



Conference Report

Spring 2025

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Policy Motions

Animal Welfare in the Food System

Conference believes that:

- i. Animals are sentient beings with the capacity to feel pain and suffering and that they have a right to live in as decent and humane conditions as possible.
- ii. The British people are a nation of animal lovers, who expect and deserve high levels of animal health and welfare in the food that they eat.
- iii. The government must have a comprehensive strategy for animal welfare which ensures animals in the food system are able to live in humane and healthy environments from birth to death.
- iv. Government policy must support British farmers to produce a safe, sustainable and affordable supply of food while further improving animal welfare and environmental standards.
- v. High animal welfare standards go hand in hand with high environmental standards, food security, human health, and a stronger economy.

Conference notes that, under the last Conservative Government, Britain started to fall behind on animal welfare, undermining high standards of British farming, with notable failures including:

- A. The culling of hundreds of thousands of animals due to labour shortages brought about by the shortage of vets and farm workers and the closure of small local abattoirs, due to the Conservatives' failure to support rural communities, mismanagement of the economy, and failed deal with Europe.
- B. The introduction of low animal welfare imports onto British shelves due to the Conservatives' flawed trade deals and chaotic border controls.
- C. Scrapping the Kept Animals Bill in May 2023.
- D. Failing to act meaningfully on the 2018 Stacey Review on farm regulation.
- E. Breaking its promise to consult on ending the use of cages for farm animals.

Conference also notes with disappointment the Labour Government's failure so far to make any progress on its election commitment to "the biggest boost in animal welfare in a generation", including:

1. The absence of an overarching animal welfare strategy, with no mention of it in the King's Speech and no government legislation planned.
2. Its timid approach to Europe hampers farmers with red tape and restricts their access to key workers like vets.
3. A lack of understanding of rural and farming communities, which are responsible for maintaining our food and animals to high standards.

4. Its commitment to implement new targets to ensure 50% of food supplied to the public sector is produced by British farmers or certified to higher animal welfare and environmental standards.

Conference reaffirms the existing Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- I. Ensure that UK animal welfare and farming standards are not undermined by new trade deals and renegotiating the trade deals with Australia and New Zealand to ensure British standards are not undercut.
- II. Provide a responsive and well-resourced advisory service for farmers.
- III. Develop safe, effective, humane, and evidence-based ways of controlling bovine tuberculosis, including by investing to produce workable vaccines that minimises harm to badgers and cattle.
- IV. Sign a veterinary and phytosanitary agreement with the EU as soon as possible, and alignment on standards and quality.
- V. Introduce a Research and Innovation Fund to support new and emerging technologies in the sector including the further development of precision agriculture and alternative proteins.

Conference calls for the highest quality of life possible for animals in our food system, including by:

1. Passing a comprehensive new Animal Health and Welfare Bill and all-encompassing national strategy on animal health and welfare, that secures Britain's place as a world leader in animal welfare.
2. Improving animal welfare on the farm by:
 - a. Providing training, support and financial incentives to farmers so that they can develop even higher, world-leading standards of animal welfare, including more funding for peer-to-peer learning to reward farmer networks for sharing knowledge and skills.
 - b. Ensuring that the Growth and Skills Levy takes into account the importance of agricultural skills to provide access to apprenticeships in the sector and support the next generation with expertise in animal welfare.
 - c. Investing in a comprehensive workforce plan, so that farmers have access to enough vets, abattoirs and farm workers to meet the UK's needs.
 - d. Expanding the Competition and Markets Authority investigation into veterinary services to cover non-domestic animal services.
 - e. Preventing unnecessarily painful practices in farming including non-anaesthetised castration and debudding, live plucking and force feeding.
 - f. Developing a national strategy, in consultation with stakeholders, to 'End the Cage Age' of animal farming, bringing an end to practices like farrowing crates within this Parliament.
 - g. Working towards the adoption of the Better Chicken Commitment standards.

3. Improving animal welfare standards in trade by:
 - a. Setting minimum standards for all imported food to meet UK animal welfare standards.
 - b. Matching EU standards by banning the import of food produced with antibiotic growth promoters.
 - c. Ensuring that no animal product that would be illegal to produce in the UK can be sold in Britain, including foie gras.
4. Introducing a national strategy to combat antibiotic resistance in farm animals, so that they are no longer used to compensate for poor conditions, including:
 - a. Training and financial support for farmers to reduce their antibiotic use.
 - b. A UK ban on all routine use of antibiotics and all preventative use of antibiotics in groups of animals.
 - c. Stronger rules on using antibiotics as a last resort.
 - d. Routine collection and publication of national data on antibiotic use.
 - e. Phasing out the import of food produced with irresponsible antibiotic use.
5. Making sure the public sector plays its role in promoting animal welfare by ensuring that:
 - a. All public procurement is compliant with high animal welfare standards.
 - b. An annual report on the level of high welfare food supplied to the public sector is laid before Parliament.
 - c. The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) are properly monitored and enforced.
 - d. Police officers and other enforcement officials have the training and resources they need to uphold standards.
6. Giving consumers proper information and choice by introducing a clear system of labelling, based on the successful egg labelling system, detailing:
 - a. The locality the animal was reared in.
 - b. The conditions they were kept in.
 - c. The method of slaughter.
 - d. The environmental impact of the product.

Applicability: Federal except for 1. (lines 41-43), 5. b) and 6. (lines 117-125) which are England and Wales, and II., V. (lines 64-77) , 2 a), b) (lines 74-80) and d) to f) (lines 84-92) which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion updated and developed policy on food and farming. It built on previous policy proposals as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, Policy Paper 154, *Food and Farming* (2023), Policy Paper 147, *The Natural Environment* (2022), and Policy Paper 129, *A Rural Future: Time to Act* (2018).

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

The first amendment added 4., b), and c), which strengthened calls on procurement and animal welfare in the public sector.

The second amendment added references to agricultural skills.

Ending the Crisis: A Fair Deal for Children with SEND

Conference believes that:

- i. Outcomes for young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are consistently lower than for their peers without SEND.
- ii. According to the National Audit Office, the current SEND system is "not delivering better outcomes for children and young people", while local authorities face significant financial risks; 43% of local authorities will have unsustainable deficits by March 2026.
- iii. Just half of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are issued within the statutory 20-week limit.
- iv. Where parents appeal an EHCP decision, 95% are successful, subjecting families to significant and unwarranted delays and legal costs.
- v. A lack of educational psychologists is one factor in delays to accessing SEND support.
- vi. SEND families are faced with a 'postcode lottery' with inconsistent access to support for children with SEND across different local authorities and regions.
- vii. Local authorities are faced with unsustainable costs for home-to-school SEND transport and for private special schools.
- viii. Children with SEND are roughly three times as likely to be permanently excluded or suspended, compared to their peers.
- ix. Children with SEND are significantly more likely to be absent from school.
- x. Children with SEND are disproportionately affected by the practice of off-rolling and can be subject to bias in admissions.
- xi. Overstretched schools and teachers are being forced to act as a 'fourth emergency service' due to inadequate provision for children's mental health and social care.
- xii. The lack of support for children with SEND, particularly during school holidays, has a significant impact on parent carers and siblings, including their health, wellbeing and opportunities.
- xiii. Research by Carers Trust and the We Care campaign shows that parent carers do not have access to their statutory right to assessments and, if needed, support.

Conference further believes that in addressing this crisis, the Government must take an approach that balances the need for greater inclusivity for children with SEND in mainstream schools, with a recognition that for some children with SEND, even the most inclusive mainstream setting may not be suitable.

Conference reaffirms Liberal Democrat calls for:

- A. A National Body for SEND, to oversee the provision of support for children with SEND and fund the costs of very high needs over £25,000 a year.

- B. Extra funding for local authorities, to reduce the amount that schools pay towards the cost of a child's EHCP.

