



Conference Report
Spring 2021

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Policy Motions

A Better Response to the Impact of COVID-19 on Education

Conference notes that:

- i) Young people's education and opportunities have been hit hard by COVID-19.
- ii) The cumulative impact of disruption to education during the COVID-19 pandemic has not been evenly spread among those in education, and that those with fewer resources have been hit disproportionately hard.
- iii) The impact on educational opportunities has also been unevenly spread across English regions, with some regions hit with far greater disruption to schooling than others.
- iv) The Education Policy Institute report of a survey of schools on the financial implications of the pandemic for schools concluded that "school budgets are likely to be under increased pressure" and that "the pressure will be felt most in schools with high levels of disadvantage".
- v) The pandemic has had a very serious impact on young people's mental health, as well as their educational opportunities.
- vi) In Wales, Kirsty Williams as Education Minister has identified ways to mitigate many of these impacts and turn some of them into opportunities to improve education in the long run. Wales has also introduced a 'Pupil Development Grant' to support more disadvantaged pupils.
- vii) Pupils with Special Educational Needs have been left even further behind and have experienced greater delays in EHCPs.
- viii) LGA analysis shows spending by local authorities on youth services nationally has reduced by 69 per cent since 2010/11, from £1.4 billion to £429 million, with the loss of more than 4,500 youth work jobs and the closure of 750 youth centres. Such youth services offer young people safe places to meet, support them to succeed in school, training, or employment, and help them avoid long-term unemployment, mental health problems, and being lured into criminal activity.
- ix) The pandemic has made the need for such services greater than ever.
- x) Meanwhile the National Citizen Service (NCS) receives an estimated 95 per cent of the Government's youth services budget, despite only one in six eligible young people taking part and a fall of eight per cent in participants in the past year; National Citizen Service offers just two to four weeks of voluntary activity for 16 to 17-year-olds, receiving £1.26 billion in government funding from 2016 to 2020.

- xi) The government's apprenticeship levy has cost businesses millions of pounds, but there has been little or no analysis of the impact of the levy.
- xii) Much of the apprenticeship levy remains unspent.

Conference believes that:

- a) More must be done to ensure that the impact of the pandemic on the life chances of young people is recognised and urgent action must be taken to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged in the long term.
- b) Given the uneven nature of the impact of the pandemic on children in different areas of England and with different home circumstances and access to online learning, to continue to base the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels on exams alone would be deeply unfair.
- c) Many of the approaches pioneered in Wales could also be beneficial in England, in particular programmes to tackle holiday hunger and support access to digital tools.
- d) Investment is needed in youth work, mental health support and pastoral care in schools to ensure young people are able to recover from both educational and emotional damage as a result of the pandemic.
- e) Some of the National Citizen Service funding would be better spent on all-year-round provision for young people of all ages, rather than a time-limited programme which is restricted to a narrow age group and is attracting only a relatively small number of teenagers.
- f) At this time of national crisis, which is hitting the work opportunities of the young particularly hard, young people at the start of their careers should be the main beneficiaries of unspent apprenticeship levy money.

Conference therefore recommends that:

1. Given the ongoing disruption to education in many areas of England, over a prolonged period, while the move to alternative assessment is welcome for students due to take exams in 2021, thought needs to be given now to how students taking exams in 2022 can be assessed fairly.
2. Options should be developed to continue support to digital learning post pandemic. In particular, to support wider participation in less popular subjects such as Further Mathematics and Modern Foreign Languages in schools where they may not otherwise be available.
3. The money allocated to the National Citizens Service and the £500 million Youth Investment Fund programme for 2020 and 2021 be passed to local authorities to

provide expanded and targeted year-round youth work and education recovery programmes to improve the mental health and wider life chances of young people hit by the pandemic.

4. Any apprenticeship levy money unspent by companies which would be clawed back by the Treasury be allocated to local authorities in partnership with FE colleges and schools to ensure the maximum number of apprenticeship placements are available for young people leaving school and college in 2021.
5. Such local authority funded apprenticeship schemes should be granted flexibility over the work placement requirements until July 2022, as the need to get young people into training is urgent, and the number of employers with whom to partner in such schemes is likely to be restricted in the coming year.

Applicability: England only.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed education policy, specifically dealing with how to manage the impact of COVID-19 on education.

It built on previous policy in the policy motion *The Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* (September 2020), the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019), and policy paper 128 *Every Child Empowered: Education for a Changing World* (2018).

Vote to suspend standing orders: A vote was held to suspend standing orders, which failed to achieve the two-thirds majority required.

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment and rejected one amendment.

Amendment one added sections iv, vi, vii, c and 2, which acknowledged that many schools are under financial pressure, praised the work done by Kirsty Williams in Wales and encouraged support for digital learning.

Conference passed the amendment by 273 to 17.

Amendment two called for a 10-year roadmap for supporting children whose education has been disrupted by COVID-19, as well as an additional year of schooling.

Conference rejected the amendment by 155 to 129.

Separate votes: Conference voted by 157 to 154 to delete lines from amendment one, which would have allocated funds for a 'Covid Catch-Up Premium'.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 297 to 7.

Accessibility in Education

Conference notes that:

- i) Being able to easily access online learning resources and activities is imperative for networks, learning and communication in the modern digital age, allowing people to collaborate and overcome physical barriers and limitations.
- ii) Many young people cannot access the internet for various reasons, such as regional or financial inequality.
- iii) Young people cannot access the internet for various reasons, such as regional or financial inequality. These often intersect, particularly in rural areas, many of which lack broadband access and also suffer from high levels of poverty. Similarly, poorer parts of metropolitan areas are affected by both underinvestment and persistent poverty.
- iv) During a time where educational institutions are being disrupted, either due to COVID-19 or other reasons, technology is important for the continuation of learning, allowing teachers and students to access each other and share work and resources.
- v) Under the leadership of Liberal Democrat Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, the re-purposing of existing stocks of laptops and distribution of internet routers to disadvantaged learners happened far more quickly in Wales than in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Conference believes that:

- a) Those unable to access online learning resources and activities for financial or other reasons are at a significant disadvantage.
- b) Material should be readily available in all formats (including large print, audio and Braille and via assistive technology products and services for pupils with SEND).
- c) Internet connections vary across the country and can affect the usability and efficacy of some technologies.
- d) Every student should have access to online resources and up-to-date technology and software.
- e) Where courses are disrupted through emergencies such as COVID-19, colleges and universities should adopt a no-detriment policy when grading students and, in cases where no-detriment is not possible, appropriate adjustments and guarantees.

Conference calls for:

1. The government to offer universities funding to establish digital inclusion bursaries for items such as tablets or laptops for students from disadvantaged families in order to help with home and remote learning including assistive technology products and services to meet the needs of students with SEND and any training required to support students and teachers in making use of these.
2. The government to ensure every disadvantaged family and students have access to broadband that would be sufficient enough for home learning, by requiring internet service providers to offer a social tariff for broadband.
3. Universities to offer guidance on working and learning from home.
4. Greater communication between Universities and government to allow them to deliver these bursaries.
5. The use of 4G/5G routers as a temporary fix for places without a proper broadband infrastructure in order to improve internet access in parts of the country where internet speeds are slow.
6. The government to conduct a comprehensive review into digital exclusion among children and young people, including both long-running challenges and those exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.
7. The government to tackle digital exclusion by developing and funding a strategy that addresses the findings of this review.

Applicability: England only.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed education policy, specifically to improve access to digital technology for disadvantaged families and regions.

It built on previous policy in the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019).

Drafting Amendments

The Federal Conference Committee accepted several drafting amendments which:

- In b, after 'Braille' inserted: 'and via assistive technology products and services for pupils with SEND'.
- In e, deleted 'modules' and inserted: 'courses'.
- In e, after 'students' inserted: 'and, in cases where no-detriment is not possible, appropriate adjustments and guarantees'.

- In 1, after 'learning' inserted: 'including assistive technology products and services to meet the needs of students with SEND and any training required to support students and teachers in making use of these'.

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment

The amendment replaced section ii and added sections 6 and 7, which called for a comprehensive review of access to digital technology for young people, to close the digital exclusion gap.

Conference passed the amendment by 180 to 5.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 200 to 3.

Acting on the Russia Report

Conference notes that the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament's 'Russia Report' was published in July 2020, after many months of delay by the Conservative Government.

Conference notes with particular concern the report's findings that:

- I. "The UK is clearly a target for Russia's disinformation campaigns and political influence operations".
- II. The Conservative Government failed to take action to protect the UK against potential Russian interference in the 2016 EU referendum, and has commissioned no retrospective assessment of whether such interference took place.
- III. The Government has continued to fail to take the threat that Putin's Russia poses to our democracy seriously, despite clear evidence that it interfered to help Donald Trump become US President in 2016.
- IV. Lax regulation has turned London into a "laundromat" for illicit finance, and the National Crime Agency lacks the resources required to tackle it.
- V. Members of the Russian elite with close links to Putin are, through involvement in political organisations and donations to political parties, in positions "to assist Russian influence operations" in the UK.

