

The Government must extend the Brexit transition period

Today we have introduced a Bill to require the Government to seek a two-year extension to the Brexit transition period, in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

To choose a No Deal Brexit and crash out, when the option to extend the transition is possible, would be an act of national self-harm – especially when our NHS, economy and food supply chains are already stretched and struggling.

To crash out of the Brexit transition period when our NHS & economy are already stretched due to COVID-19, would be unthinkable

Speaking ahead of the Bill's presentation, Liberal Democrat Acting Leader Ed Davey said:

“It is clear the government have not made nearly enough progress on the Brexit trade talks.

To crash out of the Brexit transition period when our NHS & economy are already stretched due to COVID-19, would be unthinkable.

It is time the Prime Minister did the right thing. That is why Liberal Democrats are today presenting legislation that would enable the government to seek an extension to the transition period.”

To crash out of the Brexit transition period when our NHS & economy are already stretched due to COVID-19, would be unthinkable.

While Gove has admitted there will be checks on goods going from Britain to NI, there is still significant detail lacking in these documents.

With just weeks to go until the deadline, the Government must extend the transition period as a priority.

<https://t.co/I8z6e5laPm>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [May 20, 2020](#)

European Union Withdrawal (Implementation Period) Bill:

A Bill to require Her Majesty's Government to seek a two-year extension of the implementation period under Article 132 of the Withdrawal Agreement; to repeal the prohibition on agreeing to such an extension under section 33 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020; and for connected purposes.

The Presentation Bill will face its second reading on 12th June 2020. However, the extension request has to be made by the UK before the end of June.

With just weeks to go until this deadline, it is clear that the Government must extend the transition period as a priority.

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[New Liberal Democrat leader elected this August](#)

Last week, we published the frank independent review [into the 2019 general election](#). It rightly received plaudits in the media for its candour.

This review challenges us to change as a party and to change the country for the better.

We now need to get on with that work – and that's what we've done with a set of key decisions by your Federal Board.

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[International Day Against Homophobia,](#)

Transphobia, Biphobia

In the midst of the Covid 19 crisis it is easy to think it is the only issue in town. But there is another issue that as Liberals we should not need reminding of.

One aspect of it was highlighted to me this week when **a friend told me that he cannot give blood.**

My friend would like to help by providing blood from which plasma could be used in the fight against COVID-19 but regardless of how rare his blood group might be, of how healthy he is, he cannot donate because he is gay.

I was stunned.

We must surely recognise that there are still elements of our lives which label and marginalise the LGBTQ community

So I checked and, to be fair, the NHS site says all men must wait 3 months after having sex with another man before donating. It doesn't claim to be a ban, and says it is regardless of sexuality. But the reality is that as someone in a long term committed single-sex relationship that almost automatically excludes him.

And it is not the only example.

More than once in the past three years I have pressed the Government to fulfill the promise of its LGBT action plan and ban gay conversion therapy.

Today is International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia.

I would not suggest for a minute that safeguards to ensure donated blood is healthy is by its nature homophobic. I cannot say the same about the lack of a ban on gay conversion therapy.

We must surely recognise that there are still elements of our lives which label and marginalise the LGBTQ community and that this is one of them.

As Liberals we should be aware of the danger of assuming that everybody feels equally respected and protected in the current crisis. These past two months have posed problems for us all that we never thought we would have to face, and demanded strength we did not know that we had.

But we are not there yet.

In striving to reach that moment we would do well to remember the words of US politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan:

"The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society.

The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself."

That is the task we must set ourselves.

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2019 Election Review

Following the 2019 General Election, the Federal Board commissioned Dorothy Thornhill and her team of fourteen to conduct an independent review of the Party's performance.

The Liberal Democrats are committed to a fair and open society and reflect that in our internal approach to transparency and accountability. The resulting report is therefore available here in its entirety.

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What's coming up at the next Federal Board?

How do we improve as a party and achieve greater success in future elections?

That's the theme running through the bumper set of key decisions the Federal Board is looking at next week at our meeting. (Or rather meetings, as to avoid Zoom fatigue, we're splitting one long meeting into halves on consecutive nights.)

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