Conference calls on the UK Government to:

- I. Speed-up the building of state-funded special schools, including by:
 - a. Proceeding as a matter of urgency with construction of the 67 currently planned special free schools.
 - b. Streamlining processes so that local authorities can build special schools, without unnecessary delays from central government.
- II. Improve inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream education, supported by the necessary resources and adaptations, including through:
 - a. A statutory requirement, building on current teacher training and early careers provision, for all teachers to be fully trained to identify and deal with SEND issues, and to have access to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on SEND.
 - b. A statutory requirement for all non-teaching educational professionals to receive training on SEND issues.
 - c. A National Inclusion Framework for schools and academy trusts, to include a clear definition of inclusion, as well as guidance for school leaders on how to support pupils to overcome any additional vulnerabilities that may prevent them from engaging in mainstream education.
 - d. A National Parental Participation Strategy, creating a new duty for schools to focus on parental participation as an important pillar of inclusivity.
 - e. Steps to encourage the presence, where appropriate, of a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) on each school's senior leadership team, recognising the importance of a fully-qualified SENCO in school inclusivity.
 - f. Reviewing how protected time can be provided for SENCOs to do their work.
 - g. Reforming Ofsted inspections so that the importance of inclusive provision for students with SEND is properly taken into account.
- III. Take measures to improve early identification of SEND, including by ensuring that all educational professionals, particularly in the early years workforce, receive SEND- specific training.
- IV. Work alongside local government and trade unions to review how persistent absence among children with SEND can be reduced, encouraging schools to take a holistic approach on improving attendance amongst SEND pupils and ensuring parents are supported to help their children back into well resourced school settings.
- V. Review how financial burdens on local authorities caused by the costs of SEND home-to-school transport and the cost of places in private SEND provision can be reduced, while ensuring quality of transport and education is not lowered.
- VI. Take measures to improve access to support for parent carers and siblings including through:

- a. Working with local government to ensure that parent carers have access to Parent Carers' Needs Assessments and support in every local authority.
 - b. Ensuring that any future carers strategy or reforms to SEND specifically consider the needs of parent carers and siblings.
 - c. Making sure that Ofsted inspections of local authorities specifically assess how councils are identifying and supporting parent carers.
 - d. Including young carers as a priority group within any holiday activity programmes.
- VII. Support Higher and Further education by allowing pre-16 diagnosis of disabilities such as neurodivergence like dyslexia, ADHD and autism to be accepted to access Disability Student Allowance and reasonable adjustments.
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Applicability: England only.

Background briefing: This motion updated and developed policy on education and special educational needs. It built on previous policy as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, Policy Paper 152, *A Better Start in Life* (2023) and Policy Motion, *Investing in Our Children's Future* (2023).

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

The first amendment added additional support for unpaid carers.

The second amendment regarded pre-16 diagnosis of disabilities.

Free to be Who You Are: Motion for the LGBTQ+ Equality Spokesperson Paper

Conference believes that:

- i. Everyone should have the freedom to live their lives as who they are, with their fundamental rights protected.
- ii. Nobody's life chances should be limited or determined because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- iii. Fighting for the rights, dignity and freedom of all LGBTQ+ people is inherent in our core beliefs of liberty and equality.
- iv. True equality is achieved when individuals are not only free from prejudice and discrimination, but also to fulfil their full potential.
- v. Human rights are indivisible, so defending the rights of LGBTQ+ people is crucial to upholding the human rights of all.

Conference commends the party's long history of, and reputation for, advancing LGBTQ+ equality, and reaffirms its commitment to continue this proud tradition.

Conference notes with concern that:

- A. Too many LGBTQ+ people face prejudice, discrimination and hostility simply because of who they are, with two-thirds in the UK having experienced anti-LGBTQ+ violence or abuse.
- B. LGBTQ+ people face deeply entrenched structural inequalities and extra barriers to accessing support throughout many aspects of life, from education to housing and healthcare.
- C. Despite progress on public acceptance of most LGBTQ+ people, divisive culture wars set back attitudes, especially when it comes to trans people.
- D. Outside the UK, acceptance of LGBTQ+ people is still worryingly low, with 67 countries still criminalising people for being gay, and a number of British Overseas Territories not recognising same-sex marriage..

Conference therefore supports the following policies on LGBTQ+ equality, taken from the spokesperson's paper *Free To Be Who You Are*:

1. Implement a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan to coordinate cross-government work on delivering LGBTQ+ equality.
2. Give all equalities issues the focus they deserve by creating a dedicated Secretary of State in the Cabinet to lead the Women & Equalities Unit.
3. Tackle anti-LGBTQ+ hate crime by:
 - a. Ensuring hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people are counted as aggravated offences.

- b. Giving the Secretary of State for Women & Equalities a clear mandate to coordinate government work on hate crime.
 - c. Delivering better training for police on preventing and prosecuting anti-LGBTQ+ hate crime.
- 4. Enable LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse and hate crime to get the support they need by improving access to specialist 'by and for' support services and making general support services more inclusive through specialised training.
- 5. End anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care by:
 - a. Commissioning an urgent investigation into anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care settings including care homes, with recommendations on how to prevent it.
 - b. Delivering mandatory training for all care workers on acceptance and the particularities of caring for LGBTQ+ people.
 - c. Professionalising the care workforce including by creating a national register of care workers, including transparent records of abuse.
 - d. Reviewing the Care Quality Commission's grading system, to ensure that all inspections take into account LGBTQ+ residents' experience in a given care home, and that fresh inspections swiftly follow any allegations of abuse.
 - e. Introducing a 'pride in care' quality mark and LGBTQ+ care champion scheme for councils.
- 6. Call on the Government to publish clear and comprehensive guidance on the use of any single-sex and separate-sex exceptions under the Equality Act, which reaffirms existing laws on protecting people from discrimination on the basis of being trans.
- 7. Include specific provisions to tackle LGBTQ+ homelessness in a cross-Whitehall plan to end homelessness, including central government support for local authorities to give consideration for LGBTQ+ supported housing for older LGBTQ+ people, as has been successful in Lambeth and Manchester, when looking to expand the supply of social housing.
- 8. Create an education system where all LGBTQ+ pupils can thrive by:
 - a. Rolling out a permanent programme to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools in consultation with teachers, school leaders and families.
 - b. Ensuring pupils can receive age-appropriate, LGBTQ+-inclusive relationship and sex education (RSE).
 - c. Giving teachers the training and support they need to perform their pastoral and safeguarding duties with care when supporting children who are struggling with issues related to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 9. Tackle disproportionate rates of mental ill-health among the LGBTQ+ community, including through better training for mental healthcare staff and improved access to services.
- 10. Ban medically unnecessary, non-consensual treatments or surgeries for intersex infants and children.

11. Ensure that all trans and non-binary people have access to the high-quality healthcare they deserve and prioritise tackling unacceptable waiting times by:
 - a. Expanding the provision of appropriate and timely specialist healthcare through NHS child and adult services for trans and non-binary people.
 - b. Issuing clear guidance for GPs on prescribing hormones to trans and non-binary adults.
 - c. Ensuring trans people have access to high-quality healthcare on the same basis we should expect for all patients, with medical decisions made by patients and doctors together, informed by the best possible evidence.
 - d. Supporting research using international best practice to improve evidence on the safety and efficacy of potential treatments.
12. Push for all integrated care boards in England to immediately remove the requirement for lesbian couples to pay for artificial insemination before accessing NHS-funded IVF services.
13. Establish a national online portal to provide HIV and STI home testing services across England, with a long-term aim to roll out Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) prescriptions on the same portal.
14. Ban all forms of conversion 'therapies' and practices.
15. Facilitate another National LGBTQ+ Survey over the course of this Parliament.
16. Reform the gender recognition process to remove the requirement for medical reports, recognise non-binary identities in law, and remove the spousal veto.
17. Improve accessibility of LGBTQ+-focused spaces for d/Deaf or disabled LGBTQ+ people, LGBTQ+ people from ethnic minority communities and LBT women, ensuring that these spaces are inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of all.
18. Stand up for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers by:
 - a. Ending the culture of disbelief for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in the Home Office, and never refusing an LGBTQ+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.
 - b. Ensuring the UK offers asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, regardless of their country of origin.
 - c. Reducing immigration detention to an absolute last resort with a 28-day time limit, recognising that LGBTQ+ detainees face particular risks of violence and abuse.
19. Promote LGBTQ+ rights abroad, including by:
 - a. Developing a comprehensive strategy for promoting the decriminalisation of homosexuality and advancing LGBTQ+ rights abroad.
 - b. Hosting a global conference on LGBTQ+ rights in the UK.
20. Consider intersectionality when implementing the aforementioned policies, acknowledging that LGBTQ+ individuals face unique disadvantages and are disproportionately affected by systemic inequalities.

Conference further notes with concern that the current waiting lists for trans people attempting to access Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) in the UK is on average five years, and in many cases even longer.

Conference believes that:

- a. Trans people have a right to be seen by a specialist within 18 weeks, as set out in the NHS constitution
- b. Trans people deserve further support while on an NHS waiting list in relation to mental health support and Gender Affirming Care.