Conference further notes with concern that:

- A. Transparency International has identified more than £5 billion worth of UK properties bought using suspicious wealth, one fifth of which originates from Russia.
- B. The Government has still not introduced legislation to establish a public beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property, despite promising it nearly five years ago.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- i) Take big money out of politics by reforming party funding in line with the Committee on Standards in Public Life's 2011 report, including a cap on donations.
- ii) Substantially increase funding for the National Crime Agency.

Conference calls on the Government to:

- a) Commission a wide-ranging and properly-funded investigation into potential Russian interference in our democracy, including the 2016 EU referendum, and publish the report as soon as possible.

- b) Make it a national security priority to protect the UK's democratic processes – including local democracy – from any threats or interference, with proper resourcing and clear ministerial responsibility.
- c) Introduce the Registration of Overseas Entities Bill without further delay.
- d) Amend the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 to include serious and organised crime as grounds for introducing sanctions.
- e) Cease its attempts to undermine parliamentary scrutiny, including by interfering in the membership of committees.

Conference further calls for the independence of the Intelligence and Security Committee to be strengthened by:

1. Enabling the Houses of Parliament to elect its members.
2. Giving it the power to decide what it publishes and when.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion responded to the publication of the Intelligence and Security Committee's 'Russia Report' and updated and developed wider policy on security. It built on previous policy in the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019) and policy paper *Safe and Free* (September 2016).

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 288 to 2.

A Pay Rise for NHS Staff

Conference recognises the sacrifice and hard work of all NHS staff, who have worked tirelessly to keep us safe throughout this pandemic and have cared for thousands of patients ill with COVID-19.

Conference further recognises the efforts of NHS staff and volunteers in vaccinating millions so efficiently and safely.

Conference notes its disappointment and dismay that the Department for Health and Social Care has recommended that NHS workers receive a pay increase this year of 1% which, as many have noted, amounts to a real-terms pay cut due to the rise in inflation expected this year.

Conference further notes the future pressures on the NHS workforce. Including, the growing backlog of postponed medical appointments, specifically operations and urgent cancer care, and the shortage of nurses and midwives in the NHS, estimated to be 50,000 and 3,000 respectively even before the pandemic.

Conference believes that NHS workers should receive a proper and substantial pay rise above inflation in 2021. Not only as a reward for their service but in an effort to retain experienced staff and attract new members to the workforce.

Conference further believes that increased mental health and psychological support is needed to help front line staff who may have become traumatised or ill over the last year.

Conference reaffirms its gratitude to all NHS staff and health and social care workers.

Applicability: England only.

Background briefing

This emergency motion created new policy in response to the government's announcement of a 1% pay rise for NHS Staff. It called for a substantial pay rise above inflation in 2021.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 235 to 2.

Autism Support

Conference notes that:

- i) Autism is a part of daily life for 2.8 million people in the UK.
- ii) The National Autistic Society found that 80% of autistic people wish they had more information about laws around autistic individuals.
- iii) Currently every autistic person has the right to a needs assessment under the Autism Act 2009, completed by an assessor with the skills, competency and knowledge of autism sufficient to undertake that assessment – however this is not always accessible for individuals.
- iv) Only 8% of autistic people and 5% of family members felt that health and care services had improved since the Autism Act.
- v) Only 16% of diagnosed autistic individuals are in full time employment and 32% in part time employment, but many adults remain undiagnosed due to unnecessary hurdles in the assessment system.
- vi) 77% of unemployed diagnosed autistic individuals want to work.
- vii) Misdiagnosis of autistic individuals is far too common – especially in ethnic minorities, women, girls and non-binary individuals.
- viii) Due to social misunderstandings, autistic individuals can unknowingly end up on the wrong side of the law – 4.5% of young offenders in Feltham have a diagnosis.
- ix) Autistic people are up to seven times more likely than the general population to be involved in the criminal justice system.
- x) Autistic people and their families may be eligible for a Blue Badge to access disabled parking spaces.
- xi) Autistic individuals are included in many invisible disability campaigns including the London 'Please offer me a seat' campaign.

Conference believes that:

- a) Every individual should be able to achieve their potential – neurodivergent or neurotypical.
- b) Autistic and other neurodivergent individuals not only are equal workers but can provide unique perspectives and be a substantial addition to the workplace.

- c) A diagnosis should not be a label, it is a tool there to support individuals in getting the help needed.

Conference resolves that:

1. Guidance on employment must be updated to ensure the Equality Act 2010 is fulfilled and employers can support autistic individuals in their employment.
2. Education about neurodivergence should be included on the curriculum in the same way mental health is currently.
3. Diagnosis must be made more accessible, by stopping gatekeeping and reducing steps required for diagnosis to be official in NHS terms.
4. Wait lists for diagnosis must be reduced by increasing funding and space for diagnosis.
5. Autistic women, girls, non-binary individuals and ethnic minorities must have equal access to support and diagnosis.
6. There should be increased training for teachers to acknowledge neurodiverse individuals, to both recognise behaviour and support different styles of learning.
7. There should be further improvements to the Autism Act 2009, to create obligations on employers and local authorities to support autistic people with their care assessments.
8. Autistic offenders should be met with support and not punishment when the crime is non-violent.
9. Sensory spaces should be provided for autistic individuals engaging with the justice system – whether as complainants or defendants or witnesses or staff.
10. Autism must not be represented as decreasing quality of life.

Applicability: England only; except 1., which is Federal; and 8. and 9., which are England and Wales.

Background briefing

This motion created new policy in relation to Autism. It called for a variety of measures to improve the lives of people with Autism.

Separate votes: Conference held a separate vote to delete ‘when the crime is non-violent’ which was rejected by 115 to 110.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 298 to 2.

Full Reopening of Schools

Conference notes that:

1. On the 8th March 2021, following a period of partial closure, schools and colleges in England re-opened, in full, to 10 million people.
2. The Government's own Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) recommended a phased reopening of schools.
3. Concerns have been expressed by major education organisations – including the NEU, Association of School and College Leaders and National Association of Head Teachers – that having all pupils return at the same time risks causing a surge in coronavirus cases and calling instead for a phased return of pupils.
4. With the exception of offering asymptomatic testing to pupils and staff, and secondary pupils being asked to wear masks, the Government have taken no other steps to ensure schools are safer for pupils and staff.
5. The Chancellor's Budget on the 3rd March 2021 failed to provide any additional funding to schools to help them meet the full costs associated with reducing the risks of coronavirus transmission.

Conference believes that:

- A. Young people have already suffered enormous disruption to their education and spent months isolated from their peers, while parents have been exhausted from the colossal efforts of juggling home schooling and their own work.
- B. It is right that, as we start to lift lockdown restrictions, schools opening more widely should be a top priority - but that it is equally important that this is done in a way which ensures they are able to stay open, safely, for good.
- C. School leaders, teachers and support staff have worked tirelessly to ensure schools are as safe as possible during the pandemic and should be applauded for their efforts, but that they have been left with completely inadequate support from the Government.
- D. The Government should have followed scientific advice when making the decision about how and when the wider opening of schools would happen.
- E. School leaders and Public Health Directors should be given greater powers to decide the best way to open and keep schools open safely, in a way that works for the students, parents and teachers of each school.

F. In Wales, under the leadership of the Liberal Democrat Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, there has been a phased reopening of schools, in line with scientific advice.

Conference therefore calls for:

- i) Government to immediately empower schools to use rotas which would enable social distancing in classrooms and help reduce transmission and suppress the R rate.
- ii) Government to trust school leaders to decide the best way to open schools safely and keep them open safely, subject to the approval of local Public Health Directors.
- iii) Government to issue guidance on the use of fines for non-attendance at school, to exempt pupils who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, until clear evidence is available about the impact of fully reopening schools on coronavirus transmission rates.
- iv) Government to distribute additional funding to schools and local authorities to implement measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission including: additional school transport so that bubbles are respected, ventilation units for every classroom and additional cleaning, and to make the process of distributing those funds as easy as possible.
- vi) Government to continue the roll out of laptops and tablets to pupils from low-income households who need one in order to learn remotely during periods of self-isolation or full closures of schools.
- vii) Government to continue to closely monitor the evidence of the impact which the full reopening of schools has on rates of coronavirus transmission; and if this has contributed to a rise in cases by the Easter holidays, to reconsider the use of rotas as an additional safety precaution at this point.

Applicability: England only.

Background briefing

This motion created new policy in response to the full reopening of schools in England on the 8th of March.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 226 to 9.

Fixing the Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Conference records its deep sorrow and outrage at the suffering and loss of life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, both here in the UK and globally, which has resulted in more than one hundred thousand deaths in the UK since our Autumn conference, a period of only six months.

