

# Liberal Democrats



Conference Report  
Liberal Democrat Spring Conference  
York 2016

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# Policy Motions

## A Fairer Deal for Private Renters

Conference notes:

- i) Private sector rents have become untenably high in many parts of Britain, and many renters are now paying more than half their income in rent.
- ii) Rented homes often fall below a decent standard and there is a continuing problem with rogue landlords.
- iii) Moving from one rented home to another can be very expensive, with high letting fees and large deposit requirements.
- iv) Many renters who wish to buy a home are priced out of the market, with average property prices rising much faster than wages and an historic lack of building new homes to meet demand.
- v) The main cause of homelessness is now the ending of tenancies in the private rented sector.

Conference welcomes:

- a) New legislation coming into force to protect tenants from revenge evictions, initiated by Sarah Teather during the Coalition.
- b) Plans to introduce a rogue landlords database and banning orders with financial penalties of up to £30,000.
- c) Liberal Democrat commitments to create new opportunities for buying a home including Rent to Own, where monthly rental payments stack towards a deposit, and a huge increase in supply to 300,000 new homes a year, including 50,000 new council homes in London by 2020.
- d) Liberal Democrat plans to make moving home cheaper for renters through the Help to Rent tenancy deposit scheme.

Conference calls for:

1. The letting of homes in the private rented sector to be professionalised through the mandatory licensing of landlords.
2. The scrapping of letting fees for tenants.
3. A financial boost for local authorities to ensure they are able to support tenants by providing sufficient housing and legal advice.
4. A requirement to give tenants first refusal to buy the home they are renting from the landlord if they decide to sell it during the tenancy, at market rate according to an independent valuation.
5. A ban on advertising new homes overseas before they are advertised in the UK.
6. A review by the Secretary of State of the legislation applying to the private rented sector, as the first step towards a comprehensive private rented sector strategy.
7. Support and encouragement from Government for councils to develop, own and manage private sector rented homes outside of housing revenue accounts to improve

the quality of homes in the sector with the freedom to offer long-term tenancies.

*Applicability: England only*

***Background Briefing***

*This motion developed and updated policy on the private rented sector, in particular on mandatory licensing of landlords. Previous policy was set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015), policy motion Protecting Private Tenants (2014) and policy paper 104, Decent Homes for All (2012).*

***Amendments:*** *Two separate votes were held.*

*The first would have deleted 1. Conference voted to retain these words.*

*The second would have deleted 4. Conference voted to retain these words.*

## Fracking

Conference applauds the international agreement reached in Paris in December 2015, in which 195 countries agreed to act to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, and if possible to below 1.5°C, above pre-industrial temperatures.

Conference reiterates its support for the Liberal Democrat aim of a zero-carbon Britain by 2050, as a contribution to this international goal.

Conference condemns the Conservative Government's assault on Britain's green industries, in particular renewable energy, which is not only incompatible with the UK's commitment to the Paris agreement but is also undermining a growing industrial sector with significant potential for jobs, exports and prosperity.

Conference notes, in contrast, the Government's extensive support for the extraction of shale gas by hydraulic fracturing ('fracking'), including legislating to allow fracking under national parks and other protected areas, and being prepared to override local authorities' decisions not to give planning consent for fracking.

Conference believes that:

1. Since fracking in the UK is not projected to produce significant volumes of gas for at least 10–15 years, shale gas will not replace coal in electricity generation, as coal is being phased out in any case in line with the UK's climate targets and EU air quality rules.
2. The prospect of the extensive production of shale gas is highly likely to undermine the investment in renewable energy, particularly in renewable heating, which will be needed to meet the UK's climate targets.
3. Therefore fracking will undermine the UK's ability to decarbonise its economy and fulfil the requirements of the Paris agreement and the UK Climate Change Act, let alone the Liberal Democrats' more ambitious target.

Conference also believes that fracking operations pose potential local environmental risks to groundwater quality and water supplies, from waste and air emissions, to health and biodiversity and to the geological integrity of the areas involved, risks likely to be exacerbated by the Conservative government's cost-cutting and deregulatory approach to compliance with environmental standards.

Conference also notes that for these reasons and others, the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all announced, or declared their intention to announce, bans or moratoriums on fracking.

Conference calls on the Government to ban fracking in England, and to adopt an energy policy based primarily on renewables and energy efficiency, which supports the implementation of the Paris agreement.

*Applicability: England only*

***Background Briefing***

*This motion significantly developed policy on fracking in England by calling for an outright ban. Previous policy, which allowed for fracking subject to a number of conditions on environmental protection and community benefit, was set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015), and policy paper 109, Green Growth and Green Jobs (2013), as amended by conference.*

***Amendments:*** *Conference rejected an amendment that would have removed everything after 'Conference believes' and replaced the banning of fracking with calls for strict regulation of the fracking industry, an independent review into the use of shale gas, and commercial production of shale gas being reliant on a number of conditions including the outcomes of the independent review and the development of Carbon Capture and Storage technology. Existing party policy on Carbon Capture and Storage, as laid out in policy paper 109, Green Growth and Green Jobs (2013), remains in place.*

## Liberal Democrat Economic Policy

Conference re-asserts the Liberal Democrats' continuing commitment to sound public finances, social justice, environmental sustainability, an open economy in an open society, and the principle of free markets whenever possible with intervention where necessary by an enabling state.