Conference therefore calls for:

- I. The NHS to provide further support to trans people on waiting lists, including more mental health support.
 - II. The NHS to commission further gender identity clinics and pilot schemes to bring down waiting lists.
 - III. The NHS to be supported and encouraged to work with private Gender Identity specialists to a greater extent, to provide shared care agreements for transgender people.
 - IV. The Government to increase funding and capacity in NHS GICs.
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Applicability: Federal, except for 3., 4. (lines 44-48), 10. (lines 82-83) and 14. (line 108), which are England and Wales, and 5. to 9. (lines 49-81) and 11. to 13. (lines 84-107), which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion updated and developed policy on LGBT+ rights and equalities. It built on previous policy proposals as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, and Policy Motion, *Ban Conversion Therapy* (2021).

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments, and a third amendment was withdrawn.

Amendment one strengthened the motion's calls for LGBT+ protections in care homes.

Amendment two added greater support for transgender healthcare.

Conference voted to retain the lines "Reform the gender recognition process to remove the requirement for medical reports, recognise non-binary identities in law, and remove the spousal veto."

Restoring International Development Assistance

Conference notes:

The Liberal Democrats were the first UK political party to commit to meeting the OECD target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA), and enshrined this target in law whilst in government.

On 25th November 2020, Rishi Sunak announced a 'temporary' cut to 0.5%; this resulted in thousands of preventable deaths and cuts to vital programmes.

The current Labour Government's manifesto committed to restoring development spending at the level of 0.7% of GNI "as soon as fiscal circumstances allow"; despite this, on 25th February 2025, Keir Starmer announced an immediate cut from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI.

The international development budget has been further eroded by the large increase in in-donor refugee costs due to the decision of the previous Conservative government to pause asylum approvals – as well as leaving thousands of people trapped in limbo, these costs have occupied an increasingly large share of ODA.

Conference believes that:

While there is an acute need to increase defence spending to support Ukraine and ensure the UK's future security, this can be met through fair measures such as a digital sales tax and does not require yet another cut to ODA.

The government's cuts to ODA will cost lives and are completely unjustified. UK aid provides desperately needed support to the most vulnerable people in the world, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states, and is a key tool in meeting our climate commitments.

The UK's commitment to development has been one of our most effective foreign policy tools in recent decades and is a key pillar in ensuring our future security.

Sudden cuts to ODA fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable – those affected by humanitarian crises – due to annualised budget cycles being easier to cut.

Conference calls for:

1. The immediate restoration of UK aid spending at 0.5% of GNI and a roadmap to restore 0.7% of GNI as soon as possible within this parliament.
2. A halt to the charging of asylum hosting costs to the ODA budget, freeing up billions for global poverty reduction, climate action and humanitarian response.

3. The Government to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP as soon as possible – based on funding plans outlined by the Liberal Democrats – and to hold cross-party talks to agree a consensus on how to reach 3%.
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Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion updated and developed party policy on international development assistance in light of recent cuts announced by the Government. It built on existing policy as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, and Policy Paper 157, *Liberal Values in a Dangerous World* (2024).

Science, Innovation and Technology: Motion for the Science Policy Paper

Conference believes that:

- i. Technological innovation is essential to tackling the major challenges of our time; climate breakdown, conflict, economic stagnation, crumbling public services, and social unrest.
- ii. Technological advances must be for the benefit of all in society, not just for wealthy and powerful individuals and institutions.
- iii. For technology to benefit the whole of society and deliver the maximum benefit, government must play a comprehensive and active role, showing leadership with a national and international strategy.

Conference further believes that the Liberal Democrat values of internationalism, respect for individual rights and wellbeing, and challenging concentrations of power can combine with science and technology to usher in a new age of prosperity and progress.

Conference notes that the last Conservative Government was an utter failure for UK science and innovation, with a hostile attitude towards international collaboration, shambolic adoption of technology in the public sector, chaotic management of the economy putting off investment and ideological hostility to sensible regulation.

Conference notes with disappointment the Labour Government's confused approach to AI in its Copyright and AI consultation that has unnecessarily created division between the creative and technologies sectors.

Conference further notes that the significant benefits and uses AI can bring to support creativity in the music, film, TV, gaming, arts and media sectors must work in tandem with continuing to protect rights holders.

Conference also notes that the Labour Government lacks the ideas to take advantage of the emerging technological revolution and they are failing to address the deep issues they have inherited.

Conference condemns the Labour Government's decision to cancel the exascale supercomputer in Edinburgh as a short-sighted cost-saving measure, symbolic of their lack of vision and understanding of how science and technology works.

Conference notes the damaging effects of the concentration of enormous power in the hands of US tech oligarchs, and regrets recent moves away from crucial online safety and misinformation measures by Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and others.

Conference condemns the Labour government's decision to isolate the UK on the global stage, by siding with Trump in failing to sign the Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet recently agreed in Paris.

Conference also condemns the Home Office for its February 7th technology capability notice (TCN), where they requested technologically impossible demands of exclusive access to user data stored via Apple's iCloud system, putting user data at risk and subsequent withdrawal of end-to-end encryption under Advanced Data Protection (ADP) from some forms of iCloud data for new UK users and those who have not enabled ADP prior to February 24th.

Conference further believes that exclusive, secure access to personal data in a digital world via encryption is paramount for rights to privacy and should not be abridged via encryption backdoors.

Conference therefore endorses policy paper 158 *Science, Innovation and Technology*, and its flagship policies to:

- A. Create a teacher workforce strategy for England to ensure that every secondary school child is taught STEM subjects by a subject specialist.
- B. Ensure that the digital rights of every citizen are strengthened and upheld, with fair protection and remuneration for creative industries in the age of AI, so that all can benefit from technological progress.
- C. Introduce a National People Strategy alongside an industrial strategy to ensure that the UK workforce has the necessary skills and people are protected from disruption.

Conference in particular endorses policies to:

- 1. Build a vibrant and successful technology and science sector, which is dynamic and innovative whilst ensuring that technological progress is fair to all in society, with guardrails against exploitation and abuse by introducing a national and international science and technology strategy that raises R&D spending to 3.5% of GDP.
- 2. Maintain a balance between enabling AIs to develop and defending the fundamental rights of those who create and own content by:
 - a. Increasing confidence in the transparency of AI development.
 - b. Introducing new record keeping duties and robust, independent auditing of data and content use for AI development.
 - c. Pushing for an active Government role in ensuring creators receive appropriate and proportionate remuneration when copyright material is ingested into generative AI models for training purposes and derive the full benefit of technology such as AI made performance synthesization and streaming.
- 3. Invest in young people's education by:

- a. Creating a teacher workforce strategy that ensures that every secondary school child is taught by a subject specialist and fully funding the independent pay body's recommendations for teacher salaries.
 - b. Building a long-term consensus across parties and teachers to broaden the curriculum and make qualifications at 16-18 fit for the 21st Century.
 - c. Emphasising data and digital literacy across subjects and overhauling mathematics education to improve teaching of data and computer science.
 - d. Investing in adult education and skills, to be set out in a future policy paper.
 - 4. Strengthen our universities as world leaders in research by:
 - a. Enacting a decade-long programme of increasing and improving research funding, with a package of measures to improve spin-outs.
 - b. Fully participating in Horizon Europe, and applying to join the European Innovation Council and EU-US Trade and Technology Council.
 - c. Replacing the Conservatives' failed immigration policies with a flexible merit-based system to attract international talent.
 - 5. Unlock the innovative potential of the private sector, underpinned by four principles:
 - a. High-quality, well-targeted regulation that can help enhance growth and create new sectors, while also protecting consumers, society and our planet.
 - b. Providing businesses certainty to enable businesses of all sizes to invest and take risks; we will be transparent in our plans to help businesses feel confident in theirs.
 - c. New technologies and scientific monetisation happen most effectively when based on high-quality good corporate governance that puts long-term, ethical growth over short-term returns.
 - d. Innovation happens when the public and private sector meet; we will use the power and resources of the state to underpin, and incentivise technological development and adoption.
5. Ensure AI works for the common good – balancing innovation with ethical responsibility – with a National AI Strategy including by:
- a. Introducing a robust regulatory environment, learning from experience of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, with flexible monitoring, inspection, auditing and enforcement powers that would oversee ethical and transparent standards for AI.
 - b. Supporting open approaches to AI to democratise and championing transparency.
 - c. Defending and expanding the rights of the public with regard to automated decision making.
 - d. Reaching an international agreement on the governance and use of AI.

- e. Strengthening rules around copyright so that creators are treated fairly, with record keeping duties and robust, independent auditing of data and content use for AI developers.
- f. Strengthening our democratic processes and investing in new technologies to detect illicit or harmful uses of AI.

