

# [Federal Policy Committee March report 2022](#)

Our focus this year has been squarely on **understanding the party's overall political direction, our target voters, and the role our policies can play in helping us to persuade people and win votes**. This was the main focus of **our in-person awayday at LDHQ at the end of February**, and has underlain all our other discussions, with the aim of informing both our current policy development work, and its direction for the future.

We already have quite a large programme of policy development to try and achieve this, under way. **Working groups developing policies for a fairer society (including UBI), and a more caring society** (with a particular focus on social care) are under way, as are ones looking at **planning & homes, early years and the natural environment**. These all held consultation sessions at spring conference (see their [consultation papers here](#), and please do respond! Useful responses can be anything from a sentence or two on your top priorities, to a full set of answers to every question in the papers).

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## [Reviewing our Westminster candidate selection processes](#)

Tim Farron and I are currently conducting a **review into the Party's candidate selection processes**.

The review has been commissioned by the The Federal Communications and Elections Committee (FCEC), following conversations with the State Parties. Candidate approval and selection is a State Party function within our governance.

**Working with and supporting the State Parties in their own work, the review will investigate, assess and report on:**

- Westminster Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC) selections that have taken place during this Parliament.
- The current strengths of, and areas of improvement for, the Party's candidate selection processes in each State.

- How to implement suggested improvements.

Following an initial consultation session with members at Spring Conference, and a first phase of key stakeholder interviews, we are **inviting all members to have their say**.

[Click here to tell us what you think.](#)

Practical suggestions, made in the context of our available resources, are particularly welcome. We also encourage you, ahead of responding, to reflect on a few of the questions members such as you have highlighted so far.

- What is working well?
- What is not working well or could work better?
- What do our processes mean for diversity and inclusion?
- Do we test for the right things?
- Do we do our due diligence properly?
- How do we balance the needs and rights of Local Parties, Federal Campaigns and Candidates?

**The deadline for submissions is the end of April 28th.**

We aim to report our initial findings to FCEC in May, with a view to bringing proposals for reform to Autumn Conference.

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## [The Anti-Refugee Bill is a traffickers' charter](#)

Over the past month, as more than **3.5 million innocent Ukrainians have been forced to flee their country to escape Putin's war**, people across the UK have responded with enormous compassion and generosity.

More than **150,000 have offered to open their homes to Ukrainian refugees**.

The Anti-Refugee Bill is an awful piece of legislation that flies in the face of the incredible spirit of the British people.

Yet the response from Conservative Ministers has been slow, bureaucratic and inadequate, **granting just 15,800 visas after weeks of war**.

And at the same time, **Priti Patel is still pushing her Anti-Refugee Bill**

**through Parliament.** An awful piece of legislation that flies in the face of the incredible spirit of the British people.

Among other things, this Bill would:

- **Criminalise refugees** simply for coming to the UK to seek asylum.
- **“Offshore” asylum seekers** by sending them to another country while their claims are processed.
- Create a **second class of refugees with fewer rights** and only temporary protection.

So under these new laws, a refugee from Ukraine – or anywhere else – who comes to the UK to seek asylum would face up to four years in prison, be sent abroad for processing, and then – if their claim is approved – be relegated to second-class refugee status.

**Thanks to the heroic efforts of Brian Paddick and other Liberal Democrat peers, the House of Lords passed amendments to remove those laws from the Bill.** They also added new clauses to require the Government to resettle at least 10,000 refugees a year, and to give asylum seekers the right to work if they have to wait more than six months for their claims to be decided.

At a time when protecting refugees has never been so important, Conservative MPs have voted for more tragic deaths in the Channel.

Yesterday, Conservative MPs voted to overturn all of those amendments. **We voted to keep them.** Now the Bill will return to the House of Lords next week, where **we will continue to oppose it.**

**By voting to stop refugees from taking safe and legal routes to the UK, and forcing them to take dangerous ones instead, Conservative MPs have voted for more tragic deaths in the Channel.**

Priti Patel’s Anti-Refugee Bill is a traffickers’ charter. It beggars belief that **she is still trying to push it through at a time when protecting refugees has never been so important.** She should listen to the British people and ditch it now.

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# Emergency airlifts for Ukrainian refugees in Poland

On Wednesday, I returned from the Ukraine-Poland border. When I was there, I met **refugees who have been forced to flee Putin's assault on their homes, including people who are desperate to come to the UK – often to join family members.** I was proud to see many British aid workers and volunteers providing support and the generosity of the British public who are offering their homes.

The Conservatives' heartlessly inadequate response to countless Ukrainian women and children fleeing Putin's bombs is shameful.

However, **I was appalled by the lack of any organised UK Government-sponsored or supported welcome and the absence of UK Government personnel on the ground at the border.** This stood in stark contrast to 19 other nations who were present on the ground.

It is very frustrating that, despite the many recent U-turns on visas, **the Government still refuses to act on resettlement and to facilitate safe and quick passage to the UK.** The Conservatives' heartlessly inadequate response to countless Ukrainian women and children fleeing Putin's bombs is shameful.

**Since the very start of this war, the Liberal Democrats have been calling for a resettlement programme,** working with the UNHCR and other refugee agencies to bring Ukrainian refugees to the UK, as we did for those fleeing Assad's war in Syria.

I have written to Liz Truss, the Foreign Secretary and Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, urging the Government to **launch an immediate emergency airlift operation to resettle Ukrainian refugees currently arriving in Poland who want to come to the UK.** Given the scale of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, it is only right that our country plays its part. You can read my letter below.

Britain has a long and proud tradition of giving sanctuary to those fleeing violence and persecution. It is clear that the British people are prepared to honour that tradition and welcome Ukrainian refugees with open arms. The Conservative Government's actions have let down the British people.

Without some sort of resettlement scheme, ideally far more open and flexible than past schemes, many refugees will never be able to get to the UK to take up the incredible offers of help from people in our country. There is also a very **real danger that some refugees will fall into the hands of human traffickers and people smugglers.**

Surely these families have been through enough? It's urgent that people are now transported to safety and help so they can start

rebuilding their lives.

We must prevent that, by **providing safe and fast transportation for Ukrainian refugees seeking to come to the UK**. The Government should send personnel to the Ukrainian border now, ideally working with the UK's own specialist refugee and aid charities, to form new welcome groups with the charities already on the ground.

We must also provide free flights to the UK, with coaches to the nearest Polish airports from key border crossing points and establish welcoming reception centres for the refugees here on arrival at the UK.

The queues of **refugees are exhausted and traumatised**. Surely these families have been through enough? It's urgent that people are now transported to safety and help so they can start rebuilding their lives.

**Emergency airlifts are now the best guarantee for these refugees to get to the UK safely and swiftly, to the kindness and compassion of the British public waiting for them.**

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## [Meet the Technology Blog](#)

**Over the weekend, we unveiled a new Liberal Democrat Website.**

It's the Technology Blog, which you can see here: <https://tech.libdems.org.uk>

**This blog is hugely exciting – because it's been built on our brand new website platform, Fleet.**

Fleet is intended to replace both Nationbuilder and Prater Raines FOCI for the party.

We're building Fleet in collaboration with the team at Prater Raines and it's based on the open source Typo3 framework – which is widely used by organisations with a federated structure (like us!).

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