

[WATCH: Making education our priority](#)

Boris Johnson's failure to defend our children's education meant that his Government spent the same amount in one month on Eat Out To Help Out as in a whole year for our children's school catch-up.

Imagine a future where our children's education is a priority. Where schools raise their mental well-being and their maths grades. Where they can excel at English and find their talent for music or sport. Where they grow into happy, healthy, adults.

We all fear that in the end, it will be our children who have paid the price of this pandemic."

Ed Davey

The Liberal Democrats are calling for a £15 billion package of education catch-up funding, as recommended by the Government's former Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins.

As part of this, the party is calling for a £5 billion programme of Catch-Up Vouchers for every school child, putting the money directly into parents' hands to spend on whatever their children need most: tutoring in reading, writing or maths; music lessons; swimming classes or other physical education.

We heard that loud and clear on the doorsteps of Chesham and Amersham – a typical "Blue Wall seat." They told us that too often this Government hasn't listened, has taken people for granted, has ignored the people who work hard, and pay taxes.

When we won the Chesham and Amersham by-election, people told us Boris Johnson was taking them for granted. They told us our victory was the first time in years they'd been listened to. Britain needs a party prepared to listen.

It is time Boris Johnson's Conservatives stopped taking people for granted, time people got a fairer deal, time we guaranteed a better life for future generations.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Autumn Conference – Press Roundup](#)

What a conference we've had!

From motions to keynote speeches to training, there was something for everyone and the quality of debate was, as ever, excellent.

We also got a huge amount of press coverage. Our stunning win in Chesham and Amersham has put us back in the spotlight – and the media are beginning to see that **only we can dismantle the Tory Blue Wall.**

Here's just a few of the stories we secured this weekend:

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Ending Violence against Women and Girls](#)

In 2019/20, 4.9 million women were victims of sexual assault in England and Wales. This statistic is appalling. We must put an end to this.

The justice system is failing victims of domestic abuse. Only 2.4% of reported rape cases end in convictions. Out of 139,000 rapes estimated by the ONS, only 58,848 were reported to the police.

Sexual harassment is even in our schools. A third of 16-18 year old girls report unwanted sexual touching at school.

These crimes **cannot be allowed to continue.**

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

Ending the Epidemic of Frauds and Scams

Online fraud has risen by a third in the pandemic. We **must ensure justice is delivered to victims** and need to tackle this endemic of scams and frauds head on.

The push to a virtual world in the pandemic has increased the rate of online fraud and scams. Hackers and fraudsters take advantage and prey on people over the internet.

These criminals trick innocent victims into transferring them money through “push payment scams”. The banking industry is not being held accountable. It could do more to prevent these scams and support victims who slip through the net.

We need to put a stop to this. We must do more to stop those criminals taking advantage of an increasingly virtual world.

Our government has failed to properly resource the police. Only 3% of reported fraud offenses were investigated fully by the police last year. This is a systemic failure. **The public should be able to trust that as victims of crime they will be compensated.**

We deserve to live in a society free from fraud and scams.

That’s why we are calling to:

- Name and shame the banks with the worst record at prevent fraud and reimbursing victims
- Set minimum standards for all banks on preventing fraud
- Replace the voluntary industry code for preventing push payment scams with a mandatory code **which includes reimbursing victims**
- Create a national warning system for scams where individuals can check and report suspicious activity

[Read the motion in full](#)

As Liberal Democrats we champion a free and fair society. Online fraud and the continuing distress and fear it causes is a threat to this. We must tackle these crimes head on.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Alex Cole-Hamilton's Conference Speech – Highlights](#)

Alex Cole-Hamilton, MSP for Edinburgh Western (Constituency) and Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats delivered an emotional speech to conference today.

We've gathered the highlights for you to explore, or you can read or watch his full speech here:

[See Alex's full speech](#)

Alex kicked things off by expressing his heartfelt thanks to his Scottish Liberal inspirations:

"I cannot overstate the sense of responsibility I feel to the great Scottish Liberals on whose shoulders I stand, and whose legacy I inherit, among them friends and mentors like Jim Wallace, Jo Swinson and Charles Kennedy.

But I would not be standing here, I would not have a seat in the building behind me were it not for Willie Rennie.