6. Fixing our crumbling public services with a comprehensive public sector technology policy and investment plan, notably by:

- a. Investing in skills, training and new technology across the public sector, with long term investment and planning.
- b. Improving health and care with a new approach to personal data, a new agreement with the European Medicines Agency and a comprehensive technology adoption programme.
- c. Ensuring our criminal justice system is able to make the most of new technology, with appropriate safeguards on AI to tackle biases and discrimination.
- d. Empowering local government, with investment in skills and training and a technology sandbox.

7. Harnessing the power of technology to tackle the big social challenges of our time, notably by:

- a. Generating sustainable, inclusive economic growth through a long term, consistent industrial and people strategy.
- b. Tackling regional inequality through a digital inclusion strategy, national investment in digital infrastructure and investing in local government.
- c. Tackling social inequalities, particularly gender, ethnic, disability and class inequality, so that science and technology bring benefits to all.
- d. Tackling the digital divide with local and national plans for digital inclusion.
- e. Investing in green technologies to help mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis.

Conference calls on the Government to adopt the principles of the Paris AI agreement within a National AI Strategy.

Conference further calls for any TCN issued by the Home Office in relation to sweeping access to iCloud to be withdrawn, requests Apple to subsequently restore the option of ADP to all UK Apple consumer and calls on the Government to confirm no future plans on utilising encryption backdoors on other communication platforms.

Applicability: Federal, except for 2. (lines 51-63), 6. (lines 109-120) and 7. (lines 121-134) which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion and the accompanying policy paper updated and developed policy on science, artificial intelligence, and public services.

It built on previous policy proposals as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, Policy Paper 145, *The Nature of Public Debate* (2022) and Policy Paper 150, *Towards a Fairer Society* (2023).

Amendments: Conference passed three amendments, and the FCC agreed to a drafting amendment.

Amendment one added calls regarding artificial intelligence.

Amendment two called on the UK government to diverge from the US.

Amendment three strengthened data protection calls in the light of developments with iCloud.

The drafting amendment read added points 5., 6., and 7., which had been accidentally omitted from the printed agenda.

The UK's Response to Trump

Conference notes that in November 2024, Donald Trump was elected as the President of the United States for a second time.

Conference expresses profound alarm at:

- i. Trump's disregard for democratic institutions, exemplified by his false claims that the 2020 US election was 'stolen', his involvement in the January 6th Capitol attack, and his decision to pardon those imprisoned for the attack.
- ii. In January 2025, the US Department of Justice Special Counsel reported that had Trump not been re-elected, he would have been convicted for illegally trying to overturn the 2020 US election.
- iii. Trump's suspension of military aid to Ukraine, and lack of commitment to NATO.
- iv. Trump's failure to rule out using military force to seize control of the Panama Canal and Greenland and his threat to annexe Canada as the US 51st state.
- v. Trump's reckless comments proposing that Palestinians be removed from Gaza and 'resettled' elsewhere - which would constitute a grave violation of international law - undermining the already fragile ceasefire and disregarding the legitimate right of Palestinians for their own state.
- vi. Trump's plans to implement tariffs which will damage the UK economy in the midst of a cost of living crisis.
- vii. The continued attempts by Trump ally and incoming US government official Elon Musk to interfere in UK politics, including reports of potential future donations.
- viii. Trump's lack of commitment to international climate action and his plan to withdraw from the Paris agreement.
- ix. Trump and the Republican Party's pursuit of policies which are deeply damaging for American women and minority groups.
- x. Donald Trump's personal conduct, as the first US President to be a convicted felon, and to have been found liable for sexual assault.
- xi. Trump's cancellation of USAID, which could lead to China increasing its influence in the Global South.
- xii. The disgraceful verbal assault by Trump and Vance on President Zelensky in the Oval Office on 28 February 2025.
- xiii. The Trump Administration's actions to roll back the rights of LGBTQ+ people in the US, in particular towards trans people, as well as those of women and ethnic minorities.

Conference is also deeply concerned that the second Trump presidency comes at a time when Putin's forces are still waging their illegal war in Ukraine and we see unprecedented attempts at foreign interference by Russia, including in Georgia, Moldova and Romania.

Conference believes that the United Kingdom must now lead in Europe to ensure support for Ukraine, to secure NATO's future and strengthen trade and defence cooperation with our European allies.

Conference welcomes the Government's decision to raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP, but expresses concern that doing so by cutting Official Development Assistance will ultimately make the UK less secure.

Conference further believes that it is more urgent than ever for the UK to fix its broken relationship with the EU and that enhancing economic ties with the EU, including by cutting red tape and boosting trade links, is essential for insulating the UK from Trump's unpredictability as well as growing our economy.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrats' longer-term objective of UK membership of the EU and our four-stage roadmap to restore ties of trust and trade as set out in Policy Paper 144 *Rebuilding Trade and Cooperation with Europe*.

Conference deeply regrets the continued refusal of the Labour Government to entertain the prospect of membership of the Single Market or the Customs Union, especially given the uncertainty and unpredictability threatened by the second Trump presidency.

Conference accordingly calls on the Government to:

- A. Ensure that Ukraine is supported no matter what, by holding a European leaders summit to seize the frozen Russian assets in the UK and Europe and giving them to Ukraine.
- B. Ensure Ukraine's participation in peace negotiations as an equal partner to safeguard against a coerced and detrimental peace settlement.
- C. Take urgent and immediate action to boost growth by restoring the trading relationship with the EU, removing red tape imposed by the Brexit deal in line with our four-stage roadmap and, as the culmination of the third stage in our roadmap, negotiate a new UK-EU Customs Union by 2030 at the latest.
- D. Rule out any UK-US trade deal which lowers British environmental and health standards.
- E. Ensure that the UK is a world leader on climate in the US's absence, including by restoring the international development budget to 0.7% of national income with tackling climate change a key priority for development spending.
- F. Strengthen the UK's defences in the light of US isolationism and Putin's aggression by:
 - a. Reversing the 10,000 Conservative troop cut, with an ambition of returning the Army to 100,000 troops.
 - b. Committing to spending 2.5% of GDP as soon as possible - to be funded by raising the Digital Services Tax from 2% to 10% - and holding cross-party talks to agree a consensus on how to reach spending 3% of GDP on defence.
 - c. Maintaining the UK's nuclear deterrent with the four Dreadnought-class submarines providing continuous at-sea deterrence, while pursuing global multilateral disarmament.
- G. Deepen cooperation on defence and security with our allies, including by:

- a. Providing further investment in the Joint Expeditionary Force, including convening a summit of JEF leaders in the UK to discuss how the JEF should respond to Trump's election and his remarks regarding Greenland.
 - b. Building on existing UK-French and UK-German cooperation arrangements, including the Lancaster House Treaties and the Trinity House Agreement.
 - c. Developing closer cooperation with EU agencies and member states over defence, intelligence and cyber-security.
 - d. Support the creation of a Rearmament Bank, together with our European and other allies, to enable greater access to finance for defence programmes.
- H. Protect the UK from foreign interference from overseas oligarchs and hostile state and non-state actors by:
- a. Making protecting our democracy a national security priority.
 - b. Taking big money out of politics by capping donations to UK political parties.
 - c. Working closely with European and other democratic allies to coordinate our response to Russian interference.
-

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion updated and developed policy on international affairs and defence.

It built on previous policy proposals as set out in the 2024 General Election Manifesto, *For a Fair Deal*, Policy Paper 157, *Liberal Values in a Dangerous World* (2024), and Policy Motion, *Standing with Ukraine* (2023).

Amendments: Conference passed three amendments, and the FCC agreed to a drafting amendment.

Amendment one added a funding model to the 2.5% spending commitment.

Amendment two strengthened calls for enhancing economic ties with the EU.

Amendment three regarded Ukraine's role in peace negotiations.

The drafting amendment updated the motion's calls following new US developments.

Constitutional Amendments

Implementing the Lessons of the General Election Review

Conference notes that:

- A. State and Regional Candidate Chairs, their committees and the other volunteers supporting their work are the backbone to our Westminster candidate system. They are central to our efforts as a party to find and support candidates and we are grateful for their continued hard work.
- B. We recognise the need to create the best possible Westminster candidate system for our State and Regional Candidate Chairs, their committees and other volunteers to operate within and for them to receive the best possible support.
- C. The 2024 General Election Review has recommended that major changes are needed to our Westminster candidate processes in order for us to better support candidates and win more elections.
- D. As the Review found, in practice due to shared resources, volunteers and staff support, the Welsh and Scottish state parties have to follow many of the same rules and processes agreed by the English state party but do not currently have any input into those decisions.
- E. The Federal Constitution currently gives the Federal Party responsibility for “overall preparations for [Westminster] Parliamentary ... Elections” in Article 2.3, but candidate approval and selection rests with each of the three State Parties.
- F. Splitting off Westminster candidate approval and selection from the main organisation of our Parliamentary election campaigns risks the support, mentoring and selection of candidates being siloed off from our main election work.
- G. Despite making up 51% of the population, women only made up 28% of Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidates in the General Election: a lower percentage than the Conservative, Labour, and Green parties.

