



Liberal News.

Winter 2020

ADDRESS TO THE 135TH LIBERAL PARTY ASSEMBLY 3RD OCTOBER 2020

The current Covid-19 Crisis has shown that the concept that an individual lives in a social, political, and economic silo is a delusion.

As a party of Social Liberalism, we recognise that people live in communities and their welfare is directly shaped by the positive intervention of national and local government supporting education and health, economic activity, and community infrastructure

Whilst the NHS will have limited resources to deal with the impact of Covid-19 or any health intervention, the most drastic shortage is a common structure and support for the care industry and public health education.

These are issues we need to see tackled before there is another wave of Covid-19 or a parallel health crisis.

During the crisis we have seen Government recognize that the health situation and measures in each region vary differently.

If this is true for health, then surely this decentralised approach makes sense for housing and employment markets - one size or policy does not fit all.

As we Liberals look at the BREXIT situation then overwhelmingly we must make the case for a free trade and free movement zone across countries with a shared language, shared history, economic and political framework with equitable wealth and skills, the case for a Canadian Australian New Zealand UK(CANZUK) framework makes more sense every day.

That would not or should not stop increased cooperation and trade deals with Commonwealth countries from India, Malaysia South Africa, and East Africa.

The case for a controlled immigration policy based on skills market needs and recognising our unique relationship with the Commonwealth is the way forward post BREXIT.



Party President Steve Radford

The Arts & Theatre Industry & its Post Pandemic Recovery

The Liberal Party is concerned at the long-term damage being done to entertainment venues, theatres, and museums by the restrictions brought in to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Such venues are especially vulnerable due to the nature of their enclosed and intimate environment and the extended time people are in close proximity even with social distancing.



Those venues in the public sector stand a better chance of survival than those in the private sector which cannot rely on the public purse for funding.

As a short-term action we believe regional TV and radio can provide an outlet for live broadcast for seasonal shows as a way of maintaining contact between the public and entertainers.

With the loss of the valuable Christmas period many venues will be losing their largest infusion of funds. We believe that assistance should be given to allow them to remain viable until the pandemic has subsided and to assist them to retain their premises and staff.



Liberal Party Emblem

The Liberal Party NEC have been discussing the modernisation of the party emblem and would like to open the discussion to the wider membership.

The traditional orange and black starburst has served the party well for some time but is now dated and 2 dimensional and does not reproduce well in the media.

The party is grateful to Fares Moussa for his work on prospective designs, whilst NEC member Mark Page has contributed a draft emblem.

We would welcome feed-back from the party members on this important decision which will front our party's media image into the century.

Motions Passed at Annual Assembly.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic and social distancing restrictions this year's annual assembly was held over Zoom, video conferencing software which allowed all participants to participate from their home.

UK Flooding Management

The Liberal Party notes ongoing concerns on the dangers of local and regional flooding as the UK's weather evolves in the face of Climate Change.

We call on all organisations charged with aspects of flood management such as councils, drainage boards, landowners, and the Environment Agency to work together to ensure comprehensive and joined up management and intervention.

Actions such as the timely dredging of rivers to ensure the free movement of water, managed release of water from reservoirs and land management to ensure trees act as a natural management system for water flows all lessen the impact of flooding.

We encourage local councils to facilitate tree management to protect areas against flooding, utilising high water soakage trees to reduce soil erosion and for environmental benefits.

We believe the Environment agency has a key role in overseeing housing developments and their impact on drainage.

Local councillors and activists should be able to consult plans and make recommendations to improve drainage.

The party rejects the unchallenged building on flood plains and calls for more robust enforcement by the Environment Agency to eliminate it. Such building has been driven by housing targets not aligned with local land availability or drainage consideration.

The provision of flood defences should not simply reflect commercial and domestic property value but also the sustainability of communities large and small.

The increased regularity of flooding cannot be separated from the challenges of Climate Change and the development of a more unpredictable rainfall pattern in this country.

Stephen Graham and the Policy Development Committee



Creation of 25 Single-tier Local Authorities by Abolishing Smaller Councils

The Liberal Party notes recent media reports that the County Councils Network has commissioned a study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers recommending the abolition of 213 of England's smallest councils and replacing them with 25 new larger local authorities.

This report is in advance of the publication of central government plans on overhauling the local government system due later in the year.

The Liberal Party is committed to local democracy to provide local accountability and the local knowledge needed to provide relevant services.

In the view of the government policy to collapse district and county councils into unitary authorities we believe that a referendum of all communities that would be affected should be carried out.

We believe the further the seat of governance is away from people, the more diluted the service provided is and the less the public voice is heard. We do not believe the muted £3bn savings represent £3bn in additional funding for local services.

NHS Patient Backlog and Waiting Lists Post Covid-19

The Liberal Party notes media reports on the backlog of elective surgery and increases waiting lists in some NHS care authorities the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although the NHS was able to mobilise resources at the start of the pandemic this has highlighted the erosion of bed numbers and the closure of wards in this country over the last 20 years leading to excessive utilisation and a lack of spare capacity.

The response to the NHS waiting list backlogs should be addressed at a local level with targeted funding to expand wards and bed numbers and to prioritise the most acute procedures and cancer treatment which were terminated at the start of the pandemic.

We believe funding should be directed to local hospitals and community care to provide better support as well as acting as a hub for community health and wellbeing in line with our party policy initiative and the Nuffield Trust report on local acute care.

Grenfell Tower Cladding Replacement

The Liberal Party notes with concern a media report (2nd Sept 2020) that the Mayor of London has written to 51 city landlords requesting an urgent update on the removal of flammable cladding from high rise properties.

These private and social landlords received government funding to remove cladding on their buildings and are amongst a reported 100 such buildings in the London area needing urgent remedial action.

This situation is replicated across the country where many private residents have been left in the intolerable situation of facing substantial bills to fund the replacement process whilst living in potentially unsafe properties.

The party believes that the removal of ACM (aluminium composite material) cladding is a national priority and whilst we welcome the £1bn Building Safety Fund to deal with unsafe ACM cladding on buildings we believe central funding should be provided for all such residential properties.

Transgender Rights and Safeguarding

The transgender community has grown in recent years primarily because of liberation of gender and sexual identification. The Liberal Party supports and encourages individual autonomy as a valid path to personal happiness and wellbeing.

Development and change in society has created conflict for some citizens in their physiological and social roles and between their natal sex and people who identify their gender differently.

Transgender people should be treated as equals and as individuals. We realise however, that the Rights, of transgender people and of those who identify as their natal birth, must be raised in order to develop measures needed to ensure safety, privacy and respect.

The Liberal Party supports these measures:

- 1) Transgender Individuals who wish to change their legal sex must be allowed to do so. We support the continued necessity of medical gatekeeping with any legal change of sex and oppose any legal changes based upon self-identification.
- 2) We support segregation by biological sex in prisons and women's' refuges in order to maintain the safety and privacy of natal females. Separate prison accommodation should be provided for transgender citizens to ensure their safety and privacy.
- 3) Healthcare spending and resources for gender dysphoric individuals, including long-term psychological intervention, should be provided at sufficient levels. Physical or gender modifying drug-based medical treatments for gender dysphoria should be prohibited for anyone under 18 years of age.
- 4) We support the retention of biological sex and gender identity as distinct categories in public sector data gathering such as in crime statistics, poverty metrics or public health research.
- 5) We support the use of plain English for discussions of biological sex in health and reproductive care.

We always want to hear from Liberals around the country so feel free to send us your articles, letters or news items.

Liberal News is your forum to reach every other member of the Party.

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