Conference notes:

- a) The Liberal Democrats' effective record in Government in stabilising the public finances and major contributions in the fields of apprenticeships, banking regulation, the British Business Bank, the Green Investment Bank and the promotion of innovation through the Catapult network.
- b) The investment by Liberal Democrats in Government in sustainable transport infrastructure including Crossrail, electrification of rail and buses and developing new technologies.
- c) The fragile nature of economic recovery following the 2008 crash, evidenced by interest rates which are historically low and continued Eurozone uncertainty.
- d) The growth of house prices carrying the threat of a price bubble and subsequent crash.
- e) The Chancellor's unhelpful and arbitrary re-definition of the deficit, doubling the total by including capital spending, in his attempt to justify Tory spending cuts.
- f) The medium-term risk to the UK economy posed by increasing and unsustainable private and household debt.
- g) The threats to the UK economic prospects posed by Conservative approaches to UK membership of the European Union and immigration.
- h) The International Monetary Fund's advice to reduce debt through growth not cuts.
- i) The commitments made during 2015 by all the world's nations, including the UK, to a new set of Sustainable Development Goals and to limit climate change
- j) The UK economy's over-dependence on London and the South-East.
- k) The UK's bad record in allowing the growth of an increasing number of young people with low levels of education, training and aspiration.
- l) Growing inequalities in wealth and income, coupled with unfair and regressive action against the poorest people in the country, now exacerbated by the assault on welfare spending.
- m) The acceleration of profound changes in the global economy due to digitalisation and automation (the so-called fourth industrial revolution) which risks large-scale service sector job losses similar to those in manufacturing.

Conference calls for effective measures to support and grow the UK economy, including by many established Liberal Democrat policies:

1. Increased investment, both directly by Government financed by public borrowing, and stimulated by Government, particularly in affordable housing including social housing and infrastructure to support balanced growth throughout the UK.
2. A commitment to invest in digital infrastructure and policy to make the UK a world

leader in internet connectivity, with the goal of providing ultrafast internet access across the country by 2025.

3. Support for planning reform, institutional lending to small builders and action by local authorities for planned development, including assembling land for auction.
4. Further measures to improve and regulate banking services by promoting efficient lending, particularly to small and medium-sized enterprises, encouragement of challenger banks and increased personal accountability.
5. Strengthening takeover legislation to protect the country's science base.
6. The decarbonisation of the economy, including the promotion of the UK's world-leading green industries, such as offshore wind power, low-carbon vehicles and green finance, with continued financial and other support in home markets and help with exports.
7. The implementation of the EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy to reduce waste and encourage material reuse through 'closed loop' manufacturing, creating new sustainable jobs and reducing the use of natural resources.
8. Using the power of public procurement to support a shift to a more sustainable economy, and the inclusion of indicators of social well-being and natural capital alongside conventional GDP as measures of success.
9. Further development of transport infrastructure to improve connectivity and boost regional economies, including investment in northern transport links, completing the electrification of the majority of the rail network, and enhancing bus services.
10. Further development of the Government's industrial strategy, promoting co-operation and supply chain development in key sectors for the long-term.
11. Re-balancing the economy towards manufacturing industry and regions, based on the coherent and substantial devolution of political and financial power.
12. Further reform of corporate governance to encourage 'long-termism' and to discipline executive pay, including an employee role in determining executive pay.
13. Renewed emphasis on vocational education and training, particularly through effective apprenticeships and especially higher-degree level and engineering and construction apprenticeships.
14. Coherent efforts across Government Departments to address the needs of young people who are excluded from the labour market and participation in wider society.
15. Addressing inequality through a renewed commitment across Government and society to analyse and address Beveridge's Five Giants in modern society.
16. Investigating sustainable ways of funding universal services, including a cross-party, cross-society settlement on funding health and social care.
17. A new commitment to taxing unearned wealth, including Land Value Taxation and pressing for the urgent completion of the Land Registry of land ownership, and the valuation of sites to enable this reform.
18. Measures to dampen the growth of asset bubbles in opposition to Conservative approaches which tend to increase that growth.
19. Support for more diverse home and business ownership models including co-ownership, worker ownership, social enterprise, mutuality and co-operation.
20. Working to adjust the tax system away from subsidy of high leverage debt and tackle the bias against equity investment.



*Applicability: Federal, except 3, 13, and 16, housing aspects of 1, and land tax aspects of 17 which are England only.*

### **Background Briefing**

*This motion reaffirmed and updated policy on the economy, building on existing policy as set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015), policy paper 109, Green Growth and Green Jobs (2013), policy paper 105, Sustainable Prosperity and Jobs (2012), policy motion Strengthening the UK Economy (2013) and policy motion Generating Jobs and Growth in a Time of Austerity (2012).*

**Drafting Amendments:** *The Federal Conference Committee accepted several drafting amendments to the motion that:*

- *Inserted b)*
- *Inserted 2.*
- *Inserted 9.*
- *In 17. inserted everything after 'Land Value Taxation'*
- *In 19. deleted 'ownership models' and inserted everything after 'for more diverse'*
- *Inserted 20.*

**Amendments:** *Conference voted to accept one amendment and reject another.*

*The amendment that was accepted included environmental and sustainability aspects of the economy, including inserting i), m), 6, 7, and 8.*

*The amendment that was rejected proposed to include reference to the digital and creative industries.*

## Privacy and Security in a Digital Age

Conference asserts that the Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free, and open society, in which liberty and security are fundamental values.