Conference therefore believes that:

- 1. As our candidates are such an essential part of any election campaign, the party body responsible for running general election campaigns should also be responsible for the candidate process, just as is already the case for Holyrood and Senedd elections as well as local elections.
- 2. All three State Parties should have parity of esteem, with all three having an equal input into the decision making.
- 3. There should be full support for our candidates system from the Federal Party, including dedicated staff support.

4. Our commitment to improving the party's diversity, and particularly to tackling the under-representation of ethnic minorities, means the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, elected by party members, should have direct input into the candidate process and diversity must be embedded into the candidates process and made a key priority.
5. Recognising the significant underrepresentation of women among Liberal Democrat candidates, it is essential to take action to enhance their representation both within the candidate pool and across the party as a whole.
6. A co-ordinated, planned timetable for selections will enable better use of volunteer time to help run them, will enable more action to be taken to improve the diversity of our candidates and will enable better planning for and provision of training for newly selected candidates.
7. Training of approved and selected candidates is essential for their, and the party's, success.
8. There should be clear and direct accountability for the management of our candidate process, including via the party's sovereign body, Federal Conference.
9. It is for local party members to determine who their Liberal Democrat candidate is in Westminster elections. There is no proposed change to this. As is currently the case, the responsibility to decide who is a Liberal Democrat Westminster candidate in each constituency will continue to rest with local party members.
10. The delivery of our Westminster candidate function depends on the vital work of our Regional Candidates Committees (in England) and State Candidate Committees in England, Scotland and Wales and their other volunteers. There is no proposed change to this. As is currently the case; these committees and volunteers will continue to deliver their important work and, for Regional Candidates Chairs in England, continue to sit on the State Candidate Committee.
11. Clearly defined metrics help to create an open and transparent working environment, while acting as a motivator for Local Parties and candidates.

Conference therefore agrees to amend the Federal Constitution as follows:

In Article 2.3(c) after "Elections" insert: ", including arrangements for candidate approval and selection".

In Article 13.4 delete the text regarding the composition of the Joint Candidates Sub-Committee by deleting:

"shall include one representative, with a power of substitution, from each of the State Candidates Committees. The Chair of the JCSC shall be appointed by the FCEC from amongst its members"

and insert:

"shall comprise:

- a. the Chair of the JCSC who shall be appointed by the FCEC;

- b. one representative, with a power of substitution, from each of the State Candidates Committees;
- c. one person elected by the FCEC from amongst its members;
- d. the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities; and
- e. the Chief Whip in the House of Commons."

In Article 13.4 delete:

"a. The JCSC shall maintain oversight of the Party's readiness to field candidates in all elections to the Westminster and European Parliaments and shall co-ordinate the maintenance of standards and the performance of the functions specified in Article 19.1 and 19.7, including for the first elections to the House of Lords (or any fully or partially elected replacement second chamber of the Westminster Parliament)."

"b. If it is not possible for there to be an appropriate constitutional amendment before the first elections to the House of Lords (or any fully or partially elected replacement second chamber of the Westminster Parliament), the procedures to be adopted for the purposes of article 19.1 shall be based as far as possible on the provisions of clauses 19.4 and 19.8 as appropriate. It shall receive reports from States Candidates Committees to that end."

and insert:

"13.5 The JCSC shall set the standards and processes for, and maintain oversight of, the Party's readiness to train and field candidates in all elections to the Westminster and European Parliaments as well as any public elections to the House of Lords or its successor. In order to do this, for these elections the JCSC's functions shall be:

- a. to make provision for there to be lists of approved candidates;
- b. to maintain and publish criteria for approval and to ensure, so far as possible, their consistent application;
- c. to make and from time-to-time to vary rules for the selection and adoption of prospective candidates, including provisions for deselection;
- d. to co-ordinate and regulate the procedure for the selection and adoption of candidates; and
- e. to provide training for Returning Officers, approved candidates and selected candidates.
- f. To develop and implement candidate diversity action plans, led by the Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities.
- g. To produce clearly communicated, realistic workload expectations, including a comprehensive schedule and pathway at every seat level, set out clearly in the candidates' compact.

In carrying out these roles, it shall consult with State Candidates Committees."

In carrying out its role under (d), the JCSC shall establish a Consultative Group, including representatives from each State Candidates Committee, who may include one or more Chairs of Candidate Committees created by Regional Parties. The Consultative Group shall offer advice to the JCSC, and the JCSC shall respond to any advice offered.

In Article 13.4 renumber (c) as Article 13.6 and capitalise the first letter of "article".

Insert new Article 13.7: "The FCEC report to conference shall include the work of the JCSC."

Delete the wording of Article 19.1 and insert: "Each State Party shall establish a Candidates Committee in order to carry out its responsibilities for elections to the Westminster and European Parliaments as well as any elections to the House of Lords or its successor, including implementing the requirements set under Article 13.5. These Candidates Committees shall also have responsibility for candidate approval and selection for elections to any devolved Parliament or Senedd within the State Party's area."

In Article 19.2 after "each State Candidates Committee shall" insert: "follow the requirements set under Article 13.5 and shall".

Delete the wording of Article 19.2 (b) and insert: "the previous participation by the applicant in the work of the Party, both generally and within the relevant State, as well as their previous participation in other walks of life."

In Article 19.3 delete: "The name of any person may be removed from a list by the relevant State Candidates Committee if" and insert: "The name of any person may only be removed from a list by the relevant State Candidates Committee by following the requirements set under Article 13.5 and if".

In Article 19.3 delete the two references to "as an MP or MEP" and insert: "in the public office for which they have been approved as a candidate"

In Article 19.4 delete: "The rules for the selection of Westminster candidates shall comply with" and insert: "The rules for the selection of Westminster candidates made by the JCSC shall comply with".

Delete the wording of Article 19.4(j)(iii) and insert: "notice as to how ballot papers and/or electronic voting instructions will be distributed, including if applicable how to apply for a postal vote".

Delete Article 19.7(b), renumber Article 19.7(a) as Article 19.5, and renumber other articles accordingly, including the cross-reference in Article 13.6.

In Article 19.8 delete: "The rules for selecting the lists of candidates " and insert: "The rules for selecting the lists of candidates made by the JCSC".

Conference further notes that implementing these changes will require agreement by the State Parties under Article 2.10(c) and encourages them to give their assent as soon as practical this year.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This amendment updated and developed the constitution's wording on candidate selection following the General Election Review 2024.

Amendments: Conference passed two amendments.

Amendment one recognised the contribution that candidate chairs, committees, and volunteers make to the Westminster candidate system.

Amendment two added calls related to candidate diversity.

Report Questions and Answers

Campaign for Gender Balance report

Q1. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Julia Cambridge

Thank you Christopher, this is important. The Campaign for Gender Balance is trying to get more women selected as top candidates, and if anyone has specific complaints, we would firmly say that there are independent disciplinary complaints processes that people can use, and if people see discrimination, we would urge people to use them.

Federal Board report

Q1. Submitted by Donna Harris

Under Section 106 of the Equality Act, the party will soon have to publish anonymised diversity data around candidates as well as their approval, nomination and selection. How does the party plan to meet these transparency requirements?

Answer by Mark Pack

Candidate matters such as this rest with the Joint Candidates Subcommittee (JCSC) and I am sure that via that, the state parties and the Federal Party will work together collegiately and positively to ensure we meet our legal obligations - particularly as the overall purpose is one we very much support as a party and as the data will also benefit ourselves in seeking to improve our own record on diversity.

If there were any specific concerns or suggestions behind the question, very happy to follow up directly with you on those.

Supplementary question by Donna Harris

How will the Federal Board work with Lib Dem Women and the other diversity AOs, and how quickly will this be done?

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Much of the Federal Board's work on this is done, as you know, through the Federal People Development Committee, and the diversity AOs are represented through that. I think Q2. addresses some of this question.

Q2. Submitted by Eleanor Kelly

As part of our response to the General Election review, Liberal Democrat Women requested data concerning the gender, region and seat status of candidates. Nearly six months later, this has not been fully provided. When can we expect it? How will the President support robust diversity data monitoring, not only for members as outlined in his report, but also for Candidates?

