

[Our next Leader](#)

Here's the most important question in this leadership election; If Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn go head to head as the leaders of the Tories and Labour, both supporting Brexit, who should we choose who will stand out as the real alternative?

For me, that leader is Jo Swinson.

Let me tell you why.

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Author:

[I can't wait for our turn in the spotlight.](#)

Nothing is more frustrating than the BBC giving prominence to Nigel Farage, whilst so often ignoring us.

That's why – at the start of our leadership contest – I wrote to the BBC demanding they host a TV hustings for the Liberal Democrats.

So I'm delighted to announce they've now agreed there will be three televised debates – on the BBC, Channel 4 and Sky, between Jo and myself on Monday 1st July (Sky & Channel 4) and Friday 19th July (BBC) to help you make your mind up!

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Author:

[Ed Davey: Some of my proudest moments](#)

It has been a huge honour to have the chance to lead our great Party, and I am really enjoying speaking to members across the country in this campaign.

I've been talking about my vision to stop Brexit, tackle the Climate Emergency, and defend our Liberal values – but also about my political life

that has led me here. I wanted to share some of my proudest moments with you:

Securing my constituent's release from Guantanamo Bay



I run a twice-weekly advice surgery for my constituents, and over the years I've helped them with a huge range of problems – from potholes to claims of asylum. One case though that I am incredibly proud of is securing the release of Bisher Al-Hawi, who was never charged with a crime, from Guantanamo Bay in 2004.

After years of pressuring both the UK and US Government, including two trips to the Pentagon, I finally secured his release. **It wasn't a vote winner, and certainly wasn't easy, but I was proud to defend the rule of law – a key Liberal value.**

Winning in 1997 – and again in 2017.



Winning my seat in 1997 was a microcosm of our Party's success that year. Written off – but believing in ourselves. An efficient team of campaigners united with a common goal. More campaigning than Labour and the Conservatives put together. **In the end won by just 56 votes!**

It taught me that the ability to build teams and work with others is the most important trait for any kind of leader to have. And after my defeat in 2015, I did the same again. I won my seat back in 2017 – not only with the help of some 1997 veterans but also huge numbers of new members.

I'm passionate about sharing the way our Party has won before, so we can win across the country.

Fighting for LGBT+ Equality



I'm a Liberal because I believe in justice and equality. I'm proud for all that we have done as a Party to make our society a more equal place – but two moments stand out for me. Moving the amendment to abolish the homophobic section 28 was one of my proudest moments in Parliament. Ten years later, equal marriage, spearheaded by Lynne Featherstone, got us further towards equality – and I was delighted to vote in favour of it.

I know though that we still have so much further to go. Hate Crime is on the rise, and there is a worrying trend towards intolerance. As Leader I will fight to defend our values – **and advance the cause of equality even further.**

Transformative investment in Hull



When I was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, I nearly quadrupled the UK's use of renewable energy. One success stands out for me though: securing a huge investment into wind farm production in Hull. Not only was this a nine-figure investment in the city, revitalising its economy, but it also helped to make the UK the world leader in Offshore Wind technology.

As leader, I would fight for this kind of investment up and down the country. We can decarbonise our economy whilst revitalising the areas historically left behind by successive governments. With this, we can heal the divisions exploited by the likes of Farage and Johnson, as well as dealing a serious blow to the Climate Emergency.

The Day After the EU Referendum



I stayed up for the referendum result. Seeing Leave win devastated me and it was so easy to lose hope. But Tim Farron's passionate speech that morning gave me hope after the darkest night of my political life. It certainly inspired me – **and what we have achieved since then would not have been possible without everyone who joined us after the referendum.**

We've been through dark times, and the stakes are still high. I am increasingly worried about the potential for a no-deal Brexit under Boris Johnson. But on that morning the Liberal Democrats stood up for our place in Europe, and thousands joined our fight. **For that I will forever be grateful.**

New challenges – and new opportunities

I have spent my career fighting for the values that make us Liberal Democrats; on doorsteps, in the media, and in Parliament. It's what my leadership would be about – and I know that stopping Brexit is the most urgent liberal cause.

With Labour and the Conservatives crumbling we the Liberal Democrats have a golden opportunity, and I have the experience, skills and vision to help us make the most of it. **Back me for leader of our Party at edforleader.org.**

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Author:

Issues we should be talking about as well as Brexit

In the last week I have been immersed in the subjects which we ought as a country be talking about, but which attract minimal attention where they do not impinge on Brexit or the Hunt-Johnson roadshow.

