charter to help create a level playing field for disabled workers.

16) Question from Candy Piercy

Should tax breaks be given to the top 1% of earners when so many people are struggling to choose between heating and eating?

Answer from Lord Newby

This Government has hit hard working families with unfair tax rises, to pay for the fact that they themselves crashed our economy.

Typical family incomes will fall by £1,100 next year, and £650 of that is due to tax rises [[Resolution Foundation](#)].

But our public services are also stretched to near breaking point, with massive NHS backlogs, long ambulance waiting times and crumbling schools and hospitals. The Government should absolutely be investing in these services.

What we have said is that the Government should be putting taxes on those able to pay them - the oil and gas giants, the big banks, the global tech monopolies, big profitable multinationals - rather than hard-working households.

17) Question from Dominic Martin

What policies will the parliamentary party promote to retain experienced NHS staff in the workforce without resorting to pension give-aways to high earners as in this week's budget?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

We want to make sure the tax system encourages people to work and doesn't unfairly penalise those who save for retirement.

Given the staffing crisis in our NHS, action is urgently needed to reform the pension rules that see so many doctors retiring early.

However, this change is not a silver bullet. We do have concerns about the Government spending so much money on a policy that won't help most people, especially at a time when they are also raising income tax and energy bills for everyone.

The NHS is nothing without the staff that work so hard to keep us all well. But they are burned out and stressed after years of neglect and poor conditions. Sky high wait times and overflowing A&E's cannot be fixed unless staff wellbeing and staffing conditions improve.

The Government has completely failed to fulfil their manifesto pledge to recruit 6,000 more GPs. They have failed to improve conditions, ways of working, and workload. All issues quoted by GPs as a reason for leaving the job.

It's time we put in place proper rest facilities for staff and take staff fatigue seriously.

Liberal Democrats have been pushing the Government to implement a legally binding workforce strategy to ease the pressure on current NHS staff, with properly resourced training, recruitment and retention plans. This must include more medical training places for GPs.

We would introduce incentives to keep experienced GPs in the workforce, such as career development and training programmes, as well as launch a scheme inviting retired GPs and nurses to come out of retirement to work in the NHS.

18) Question from Ben Williams

Now it's reached the Commons committee stage, what can the Parliamentary Parties do to prevent the shameful Illegal Migration Bill causing harm to asylum seekers?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

The Liberal Democrats have already tabled over 25 amendments to the Illegal Migration Bill. These amendments:

- Set a resettlement target.
- Create a humanitarian travel permit.
- Create a safe passage pilot scheme.
- Legislates for a family reunion scheme.
- Consults with local residents and ensure there is a minimum standard of conditions in immigration accommodation before the Home Secretary can determine where people are detained.
- Delete all sections that deny people access to the UK's modern slavery framework.
- would ban child detention and ensure that no one is kept detained in asylum centres for more than 28 days.
- require the Secretary of State to publish a report on the actions that are being taken to tackle people smugglers.
- would require the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament an impact assessment regarding the expected effectiveness of the changes made by this Act in stopping, or reducing the number of, Channel crossings from France by asylum seekers.
- would require the Government to commission and publish an independent report on the effects of its Immigration Rules on the UK economy and public services since December 2020.
- Would require the Secretary of State to commission an independent management review of the efficiency of UK Visas and Immigration in processing applications and the efficiency of the removal process for those whose leave to remain has expired.

19) Question from Suzanne Fletcher

When you talk about £2 extra for carers do you mean in receipt of carers allowance or carers in care homes?

Answer from Wendy Chamberlain MP

This policy applies to care workers, such as those in care homes. A major cause of the terrible NHS crisis is the crisis in social care. Thousands of people are stranded in hospital beds because there aren't enough care workers to look after them at home or in a care home.

Only 2 in 5 people are able to leave hospital when they are ready to do so, contributing to record-breaking waits in A&E and dangerous ambulance handover delays.¹

We have a shortage of 165,000 care workers – a number that has skyrocketed on the Conservatives' watch. More than one-in-ten (11.6%) of frontline care jobs are vacant.² Care workers aren't paid enough for the tough and important work they do – many are paid less than even the lowest-paid jobs in most supermarkets.

If the Government is really going to fix the NHS, it needs to fix care. It should start by paying care workers properly to fill those vacancies and ensure everyone can get the high-quality care they need, when they need it.

