

# The May elections

The chaotic incompetence of a government that declares schools safe on a Sunday, sends children back for a day and then closes them is the sort of thing that should be the domain of political fiction.

Sadly and tragically, it's the government we suffer from in Westminster. It is a reminder about how important it is that we recover as a party, and a spur to our efforts to ensure we do our part in defeating the Conservatives at the ballot box.

The elections due in May across England, Scotland and Wales are an important part of that.

## **The May Elections**

Will the elections be delayed? The simple answer is, we don't know. But we do know that we need to campaign to do well in them whenever they happen. Other parties can gamble on trying to win an election without much time to campaign beforehand. We can't.

That is why we need to continue with our preparations and build-up as if the May elections will happen, and treat any extra time as a bonus. Better that than be caught out thinking something wouldn't happen and then not having time to prepare when it does.

Of course, our work should always take into account coronavirus health risks, and always [carefully follow the party's advice](#), which is regularly reviewed and updated when necessary.

There is a wide range of free training available to help you hone your campaigning skills and learn how to campaign best in the face of coronavirus. Do take a look at the listings on [the party website](#) and on the [ALDC site](#).

## **Election Rumours**

One other thing to bear in mind is that, as with previous questions about whether elections would be delayed or whether a government would call an election early, a lot of rumours circulate. They often appear to be based on credible insider information – e.g. 'someone who spoke to a former colleague at the Electoral Commission...' But in reality they are not nearly as credible as they may seem.

The thing to bear in mind is that the decision to delay an election can be made suddenly by the Prime Minister (in England, similar considerations for other nations). As we've seen with the fiasco of children going back to school in England for just one day before schools being closed, there's no reason to think that an election decision either way will be made carefully, in good time and with all the right preparations in place.

Or for another example, when Gordon Brown was dallying over calling a general election in 2007 the news that Labour had started printing special election leaflets sounded like it was dead-cert insider information showing the election would go ahead... and then he didn't call it. So what someone says the Electoral Commission is doing, or what Whitehall civil servants are preparing, can sound credible... but really isn't much of a clue at all to what will happen.

Rumours can be fun to talk about. But don't be misled by them into thinking someone has the inside track on what is going to happen. They don't, which is why we need to keep preparing.

## **Party Awards**

It's award time again soon! Recognising the amazing volunteer effort across the party is something we do not do nearly enough. Which is why I've asked the Federal Conference to have time at our spring conference to add in a round of party awards. We always do some at autumn conference, but having awards in spring too will mean we can recognise more of the wonderful contributions made by so many.

The plan is to have three awards at spring: a new Leader's Award to recognise those who show leadership in whatever form in the party, the Bertha Bowness Fischer Award to recognise the contribution of a newer member and a revived Albert Ingham Award to recognise our election agents and campaign managers. More information, including how to nominate someone you know, is [on the party website](#).

## **Supporting Party Bodies**

January sees the first meeting of a new 'party bodies forum', one of the practical steps we're taking to implement [the party bodies review](#) into how we support and work with those parts of the party which do not fit into the standard local/regional/state party structures.

Groups such as Green Liberal Democrats and Liberal Democrat Women are an important part of the Lib Dem family. The forum should help us improve the way the party and party bodies interact, something which has often been a cause of frustration in the past.

It's the first of many recommendations that we'll be implementing from the review, with the chair of the Federal People Development Committee, Bess Mayhew, taking the lead in making sure they happen.

## **Improving the way we fill posts in the party**

I mentioned [last time](#) the progress we've already made in improving the way roles are filled in the party. We need to get better at getting high quality, diverse teams in places rather than simply people who happen to know people.

So one item from the January Steering Group is looking at the next steps we can take, both to improve what we do in the Federal Party and also how we can

support other parts of the party.

I know many members have experience of how to best fill roles in volunteer organisations, so [suggestions and feedback are very welcome](#). In particular, for those of you reading who haven't put yourself forward before for a role – what would motivate you?

## Parliamentary Boundary Review

The official review is underway, and expected to come into force for the next general election. However, that is no reason to hold up getting on with selections in our most winnable seats. One of the consistent lessons from previous Parliaments – and one that comes through clearly in the Thornhill Report into the 2019 election – is about the need to get prospective candidates in place early. That gives them more time to get known by voters and to help build up the sort of local party infrastructure required to run a winning campaign.

The party's response to the boundary review will be coordinated by our Director of Field Campaigns, Cllr Dave McCobb, and his team.