Conference recognises the urgent need for coherent and comprehensible legislation to govern the powers and capabilities of the security, intelligence, and police services; this is needed to protect both the safety of citizens and our essential right to a private life.

Conference notes:

- i) Work done by Liberal Democrats in government to block the 'Snoopers' Charter' and establish a major review of investigatory and surveillance powers and safeguards.
- ii) That technology has become an essential and omnipresent part of life, and access to our personal technology provides a full picture of our personality, movements, and sensitive personal information.
- iii) The findings of Liberal Democrat-commissioned reviews by David Anderson QC, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, and the Royal United Services Institute; and the review of the Intelligence and Security Committee.
- iv) That reform of surveillance laws has, in part, been triggered by Edward Snowden's revelations and resulting public outrage.
- v) That given that most perpetrators of recent terrorist atrocities have been known to security and law enforcement agencies, it is clear that intrusive surveillance powers only form one part of the tools available to security and intelligence agencies and law enforcement; community-based intelligence and proper resourcing are also essential to fight serious crime and terrorism.
- vi) That Britain faces sustained threats from terrorist groups such as ISIL/Daesh, serious and organised crime, cyber-attacks, and other organisations, and the vital role played by the police and intelligence services in combating these threats.
- vii) The vital role communications data has played in major investigations and prosecutions, and the danger of losing this data as communication moves online.
- viii) That the UK should set an example in this field and that introducing unduly intrusive surveillance powers without proper safeguards would have a reputational effect and could lead to other countries unacceptably extending their own powers.

Conference believes:

- a) Systematic surveillance without suspicion conflicts with universal values and fundamental rights, including the rights to a private life, freedom of expression, association, conscience and religion or belief.
- b) Liberal Democrats remain opposed to the blanket collection of UK residents' communications by the police or intelligence agencies; and are concerned that intelligence agencies have long had access to UK citizens' phone metadata in bulk and in secret.
- c) All proposals regarding investigatory powers must be both necessary and proportionate, oversight and safeguards must be robust, and judicial authorisation must be independent, objective, and not confined by judicial review principles.

- d) Any interception and storage of Internet traffic by or on behalf of government agencies is potentially a threat to our human rights; access should only be allowed in response to specific intelligence of an identified serious threat and subject to the strictest safeguards and time-limited judicial authority; collateral information must not be disclosed to anyone, and must be securely destroyed.
- e) Proposals for providing 'Internet Connection Records' isolated from other internet activity appear to be technically complex, disproportionately costly, and easily circumvented; in addition, the operational case for, and the technical capability to carry out, bulk collection and storage of non-business purposes data by Internet Service Providers has yet to be made.
- f) Current legislation has prevented those who have been surveilled unlawfully from taking a direct part in any review proceedings or, where appropriate, from seeking an effective remedy.
- g) Public trust in the work of the intelligence and security services is essential to a fair, free and open society, and that clear public agreement of their remit and the extent of their powers would be beneficial to all.

Conference therefore calls for:

1. All powers to be necessary, proportionate and fully compliant with the European Convention of Human Rights.
2. Parliament to be given all necessary information and sufficient time for full and proper scrutiny of the Investigatory Powers Bill.
3. The proposed Judicial Commissioners created by the draft bill to be given full and independent powers for judicial authorisation over all requests for intercept, bulk data acquisition, and retention.
4. No bulk collection of Internet Connection Records to be undertaken unless it can be shown by the Home Office that it is technically possible to restrict intrusion to the level of that held in respect of call records, and that data would be collected and stored safely.
5. Any data retained under investigatory powers to be held for the shortest time possible and for the strongest possible precautions taken during storage, communication, or destruction.
6. Maintenance of strong and effective encryption which is the basis of our online security, and should never be weakened to aid state surveillance.
7. The introduction of a post-hoc notification requirement for those subjected to surveillance, with necessary exemptions including those safeguarding ongoing surveillance and threats.
8. Any violation of the confidentiality of communications between journalists and their sources, elected officials and their constituents, and lawyers and their clients to be subject to additional safeguards including senior independent judicial authorisation.
9. Establishment of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Board which we legislated for in coalition and which the Conservative government has so far failed to establish, ensuring civil liberties are properly considered when formulating government policy on counter-terrorism.
10. A transparent international framework to govern the transfer of personal data between legal jurisdictions.