Conference regrets the enormous economic damage caused by the virus and the hardship many people are facing, with the poorest, women and young people being hit hardest. Conference further regrets the social damage inflicted by the pandemic and the severe impact it has had on people's mental health and wellbeing, including as a result of incidences of domestic violence increasing dramatically over the last year.

Conference pays tribute to NHS staff, social care workers and volunteers that have worked tirelessly to get as many people vaccinated as efficiently and safely as possible, and have cared for those ill with COVID-19. Conference further pays tribute to the scientists and experts that helped to develop safe and highly effective vaccines in under a year, an unprecedented achievement.

Conference also welcomes the successful actions of local government in creating local systems involving ethnic, faith and other community leaders to drive up testing, tracing, isolating and vaccination rates amongst hard to reach individuals and communities.

Conference believes that it is clear that the UK Government failed to learn the lessons from earlier in the pandemic and failed to prepare for the Winter of 2020/21; in particular conference believes that:

- I. The Government has consistently been too late to put the country into lockdown despite rising infections and deaths.
- II. Ministers failed again to communicate clearly the importance of restrictions introduced to contain the virus, with mixed messaging, consistent conflation of guidance and rule of law, and several dithering U-turns.
- III. The Government was dishonest about the effects the Christmas relaxation of restrictions would have on the spread of the virus and the subsequent increase in deaths.
- IV. The confusion over the decision to shut schools just a day after the Prime Minister insisted it was safe to keep them open was extremely disruptive.
- V. There continues to be a failure to take full advantage of the strengths and expertise of local government.
- VII. The Government's failure to impose proper restrictions at borders has led to an increased number of deaths in the UK.

- VIII. The test, trace and isolate system continues to fail to contact people who have come into contact with the virus and still does not provide adequate support for those required to self-isolate.
- IX. Low vaccination rates amongst care workers reflects the difficulty many have had in booking appointments given their long hours and demanding work, loss of earnings without compensation, and the distance some must travel to vaccination centres.

Conference further notes that the Government broke the law by failing to report details of all contracts it has signed during the Covid pandemic; these deals were worth hundreds of millions of pounds and the public have a right to know how this money was spent and which companies were contracted to supply the Government.

In addition to reaffirming the motion passed at Autumn Conference 2020 (The Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic), conference calls on the Conservative Government to:

1. Fix the self-isolation scheme by:
 - a) Guaranteeing a payment equal to minimum wage to ensure that no one is forced to come out of isolation for lack of money.
 - b) Supporting the dependents of those isolating.
 - c) Providing appropriate accommodation free of charge to those who cannot easily self-isolate at home.
 - d) Putting in place and funding local public health teams, working with the NHS, to check in daily on those isolating to ensure they have everything they need to continue their isolation.
2. Mend the broken Track and Trace scheme by making much better use of existing expertise in local government.
3. Launch an independent public inquiry as promised by Boris Johnson immediately, so that lessons can be learnt as to how to handle future outbreaks and/or pandemics.
4. Reject the need for 'vaccine passports' – conference believes that 'vaccine passports' for domestic use:
 - a) Disproportionately impact those that have not yet had their vaccination and would lead to a two-tier system between those who have been vaccinated and those who have not.
 - b) Disadvantage people with certain medical conditions and those under the age of 18 who cannot be vaccinated

- c) Are difficult to enforce and could be open to forgery.
5. Implement simultaneous and immediate rollout of UK-purchased vaccines via COVAX, at the same time as it is happening in the UK, as requested by the WHO.
6. Support those working in the NHS and social care, and emergency services by:
 - a) Ensuring they have the protective equipment they need.
 - b) Providing them with adequate mental health support.
 - c) Giving them a pay award that properly recognises their service.
 - d) Granting all foreign nationals working in the NHS and social care indefinite leave to remain.
7. Increase support for disabled people through the social care, housing, education and mental health systems and safeguard their rights by scrapping the relaxations within the Coronavirus Act and rejecting the blanket issuing of 'do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation' decisions (DNACPRs).
8. Support those with 'Long Covid' by:
 - a) Committing to carrying out urgent research into the long-term effects of COVID-19 disease with the aim of identifying treatments and causes.
 - b) Developing a register for those suffering from Long Covid and create care pathways to ensure that all practitioners have the guidance to treat long-term COVID-19 patients effectively.
9. Tackle the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on black, asian and minority ethnic communities, and introduce a cross-government Race Equality Strategy.
10. Constantly assess and learn from countries that have successfully managed outbreaks of the virus, in particular, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and South Korea.
11. Apply quarantine to all travellers to England, not just to those travelling from so called 'red list' countries where there is a high prevalence of new variants.
12. Improve mental health support during the pandemic by:
 - a) Properly signposting the mental health support available during the coronavirus crisis.
 - b) Increasing the level of funding for mental health charities offering support during the coronavirus crisis.

- c) Providing additional investment in mental health services.
13. Ensure that migrants are not prevented from accessing vaccines, healthcare or financial support, by:
- a) Suspending the 'no recourse to public funds' rule.
 - b) Ending immigration checks and upfront charging in the NHS.
 - c) Establishing a firewall to prevent public agencies from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement.

Applicability: England only; except 5, 6 d)), 13 a) and 13 c), which are Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on COVID-19. It reaffirmed existing policy and introduced numerous measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19. Notably, it called for a rejection of a 'vaccine passport' and made recommendations for improving the test, trace and isolate systems. It built on previous policy as set out in policy motion *The Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* (September 2020).

Separate votes: Conference held a separate vote to delete section 7, which was rejected by 261 to 86.

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment.

The amendment added a line into section 7 which rejected the blanket issuing of 'do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation' decisions.

Conference passed the amendment by 350 to 7.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 381 to 14.

Giving Consumers a Fairer Deal (Utilities Policy Paper)

Conference notes the importance of utility industries and infrastructures – energy, water, telecommunications and rail:

- A. In the daily lives of everyone in the UK, as highlighted by the coronavirus crisis.
- B. To delivering Liberal Democrat aims of a lasting recovery from the coronavirus crisis and building an economy that is more balanced across the UK, more environmentally sustainable and more resilient to future shocks.

Conference believes that:

- i) The current system of utility regulation will not deliver the scale of investment needed to deliver our longer-term aims.
- ii) Liberalised utility markets and the regulation of network monopolies do not work to the benefit of all consumers, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers.

Conference calls for reforms of utility regulation to:

- I. Give consumers, especially vulnerable consumers, a fairer deal.
- II. Ensure that utilities contribute to Liberal Democrats' aims of establishing long-term growth across all the regions and nations of the UK and making the transition to net zero carbon by 2045 at the latest.

Conference therefore endorses policy paper 140, *Giving Consumers a Fairer Deal*, and in particular its proposals to:

- 1. Create fair retail markets for consumers by:
 - a) In energy:
 - i) Enabling disengaged customers to save money by bringing in collective opt-out switching.
 - ii) Protecting consumers using energy management and 'auto-switching' services.
 - iii) Protecting customers from company failures by ensuring that the customers given a new supplier under Supplier of Last Resort (SoLR) receive a competitive tariff.
 - iv) Requiring energy companies that offer a discount to customers who buy both electricity and gas to offer the same discount to customers who can not buy gas because it is not available where they live.

- b) In telecoms:
 - i) Preventing mobile operators from applying roaming charges for calls to and from EU countries.
 - ii) Requiring companies to inform customers of the cost when they attempt to access bundled services, so that they can end the call without charge.
 - iii) Requiring telecoms companies to continue to provide a webmail service at a regulated price to customers who switch provider.

- 2. Secure a better deal for consumers from network monopolies by:
 - a) Eliminating regional differentials on consumer electricity bills.
 - b) Bringing in a simpler fares structure for rail passengers.
 - c) Ensuring that price reviews deliver a fair balance between promoting the interests of consumers, securing the investment needed to deliver net-zero and resilient networks and making sure there is a reasonable return for shareholders.
 - d) Introducing outperformance sharing mechanisms to allow consumers to share in the benefits that equity investors achieve from high gearing.
 - e) In telecoms, moving towards regulation of the service being provided, rather than regulating particular players in the market, as part of a package of measures to address the growing power of 'big tech' companies.

- 3. Address the difficulties faced by vulnerable consumers, including elderly people, disabled people and people on low incomes by:
 - a) In energy:
 - i) Reforming the price cap, to target customers in vulnerable circumstances, with a new capped tariff set lower than the existing price cap.
 - ii) Ensuring that the Warm Homes Discount (and any successor scheme) is available to all customers in vulnerable circumstances.
 - iii) Ensuring that prepayment customers pay for their energy on the same basis as credit customers.