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## [Britain must re-enter the world stage](#)

Reports that the 25th amendment may be invoked to remove Donald Trump from office reaffirm what we already knew: **Donald Trump is not and has never been fit to hold the office of President.**

The scenes coming out of Washington last night were an attack on democracy, plain and simple. [pic.twitter.com/U00CSBvS1e](https://pic.twitter.com/U00CSBvS1e)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [January 7, 2021](#)

The Tories should be ashamed of how they cosied up to Trump and his administration, how they stood by as he flouted the international rules-based order and how they have mimicked his populist agenda.

While this comes too late to avoid the damage Trump has done in the US and beyond, **there is new hope in the inauguration of Biden on the 20th.**

Liberal Democrats call on the Prime Minister to **end Britain's long walk towards isolation** and to seize this opportunity to **re-enter the world stage** as a strong ally in the **fight to promote peace and end climate change and**

**injustice.**

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## **Make someone amazing smile – nominate them for an award!**

Party Awards recognise publicly those who have given the party outstanding service and commitment in the past year. They are presented at Conference and each winner receives a trophy to keep.

[You can watch last autumn's presentation ceremony here!](#)

We present three awards at Spring Conference, and five at Autumn Conference. You can [nominate someone by clicking here](#). The upcoming awards are:

### **The Leader's Award**

Eligibility: any member of the party.

Criteria: awarded to those who have shown exemplary leadership skills while working or volunteering for the Party. Ranging from long-standing service at the Head of a Council, to effective rallying of new and exciting campaigns for the Party, or even guiding a local Party through a difficult time, anyone is eligible and the Party seeks to recognise leadership in all of its shapes and sizes.

### **The Albert Ingham Award**

Background: this award is named for one of the Party's great Election Agents, Albert Ingham. Albert's work, much of it in his home county of Yorkshire, was prodigious and his impact on the Party ranged from organising to fundraising to promoting fresh talent.

Eligibility: Any election agent or senior member of a campaign team

Criteria: awarded to those whose most recent campaign, through its excellence, fastidiousness, tenacity or novelty has been a model for others to follow.

### **The Bertha Bowness Fischer Award**

Background: this award is named for the Country's first woman to become a qualified election agent – who as a Liberal is a testament to our traditions

of equality, inclusion and campaigning rigour.

Eligibility: any newer (less than two years) member of the Party.

Criteria: awarded to those who have shown outstanding energy and/or ingenuity in supporting their new-found political home. It seeks to welcome those people who may well be the future of the Party, no matter their background. It is named for a trailblazer for women in not just liberal, but all politics, and recognises the contributions of new friends from outside of politics and from other parties alike.

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**More details about the individual awards and who is eligible can be [found here](#).**

Candidates must themselves be party members, and be nominated and seconded by two party members.

**All nominations should be completed using [this nomination portal](#).**

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## **What is the deadline and when will I find out?**

Nominations will close on Monday February 15th at 17:00.

All nominators will receive confirmation of their nomination shortly thereafter. If your nominee is selected for an award, they and you will be informed by March 8th.

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## **[Stand up for Carers – Facebook Ads Bulk Buy](#)**

Unpaid carers are doing a remarkable and important job in very difficult circumstances. **They deserve our support.**

But many carers are facing extreme financial hardship.

900,000 full-time unpaid carers rely on Carer's Allowance – but **at just £67.25 a week, it's just not nearly enough.**

In November, the Liberal Democrats launched a campaign calling on the UK Government to immediately raise Carer's Allowance by £1,000 a year, the same as the uplift in Universal Credit. To make this campaign a success, we need local parties up and down the country to make it part of their campaigns.

That's why we're offering a new **bulk-buy deal on digital advertising**.

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## [Johnson has waited till the eleventh hour to act](#)

This is the public health policy the Prime Minister should have announced before Christmas.

But yet again, Boris Johnson ducked the difficult decisions, failed to listen to experts and acted too late.

**Just yesterday morning Johnson was telling parents that schools were safe and children should definitely go.** Today he is telling us that they must all move to remote learning but without any proper future plan.

The Prime Minister's **failure to act** earlier means we are seeing record numbers of new infections, a rising death rate, hospitals overwhelmed and NHS and care staff exhausted.

With this new lockdown, Liberal Democrats believe it's urgent that the Government:

- announce a new comprehensive economic plan for businesses and the self-employed
- introduce a plan to increase Carer's allowance in line with the increases in Universal Credit
- and fully take account of the impact of these developments on the mental health of young people and vulnerable individuals who are going through an incredibly difficult time

All around the world, the evidence is that acting early is critical to minimising damage to the economy and protecting public health.

**We need a Prime Minister who can act in time, not one who acts when it is too late.**

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