*Applicability: Federal*

***Background Briefing***

*This motion developed and updated policy in response to the Investigatory Powers Bill that was then before Parliament at the time. Previous policy on privacy and the surveillance powers of the police and security services was set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015), policy motion A Digital Bill of Rights (2014), and policy motion Civil Liberties (2012).*

***Drafting Amendments:*** *The Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to the motion that in a) after 'religion' inserted 'or belief'.*

## Regulatory Framework for Cannabis

Conference notes:

- i) That existing Liberal Democrat policy calls for those arrested with drugs for personal use to be diverted to treatment if they are problematic users or given education or Fixed Penalty Notices if they are not.
- ii) That the aim of drugs policy should be primarily to reduce public health harms and, as such, responsibility for drugs policy should sit predominantly with the Department of Health.
- iii) Existing Liberal Democrat policy enabling doctors to prescribe cannabis for medicinal use.
- iv) The growing number of international examples of cannabis being legally regulated, including in Uruguay and four US states, legal cannabis use in Dutch coffee shops and Spain's registered cannabis social clubs, decriminalisation in Portugal, and plans from the Liberal Government in Canada to legislate for regulation.
- v) The report from the independent expert panel on cannabis regulation convened by Norman Lamb which recommends how a regulated framework for cannabis could be implemented in the UK, with a view to reducing public health harms.
- vi) That economic analysis of the effect of legalising cannabis has found it could save the public purse £200–300 million per year in the criminal justice system and generate between £400 and £900 million in tax revenue, and that these figures were endorsed by the Treasury in a report commissioned by Liberal Democrat Ministers in the Coalition.
- vii) That evidence exists suggesting heavy use of cannabis in mid-late teens may impair memory formation and retention in early adulthood

Conference believes that:

- A. Debate around effective ways to reduce harm caused by drugs should be based on evidence of what works, not on political prejudice.
- B. It is not right that every year tens of thousands of people receive a criminal record for recreational use of cannabis, leaving a devastating long-term impact on their education and employment chances.
- C. As with all drugs, cannabis carries health risks and through legal regulation it is possible to make cannabis products far safer for use than when they are sold through an unregulated criminal market.
- D. The Government should not miss out on hundreds of millions in tax revenue from sales of cannabis products while criminal gangs collect hundreds of millions of pounds in untaxed profits.
- E. The safer-to-use cannabis provided through a regulated market, along with educational programmes and effective signposting, can help support teenagers to reduce or stop usage of cannabis, thus lowering the risk of memory damage in adulthood.

Conference calls for:

1. Government to develop a framework for the legal regulation of cannabis in the UK, taking account of the recommendations of the independent expert panel convened by the Liberal Democrats and taking into account evidence from international frameworks for the regulation of cannabis, including:
  - a) The establishment of an independent regulatory authority to oversee and license the production and sale of cannabis products.
  - b) Age restrictions on the sale of cannabis products and health information made available to all purchasers at the point of sale.
  - c) Clear limits on the strength of cannabis products made commercially available.
  - d) Clearly defined premises in which cannabis products can be sold, including the introduction of cannabis social clubs.
  - e) Clear restrictions around the packaging and marketing of cannabis products.
  - f) No promotion of cannabis products should depict the smoking of tobacco
  - g) A system of taxation which is designed to discourage more harmful use.
  - h) The re-scheduling of cannabis to allow doctors the freedom to prescribe cannabis products as medicines to their patients where they consider it will be beneficial.
  
2. Government to increase expenditure on public health education programmes about the risks of drug use to ensure consumers are informed about the risks of consumption and to discourage harmful drug use; such programmes should include, but not be limited to, public health care providers (especially primary care), secondary schools, Further and Higher Education settings, prisons and detention centres.

*Applicability: Federal, except 2 which is England only.*

### ***Background Briefing***

*This motion developed policy on the legal regulation of cannabis in the UK. Previous policy was set out in the General Election Manifesto, Stronger Economy. Fairer Society. Opportunity for Everyone (2015), and policy paper 118, Doing What Works to Cut Crime (2014).*

### ***Drafting Amendments***

*The Federal Conference Committee accepted drafting amendments to the motion that inserted f).*

### ***Amendments***

*Conference voted to accept one amendment that referenced educational programmes for teenagers and young adults. It inserted vii), E, and in 2 inserted everything after 'drug use'.*

## Towards a Stable and Peaceful Syria

Conference condemns:

- A. The sustained violent suppression of democratic opposition by the regime of President Assad in Syria and the resulting humanitarian catastrophe.
- B. The reign of violent, sectarian terror that Daesh is spreading in parts of Syria.

Conference notes with concern:

- i) The targeting of legitimate opposition groups in Syria by the Russian army.
- ii) The severity of the humanitarian disasters that have been created by the conflict in Syria and the resulting instability across the region.
- iii) The increasingly sectarian nature of the Syria conflict.
- iv) The strain that the resulting refugee crises is putting on countries in the region, in particular the strain on Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.
- v) The lack of safe and legal routes for refugees which is leading to millions attempting dangerous crossings into Europe.
- vi) The inability of countries across Europe to work towards a cohesive solution to the refugee crisis in our continent, and the resulting rise in anti-refugee rhetoric and violence.
- vii) Escalating violence between the Turkey and the Kurdish minorities in Turkey and across the region.

Conference welcomes:

- a) The Department for International Development's continued commitment to providing humanitarian aid to all those who are suffering in the region.
- b) The UK government's hosting of the Syria Donor conference in February 2016 to encourage international partners to help fund support in Syria.

Conference believes that a strong EU with Britain at its core will be more effective in helping the Syrian people and in facing down the mischievous policies of certain states intervening in Syria for their own ends, than would be the case if Britain were to leave the EU.

Conference calls on the UK government to:

1. Play a leading role alongside the European Union in the Geneva III process and the current tentative cessation of hostilities, including ensuring the participation of women in peace talks.
2. Support the moderate opposition groups in Syria and where possible protect them from abuses by the Assad Regime and Russia.
3. Investigate the creation of humanitarian corridors and no-fly zones over Syria.