For carers, we have consistently called on the Government to commit funding to local authorities so they can offer every unpaid carer the support services they need to take at least a weekly break.

A fair deal for carers is close to my and to our Leader's hearts in particular, and I am proud of having personally steered my Carers Leave Bill through the Commons in the last few months. If passed, the Bill will grant carers five days' worth of leave per year, with no evidence requirements. It will give 2.3 million unpaid carers in work new employment rights and will help to ensure more carers can continue to work, alongside their caring commitments.

¹ CQC [State of Care Report 2021/22](#)

² In 2021-22, up from 4.7% in 2012-13. [[Resolution Foundation \(2023\)](#)]

Federal Board Report

1) Question from Andrew Hudson

When are we going to see an end of meetings conducted by zoomocracy?

2) Question from Judith Bailey

Does the Board consider the proposed 6.4B presents any risk of imposing sanctions improperly with the lack of opportunity for real dialogue through a hearing?

3) Question from Lucas North

The Young Liberals are the only enrolling body who don't have meaningful access to our membership data. When will this be fixed?

4) Question from Lucas North

When and why was the decision made that the Young Liberals would not have access to Connect, and so cannot use Fleet to host petitions or surveys?

5) Question from Lucas North

We've heard a lot about one of the benefits of Fleet being that petition data will flow into Connect. Why are the Young Liberals excluded from this?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack (President of the Liberal Democrats)

Along with the supplementary questions, these were answered at conference. The full exchange of questions, answers and supplementaries can be viewed on the party's YouTube channel [here](#).

6) Question from Gareth Epps

With six weeks to go until the biggest round of English local elections, where is the promised compelling and distinctive narrative?

7) Question from Gregg Webb

Given we are the only opposition party polling below our 2019 result, what is the Board's view of the Party's strategy to correct this?

8) Question from Gregg Webb

Given our party's current low polling in spite of specifically targeting the Conservatives, what does FCEC believe is failing in the current Party strategy?

9) Question from Katherine Macy

How can we make sure we are championing liberal policies such as trans rights and pro internationalism and not just being the anti Tory party?

10) Question from James Green

Why are we failing to promote a liberal vision that supports house building, trans rights and workers rights in favour of just being anti-Tory?

25) Question from Joe Toovey

How do we motivate demoralised campaigners worried that core liberal issues - Europe, drug policy, trans rights - are being deemphasised in our campaigns due to fear of controversy?

26) Question from Lucy Tonge

Does the Board recognise how demoralised many members are at our lack voice on progressive Liberal issues for fear of upsetting potential Tory swing voters?

28) Question from Gregg Webb

With Brexit support collapsing, Conservatives tainted and Labour split - why have we stopped talking about our policy when it so massively outpolls our Party?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

These all are in related forms about the party's strategy and messaging. The mood of the public is great anger about the failures of the Conservative government in Westminster. Given how much of our lives those failures touch, being clear that our priority is to remove the Conservatives from power is an important part of both our messaging and our strategy. It's also a message that works as helpful background context for campaigning against Labour because the clarity about our view on the Conservatives in government helps reassure Labour voters that they can safely vote for us. In such areas, it also works effectively alongside a similar message about failing local councils we are also campaigning against.

Emphasising this part of our message is part of treating voters with respect: in a democracy they get to choose what is important to them when deciding who to vote for, and so that's where we need to start. For policy areas, that means it issues such as health and the cost of living which repeatedly come out top of voters' concerns, and so what they most want to hear about from us. It's a fundamentally liberal approach to listen to what people say is of most concern, to respect and engage with that, and then find liberal solutions to persuade them with.

Alongside that, it's important we give a positive message of our liberalism, which is why our Parliamentarians regularly raise issues such as small boats, civil liberties and green issues, among many. There's more we need to do on this front, particularly to bring it together into a clear overall story rather than a collection of individual points. The Federal Policy Committee's work on our 'pre-manifesto' will have a new summary of our approach that will be helpful as will the intended new guide to 'what to say on the doorstep' that we're hoping to get out for canvassers later this year.

We've seen the benefits of our approach in both the run of three amazing Parliamentary by-election wins, and in making progress in both the rounds of local elections so far this

Parliament. We focused on the issues that mattered most to voters, and as a result got more liberals elected who can take action on a broad range of topics.

