

Small businesses are on the brink and the Chancellor must do more

At a time when millions of small businesses are struggling to survive, to offer them just £5 billion would be an insult.

We need to see a budget with a bold and ambitious compensation package

From beauticians to builders, florists to café owners – the small businesses in our communities are **on the brink and the Chancellor must do more.**

It is now or never to save the millions of businesses in our local communities and the Government must put their recovery first.

At a time when millions of small businesses are struggling to survive, to offer them just £5 billion would be an insult.

We need to see a budget with an ambitious compensation package for those who are facing crippling losses. <https://t.co/Eld9Tkrz5R>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 1, 2021](#)

Those who have been left with no financial help must be brought under the umbrella of Government support.

We need to see a budget with a **bold and ambitious compensation package** for those who are facing crippling losses, and coping with hardship through no fault of their own.

And we must see those who have been left out in the cold, with no financial help, **brought under the umbrella of Government support.**

The Liberal Democrats have set out how the Government can do this, but it will require considerable amounts more in support, to provide what our local businesses and the people who depend on them **deserve.**

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Author:

10 reasons the world needs liberals

25 years ago our former leader **Paddy Ashdown** laid out the stakes for Britain's position in the world:

Britain's role as the bulwark against tyranny in two wars this century was not a product of isolationism. It was the natural response of a nation used to engaging in the world and certain about its role as a European power.

25 years on, Paddy's vision is more important than ever.

Our liberal values are under threat across the world. As proud liberals, it is our duty to stand against the scourges of warfare, authoritarianism, and inequality.

Here are 10 reasons why the world needs liberals:

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What is LGBT+ History Month and Why Does it matter?

Just like with Black History Month (October) or Disability History Month (which runs from November into December), it's typically filled with events (check ours out [here](#)) and discussion. **LGBT+ History Month reminds us of the progress we've made, but also warns us about the injustices that we have only recently escaped – and injustices that are still with us.**

Back in 2005 when LGBT+ History Month was first introduced in the UK, things were quite different. Section 28, which "prohibited the promotion of homosexuality" by public authorities, had only been off the statute books for two years in England; there was no same sex marriage (and civil partnerships only came into effect in December 2005); and the life blood donation ban for men who have sex with men was in full effect. In 2021, things are different in lots of respects (see the [Plus](#) and [Stonewall](#) timelines of changes).

But we still have ongoing challenges, and the wounds of the past – which are in living memory! – are still with us and shape our community and perspectives.

LGBT+ people deserve better than to be written out of our cultural

memory. To be without their stories is an affront to their dignity, and does nothing to help us tackle the biases and stigmas that still pervade in our society today.

Stories do matter – whether they're represented in fiction or non-fiction. This year we've experienced the huge cultural impact of Russell T Davies' 'It's A Sin', which has been hugely impactful for many LGBT+ people. This has been true for people who lived through the period as well as those who didn't.

These stories do really matter: they personalise and they humanise. LGBT+ people deserve better than to be written out of our cultural memory. To be without their stories is an affront to their dignity, and does nothing to help us tackle the biases and stigmas that still pervade in our society today.

In the UK we might focus primarily on the decriminalisation of sex between men (1967), the introduction and scrapping of Section 28 (1988-2003 in England/2000 in Scotland) and same sex marriage (2013). But there are stories from right across the world for us to explore and understand.

Same sex sexual activity is still illegal in at least 72 countries. Of those, 11 have the death penalty as a possible punishment. And at least 15 countries criminalise the free expression of one's gender identity (with many more than 15 proving a hostile environment to trans people) (See [Human Dignity Trust for more](#)).

Throughout February we'll be writing and talking much more about LGBT+ History – from darkneses that we cannot let be repeated to iconic figures and their work to make the world a more just and equal place. LGBT+ people infinite diversity in infinite combinations. Their stories are not monolithic, or constrained to a few niche areas.

LGBT+ people exist and always have existed throughout our societies. Their stories matter and they deserve to be told.

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Learn more about LGBT+ Lib Dems at lgbt.libdems.org.uk or get in touch at pluslgbtld@gmail.com. You can join as a member [here](#), and support our fighting fund for LGBT+ candidates [here](#).

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We must give carers a break

During this pandemic, millions of people have stepped up heroically to look after elderly, disabled and vulnerable people.

Most carers are simply exhausted during coronavirus. Most haven't had a single break since the pandemic began.

A recent survey by Carers UK found that **81% of carers are spending more time on their caring responsibilities during the pandemic**, mainly because the needs of the person they are caring for have increased or because the local care services they rely on have been reduced or closed.

But now most carers are simply exhausted. Most haven't had a single break since the pandemic started.

The Government must provide funding to councils so they can offer every unpaid carer the support they need to take a weekly break

The **brutal combination** of lockdowns, shielding requirements and reduced support services have made the pandemic especially tough.

The survey by Carers UK found that 64% of carers have not been able to take any breaks from their caring role during the pandemic. 74% said they feel exhausted and worn out as a result of caring during Covid, and 44% said they are reaching breaking point.

We must do far more to support our wonderful carers.

So Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to give carers a break by providing immediate emergency funding to councils so they can offer every unpaid carer the support services they need to take a weekly break.

The Liberal Democrats will stand up for carers and lead the way to a more caring society as we emerge from this pandemic.

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Chinese New Year: Year of the Ox

For all of us, 2020 was a difficult year; some of us touched by death and many by loss of income, wellbeing and self-worth. **So much has changed, and yet not changed.**

Those of us with memories of SARS watched in concern at the British Government late and botched efforts to tackle COVID. We saw COVID-related hate crime spike as Chinese people were shunned, and verbally and physically assaulted. Internet memes depicting Chinese people as sources of COVID were widely shared.

The ox symbolises strength, determination and hard work. Certainly, qualities needed to rebuild our communities, our economies, our families and ourselves.

Many people appear numbed to news that would have horrified us 12 months back – over 100,000 deaths, job losses, business closures and billions of pounds spent on PPE half of which were awarded dubiously. We cannot carry on as before and we must change the trajectory that has shaped growth and prosperity over the last 200 years since the Industrial Revolution.

Fundamental changes are needed from the way we govern to the way our economy works, the way we consume and the impact of technology on our lives, our jobs and our societies.

We have also watched with concern the situation in Hong Kong but continue to call for a more balanced response and an evidenced-based Chinese foreign policy within the Liberal Democrats. We are sad that Paddy Ashdown was not able to witness the first Hong Kong citizens use rights he called for decades ago to allow BNO passport holders the right to live in Britain.

So, will things get better in 2021? The ox symbolises strength, determination and hard work. Certainly, qualities needed to rebuild our communities, our economies, our families and ourselves.

Many Liberal Democrats have been actively helping others through the difficulties of the pandemic. We can bring a message of hope, that by working together we can reshape our society, economic and governance systems. **We can create prosperity, fairness and justice.**

Wishing everybody a fulfilling, prosperous and safe Year of the Ox.

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