4. Continue to work closely with our international allies to stop and reverse the spread of Daesh in Syria, Iraq and beyond.
5. Increase the number of refugees the UK takes both from the region and from within Europe, and work with the European Union to create safe and legal routes in order to end the dangerous passage of peoples across the Mediterranean.
6. Maintain its commitment to provide regular updates to the Parliament on the status of military operations in Syria.

*Applicability: Federal*

***Background Briefing***

*This motion substantially developed and updated policy on the crisis in Syria. Previous policy was set out in policy motion The Arab Awakening (2011).*



# Business Motions

## Appointment of the Federal Appeals Panel 2016-2020

Conference confirms the reappointment of the following members to the Panel for a second five year term of office:

- a) Judy Broadway.
- b) Alan Masters.
- c) Paul Roberts.
- d) Alan Sherwell.
- e) Monica Whyte.

Conference confirms the appointment of the following new members to the Panel for a five-year term of office:

- 1. William Charnley.
- 2. Catherine Smart.
- 3. Giles Bailey.
- 4. Ian Jolly.

## Electing Diverse MPs

### Conference notes:

- I. The Liberal Democrats' commitment to eliminating all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, colour, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, and opposition to all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality.
- II. The need for the country's elected bodies and party structures to reflect the diversity of the society we live in.
- III. The insufficient diversity among the party's past and present representatives in the House of Commons.
- IV. The efforts made to date to increase diversity amongst the party's Westminster candidates, including the Campaign for Gender Balance and the Leadership Programme, which led to more than half of all candidates in target or held seats being women.
- V. The definition of under-represented groups in guidance to political parties in the Equality Act 2010 as inclusive of women, BAME, LGBT+ and disability.
- VI. With regret that despite the success of measures taken recently, there has been a limited impact on the proportion of individuals elected from under-represented groups and low socio-economic backgrounds.
- VII. That whilst selection of candidates is a matter devolved to the state parties, the Federal Party supports actions that are already being taken in England, Scotland and Wales to improve diversity amongst Liberal Democrat candidates and elected representatives.
- VIII. The proportion of Liberal Democrat councillors who are female has stayed flat at around one third for 25 years.

### Conference acknowledges that:

- a) The party's list of approved Westminster candidates does not fully reflect the communities we aim to serve.
- b) The party at all levels needs to ensure that candidates from under-represented groups are attracted to apply and then selected to stand for elected office.
- c) To have a more diverse set of MPs, the party must concentrate its efforts to increase the number of diverse candidates in the most winnable Westminster seats.
- d) Proposals will be coming forward on wider party diversity, including in party structures and local government, as part of the Federal Executive-led Governance Review to the Autumn Federal Conference.
- e) Our use of zipping in past EU elections shows that positive action can be very effective.
- f) Scottish Liberal Democrats do not allow seat selections to proceed unless 40% of the short-list is female, and that seats have been asked to re-advertise where their efforts to increase diversity were not deemed sufficient, and welcomes Scottish Leader Willie Rennie's working group which is considering measures to improve gender balance in future elections.

Conference recognises that:

- i) The party is required to consider the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, including Section 104, which permits political parties to take proportionate positive action to reduce inequality in the party's representation in Westminster, but does not allow shortlists for candidate selections to be restricted to individuals with protected characteristics other than by gender and disability.
- ii) In percentage terms, the largest single under-represented group is women, who make up 51% of the UK population.
- iii) Individuals may have more than one protected characteristic which should be taken into consideration in any intervention.
- iv) There can be minorities who are under-represented even within under-represented groups and that this should be taken into consideration in any intervention.
- v) Liberal Democrats continue to value candidates from over-represented groups, and will ensure that training and support is available for them.

Conference therefore resolves that to increase the proportion of Liberal Democrats from under-represented groups in the House of Commons the Liberal Democrats will:

- A. Continue and extend support for individuals seeking approval or selection as Westminster candidates from under-represented groups, thus building on the work that has been done in the past including the Leadership Programme.
- B. Create a '2020 Candidate Diversity Task Force' to co-ordinate and monitor party-wide efforts to actively recruit parliamentary candidates from under-represented groups from both inside and outside the Party. This will include a focus on recruiting candidates with more than one protected characteristic and from minorities who are under-represented even within under-represented groups. The Task Force will work with ALDC and our cohort of councillors, recognising that, whilst local government is important in its own right, it can also be a good recruiting ground for potential Parliamentary candidates. It will report to the Federal Executive, working with the Diversity Engagement Group as appropriate. The Task Force will have one representative each from the three state parties, the Federal Executive, ALDC, EMLD, LDDA, LGBT+, LDW, Liberal Youth and PCA and be led by a Candidate Diversity Champion appointed by the Leader and the President. The Federal Executive Report to Conference will include updates on the work of the Candidate Diversity Task Force.
- C. Through the work of the 2020 Candidate Diversity Task Force and Candidate Diversity Champion, in association with SAOs, AOs, ALDC and parliamentary candidates, examine the party's approval and selection processes, and the role of PPCs after selection, to identify barriers that may exist for under-represented groups, including those identified in the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Selection, as well as disadvantaged groups including those from a low socio-economic background. Solutions will be proposed to overcome these barriers; to seek to make proposals to increase diversity at all levels in the party; and to bring forward proposals on how to address the emotional, practical and financial challenges facing candidates from under-represented groups.