With the most recognisable smile in Scottish politics, Willie has silenced any talk of our extinction in Scotland and with record breaking majorities in our constituencies he has redefined the meaning of the word fortress."

And reminded us of the resilience that hope gives his party in their fight for truth:

"In recent times it's felt like we've been walking a lonely road as Liberals in this country.

We've suffered many setbacks and have had to work hard to regain trust and belief.

But the one thing that has sustained us on that journey is the one thing our country is now crying out for.

And that's hope.

After everything we've been through, Scotland needs new hope right now.

As a party we deal in hope because it sustains us. Because we see the best in things, in the people we live among and in the communities we serve."

Alex senses that ripples of hope are spreading:

"Everywhere I look there is a sense that people are remembering that about us.

Understanding when they put trust and belief in the Liberal Democrats they

get a return on that investment for them and for their communities.”

“Whisper it, but there’s something in the air about our party, a growing sense of optimism and of confidence, in opinion polls and in by election results.

From Chesham and Amersham to Wick in the northern-most tip of Scotland we are winning again and we are winning against the odds.”

And that hope is needed now more than ever...

“Long before we’d heard of Covid-19, things were bad in Scotland.

There were warning lights blinking across the dashboard of public policy, they remain unattended to:

On the educational attainment gap, missed climate targets and record mental health waits.

On GRA reform.

On the threadbare state of our police force.”

Alex berates the shameful state of the Government’s priorities:

“The pandemic demanded every ounce of the government’s attention. It also allowed ministers to set aside the hard stuff.

Patients in pain, sent letters telling them their treatment would start in 12 weeks, when in fact, they wouldn’t be seen in 50.

All of these were matters of policy that presented a problem for the SNP and so it used the Covid emergency to deflect and defer action on them.

And yet, despite all that, on the eve of a deadly second wave, the First Minister found time and space for a bill about another independence referendum.”

And mourns how nationalism traps us and sweeps away what really matters:

“Every election, we are told that each vote cast is either a mandate for another referendum or the only way to stop it.

This has become the full extent of public debate in our country.

People are suffering because of it. Progress is stifled by a clash of nationalisms, the Scottish Nationalism of the SNP, but also the Brexit nationalism of Boris Johnson’s Conservative party.”

“Conference, at this precise moment, well over 1500 children are waiting more than a year for mental health treatment.

It is a national outrage.

Those statistics tarnish the record of the government.

But what absolutely ruins it is the drug deaths emergency.

Scotland has the worst drug mortality in the developed world.

It is nearly 4 times the rate of England and Wales.

Time and again, the SNP government have shown themselves unequal to the task of reducing this devastating problem in Scotland.

In fact 5 years ago, with rates rising and records already mounting, Nicola Sturgeon saw fit to cut budgets to drug services by 22%, sending organisations to the wall and severing support.

It is time for action:

“The SNP claim that these deaths are a result of UK Government policy.

That is a fallacy.

If this were the fault of reserved powers or austerity, we would see the same rates of people dying on the streets of London as we see in Glasgow.

We don't. Glasgow is 10 times worse.

Conference, this is a particularly Scottish problem, which now demands international attention.

That is why this morning I have written to the Director General of the World Health Organisation, asking him to mobilise and send a task force of global experts on drug mortality to Scotland to help get this public health disaster under control.”

For meaningful change before our planet, our home, is irreparably damaged:

“It's up to Scottish Liberal Democrats to provide hope for the climate emergency.

We've won some of the toughest climate targets in the world. Those targets need to be met. But that's something the Scottish Government has failed to do year after year.”

“We need new hope for the climate emergency. In the run up to COP26 I'll be laying out a range of measures Liberals want to see.”

The Scottish Liberal Democrats fight for change, with hope at their very core:

“If you want a party that will fight the climate emergency with ferocity but without the baggage of nationalism, come with us.

If you want to live in a country which offers the best education in the world, which values its carers and those they care for, then come with us.

If you want a party that stands unwaveringly for human rights at home and abroad, one that will stand up to state intrusion in your lives, come with us.

If you're affected by the national mental health crisis then come with us.

Come with us and I promise you that Liberal Democrats in the villages and towns of Scotland will show you the meaning of the word hope once again."

[Go to Source](#)

Author: