

# Why I'm standing to be MP for Brecon and Radnorshire

It's been equal parts incredible, exhausting and humbling to be at the centre of a massive Lib Dem parliamentary by-election.

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## What a whirlwind 2 months!

After a time-warp 6 week campaign, an 18 hour polling day marathon and an incredible win on 26 May, the sixteen of us went to Brussels in June to take up our new positions as MEPs. You might have heard about the furore we caused!



*The Liberal Democrat cohort are sworn in as MEPs. If you like our tshirts, you can get your own [here](#)*

Between setting up offices in Brussels, Strasbourg and home constituencies, hiring staff, filling in forms and receiving hundreds of messages, we ran from meeting to meeting and started to home in on key policy targets.

**For me, that meant fulfilling a lifetime passion for human rights work. In my**

previous life, I had volunteered for a number of charities and hosted refugees. But my day job did not allow me enough time to make a real impact. Being an MEP enables me to work with private organisations, governments and individuals from all over the world to drive an agenda of change. We have the power, and the responsibility to speak up for the weakest members of society – those who have been displaced, discriminated against or persecuted by their own governments. As Vice Chair of the Human Rights Committee, I am determined to fight for their rights.

I'm also delighted about what The Express have called the "Lib Dems EU Takeover" – our own Chris Davies and Lucy Nethsingha have both been elected committee chairs, of the Fisheries and Legal Affairs committees respectively.

Apart from committee work, there is so much else I want to do: a Young Visitors programme for UK apprentices, an arts competition for school children, and a series of documentaries about some of the many unknown EU-driven benefits to London citizens.

**Of course, none of this possible if we leave the EU.** Brexit hanging over us like a dark cloud, and the prospect of a sudden end to our dreams is tough. Surely, few others have a more pressing personal as well as political incentive to Stop Brexit than the sixteen of us. That's why we were elected, that's what we promised to do and with your help, we will do.

Best wishes from the Eurostar

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## [World Population Day](#)

World Population Day is an opportunity to put reproductive rights and issues of gender equality firmly on the global agenda. **This year, period poverty must be front and centre of the conversation.**

If the UK Conservative government are serious about eradicating period poverty by 2030 then they must use this opportunity to ensure ending period poverty is in the minds of every single world leader. **The Conservative government have a duty to do all they can to end the injustice and stigma surrounding periods in the UK and across the globe.**

Established by the United Nation Development Programme in 1989, the internationally recognised day has helped to highlight the importance of population issues and amplify calls for reproductive health as a priority. **A key pillar of reproductive rights, menstrual hygiene impacts women and girl's**

**access to education, and often has a big effect on their overall health.**

Around half of all women and girls across the world do not have access to safe sanitary products and the stigma and taboos surrounding periods persists globally.

Around half of all women and girls across the world do not have access to safe sanitary products and the stigma and taboos surrounding periods persists globally. The reality for many is that they are forced to use dirty rags, grass, plastic, or overuse a pad or tampon, due to a lack of access to sterilised sanitary products. The everyday reality and cost of periods is putting lives at risk and perpetuating inequality. So too is the cycle of misinformation and taboos that surrounds periods.

**Just this year, a Nepali mother and her two children were found dead after the woman was banished to a “menstruation hut”.** In this heart-breaking instance, the cause of death was smoke inhalation as she lit a fire in a desperate attempt to keep her children warm, but there have also been cases of women dying from snake bites, and others being subject to criminal attacks. These unnecessary, shameful cases are as a direct result of a lack of education surrounding periods. Associating periods with bad luck or impurity is not uncommon in cultures across the world, with devastating consequences.

In the UK, a lack of understanding and education also leads to persistent stigma. Nearly half of those who get their period for the first time don't know what's happening to them and almost 60% report feeling embarrassed about their period. **A failure to provide effective education about menstrual health to those of all genders is keeping taboos alive and perpetuating inequalities.** Health issues including endometriosis often go undiagnosed because people aren't clued up on warning signs or symptoms.

Just this year, a Nepali mother and her two children were found dead after the woman was banished to a “menstruation hut”.

Providing sanitary products in hospitals and schools in England is a step in the right direction, but we should be leading on this issue. The Tories must pledge to roll our free products across other spaces too, including shelters, hostels, libraries, and leisure centres. The campaign to end period poverty globally by 2030 is crucial, but to do this we must protect our UK aid commitment and keep the issue on the global political agenda. **Today is a chance to do that.**

**It is time to eradicate period poverty wherever it exists.** This World Population Day the Conservative government must use their voice to break the silence surrounding periods and ensure they are taking the most effective steps possible to bring an end to period poverty. No one, no matter where they live, should lose out on an education or have their health and wellbeing put at risk because of their period. Eradicating period poverty will take

funding, it will take education, and it will take unwavering commitment. **This World Population Day, I am calling on the Conservative government to use their influence and resources to help ensure the fight gets all three, at home and abroad.**

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## **It's time to stop Brexit**

When we think of great moments of political upheaval, social change and protests for justice, the images which often come to mind are marches. There is something acutely powerful about seeing so many come together to create, for one moment in time, a community of like-minded people. A crowd which passionately believes in a common cause will have its cause noticed. **Marches become beacons of free speech and spawn mass movements which captivate people's attention.**

These marches can seize or reinforce an agenda and create a new public narrative for how we view today's challenges.