- D. Working in conjunction with ALDC, the 2020 Candidate Diversity Task Force shall undertake a project to encourage a more diverse local government base including identifying any barriers which exist for currently under-represented groups. It will also consider good practice from council groups across the country that more accurately reflect the diversity of their communities.
- E. Campaign to amend the Equality Act 2010 to remove the restrictions on shortlists for candidate selections for people from under-represented groups.

Conference recommends that:

1. Any local party should be able to vote for an all-women shortlist or an all-disabled shortlist, or reserve some spaces for candidates from other under-represented groups.
2. As a minimum the three state parties should follow the Canadian Liberal Party practice of requiring the relevant Local Party to provide documented evidence to their region or state (as relevant) of a thorough search for potential candidates from under-represented groups before being granted permission to start their Westminster selection process; this should apply in those seats where the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate received more than 15% of the vote in the 2015 General Election but the seat is not held by the Liberal Democrats.
3. In Scotland, Wales and each Region of the English Party, take measures to move towards a slate of candidates that reflects the diversity of the state or region, in line with the Leader's ambition of having at least 50% women candidates and at least 10% BAME candidates across Great Britain and set out to each Local Party the options they can take to improve diversity, including the use of 'banding', and the potential to reserve places on shortlists for people from under-represented groups within the terms of Section 104 of the Equalities Act. State Parties should report on the implementation of each of these measures.
4. If any sitting MP elected in 2015 decides not to contest the next General Election, his replacement should be selected from an all-women shortlist.
5. In Scotland, Wales, and each Region of the English Party where there are two or more non-held seats which gained 25% or more of the General Election vote in May 2015, the regions should designate as a minimum of one seat not held by a Liberal Democrat MP to select its candidate from an all-women shortlist. Where these seats are affected by boundary changes, the party's rules on re-running selection processes will apply.
6. In addition to the one seat identified in 5. above, where the Liberal Democrat parliamentary result at the 2015 General Election was in the 10% of seats which had the highest percentage vote without returning a Liberal Democrat MP, the selection shortlist for the 2020 General Election should, subject to sufficient applications, include at least two candidates from under-represented groups.
7. Ask ALDC to submit recommendations within twelve months to the three State Parties on measures that should be taken to ensure gender balance and diversity across both council groups and amongst selected council candidates.

### ***Drafting Amendments***

*The Federal Conference Committee accepted drafting amendments to the motion that:*

- *In I. after 'religion' inserted 'or belief' and after 'sex' inserted ', gender identity'*
- *Inserted VIII.*
- *Inserted E.*
- *Inserted 7.*

### ***Amendments***

*Conference voted to accept one amendment and reject another.*

*The accepted amendment added a resolution to campaign to amend the Equality Act 2010 and to set out to local parties the action that was open to them during selection under the Equality Act 2010, by inserting D and everything after 'Great Britain' in C.*

*The rejected amendment sought to remove allowances in the motion for All-Women and All-Disabled Shortlists.*

# Constitutional Amendments

## Allowing AOs and SAOs to enrol members to the Liberal Democrats

*In Article 3.2 of the Federal Constitution, after clause 3.2 c) insert:*

d) any Specified Associated Organisation or Associated Organisation that the Federal Executive considers ought to be entitled to enrol members to the party.

--

*The relevant section of the Federal Constitution as amended becomes:*

3.2 Membership shall be acquired through an enrolling body, being:

(a) a Local Party in the area of which the member lives, works or studies (or, with its consent, another Local Party);

(b) a Specified Associated Organisation representing youth and/or students; or

(c) a State Party in accordance with its internal procedures (and so that any overseas member in a location where there is no Local Party may become a member via a State Party designated by the Federal Executive to act as agent for the Federal Party).

d) any Specified Associated Organisation or Associated Organisation that the Federal Executive considers ought to be entitled to enrol members to the party.

## Questions on Reports to Conference

### Campaign for Gender Balance

There were no questions to this report.

### Diversity Engagement Group

There were no questions to this report.

### Federal Conference Committee

#### Q1 Submitted by Simon McGrath

What studies has the FCC carried out on the possibility of members being able to attend Conference remotely?

#### Answer by Andrew Wiseman

FCC have discussed technology on a number of occasions – but it is constantly changing and we need to keep it under review. We live stream our auditorium sessions, but this does not allow members to speak or vote. Having taken advice from the Electoral Reform Society, we are not convinced that technology is at a place or cost where we can realistically implement remote voting and speaking in a way that is both secure and reliable. It is, however, something we will carry on looking at and will keep under review.

#### Q2 Submitted by Caron Lindsay

What is FCC's policy regarding making arrangements for members to access meetings remotely by either dialling in or over the internet and when was this policy adopted?

#### Answer by Andrew Wiseman

For a number of years we have organised dial-ins to FCC meetings. At the time we agreed this, we discussed whether we should have dial-in provisions for agenda-setting meetings, and decided that we would not. These meetings are looking back and looking forward as we decide which motions and amendments to select. During the course of these meetings, we generally have over 50 votes – and thus came to the conclusion that having participation over the phone was simply impractical.

