



**First deadline  
submissions  
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## Policy Motions

### Communities and Local Government

#### 1. Local Government Finance Emergency

Submitted by

ALDC

England only

Conference notes that

1. In England, local government grants from Central Government dropped by 46% between 2010 and 2019, leading to an 18% overall reduction in funding per capita by 2024/25 since 2010.
2. Areas of greatest deprivation have tended to see the largest cuts in overall funding despite having the greatest need for the services that local government provides.
3. Increasing pressure from adult and children's social services, SEND, home to school transport, and temporary accommodation have meant cuts of up to 70% in non-statutory spending.
4. The cumulative deficits in Dedicated Schools Grants, where the statutory override is due to end in 2027/28. The LGA has estimated that the sector's deficit will reach £5.0 billion in 2025/26.
5. Councils face increased cost pressures from inflation, rising pay, population growth and an ageing population.
6. Many councils are now in financial survival mode, with reserves depleted surplus assets already sold and non-statutory services slashed.
7. Since 2018, 7 councils have issued Section 114 notice, meaning that they are unable to meet their expenditure commitments. Others are reported to be on the brink of issuing notices.
8. In 2025/26, 30 councils required Exceptional Financial Support, with a danger that emergency bailout deals are becoming normalised.

Conference further notes that

1. Part of the rationale for Local Government Reorganisation given by the government was cost savings, but even the most optimistic savings projections from LGR will not

resolve the local government financial crisis.

2. Savings are likely to be achieved only in long term while reorganisation costs are short term, while the process has consumed considerable financial and human resources.
3. Council tax is a flawed taxation system, with taxation based on 30-year-old property valuations. The money raised is unrelated to actual local need or demand for services.
4. While the High Value Council Tax Surcharge seeks to tackle the under taxation of more valuable properties, the money raised will go to central government rather than local councils, with no guarantee that councils will see a net benefit.
5. While the Fair Funding Review offers help to some councils, others face considerable transitional pressure.
6. The multi-year nature of the Local Government Financial Settlement is welcome.

Conference believes that

1. Local councils are a vital component in delivering both increased housing, including affordable and social housing, and economic growth.
2. Local services, under democratic control, delivered close to those who need them, results in more effective services at a lower overall cost.
3. Taxation for council expenditure must be fair and progressive, with the level set locally by democratically accountable councillors.

Conference recognises

1. The outstanding work done by Liberal Democrat councillors and council leaders in innovating and delivering services to their communities under increasingly difficult financial circumstances.
2. The value communities place in Liberal Democrat councillors demonstrated by Liberal Democrats successfully defending far more of their seats in council by elections than any other party.

Conference further believes that

1. Any council having reduced funding because of the fair funding review must receive adequate transitional funding.
2. That government must deliver a long term, sustainable solution to the DSG

cumulative deficits and SEND funding it has promised.

3. A long-term solution must be based on a review of all the components of the funding system.
4. The overall level of funding for local government must be increased.

Conference therefore calls on the Government to:

1. Provide a sustained real-term increase in core funding for local government.
2. Implement a needs-based funding distribution through the Fair Funding Review with fully funded transitional protections so that no council faces destabilising year-on-year losses.
3. Deliver a long-term funding solution for SEND and DSG high-needs deficits.
4. Implement a comprehensive review of the local government funding system, with the objective of delivering a fair, sustainable, multi-year settlement that matches funding to need and reduces reliance on crisis measures.

Conference further calls on the Federal Policy Committee to ensure local government funding is within the scope of the policy work on empowering local communities set out in Policy Paper 161 "Leading the Way".

### 3. Power to people and communities - choice in local government

Submitted by

10 Party Members

1. The proposed reorganisation of local government into unitary authorities, replacing the two-tier system that has existed outside major urban centres since the Local Government Act 1972.
2. That up until now, local councils have been empowered to choose their local governance model, with options being Alternative Arrangements, Committee System, Leader and Cabinet and Mayor and Cabinet.
3. That Liberal Democrats have led administrations in all of the executive arrangements listed in conference notes two.
4. As part of the local government reforms, the government have removed the ability of councils to choose their governance model.
5. Local government in England and Wales still uses first-past-the-post
6. Liberal Democrat policy to change the voting system for all elections into a form of proportional representation.
7. With local government reorganisation, there is an opportunity to ensure that councillors are fairly remunerated for their work and currently there is too high a disparity between local councils.

Conference believes

- a. That the essence of liberalism is about choice and empowering local people to make decisions in the best interests of their area is core to our identity.
- b. That Liberal Democrats in local government have a duty of care to deliver the best deal for their residents and across the affected areas are doing an admirable job working to ensure that residents get the fairest deal from local government reorganisation.
- c. That the range of executive options available should be the purview of the local authority and not dictated to by central government.
- d. That voting reform is long overdue, and efforts should be made to secure voting reform in local government as a first step.

Conference therefore calls for:

- i. The Local Government Department to be more flexible to the needs of local communities in regards to population sizes of new unitaries.

- ii. Liberal Democrats in local government and parliament to push for a review of the decision to scrap all models but “leader and cabinet” for the new councils and to codify the legacy council arrangements into statute so they are not vulnerable to scrappage by central government.
- iii. Liberal Democrats to push for local authorities to have the power to change their voting system to a proportional one, as already exists in Wales.
- iv. For a national remuneration panel for local government that looks at cost of living in areas and the new unitaries and sets a national scale for councillor salaries as well as codifying the public service exemption clause to entitle time off for council meetings.



#### 4. A Planning System to build the Homes & Communities we need

Submitted by

13 Party Members

Conference notes that:

- I. Tackling the housing crisis requires a massive increase in house building as well as supporting infrastructure.
- II. Tackling the healthcare crisis requires an increase in community healthcare facilities to improve access to care and reduce pressure on hospitals.
- III. Tackling the climate crisis requires local energy generation and storage, and local infrastructure to support sustainable transport policies.
- IV. The planning system operates across multiple tiers which vary across the country due to a patchwork of combined authorities and local governance arrangements.
- V. The lack of legal mandate or accountability for infrastructure within this system results in many developments being built without the infrastructure required to support growth.
- VI. Many developments also result in the unnecessary loss of existing facilities & local businesses.
- VII. Research in 2024 showed that councils in England & Wales were sitting on an estimated £8bn in unspent CIL & S106 funds.
- VIII. Labour's Planning and Infrastructure Bill fails to require that housing growth is matched by infrastructure provision.
- IX. The Bill further weakens infrastructure planning by enabling the removal or downgrading of statutory consultees.
- X. Labour rejected all Liberal Democrat amendments requiring infrastructure to be planned for alongside new housing.

Conference believes that:

- A. Housing delivery without adequate infrastructure undermines quality of life and drives opposition to developments.
- B. The scale of development required to tackle the housing crisis presents an opportunity to transform our society, particularly tackling the healthcare and climate crises.
- C. Rolling back the role of infrastructure and delivery bodies in the planning system is

the wrong response to slow housing delivery.

- D. Councils are often forced to compromise on infrastructure when approving planning applications because the lack of legal requirements favours developers.
- E. Clear, mandatory infrastructure requirements will enable faster housing development overall by reducing uncertainty, delay and opposition – while delivering better outcomes.
- F. CIL & s106 funds should be spent in a timely fashion.

Conference reaffirms our commitment to existing housing policies including:

- i. Building 380,000 new homes per year, including 150,000 social homes
- ii. Community-led development to ensure meaningful engagement with local residents
- iii. Strong building safety standards to ensure buildings are fit to live in
- iv. Ending exploitative housing practices by strengthening renters' rights, abolishing leasehold and abolishing 'fleecehold'.

Conference resolves to:

- 1. Strengthen existing cross-boundary planning arrangements by introducing a formal duty for planning authorities at different tiers to agree, document, and publish how responsibility for critical infrastructure is allocated between them before plans are adopted.
  - a. Critical infrastructure including but not limited to: healthcare, transport, energy, utilities, schools, community facilities, amenities and green/open space.
- 2. Require planning authorities to act in accordance with these agreements, with plans unable to be adopted unless they incorporate the agreed infrastructure and identify appropriate funding.
- 3. Ensure that these plans contribute to tackling the health and climate crises by specifically requiring:
  - a. Appropriate space for community-based healthcare
  - b. Area-based renewable energy generation and storage wherever practical
- 4. Make critical infrastructure providers statutory partners in the planning process to ensure viability (including at minimum the NHS, Utilities, Transport authorities, Environment Agency)

5. Ensure developers submit legally binding infrastructure delivery plans tied to the local plans, with phasing linked to forecast occupation.
6. Protect community assets by establishing a presumption that where development results in the loss of key facilities, these will be replaced wherever possible.
7. Reform management of CIL & s106 to ensure timely delivery by:
  - a. Introducing statutory time limits for spending funds;
  - b. Strengthening public reporting on collection, allocation, and unspent balances;
  - c. Enabling intervention where infrastructure funding is consistently left unspent.

## 5. Revitalising Town Centres and High Streets

Submitted by

Federal Policy Committee

Conference understands that Town Centres and High Streets are the beating heart of communities up and down the country, places that people love and become attached to, places that give a sense of local pride and places that can support the local economic, social and environmental needs.

Conference recognises that many Town Centres and High Streets have been allowed to go into disrepair, with empty shops, cracked pavements, traffic jams and waste strewn across the streets.

Conference believes that, to create a successful town centre, it must be:

Fair: Welcoming spaces that are socially inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Economically Successful: Places that feel alive with opportunity, where independent businesses thrive day and night, weekday and weekend and resilience is built through a diversity of uses.

Social: An opportunity to connect, for all ages and backgrounds, with activities and infrastructure that supports health, wellbeing and community pride.

Local: Rooted in the needs of local people, supporting local businesses, and creating meaningful jobs, especially for young people building their futures.

Sustainable: Designed for the future with clean transport options, green spaces, and with inbuilt climate resilience.

Clean and Safe: Environments where people feel secure and comfortable spending time and where businesses have the confidence to locate.

Conference wishes to reimagine town centres, not as relics of the past but as places for everyone to live, connect and belong, places that inspire local pride today and for generations to come.

Conference therefore endorses the policies set out in policy paper 162 Revitalising Town Centres and High Streets, and in particular welcomes its proposals to:

1. Reduce vacancy rates by:

A temporary emergency cut to VAT for hospitality, accommodation and attraction.

A review of the cumulative effects of taxation on the High Street.

Improving access to competitive energy deals.

Reforming business rates to reward occupancy and community value.

Requiring landlords, especially these from overseas, to publish contact details and a named contact in the UK

Strengthening the Town Centre First principle in national planning policy, including an 'Out of Town Levy'.

Encouraging homes above shops.

2. Create the spaces the community wants on and offline by:

Making it easier to convert vacant units into community hubs, without full planning change of use.

Creating a national digital infrastructure designed to support local enterprise, a platform that can be available for local adaptations and branding.

Giving councils powers to designate Independent Shop Zones within their local plan, locally defined areas that protect and champion small, locally owned businesses.

Close loopholes that incentivise landlords to lease property to shell companies or businesses with no credible trading activity, and tighten anti-money laundering (AML) duties for commercial lettings, requiring landlords and agents to carry out proportional, risk-based AML checks.

3. Create distinctive design and better accessibility by:

Promoting public transport and active travel options.

Reviewing the impact of parking charges to provide guidance for councils to support more flexible, targeted approaches that can support footfall, in particular during evenings and

weekends.

Making dedicated funds available for local authorities that want to deliver high-quality High Street pedestrianisation projects.

Establishing a National Centre for Design and Placemaking to support local authorities through providing design support, guidance, and training for local authorities, championing good design and sustainability across all regions.

Initiating an annual national 'Amazing High Streets' competition to celebrate the outstanding design of public spaces.