There's a clear gap that comes out in the polls between people's willingness now to consider voting Lib Dem and the actual party they plump for. Figures for the former, from both Opinium and YouGov for example, are [now at healthy levels](#). What we still need to do is continue rebuilding our local campaign organisation so that, as with those by-elections, we can turn more of that willingness to consider us into actual votes. Local elections too have shown that where we are managing that, we are pulling off often dramatic results.

11) Question from Zoe Hollowood

Will FB dissociate the Party from incendiary assertions by a Party committee that gender-critical beliefs are "equivalent to...white supremacist or anti-semitic views"?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

To the best of my knowledge, that's not a quote made by any Board member or at a Board meeting and as the source, context and other such information about the quote hasn't been provided, it doesn't seem productive to comment further.

12) Question from Jennie Rigg

In light of the ruling in B Randall Vs Trent College are Board going to refer so-called "gender critical" members to the Prevent programme to be de-radicalised before the party becomes even more of a hostile environment for trans people?

13) Question from Alana Mullen

In light of the B Randall vs Trent College ruling, will Board adopt a stronger policy against transphobia that protects trans people not hate mongers?

14) Question from Toby Keynes

Does FB recognise the rights of members holding gender critical beliefs to be consulted about matters – including the Transphobia Definition – directly affecting them as members?

17) Question from Timothy Oliver

When will the Federal Board complete work on a definition of transphobia that LGBT members of this party can have confidence in?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The Board will continue to keep under review any relevant new information that may require previous Board decisions to be reviewed, such as if there has been a legal case that changes the law in an area which the Board relied on for a previous decision.

I will make sure that consideration is given to the specific case raised in two of the questions to see whether or not it falls into this category.

Likewise, where relevant, we will continue to consult with party members, respecting the processes and scrutiny procedures that party members, via conference, have chosen - such as the particular role for official affiliated organisations.

15) Question from Lucy Tonge

What are Federal Board doing to manage the issue of transphobia in the party? How are you keeping trans members safe from harassment/abuse at conference?

16) Question from Jon Ball

How is the Federal Board ensuring that the party remains a safe place for trans members and how is it engaging with the concerns of many trans members over the ongoing transphobia problem?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

Trans members are an important part of our party, and the struggle for their rights is an important part of what liberalism means in contemporary society. The new Code of Conduct is a significant step towards making our party feel a safe and welcoming place for all our trans members, and once we have the experience of the code being in place for a while, I am happy to meet with Plus Liberal Democrats to discuss how it is going and any further lessons to learn.

I would also encourage anyone who comes across breaches of the Code to consider submitting an official complaint.

18) Question from John Grout

How does the Federal Board intend to improve communication with SAOs around the decision making process?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The creation of the now not quite so new Party Bodies Forum is an important part of improving communications with our affiliated organisations and I'm grateful that other federal committees have also taken a very positive approach to engaging with the Forum and through it with our affiliated organisations. They are an important part of our party.

We need to continue to get better at such consultations in advance of decisions as it's often the case that the earlier consultation happens, the better it can influence the outcome. I'd be very happy to hear from anyone involved with an affiliated organisation what other steps they would find useful.

19) Question from Mark Johnston

How many vacant positions remain on the Federal Appeals Panel? What is the break-down of FAP vacancies under each federal and state party category?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

Following conference, eight of the nine slots on the Federal Appeals Panel (FAP) which are federally appointed have been filled. The Board hopes to make a recommendation for the ninth person to autumn conference.

There are also three slots each for the English, Scottish and Welsh state parties to fill. When I checked ahead of the Board report session, one out of three slots was in place with one further person about to be appointed in Scotland, and one out of the three slots was in place in England with two further people about to be appointed. For the Welsh state party, there are three slots to fill and are hoping to do so shortly.

The Board is also looking at whether to change the rules on who can be an FAP member, which may make it easier to fill slots in future. If we decide such a change is desirable, we will present the plan to conference.

20) Question from Gareth Epps

As there has not been a Conference for a whole year, how can there be less to report, and why is the report shorter than usual?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The Board's report for our aborted autumn conference was published at the time, and is [available on the party website](#). The report in this time's booklet therefore, rather than repeating what was in that, adds on events since the autumn.

As the report also says, "there is less than usual to report back to Spring Conference due to the pause in committee work that happens every three years during our big round of internal party elections". Comparing this time's report with the printed versions of spring conference reports after previous rounds of elections, this report is of a similar length to those I have checked.

