

Buildings fire safety review urgently needed after Grenfell Tower fire

The Liberal Democrats have called on the government to urgently publish a long-awaited review of building regulations on fire safety and implement its recommendations, following the deadly fire at Grenfell Tower.

Sal Brinton, Liberal Democrat Party President and member of the All-Party Parliamentary Fire Safety and Rescue Group, commented:

“My heart goes out to the victims of this tragedy, their family and friends and the emergency services who have shown such bravery in appalling circumstances.

“It is too soon to say the exact causes of this deadly fire, but we must not shy away from asking difficult questions.

“In particular, we need to look at why the lessons of the past seem not to have been learnt.

“Ministers have been asked repeatedly to upgrade fire safety regulations but have done nothing, including on sprinklers and strengthening compliance rules.

“The government must conduct an urgent review into fire safety and building regulations, with recommendations implemented as soon as possible.

“We must also hold a public inquiry into what caused this tragic fire and how it could have been prevented.”

Vince Cable: Fall in retail sales shows brutal reality of Brexit hitting consumers

Retail sales fell by 1.2% between April and May, worse than economists had expected, figures from the Office for National Statistics have shown.

The ONS said that average store prices have risen by 2.8% over the year, which has been a significant factor in slowing growth.

Liberal Democrat MP Vince Cable said: “The economy has been kept going for a year on the basis of consumer debt, which was always artificial and unsustainable.

“The brutal reality of a hard Brexit is now starting to hit businesses and consumers.

“Unless the government takes a cross-party approach to Brexit, reflecting the need for compromise, we will inevitably see a continuing slowdown and possible slump in the economy.”

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron resigns

This afternoon Tim Farron resigned as Liberal Democrat leader.

At party HQ in London he gave the following speech to party staff:

“This last two years have seen the Liberal Democrats recover since the devastation of the 2015 election.

That recovery was never inevitable but we have seen the doubling of our party membership, growth in council elections, our first parliamentary by-election win for more than a decade, and most recently our growth at the 2017 general election.

Most importantly the Liberal Democrats have established ourselves with a significant and distinctive role – passionate about Europe, free trade, strong well-funded public services underpinned by a growing market economy.

No one else occupies that space. Against all the odds, the Liberal Democrats matter again.

We can be proud of the progress we have made together, although there is much more we need to do.

From the very first day of my leadership, I have faced questions about my Christian faith. I’ve tried to answer with grace and patience. Sometimes my answers could have been wiser.

At the start of this election, I found myself under scrutiny again – asked about matters to do with my faith. I felt guilty that this focus was distracting attention from our campaign, obscuring our message.

Journalists have every right to ask what they see fit. The consequences of the focus on my faith is that I have found myself torn between living as a faithful Christian and serving as a political leader.

A better, wiser person than me may have been able to deal with this more successfully, to have remained faithful to Christ while leading a political party in the current environment.

To be a political leader – especially of a progressive, liberal party in 2017 – and to live as a committed Christian, to hold faithfully to the Bible’s teaching, has felt impossible for me.

I’m a liberal to my finger tips, and that liberalism means that I am passionate about defending the rights and liberties of people who believe different things to me.

There are Christians in politics who take the view that they should impose the tenets of faith on society, but I have not taken that approach because I disagree with it – it’s not liberal and it is counterproductive when it comes to advancing the gospel.

Even so, I seem to be the subject of suspicion because of what I believe and who my faith is in.

In which case we are kidding ourselves if we think we yet live in a tolerant, liberal society.

That’s why I have chosen to step down as leader of the Liberal Democrats.”

[Tim Farron announces election for deputy leader](#)

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron has set in train a deputy leadership election for the parliamentary party in the House of Commons.

Tim Farron said: “In the last parliament we didn’t have any women in our parliamentary party and we didn’t feel it was right to elect a deputy in those circumstances. But I wanted to revive the role as it gives the party another powerful voice and has helped give prominence to many of our notable MPs, including Ming Campbell, Simon Hughes and Vince Cable.

“Now a third of our parliamentary party is female and we have our most diverse group of MPs ever, I feel our MPs form a more representative group to elect a deputy leader. There is still much more work needed to make ourselves more like the nation we seek to represent, but this is a really positive time for our party after increasing our number of MPs by 50%.”

The position will be elected by Liberal Democrat MPs and will be announced before the end of the month.

The process for the election is as follows:

- Nominations were opened following a meeting of the parliamentary party on Monday 12 June.
- All MPs are eligible for the position and any MP wanting to put themselves

forward for the position needs to secure the support of a proposer and seconder.

- Deadline for applications is 5pm on Tuesday 20 June.
- If there is only one candidate they will be formally appointed to the position on Tuesday 20 June.
- If there are two or more candidates then a hustings will take place at the parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday 27 June. Following the hustings the election will be decided through a secret ballot of MPs using the single transferable vote.
- Ben Stoneham, our Lords Chief Whip, will act as returning officer.

Sharp fall in EU nurses coming to UK

There has been a sharp fall in nurses from EU countries registering to work in the NHS, new figures have revealed.

The Health Service Journal reports that monthly statistics show the number of EU nurses registering with the NMC to work in the UK peaked at 1,304 in July 2016, a month after the referendum, before falling to 344 in September 2016 and then to just 46 in April 2017.

Liberal Democrat Shadow Health Secretary Norman Lamb said: "These figures are profoundly worrying and the possible implications for the NHS and patients cannot be underestimated. The government has to face up to the impact their refusal to guarantee EU citizens to remain in the UK after Brexit is having. It is a political choice they have made and it is going to harm our services, in particular the NHS.

"The government must now change this decision. The result of the election last week gives them the opportunity to change their mind, and they now must. Liberal Democrats are clear that EU citizens whose lives are now rooted in the UK must have the right to stay".