

Extend the Brexit transition period

It's been four years since the EU referendum and the UK has left the EU.

Liberal Democrats are passionately pro-European and while this is a hard pill to swallow for many of us, the issues now at hand are not about Leave or Remain.

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At a time when the UK could face the biggest economic crisis in hundreds of years, it is unthinkable that the government would rush through a half-heated deal, or worse get no deal at all.

Food shortages, medicine shortages, and an unprecedented hit to jobs and livelihoods: that is what the UK is facing if we crash out of the EU without a deal.

That's why today, on the anniversary of the EU Referendum, we are calling on the government to ensure the UK does not crash out of the transition period without a deal.

It is vital the government extend the transition period. With a week to go for them to do so, there is still time.

Whilst the PM opposes extending the transition period, he must at least be honest about what this means for our country.

Whilst the prime minister continues to oppose extending the transition period, he must at least be honest about what this means for our country.

Liberal Democrats are also urging Boris Johnson to provide assessments as to the impact of a no-deal Brexit at the end of the year, and to ensure Parliament has proper scrutiny over the decision.

The government must put the national interest first.

We are urging Boris Johnson to provide assessments as to the impact of crashing out of the European Union without a deal, and to ensure Parliament has proper scrutiny over the decision.<https://t.co/wrXUwtqGAa>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 23, 2020](#)

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Windrush Day 2020

Seventy-two years ago today, HMS Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury. Its arrival marked a significant moment in British History. Many of the passengers on-board came from the Caribbean, by invitation, to support the reconstruction of our country. **Their hard work and skills would later bolster the economy, fill labour shortages and help establish our National Health Service.**

These brave men and women arrived on our shores hopeful, but they were not met with open arms

I came to Britain from Trinidad in 1960 when I was 10 years old and saw first-hand the sacrifices, hardships and challenges faced by the people who responded to that invitation. Those brave men and women arrived on our shores hopeful, but they were not met with open arms. Many encountered racism, discrimination, and rejection. Yet, they persevered. Children like myself also often had to face adversity and hostility on a daily basis, at school and on the streets. Some of those children are now embroiled and caught up in the Windrush Scandal. **They are being asked after 50 years of being in Britain, to prove they have a right to live in this country, a place they have spent all their lives and call home.** I too could have so easily been one of these victims had I not arrived here on my own passport.

The Windrush Scandal openly exposed deep-rooted failings in the Home Office and laid bare the injustices faced by the people who helped to make Britain the success it is today. This was recently portrayed so emotionally in the BBC drama 'Sitting in Limbo'.

But the scandal isn't over. Many people are still dealing with the consequences of lost jobs, home evictions and wrongful deportations. And although it's been a year since the Windrush Compensation Scheme was launched, only a handful people out of over a thousand applicants have received payments. This is shameful and simply unacceptable.

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The last few weeks have once again exposed deep-seated racial inequalities. The disproportionate number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people dying in this pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, are a sharp reminder of the

systemic and institutional discrimination in our society today.

I am the Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee, charged with commissioning a Windrush Monument to celebrate the major contribution the Windrush Generation has made to Britain. This will be unveiled to commemorate Windrush in 2022.

Meanwhile on this Windrush Day, we honour the outstanding economic, social, and cultural influence of the Windrush Generation. As we honour their legacy, let us also vow to never become complacent in standing up to bigotry, hate and injustice. Let us strengthen our commitment to build a new Britain that is fair and just for everyone, without exception. What a wonderful legacy that would be for our children and future generations.

Baroness Floella Benjamin, DBE is Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee

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Compassion and dignity for seekers of sanctuary

World Refugee Day is an important reminder that we must do all we can to protect people forced to flee their homes to escape war and persecution.

People who've come to the UK having fled war or persecution should be welcomed with compassion and enabled to contribute to our society.

The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but now the Conservative Government is turning its back on refugees and failing to live up to our obligations to them.

The Government has closed the Dubs scheme for child refugees and is ending the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, but hasn't announced details of what will replace them.

In the Brexit negotiations, the Government is seeking to end the UK's mandatory obligation to reunite unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with their families. Unlike every EU country except Denmark, the UK does not allow unaccompanied child refugees to sponsor family members to join them.

Thousands of asylum seekers are forced to wait many months for a decision,

unable to work, rent a home or support their families.

Asylum seekers are forced to rely on just £5.39 a day. The Government has announced that it will raise it by a miserly 26p a day – not nearly enough, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

Too many people are wrongly denied asylum, with 40% of refusals overturned on appeal. LGBT+ applicants face particular hostility, with far too many denied asylum because officials assume that they are lying about who they are.