Answer by Mark Pack

I am sorry to hear this.

The team have checked what happened with your correspondence and there seems to have been a misunderstanding over whether it was data for future selections or the last Parliament that was wanted. That confusion was not your fault, and I apologise for this.

I have asked what data can now be made available, as understanding the benchmark of where we were at in 2024 is clearly important for judging how we do in future. You should now receive the data you requested over the coming weeks.

Turning to the data for this Parliament, tracking how we do on diversity is going to be important and getting the data monitoring framework right will be an important task for the Joint Candidates Subcommittee (JCSC) now that they have expanded responsibilities for candidate selection following the passing of motion F10.

I have therefore passed on to the JCSC chair, Alison Suttie so that more details can be provided in subsequent report backs from the Board to members and conference.

Supplementary question by Eleanor Kelly

We completely understand that there has been some misunderstanding and we are looking forward to working with the Federal Board and HQ to improve that diversity data and continue on the conversation.

Q3. Submitted by John Grout

Is the Federal Board taking steps to protect the Party and plan for the Party's survival in the event that a data breach of NGP VAN is engineered by hostile actors as a pretext for shuttering the company and/or the US Democratic Party?

And submitted by Christopher Johnson

Should we look at developing a new canvassing software with our European parties in order to reduce our reliance on American companies following the US President's recent statements on Ukraine?

Answer by Mark Pack

Events involving President Trump, Canada, Greenland, tariffs on penguins and more show all too clearly that things which were previously unthinkable now very much need to feature in our contingency planning.

In addition, you may have seen some of the press coverage in the US over the recent change of ownership of NGP VAN and how that is working out.

We are therefore very much keeping our minds open on who we use as our suppliers and in regular dialogue with them, such as with NGP VAN over their customer support plans following the ownership change.

There is a significant benefit in using a supplier such as NGP VAN as their scale and the sensitivity of their clients in the US means they dedicate much greater resources to security than we could otherwise afford.

The Lib Dem Software Group also does a great job working with sister parties developing various digital tools, and I encourage anyone with digital skills to get in touch with them to help this work go further. At the moment, though, we are a long way from that being the right route for our core CONNECT service, but it is important to keep an open mind.

Q4. Submitted by Abrial Jerram

Do you believe the same willingness to reinvent ourselves that took place after 2019 is needed post 2024 General Election in acknowledgment of the fact that the next general election is going to be nothing like the last?

Answer by Mark Pack

Yes, the General Election review has set out an ambitious plan of action.

We do know that some things will be the same - the importance of focusing on issues that matter most to voters, the importance of 'targeting' under the first past the post system, and the importance of both protecting our incumbents and broadening our strength across the country.

But we will also have new opportunities against Labour whilst it is imperative that we challenge Reform and adapt to the changing media landscape.

Q5. Submitted by Sir Simon Hughes

Please can all party elections require that members can vote by post as well as email, and that all local council selections have rules to maximise gender balance and diversity?

Answer by Mark Pack

Rules for local council selections do not sit with the Federal Party but rather with State Parties and therefore are best addressed to them.

For internal elections that are within the Federal Party's remit, the election regulations ratified by Conference make provision for postal ballots to be requested.

For Parliamentary selections, the constitution, as now amended by motion F10, sets out requirements regarding postal and electronic voting and I will draw your views to the attention of Alison Suttie, chair of the Joint Candidates Sub Committee (JCSC), as that body now has a role in drawing up more detailed rules.

Supplementary question by Simon Hughes

I think there is also an issue for the Federal Party. We've talked about diversity a lot, gender a lot, but it is still possible for local parties to have elections that don't require postal voting for those who are digitally excluded. Secondly, there is nothing to ensure that in mixed wards there are both male and female candidates, and to ensure not all candidates are white. There are no requirements, and sadly we don't always deliver. Can you have a look at what the Federal Party can do, and work with the English Party. We have too many white, male candidates standing for local elections, and too few female and non-white candidates standing for local elections.

Answer by Jeremy Hargreaves

Thank you. I will do two things. Firstly, I will pass this on to the JCSC, who will look at this in more detail I am sure. Secondly, we have been talking about diversity data in a number of different ways, so it is a priority to take forward in this Parliament.

Q6. Submitted by Andy Williams

Are there plans to standardise MPs local party tithes in future. Given that they seem to range from sensible to zero?

Answer by Mark Pack

The tithing scheme you mention was an English Party decision so any questions or concerns would need to be raised with the English Party directly.

Q7. Submitted by Michael Berwick-Gooding

Please can you state how many people in the consultation wanted no change to the number of nominators required to stand for a Federal Party Committee and how many people wanted an increase?

Answer by Mark Pack

There were two relevant consultations, first the broad one by the Nick Manners internal election review, which included a survey responded to by over 700 members and led to the recommendation regarding looking at the nomination threshold. Then when drawing up the specified proposals, the Board was guided in part by a narrower consultation specifically on the details of implementation, in which 100 members took part. It supported an increase for committees 56%-41% and for the Vice President role 65%-32%.

Q8. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Mark Pack

The Federal Board sees tackling discrimination as an important issue.

The Federal People and Development Committee (FPDC), on behalf of the Federal Board, has been working with staff on the complaints process, safeguarding plans and our whistleblowing policy.

In addition, the Board makes significant efforts to increase the diversity of those we appoint or elect to various party positions, such as making the party's different diversity groups aware of each advertisement that goes out. Creating a more diverse pool of volunteer post holders is part of the longer-term culture change needed to best tackle these issues.

The Board is always keen to hear suggestions for what more can be done, and please do get in touch with any specific ideas or concerns.

Q9. Submitted by John Grout

What, in the Board's opinion, is the acceptable level of harm it is prepared to inflict on a vulnerable minority (and the party's reputation), to avoid litigation from those determined to exterminate them, in contravention of the party's Values?

And submitted by Gareth Epps

Is there nothing the party will not agree to do when issued legal threats by people who do not share our values?

And submitted by Leon Duveen

Yet again, the Party has been blackmailed by threat of expensive legal action into accepting a stall from a group that opposes basic Liberal Democrat principles. This is an intolerable situation and what is the Federal Board doing to make sure that such groups that do not respect the fundamental values of our Party are not allowed to have a stall or hold fringe events at our Conference?

Answer by Mark Pack

Of course we have no tolerance for harm or abuse of any kind within our party. We have formal definitions of transphobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia, and it is important that these are always properly adhered to and that our independent complaints process takes action where necessary.

Ultimately, when it comes to facing legal proceedings, the party needs to take legal advice and act accordingly - including on questions of our likelihood of winning those legal proceedings, and the financial implications we could face as a result.

We have a job to do to make sure we are not breaking the law, or paying out more than we need to. We also fully pursue reclaiming our costs when the courts rule in our favour.

Q12. Submitted by Sir Simon Hughes

How many complaints against members as of 1 March 2025 are awaiting a) hearings and b) decisions for longer than 3, 6, 9 and 12 months, and can speedy decisions be ensured in future.

And submitted by Sir Simon Hughes

Since 1 March 2020 and until 1 March 2025 how many complaints have been made against party members in each year, how many have been concluded, how many are still unresolved and what is the maximum time for a decision.

Answer by Mark Pack

Full statistics about our complaints process are published to Conference each year, in the Autumn. I am afraid it would not be a good use of the resources of our small staff team to collate and publish different data, on a different timescale and under different categories from those used for the existing annual publication.

Q13. Submitted by Sir Simon Hughes

Since 1 March 2020, as of 1 March 2025 a) how many legal cases have been initiated by members or former members against the party, b) how many concluded, c) how many with awards or judgements against the LDs and d) at what total cost?

Answer by Mark Pack

There have been 9 cases, of which 6 have been concluded and of those in only 1 had judgement being found against the Liberal Democrats. Control and reporting of costs is covered by our financial reporting processes and scheme of financial delegation, with relevant oversight from volunteer party officers, but we do not publish financial details.

Q15. Submitted by Sir Simon Hughes

Will the President and all party officers confirm the right of all LD PPCs and MPs as a matter of personal liberal conscience to express views and vote against abortion, assisted dying, euthanasia and the legal right to change sex, and to be respected for doing so.

Answer by Mark Pack

We are a proud liberal party and that naturally means our members, candidates and elected representatives have a diversity of views within our shared overall values. Our constitution respects that: Article 2.8 makes clear that "No elected representative in any body in the Party shall be mandated." I also note, for example, that when Conference passed our policy in favour of legalising assisted dying as a choice for terminally ill

adults, with strict safeguards, it also expressed the clear view that this should be a free vote for our parliamentarians – as is the case.