4. Drive footfall and bring high streets to life by:

Establishing a High Street Culture and Community Fund delivered in partnership with the Arts Council and local authorities to give ongoing support to community-led cultural initiatives and local events.

Establishing a national Incubator Fund to support the creation and early-stage development of locally designed festivals.

Backing creative start-ups and cultural enterprises.

5. Tackle the lack of sustainable investment by:

Establishing High Street Improvement Districts (HSIDs) led by a locally- agreed board representing the cross section of interests, including representation from the local council, which would be charged with creating a long term vision for the town centre, supported with a joined-up roadmap, curator and communication plan.

Creating a 'High Streets Back Home' scheme as a defined and accessible route for people to give back, to invest in the future of their community, whether by supporting community asset purchases, restoring heritage buildings or backing local enterprise space.

6. Tackle safety, anti-social behaviour and shop theft by:

Building features that discourage anti-social behaviour (such as strategic lighting) into the design of town centres.

Supporting small businesses to invest in CCTV

Offering digital tools as collective procurement bundles, making them accessible for small businesses, such as a WhatsApp instant alert system for businesses, BID teams, and community wardens that flags offenders, patterns, and risks in real time.

Calling on the National Crime Agency to establish a dedicated unit to liaise with local authorities and police forces to take on organised shoplifting gangs.

Applicability: England only, except for 1 a) and b) which are Federal.

## **Crime, Justice, Equalities, and Civil Liberties**

### **1. Defending the Right to Protest**

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference believes that the right to protest is a fundamental human right and a vital part of any democratic society. From the slave trade to women's suffrage, workers' rights to the Iraq War, protests have been an essential way for people to make their voices heard.

Conference notes that:

- i. In the last Parliament, the Liberal Democrats consistently opposed the Conservative Government's legislation to crack down on the right to protest – part of the Conservatives' broader assault on fundamental democratic rights and freedoms.
- ii. The Labour Government's misguided use of counter-terror legislation has led to the arrest of peaceful protesters on a shocking and unprecedented scale – undermining civil liberties, damaging public confidence in the rule of law, and wasting valuable police and court time.
- iii. The Labour Government is now planning to restrict the right to protest even further, with a new law aimed at banning protests on the basis of so-called "cumulative disruption" in a given area – regardless of whether previous protests had anything to do with the same people or issues.
- iv. Both the Conservative Party and Reform UK are campaigning to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights and repeal the Human Rights Act, which together protect everyone's rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association with others.

Conference further believes that violence and incitement to violence; antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of racism; destruction of property and other crimes must not be tolerated and should be dealt with under existing laws, but must not be used as an excuse to crack down on the right to peaceful assembly and protest.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitments to:

- a. Scrap the Conservatives' draconian anti-protest laws, restoring pre-existing protections for both peaceful assembly and public safety.
- b. Oppose any attempts to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights, weaken the Human Rights Act, or undermine the rule of law in any way.



Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Abandon its plans to restrict the right to protest, including measures to ban protests on the basis of so-called “cumulative disruption”.
2. Commission a full and independent review of the impact of counter-terror legislation on the right to protest.

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## 2. Preserving Trial by Jury

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes:

- A. The complacency of the former Conservative Government, which drove the criminal justice system into dysfunction and left victims and survivors facing years-long waits for justice.
- B. The Crown Court backlog, with around 78,000 cases waiting to be completed, meaning defendants charged with serious offences today may not face trial until late 2029 or early 2030.
- C. The 20% fall in Crown Court productivity since 2016.
- D. Proposals announced by the Labour Government on 2 December 2025 to remove jury trials for offences likely to result in custodial sentences of less than three years, replacing them with trials by a judge sitting alone.
- E. Evidence that public confidence in juries is significantly higher than confidence in the justice system as a whole, with around six in ten people expressing “a fair amount” or “a great deal” of confidence in juries delivering the right verdict, compared with around four in ten for courts and judges more generally.
- F. The 2017 Lammy Review, chaired by the current Justice Secretary, which found that Black and Chinese women are convicted at higher rates than White women in magistrates’ courts, but not by juries.
- G. The current Justice Secretary’s comments in 2020 that jury trials are a cornerstone of democracy and that their removal would be a mistake.
- H. Real-terms cuts of approximately 3% annually to the Ministry of Justice capital budget until 2028/29.

Conference believes:

- I. Victims and survivors deserve swift justice and should not be left waiting for years while evidence deteriorates and cases collapse.
- II. Urgent action is required to reduce court backlogs and ensure the justice system functions effectively and fairly.
- III. Trial by jury has been a cornerstone of the justice system for over 800 years and restricting it for a large category of offences is a counterproductive and short-sighted response to court delays.

- IV. There is no evidence that jury trials are a primary driver of court backlogs, which are instead caused by inefficiencies, mismanagement, staff shortages, and estate failure.
- V. Removing juries risks reducing public trust in the justice system and may lead to unfair and disproportionate outcomes for women and minority defendants.

Conference calls on the Government to:

- 1. Abandon plans to remove jury trials for all but the most serious offences and to expand the use of judge-only trials.
- 2. Publish and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy to reduce court backlogs, including by increasing Crown Court sitting days; making effective use of underused court buildings; addressing failures in outsourced and private contracts, including prisoner transport, which cause avoidable delays; and investing in effective rehabilitation and prevention to reduce reoffending rates.
- 3. Cancel planned real-terms cuts to the Ministry of Justice capital budget and make the necessary repairs and improvements to Crown Court infrastructure.

### 3. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: The Watershed Moment

Submitted by

16 Party Members

Conference notes that:

1. On 18 December 2025, the UK Government launched Freedom from Violence and Abuse. Conference welcomes this cross government, ten year strategy to build a safer society for women and girls.
2. The strategy confirms that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is at epidemic levels and must be treated as a public health emergency:
  - i) One in eight women in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025 experienced domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking—over 2 million women.
  - ii) Around 200 rapes were recorded daily by police in the year ending June 2025, with true prevalence higher due to underreporting.
  - iii) More than 150 women are killed each year by men in England and Wales and there is increasing awareness of suicide by victims of domestic abuse.
  - vi) VAWG related crime is rising, especially tech enabled abuse, and is more complex to prevent, detect and prosecute.
  - v) Misogynistic attitudes are increasing, fuelled by online content and pornography.
3. VAWG harms children, especially girls:
  - I) Police recorded 104,345 child sexual offences in the year to June 2025. Around 4.3 million adults (9.1%) were sexually abused before age 18.
  - II) Adolescent girls are more likely to be victims of sexual assault than older women; they are the most common target for online related VAWG.
  - III) Grooming gangs continue to exploit vulnerable girls, with failures in safeguarding and accountability across multiple regions.
  - VI) VAWG is transmitted across generations, with children affected facing long term physical, emotional and behavioural harm.
4. Some groups of women and girls face higher risks of VAWG, including:
  - a. Adolescent girls and younger women.
  - b. Women with disabilities report higher levels of domestic abuse and sexual

assault.

- c. Women from ethnic minority backgrounds, with Black/Black British people 2.5 times more likely to be victims of domestic homicide.
  - d. Women in low socioeconomic groups experience higher levels of domestic abuse.
  - e. Women working in prostitution.
5. The justice system is failing victims of VAWG:
- 1) In 2021, only 1.3% of rape cases recorded by police resulted in a charge or summons. Two to three years waits for trials contribute to around 60% of victims withdrawing.
  - 2) VAWG offenders are among the most prolific and dangerous but policing and criminal justice responses do not match harm done.
  - 3) A radical shift is needed so that policing treats VAWG as a core priority.
  - 4) The Angiolini and Casey reports highlight poor quality and incomplete data severely limiting understanding of perpetrators and victims.
6. Costs of VAWG are staggering:
- A. VAWG costs women and girls their lives, and causes lifelong physical and psychological harm for survivors.
  - B. The annual economic cost of domestic abuse is an estimated £89.3bn; £6.6bn for rape; and £10.2bn for other sexual offences.
  - C. VAWG accounts for around 20% of all police recorded crime.
  - D. Significant personal and economic benefits accrue from ending VAWG.
7. VAWG is a men's issue:
- 1) At least one in 20 adults in England and Wales perpetrates VAWG annually – 2.3 million perpetrators. Over 90% of perpetrators prosecuted for VAWG are men.
  - 2) Men and boys are also victims, but women and girls disproportionately affected.
  - 3) The strategy's focus is to prevent boys becoming either victims or perpetrators of violence and abuse by addressing harmful expectations of masculinity.

Conference recognises:

- 1. Resolution F30 *Preventing and Tackling Sexual and Domestic Violence* Liberal

Democrats Autumn Conference 2013

2. Resolution F46 *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference 2021
3. Resolution *Measures to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls*, Scottish Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference 2025

Conference believes that:

1. VAWG can be fixed. The strategy outlines evidence based interventions that work.
2. VAWG is a global issue requiring local action within a strong national framework.
3. Addressing VAWG and its root causes requires coordinated action across all sectors.
4. By challenging misogyny and power imbalances, we can build a safer, fairer society and reduce harm across generations.
5. Children must be safeguarded and supported to form positive, respectful relationships.
6. The 2023 Online Safety Act must be delivered to protect children and adults.
7. Single sex spaces, per the Equality Act 2010, are essential to protect women and girls.
8. The VAWG strategy needs strong leadership, a costed and measurable plan, and clear accountability to finally eradicate this preventable abuse.
9. The costs of VAWG are too great to let this strategy fail.
10. Addressing VAWG means listening to women, especially survivors.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitment to hold the government to account for delivering the VAWG strategy.

Conference calls for:

1. Local government to tackle VAWG on the ground by:
  - 1) Creating local VAWG strategies and appointing a cabinet lead on VAWG
  - 2) Creating a countrywide network of Councillors leading on VAWG.
  - 3) Prioritising commissioning of women led, community based organisations
  - 4) Raising public awareness and understanding by marking annual awareness days, including the 16 Days of Activism.

- 5) Gathering local evidence to inform national implementation.
2. More accountability within Parliament to deliver the VAWG strategy by:
  - 1) Appointing a parliamentary lead on VAWG with regular updates on progress on VAWG.
  - 2) Engaging stakeholders to produce a costed, measurable plan with milestones for delivery of the VAWG strategy.
3. Additional resources for tackling VAWG:
  - 1) Resourcing the strategy, including establishing cross departmental pooled funds and commissioning women led organisations working on VAWG.
  - 2) Collection of comprehensive data on VAWG, following the March 2025 Sullivan Review.
4. Using of existing legislation to tackle VAWG:
  - 1) Driving implementation of the 2023 Online Safety Act to protect children and adults, updating as technology evolves.
  - 2) Upholding the Equality Act 2010 provisions on single sex spaces to protect women and girls.

#### 4. Commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes:

- A. The UK's proud post-war tradition as one of the first countries to ratify the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and the vital role the Convention has played in safeguarding human rights and holding the state to account.
- B. The numerous instances in which the ECHR, and its domestic counterpart the Human Rights Act 1998, have delivered justice for ordinary people, including securing free speech, protecting the dignity of older and vulnerable people, and ensuring accountability for families affected by major public tragedies such as Hillsborough.
- C. The Conservative Party's formal commitment to withdraw from the ECHR, including the requirement that all Conservative candidates support withdrawal in order to stand at the next General Election.
- D. Reform UK's commitment to withdraw from the ECHR and repeal the Human Rights Act, including Nigel Farage's 10 Minute Rule Bill on 29 October 2025 which sought to make this law.
- E. The Labour Government's proposal announced on 17 November 2025 to review specific articles of the ECHR and narrow their definition, creating uncertainty over the protection of fundamental rights.