### Federal Executive

*Subsequent to this report, the Committee Election Regulations were agreed by Conference.*

#### Q1 Submitted by Mick Taylor

The long awaited report into the 2015 General Election has now been published.

- a) Will the Chair of FE give the party an assurance that the report will be acted upon with despatch with action being taken on all its recommendations before the next conference and preferably before the May elections and the referendum?

- b) Will the Chair of FE give an assurance to the party that the recommendations of the report into the 2014 European Elections will also be fully implemented in the same timescale?
- c) Will the Chair of FE give the party the assurance that the review of the party's central office functions and staff will take into account the clearly identified failures of leadership both political and professional and that this will be reflected in the revised organisation?
- d) Will the Chair of FE give an assurance that the FE will give serious consideration to locating the bulk of HQ functions outside of London to cut costs with the result of freeing up more money for campaigning?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

- a) There will be an action plan from FE for the implementation of the recommendations of this report
- b) We have picked up many recommendations from the 2014 review already
- c) Yes, this has been done and will be looked at
- d) Certainly at the moment with reduced staff we do not think it is sensible to have a move. We did discuss it, but we are not at this point planning to move out of London.

**Supplementary Question by Mick Taylor**

Can we put a timescale on this?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

We're drawing up an action plan with timescales on each of the recommendations. In reports to future conferences, there will be updates on these timetables.

**Q2 Submitted by Alisdair McGregor**

Can the Federal Executive provide an explanation as to why the party has not selected European election candidates in time for them to campaign and raise their profile in the European referendum, despite the fact that the referendum was well known to be coming?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

The Federal Executive supports the suggestion that this should have been done faster.

**Supplementary Question by Alisdair McGregor**

The English Party not selecting candidates on time I will add to my existing problems with the English Party. During the governance review can you give us assurances that you will look at removing candidate selection from the English state party?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

No I can't give you any assurances around that as it is not my role. In the English party regions need to play a stronger part.

**Q3 Submitted by Alisdair McGregor**

Can the Federal Executive provide an update on the progress of the 2014 European elections review, and a timetable for the implementation of any recommendations therefrom?



**Answer by Sal Brinton**

FE has already taken up many recommendations from the 2014 election review, and has been monitoring implementation in meetings. Many of the recommendations are now updated by the 2015 election review and we will be working to implement that.

**Q4 Submitted by Sarah Noble**

What steps are the Federal Executive taking to ensure that our pastoral care structures are not abused by third parties to further engage in harassment?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

All complaints are being taken very seriously. Trends in complaints, eg complaints submitted by the same person are being monitored. The Pastoral Care Officer reports in to the Federal Executive on an anonymised basis and very few complaints have been raised.

**Supplementary Question from Sarah Noble**

What assistance can the party, and FE, give to members of the party on the basis of political activism?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

It's really important that we all stand up for each other. We should all be the ones to step in.

**Q5 Submitted by Gareth Epps**

Why did the Federal Executive sign off a radical staff restructure months before the investigation into the calamitous 2015 General Election campaign concluded what lessons needed to be learnt?

**Answer by Sal Brinton**

Decisions on this were not taken in isolation – myself and James Gurling were talking to Tim Gordon, wanting to make sure we were informing the view. There were a string of things we needed to look at urgently, including financial pressures – by acting early, we managed to avoid any 2010-style layoffs. We were very mindful that FE did not want a staff reorganisation to happen in 2016 which would impact on the EU referendum and devolved elections. The new structure also has a number of benefits, including being project team-based.

**Supplementary Question from Gareth Epps**

Looking at the future, given that previous reviews were not actioned, can you make sure there are party bodies and party staff who have implementing the review points built into their performance objectives.

**Q6 Submitted by Jennie Rigg**

Which party bodies and organisations did Federal Executive consult prior to submitting the diversity motion that is before this conference?

### **Answer by Sal Brinton**

FE didn't start this motion – three other Diverse MPs motions were being drafted and at that point we believed it was better to pull all party bodies together, including Daisy Cooper, Prue Bray, and FE. Party bodies including diversity SAOs and state parties were consulted. By the time we submitted the motion to conference, I was on version 78.

### **Supplementary Question from Jennie Rigg**

Congratulations on taking into account what has been said before.

## **Federal Finance and Administration Committee**

### **Q1 Submitted by Spencer Hagar**

Would you please describe the measures that you are taking to ensure that fundraising by the Party at UK national level is coordinated with the fundraising efforts of Local Parties, rather than risking cutting across and undermining them?

### **Answer by Peter Dunphy**

HQ fundraising covers 2 areas only - larger federal donations and direct responses to member emails. We would be keen to have more involvement from local parties in UK fundraising, for example Legacy fundraising

### **Supplementary Question from Spencer Hagar**

What systematic co-ordination is there? I am from Cambridge Party, and there is often cross-cutting between national campaigns and local efforts.

### **Answer by Peter Dunphy**

It is difficult to comment on individual cases. HQ do try to co-ordinate their efforts with those of local parties.

### **Q2 Submitted by Jennie Rigg**

How does the FFAC disseminate information on decisions it has reached both to the wider party and to its members, other than this report?

### **Answer by Peter Dunphy**

FFAC is a sub-committee of the Federal Executive so it reports to them with full minutes and Q and A. There are some confidentiality considerations, but I would welcome further suggestions for further communication.

