

An amazing campaign

Chesham and Amersham

What a brilliant result! We had the best candidate in Sarah Green, ran the best campaign under James Lillis's direction and had an awesome amount of help from people all around the country.

That would all be impressive even in normal times, but coming off the back of the huge May elections and while we're all still dealing with coronavirus and lockdowns, that's been an amazing achievement.

It's also an achievement that sets us up for more success in the future – as the acres of media coverage demonstrate.

Westminster selections are up and running

New Parliament, new name: this time around we are 'tiering' our seats, so the most winnable seats (aka target seats, aka key seats) are now called Tier 1 seats. Selections have started up, with advertisements going out to people on the approved list and appearing on the members-only section of the main party website.

It's important that we all encourage talented people we know to think about applying, and for many seats there will still be time to go through the approval process.

As a recent internal survey suggested, vanishingly few people are asked to run by fellow party members, particularly potential candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. **There is power in asking!**

A lot of effort is going into ensuring we continue the very welcome improvements in the diversity of our Parliamentary Party secured at the 2019 election. We need to do that to properly live our values – and it's a handy bonus that the evidence shows that more diverse teams make for more effective teams too.

One of the new things for this Parliament is Project Stellar: **a support package for our top candidates from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds**. Anyone selected in a Tier 1 seat from such a background can automatically qualify for this support, and depending on the numbers, we may also be able support candidates in Tier 2 seats in this way too.

The exact details of the programme are currently being developed, ready for it to be launched later in the year as the first selections start coming through.

If you are interested in playing a hands-on role in making our party overall more diverse, inclusive and equitable, please do consider [volunteering for our new working group on these issues](#).

Learning the right lessons from the May elections

There's much we need to learn from both what went well and what didn't in the May elections. That's the way to continue to improve and to extend a run of what is now **three years in a row of making net gains in council elections**. With local elections right across Scotland and Wales next year, as well as many in England too, we really need that three years in a row to become four.

So I'm glad to report that the Federal Communications and Elections Committee (FCEC), chaired by Cllr Lisa Smart, met earlier this month and agreed a series of mini-projects to dig into particular areas of success and concern.

Part of that involves listening carefully to the wonder band of 178 people we've identified who did the most canvassing for the party in the May elections – **speaking to an average of 1,000 people each in the six weeks up to polling day! Thank you to each and every one of those 178**. That's a group of people with invaluable collective insight into what did and didn't work, both in terms of political messaging and organisation. Those are the sorts of grassroots voices that the Thornhill Review into the 2019 election rightly concluded we need to listen to more.

New committee chairs

Federal Conference Committee has a new chair, Nick Da Costa. He was elected by FCC members following [Geoff Payne standing down earlier this year](#).

The Federal International Relations Committee (FIRC) has a new chair too, with Phil Bennion replacing Jonathan Fryer, who sadly died [earlier this year](#).

Meanwhile, Bess Mayhew, chair of the Federal People Development Committee (FPDC), will be taking maternity leave and so the committee has elected Mary Regnier-Wilson to fill that gap.

Congratulations to Phil, Mary Nick, and double congratulations to Bess.

One other face will be changing later this year. Isabelle Parasram has a new job which means she will need to stand down as [Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities](#). A by-election will be held later this year to fill her post.

June Federal Board

Our latest meeting should have happened the Saturday before polling day, but the Board decided to postpone it until after [Chesham and Amersham](#) in order to free up more time for campaigning.

When we did meet, it was for a very full day-long agenda, including reviewing progress on the party's strategy, discussing the party's finances and hearing from Dorothy Thornhill on how she thinks things are going with implementing the [2019 election review](#) which she chaired. This continued involvement of Dorothy is important to **ensure we break the pattern of so many previous election reviews not getting the follow-up they needed**. As part of our

strategy discussion, we finalised our plans to submit a conference motion for this autumn.

We also reviewed progress on the Steering Group pilot one year on. We decided to make some changes to how the pilot works, such as improving the flow of information from the Steering Group meetings to the full Board. We agreed to ask Autumn Conference to approve a **plan to consult with stakeholders about the future structure of the Federal Board** and bring plans to Spring Conference next year, continuing the Steering Group pilot in the meantime.

One reason for picking spring next year is to give enough time to properly explore variations and put a considered set of plans to conference. The other is that we have a very large volume of other business to put to this conference. The items the Board agreed to go ahead with submitting include enacting the changes proposed by the [Party Body Review Group](#), proposals to improve the complaints system, a request from Young Liberals to change their age limit and election regulations for the post of Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities.

Questions are as ever very welcome via president@libdems.org.uk and you can find all the Board members [listed on the party website](#).

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Author:

[Let's make an amazing campaign into a winning campaign](#)

Chesham and Amersham

I'm writing this month's report before we know the result. But we do already know that we've had the best candidate in Sarah Green, run the best campaign and had an awesome amount of help from people all around the country.

That would all be impressive even in normal times, but coming off the back of the huge May elections and while we're all still dealing with coronavirus and lockdowns, that's been an amazing achievement.

And there's still time to make it into a winning achievement. [Here's how to help](#).

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When we do meet this Saturday, we've got a very full agenda, including reviewing progress on developing the party's strategy, discussing the party's finances and hearing from Dorothy Thornhill on how she thinks things are going with implementing the [2019 election review](#) which she chaired. This continued involvement of Dorothy is important to ensure we break the pattern of so many previous election reviews not getting the follow-up they needed. As part of our strategy discussion, we'll look at plans to submit a conference motion for this autumn.