Conference believes:

- I. The ECHR remains essential to protect British people from abuse, discrimination and injustice, and to uphold the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in the UK.
- II. Withdrawing from the ECHR would gravely undermine civil and human rights in the UK and weaken protections for our most vulnerable.
- III. The strength of the UK's soft power and international standing depends on its commitment to international law, human rights and democratic values - of which the ECHR is a cornerstone.
- IV. Leaving the Convention would isolate the UK internationally and trigger our expulsion from the Council of Europe, putting us in the same bracket as Putin's Russia.
- V. Just like Brexit, it would be counterproductive to securing our borders and undermine the very relationships we need to be strengthening with our European



partners to build a fair and controlled immigration system.

Conference commends Liberal Democrat MPs for leading the opposition to Nigel Farage's bill to withdraw from the ECHR, and successfully defeating it in the House of Commons

Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Reaffirm the UK's full commitment to the ECHR and oppose any attempt to withdraw from it or water down fundamental rights, including protections against torture.
2. Refute Reform UK and the Conservatives' mischaracterisation of the ECHR, which falsely portrays it as a barrier to effective control of our borders while ignoring its role in protecting hard-won rights for British people.
3. Lead dialogue with our European allies to ensure the Convention remains fit for purpose and continues to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in a rapidly changing world.

## Defence Motions

### 1. Armed Forces: A Fair Deal for Our Heroes

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes the Conservatives' disastrous mismanagement of our Armed Forces while they were in power, leaving service personnel to languish in mouldy accommodation while cutting our Army by 10,000 troops.

Conference welcomes the present Government listening to Liberal Democrat calls to increase defence spending and to assess family military accommodation against the Decent Homes Standard.

Conference further notes, however:

- a. The findings of the Armed Forces Continuous Attitudes Survey (2025), which showed that around six in ten service personnel were not satisfied with service life in general.
- b. The persistent and unfair challenges which our service personnel and veterans face, including:
  - i. Continuing and widespread poor quality of military accommodation, with data highlighting that there were over 7,000 urgent repair call-outs in the month before Remembrance Sunday last year.
  - ii. Systemic harassment still faced by women service personnel, with two-thirds of women serving full-time in the UK's armed forces reporting that they experienced sexualised behaviour in 2025.
  - iii. Inconsistencies across the military's medical discharge process, with evidence suggesting that around 70% of medically discharged veterans have a negative transition to civilian life.

Conference believes:

- I. We owe it to our incredible service personnel and veterans to do right by them, recognising the sacrifices they make to keep us safe.
- II. Building a world-leading system of support and recognition for our service personnel and veterans is the best way to resolve the persistent issues in recruitment and retention across our military.

III. The make-up of the UK's Armed Forces is still not reflective of the diversity of British society, which it should reflect.

Conference reaffirms the policy recommendations proposed in Motion F7: A Fair Deal for the Armed Forces Community (2023) and calls on the UK Government to:

1. Introduce a national protocol to provide consistent access to public services for Armed Forces families.
2. Create a statutory duty for Single Living Accommodation to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
3. Implement the Atherton Report's recommendation that the MOD refers all sexual offences and domestic violence involving service personnel in the UK to the civilian police.
4. Normalise the visible appreciation of Armed Forces' service across British sport and culture, including by working with sporting bodies on a "Salute to Service" programme.
5. Establish a compensation scheme for nuclear test veterans, similar to those which already exist in the United States, Canada and France.
6. Commission an independent Government review of the medical discharge process.
7. Mandate that medical records should be provided to veterans no later than one month after leaving the military to ensure discharged personnel can register with civilian GPs and continue to receive the appropriate treatment.
8. Embed tailored employment, housing, and financial advice within the discharge process and for recent leavers – delivered by professionals trained to understand veterans' needs.
9. Require the MOD to conduct a pre-discharge mental health assessment and effective handover to civilian support for service personnel leaving the Armed Forces.
10. Ensure that veterans receive suitable support from NHS medical and mental health services on discharge, and that there is full continuity of care between any medical treatment in service and that after discharge.
11. Appoint a Veterans' Mental Health Oversight Officer to oversee the care and treatment of veterans.
12. Conduct a fresh review of Armed Forces recruitment processes, to ensure all possible steps are being taken to make these processes efficient and consistent

across the military, and to improve diversity in the Forces.

Confidential

## Culture, Media and Sport Motions

### 1. Supporting Local Journalism

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference believes that:

- a. A free, independent, and pluralistic local press is essential to democratic accountability, informed communities, and public trust in institutions.
- b. High-quality local journalism plays a vital role in scrutinising public bodies and ensuring that citizens are able to participate meaningfully in civic life.
- c. Regular access to reliable local news is associated with higher levels of civic participation, including voter turnout and public engagement in local decision-making.
- d. Local journalism must form a core part of any strategy to combat misinformation and disinformation.
- e. Clear distinctions between journalism produced under editorial oversight and automated or synthetic news content are necessary to maintain public trust in news, while recognising that the responsible use of technology can support the delivery of high-quality journalism.
- f. Market concentration in digital advertising and content distribution has created structural disadvantages for local news providers that cannot be left unaddressed.

Conference notes with concern that:

- i. Up to 295 local newspapers have ceased publication since 2005, with more than 4.7 million people in the UK now living in “news deserts”, with little to no trusted local news provision.
- ii. Closures and mergers of local newspapers have disproportionately affected smaller towns and rural communities, contributing to the growth of areas with limited or no regular local news coverage.
- iii. Ofcom analysis shows that local media advertising has fallen by 64 per cent since 2014, representing around £796 million in lost revenue, as advertisers have shifted towards large digital platforms.
- iv. In the absence of local professional journalism, communities increasingly rely on unverified and informal sources on social media for local information, which are not subject to consistent editorial standards or accountability.

- v. The advent of artificial intelligence and large language models has posed new challenges for local journalism including the use of journalistic content to train AI systems or assist in automated news production, and that current frameworks do not always ensure that journalists and publishers receive appropriate recognition or remuneration for the use of their work.
- vi. There are limited professional development pathways for journalists to follow after completing their initial training.
- vii. The Government has made little progress on the long-delayed Local Newspaper Strategy.

Conference reaffirms pledges to:

- a. Enact the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry and commission the Leveson 2 Inquiry into press and police relations.
- b. Require social media platforms to pay news providers for their content, in a manner similar to EU regulations.
- c. Provide financial support for local journalism and fact checking websites.
- d. Require online news outlets to be regulated to the same standards as printed outlets.

Conference calls for the Government to:

- 1. Recognise high-quality local journalism as a public good to be preserved.
- 2. Proceed immediately with the long-delayed Local Newspaper Strategy, placing renewed emphasis on:
  - i. the impacts of social media and artificial intelligence, and deliver recommendations that strengthen journalists' and publishers' ability to secure fair remuneration when their work is reused by third parties, while providing mechanisms to challenge misuse.
  - ii. exploring ways to distinguish high-quality journalism from news content generated by automated systems.
- 3. Introduce an obligation for social media companies to clearly indicate reputable local news sources on their platforms.
- 4. Support the development of local newspaper advertising cooperatives, enabling

advertisers to run campaigns across multiple outlets while ensuring revenue is distributed fairly among participants.

5. Give a legal right to community groups and local residents to have the first option of purchase for local newspapers in the event of closure or bankruptcy.
6. Ensure the BBC has a clear mandate for its regional news to work as a partner for local journalism, with a focus on serving the 4.5 million people living in “news deserts”.
7. Increase funding for the BBC’s Local Democracy Reporting Service, and develop equivalent schemes to cover arts and culture, crime and justice, and health.
8. Establish a statutory framework for the tendering process of public notices based on criteria including demonstrable local presence, editorial standards, and regulation compliant with Leveson principles, and allow notices to be placed in online newspapers also.
9. Aim to ensure that at least 5 per cent of the government’s advertising budget is spent on local media.
10. In collaboration with the BBC and British universities, develop a series of modular learning courses, covering the operational, technical and writing aspects of journalism, and ensure that it is eligible for Lifelong Learning funding.

## Economy and Tax Motions

### 1. Freezing Beer Duty and Supporting British Pubs

Submitted by

Woking Liberal Democrats

Conference notes that:

1. The vital economic, social and community role played by pubs and brewers across the United Kingdom.
2. The pub and brewing sector supports over one million jobs across every nation and region of the UK and contributes £34.3 billion in gross value added while generating £18 billion in tax revenue.
3. Over 80 percent of beer sold in the UK is produced domestically in around 1,800 breweries supplying approximately 45,000 pubs in every parliamentary constituency.
4. Beer is the lowest strength mainstream alcoholic beverage and offers the widest range of no and low alcohol alternatives.
5. Pubs are central to the UK tourism offer, with around two thirds of domestic holidaymakers and over half of overseas visitors visiting a pub, often to experience British beer.
6. Pubs are foundational to local economies and community life, with 73 percent of people in Britain saying that pubs help combat loneliness in their local area.
7. Despite strong consumer demand, many pubs and breweries are unable to operate profitably, with closures accelerating as already tight margins are further squeezed, including the closure of around seven pubs every week.
8. The sector is one of the most highly taxed in the economy, accounting for around 40 percent of brewers' turnover and approximately £1 in every £3 spent in a pub.
9. That new Extended Producer Responsibility costs, estimated at £120 million per year, alongside higher taxes and regulatory burdens, are contributing to increasingly unsustainable operating models for both pubs and breweries.
10. Rising costs driven by taxation and regulation pushed the average price of a pint above £5 for the first time in 2025, with decisions taken in recent Autumn Budgets set to increase costs further in 2026.
11. UK beer duty rates remain close to three times the European Union average and among the highest in Europe, while repeated duty increases have delivered



diminishing returns to the Exchequer.

12. Changes to beer duty, particularly for draught beer sold in pubs, have been shown to deliver the majority of employment and investment benefits through the on trade, while also generating higher VAT receipts per pint than off trade sales.
13. Modest, sustained growth in the pub and brewing sector could deliver significant economic benefits over the course of a Parliament, including tens of thousands of additional jobs, higher wages, increased output and increased overall tax revenues.

Conference further notes that:

14. The Liberal Democrats have previously supported action to reduce the tax burden on pubs and brewers, including through fairer alcohol duty and targeted support for the on trade.
15. Since this policy was last debated, operating costs for pubs and breweries have risen sharply, closure rates have accelerated and new regulatory pressures have emerged, requiring an updated and more ambitious policy response.

Conference therefore believes that:

- a. Community pubs are vital social infrastructure, supporting wellbeing, tackling loneliness and strengthening local economies.
- b. A fairer and more sustainable system of alcohol taxation can support jobs, investment and community life while maintaining overall public revenues.
- c. Supporting the on trade, particularly draught beer sold in pubs, is one of the most targeted and effective ways to sustain the sector.
- d. It is vital that enjoying a pint in a pub with friends and family does not become unaffordable for the majority of people.

Conference calls on the Government to:

- i. Freeze overall beer duty rates as a minimum in the short term, with a clear commitment to reducing beer duty gradually over time towards the European average.
- ii. Increase the draught beer duty discount substantially, with the ambition of raising it to at least 30 percent and working towards 50 percent, recognising the strong economic and community benefits of draught beer sales in pubs.
- iii. Use beer duty reform as a targeted lever to support pubs and brewers, protect jobs in towns and villages and encourage investment in UK brewing.

- iv. Ensure that any future changes to alcohol duty prioritise affordability in the on trade and do not undermine the viability of community pubs.
- v. Reform the wider tax and regulatory framework affecting pubs and brewers so that it properly recognises their social value, including their contribution to tourism, employment, community cohesion and mental wellbeing.