I went to Manchester to speak to the NHS Confederation: essentially the people who run the NHS, from Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive, down. I tried to get my head around the underlying politics of the NHS: this is a much loved public service which politicians tamper with at their peril, but it **also feels itself to be in a permanent state of crisis and underfunding.**

This strange picture of political complacency and angst has also been reinforced by the recent financial settlement which ensures that, unlike the rest of the public sector, the NHS has guaranteed real growth for several years ahead; but, still, it is not enough. And the NHS is conscious of having been the most emotionally potent argument for leaving the EU: the £350m per week extra as promised on the side of a bus. Yet the reality has been that **the service is one of the main Brexit casualties as crucial EU staff drain away.**

The NHS feels like it is in a permanent state of crisis and underfunding.

Talking to key people in the sector it is clear that there are **three, big, unresolved issues.**

One is the question of **who is to pay for social care:** especially the frail elderly who sit, unhealthy and expensively, in hospital because of lack of help at home or in affordable, quality, nursing homes. Councils are supposed to provide services but are desperately short of money; families resent means-tested charges which can eventually cost the family home; the NHS does medical not social care.

Politicians need to find a cross-party solution which will involve both higher taxes and better off families paying their share; so far the fear of being attached for advocating a 'death tax' or 'dementia tax' has created paralysis. I assured the audience that Lib Dems are committed to higher income tax to raise revenue and a cross-party solution.

The second is **mental health.**

All agree that this is a Cinderella service which has been neglected as long as we can remember. We all have had relatives and friends who succumbed to breakdowns and have seen the havoc it causes. During the Coalition, **my Lib Dem colleagues at the Department of Health prioritised mental health** and helped shift attention and resources to it.

Since then neglect has returned. Restoring mental health to a proper priority requires much more attention to preventative work, especially amongst young people of school and college age. In Twickenham, I hear that 1 in 4, or 1 in 5, young people are now experiencing eating disorders, self-harm or other manifestations of mental stress: roughly the national average. Creative local charities are filling the gaps in counselling and advice left by the rather threadbare NHS. but they have a hand-to-mouth existence and need support.

Making mental health a priority means giving much more attention to preventative work

And third, there is the **retention and recruitment problem for nursing staff and doctors**: 100,000 vacancies including 40,000 nurses.

Brexit has added a new negative element but it is superimposed on **system already under strain**. Staff complain about rigid work routes, lack of notice for holidays, lack of flexible family friendly working arrangements. Care for the sick can't be reduced to a 9 to 5 job but can't, equally, be an excuse for poor human resources management. I quoted from the comedian and ex-doctor Adam Kay with his horrifying but occasionally hilarious stories of life as a junior hospital doctor. And I probably got a few backs up by pointing out that in a room of 300 top NHS managers and trust directors, there were possibly at most half a dozen people from ethnic minorities, in contrast to what we see on the wards.

After an evening with the medics **I joined a campaign the following morning by Manchester Lib Dems on homelessness.**

The Labour council in Manchester, portrayed nationally as a beacon of enlightenment, has a harsher reputation at home. Its latest idea is a 'homelessness tax' (a system of spot fines at people who sleep rough in the town centre). Together with Big Issue North, our team have mobilised a big petition against a measure which follows a long tradition – embodied in the **Vagrancy Act** – of punishing the down and outs for being down and out. Or perhaps the Labour council think they just don't fit the image of a successful, economically developing city and have to be cleaned out of sight.

The political reaction to the campaign – organised by three Lib Dem councillors up against 97 Labour – has been enormous.

It reminds us that while we have been celebrating Lib Dem victories across the South of the country and in London in particular, the real heroes of our revival are the activists in Manchester, Liverpool, Oldham, Sheffield, Hull, Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland – among others – who **stuck with us through the politically hostile environment of Labour dominated cities, and are now on the way back.**



Back to Twickenham and to an event which was one of the pleasures of being a local MP.

A local primary school was staging an exhibition of sculptures, paintings and writings advertising the dangers of plastic pollution. The children had all written to me (all of them!) inviting me to the evening display and I made it just in time, returning from Manchester. The place was humming with energy and enthusiasm from children, teachers and parents.

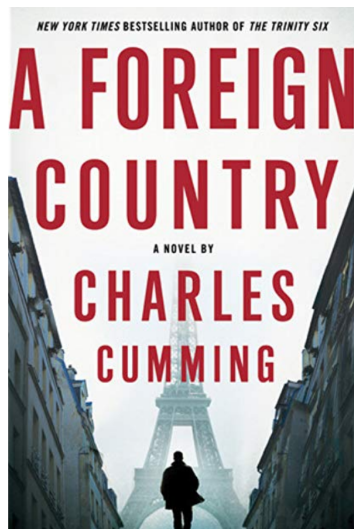
Dozens of selfies with the children and I was left with a feeling of real appreciation that I had been able to lend support.

I tried to have a quiet weekend but this is the season of fetes and festivals and **any conscientious MP has to be there at the tombola stalls and drinking Pimms**. I was lucky with the tombola, which yielded a train ticket to Edinburgh, a free haircut and several bottles of plonk.

On Sunday morning **I joined a group of walkers promoting sensible drug policies: something the Lib Dems have long prioritised.**

I wasn't prepared for the emotional force of the campaigners. I talked to one woman who had lost two sons to heroin addiction. She was now devoting her life to this campaign. Public opinion has swung behind the campaigners; **prohibition has failed massively**. Other countries in Europe and North America are trying solutions which are based on evidence. But UK politicians are very nervous of being seen to be 'soft on drugs'.

I have had a frustrating time recently locating a good novel. But I have found a fine thriller written in the Le Carre mould: Charles Cumming writes novels about the spying world with gripping plots and topical interest. Try *A Foreign Country*.



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[7 things the Lib Dems have done for the LGBT+ community](#)

June is LGBT+ Pride Month!

LGBT+ Pride events are being held across the country to recognise the impact LGBT+ people have had in the world and the struggle they still face for equal recognition. The Liberal Democrats have always championed the rights of the LGBT+ community. Here are 7 things that we have done:

1. Opposed section 28

Sorry, Jeremy – Section 28 was repealed by the Lib Dems, who tabled the motion to abolish it. A motion which you abstained on.

<https://t.co/XfZwMY7RiB>

– Young Liberals (@YoungLiberalsUK) [25 May 2019](#)

In the 1980s the Liberal Democrats were the first party to openly oppose Section 28 – an act which prohibited the so-called promotion of homosexuality. In 2003, the Lib Dems were the first to introduce legislation

to repeal the act. After over 20 years since the act was introduced, parliament finally voted to abolish it!

2. Supported lowering the age of consent to 16 for same-sex relationships

In 1998 Theresa May voted against lower the age of consent for gay relationships to 16, in 2002 she voted no to allowing homosexual couples to adopt, in 2003 was absent for vote on the repeal of section 28, saying “most parents want the comfort of knowing Section 28 is there”.

<https://t.co/uhh0ZgjxIT>

– Dr Fern Riddell (@FernRiddell) [17 May 2019](#)

In 1994, the Lib Dems unanimously supported amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to reduce the age of consent for homosexual sex to 16, bringing it in line with heterosexual sex.

3. Supported Same-Sex Couples adopting children



by Bénédicte Barrett

The Liberal Democrats supported amendments to the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to allow adoption by unmarried couples, including same-sex couples. We unanimously opposed Conservative attempts in the Lords to reject these amendments.

4. Led on Trans Rights

TRANS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Allowing trans people to change the gender on their birth certificate had been Liberal Democrat party policy since 1998. It was six years until the Gender Recognition Act came along, and it was wholeheartedly supported by the Lib Dems. The Tories in the House of Lords tried to destroy the legislation but were successfully opposed by Liberal Democrat peers.

5. Introduced the equal marriage bill



In 2013, the Same Sex Marriage Act was introduced because of the hard work of our MP Lynne Featherstone in coalition government. Since then, thousands of same sex couples have been able to get married.

6. Campaigned for blood donation rules to be based on science not sexuality

<https://giant.gfycat.com/DimwittedFlawedBantamrooster.webm>

Currently gay and bi men are excluded from donating blood. In light of this, we adopted a policy in 2011 for Britain's blood donation rules to be based on the risk of the individual, not on sexuality.

7. Campaigned for LGBT inclusive workplaces



We are fighting for businesses with more than 250+ employees to be made to monitor and publish data on BAME and LGBT employees, not just gender. We hope that this will end unfair discrimination against LGBT employees at work.

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