 - b) In water:

- i) Asking Ofwat and the water companies to set minimum criteria for the value, scope and eligibility criteria for social tariff schemes across the country.
 - ii) Requiring water companies to put a share of their own profits into social tariffs.
 - iii) Encouraging water companies to work more collaboratively to raise awareness of priority services and to be more pro-active in identifying customers in need of temporary support.
 - iv) Expanding opportunities for customers to reduce their water bills.
- 4. Reduce the 'digital divide' between different areas of the UK and different groups of the population by ensuring that regulation delivers:
 - a) Telecoms services that are accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live or their socio-economic status, and remain available for as long as they are needed.
 - b) Universal coverage and good performance of telecoms services to all consumers – our minimum standard will be access to broadband of at least 30Mbit/s downstream and 5Mbit/s upstream at an affordable price, and this will be reviewed as technology improves.
- 5. Strengthen consumer redress and advocacy by:
 - a) Pursuing a strategic re-design of regulation, to coordinate advice, advocacy, redress and regulation.
 - b) Promoting improved coordination between the regulators, to develop common approaches on consumer protection.
 - c) Giving Citizens Advice the statutory role to represent and support consumers in telecoms, building on its knowledge and expertise in energy.
 - d) Ensuring that protection is extended to areas which are currently unregulated, such as electric vehicles, heat networks and heat pumps.
- 6. Facilitate a more strategic approach by industries, government and regulators to future investment by:
 - a) Issuing strategic policy statements for each of the regulated sectors, consistent with Liberal Democrats' longer-term objectives.

- b) Establishing a new Railway Agency, responsible for the strategic management of the rail system and for planning new investments, working to a policy framework set by the government.
 - c) Modernising the way price controls are conducted, to encourage innovation by enabling more competition.
7. Ensure that regulators encourage companies and consumers to behave more consistently with our commitment to tackle the climate emergency by:
- a) Giving Ofgem, Ofwat, Ofcom and the new Railway Agency a primary duty to help deliver our net-zero target and to assist in building network resilience.
 - b) Requiring the regulators to show how their policies and decisions are aligned with, and promote the achievement of, our emissions targets and climate adaptation policies.
8. Make utility regulators more accountable by:
- a) Ensuring that Parliamentary Select Committees can scrutinise the regulators' performance in respect of their statutory duties and public policy aims, as set out in the strategic policy statements.
 - b) Improving monitoring and reporting, by requiring regulators to develop better and more accessible performance measures covering investment, quality of service, environmental protection and resilience.
9. Promote a public benefit company model for electricity distribution, gas distribution and water companies, so that particular economic and environmental policy objectives must be considered explicitly in the running of the companies.

Applicability: Federal; except 3. b) which is England and Wales.

Background briefing

This motion and the accompanying policy paper updated and developed policy on the utilities sector (energy, water, telecommunications and rail). It aims to improve outcomes for consumers, especially vulnerable consumers and those in regions with lower quality services, and to help deliver on our environmental goals.

This built on previous policy as set out in policy paper 139 *Tackling the Climate Emergency* (2019) and the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019).

Amendments: Conference rejected one amendment and passed one amendment.

The passed amendment added to section a vi, which requires energy companies that offer a discount to customers who buy both electricity and gas to offer the same discount to customers who cannot buy gas because it is not available where they live.

Conference passed the first amendment by 125 to 120.

The rejected amendment would have added a line after 7 b, which would have required the regulators to prevent energy companies making standing charges.

Conference rejected the second amendment by 203 to 46.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 264 to 12.

International Development

Conference notes that:

- A. The UK Government announced in June 2020 the integration of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) into a new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; the decision was taken with little sector consultation and in advance of the Government's 'Integrated Review' of its international policies.
- B. The '2020 Aid Transparency Index' found that DFID is one of the world's most transparent donors, rating it as "very good"; but other ODA spending government departments do not meet the same standards.
- C. The UK Government announced in November 2020 its intention to renege on its commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and introduce legislation to reduce this to 0.5%, despite the reduction resulting anyway from the fall in GNI.
- D. Coronavirus poses particular challenges to development, not least in potentially reversing decades of progress in reducing poverty.
- E. Mitigation from, and adaptation to, Climate Change, while recovering from the consequences of the pandemic, places enormous additional financial pressures on all countries, particularly the poorest and most climate-vulnerable. Without international support, these countries will find themselves in permanent crisis mode.
- F. The UK can play a key role in supporting developing countries to address the immediate consequences of the pandemic – through providing humanitarian aid and support for health system strengthening – but also in supporting their longer-term recovery, which has important implications for our own future prosperity.
- G. A high-quality international development programme, as part of an open, generous, globally-engaged UK will not only be of direct benefit to those who need that support, but also sends an important message about our values and priorities, and a recognition that many of the challenges we face can only be addressed as a global community.
- H. The Liberal Party committed in 1970 to 0.7% gross national income (GNI) aid spending, the first UK political party to do so; and it was the Liberal Democrats who enshrined this commitment in law while in Coalition Government.

Conference restates the Liberal Democrat belief that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long-term continuity of life in all its forms.

Conference reaffirms its commitment to:

1. Retaining DFID as a separate Department of State with its own Cabinet Minister.
2. Maintaining the UK commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on ODA, recognising that the programme will reduce substantially anyway in the short term as a result of the overall reduction in GNI caused by the impact of coronavirus.
3. Ensuring that the UK plays a significant role in supporting developing countries address the economic and health consequences of coronavirus, including through playing a proactive role in debt forgiveness and relief initiatives.
4. Ensuring that the UK plays a global leadership role in increasing funding to developing countries to help mitigate and build resilience against the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss.
5. Ensuring that the use of ODA continues to be consistent with the OECD/DAC rules/guidelines, and with UK legislation, and in particular its primary purpose should remain the economic development of, and poverty reduction within, the partner country.
6. Ensuring that a Parliamentary select committee with a remit of examining all British Government ODA expenditure is retained, as well as the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI).
7. Ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed in September 2015, lie at the heart of the UK's international development policy, recognising that the five 'Ps' of Prosperity, People, Planet, Peace and Partnerships provide an overarching framework for progress.
8. Reinvigorating internationalism and multilateralism, noting that challenges like climate change and pandemics have no respect for national borders and can only be addressed by countries working together.
9. Re-establishing the development education programme, linked to the SDGs, to increase public understanding of the links between progress elsewhere and the UK and the universal nature and applicability of the SDGs.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on international development and responded to the government's announcement of the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It built on previous policy in

policy paper 132 *Britain at the Heart of a Changing World* (2018) and the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019).

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment.

The amendment added sections E, 4 and the paragraph after H, which added concerns about climate change and biodiversity loss and restates the Liberal Democrat belief that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet

Conference passed the amendment by 287 to 4.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 312 to 3.

Lifting Barriers to Work for Disabled People

Conference notes that:

- A. Of the eight million working-age people in the UK who have a disability, just 52% are in work; for non-disabled people the employment rate is 81%, meaning the disability employment gap stands at 29 percentage points.
- B. On average, non-disabled workers earn £2.10 per hour more than disabled workers – a disability pay gap of 20%.
- C. The majority of disabled people are not born with their disabilities, but acquire them later in life; it could happen to anyone.
- D. Many employers are still hesitant to employ disabled people: in polling commissioned by Leonard Cheshire, one in five employers said that a declared disability would make them less likely to employ someone; 56% said the practicalities of making workplace adjustments was a barrier to employing disabled people, and 54% said the cost of adjustments was a barrier.
- E. As well as the devastating impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on their health and care, disabled people have also been disproportionately affected at work – whether through being furloughed, having their hours reduced, being unable to return to work or being made redundant.
- F. A survey by Unison found that half of disabled workers have been working entirely from home during the pandemic, with another 15% working from home some of the time; 73% of these said they were as or more productive working from home, and 54% of all disabled workers felt they would benefit from being able to work from home once the pandemic is over.
- G. The Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs' in response to the pandemic made only one reference to disabled people – and that was merely to state that expanding the Work and Health Programme “will have no impact on the existing provision for those with illnesses or disabilities”.

Conference believes that:

- I. Despite progress since the Disability Discrimination Act was passed in 1995, there is still much further to go to end discrimination against disabled people – including in the workplace.
- II. We must do far more to tackle barriers to work for disabled people, including by providing more support for employers to change the way they view disability.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- a) Increase funding for the Access to Work scheme and raise employers' awareness of it.
- b) Make flexible working a 'day one' right: flexible working should be open to anyone from when they start a job, with employers required to advertise jobs accordingly, unless there are significant business reasons why that is not possible.
- c) Require large employers with more than 250 employees to monitor and publish data on disability employment levels and pay gaps, as well as for gender, ethnicity and LGBT+ employees.

Conference further calls on the Government to:

1. Implement a targeted strategy to support disabled people into work, with a Jobs Guarantee for unemployed disabled people and specialist disability employment support.
2. Give every person a 'day one' right to work from home if they want to, unless there are significant business reasons why it is not possible.
3. Improve the Access to Work scheme by simplifying and speeding up the application process to make it easier for employers – especially small businesses.
4. Introduce 'Adjustment Passports' to record the adjustments, modifications and equipment a disabled person has received, and ensure that Access to Work support and equipment stays with the person if they change jobs.
5. Increase Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments by £20 a week.

