

Spring Conference 2021

Federal Conference Committee met for the morning of Saturday 14 the November 2020. The meeting was designed to pick up on issues that arose from the Autumn Conference feedback meeting that took place in October.

At the feedback meeting, the FCC had decided that Spring Conference would take place online. We will be using the Hopin platform and conference will operate in a very similar manner to Autumn Conference.

At that last meeting, we decided on the registration rates, and the rates for the exhibition and fringe for party bodies. We finalised some aspects of those rates at the November meeting.

The conference deadlines are as follows (all of these are at 1pm):

- Drafting Advice for motions: 17th December 2020
- Motions Deadline: 6th January 2021
- Drafting Advice deadline for amendments: 22nd February 2021
- Amendments and Emergency Motions deadline: 8th March 2021
- Appeals deadline: 18th March 2021
- Spring Conference: 19th to 21st March 2021

At the November meeting, we also dealt with a few issues that concern Hopin. We noted, for example, that there is to be a 'report user' button added for the future.

Although Autumn conference was a great success overall, there were some areas that worked better than others. The committee considered in detail how it might make the exhibition more attractive, for example. It had formed a working group beforehand to consider proposals. We will look to provide additional information to exhibitors in advance, we will make sure that chairs plug the exhibition, and specific stands within it on a rotation basis, immediately before auditorium breaks. We will look to hold some VIP tours of the exhibition. We will also try and explain in a video what the exhibition is so that attendees can see in advance. We will also only offer medium and large stands in the future. All of that is designed to get better footfall through the exhibition and to make it more attractive.

In terms of the fringe, the committee decided to extend the session times from 50 minutes to between 60 and 75 minutes in duration. We will also look to provide more and better information in advance to those running fringes to try and eliminate technical difficulties.

The committee also considered the conference app and documentation. We noted that, for an online conference, it makes no sense to have a separate Agenda,

Conference Extra, and Conference Daily. It would be a lot better if they were merged into one document, and that is what we are going to do for Spring Conference. We will publicise an Agenda containing all of the motions that we have selected. That will be available as a printed document, at an extra cost, should people want it. We will then make available a compendious electronic agenda that contains the motions, the amendments, and all of the questions that we select at the later deadlines. We hope that that will provide an easier, and more user-friendly way of navigating through what we are debating. Because that document will overlap the app to a large extent, we will not be making the app available at Spring Conference.

We also had a discussion about the conference deadlines. We are looking to simplify the way in which items are submitted after the main motion and amendments deadline. We are hoping to introduce a single type form through which people can communicate with the FCC and the chairs and aides of sessions about, for example, procedural motions, late questions, and points of order. We also looked at where our conference attendees came from in the country and how long they had been members for. There were a number of very long-standing members a conference and a number of very new members. There was a particular bias towards local parties that have a track record of electoral success.

We look forward to seeing you all at Spring Conference!

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Author:

The Tories' climate plans won't undo the damage of the last five years

Today the Government announced their Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

Sadly, it **fails to undo the damage the Conservatives have done to the UK's progress on climate change over the past five years.**

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[Fighting for equality and inclusion for disabled people everywhere](#)

Disability History Month is an important opportunity to remember how far we have come in the battle for disability rights and equality.

There is still a long road ahead to ensure equality and inclusion for disabled people.

It is also a time to honour those who have led the way forward, defied stereotypes and contributed so much to the success of our country.

8 November marked the the 25th anniversary of the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The act made it illegal for employers and service providers to discriminate against someone because they were disabled. This was a key step in advancing disability rights.

As a society we have come a long way since then, but we cannot afford to become complacent – **there is still a long road ahead to ensure equality and inclusion for disabled people everywhere.**

This year's theme is "access" which highlights continued failures to improve accessibility be it in the physical environment, access to information or services.

We all benefit when everyone can fully participate in our society.

We must work to challenge this because we all benefit when everyone can fully participate in our society.

Finally, I want to thank everyone involved in organising this month's events.

I wish you all the very best for a successful and thought-provoking Disability History Month.

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Author:

We cannot stand by as thousands are left homeless this winter

With coronavirus putting the most vulnerable in our communities at risk, we must ensure no one is left behind.

2020 has seen a sharp rise in rough sleeping. **Without a home to stay in, these people are at a higher risk of catching the virus and have no way to self-isolate.**

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Liberals Must Fight For Trans Rights

13 November marks the beginning of Trans Awareness Week.

Started in 1988, this week is for amplifying the voices of trans people, and for advocating an end to the discrimination and prejudice that trans people still face today. The week ends with Trans Day of Remembrance, on 20 November, which honours the memory of the lives of trans people whose lives were lost to violence and bigotry that year.

For many trans people COVID-19 has only added to the sense of a life on-hold awaiting treatment.

Throughout the year trans people have faced a number of challenges.

The coronavirus, which has hung over us all this year, has impacted minorities disproportionately. As LGBT+ LD highlighted back in March, this has been especially true for trans people.

An overwhelmed NHS has cancelled many, many appointments to deal with COVID-19: access to hormones, therapy and surgery for trans people have all been impacted. In a system where waiting lists can be years-long even without a pandemic, for many trans people COVID-19 has only added to the sense of a life on-hold awaiting treatment.

And then there has been the bitterly disappointing scrapping of Gender Recognition Act reform. Despite three years of promises and consultations from successive Conservative governments – which in turn whipped up a storm of anti-trans hatred and misinformation – the Government in September gutted

its plans to reform the GRA.

We are calling on Liberal Democrats up and down the country to join us in standing up for the rights and dignity of all trans people.

The vast majority of respondents to consultations called for self-ID, the removal of the spousal veto, and allowing non-binary people to gain legal recognition. Instead, all we got was a suggestion to take the process online and to offer a slight discount.

The government's changes do little to protect trans people or their dignity. Gendered Intelligence at the time summed the reforms up well: "reforming a piece of legislation which is fundamentally broken cannot mean slapping a discount sticker on it and expecting great results".

These two huge policy areas have dominated much of 2020 for LGBT+ activists – **but there are many other areas of concern for trans people.** For example, recent studies have highlighted how trans people are at once more likely to be highly educated than the average person, but also significantly more likely to be unemployed or live in poverty.

We have challenges in our own party to remedy, also.

Our leadership contenders this year were united in their defence of trans rights, which have been embedded in our manifestos for years. We have adopted a formal definition of transphobia, and at Conference this year we passed a motion to make trans and nonbinary members more able to participate in our party. However, the debate at the conference shone a light on the transphobia that still exists in our party. **Our party may be at the forefront of the fight for trans rights** – but we cannot be complacent with ourselves.

In spite of the challenges the trans community are facing there is hope.

That's why we are calling on Liberal Democrats up and down the country to join us in standing up for the rights and dignity of all trans people.

Trans rights are human rights. Non-binary people are non-binary, trans men are men, and trans women are women. These sentences are not contentious in our party.

In spite of the challenges the trans community are facing there is hope.

The recent United States elections—which saw more and more LGB people get elected to congress—also saw LGBT+ rights campaigner and the National Press Secretary for the Human Rights Campaign, Sarah McBride, become the first State Senator-elect in US history who is openly trans.

Progress and justice are not inevitable – but they are possible. It is our

job, and the job of all liberals, to make it so.

– *LGBT+ Executive*

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