21) Question from Gareth Epps

Does the Federal Board now see itself as accountable to the new Federal Council, rather than to Conference?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

Both Federal Council and Federal Conference have important roles to play in overseeing the work of the Federal Board. The constitutional provisions, as agreed by party members via conference, set out different roles for each and so the Board sees itself accountable in line with those different roles.

In addition, Board members have accountability via other mechanisms too, such as my own accountability to Board members given their new (and welcome!) power to remove me from office.

22) Question from Olly Craven

How are you ensuring that disadvantaged groups can take part in your committee without being discriminated against or subjected to discriminatory rants from other members?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

It's important that party meetings are conducted in an appropriate way. That not only makes the meetings more effective, and is also the way to encourage a wider range of people to be involved in our decision making.

The Board's standing orders, and now the party's new Code of Conduct, set out what can be done when there is inappropriate behaviour at party meetings.

As covered in a public Federal Appeals Panel ruling, [which upheld the Board's actions](#), in one case we had to take the unusual step of removing someone from a meeting because of their behaviour. I hope that we don't have to do so again, but as this case illustrated the Board is willing to act where necessary and the party's appeal process then backed up the legitimacy of such action.

23) Question from Olly Craven

How can we improve our membership recruitment and engagement in Labour facing areas? Are there policies/campaigns that are already party policy that might cut through?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The heart of successful membership recruitment and engagement is face to face contact, going out and speaking with people on the doorsteps to understand what motivates them and to get them involved, whether it's delivering leaflets, joining the party or running for the council.

In my experience, what works best in Labour-facing areas for specific policies/campaigns to mention, when there is also a Conservative government in Westminster, is use of our local messages on what Labour is getting wrong on the local council or, where we are running the council, our successes secured despite Labour opposition. Along with reminders of our opposition to what the Conservative government is getting up to.

24) Question from Chris Northwood

The new rebate system for online donations/tickets is causing major cashflow issues for local parties. Was this considered when setting it up, and what will be done to address this going forward?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

There were problems initially with payments being made for donations and tickets, for which apologies. These should now all be sorted, with regular monthly payments coming through for local parties. If you're still having any problems, please [contact me with details](#) and I will make sure they are looked into.

27) Question from Daniel Jones

Given increasing penetration of conspiracy and extreme ideas into the mainstream, what is the party doing to ensure candidates at all levels are properly vetted?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

We have introduced a new due diligence vetting process to help catch such issues, and have been increasing the range of party roles for which it is used. If the question is prompted by particular concerns, it would be very useful to [hear the details](#).

29) Question from Jared Jeyaretnam

How can we ensure local parties stick to our national values when it comes to tackling the housing crisis or stopping pollution?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

It's not the Federal Board's role to police the content of every Focus leaflet, but we have been investing in a large network of field staff, supporting local parties in understanding what our policies are and how to campaign on them effectively. Support and persuasion are better than attempting to order from the centre.

Federal Campaigns and Election Committee Report

1) Question from John Grout

How is FCEC planning to help PPCs and local parties in the upcoming election handle the current right-wing culture war, especially as it relates to vulnerable minorities (asylum seekers, trans people, etc.)?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock (Chair of the Federal Campaigns and Election Committee)

Consideration of these issues will be part of detailed GE planning. Ed Davey has already spoken plainly about Liberal values and how these relate to matters of equality.

2) Question from Mark Johnston

Measured in net seat gains as compared to 2019, what is your (or your committee's) minimum definition of success in the next general election?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

The Campaigns team are working very hard with a group of advanced seats. Much will depend on the timing of the election and the political circumstances at the time.

3) Question from James Bliss

Other federal committees (like FB formally and FPC on an ad hoc basis) have a seat on the committee for the Young Liberals, would you support adding one for FCEC to help with engagement of young party members and to help develop the next generation of committee members?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

We're always open to hearing new ways of working and involving younger members in how we work in consultation with the Federal Board.

4) Question from Lucy Tonge

What is the party doing to ensure we have a distinct narrative, that extends past just being "antiTory" going into the next GE?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

The manifesto group will develop a detailed policy

5) Question from Lucy Tonge

How can we best support members wanting to campaign but unable to participate in physical activities such as canvassing/door-to-door?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

Phone canvassing; clerical work such as addressing and stuffing envelopes; working on Connect and Fleet; telling on polling day. All these are crucial

6) Question from Sean Bennett

Despite the hard work of our comms professionals, the party's voice isn't being heard by the public. What are we doing to change that?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

The excellent work by the communications team is changing that for the better. All members can help by campaigning in their area.