Confidential

## Education and Families Motions

### 1. From Local Roots to Global Reach: A Liberal Vision for Universities

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference believes that:

- a. British universities are a world-leading export that attracts global talent and projects UK soft power overseas.
- b. Universities play a vital role in driving growth across the UK, developing skills and supporting high quality jobs, particularly in regional economies.
- c. As hubs of innovation, universities are central to any credible strategy on research and development. Yet funding remains too limited to unlock the full value of university research and to drive effective commercialisation.
- d. A more integrated tertiary approach between FE and HE can open new avenues for learners to access higher education at every stage of life and diversify university revenue streams in light of coming demographic and international challenges.
- e. Financial pressures have gradually eroded the student experience. Students deserve a fair deal on finance that allows them to participate meaningfully in university life regardless of background.
- f. The challenges facing the sector require a sustained, multi-pronged approach beyond the immediate and next parliamentary terms.

However conference notes with concern that:

- i. The failure to uprate maintenance loan eligibility thresholds has gradually eroded the level of financial support available to students, with over 40 per cent living on less than £100 a month.
- ii. The freezing of student loan repayment thresholds means they will reach parity with minimum wage by 2031, burdening graduates with an ever-increasing marginal tax rate.
- iii. The Labour Government's national insurance hike and international student levy will cost the sector more than £1 billion per year, with just 1 per cent of the revenue raised to be reinvested into maintenance grants.
- iv. British graduates have the highest skills mismatch in the OECD, with 37 percent of graduates employed in positions that do not need a degree for, nor utilise their graduate-level skills.
- v. Research and innovation funding is often short-term and fragmented, limiting the UK's

ability to commercialise new technologies. These issues are reinforced through limited proof of concept and seed funding.

Conference therefore supports the following policies on universities, taken from the spokesperson's paper "From Local Roots to Global Reach: A Liberal Vision for Universities":

Conference calls on the Government to:

1. Reform student finance and support, by:

- a. Reintroducing maintenance grants on top of existing student loans, aiming to cover 35% of undergraduate students, rising to 50% when public finances allow.
- b. Unfreezing and uprating parental income thresholds for student finance applications.
- c. Unfreezing graduate repayment thresholds and working towards making them fairer, while exploring options to extend improved terms to existing graduates in a fiscally sustainable way, prioritising those on lower and middle incomes.
- d. Exploring how student maintenance loans could be more flexible based on regional cost-of-living pressures.
- e. Writing off a portion of student debt for those working in the NHS, with a view to expanding this to education professionals and social services workers after 10 years of service, with further write-offs after 15 years.

2. Ensure the financial sustainability of universities, by:

- a. Reversing the damaging national insurance hike and international student levy.
- b. Unlocking additional funds through student loan payment reprofiling, shared-service reform, and interest-free loans for internal restructuring.
- c. Renegotiating the cost of private-equity owned academic journals, with a commitment to support a new, open-source academic journal collection with EU and global partners if cost reductions remain unsatisfactory.
- d. Working towards ending pension inequality between pre- and post-92 institutions
- e. Protecting regional subject diversity so students who cannot relocate retain access to a broad range of subjects locally.

3. Strengthen skills development and employer engagement, by:

- a. Doubling the number of degree apprenticeships in skill shortage areas and

reserving at least 50% for these for students from low-income households.

- b. Encouraging universities to embed employer-identified skills as assessed components throughout undergraduate curricula.
- c. Place a legal duty on local authorities and mayors to consult with employers and universities in the creation of skills strategies.
- d. Designing a "Stackable Funding" mechanism to allow employers to fund modular learning within an academic pathway, combined with Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) grants.

4. Expand modular learning and lifelong learning opportunities, by:

- a. Ensuring regulatory oversight to manage and promote collaboration between the FE and HE sectors, working towards a unified tertiary approach where colleges and universities have the flexibility to share facilities and co-deliver courses.
- b. Exploring credit transfer models between colleges and universities to allow students to flexibly design studies across multiple institutions.
- c. Encouraging greater flexibility in module delivery to enable mature learners and those from non-traditional backgrounds to access modular education delivered by universities, with the Office for Students to develop a regulatory framework ensuring quality.

5. Strengthen the UK's research and innovation ecosystem, by:

- a. Increasing research budgets with inflation and moving towards multi-year funding settlements.
- b. Quintupling proof of concept funding to £200m a year.
- c. Creating a network of regional innovation centres across the UK, ensuring every nation and major English region can support university-industry collaboration with state-of-the-art research facilities.
- d. Aiming to restore the 80% commitment for full economic cost recovery of research.

6. Empower academics, students, and research teams to innovate and commercialise research, by:

- a. Introducing government-backed, low-interest, seed funding loans for companies borne from university research, and expanding the definition of commercialisation so university-derived SMEs and student startups are eligible.

- b. Changing visa rules to allow PhD and MRes students to found startups during their studies and ensuring they are eligible for proof of concept funding.
- c. Developing a standardised national framework for negotiating intellectual property between universities and staff, with the long-term ambition of enabling academics and researchers to hold full rights to the intellectual property arising from their research.

7. Strengthen UK universities' global leadership by:

- a. Pushing for UK qualifications to be recognised in the EU on a semi-automatic basis, with the ambition to make this automatic in key sectors.
- b. Maintaining and enhancing the high-standard of university teaching by expanding teacher training opportunities both through HE Fellowships and via new innovative schemes.
- c. Creating a single governmental contact point for universities concerned about foreign interference pressures, and developing guidance for universities to combat foreign interference on campus.

## Energy, Climate Change and the Environment Motions

### 1. Protect our Seabed from Deep-sea Mining

Submitted by

Yorkshire Liberal Democrats

Conference notes that:

- A. In November 2025, the UK Government announced its Critical Minerals Strategy which:
  - a) Identifies materials vital to the UK's economy, national security and transition to clean, renewable energy.
  - b) Establishes a new growth minerals list.
  - c) Aims to secure access to critical minerals by 2035 by:
    - i. Expanding mining, refining, and recycling capacity.
    - ii. Investing £50m and providing additional public support to businesses.
    - iii. Building resilient UK and global supply networks through greater international engagement.
- B. In January 2026, the High Seas Treaty – which the UK will soon ratify – established an international legal framework for environmental protection and scientific collaboration.
- C. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) has issued exploration licenses for polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and mineral-rich ocean crusts in:
  - a) The Clarion-Clipperton Zone and the Northwest Pacific Ocean.
  - b) The Indian Ocean's Carlsberg Ridge and the Afansay-Nikitin Seamount.
  - c) The Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

Conference further notes that:

- I. Terrestrial mining has caused serious environmental and human harm.
- II. Deep-sea mining:
  - a) Has been endorsed as an environmentally friendlier alternative to terrestrial mining despite criticism that it risks seriously damaging marine ecosystems.
  - b) Has not yet been approved by the ISA.
  - c) Is not explicitly prohibited under the High Seas Treaty.
- III. The international seabed serves as a major carbon sink and is home to thousands of

undescribed species.

IV. The CMS considers extending industrial support to UK businesses' overseas critical minerals projects.

V. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Water and Flooding's portfolio encompasses water- and non-water-related responsibilities.

Conference believes that while the UK requires greater access to critical materials, the environmental and societal harms of unmitigated resource extraction risks outweighing these materials' environmental and economic benefits.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrats' commitment to:

- i. Fostering stability, certainty and confidence for economic growth and investment.
- ii. Accelerating the transition to a more circular economy.
- iii. Restoring the UK's global leadership on climate change.
- iv. Accelerating the deployment of renewable power, increasing investment in green infrastructure and delivering energy security.
- v. Creating a real network of marine conservation areas fully protected from damaging and destructive activities.

Conference urges the UK Government to:

1. Support responsible mining practices by:
  - a) Conditioning industrial support on commitments by businesses to undertake:
    - i. Responsible waste management.
    - ii. Job creation, training and community investment schemes linked to domestic production prioritising economically disadvantaged areas.
    - iii. Ecological restoration when decommissioning mines.
  - b) Levying mining profits to support ecological restoration projects via Official Development Assistance.
  - c) Lobbying for improved international regulatory standards.
2. Increase investment in:
  - a) Domestic production infrastructure for more readily available materials such as carbon allotropes and sodium.
  - b) Research and development into electrical components that utilise materials other than Rare Earth Elements.



3. Support as part of the UK's future High Seas Treaty commitments:
  - a) Bans of deep-sea mining in:
    - i. All signatories' national waters.
    - ii. International waters.
  - b) Bans on UK companies from:
    - i. Undertaking deep-sea mining operations in foreign national waters.
    - ii. Sourcing critical minerals through deep-sea mining.
  - c) Reforming the ISA into an environmental protection body.
4. Appoint a Minister for Oceans focused on international waters and marine environmental protection.

Applicability: Federal

## 2. Cleaning Up Illegal Waste

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes that:

- Waste crime costs the economy over £1 billion a year.
- The government's own estimates indicate that 20% of all waste is illegally managed; 35% of which is serious organised crime.
- Over 38 million tonnes of waste, enough to fill Wembley Stadium 35 times, is believed to be illegally managed at some point in the waste management chain each year.
- No one has ever been convicted of Landfill Tax fraud.
- The low-risk high financial reward has led to waste crime being described as the 'new narcotics'.
- Industrial fly tipping is severely "under-prioritised", according to the findings of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee inquiry into waste crime.
- The Environment Agency (EA) has confirmed six other illegal waste sites of a similar size to the site at Hoads Wood but many other large illegal dumps are being discovered.
- The EA met the £15m clean-up cost of the site at Hoads Wood with funds taken from the flood defence program and has agreed to meet the costs of clearing the Kidlington site estimated at £15-25m.

Conference believes that:

- We do not know the true scale or damage of serious organised waste crime in this country.
- Organised criminal gangs are getting away with profiting from the illegal dumping of vast quantities of waste, which does unknown damage to the public and the environment.
- The risk of toxic run-off from illegal waste sites is increasing: the swift removal of serious waste crime sites is essential to limiting the degradation of water, soil and air quality and the risks to people and wildlife.
- The EA is not equipped to deal with this unfolding environmental disaster or tackle the work and impact of organised criminal gangs illegally dumping vast quantities of waste.
- Illegal dumping is the inevitable product of inattention and inaction which so characterised the Conservatives in majority government.
- Government reforms to rules for waste have been delayed for years and will be ineffective without a well-resourced regulator.

- Communities should not have to suffer the effects of waste crime which blights the environment and puts further pressure on local council budgets which are already on the brink.

Conference reaffirms pledges to:

- Strengthen the Office for Environmental Protection and provide more funding to the EA and Natural England to better protect our environment and enforce environmental laws.
- Reform the planning system to align with climate, nature and resilience goals.
- Introduce a Countryside Copper Guarantee to crackdown on rural crime, including a dedicated rural crime police lead, improvements to training, intelligence sharing and reporting and technologies to detect and deter rural crime, including drones.
- Step up support for resource efficiency and the circular economy with improved building and product design standards; aim to eliminate non-recyclable single-use plastics within three years; and finalise a Global Plastics Treaty to cut plastic pollution worldwide.
- Place decarbonisation at the heart of the UK's industrial strategy.
- Pass a Clean Air Act.
- Invest in nature-based solutions for carbon removal, including expanding woodland and restoring peatlands.

Conference calls for:

- An independent review into the entire waste crime system.
- A single national hotline for waste crime to improve reporting, mapping and detection and help catch those responsible.
- A government strategy to tackle illegal dumping, including measurable metrics and targets.
- The proper resourcing of the EA and Joint Unit for Waste Crime to tackle waste crime.
- The National Crime Agency to take over the investigation into illegal dumps in the most serious cases and improve national coordination across police forces and crime prevention agencies.
- The government to urgently redirect money from the Landfill Tax to clamp down on illegal waste sites.
- An end to the Treasury collecting Landfill Tax from the large-scale waste sites the EA is cleaning up and their overly restrictive rules which prevent the EA from making use of revenue from permitted activities to work to prevent unpermitted activities.
- The increased use and deployment of technology and remote monitoring,

including satellite, to fight serious organised waste crime.