We will also be reviewing progress on the Steering Group pilot one year on, and decide what to do next. We'll also be looking at business to submit to the autumn party conference, such as a request from Young Liberals to change their age limit rules and changes to the party's complaints process. Also in the mix are plans to implement the Party Body Review Group report. It set out an exciting set of changes to better support and involve party bodies.

I'll update this report with our decisions once the Board has met. In the meantime, questions are as ever very welcome via president@libdems.org.uk.

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Author:

ALDE Congress Online

At the weekend we **met with old friends and new from our European sister parties for ALDE Congress**, albeit via a Zoom link, as the Congress was online for the first time. It was my privilege to lead a diverse Lib Dem delegation of around 40, which in addition to the official categories for diversity, included several UK nationals resident in the EU and a few EU citizens resident in the UK.

Ahead of the Congress we had met to propose amendments and again to discuss the amendments tabled by other delegations. These are negotiated in the "Working Groups", which usually take place onsite at the beginning of Congress. Online they were held several days in advance of Congress and a high proportion of delegates were unavailable. Some were unaware that this was the real forum for debate. The procedure is not unlike the European Parliament Committee stage where the political groups negotiate compromise amendments. At the final plenary voting session there is no debate and delegations work to voting lists.

The Working Groups did not go to plan, as the scheduled sessions of two and a half hours each ran to 6 and 5 hours respectively. Even delegates who started the sessions were often not there by the end. I was sat with original text on one screen, amendments on another, proceedings on my iPad, delegation WhatsApp and the voting platform both on my iPhone plus a print-out of our voting line.

The four Resolutions that we were entirely opposed to all fell or were withdrawn. One was a detailed political programme resembling an election manifesto. Our colleagues from the Netherlands (D66) proposed to delete the entire motion on the grounds that it was not appropriate to replace our entire political programme via a Congress motion from one or two delegations. We would have taken a similar view if such had appeared at our Federal Conference. Another was a resolution that would have made ALDE a party of individual members, rather than of national political parties. This was contrary to EU funding rules and systems. A third called for a European Army and the fourth called for health to become largely an EU competence; causing us real difficulties over the NHS when we re-join the EU. Don't worry! These all fell.

We also faced a couple of resolutions where we had fundamental problems, but they were not beyond saving with some radical amendment. One was on LGBT+ rights and religion. I delegated David Chalmers and Adrian Hyyrylainen-Trett to deal with the issue. With skilful rewording they turned the text away from finger pointing at particular religions to one based on principle. **The negotiations with the movers were also not straightforward. David and Adrian did a great job.**

The other called for the entire economy to be subject to the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). I had drafted a compromise with Billy Kelleher MEP of Fianna Fail which was to use an expert panel to advise on which sectors

should be added to ETS, but the movers stuck to their purist vision. I decided to play hard ball and advised our delegation to support the Swedes in removing the paragraph altogether. The deletion passed in the Working Group but had the effect of shaking the movers to accept the compromise, very late in the day, at the final vote. I was too slow typing “abstain” into the WhatsApp group but the deletion fell by one vote anyway and my compromise text sailed through.

Urgency resolutions were discussed, amended and passed during the Congress itself on Belarus, Ukraine/Crimea, antisemitism, land expropriation in South Africa and the Northern Ireland Protocol. **Our delegates, including Joyce Onstad, Markus Gehring and Hannah Bettsworth made some telling interventions to improve the texts.**

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Author:

[Priti Patel is turning her back on refugees](#)

Priti Patel says refugees should come to the UK through safe and legal routes, and is threatening to punish any who don't.

The Conservative Government is failing to provide any safe and legal routes for refugees to take.

But at the same time, **the Conservative Government is failing to provide any safe and legal routes for refugees to take.**

The Government's latest figures show that just 353 refugees were resettled in the UK in 2020-21 – a drop of 93% since the previous year.

The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but now the Conservatives are turning their backs on refugees.

Their failure to provide safe and legal routes is pushing desperate, vulnerable people into the hands of people smugglers and human traffickers.

Priti Patel's tough rhetoric and cruel policies only increases their profit margins. “We thank your government for our full pockets,” one smuggler told the Guardian recently.

That's why the Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to make an ambitious, ten-year commitment to resettle 10,000 vulnerable refugees a year

from Syria and other dangerous conflict areas. Because that's how we will actually combat these criminal gangs and prevent people from making dangerous attempts to cross the Channel and the Mediterranean.

We are calling on the Government to make an ambitious, ten-year commitment to resettle 10,000 vulnerable refugees a year

And what about the people who do come to the UK seeking sanctuary, having left their homes fleeing war or prosecution? **They should be welcomed with compassion, not kept in limbo for months while their claims are processed.**

Those same statistics reveal that 50,084 asylum seekers have been waiting more than six months for a decision from the Home Office – a number that has doubled on Priti Patel's watch. That's the scandal she should be tackling, but none of her endless series of cruel proposals will actually help solve it. In fact, they'll just cause even longer delays.

The Home Office is clearly not fit for purpose. So instead of making it harder for refugees to claim asylum, let's take these decisions away from the Home Office altogether.

A new arms-length, non-political agency should take over, with the staff, training and resources to process applications quickly, decide cases fairly, and get them right first time. And let's finally lift the ban and **give asylum seekers the right to work.** They should be enabled to contribute to our society, not trapped for months on just £5.66 a day.

Liberal Democrats are fighting to fix the broken asylum system, so that everyone can have confidence in it, and everyone's rights and dignity are respected.

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[Unpaid carers mustn't be ignored any longer](#)

People looking after their loved ones too often feel forgotten.

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