

# Liberal Party Special Assembly 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## MOTIONS DEBATED

### MOTIONS PASSED

#### **Open Access - Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.**

The UK is an island nation constrained in its available land for the competing needs of housing, business, and agriculture.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a limited right to roam over uncultivated and unenclosed land but was limited in its reach and this country retains some of the most restrictive land access in Europe.

The Liberal Party believes that the concept of Open Access should be expanded and renewed to allow responsible access to fields outside the crop growing season and in the absence of livestock.

Access to the countryside provides for better mental health and healthy recreation pursuits which contribute to the nation's wellbeing and as such the countryside should be accessible to all within reasonable boundaries.

As such safeguards need to be introduced to limit damage to crops, harassment of livestock and invasive activities such as unauthorised metal detecting.

The Liberal Party acknowledges that more educational work should be done to inform people about access to land, public bridleways and footpaths and how to value the countryside as part of a wider environmental policy. This can include exploring setting -up community countryside volunteer schemes to enhance the safe use of the countryside.

#### **Electric Vehicles**

The Liberal Party views the expansion in the use of electrically powered vehicles as a key step in tackling global warming by reducing CO2 emissions, and improving air quality by the reduction of particulate emissions as well as subduing noise pollution.

However, we believe that in the rush to adopt these, issues ranging from the provision of electrical charging points to the consumption of raw materials in the manufacturing of cars and their batteries, have been overlooked.

Provision of electrical charging points on a national basis also implies an increase in electrical consumption moving the source of pollution from vehicles themselves to power generation.

We see the goal of ceasing the sale of diesel and petrol cars and vans from 2030 as an ambitious target, but believe it will need to be supported with increased spending on infrastructure

The Liberal Party see's driverless cars as the way forward but we believe that the long-term aspiration should be the availability of on-demand transport, not ownership of such vehicles.

As such we would encourage the creation of car share schemes as well as leasing schemes which would cover the entire life and recycling of such vehicle.

## **Solar Power**

Solar panels provide an immediate way of substituting a part of our domestic electrical consumption from a natural source of energy.

We believe where listed-building and conservation areas specifications permit, the installation of solar panels on all domestic and business properties should be promoted and facilitated with grants and incentive schemes; and that all new-build and regenerations schemes that are not zero-energy should compulsorily accommodate solar provision in their submissions.

As such we urge local councils to, utilise, for example, section 106 payments to support solar panels in all suitable community buildings.

This should be supported by the restoration of a realistic Feed in Tariff (FIT) for the domestic generation and export of energy to the national grid to encourage domestic installations coupled with investment in a national smart grid to accommodate renewal energy generation.

## **A Manifesto for Interim & Post Pandemic Recovery & Renewal**

### **The Cashless Society and access to Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)**

The increasing trend towards a cashless society has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic where contactless transactions have been promoted as way of further enhancing social distancing.

The decline of cash payments in society has been compounded by a decrease in the availability of ATMs.

We believe Internet banking and electronic payments should be an alternative payment method and not a direct replacement. Services such as pre-paid meters are largely cash driven and many charities rely on spontaneous donations of small change.

The party also notes the vulnerability of electronic payment service with a series of digital banking failures In such circumstances cash is the only payment method to purchase goods and services.

The Which? Magazine report of December 2018 highlighted that more than 1.3 million people in this country still have no bank account and 2.2 million rely almost exclusively on cash transactions on a day-to-day basis.

We believe that once the pandemic is over, a managed rolling back from card-only transactions should be initiated.

We believe that bricks and mortar premises remain relevant to providing services to those in need of banking services such as the elderly and those in rural and urban locations as well as opportunities to act as local hubs for postal services and other community needs; which should be developed as part of the community infrastructure.

### **Arts, Culture & Entertainment Industries**

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

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

With the loss of the valuable Christmas period many venues have lost their largest infusion of funds which would have cushioned their finances for the next 12 months.

The Cultural Recovery Fund (phases one and two) have given arts, culture and entertainment organisations support for loss of revenues between October 2020 and March 2021 (now extended to June 2021). However, we believe that support should be extended up to at least the end of August 2021.

We also call for radical reforms to arts funding in the UK. Arts Council funding is skewed in its regional distribution and centralised policy-making. Local Authorities are increasingly withdrawing funding to arts and culture. The Liberal Party calls for regionalised independent Arts & Culture Funding Commissions with more input from grass-roots influencers to replace the Arts Council; the introduction of rates and tax incentives to businesses for partnership and investment in arts and culture; and the introduction of arts and culture participation packages for educational establishments to enable more capacity for partnership working and the positive opportunities it will bring for young people.

## **MOTIONS SENT BACK TO THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Nuclear Power**

SENT BACK TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT WITH RECOMMENDATION THAT MORE INFORMED DETAIL ON THE SCIENCE (I.E.: FUSION VS FISSION ETC.)

### **Women's role in Society**

SENT BACK TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT WITH RECOMMENDATION TO DEVELOP EQUALITIES POLICY, INCLUDING SECTION ON WOMEN