

[Setting out our vision for the country](#)

Setting out our vision for the country

Our [September Federal Conference](#) has a key trio of debates on **our vision for a Liberal Democratic society, our overall policy platform and the strategy to give us the political power** to achieve those aims.

Having spent the first part of this Parliament fixing many of the practical organisational issues that caused so many problems in the 2019 general election, we now need to shift up a gear to get the external aspects right too. Sarah Green's victory in Chesham and Amersham is a wonderfully inspiring example of what we can achieve when we get this right. **The challenge is now to do that across the country.**

It's promising that we've seen **a sustained boost in our opinion poll ratings since Sarah's victory** (up from 7% on average this year before her victory to 9% since). There's also been a noticeable increase in our local council by-election performances since Sarah's victory and the easing of coronavirus-related restrictions on local campaigning. Local factors mean it's rarely wise to read too much into any one result, but the volume of by-elections – and their spread around the country – now means we look at that improvement with confidence that it's real.

So we can also approach these conference debates with confidence about our potential – **as long as we continue to up our game.**

Improving people's experience of being a member

Our party is our membership. Giving people a good experience is crucial for growing, retaining and encouraging people to be active in our party. And enabling individuals to create the change they want to see in the world is at the heart of our liberal philosophy.

To help get our plans right for this, the Federal People Development Committee (FPDC) is doing telephone research calls to **understand the perspectives of ordinary members** on what works and what doesn't. If the random selector picks you out for a call, please do take part – and **if you have time to volunteer to help make the calls, [let me know](#)** and I can put you in touch.

Alongside this, a variety of ideas are starting to be piloted, such as new ways of recruiting canvassed Lib Dems as members, a new quarterly cycle of briefing and feedback video calls for all local party officers, and the **special £1 registration fee for first-timers at Federal Conference**. I'm also **[very happy to hear](#) any suggestions from you.**

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Author:

[Afghanistan](#)

Global leaders should hang their heads in shame.

We've all watched the heartbreaking scenes at Kabul Airport showing citizens of Afghanistan trying to escape from the terror of the Taliban. **Their situation is desperate.**

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Author:

[Come to conference for just £1](#)

Only £1 to come to conference

Our autumn federal party conference is being held online in September. **There's a brilliant offer for people who have not come to conference before: [you can register for just £1.](#)**

Conference will include an important trio of linked debates: on our party's values, our policy platform and our strategy. Traditionally, we have debated these separately at conference, even years apart. But all three need to fit together in a coherent way – which is one of the lessons from the 2019 election post-mortem. So this time we're doing things differently.

The values and platform come from our Federal Policy Committee (FPC), while the strategy is being proposed by the Board. **It sets out the practical approach which is needed to grow our party and win more elections, securing us more political power to deliver on what we believe.**

Among the other conference items is also **the latest stage in developing our post-2019 European policy, [which you can read about here.](#)**

As I [mentioned last month](#), the Board has also put in some important proposals for conference to decide on, including boosting our party bodies with an improved, simpler structure and set of rules. These come from the Party Body Review Group, which has run an extensive consultation with existing party bodies before drawing up the plans.

The full conference agenda and reports to conference booklet [are both now out.](#)

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[The UK–EU relationship: the Liberal Democrat position](#)

Anyone who was at the last two Liberal Democrat conferences should remember the two debates that were held on the party's position on the future relationship between the UK and the EU. In a passionately argued debate last September, **conference resolved that the party should support a longer-term objective of UK membership of the the EU**, but we rejected a proposal for an immediate campaign to reverse Brexit, which, it was argued, was more likely to alienate voters sick of the recent history of Brexit-inspired division and bitterness. **Conference also called for the closest possible alignment between the UK and the EU on trade, security, environmental, social, judicial, educational and scientific issues.**

We aim to construct a 'roadmap to rejoin' that ultimately convinces the electorate that membership of the EU is in the UK's best interests

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Author:

[Leaseholders are suffering due to Conservative inaction on cladding](#)

We all remember seeing the horrific scenes of the burning tower at Grenfell on the news over four years ago.

The tragic loss of 72 lives was a dark moment for our country and the cladding scandal that emerged emboldened me to stand up for the rights of all those living in unsafe buildings.

That event also was a lightning rod for the wider public and put a sharp focus on the quality of housing that many people live in – particularly in more densely populated urban areas.

millions of leaseholders now find themselves stuck in limbo and facing huge bills”

It was later found that the Grenfell tower was covered in unsafe, flammable cladding and lacked a whole host of basic fire prevention measures. Once again, **we saw the dangers of developers putting profit ahead of safety.**

Across the UK there were calls for swift action to support leaseholders to remove this dangerous cladding from their buildings. However, at both a Westminster and Devolved Government level, the response has been sluggish.

Due to Government inaction, millions of leaseholders now find themselves stuck in limbo and facing huge bills, often in the high tens of thousands of pounds, to remove this dangerous cladding.

They are unable to move or sell their property due to the cladding, leaving millions trapped as Mortgage Prisoners. Despite strong community action, and attempts to rally leaseholders together, the situation continues.

It’s appalling that the burden of responsibility is being placed on these innocent leaseholders, rather than the building owners and developers who cut the corners in the first place.

The Liberal Democrats will continue to fight to End the Cladding Scandal for good.”

The Conservatives strategy for dealing with this is to bury their heads in the sand and pretend everything is fine. They can announce big schemes all they want, but unless they listen to the concerns of leaseholders and shift the financial burden onto building owners – millions of men, women, and children will continue to suffer.

That is why I have been working tirelessly in Parliament to champion the voices and rights of leaseholders.

“Leaseholders have done everything right and nothing wrong yet they are being expected to pay for the failures of construction, of developers, and of materials manufacturers” [@KathPinnock](#)
[#EndOurCladdingScandal](#)

– Lib Dem Lords (@LibDemLords) [July 20, 2021](#)

Working alongside other peers, I have tabled 8 amendments to various bills on this issue and am working closely with Liberal Democrat MPs to keep applying pressure on the Government to change tack.

The most recent of these amendments was debated yesterday, but **sadly the Conservatives once again voted it down. Their refusal to even explore what additional support we can give shows they simply don’t get the scale of the**

issue – or how it is affecting people.

For the sake of all those families who have seen their livelihoods destroyed we must act. We owe it to them to ensure they do not lose out due to developer greed.

The Liberal Democrats will continue to fight to End the Cladding Scandal for good.

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