Applicability: Federal.

Background Briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on disability equality in the workplace. It reaffirmed existing policy and called for a package of measures to help reduce barriers to disabled people. It built on previous policy as set out in the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019).

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment

The amendment extended a 'day one' right to work from home from disabled people to everyone.

Conference passed the amendment by 194 to 15.

Separate votes: Conference held a separate vote to remove the word 'newly' in section 1, extending the Jobs Guarantee to all disabled people.

Conference voted 179 to 17 to remove the word.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 211 to 2.

Protecting the Right to Protest

Conference notes with alarm the Conservative Government's plans to restrict the right to protest through a wide-ranging new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, including new powers to prevent peaceful protests.

Conference believes that:

- I. The right to protest is a fundamental human right and a vital part of any democratic society; from the slave trade to women's suffrage, workers' rights to the Iraq War, protests have been an essential way for people to make their voices heard.
- II. The Conservatives' proposals would seriously undermine that right and lead to people being unnecessarily criminalised simply for exercising it.
- III. These latest plans are part of this Conservative Government's broader assault on the rule of law and its anti-democratic attempts to silence any opposition to its policies.

Conference condemns:

- A. Priti Patel's consistently hostile attitude towards peaceful protests, including her description of Black Lives Matter protests as "utterly disgraceful", "dreadful" and "illegal".
- B. The Conservatives' repeated attacks on the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act, which protect everyone's rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association with others.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrats' opposition to any attempts to weaken the Human Rights Act or undermine the rule of law in any way.

Conference strongly opposes the Government's attempts to restrict the right to protest, and calls on the Home Secretary to drop these proposals.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion created new policy in response to the government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 343 to 1.

Stand up for Unpaid Carers

Conference believes that:

- I. People who care for others – whether paid or unpaid, young or old – do a remarkable and important job; they deserve our support, but are far too often forgotten and ignored.
- II. Millions of carers face big challenges every single day: many are living in poverty, many find it impossible to juggle work with caring responsibilities, and many struggle with their own physical and mental health; these challenges have been made even harder by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- III. As this pandemic has reminded everyone, caring for people’s health doesn’t stop at the hospital exit or the GP’s surgery door; we can only truly improve the NHS if we properly support carers.
- IV. Throughout this pandemic, Ministers have let carers down and shown that they are just an afterthought for the Government – whether it’s about supporting them financially, enabling them to visit their loved ones in care homes, or vaccinating them against COVID-19.
- V. We must do far more to support our wonderful carers; the Liberal Democrats must stand up for carers and lead the way to a more caring society as we emerge from this pandemic.
- VI. Supporting carers is a vital part of building a fairer society, championing social justice and achieving gender equality.
- VII. Access to education and employment are vital in helping to lift people out of poverty and deprivation and that current lack of support for Carers and welfare benefits rules actively prevents this.
- VIII. It is essential that widespread reforms are enacted to better protect and support Carers and those they care for and for the benefit of society.

Conference notes that:

- A. Carers UK estimates that there are 11.5 million people across the UK who give unpaid support to someone who is elderly, seriously ill or disabled; it estimates that, by doing so, unpaid carers are saving the Government £193 billion a year.
- B. Most unpaid carers are having to spend more time looking after loved ones during the pandemic; most haven’t been able to take a single break since it started; most are simply exhausted.

- C. Millions of people juggle work with unpaid caring responsibilities, and this can be hard: every day, an estimated 640 people give up paid work altogether in order to care.
- D. According to a survey by the Disability Law Service, 52% of carers who apply for flexible working have their applications refused.
- E. The Government plans to introduce one week of 'Carer's Leave' a year, but is proposing that it be unpaid.
- F. 900,000 full-time unpaid carers – most of them women – rely on Carer's Allowance, which at only £67.25 a week is the lowest benefit of its kind.
- G. Many carers are currently excluded from receiving Carer's Allowance, including:
 - i) Carers in full-time education or studying for 21 hours or more a week.
 - ii) Carers earning more than £128 a week – less than 15 hours a week on the National Living Wage.
 - iii) Carers who spend less than 35 hours per week on their caring responsibilities.
- H. Thousands of carers are facing extreme financial hardship: a recent survey by Carers UK found that more than a third of those on Carer's Allowance are struggling to make ends meet; many have been struggling for months, often relying on foodbanks to feed themselves and the people they care for.
- I. In response to the outbreak of the pandemic, the Government increased the Universal Credit standard allowance and the Working Tax Credit basic element by £20 a week above the planned uprating in April 2020, but Conservative Ministers have refused to increase Carer's Allowance.
- J. Liberal Democrats successfully campaigned alongside carers and carers organisations to add unpaid carers to the priority list for vaccination against COVID-19.
- K. Many carers face the prospect of the death of the person whom they are caring for: even more so during the pandemic.
- L. 63% of carers also have a Disability or long term health condition themselves – sometimes as a result of their caring responsibilities. The most recent statistics available (2010) showed 27% of unpaid carers were claiming Disability Living Allowance in their own right.
- M. In June 2020 it was found that at least an additional 4.5m people have had to take on caring responsibilities due to the pandemic.

- N. In 2019 it was found that 51% of carers provide at least 50 hours of care per week.
- O. Caring is often not a 1:1 relationship – approximately 10% of carers care for more than one person and a significant number of disabled people have more than one unpaid carer – situations the current rules on carer's allowance fail to consider.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- a) Introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers.
- b) Make flexible working a 'day one' right: flexible working should be open to anyone from when they start a job, with employers required to advertise jobs accordingly, unless there are significant business reasons why that is not possible.
- c) Introduce a package of carer benefits including free leisure centre access and self-referral to socially prescribed activities and courses, as well as free bus travel for young carers and young adult carers.
- d) Lift the ban on carers in full-time education receiving Carer's Allowance.

Conference further calls on the Government to support unpaid carers by:

1. Providing emergency funding for respite care so that carers can take breaks; this should replace the care provided by the carer on a 1:1 basis without any requirement for the disabled person to go into a respite care centre (unless they want to) or accept a reduction in care hours.
2. Introducing paid Carer's Leave.
3. Making caring a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
4. Requiring employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with caring responsibilities to provide that care.
5. Raising Carer's Allowance by £20 a week.
6. Increasing the Carer Element of Universal Credit by £20 a week, so carers' other benefits are not reduced as a result.
7. Increasing the Carer Premium and Carer Addition by £20 a week as well, and providing an equivalent payment to carers who are entitled to Carer's Allowance but not receiving it, so older carers on low incomes also benefit.
8. Raising the amount carers can earn before losing Carer's Allowance from £128 to £160 a week, introduce tapering off after this point so that unpaid carers are not subject to a cliff edge removal of benefits when they try to move into employment, and reducing the number of hours' care per week required to qualify for it.

9. Providing additional funding to local authorities and relevant leisure providers to enable them to provide a package of carer benefits, including access to training and support as required e.g. manual handling, first aid, dementia care and understanding their rights as a carer.
10. Making receipt of Carer's Allowance an eligibility criterion for the Government's Funeral Expenses Payment.
11. A commitment to move towards at least 80% of referrals to Mental Health and Occupational Therapy services to be fulfilled within 8 weeks and 100% within 16 weeks.
12. Further reforming claimant rules on carers allowance to allow people to combine the hours they care for different people in a claim and to allow for multiple people to claim Carer's Allowance for the same person where they all meet entitlement rules.

Applicability: Federal; except a), c), 1.) and 9., which are England only.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on unpaid carers. It reaffirmed existing policy and introduced a package of measures to improve the lives of carers. This built on previous policy as set out in the policy motion *Young Carers* (September 2019) and the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019).

Drafting Amendments

The Federal Conference Committee accepted several drafting amendments to the motion which added sections K and 10.

Amendments: Conference passed one amendment.

The amendment added sections VII, VIII, L, M, N and O, which emphasised the importance of education and mental health. It also introduced tapering off for Carer's Allowance, committee to move towards at least 80% of referrals to Mental Health and Occupational Therapy services to be fulfilled within 8 weeks and 100% within 16 weeks and further reforming claimant rules on Carers Allowance.

Conference passed the amendment by 299 to 0.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 337 to 1.

Safe and Legal Routes to Save Lives

Conference believes that:

- I. Refugees who have been forced to flee their homes to escape war and persecution are some of the most vulnerable people in the world; we must do all we can to protect them.
- II. The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but now the Conservative Government is turning its back on refugees and failing to live up to our obligations to them.
- III. Providing refugees with safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK is the best way to combat people smuggling and human trafficking, and to prevent people from making dangerous attempts to cross the Channel or the Mediterranean.
- IV. The UK must welcome refugees and treat all seekers of sanctuary with dignity and compassion.
- V. Many child refugees and victims of human trafficking arrive in the UK with little or no English or having experienced trauma or exploitation, and need support navigating the challenging and confusing immigration, care, legal and other services they encounter on their arrival.
- VI. Creating pathways for submission of humanitarian visa applications prior to arrival in the UK is a humane and effective way of reducing dangerous irregular journeys.
- VII. Upon arrival in the UK, asylum-seekers should receive support necessary for their physical and mental wellbeing, and that protects their human dignity (including adequate healthcare, sanitation, and physical security) which the facilities at camps such as the Napier and Penally Barracks fail to provide.
- VIII. The inhumane conditions to which asylum-seekers are subjected at camps such as the Napier and Penally Barracks breach the UK's refugee and human rights obligations.

Conference notes with dismay the lack of safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK. In particular:

- a) The Government closed the "Dubs scheme" for unaccompanied refugee children elsewhere in Europe after resettling just 480 children.
- b) The Government closed the UK's refugee resettlement schemes in March 2020. In July 2019, it announced a new "global resettlement scheme" to replace these schemes from 2020, but it has not yet opened the new scheme or committed any funding for refugee resettlement beyond 2021–22.

- c) The Government has chosen to withdraw the UK from the Dublin System, which enables people applying for asylum in the EU to be reunited with their family members in another member state.
- d) Unlike every EU country except Denmark, the UK does not allow unaccompanied child refugees to sponsor family members to join them; Liberal Democrat peer Baroness Hamwee has tabled the Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill that would rectify this.
- e) In December, the Government changed the rules governing asylum applications so the Home Office can declare claims inadmissible if the applicant has passed through or has a connection to a “safe third country” – even if that country refuses to readmit them; this is a breach of the UK’s commitments under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.
- f) The Government plans to introduce new legislation to further restrict people’s rights to claim asylum in the UK.
- g) The Conservative Government has delayed the full rollout of a system of independent guardians in England and Wales to represent, support and safeguard child victims of human trafficking in their interactions with different agencies and processes, despite having legislated for it in 2015.

Conference condemns the Conservative Government’s heartless and inhumane response to desperate people attempting to seek sanctuary in the UK.

Conference calls on the Government to provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK by:

1. Immediately restarting refugee resettlement and making a new, fully-funded commitment to resettle 10,000 vulnerable refugees each year.
2. Establishing a new Dubs Scheme to resettle a further 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees from elsewhere in Europe over the next ten years.
3. Guaranteeing the rights of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe to be reunited with family members in the UK.
4. Supporting Baroness Hamwee’s Bill to expand family reunion rights so that unaccompanied child refugees in the UK can sponsor close family members to join them.
5. Providing all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with support and specialist legal advice including by appointing an independent guardian for each child, prioritising those children who are victims of human trafficking.

6. Upholding the Refugee Convention, reversing the recent changes to asylum rules that contravene it, and abandoning plans to further restrict the right to seek asylum.
7. The closure of facilities such as the Napier and Penally Barracks, and for provision of alternative accommodation for asylum-seekers which ensures adequate healthcare, sanitation, and physical security, and which facilitates their fair and effective access to the asylum system.
8. The creation of pathways for submission of humanitarian visa applications, including at embassies and consulates at countries of origin and at channel crossings.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy towards refugees, adopting a fairer and more humane approach.

It built on previous policy in the General Election Manifesto *Stop Brexit and Build a Brighter Future* (2019) and policy paper 131 *A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration* (2018).

Drafting amendments

The Federal Conference Committee accepted several drafting amendments to the motion, which added section VII, VIII and 7.

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

Amendment one added sections V and g, which called for the implementation of a system of independent guardians for child victims of human trafficking.

Conference passed the amendment by 255 to 3.

Amendment two added sections VI and 8, which called for the creation of pathways for submission of humanitarian visa applications prior to arrival in the UK.

Conference passed the amendment by 253 to 1.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 266 to 2.

Supporting Businesses, Workers and the Self-Employed during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Conference believes that:

- I. We must leave no one behind as we tackle this pandemic, and build a fairer, greener, more regionally balanced economy as we emerge from it.
- II. The continuing waves of infection from the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions make it imperative that the Government continues to support businesses – especially small businesses.
- III. To protect jobs, the country needs a long-term strategy that stretches through the whole of 2021; last-minute, knee-jerk responses are unnecessarily harming the economy.
- IV. To support the recovery, we need to 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.

Conference notes with concern that:

- i) The COVID-19 pandemic caused the UK's GDP to shrink by 11% in 2020 – the biggest economic hit our country has suffered since before the invention of the steam engine.
- ii) The Government has caused enormous uncertainty for both employers and workers with last-minute announcements, short-term sticking plasters and frequent U-turns: for example, the Chancellor resisted calls to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) beyond October 2020 until the day it was set to expire; he then made three separate announcements extending it – first to December 2020, then to March 2021 and finally to April.
- iii) Despite the CJRS, the UK lost more than 900,000 jobs between March and September 2020, and 370,000 people were made redundant in August to October alone.
- iv) Certain groups of people have been impacted particularly badly by this economic crisis, including women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and young workers.
- v) Certain sectors have been impacted particularly badly, including hospitality, tourism, charities and the creative industries.

- vi) An estimated 3 million people were excluded from the Government's income support schemes; in particular, the Government has excluded from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS):
 - a) Self-employed workers operating as limited companies.
 - b) Self-employed workers earning more than 50% of their income from employment.
 - c) Self-employed workers with profits over £50,000.
- vii) Ending the CJRS and SEISS prematurely would risk mass unemployment.
- viii) Unemployment will hamper economic growth, bring down tax receipts, add pressure to the welfare state and hurt the UK's economic recovery.
- ix) At just £95.85 a week, Statutory Sick Pay is not enough for claimants to survive on.
- x) This crisis has greatly increased the debt burden on many small businesses: research by the Federation of Small Businesses found that 34% have increased their levels of debt, and 40% of businesses in debt now describe it as "unmanageable".
- xi) The use of regional lockdowns means that some parts of the country will be worse-affected than others, while regions dependent on sectors such as tourism will also face particular challenges. In many cases, this will exacerbate pre-existing regional inequalities.
- xii) The number of people starting apprenticeships in England had already fallen before COVID-19 hit – from 500,000 in 2014–15 to 393,000 in 2018–19 – and it has plummeted further during the pandemic: just 54,000 people started apprenticeships between April and July 2020, compared to 102,000 in the same period of 2019.
- xiii) Fraudsters have exploited the Government's COVID-19 support schemes, but HMRC does not yet know the scale of this fraud: its planning assumption was that total fraud and error in the CJRS would be 5 to 10%, equating to between £2.3bn and £4.6bn by December 2020.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- A. Ensure a green recovery, with a focus on reskilling existing workers and those left unemployed by the pandemic so they can participate fully in the transition to a zero-carbon economy.
- B. Expand higher vocational training, including by transforming the broken Apprenticeship Levy into a wider 'Skills and Training Levy' and developing National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy.

- C. Develop a COVID-19 Race Equality Strategy, to form part of a new Social and Race Equality Contract.
- D. Establish a £50 billion capital rebalancing fund allocated to and administered by devolved authorities to address the historic investment disparities between our nations and regions [Note: this was passed in Autumn 2019 in the 'Fairer Share For All' motion].

Conference further calls on the Government to:

1. Immediately extend the CJRS and the SEISS until at least the end of December 2021 for all sectors of the economy, with provisions for flexible furlough arrangements.
2. Fix the SEISS by extending it to cover the self-employed people who are currently excluded.
3. Establish dedicated support schemes for the worst-affected sectors, such as hospitality, tourism, charities and the creative industries.
4. Develop a long-term economic strategy, setting out how the UK will invest in new industries, jobs and training, that will create a fairer, greener, more regionally balanced economy after the Pandemic.
5. Establish and resource regional investment funds, allocated to and administered by devolved authorities, to enable targeted investments in rebuilding local economies, with particular emphasis on support to small and medium sized businesses.
6. Use the extension of the CJRS and SEISS to facilitate the transition to a new greener economy.
7. Legally require companies that use the CJRS to demonstrate they are offering equal pay for equal work and treating women fairly and equally in terms of restructuring, recruitment, retention and promotion.
8. Increase Statutory Sick Pay to the equivalent of two-thirds of the National Living Wage (currently £220 per week), and extend it to the 2 million workers who are currently excluded because they earn less than £120 a week.
9. Provide more support to small businesses struggling with cash flow and debt, including by:
 - a) Extending business rates relief, VAT reductions and tax deferrals to avoid a potential cliff-edge.
10. Do more to tackle fraud and error in the CJRS and other COVID-19 support schemes, and to recoup taxpayers' money that has been paid to fraudsters.