We saw this recently in Westminster with the march for climate change, and at the pride marches around the country, as a rainbow of people flow through the streets of Britain every summer. These marches can seize or reinforce an agenda and create a new public narrative for how we view today's challenges.

While their disruptive methods caused frustration and, for some, may have overstepped the mark, no one can deny that Extinction Rebellion made people start discussing the environment around the kitchen table. It couldn't be clearer that **when people take a stand, they become impossible to ignore.**

I was so proud to join more than a million people took to the streets of London to show their support for a People's Vote.

My first march was 30-and-a-bit years ago with Amnesty International, highlighting the plight of prisoners of conscience abroad. Last month, as one of over 100 MPs I strode in solidarity to meet Richard Ratcliffe, the husband of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe outside the Iranian Embassy, during his hunger strike in protest at his wife's continued shocking and unlawful detention. I was also incredibly proud to be at the largest march this country has ever seen, back in 2003, against the Iraq war, when Charles Kennedy and the

Liberal Democrats led the political protest in the face of overwhelming criticism from the Tory and Labour parties.

But I was even prouder, earlier this year, to be part of the largest march seen in the UK since then – when over a million people took to the streets of London to show their support for a People’s Vote.

**And that’s why I’m delighted the Lib Dems will be joining thousands of others on July 20 at the March for Change – unequivocally demanding this Brexit mess be stopped.**

We’re unequivocally demanding this Brexit mess be stopped.

Again the Lib Dems were prominent, just as we have been dominant in the fight against Brexit since the day after the referendum three years ago. Back then, many people described our position as desperate, out on a limb while Jeremy Corbyn urged that Article 50 be triggered immediately. Yet over time, more people joined our cause, our rallies became bigger and we made more allies in our fight against a government increasingly committed to the most chaotic of Brexits. Our message has grown louder and more people have taken to the streets to shout loud and clear to Labour and the Conservatives that the Brexit they want to deliver is not in our name and not what the majority want.

We will take to the streets to shout loud and clear to Labour and the Conservatives that the Brexit they want to deliver is not in our name

Some will disregard the marchers’ voices. The Tory candidates to be our prime minister are putting rocket boosters on their campaigns to reach the dreaded No Deal cliff-end sooner. Jeremy Corbyn is choosing to bury his head even deeper in the sand.

We the Lib Dems not only hear those voices, we are channelling their energy.

**I am proud to be the anti-Brexit spokesperson of the largest, loudest and proudest party committed to demanding better than Brexit and diverting us from the disastrous trajectory we’ve taken. More and more people are rallying behind our banner as we inch closer than ever to stopping Brexit.**

So, when we march in just a few weeks’ time on July 20, we will do so with a more purposeful stride. I hope you will join us.

*The march for change are organising coaches to the march from across the UK. You can book a coach here: [https://www.marchforchange.uk/assembly\\_points](https://www.marchforchange.uk/assembly_points)*

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## I'm a new(ish) member – and I just spent a week in Brecon and Radnorshire

I'm Benny, and I've been a Liberal Democrat since 2017 – but I never really had a chance to get particularly involved.

That changed last week when I headed up to Brecon.

I knew how important this by-election is going in – we can't afford to take it for granted. **It's essential as many Liberal Democrats as possible head to Brecon and Radnorshire to support our candidate, Jane Dodds.**

Brecon and Radnorshire is closer than you think.

I was a bit nervous, initially. I'd never really done anything like this before. But the team on the ground were super welcoming and professional. I was paired up with experienced campaigners and learned a lot from them. I even got the opportunity to act as Jane's aide, travelling around the constituency with her – it was a lot of fun!

There's a variety of stuff to do, too. There's doorknocking, leaflet delivery, envelope stuffing and more – and I want you to know **as a first-timer that it was easier and more fun than I ever imagined.**



**Brecon and Radnorshire is closer than you think.** I live in Shepherd's Bush, and it's about a 3-hour drive to Brecon from home. It's pretty easy to get to by public transport too – just get the train out to Cardiff then switch onto a bus there. Many buses to the constituency are free on weekends – it can work out pretty cheap if you book in advance.

Time's ticking on. There's serious potential for a Lib Dem gain here, but the Conservatives and Brexit Party are working the constituency hard. We can't get complacent.

Our team is currently working on the plan for postal votes, which land in just 9 days. In a constituency like Brecon and Radnorshire, that's a huge chunk of the electorate. That means **this weekend is crucial for the campaign.**

Don't leave it to someone else – they might be leaving it to you.

If you've never helped before, don't be put off – everyone has to start somewhere and the team couldn't be more welcoming. Come along – you'll love it.

**Don't leave it to someone else – they might be leaving it to you.** Come to Brecon and Radnorshire – help us elect a new Lib Dem MP.

[I'll come!](#)

Follow Benny on Twitter: [@Benny\\_curtis1](#)

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