Decisions on the whip for any specific vote are rightly made by the Chief Whip.

Q16. Submitted by Robert Reiss

The public version of the party style guide was last updated in September 2018. To assist local parties in maintaining coherence with federal party branding, will the style guide be reviewed and updated as a priority?

Answer by Mark Pack

A new brand/style guide is currently being produced by the Digital and Field Resources Teams. This will be more consistent and will reflect where we are as a Party. The new Brand guidelines will be simple to follow and available soon, although immediate election campaigns take priority.

Q17. Submitted by Tony Vickers

Is Lib Dems Abroad working with British Overseas Voters Forum, given the likely high propensity for Brits based abroad to vote Liberal Democrat?

Answer by Mark Pack

As Liberal Democrats Abroad are separate from the Federal Party, this is a question that would need to be raised with them directly. Please get in touch if you need contact details for them.

Q18. Submitted by Janey Little

Part of the rationale behind F10 Constitutional Amendment: Implementing the Lessons of the General Election Review, is to improve diversity. If the amendment passes, can you detail how this is going to be enacted under the new JCSC framework? Or if the amendment fails, the plans to improve diversity if it remains within the old model.

Answer by Mark Pack

F10 has altered the composition of the Joint Candidates Subcommittee (JCSC) to include the Vice President with responsibility for ethnic minority communities, an important move to support improving candidate diversity.

The General Election Review also highlighted a number of recommendations to aim to improve diversity. These recommendations included creating a new mentorship programme pairing MPs with diverse candidates in every tier, re-introducing women-only candidate approval days, and introducing dedicated days for ethnically-diverse candidates to ensure approvals are not a 'blocker' in taking forward candidacy.

There was also a recommendation to renew focus on ethnic diversity - particularly among our local government base, and ensuring that the party is actively canvassing in more ethnically diverse areas. As canvass data subsequently feeds into membership and candidate recruitment, that has to be part of long-term, sustained progress for our party.

As we are still in the very early stages following the Conference vote, and that the changes made in F10 still need to be ratified by the State Parties, some of the details on this are yet to come. However, it is clear from both F10 and the General Election Review, as well as previous Federal Conference motions, that this is a priority area for the party, and rightly so.

Federal Communications and Elections Committee report

Q1. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Kath Pinnock

Thanks very much for the question, it's very important to keep prodding us all about fighting discrimination in all its forms and wherever it raises its ugly head. What we can do as the Federal Communications and Elections Committee is enable candidates to go through the approval and selection processes. The passing of F10 (Implementing the Lessons of the General Election Review) will help with this, and enable a wider diversity of candidates to come forward, and be supported. The Federal Communications and Elections Committee absolutely opposes any form of discrimination, including any racial discrimination.

Federal Conference Committee report

Q1. Submitted by Simon Hughes

There was last year a very long delay in publishing written answers to questions submitted to Conference. Please can all answers be published within 21 days of the last day of Conference in future.

Answer by Nick da Costa

Thank you for the question Simon. Yes, there was a long delay and this was unacceptable. I have written to all committee chairs and those who provide responses to questions at Conference informing them that I expect their written responses far quicker this time, and that if we do not get the responses quick enough this time we will be: firstly, publishing the questions and answer bundle and stating that "no response received" from the relevant person and secondly, that I will then insist that all written responses are received and published within 21 days of the end of Conference and if no questions received within that timeframe that we will publish who has not submitted responses.

Q2. Submitted by Brandon Masih

The Science Motion, as per the first drafts publication on the Facebook Federal Conference Group, is much longer in its calls for sections than what made the agenda in the end. Could FCC explain whether such shortening after submission is normal and why that means the motion text no longer discusses AI much?

Answer by Nick da Costa

Thank you for the question, unfortunately, sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Science motion were missed off when the agenda was published. We have rectified this, by drafting in the missing sections. The missing sections are all contained within the policy paper, so therefore are already part of the motion. Apologies for this - this is my fault and I should have picked it up in the agenda proofing stages.

Q3. Submitted by Abrial Jerram

F4 is, on the whole, extremely vague yet was selected despite much high quality competition, would you have selected it for debate if had not been submitted by FPC?

Answer by Nick da Costa

The motion is not vague - there is a whole policy paper appended with the motion.

Q4. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Nick da Costa

The FCC takes its responsibility to promote an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming environment at Conference and within the wider party very seriously. We recognise that tackling discrimination - whether misogyny, ableism, transphobia, or any other form of prejudice - is an ongoing process that requires proactive measures and constant vigilance.

What we have done:

1) Improved accessibility and inclusion at Conference

We are constantly updating and strengthening better support for disabled members, for example through the accessibility forum, and adjustments to venue selection. Furthermore, we now have a dedicated steward for accessibility matters in the auditorium, and it is an important part of the role of our stewards too.

2) Strengthened conduct policies.

The FCC has recently updated its policies with regards to exclusion from conference (following a FAP ruling), and also a clear mechanism for involvement of the party's complaint system. We take a zero-tolerance approach to harassment.

3) On selection of speakers - as you are aware we collect information on diversity on our speakers cards so that we can try - as much as possible - to ensure that debates have a diverse range of speakers, but also of opinions on a matter.

As I mentioned earlier, tackling discrimination is an iterative process. This never finishes, and we will always need to do more, and do better.

I want to continue working with FCC members to ensure that we provide guidance - not only for debate chairs, but also for fringes, to ensure that we are all working to tackle discrimination and fostering inclusive debates.

We receive diversity data reports from our stewards on the speakers selected at conference, and this is reviewed by the committee to see if we can do better.

And we want to continue to ensure that any concerns raised by members are addressed and ensure that if members have any concerns that these are raised through the appropriate channels.

Federal Council report

Q1. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Prue Bray

Federal Council has only limited opportunities to take action itself because its main function is to scrutinise the work of Federal Board. However, at our last meeting we dealt with a call-in of the Board's decision to increase the expenses limit for the Presidential election to £25,000 and the discussion on that item centred on the impact on people of diverse backgrounds, who would be less likely to have access to significant sums of money. Concerns that the increase would make it harder for women and candidates from the global majority and others to stand were the main reason that Federal Council voted to ask the Federal Board to reconsider.

Federal International Relations Committee report

Q1. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by David Chalmers

I would encourage people to ask people with diverse backgrounds to sign up to the delegation. The committee itself is a strong team and I make sure everyone's voice is heard. Everyone is valid. We have senior people that come along to our meetings, but we are inclusive of the whole committee. I try to make sure everyone feels valid and a part of the team.

Q2. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

As we enter the 110th anniversary of the Greek, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides, is it not time our party and our country recognise them?

Answer by David Chalmers

With the genocide in Armenia, it is a good point. We have a sister party in Armenia, and this question has reminded me that I need to reach out to them, to talk to them, and to talk to our Parliamentarians to see how it fits in. In the course of the next week, I will take a look at this.

Federal Policy Committee report

Q1. Submitted by Christopher Johnson

What has your committee done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Lucy Nethsingha

Thank you for your question. There are two key things that I want to talk about in relation to this question. The first is that, when we are thinking about policy, we are always very mindful of the impact that has on all groups. In our policy work, we take tackling discrimination extremely seriously. We take it seriously in relation to the groups mentioned in the question, but also how our policy impacts other groups, including rural and urban communities, and different socioeconomic groups. Secondly, the Federal Policy Committee puts a large amount of hours into ensuring our policy working groups are properly reflective of different groups and geographies. There is a huge amount of effort that goes into making sure that when we set those working groups up they reflect the whole of society as much as we are able to. We are very grateful to all those that apply to sit on those policy working groups, because the more people that apply to be on them, the easier our job is to ensure those groups are properly represented. I do want to thank Dr Mohsin Khan and the relatively small group of people that spend hours going through the applications making sure that they are representative, and then to all the people that sit on those working groups who make sure our policies reflect society and are non-discriminatory.

Q2. Submitted by Abrial Jerram

Would you agree that F4 and its accompanying policy paper is very vague and if so, is that deliberate?

Answer by Lucy Nethsingha

Thank you, I have a very short answer to this one, which is no. I do not agree that F4 is vague and it certainly is not intended to be. I feel slightly annoyed about this question because it is not reflective of the amount of work that has gone into that paper. A vast amount of work has been done by a lot of people to bring this paper forward, and I think we need to be respectful of that.