Applicability: Federal; except sections xi, B, and 8 a, which are England only.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It reaffirmed existing policy and called for an extension and reform of the CJRS and the SEISS, an increase to Statutory Sick Pay and a variety of other measures to support the recovery.

It built on previous policy as set out in policy motion *The Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* (September 2020) and policy motion *A Green Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic* (September 2020).

Drafting Amendments

The Federal Conference Committee accepted several drafting amendments to the motion which:

- In vii deleted 'are' and inserted: 'were'
- Deleted vi) a)
- In vii) deleted 'the Office ... in April'
- In 1, deleted 'June' and inserted: 'December'
- Deleted 8. b)

Amendments: Conference rejected one amendment and passed one amendment.

The rejected amendment would have added a section after xii and a line to section 9 which would have committed to freezing corporation tax at 19%.

Conference rejected the amendment by 26% to 74%.

The passed amendment acknowledged regional inequalities created by regional lockdowns, established a £50 billion capital rebalancing fund and established regional investment funds.

Conference passed the amendment by 92% to 8%.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion as amended by 97.5% to 2.5%.

The EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the Future of the UK–EU Relationship

Conference believes that the Conservative government's EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement:

- A. Is a threadbare deal, bad for jobs, business, security, and the environment.
- B. Is the only 'free' trade deal in history to put up new barriers to trade instead of pulling them down, and leaves the UK services sector in total limbo.
- C. Represents a comprehensive betrayal of the promises made by the Leave campaigns during the referendum and by the Conservatives' 2019 election manifesto.

Conference further believes that this botched deal will make the British people poorer and less safe by, among other things:

- i) Erecting new and significant non-tariff barriers to trade in UK goods and services with the EU, putting at risk at least 3.3 million jobs, and pushing many businesses already struggling as a result of COVID-19 over the edge.
- ii) Putting up barriers to future foreign investment in the UK through creating permanent uncertainty over the UK's potential future divergence from EU standards.
- iii) Withdrawing from Europol, Eurojust and the Schengen Information System database.
- iv) Removing the rights to free movement of UK citizens to live, work, study and retire within the EU.
- v) Failing to put in place any frameworks for UK–EU cooperation on foreign, external security or defence policy.
- vi) Ending UK participation in the Erasmus Plus programme.

Conference notes with alarm that many highly negative impacts have already become apparent, even before full restrictions are applied, including: higher business costs in all sectors, especially those exporting to the UK's main European market, through the extra burdens of red tape and higher transport costs; rising job losses in the fishing, agricultural and financial services industries; a rise in skill shortages across the British economy, and key services, notably health and social care, as an 'expert exodus' gathers pace; and the creation of significant barriers to musicians and actors performing in the EU.

Conference condemns the UK Government for risking its commitment to uphold the Northern Ireland Protocol, potentially undermining the beneficial impacts of the Good Friday Agreement and eroding trust in the UK as an international partner.

Conference condemns the UK government for ensuring that the bill implementing the new treaty was pushed through Parliament with only a charade of democratic accountability and no opportunity to scrutinise its flaws.

Conference accordingly congratulates the Liberal Democrat parliamentary parties in the Commons and Lords for opposing the bill.

Conference notes that the Labour Party supported the bill, leaving the Liberal Democrats as the only major UK-wide pro-European party in Parliament.

Conference further notes that the new Agreement will be reviewed every five years and that, in any case, provides for the UK to join EU programmes by mutual agreement.

Conference believes that the future UK–EU relationship must be strengthened, to the benefits of both the UK and EU, and recognises that there are many ways in which this could be achieved, including, but not limited to, UK membership of the EU Customs Union, the European Single Market or both, and closer cooperation over health, climate change, environment, crime and policing, education, scientific research, foreign, security and defence policy.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrats’ support for a longer-term objective of UK membership of the EU, as set out in the September 2020 conference motion ‘The UK and Europe’.

Conference therefore:

1. Instructs the Federal Policy Committee to carry out a programme of work, including consulting widely within the party, to determine the best possible future framework for the UK–EU relationship across all policy areas, with the aims of:
 - a) Demonstrating the benefits to UK citizens and businesses of a much closer relationship compared to the government’s inadequate measures;
 - b) Recommending roadmaps for the UK to rejoin the Customs Union, Single Market and other EU agencies and programmes as appropriate; and
 - c) Maximising public support for eventual UK membership of the EU.
2. Calls on the Liberal Democrat parliamentary parties in the Commons and Lords to expose the inadequacies of the government’s arrangements and to promote the benefits of closer relations between the UK and EU.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing

This motion updated and developed policy on UK-EU trade and the future of UK-EU cooperation, in particular it responded to the Government's EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and instructed the Federal Policy Committee to undertake further work on how to achieve a closer relationship with the EU. It built on previous policy as set out in the policy motion *The UK and Europe* (September 2020).

Drafting amendments

The Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to add 'Plus' after 'Erasmus'.

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

Amendment one added the two paragraphs after vi, which highlighted the harms caused by the government's deal with the EU and the risks to the Good Friday Agreement.

Conference passed the amendment by 435 to 10

Amendment two added section b, which instructed the Federal Policy Committee to produce roadmaps for the UK to re-join EU institutions.

Conference passed the amendment by 427 to 16.

Vote on motion as amended: Conference passed the motion by 449 to 13.

Constitutional Amendments

Changes to role of Vice-President

Conference notes that:

- I. The 2019 General Election Review (the Thornhill Review) specifically recommended that the party “embed at all levels the concerns and interests of [ethnic minority] communities”.
- II. The post of Vice President is currently elected by the Federal Board rather than party members, and does not have a vote at the Federal Board.

Conference further notes that the Constitution refers to the Vice President as ‘the Vice President responsible for working with BaME communities’ in Articles 14.3 (b) and 20.2 (d) and that ‘Ethnic minority communities’ is preferable in this context.

Conference believes that a post as important as this one should be elected by all party members by a process of one member, one vote, as in the case of the Party President; such a process would:

- a) Be more democratic.
- b) Raise more awareness of the role.
- c) Give the Vice President a clearer mandate.
- d) Simplify the election process.

Conference resolves that from the end of the current term of office, to reform the role of the Vice President (“responsible for working with BaME communities”) and the rules associated with it by:

1. Making the Vice President a voting member of the Federal Board, inserting a new Article 9.2 (i) (i):

‘a Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities;’

(renumbering subsequent articles as appropriate).
2. In Article 14.3 (b), changing ‘BaME’ to ‘ethnic minority’.
3. In Article 20.2 (d) changing ‘BaME’ to ‘ethnic minority’ and replacing ‘the Federal Board’ with ‘the members of the Party for a term of three years starting from 1st January in the year immediately following the election and shall hold office until death, incapacity, resignation or the election of a successor; this Vice President shall be eligible for re-election once only’.

4. Making any necessary alterations to any and all further documents to be consistent across Party documentation.

Applicability: Federal.

Motion refer back

Conference passed a motion by 157 to 83 to hold a debate on a motion for a reference back on the proposed motion. Conference then rejected the motion to refer back by 147 to 96.

Vote on motion: Conference passed the motion by 215 to 48, achieving the necessary two-thirds majority.

Report Questions and Answers

Federal Conference Committee Report

Q1. Submitted by Oliver Craven

This Conference's ticket was more expensive than Autumn's. Did you consider that reducing the price to attract more attendees may have raised more revenue?

Answer by Geoff Payne

It's about the rates we charge for the Conference. We have different prices, and they are the best compromise between covering costs and widening access. Conference has financial targets and costs to meet.

Supplementary question from Oliver Craven

It was difficult to access the claimant rate with no obvious place to access.

Answer by Geoff Payne

We would make it more prominent for next time, but there were lots of people who were able to make the claims. We will work harder to improve accessibility.

Q2. Submitted by Oliver Craven

What measures are you taking so that the members of your committee that are directly elected are accountable to the members that elected them?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We are all accountable, with a report released after FCC meetings on Facebook and the website. FCC members respond to motions in a timely manner and are active on the Facebook page, a feedback link goes out to everyone and they look at this. We have introduced the Q and A chat and a new poll system for online Conference so that we are more accountable.

Q3. Submitted by Malcolm Mitchell

When I registered for this Conference, I requested and paid for having Paper copies of Agenda, Reports etc. I have not received any of these in time to be able to propose any amendments on behalf of my Local Party and have had to resort to printing material. Why is this?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We've had issues with sending out printed conference papers, it was outside the control of Conference organisers. You should have been contacted and given a refund and it shouldn't happen again.

Supplementary question from Malcolm Mitchell

I've kept all the old policy papers in an archive, and the policy papers from the Autumn Conference still have not arrived.

Answer by Geoff Payne

We will get this sent out to you.

Submitted by Peter Davies

Do you publish rejected motions/amendments/procedural motions etc? If not have you considered doing so?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We don't publish them word for word but put out a report after each meeting. If people want the text, we can look into this. The subject titles are published but not the text.

Question from the Q and A

It's very disappointing not to have the Conference App which made scheduling so much easier. Can this be reinstated next time?

Answer by Geoff Payne

Hopin can replicate many of the features of the app and not many people were using the app. There hasn't been demand for the app. If there was demand for it then we could look into bringing it back.

Submitted by John Vincent

Do you think we will be face to face at the Autumn Conference?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We have held off until the latest time possible. We are proud to replicate most of the Conference online, with the exception of the social side. At this stage we don't know.

Submitted by Charley Hasted

Why doesn't Conference introduce a sliding scale attendance fee?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We currently keep the system simple following feedback from previous conferences. We will take any ideas onboard, but we have broadly reached the best compromise.

Question from the Q and A

Would FCC consider SAOs or local parties being able to waive their name blindness in submissions?

Answer by Geoff Payne

We have introduced name blind submissions to reduce unconscious bias and improve integrity. The problem with being able to waive it is that unconscious bias creeps back in, but we're happy to take this back to the FCC.

Federal Policy Committee Report

Q1. Submitted by David Grace

Conference discusses particular foreign and security policy issues but has not been able to discuss Trident for four years partly because of the lack of an up-to-date defence policy. Brexit, the COVID pandemic and the current government's cavalier approach to international law, defence and international development have changed the world we live in. Will the committee please establish a working group to prepare a comprehensive security policy covering both foreign and defence policy and not treating them in isolation?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

As you know selection of conference motions, including on Trident, is a matter for the FCC. FPC will shortly be considering the next round of policy papers/policy working groups and will look at the whole picture of possible areas all together. The last defence paper was in 2013, and we had a full foreign policy review in 2018. So there may well be a case for a new defence and / or foreign policy paper, and we will consider this as part of the whole policy landscape.

Supplementary question by David Grace

The world has changed, with the biggest change the Integrated Review announced by Boris Johnson this week, which set the clock back 60 years. Defence policy needs to serve foreign policy, so a panel looking at this needs to be comprehensive. Layla is doing an excellent job as spokesperson, but we need a clearer statement of ideas.

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Yes, you make a clear case and FPC will consider this.

Q2. Submitted by Oliver Craven

What measures are you taking so that the members of your committee that are directly elected are accountable to the members that elected them?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

We are keen to be accountable in our work. Unlike other committees, almost all our work comes to Conference for approval. We also make a full report to every conference, of course, and in normal times we also report after each meeting on Lib Dem Voice and Facebook; apologies that this has a bit inconsistent through the pandemic. Party members can also ask questions to us on our Facebook group. Finally, some individual FPC members also report back regularly to their individual constituencies.

Q3. Submitted by Cllr Joe Otten

Do you believe the amount of detailed and specialist policy you produce is useful, compared to a broader brush approach to more relevant issues that communicates the party's core purpose and values?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

This is an important question. At FPC, we don't view our job as producing detailed policy for the sake of it. We see our job as developing ideas to help the Party understand what it stands for and to communicate that in a way that serves the Party's needs in attracting support. So our work starts on the spectrum of broad-brush areas and works down to specific areas. The policies we develop do need to serve our political needs: for instance, tomorrow we will be debating utilities; the policy will reduce energy bills and includes specific policies to tackle the climate emergency: key messages we want to communicate to voters.

We do also need to know our answers to the big questions of the day, as that they add up: members and prospective voters expect us to and if we don't then we are not coherent or credible as a party.

Supplementary question by Cllr Joe Otten

The Labour Party can spend a day talking about the NHS, agree nothing, and then go back to their constituencies and say what they believe. We need themes that pull everything together.

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

I certainly agree about the importance of themes and we have two exercises currently working on our core values and key themes, to support communicating these to voters, which we'll be bringing to conference shortly.

Question from the Q and A

Will FPC introduce a back-catalogue of all policy passed at conference (including that which is not endorsing FPC Papers) as it is the motion that contains the policy not the paper?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Yes, I agree about the need. Some of the ways we work as a party mean we haven't found this easy to do: for example policy in a particular area is often spread over several papers and motions. But I agree we need this and we will look at it again.

Parliamentary Party Reports

Question from Chris Maines

Do you think changes to the Fire Safety Bill will be accepted by the Commons?

Answer by Wendy Chamberlain MP

The Bill is in ping pong, the Bill is coming back to the Commons on Monday and Daisy Cooper will be making the case again.

Question from Suzanne Fletcher

We have great press releases but never with a web link and they are rarely on Twitter, wouldn't our parliamentarians like us to spread the word?

Answer by Wendy Chamberlain MP

It's been a difficult time with so few MPs and COVID. We have been punching above our weight with press coverage and the leader's profile, as well as in Parliament. Munira Wilson had the first Westminster Hall debate of the year and secured SEND funding. We will look into how to make things easier to share.

Question from Paul Walker.

What are you doing about relationships with other parties?

Answer by Wendy Chamberlain MP

Not being physically present makes building cross party alliances harder, you aren't seeing people in person etc. People with more experience have helped. I have built relationships on DfID and others on APPGs. For instance, Layla Moran's chairing of the Coronavirus APPG has been critical. The work and cut through that APPG has done has been excellent.

Question from the Q and A

Layla Moran also mentioned punching above our weight, can you explain how you do this?

Answer by Wendy Chamberlain MP

With only 11 MPs out of 650, we have to work hard to get cut through. The number of questions, speeches, debates etc. that we do shows how hard we are working. For instance, on the Budget response to small business shows our cut through. Alistair Carmichael's urgent questions on fishing and Layla Moran's work on Hong Kong has generated publicity. We didn't get the result we wanted or expected in 2019, but we are making a difference.

Federal Board Report

Q1 Submitted by Oliver Craven.

When will the Steering Group proposals come to Conference?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The context for this is the Thornhill Review into the 2019 election. Last summer, the Board made use of existing powers to establish a Steering Group pilot. We will review later this year how it is going. It makes sense for decisions then to come to conference, though no decision has yet been made on which one.

Q2 Submitted by Oliver Craven

What measures are you taking so that the members of your committee that are directly elected are accountable to the members that elected them?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

Accountability is important, and that applies to all members of the committee, however they are elected or appointed to it. It can be frustrating if you can't hold people to account. Over the past year we have improved the reporting after meetings via the Party website and monthly newsletters and there is more information about party committees on the website. We have tried different webinar formats and will continue with them. At the last Board meeting we also agreed a mechanism for recording votes and reporting in the conference booklet has been expanded.

Supplementary question from Oliver Craven

If you are committed to release the results of recorded votes immediately after meetings?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The mechanism we have agreed is similar to the one used by local councils, where that applies it will be recorded and included in the reports back to party members. These normally take a few days to be published, such as to allow decisions to be properly communicated to staff, but it would be prompt reporting.

Q3 Submitted by David Grace.

The Party's website is a nightmare to use. Even when there is useful information on it, it is hard to find and there is no search facility or obvious or intuitive route. For most information a party member would require, you have to select the small button Go to main site and then the next small button More. Does the Board have any plans to improve the site? If not, will they please make some and inform the membership. In any case will the Board please report back on progress at the Autumn Conference this year.

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

The website is not as we would like it. One decision we made last year was to invest in more technology which will improve the website. Some improvements have already been made, such as the Party committees' sections. There are plans for further improvements in the near future.

Supplementary question from David Grace

This is a high priority, this is our shop window, new customers will go to another shop. I suggest the design needs improving, I contribute to some websites, it's hard to find your way through. There is no search engine and it's not clear how to navigate. Staff have been helpful with finding things, but you'd never find them on the home page. Can you report back in the autumn with progress?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

Yes. In the meantime, if anyone else is having problems finding information, by all means email me on president@libdems.org.uk.

Q4 Submitted by David Hewitt.

Our federal Facebook Page is the only part of the National Media we directly control. Why are we not making more of it? Why are we not outsourcing to SKILLED, EXPERIENCED volunteers, possibly using some form of intern agreement, like we did during the Coalition years?

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

I should start by thanking you for all you do to promote the party online. I know how valuable volunteer work like this, and have been involved in getting volunteers involved in similar ways previously. I've discussed this with HQ, and they are looking into it. I can't make promises, but we will look into this.

Supplementary question from David Hewitt

I've been watching the Facebook site since the election. Initially I was outraged by trolls on the page, people might mistake these people for Lib Dems. My mind has moved on to how we can improve content, this is the only part we control. We should be showcasing the success of Liberal Democrats in local government. Get the ALDC to produce ideas for the Facebook page. You do this on your Newswire. We have many working groups and others that make lots of great content for inclusion. These can then be shared by local groups.

Answer by Dr Mark Pack

You make a good point about internal comms more generally which we need to improve. We created a new internal comms post for that reason. I agree with you there is more to be done.

Campaign for Gender Balance Report

There were no questions to this report.