Confidential

### 3. Restoring Our Seas

Submitted by

13 Party Members

Conference notes with concern that:

- A. The practices of bottom trawling and dredge fishing have had a significant impact on the biodiversity and productivity of marine habitats in the United Kingdom.
- B. Foreign-owned 'supertrawlers' operating in UK waters have caused damage to the marine environment with significant by-catch including marine mammals.
- C. Government policy lacks a holistic approach when it comes to protecting the marine environment and recognising its role in the climate emergency.

Conference recognises that the key to a healthy and productive marine environment is a healthy seabed, able to combat climate change and produce sustainable fish stocks.

Conference also recognises that healthy seas require healthy rivers, and that government policy must view them as one system.

Conference believes that the Liberal Democrats are best placed to bring in the policy changes to protect and restore our marine environment.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitment to:

- i) Manage our seas for nature by:
  - a) Reforming marine spatial planning to deliver a new, integrated approach, focused on sustainability.
  - b) Reforming the fishing quota allocation system to reward the most sustainable fleet, and ensure all catch limits are set at sustainable levels.
  - c) Putting in place effective management rules, to support the ecology of each protected area, including a ban on bottom trawling in Marine Protected Areas.
  - d) Ensuring at least 30% of our seas will be fully or highly protected by 2030.
  - e) Funding coastal local government to increase the monitoring of the health of coastal waters and to develop ways to increase the communication of results.
- ii) Manage our lakes, rivers and streams for nature by:
  - a) Taking urgent measures, including mandating major infrastructure upgrades in the sewage system and implementing natural catchment solutions, to end sewage pollution, prevent harmful run-off from agriculture, and ensure developments do not add to the pollution burden on our precious freshwaters.

- b) Introducing nutrient budgeting in English catchments, requiring projects in vulnerable areas to demonstrate 'nutrient negativity' before they proceed.
- c) Setting new 'blue flag' standard and introducing a 'blue corridor' programme for rivers, streams and lakes to ensure clean, healthy water.
- d) Abolishing Ofwat and replacing it with a regulator with real and meaningful powers.

Conference resolves to:

1. Introduce a total ban on bottom trawling and dredge fishing within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
2. Introduce a total ban on trawlers over 100 metres in length within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
3. Create new No-Take Zones (NTZs) around sensitive or critically important habitats where fishing and extractive practices are prohibited.
4. Establish Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) to better protect the feeding and breeding grounds of whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals.
5. Support projects aimed at restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems, including the reintroduction of beavers, restoration of oyster beds and planting of seagrass meadows.
6. Instruct the Environment Agency to identify and remove obsolete barriers from English rivers and streams to facilitate the passage of nutrients and migratory fish.
7. Work with international partners to help restore and protect rivers, lakes, seas and oceans globally.

## Health and Social Care Motions

### 1. Combatting the Cost-of-dying Crisis

Submitted by

Yorkshire Liberal Democrats

Conference notes that:

- A. According to SunLife's 2025 Cost of Dying Report, average funeral costs rose by 134% between 2004 and 2025, above the rate of inflation of 75% over the same period.
- B. A study by GoCompare Life Insurance found that 60% of UK adults worry about covering the costs of a loved one's funeral.
- C. The Competition & Markets Authority found that:
  - a) Funeral services are often planned:
    - i. Once a death has occurred or is imminent due to discomfort over discussing arrangements or preferences beforehand.
    - ii. Without consideration of prices charged or options offered by funeral providers.
  - b) Households expend the same amount on funerals regardless of their income bracket, disproportionately impacting lower income households.
- D. In England and Wales, expressed funeral preferences of the deceased are not legally binding.
- E. The Funeral Expenses Payment typically provides up to £1,000 to cover essential costs, below the average cost of £1,597 for direct cremation.
- F. Public health funerals provided by local authorities:
  - a) Increased by 47% from 2015 to 2021 primarily due to lack of funds.
  - b) Incur months of investigation to:
    - i. Determine funereal preferences and next of kin.
    - ii. Recover costs from estates.
  - c) May deny dignities such attendance by relatives and loved ones at services, the return of ashes or burial markers due to cost.
- G. The Law Commission for England and Wales is considering regulations for new funereal practices such as human composting and water cremation with a final report

and draft Bill due in Spring 2026.

H. The decreasing availability of land for burial:

- a) Is contributing to increasing funereal costs.
- b) Disproportionately burdens individuals and communities opposed to cremation, namely Jews and Muslims.
- c) Has led to increased use of and interest in vertical cemeteries worldwide.

Conference believes that the emotional toll of bereavement should not be exacerbated by financial hardship or procedural issues.

Conference calls upon the UK Government to:

1. Increase the Funeral Expenses Payment to a maximum of £4,000 to cover services including simple funerals.
2. Provide all local authorities with the funding and resources to:
  - a) Allow attendance by relatives and loved ones at services, the return of ashes and burial markers as part of public health funerals.
  - b) Undertake efficient investigations to prepare and recover costs for public health funerals.
  - c) Offer via local register offices referrals for funeral purchasing advice.
3. Launch a Law Commission review into greater legal protection and enforcement of expressed funeral wishes.
4. Allow up to five relatives or loved ones to be designated as next of kin.
5. Require funeral providers to offer referral to bereavement counselling services including those provided by the NHS and charities.
6. Legalise and support the provision of infrastructure for water cremation and human composting.
7. Undertake reviews into the construction of vertical cemeteries that would:
  - a) Provide burial and immurement spaces:
    - i. Available for purchase through affordable one-off payments in perpetuity.



- ii. For public health funerals.
- b) Involve communities in determining their location and design.

Applicability: England only, except for Proposal 7 which is federal

## 2. A Fair Deal for those living with ME, Long Covid and related conditions

Submitted by

LDDA

Conference notes that:

- I. ME is a complex chronic condition affecting multiple body systems. ME has one of the lowest quality of life scores of any condition. The sickest lie in darkened rooms, sometimes unable to move, speak or even swallow.
- II. People with ME have faced decades of substandard healthcare. A recent Prevention of Future Deaths report highlighted 'non-existent' NHS care for those severely affected. Patients and their carers commonly report feeling dismissed or disbelieved within NHS care, and the inappropriate attribution of symptoms to psychological causes.
- III. Patient outcomes are affected by decades of chronic underfunding. There is currently no cure or established treatment. UK public funding committed to ME research 2013-2024 is vastly disproportionate compared to diseases with comparative DALY burdens - just £8 million.
- IV. Since 2020, this legacy of neglect has also impacted those with Long Covid. In early 2024, ONS data indicated that 2 million people in England and Scotland were living with Long Covid. Approximately 50% meet the diagnostic criteria for ME and face the same gaps in care and research. ME and Long Covid fit within a wider group of Infection-Associated Chronic Conditions (IACCs) that experience a similar lack of system-wide support.
- V. The Liberal Democrats have been a key voice in parliament calling attention to a legacy of neglect faced by people affected by ME. In 2025 a letter from Tessa Munt MP to the Secretary of State for Health ahead of the government's publication of the Delivery Plan was signed by all 72 Liberal Democrat MPs.

Conference believes:

- a. The best way to urgently affect positive improvement for patients with ME, Long Covid and IACCs is to provide appropriate funding for research and service provision.
- b. ME and Long Covid patients and carers require:
  - i. urgent Government funding for research and improvements to NHS care, proportionate to the disabling impact and economic cost of these conditions.
  - ii. increased knowledge and improved attitudes across the NHS, government

departments and society.

iii. safe, compassionate and evidence-based NHS care in line with NICE guidance.

- c. Addressing the impact of post-infectious conditions is vital to the UK's future economic success. In the immediate-term, the Department for Work and Pensions recognises Long Covid as a potential factor behind rising economic inactivity due to long-term sickness. Looking to the future, understanding how to support those with IACCs such as ME and Long Covid is a vital component of the UK's future pandemic preparedness and mitigating economic fallout.

Conference calls on the UK Government to:

1. Place research and NHS services for ME on an equal footing with other conditions, investing £100 million over the next five years to ensure research funding and care that reflect the condition's economic footprint and population need.[a][b]
2. As part of this, commit to a sustained pipeline of research investments in ME, Long Covid and other IACCs that are informed by lived experience, and establish a dedicated Post-Infectious Disease Research Hub reflecting calls from charities and researchers.
3. Ensure that those who are severely and very severely affected by ME, including those affected post-Covid ME, are prioritised within future improvements to NHS services. This must include collaboration with patient and carer organisations to develop urgent interim measures that address patient safety risks.

### 3. Building a Holistic Liberal Democrat Psychoactives Policy

Submitted by

LDDA

Conference notes that:

- I. The Liberal Democrats have a proud history of championing research, ethical consumption and harm-reduction strategies when considering psychoactive substances. However, the evolution of research and patient care in the last decade has led to party policy falling behind the fields' developments. The Liberal Democrats' longstanding commitment to evidence-based drug policy and patient-centred healthcare provides a strong foundation for reform in this area.
- II. Recent neuropsychopharmacology research demonstrates that psychoactive treatments show promise for a wide range of conditions, including:
  - A. The Department of Brain Sciences at Imperial College London conducting studies on psychedelics for treatment-resistant depression, fibromyalgia, and gambling addiction; and
  - B. Trials from around the world on cluster headaches, PTSD, anorexia nervosa and traumatic brain injuries.
- III. The failure of policymaking in this area has been documented in reports by the Home Affairs Select Committee and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology.
- IV. The lack of newly approved mental health treatments is stark, with government data showing almost ten times more cancer trial applications (29.4% of all trials) than mental health studies (3.3%) between 2019 and 2023. In 2023, over 19 people died by suicide per day in the UK, the highest rate since 1999.
- V. The UK is being left behind despite establishing the first psychedelic research centre in the world at Imperial. Other countries are taking steps to address this policy area, including:
  - A. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and parts of the US have established regulated clinical or compassionate access pathways for psychedelic-assisted therapies.
  - B. To address the mental health clinical trials imbalance, the European Medicines Agency is adopting new guidelines for depression trials incorporating psychedelic-assisted therapies.
  - C. The Czech Parliament has just passed legislation that paves the way for qualified psychiatrists to administer psilocybin.

D. The Ukrainian Ministry of Health has proposed legislative changes facilitating national psychedelic research, to address the overwhelming demand for brain injury and PTSD treatment resulting from the ongoing conflict.

- VI. In a recent review of barriers to research, the government's Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) recommended an extension of Schedule 2 research rights (significantly-less burdensome in terms of administrative process and cost) to Schedule 1 substances. The Royal College of Psychiatrists notes that "One of the current socio-political barriers to conducting this research lies in the scheduling of many of these compounds under Schedule 1" and has previously called on the Government to reschedule psilocybin.

Conference believes that:

- a. Liberal policy on Psychoactives should, in addition to harm reduction strategies, promote the therapeutic potential of legitimate psychoactive substance research.
- b. Physically disabled people and those living with mental health conditions deserve research into treatment to be unhindered by government regulation that is not fit for purpose. Those with physical conditions also deserve uninhibited access to breakthrough therapies that may ameliorate the psychological burden of navigating chronic health conditions.
- c. We all stand to gain economically from bringing policy in line with science. Securing innovative treatments for underserved conditions can contribute to reduced long-term benefit dependence and improved economic participation.
- d. To ensure equitable outcomes, access on the NHS will be necessary, especially as the burden of mental and physical disabilities disproportionately falls upon economically disadvantaged groups and minorities.
- e. The UK can and should recapture its early-mover advantage in neuropsychopharmacology research to enable access to breakthrough medications and facilitate economic growth.

Conference welcomes, in part, the 16th July 2025 Government response to the ACMD's "Consideration of Barriers to Research Part 2: Schedule 1 Controlled Drugs" report that:

- I. Agrees in principle to exempt Research Institutions and approved clinical trials from Schedule 1 licensing; and
- II. Agrees to improve the accessibility of the import/export Licensing System.

Conference, however, notes with concern that the Government response rejects Recommendation 3, granting hospitals and universities the same Schedule 1 licensing exemption.

Conference calls upon the government to:

1. Immediately accept and commence implementation of all of the recommendations and suggested further options in the ACMD's 2023 report, "Consideration of Barriers to Research Part 2: Schedule 1 Controlled Drugs" to ensure that research is no longer obstructed by unnecessary bureaucracy.
2. Accept and commence implementation all of the recommendations of the Health and Social Care Committee's 2023 "Drugs" report, including as a priority:
  - a. To review and reform the classification and scheduling systems.
  - b. To "urgently" move Schedule 1 psychedelic compounds with a reasonable expectation of medical or therapeutic potential to Schedule 2 to facilitate research.
  - c. To urgently widen access to unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPMs) available on the NHS and support randomised controlled trials into CBPM use for chronic pain.
3. Investigate routes to accessing clinically supervised, evidence-based psychedelic-assisted therapies through the NHS. To additionally address the societal challenges faced by patients prescribed psychoactive medication such as CBPMs.
4. Address structural issues of underfunding. Coordinate resources and research via a national Centre of Excellence for psychoactive research to restore our advantage and expedite innovation and progress.
5. Set out a timeline culminating at the end of this Parliament for the implementation of the recommendations from both the ACMD and the Home Affairs Committee reports.

#### 4. Tackling medical disinformation online

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes that:

- i. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X are now de facto health information infrastructures, with millions of people across the UK accessing health advice on these platforms.
- ii. Advice on these platforms do not have to adhere to clinical standards or guidelines.
- iii. A number of public figures with significant online reach, such as Nigel Farage, give credibility to peddlers of medical disinformation and implausible treatments, including scaremongering over vaccine safety.
- iii. The press transparency organisation, FullFact has uncovered hundreds of videos where AI has been used to create “deepfakes” of academics and promote unproven health products<sup>1</sup>.
- iv. Exploitative online marketing and misinformation has been particularly prevalent in areas of poor health knowledge, such as menopause, as documented by University College London.
- v. The use of disproven and implausible remedies can delay treatment, with clinical medicine sometimes only turned to when these initial remedies have proven futile and unnecessary harm has been suffered.
- vi. Millions of people use artificial intelligence and AI “companions” to discuss health concerns. This includes people expressing suicidal intent and profound mental illness<sup>2</sup>, and one in three adults use chatbots for their mental health<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Conference believes that:**

- I. Digital tools and therapies can help empower people in need of health advice and support, and have an important clinical role.
- II. Medical disinformation online is unacceptably widespread.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fullfact.org/health/academics-deepfaked-tiktok-wellness-nest/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/391/bmj.r2290>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/blog/over-one-in-three-using-ai-chatbots-for-mental-health-support-as-charity-calls-for-urgent-safeguards/>

- III. The crisis in our NHS, which sees people wait years for basic treatment and assessment for everything from gynaecology to mental health, has forced people to seek alternatives and made them more susceptible to fraudulent advice and products.

**Conference reaffirms Liberal Democrat calls for:**

- A. Introducing a new kitemark for health apps and digital tools that are clinically proven to help people lead healthier lives, and which are subject to ongoing regulation, such as by the GMC.
- B. Harness the benefits of new technology and digital tools for patients by ring-fencing budgets to enable the NHS to adopt innovative digital tools that improve patient care and experience and save staff time and costs.
- C. Rolling out digital platforms for care users to develop networks, relationships and opportunities, connecting with care workers, friends and family, voluntary groups and more, with a dedicated Carers digital strategy
- D. Cut years-long waiting lists, introduce a legal right to a GP appointment within seven days and open walk-in mental health hubs in every community so that people can get in-person NHS support and advice whenever they need it.

**Conference additionally calls for:**

- 1. Empower the public, and destroy the business model of fraudulent healthcare advice and products through:
  - a. A comprehensive NHS strategy to dominate the health advice social media eco-system with promotion of clinically approved tools. This would include partnerships with key influencers and dedicated funding for outreach to at-risk groups.
  - b. Criminal liability for those, including online influencers, who profit from medical disinformation.
  - c. A new verification requirement for any social media account claiming to be a medical professional.



- d. Stronger requirements for AI chatbots to automatically signpost users seeking health advice to clinically approved sources of information, including immediate referral to helplines for those at the point of crisis.
- 2. A specific funded strategy to combat anti-vax disinformation online including:
  - a. Targeted outreach campaigns, which integrate social media with physical presence in community spaces for areas most at risk from online vaccine disinformation, including those with elected Reform UK representatives.
  - b. Employ trusted peer to peer influencers, working in partnership with expert medical professionals, to answer concerns and questions in forums with high numbers of people at risk from vaccine disinformation, such as forums catering to new and expectant parents.
- 3. Increase the number of high quality digital tools developed for patients by:
  - a. Working with local NHS services across the country, introducing national commissioning and procurement of NICE approved digital technology, much like they do currently for medicines, to:
    - i. cut the costs of new digital services and make many more available for the first time.
    - ii. Help clinicians better determine which digital innovations would work best to recommend for their patients, while retaining flexibility and choice.
  - b. Work with primary care providers and patients to improve the experience and use of existing online NHS sources of information, such as the 111 website.

## 5. Making The Most Of Our Health Care Graduates

Submitted by

Sheffield Liberal Democrats

This conference

Notes that:

1. There is a demonstrable link between qualified staffing numbers and patient safety in the NHS
2. Many health care graduates; including nurses, midwives and physiotherapists, are unemployed or underemployed due to recruitment freezes in the NHS
3. Medical unemployment has been a significant factor driving recent resident doctor industrial action
4. Workplace stress and burnout is a significant cause of occupational ill health in the NHS workforce, with short staffing a major contributor to this
5. Large amounts of money are spent on each healthcare student

Believes that:

- A. No appointable healthcare graduate from a UK university should be left unemployed
- B. Insufficient work force modelling has meant there is a poor understanding of the workforce from graduation to retirement
- C. The previous Tory government was irresponsible in increasing medical school training places without increasing training placements available for these graduates
- D. Not employing an otherwise appointable graduate is a waste of taxpayer money

Calls for:

- I. A ring fenced national fund so that no appointable health care professional graduate from a UK university is left unemployed.
- II. NHS England to undertake effective workforce modelling across all health professions so that we have a workforce for the future
- III. Extra training rotations to ensure adequate provision.
- IV. Mechanisms for Work experience outside of training programmes to count towards post graduate training so no graduate is penalised for a previous lack of training places
- V. Legislation to prioritise graduates from UK universities for NHS training posts

## 6. Protecting Patients Prescribed Medical Cannabis and Other Essential Medicines from Discrimination

Submitted by

Local Party: Clwyd East & Flintshire

Conference notes that:

- Cannabis-based Products for Medicinal Use (CBPMs) have been lawfully prescribable in the UK since 1 November 2018.
- Tens of thousands of patients in the UK are now prescribed CBPMs, the majority through private prescriptions, with patient numbers expected to increase in the coming years.
- CBPMs are prescribed for a wide range of conditions, including chronic pain, neurological conditions, epilepsy, psychiatric conditions and other serious long-term illnesses.
- Many of the conditions for which CBPMs and other essential medicines are prescribed meet the statutory definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010, engaging duties to make reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- CBPMs may be prescribed either as oils taken orally or as dried cannabis flower intended for vaporisation using a medically-approved device, which does not involve combustion.
- Vaporisation provides rapid symptom relief and is clinically important for some patients, particularly those managing acute neurological pain, muscle spasticity or seizure activity.
- Many people with long-term health conditions rely on timely administration of other prescribed medicines in public or semi-public settings, including insulin injections for diabetes, emergency inhalers for asthma, adrenaline auto-injectors for severe allergies, and injectable or infused medicines for autoimmune or neurological conditions.
- Despite their lawful status and medical necessity, patients using CBPMs and other essential medicines continue to experience misunderstanding, stigma and inconsistent treatment by public bodies, landlords, employers, transport providers and police forces, including unlawful seizure of medication, denial of access to facilities, threats of eviction, disciplinary action or other sanctions.

Conference reaffirms:

- Conference policy supporting the legal regulation of cannabis through a controlled and licensed system (Spring Conference 2016, York), and the principle that patients using cannabis for medical purposes should not be criminalised or stigmatised.

- The party's commitment to a health-led, evidence-based approach to drugs policy, treating drug use primarily as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice matter.
- Liberal Democrat Conference policy defending and advancing disabled people's rights, including the social model of disability and the removal of barriers created by society (Autumn Conference 2017, F31A: UK Government Treatment of Disabled People).
- Conference policy supporting proportionate, consistent and lawful policing, and the importance of public trust in policing and the fair exercise of police powers (including F7: Policing Fit for the Future, Autumn Conference 2025).
- The Liberal Democrats' long-standing commitment to civil liberties, equality before the law, and the robust application of the Equality Act 2010.

Conference believes that:

- Patients lawfully prescribed CBPMs or other essential medicines should be able to take or administer their medication safely, promptly and with dignity, without fear of discrimination, criminalisation or harassment.
- Requiring CBPM patients to use outdoor smoking areas or to share spaces with tobacco smokers or users of illegal substances may place them at risk and may constitute unlawful discrimination.
- Preventing or discouraging patients from administering other prescribed medicines, such as insulin injections, in appropriate indoor settings can create serious health risks and may similarly breach equality law.
- Blanket "no smoking", "no vaping" or inflexible conduct policies that fail to account for prescribed medication use risk breaching the Equality Act 2010 where reasonable adjustments are not considered.
- Ongoing lack of awareness and inconsistent practice among police, housing providers, employers, education providers and other public bodies undermines confidence in the rule of law and causes avoidable harm to disabled and chronically ill people.

Conference calls on Liberal Democrat councillors and local parties to:

- Use their roles in councils, combined authorities and other local public bodies to raise awareness of the lawful status of CBPMs and the rights of patients using prescribed medicines.
- Bring forward motions, scrutiny inquiries or policy reviews to ensure local smoke-free, vaping, housing, employment and conduct policies comply with equality law and allow for reasonable adjustments where required.
- Encourage and support local Equality Impact Assessments that explicitly consider the needs of CBPM patients and others who must administer prescribed medicines in public, workplace or housing settings.

- Work constructively with local police forces, social landlords, private landlords, employers and transport providers to prevent eviction, harassment or sanction of people lawfully prescribed CBPMs or other essential medicines.

Conference further calls on the Liberal Democrats, including parliamentarians, spokespeople and the party nationally, to:

- Campaign for clear, consistent national guidance to police forces, public bodies, landlords, employers and transport operators on the lawful status of CBPMs and other prescribed medicines, including appropriate and proportionate verification of prescriptions.
- Press for updated national policing guidance and training to ensure officers understand the legality of CBPMs, the forms in which they may be prescribed, and the statutory protections that apply to patients under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advocate for national guidance making clear that reasonable adjustments may be required to allow patients to administer prescribed medicines, including insulin injections, inhalers and medically-approved CBPM vaporisers, in appropriate indoor or controlled settings.
- Oppose discriminatory enforcement of smoke-free, vaping or behavioural policies where these disproportionately impact disabled or chronically ill patients.
- Urge the Government to work with clinicians, patient groups, disability organisations and regulators to ensure that lawful use of medical cannabis and other essential medicines is consistently understood and respected across the public sector, while maintaining public safety and proportionate enforcement of the law.