The government must not turn its back on the children who need us now. 🇬🇧 [#RefugeeWeek](https://t.co/yXvxazl2kG)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 16, 2020](#)

People who've come to the UK having fled war or persecution should be welcomed with compassion and enabled to contribute to our society, not met with disbelief or trapped in poverty.

That's why Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to:

- Set out a new long-term commitment to continue providing sanctuary to vulnerable refugees in the UK, including resettling 10,000 refugee children from elsewhere in Europe over the next 10 years.
- Guarantee continued rights for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe to be reunited with family members in the UK.
- Support Liberal Democrat peer Sally Hamwee's Bill to expand family reunion rights so that unaccompanied child refugees in the UK can sponsor close family members to join them.
- Give asylum seekers the right to work three months after they have applied, enabling them to work in any role so that they can support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute through taxation.
- Give asylum seekers an extra £20 a week in asylum support during the coronavirus crisis, in line with the emergency increase in Universal Credit.
- Move asylum policymaking out of the discredited Home Office and into the Department for International Development, and establish a dedicated unit to improve the speed and quality of asylum decision-making.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identification, end the culture of disbelief for LGBT+ asylum seekers and never refuse an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.

The government must not turn its back on those who need us now. Liberal Democrats will keep fighting to protect refugees.

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Introducing our online conference!

One of the defining features of the Liberal Democrats is that we have a democratic conference with one member, one vote. We discuss and debate policy together and party officers and Parliamentarians are held to account.

In these extraordinary times, however, we are having to change the way we work as a party.

Conference will take place from 25th to 28th September

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has meant that we have had to cancel our physical conferences for Spring and Autumn 2020. That does not mean, however, that we have to suspend our internal democracy.

To that end, **Autumn Conference will be taking place online this Autumn**. We will have the same sort of sessions that we usually have and we hope to replicate as much of the conference experience as possible.

Conference will take place from 25th to 28th September. The exact timings will be confirmed once the Conference Committee has selected the agenda in mid-July.

We are delighted to have partnered with Hopin, a professional conferencing platform, to bring you our Autumn Conference. [You can find out more about Hopin and how the online conference will look here](#). In order to access conference, you will need a computer, smart phone, or tablet. **That's all**.

This video describes a generic Hopin event. For our Federal Conference, Hopin will be customised. You will see the usual party logo and colours, the terminology will be familiar because we will be using the terms, 'fringe', 'training', 'auditorium' and 'exhibition' to describe the different parts of our conference. We have highlighted this video because we thought you would like an introduction to Hopin as early as possible. We will be running other training events to get you used to the system as conference approaches.

Hopin will recreate our auditorium virtually and it has a voting system that will allow us to hold the debates that we are used to.

Submit a motion for conference here: libdems.org.uk/submit-motions

There will be a virtual exhibition as well as training and fringe meetings.

We are presently calling for motions for conference. You can submit a motion in the usual way here: www.libdems.org.uk/submit-motions. The deadline is the same announced before, 1pm, 1st July 2020.

We are working hard to make sure that registration opens in the coming weeks.

We will also be taking bookings for virtual fringe meetings and exhibition stalls. If you would like to discuss that, please contact Wilma Robinson: Wilma.robinson@libdems.org.uk for commercial and charity bookings or Isabelle Pucher: Isabelle.pucher@libdems.org.uk for party bodies.

We are really excited about conference. This will be a new way to meet, debate and engage with each other. We hope to see you (virtually) in September!

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The Prime Minister must think again on abolishing UK Aid.

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced that the Foreign Office and Department for International Development are set to merge.

By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone.

The Liberal Democrats have always made absolutely clear our unequivocal support for Britain's role as a world leader in providing aid to those most in need.

UK aid prevents suffering. By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone.

It was the Liberal Democrats who enshrined the 0.7% aid commitment into UK law. This is a commitment the UK should be proud to uphold.

Yet Boris Johnson's decision threatens to undermine that commitment, and with it our global influence.

By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone. – [@Wera_Hobhouse](#)

The government must rethink scrapping DFID. ↓
pic.twitter.com/X77u1VurZt

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 16, 2020](#)

It is no surprise three former Prime Ministers have condemned this move.

Boris Johnson has wanted to use the 0.7% for international aid for his own political projects ever since entering government.

This decision shows the extent of the Prime Minister's determination to see the UK turn its back on the world. The Prime Minister should think again.

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