### **Supplementary Question from Jennie Rigg**

The question was aimed more at committee transparency.

### **Answer by Peter Dunphy**

Any member of the party who gives sufficient notice can attend federal committee meetings. Accounts and Donations need to be submitted to the Electoral Commission – this is all freely available online.

### **Q3 Submitted by Simon McGrath**

In light of the need to move out of Great George St what consideration has been given to moving those parts of HQ which do not need to be in London to a cheaper location?

### **Answer by Peter Dunphy**

All options have been looked at in joint FE/FFAC meetings, with an appointed sub-group to look at options. The CEO and Directors were asked to go away and come back with all options, including a single HQ in Manchester or Greater London, and the splitting up of HQ. Some functions really need to be in Central London eg Leader's Office, press officer. We looked at retaining these functions and sending other functions eg membership elsewhere, but although there were minority positions for different solutions, the clear consensus of both committees was to best to keep everyone together in a London location.

### **Supplementary Question from Simon McGrath**

IT, finance etc could be done elsewhere, so I am sorry that decision was reached.

## **Federal Policy Committee**

### **Q1 Submitted by Steve Bolter**

At the Autumn 2015 Conference, we voted not to support the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapon delivery system, but deferred related decisions on nuclear weapons, by commissioning a Policy Working Group.

What is the composition of the Working Party and how much progress has been made? Labour, the Greens and the SNP are making political capital out of their opposition to Trident renewal. Why are we not doing the same?

### **Answer by Baroness Smith**

The working group was appointed by the FPC in January, held its first meeting in February and is due to meet again next week. It has 22 members (9 women, 13 men), with an attempt at a balance of the differing views on this subject. The group is being chaired by Neil Stockley and I don't propose to read out all 22 other names now but we will place the list on the party website.

### **Q2 Submitted by Alisdair McGregor**

Can the Federal Policy Committee update conference on the progress of the protecting children from online pornography motion which was referred back to it at the 2013 autumn conference?

### **Answer by Baroness Smith**

It has been agreed that the Sex Work Policy Working Group being chaired by Belinda Brooks-Gordon will expand its remit to take on pornography rather than setting up a separate working group.

### **Supplementary from Alisdair McGregor**

What representations have been sought from Liberal Youth and LGBT+ Liberal Democrats as the two SAOs most directly concerned with the issue?

### **Answer by Baroness Smith**

I will check with the chair and get back to you.

## **Parliamentary Parties**

### **Q1 Submitted by Andrew Hudson**

Did the party in the Lords support the rights of agency workers and supply teachers who refuse to strike break in the trade union bill?

### **Answer by Lord Wallace**

This issue does not actually come up in the Trade Union Bill – it is something that Government is intending to do through regulations.

The proposed change in the regulations that the Government have been consulting on is to allow the engagement of agency workers to replace employees involved in disputes. This is likely to be quite inflammatory and will probably become racially charged if they use immigrant staff to fill these positions. It is not in the Trade Union Bill and we are simply waiting for it come through subsequently.

We would not support the Governments proposals to allow agency workers to be used to break strikes and therefore we are supporting agency workers and supply teachers rights to refuse to do strike breaking work.

### **Q2 Submitted by Andrew Hudson**

Has the party in the commons opposed the recent regulations restricting local authorities from adopting ethical procurement policies?

### **Answer by Tom Brake MP**

We believe in localism and devolution and are therefore against this. We favour local authorities being able to make their own decisions. I have written to government opposing the ban on ethical procurement.

### **Supplementary from Andrew Hudson**

Would these regulations prohibit a local authority using a Fairtrade product?

### **Answer by Tom Brake MP**

I have written to government asking about the implications for Fairtrade products. I will respond to you individually as I have not yet received a response.

**Q3 Submitted by Steve Bolter**

Labour, the Greens and the SNP are making political capital out of their opposition to Trident renewal. Why are we not doing the same? Do we have to wait until the Working Party makes its post-Trident recommendations?

**Answer by Tom Brake MP**

We have an existing policy to oppose like-for-like replacement. When the working group reports back we will consider this further through our normal democratic processes.

**Answer by Lord Wallace**

The position in the Lords is the same - we have an existing policy to oppose like-for-like replacement and that would determine our response in any debates.

**Q4 Submitted by Andrew Hudson**

What is the Parliamentary Parties' position on the extension of Sunday trading hours?

**Answer by Tom Brake MP**

There is no formal party policy on this issue. In the vote last week in Parliament, the party allowed a free vote on the issue. The Government lost that vote.

**Supplementary Question from Andrew Hudson**

There have been reports that extending Sunday trading would put prices up.

**Answer by Tom Brake MP**

As a result of the vote, hours are not being extended so this will not be an issue.

# Motions Not Passed

## Representation of Peers on Federal Committees

In Article 8.1, (i) (i), after 'MPs' insert 'or Peers'.

In Article 8.1, delete (i) (e) and insert:

(e) *the Leader of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Lords.*

In Article 7.2, delete (d).

In Article 7.2 (i), delete 'one more person' and insert 'two more persons', and after 'are MPs' insert 'or Peers'.

### ***Background Briefing***

*This constitutional amendment aimed to prevent Peers from having representatives on Federal Committees (except for the Federal Executive) by right, and to prevent them from standing for direct election. It was rejected by Conference.*