## 7. Mental Health Policy Paper

Submitted by

Federal Policy Committee

Conference recognises that:

- A. Decades of Liberal Democrat campaigning have pushed Britain's mental health services forward and positively shaped how we as a nation think about mental health.
- B. There is a danger that the dismissive language of the far right has begun to undo the progress we made by reintroducing stigma and shame into conversations about mental health.
- C. Labour's recent record is particularly alarming, and their decision to scrap mental health targets reflects a dangerous retreat from treating mental health as a distinct and urgent policy area.
- D. The pandemic has transformed both the scale and visibility of the crisis, and that it amplified loneliness, anxiety, and grief, pushed NHS, local authority, and school staff harder than ever before.

Conference believes that:

- i) Anyone can experience mental illness, through no fault of their own, so everyone must be able to access timely diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing support.
- ii) Resources in our mental health services too often only kick in at the point of crisis.
- iii) An individual's mental health journey is deeply personal, so their treatment programme should be too.
- iv) Families and communities play a crucial role in the lives of people with mental illness, either as a source of resilience or stress. They also bear a lot of the burden of supporting them and helping them make sense of decisions on offer.
- v) Our policies are based on scientific evidence and lived experience, especially in a time of rising scepticism towards mental health and of new and developing treatments.
- vi) A healthier NHS workforce would have more time and capacity to diagnose and treat mental illness.
- vii) Services should be designed in a way that means anyone who needs them can access them - irrespective of age, class, gender, income, ethnicity, or postcode.

Conference therefore endorses Policy Paper X *Title TBC*, with its approach based on six key principles:

- I. Accessibility
- II. Fairness and equity
- III. Personal choice and autonomy
- IV. Community-centred
- V. Evidence-led
- VI. Caring for the people that take care of us

In particular, Conference welcomes its proposals to:

1. Ensure that as few people as possible develop mental ill-health by:
  - a) Offering regular mental health check-ups for people, and those supporting them, when they are most vulnerable to mental ill-health.
  - b) Ensuring that all mental health services are integrated with money advice, substance abuse, housing, and employment advice services by default, and widen access to services that provide temporary protection from problem debt.
  - c) Introducing structural reforms to both the national curriculum and Ofcom to empower children and parents to use social media in a way that is right for their family, whilst being protected from the risk of mental harm.
  - d) Require social media apps to introduce cigarette-style health warnings for under-18s.
  - e) Tripling the budget of the Farmer Welfare Fund, which would provide greater mental health support and services at livestock markets and county shows, and offering additional mental health support following Rural Payment Agency visits.
  - f) Restoring the £2 bus fare cap, and supporting local authorities to use powers to franchise services and simplify funding so that affordable bus routes can be restored or new routes added where there is local need, to reduce rural isolation and loneliness.
2. Make it easier to access mental health services, and quicker to receive a diagnosis and treatment by:
  - a) Supporting digital-enabled therapies, if there is enough evidence for them, and if patients retain the choice to opt for more traditional treatments.
  - b) Making it easier for world-class experts to do essential mental health research in the UK, and for them to conduct crucial research that helps build our evidence base.
  - c) Opening a walk-in Young People's Mental Health Hub in every community, with specific support for children that have fallen between school and CAMHS support.
  - d) Removing the arbitrary cliff edge at 18 for young people's mental health services.
  - e) Enshrining the "no wrong door" principle into law across mental health and related services, to ensure that no one will be turned away or told to start again elsewhere.
  - f) Making mental health referral and support services available following every miscarriage, not just after three, and introducing annual reporting on waiting times for these patients.
3. Prevent people with mental illnesses, and those around them, from shouldering the unfair mental and financial costs associated with mental illness by:
  - a) Making prescriptions for people with chronic mental health conditions free on the NHS.

- b) Introducing a legal duty on health professionals to identify family members and unpaid carers, and to consider their own health and support needs as part of routine care.
  - c) Preventing insurers from discriminating against people with mental health conditions when the risk is unrelated, by requiring fairer underwriting and oversight from the Financial Conduct Authority.
4. Reform the Mental Health Act to protect individual liberties and ensure that mental health professionals have the support they need to deliver appropriate care by:
- a) Creating a statutory, independent Mental Health Commissioner to represent patients, their families and carers, and introduce a new Veterans' Mental Health Oversight Officer.
  - b) Working with healthcare regulators to provide additional, appropriate safeguards on the use of digital monitoring technologies, where needed.
  - c) Ensuring that all forces have a mental health professional in the control room at all times.
  - d) Implement the recommendations of the Wessely Review appropriately to ensure that people of Black African or Caribbean heritage are no longer more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than white people.



## International Affairs Motions

### 1. Upholding International Humanitarian Law

Submitted by

Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine

Conference notes that:

- i. Grave violations of International Humanitarian Law are occurring in multiple conflict zones, including but not limited to Russia-Ukraine, Sudan, and Israel-Palestine, with devastating consequences for civilian populations.
- ii. States are obligated under the 1948 Geneva Conventions, the 1951 Genocide Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute of the ICC to take active measures to prevent atrocity crimes. They are required to protect populations at risk, and hold the perpetrators accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These obligations are being applied inconsistently, exposing a double standard for western countries and creating a sense of impunity that risks emboldening other states to violate international law.
- iii. The international courts play a central role in upholding the international rules-based order, including the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has issued arrest warrants against senior Israeli and Russian officials, and recently convicted the Sudanese militia leader Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman for war crimes in the Darfur region; and that political interference with the ICC, including sanctions, personal threats, and threats to restrict funding or cooperation in response to investigations and arrest warrants, risks undermining the independence and effectiveness of the Court across all its cases.
- iv. The contempt shown by the current US Administration and other states for the rules-based international order and the intentional weakening of international law and human rights, which comes at a time when Russia has persistently shown contempt for the sovereignty of other states, including that of the United Kingdom.
- v. The UK Government has not only failed to challenge allies seeking to undermine the International Criminal Court but has also failed to act on its own obligations arising from advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), including the July 2024 confirmation that Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory is unlawful.
- vi. The UK has almost certainly violated its obligation to prevent and punish atrocity crimes by not implementing adequate sanctions against perpetrating states and individuals, including ministers in their official capacities, and by continuing close political, diplomatic and military relations with governments credibly implicated in such crimes.

- vii. The UK has taken insufficient action to sanction Russia and its shadow fleet or to promote transparency to mitigate the illegal export of Sudanese gold.
- viii. There is evidence of UK-manufactured military equipment being supplied both directly to armed forces credibly accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and indirectly to third countries that provide military equipment to forces engaged in these crimes; and that this raises serious concerns about UK arms export controls and the risk of complicity in international crimes.
- ix. The UK has inconsistently enforced the prohibition on UK citizens serving in foreign armed forces that are credibly accused of war crimes and has shown greater willingness to investigate and prosecute British nationals associated with non-state armed groups.

Conference reaffirms:

- A. The Autumn 2021 Federal Conference motion Towards a Lasting Peace (F39), the Autumn Conference 2023 Federal Conference motion Standing with Ukraine (F33), the Autumn 2024 Federal Conference motion The Israel-Gaza Conflict – an immediate bilateral ceasefire and securing two states (F32), and the Autumn 2025 Federal Conference motion Towards a Ceasefire and Political Resolution in Sudan (F43).
- B. The Liberal Democrat commitment to international law and the universal protection of human rights.

Conference accordingly calls on the UK Government to:

- 1. Suspend the export of all UK military equipment in circumstances where there is a clear risk that it may be used by the purchaser or through resale or diversion to a third party to commit or facilitate war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, in line with the UK's obligations under international law.
- 2. Launch a public enquiry into UK complicity in grave violations of International Humanitarian Law, including but not limited to Israel's crimes in the territory belonging to the State of Palestine, as recognised by the UK in September 2025, and particularly the genocide in Gaza of the past two years.
- 3. Ensure those subject to ICC arrest warrants are detained if they enter the UK, and lobby other governments to enforce the warrants.
- 4. Affirm its commitment to the ICC and bolster the ICC's ability to conduct independent investigations into suspected war crimes wherever they may occur.
- 5. Provide the ICC with any evidence it has collected, such as intelligence from

surveillance flights, and with diplomatic support in the face of efforts to undermine the Court.

6. Respond in a timely manner to advisory opinions of the ICJ, including the July 2024 ICJ opinion that stated that Israel's occupation of the OPT is unlawful.
7. Insist that journalists, lawyers, human rights organisations and diplomats are granted unimpeded access to conflict zones to collect evidence, monitor violations and support international accountability efforts, and impose stronger sanctions on ministers and officials who obstruct such access.
8. Strengthen the UK's use of targeted sanctions against states, armed groups, and individuals credibly implicated in atrocity crimes, and make greater efforts to shut off trade that finances the activities of those credibly accused of committing such crimes.
9. Work with the EU, its member states and other countries that are committed to the maintenance of the rules-based system of international law in order to further international peace and security.
10. Empower the British police to investigate, arrest and prosecute any British citizens who are suspected of complicity in war crimes perpetrated by Russia, Israel and any other state or paramilitary unit that has been accused of war crimes, applying the Geneva Conventions Act 1957 (as amended) and other relevant legislation.

## 2. Georgia's Future

Submitted by

12 Party Members

Conference notes:

- a. The deeply alarming steps taken by the Georgian Dream Party to erode civil society and freedoms in Georgia, as well as to entrench its power, including through passing:
  - i. The Foreign Agents Registration Act in April 2025, which has been described by the Committee to Protect Journalists as threatening to “wipe out Georgia’s donor-reliant independent press and media advocacy groups”.
  - ii. The Family Values Act in October 2024, banning same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and depictions of LGBT+ people in media.
  - iii. The ‘Offshore Law’ in May 2024, exempting asset transfers from offshore accounts to Georgia from taxation and heightening the risk that the country could become a conduit for money laundering activities, particularly for sanctioned Russian oligarchs.
- b. The politically-motivated charging in November 2025 of eight Georgian opposition figures, including jailed former President Mikheil Saakashvili.
- c. The rigging of Georgia’s October 2024 parliamentary elections, described by the European Parliament as “being neither free nor fair, representing yet another manifestation of the continued democratic backsliding of the country for which the ruling Georgian Dream party is fully responsible”.
- d. The violent suppression of pro-democracy activists following the start of widespread protests against Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze’s move to halt the country’s EU integration process in November 2024.
- e. The role of outlets such as Imedi TV, owned by London-based firm Hunnewell Partners, in echoing Kremlin-style disinformation and undermining Georgian aspirations for EU membership.
- f. The immense courage and resolve of Georgian protestors - including our sister parties in ALDE - who have stood up to oppose Georgian Dream’s efforts to undermine democracy, the rule of law and the expressed intent of the Georgian people for closer European integration.
- g. Russia’s systematic interference in Georgia’s democratic processes, particularly through sponsoring the spread of disinformation.

Conference affirms its belief that the people of Georgia retain their fundamental right to self-determination and continue to express their desire for closer relations with Europe in the face of encroaching Russian influence and violent suppression by the authorities.

Conference welcomes steps taken by the UK Government to sanction key officials in the Georgian Government responsible for overseeing the crackdown on civil liberties, including - among others - the General Prosecutor, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Tbilisi Police Department Director.

Conference calls on the UK Government to go further, including by:

1. Sanctioning leading members of the Georgian Dream party - including Bidzina Ivanishvili, its founder and honorary chairman, and his close associates - and Irakli Rukhadze, a co-founder of Hunnewell Partners.
2. Conducting an audit of UK-based assets owned by officials from Georgia and organisations associated with Georgian Dream.
3. Reviewing the UK-Georgia Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.
4. Extending travel bans to all officials at the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Security Service.
5. Supporting the continuing operation of the BBC World Service in Georgia, helping to challenge pervasive Georgian Dream propaganda.
6. Coordinating our sanctions policy with the EU and US, enabling a consistent, robust and unified approach to sanctions implementation.
7. Recognising Salome Zourabichvili as the rightful President of Georgia - a symbol of democratic legitimacy.