Supplementary question by Abrial Jerram

I believe both the motion and policy paper are vague because they call for the development of a strategy. They don't lay out what the strategy is, and they don't even lay out a method by which the strategy should be devised. I don't know what that means, and I don't know how we can expect anyone else to understand it. I don't doubt that they worked hard as it is quite a long policy paper but the quality does not reflect the effort.

Answer by Lucy Nethsingha

I would respectfully disagree with you. I am sure the policy working group has done their best to express their policies. Thank you for your question.

Parliamentary Parties report

Q1. Submitted by Brandon Masih

Is there a concern that parliamentarians may undermine the arguments we have in opposing Labour policy, considering one front bencher has, on social media, described a matter of terminology on one Government tax policy as “Orwellian”?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

We believe the question refers to remarks made in the House of Commons chamber during a debate of the Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Bill, which does not introduce tax policy - it gives the Government new powers to recover money relating to fraud and error across the tax and welfare system. We voted against that Bill at second reading.

Some of these new powers are very significant, for example the Government will have access to data about people’s bank accounts and the DWP will be given powers to recover money directly from individuals’ bank accounts without a court order. One can immediately understand what this could mean for people caught in the Carer’s Allowance repayments scandal.

Upholding civil liberties (including data privacy) and fairness across our public sector is a key liberal value so it is understandable that Parliamentarians may have used perhaps stronger terms than we’d do normally, but that in no way detracts from the effectiveness of our arguments. During that debate we provided detailed scrutiny of the Bill, discussing its effectiveness, its impact on the Carer’s Allowance scandal, privacy concerns, the need to prevent fraud from happening in the first place, and challenging the Govt on its revenue estimates.

Supplementary question by Brandon Masih

My initial question was about private schools and VAT. How does the Parliamentary party work with Liberal Democrat policy teams to ensure policy is credible, particularly in regards to tax rises and spending commitments like the Digital Services Tax.

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

We are sitting here at Conference, and I am very proud of the fact that Conference is the policy making body of the party. Members make policy. Dick Newby chaired the General

Election manifesto process during the last campaign, and we ensure that we promote priorities that fit with the campaign narrative. We do have MPs on the Federal Policy Committee. As representatives they ensure we are linked in. As you will know, the Policy Review process is underway, and MP colleagues are involved with that and have been linking in with other MPs to get their feedback. This feedback will then go back to the Federal Policy Committee. Finally, there is always the fact that we have to respond to things that the Government and opposition parties say and do, which does mean we need to look at things quickly, but we always do that by thinking about our current policy.

Q2. Submitted by Emily Tester

How can the Parliamentary Party best challenge the rise of the far right, in the UK with Reform and abroad?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

The way we take on Reform is by listening to voters and focusing on the issues they care about most, from fixing the NHS to getting the economy back on track.

Our Parliamentary Party is laser-focused on delivering this - whether that's standing up against the government's NICs rise or Helen Morgan's fantastic work to help fix the social care sector.

It's also about delivering for our constituents. Many people are fed up by politics and disillusioned by politicians. If we show them that having a Lib Dem representative - be that a councillor, an MP, or even a candidate - means someone who works hard and delivers for them, that is the single most important tool we have in combating the snake oil of Nigel Farage.

When looking abroad, we are so pleased that we have the Party's Federal International Relations Committee who are doing great engagement with our sister parties around the world - and sharing information with them, including about how we achieved our historic election success last year.

Q3. Submitted by Caroline Juss

Do you feel that Parliament is adapting to having the smallest official opposition and the largest third party in history? What impact are the smaller parties having?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

Parliament is, of course, adjusting to this historic shift, and our party is rising to the challenge. We've always had a strong presence in the Lords, and we're grateful for their experience and support in helping our new MPs navigate the workings of Parliament effectively.

Meanwhile, it's clear that the Conservatives are struggling to find their footing in opposition, while we are making a real impact in holding the government to account. From social care to support for small businesses, we're ensuring that the issues our constituents care about remain front and centre in national debate.

Our new size in the Commons means the relationship between the two parliamentary parties is as important as ever. Strong opposition in the Lords gives the Commons momentum - an example of which we saw recently in the Lib Dem amendment passed to the NICs Bill in the Lords which would exempt hospitals from the NICs rise, which then allowed us in the Commons to follow up on the same issue.

We've also had great success outside the Chamber - be it Joshua Reynolds holding Big Tech to account on the Business and Trade Committee, or Layla and Alistair working tirelessly as the chairs of the Health and Care and EFRA select committees. Colleagues have also been using Private Members Bills to draw attention to key issues - Roz's Climate and Nature Bill and Manuela's Political Donations Bill both pushing for the UK to be a greener and fairer place.

Q4. Submitted by Abrial Jerram

The issue of housing and planning will soon take centre stage in parliament. What steps will MPs take to avoid the perception that we are compromising our values by putting the views of those who own homes ahead of those who are trapped by the housing crisis, noting that, by and large, Lib Dem MPs represent affluent areas which could make this hazard more dangerous.

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

The Liberal Democrats are proud to have the most ambitious housing targets of any party (and the most ambitious for building social homes too) and had them going into the last election. We are the only party taking the housing crisis seriously.

We'll be focusing on what we set out in our manifesto and on where we think the government could be doing a lot more - for homes, that's increasing social housing, improving the quality of new homes to ensure they are zero carbon, upgrading current housing stock - with free insulation for people on low incomes and incentives for

homeowners to invest in upgrades like heat pumps and solar - as well as holding the government to account on their action to end rough sleeping and to make the rented sector fairer - including implementing the ban on no-fault evictions.

These campaigns help to put our values into action and are rightly focused on providing for the most vulnerable people in the housing crisis.

Gideon Amos is leading on the Renters' Rights Bill in the Commons and we'll engage with colleagues - there is still a long way to go. We will get opportunities to push votes and issues on the bill committee as the 3rd party in the Commons, and also to push issues in the Lords.

Supplementary question by Abrial Jerram

How do we find a balance between representing constituents who may have benefited from the housing crisis, and those suffering from it?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

We need to work with communities. For example, on Kingston Council, the fact that there is social and mixed housing in a development being led by the council, the community was balloted to see what they wanted to see. Generally, when I speak to constituents show people don't object to new houses, but they reject the idea of having things done to them. It is a Liberal Democrat value to ensure people are properly consulted and that they don't feel like that.

Q5. Submitted by Simon Hughes

Can the Commons Whips please make sure that parliamentary and constituency phone numbers and emails for all MPs are always available to House of Commons switchboards and published on websites and answered promptly. Thank you.

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

We recognise the importance of ensuring that our MPs remain accessible to their constituents. The Commons Whips work closely with offices to advocate effective communication, and MPs' contact details are routinely maintained and made available through appropriate channels. While individual offices manage their own communications, we strive to support best practices in responsiveness and accessibility.

Q6. Tony Vickers

What are we doing to enfranchise the 3.5m UK citizens abroad entitled to vote, 94% of whom aren't currently registered?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

Liberal Democrats have been the loudest voice in Parliament campaigning for the rights of overseas voters.

We were pleased to see the fifteen year rule scrapped prior to the last election - this was a positive step forward, but clearly there were real problems in practice during the General Election.

Back during the previous Parliament, we tabled amendments to legislation which would have resulted in the creation of overseas constituencies - this is a model used in other countries such as France. Having specifically designated representatives of overseas British citizens would increase awareness of those citizens of their right to vote - and that would have a positive impact on turnout.

We are also pleased that at our Autumn Conference 2024 passed amendments from Lib Dems Overseas as part of our Fair Votes Now motion which call on the Government to enable electronic delivery of ballot papers to those who request them, to allow voting in person at all British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates as well as to publicise proxy voting as an alternative to postal voting.

At some point in the next session of Parliament we are expecting the Government to bring forward a much anticipated Elections Bill. Clearly as Liberal Democrats we will have a huge number of changes we would like to bring as part of this Bill and we will use that opportunity to continue to push our policies on overseas voters.

Finally, it is with pleasure that we can mention Sarah Olney's brilliant victory at the end of last year where we won a vote on her bill for proportional representation - with MPs from other parties following our lead and winning against the Government.

Q7. Christopher Johnson

What has the Parliamentary Party done and what can it do to tackle discrimination (e.g. misogyny, ableism, transphobia) in the party?

Answer by Dick Newby and Wendy Chamberlain MP

Liberal Democrats are clear that there's no place in our party for hatred or discrimination of any kind.

That starts with our parliamentary party. All our MPs and peers have done 'valuing everyone' training, to ensure our teams are able to recognise and act against bullying or discrimination of any kind.