7) Question from Jon Ball

What are you doing to ensure that campaigns and federal messaging is relevant to Labour Facing areas as well as Blue Wall seats?

Answer by Baroness Pinnock

As a councillor in a Labour facing council, I am aware of the challenges as is the campaigns team.

Federal Council Report

1) Question from John Grout

After its first few months of full operation, how does FC see its role developing over the rest of its first term?

Answer by Cllr Antony Hook (Chair of the Federal Council)

We will follow closely what the Board does as our primary role is to scrutinise its decisions. We are probably just a year or so to a General Election so I expect that preparations for that election will be at the fore of our minds.

Campaign for Gender Balance Report

1) Question from John Grout

How does CGB intend to work with women's organisations such as the WI to rebut the misogynistic and transphobic narratives emerging in the current right-wing culture war?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge (Chair of the Campaign for Gender Balance)

CGB is not set up to be a campaigning organisation. Our remit is to train, mentor and support all women candidates towards elected office and through their political journey. All our work is shaped by our commitment to intersectionality.

Liberal Democrat Women would be best placed to answer your question.

We do engage with organisations like 50-50 Parliament and Elect Her who are cross party charities that aim to improve gender recognition in elected positions. We always make it clear to these organisations that we are happy to support all women and non-binary people who come to us for assistance in their political journey.

2) Question from Fraser Graham

Do you agree that Non-Binary individuals being included in internal election quotas is not a threat to creating gender balance within our party committees?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

The Campaign for Gender Balance is an internal body set up to train, mentor and support women in the Lib Dems on their political journeys. We recognise, support and demonstrate our commitment to the Party's values of inclusion on gender. However, CGB is not a campaigning organisation and therefore cannot comment further on the internal politics of the party.

3) Question from Greg Webb

How are CGB working to ensure all women and non-binary people can succeed, unhindered by a small but vocal group of 'gender-critical' people?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

The CGB team are all totally committed to helping all women and non-binary people who come to us for support. We are committed to intersectionality and tailor our help for women with any additional protected characteristics. We demonstrate our commitment to inclusion in the way we run our training, Future Women MP weekends and mentoring.

4) Question from Tara Foster

Does the panel agree that the way the NHS currently 'cares' for trans people is inherently transphobic?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

CGB is a training and mentoring subgroup of the Federal Board. We offer support to all women in the Lib Dems, on their political journeys. We are not a campaigning arm of the Liberal Democrat's. Therefore, for topics like this we cannot provide comment. Please may

we suggest you address this important question to LDW, our MPs or the party's FPC (Federal Policy Committee).

5) Question from Tara Foster

Does the panel agree that a liberal party should not entertain non-inclusive views within its membership?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

The party's values are set out in its Constitution. CGB is a training, mentoring and support organisation and so therefore this isn't something we would comment on. Our values and commitment to intersectionality uphold the party's commitment to fairness and inclusion.

6) Question from Lucy Tonge

What specific actions is CGB taking to ensure we're supporting intersectionality/diversity of candidates beyond just cis, white, abled women?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

Supporting intersectionality is key to our commitment to inclusion and the Lib Dem values laid out in the preamble to our Constitution. Our mentors and trainers are experienced in recognising and working with people with a diverse range of needs. This could mean supporting structures that include reasonable adjustments/infrastructure for those with disabilities or advising on grants and concessions for those on low incomes. When our Future Women MP Weekend was in person we offered a concession rate to those on benefits/a low income or in education. Our support of women from ethnic minorities, on or from a low income backgrounds, disabled or where diversity intersects is strong. We recognise that extra support may be needed by women who have other protected characteristics and do our best to provide that help.

7) Question from Hina Bokhari

What support or training will be provided for women from ethnic minorities to become PPCs and councillors?

Answer by Cllr Julia Cambridge

This question was answered at Spring Conference. However we'd like to add that we recognise the need to provide extra support to women from ethnic minorities and do so in several different ways. For example, we reserve a set number of places for women from ethnic minorities on our residential training weekends, such as our flagship workshop, the Future Women MP Weekend. We also work closely with the Racial Diversity Campaign (RDC) which is a sister organisation to the CGB.

We were instrumental in supporting the set up and roll out of RDC and provided training and mentoring help to that organisation.