## Science, Innovation and Technology

### 1. Securing our Digital Rights

Submitted by

Cheshire East Liberal Democrats

Conference applauds:

- The longstanding commitment of the Liberal Democrats to civil liberties
- The work the Liberal Democrats have done in safeguarding privacy rights
- The Liberal Democrats' 2024 manifesto calling for consultation on digital rights and opposing invasive surveillance powers

Conference believes that:

A) Three laws have serious implications for privacy and data protection for UK citizens and the freedom for UK businesses to innovate.

#### I. Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act 2024

This Act enables the government to issue tech companies with "Technical Capability Notices" which require them to facilitate government interception of communications (i.e. via a "back door").

In addition, the Act forces tech companies and postal operators to help the security services in their investigations. These powers are enacted using:

- Data Retention Notices – requiring them to provide communications data for investigations related to national security, crime, health and economic wellbeing of the nation.
- National Security Notices – requiring them to support government in the interests of national security.
- Notification notices – requiring them to tell the government in advance of any changes they are planning that would be relevant to the Act.

Thus, the Act weakens the protection for UK citizens' data as decided by government and these actions are kept secret from UK citizens. As an example, Apple, in the UK, has responded to a Technical Capability Notice by withdrawing their "Advanced Data Protection" service for new UK users and plans to switch it off for existing users. Without this advanced data protection, UK citizens' personal data is at an increased risk of being accessed by unauthorised third parties.

## II. Public Authorities (Fraud, Error, and Recovery) Act

This Act contains provisions that require high street banks to divulge customers' account and financial data (via Eligibility Verification Notices), to assist government investigations in suspected cases of fraud or error.

The Act also provides for other types of notices to be issued to financial institutions, including:

- Information Notices – requiring banks to provide detailed information about both individual and broad categories of customers' accounts.
- Direct Deduction Orders - authorising public bodies to deduct funds directly from individuals' bank accounts to recover alleged overpayments or debts, often without judicial oversight.

These provisions could disproportionately impact disabled citizens who have made errors through misinterpreting benefit regulations. We're concerned, in particular, with the potential impact on those vulnerable citizens reliant on Direct Payments.

## III. Online Safety Act 2023

This Act aims to protect children and adults from illegal and harmful online content, including child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Provisions include:

- Technology Notices – requiring all companies publishing material on the internet to scan for CSAM and other harmful content using technology accredited by Ofcom, potentially breaking end-to-end encryption.
- Thus, companies may be forced to compromise the privacy and security of encrypted communications, potentially making them vulnerable to cyber-attacks and misuse of user data.

This obligation will be particularly burdensome for small companies who, with limited resources, may be forced to withdraw services affected by the Act.

- Age Verification - which may necessitate intrusive data collection raising concerns regarding privacy.
- Information Notices – requiring tech companies to provide data to regulators upon request, expanding the scope of regulatory oversight.

- Proactive Technology - demanding platforms proactively check and moderate user activity, rather than relying solely on user complaints, which can be resource-intensive and may affect user privacy.

B) These laws may damage citizens' data privacy and security, and constrain tech companies' ability to innovate...

I. Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act – by enabling secret government surveillance of UK citizens' data and government oversight of tech companies' product development.

II. Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act – by requiring banks to allow government access to personal account and financial data

III. Online Safety Act 2023 – by requiring internet service providers to scan their customers' data, compromising privacy and increasing their vulnerability to misuse.

C) These laws need to be reformed to protect citizens' data privacy...

I. Investigatory Powers (Amendment) Act – to introduce safeguards such as independent oversight of the use of Technical Capabilities Notices.

II. Public Authorities (Fraud, Error and Recovery) Act – to ensure that the measures do not unfairly affect vulnerable persons.

III. Online Safety Act 2023 – to ensure that the content scanning is managed better in proportion to the risk of harmful content.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrats' commitment:

A. To defend the Right to Privacy

Defending individuals' right to privacy, opposing intrusive surveillance and supporting strong encryption to ensure personal and financial data remains secure against unwarranted governmental or corporate access.

B. To defend Freedom of Speech

Championing the cause of freedom of speech, recognising it as an essential pillar of a democratic society.

C. To fight against Government Constraints on Innovation

Supporting technology companies' innovation, while preserving user rights and freedoms.

D. To propose and consult on a Digital Rights Bill



To establish a standing commission on digital rights, tasked with providing ongoing independent oversight and expert guidance on the development and protection of digital freedoms.

## Transport Motions

### 1. Driving Forward: Road to Access

Submitted by

Young Liberals

Conference notes that:

- Learning to drive is a vital life skill for many young people, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas where public transport is limited or unreliable. Around one in five people in England live in rural areas, where car dependency is significantly higher and alternatives to driving are often impractical.
- Learning to drive is also especially important for many disabled people, for whom driving can provide greater independence and access to work, education, healthcare, and social opportunities than public transport alone.
- There is a severe and persistent national backlog in practical driving tests. As of 2024, average waiting times at many DVSA test centres exceeded 20 weeks, with waits of six months or more in some areas, compared with pre-pandemic averages of six to eight weeks.
- This backlog is driven by long-term examiner shortages, insufficient test centre capacity, and limited system resilience within the DVSA following the pandemic, despite sustained and predictable demand.
- Scarcity of test slots has enabled exploitation by third-party bots, resellers, and touts, who reserve appointments in bulk and resell them at inflated prices. Learners have reported being charged hundreds of pounds above the official test fee to secure earlier slots.
- The cost of learning to drive has risen substantially. Most learners require 40–50 hours of professional instruction, with average lesson prices exceeding £35 per hour, placing the cost of lessons alone above £1,500, before tests or insurance.
- The cost of car insurance for young drivers remains disproportionately high. Average annual premiums for drivers aged 17–24 have exceeded £2,000, with affordability often made conditional on the use of telematics or black box policies that monitor driving behaviour and location with limited transparency or choice.
- The DVSA practical driving test does not require demonstrated experience of night-time driving, motorway driving, or adverse weather conditions, despite these being common real-world scenarios for new drivers.
- Taken together, these barriers restrict access to employment and education, entrench geographic inequality, and disproportionately disadvantage young people, disabled people, and those without family financial support.

Conference believes that:

- a. Access to transport is a matter of social and economic justice, and no one should be

prevented from learning to drive because of their income, disability, or where they live.

- b. Public transport must be improved and expanded, but driving remains essential to the freedom, mobility, and life chances of many young people, particularly in rural and poorly connected communities.
- c. A fair market cannot function where artificial scarcity is exploited through opaque systems, weak enforcement, or automated intermediaries that profit from public service failure.
- d. Privacy and personal autonomy should be respected, and intrusive monitoring through telematics should not become a de facto requirement for affordable insurance for young drivers.
- e. Improving access to high-quality driver education, fair testing systems, and transparent insurance practices can improve road safety and opportunity without reliance on surveillance.

Conference calls for:

- a. Urgent and sustained investment to expand DVSA testing capacity, including recruiting and retaining additional examiners, expanding test centres in underserved areas, and building resilience to prevent future backlogs.
- b. Targeted action to eliminate exploitation of driving test bookings, including anti-bot protections, identity-linked bookings, limits on automated reservations, and enforcement against third-party reselling.
- c. A national bursary scheme to subsidise driving lessons and test fees for low-income young people and disabled learners.
- d. A formal review and reform of car insurance practices for under-25s, including improved pricing transparency, limits on age-based premium multipliers, and an end to insurers making telematics a condition of affordability.
- e. Clear consumer rights and regulatory oversight for telematics-based insurance, including transparency over data use, proportionality of monitoring, and genuine non-telematics alternatives.
- f. Modernisation of driver training and assessment to ensure learners gain experience of real-world conditions, including night driving, motorway driving, and adverse weather.
- g. Nationwide driver education programmes delivered through schools, colleges, and

community settings, covering road safety, costs, insurance practices, consumer rights, and driver responsibilities.

- h. Allocating 2% of Vehicle Excise Duty revenue to fund the Young Drivers Support Fund.
- i. Reallocating £50 million per year invested in driver education, testing capacity, and access support, recognising that reducing backlogs and improving access will improve road safety and opportunity.
- j. The development of public-private partnerships with insurers, driving schools, and local authorities to support discounted lessons and fair access models, without compromising consumer protection or privacy.

## Business Motions

### 1. Motions rejected by FCC solely due to lack of debating time at Conference

Submitted by

Harrow Borough

Conference notes that 8 policy motions were not debated at Spring Conference in 2025 and 4 policy motions were not debated at Autumn Conference in 2025 due to time constraints.

Conference believes that it should be able to debate all policy motions that FCC has deemed to be fit for debating.

Conference notes that Article 6.3 of the Federal Party Constitution provides for the calling of additional conferences in addition to Spring and Autumn Conferences.

Conference believes that to minimise cost and disruption additional conference sessions should be held online, and suggests the second half of June as a suitable time for this.

Conference calls on FCC to bring forward proposals for an additional special policy conference each year to allow the debate of policy motions for which there was not sufficient time at the preceding Autumn and Spring conferences.

## 2. Diversity, inclusion and representation on Federal Committees

Submitted by

Federal Board

Conference notes with regret:

That the diversity quotas in articles 2.5 and 2.6c of the Federal Constitution – introduced in 2016 to improve the representation of women and LGBT+ members on Federal Committees – had to be suspended for the 2025 Federal Elections, after the party received legal advice from two King's Counsels that applying them would be ruled unlawful by the courts, following the Supreme Court judgment in April 2025.

That the process of suspending those quotas led to the count for Federal Committee elections being delayed by three weeks – a deeply unsatisfactory situation for candidates and all members.

Conference welcomes:

i) The fact that many brilliant women and LGBT+ members have nevertheless been elected to Federal Committees.

Conference resolves:

i) Before the next round of Federal Elections in 2028, the party must ensure that it has clear, lawful rules in place to avoid a repeat of this predicament.

Conference reaffirms:

i) The constitutional principle that all members should have an equal opportunity of participating at every level of the party.

Conference believes:

i) That the party's rules should always be consistent with Liberal Democrat values and principles, as set out in the Federal Constitution and most recently affirmed at Spring Conference 2025 in F9: Free to be Who You Are and at Autumn Conference 2025 in Policy Paper 161: Leading the Way.

Conference therefore calls on the Federal Board to:

1. Conduct a review of diversity, inclusion and representation on Federal Committees (including Federal Council), including:

a. An analysis of the composition of the Federal Committees, and the impact of diversity

quotas on representation since they were introduced in 2016

b. An examination of the barriers to full and equal participation in Federal Committee elections particularly faced by members with protected characteristics

c. Proposals for changes that are needed to remove or reduce barriers that may exist for members with particular protected characteristics on Federal Committees, with the aim of addressing under-representation of those characteristics on Federal Committees

d. Extensive consultation with the Federal People and Development Committee, all relevant Affiliated Organisations, and the party membership.

e. Advice from legal experts on the lawfulness of potential measures to remove or reduce barriers that may exist for members with particular protected characteristics, with the aim of addressing under-representation of those characteristics on Federal Committees

2. Report the findings of its review to Conference in Spring 2027

3. Submit for debate at the same Conference any constitutional amendments that are necessary to implement its recommendations.

## Constitutional Amendments

1. Local Government Matters: A Councillor seat on the FCC

Submitted by ALDC

In Article 11 "The Federal Conference Committee" add under 11.2 "The Conference Committee shall consist of:" new subsection e) and re-order accordingly:

- e. a principal local authority councillor, elected by principal local authority councillors of the Party from among their own number (including, for both purposes, Police and Crime Commissioners and directly elected Mayors)