

Thank you, Kirsty Williams

I should start with a word of thanks – in fact, many words of thanks – to Kirsty Williams. She has announced that she will be standing down at the Welsh Senedd elections next May. As such a successful education minister in Wales, she is a daily demonstration of the difference that Liberal Democrats in power make. A consistently powerful voice for liberalism through all her many years of service, she has made such a big difference to so many lives. Thank you, Kirsty.

We need to get many more people like Kirsty elected in future. As the [Thornhill Review](#) into the lessons of 2019 showed, we've got a huge task to change our approach, our organisation and our internal culture in order to achieve the sort of success that we all want, and which our communities so need.

There is a sobering reminder of the scale of the change, and how we can all contribute to it, in the recent research from [More in Common](#) which showed that overall the public feels least warm to us, behind both Labour and the Conservatives.

There is a big task ahead of us. It's one we can all contribute to, from the impression even an individual Twitter account can give of what Lib Dems are like through to what we do in our national messaging. It's also a task we'll only succeed in if we make the best use of talents and enthusiasm from all parts of our party.

Part of that is about continuing the changes at Lib Dem HQ in order to ensure we have the very best team and infrastructure to support people across the party. I talked last time about how we've now got a new [senior team in place](#), with [Duncan Gough](#) starting as Chief Technology Officer (CTO). Even before he started, the team has managed to make [hundreds of thousands of extra email addresses](#) available to local parties, and there's much more to come.

You can also see some of the changing approach to our national messaging in [our recent party political broadcast \(PPB\)](#), which several members took time to tell me was the best they can remember. (Whether it is a PPB or anything else good that you see, [please do drop me a line](#). It is always good to be able to pass positive feedback on to staff who are working very hard on limited budgets.)

The toughest element of what we need to get right is the party's finances. Coronavirus and the resulting economic disruption have both hit fundraising across the board. Many non-profits and charities have reported big hits to their fundraising this year, and we're not immune to those challenges either.

The 2021 budget plans the Federal Board agreed at our October meeting did therefore involve difficult decisions. Our longer-term financial plan is to run down the surplus we had after the 2019 general election through this Parliament, allowing us to maximise our chances of political success in the

crucial elections through this cycle and to gain the political momentum we then need going into the next Westminster general election. (For financial planning, it makes sense to think of the Westminster general election cycle, as this is the one that has the biggest impact on the party's overall finances.)

We also have a tricky balancing act between spending on immediate success versus investing for the longer-term, such as in improving our use of technology and data and improving our record on diversity.

The CTO appointment is an important part of that. In addition, our Director team at HQ is now far more diverse than it was, on a range of different measures. That will mean we make decisions with a wider set of perspectives. We are also in the final stages of appointing a specialist to develop the practical, specific plan on diversity that we need.

When final touches are made to the budget, it will also include money for market research, so that we can apply another lesson from the Thornhill Review. That is, to always take into account what voters think. Even Liberal Democrat voters often have different perspectives and priorities from those most active in our party. To be successful at winning support, we need to start from understanding the people we are trying to appeal to.

The Board meeting also looked at the latest round of progress on improving our governance processes. We agreed to put to party conference ways to make it easier to improve our complaints process. We are also going to consult over whether to make the post of party Vice President, held currently by Isabelle Parasram, directly elected by party members. Currently, it is elected by Board members only. That could both improve the accountability to members of an important post as well as giving it greater status in the party.

Please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#) if you have views on this, or indeed any of the other issues covered in this piece.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Liberal Democrat peers help defeat Government again on law-breaking Brexit Bill](#)

Yesterday, Liberal Democrat peers voted to remove the illegal aspects of the Government's 'Brexit Bill', due to the fact that it would break international

law.

We urge the Government to do the right thing and accept these changes to the Bill.

The Internal Market Bill will now return to the Commons, **where we urge the Government to do the right thing and accept these changes.**

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

We must help reunite those in care with their loved ones

The separation of care home residents and their loved ones has left families devastated. **Worse still, the health of those in care has worryingly deteriorated due to a lack of contact.**

Too many people have already lost family members as a direct result of lack of contact.

Eight months into the pandemic, and the Government's so-called "new" guidance simply allows a continuation of visiting from outside or behind a screen and will continue to separate families and abandon those in need.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

Let's honour our veterans and members of the armed forces this November

During Covid-19, this support is more important than ever.

With coronavirus restrictions in place across the country, this is a difficult year for the Poppy Appeal.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[The Government's latest furlough U-turn still doesn't go far enough](#)

After the Government announced a last-minute extension to the furlough scheme on October 31st, [I warned the Chief Treasury Secretary](#) that it wouldn't be sufficient since, sadly, **the coronavirus pandemic would not be going away at the end of November.**

This delay will have cost businesses and individuals an untold amount.

Now, not even a week after their announcement, Rishi Sunak has extended furlough further – this time, to March 2021 – and yet again, he has failed to go far enough.

[Go to Source](#)

Author: