

Hear from Christine Jardine

Waiting for the outcome of the nomination count for Party President felt a wee bit like that scene from The Big Bang Theory where Sheldon explains about Schrodinger's Cat.

You know, where as long as the box is closed the cat is both dead and alive?

The relief when the cat was actually alive, and I was nominated, was huge!

Now of course is when the work really starts in listening to what you want from your new President, and whether I fit the bill.

Over the past few years I've had a chance to see the role of President close up. I have no illusions about how much work is involved, or what it will take to continue to build the wide movement we all want.

But I also know how important it is that the membership has a strong, clear, effective voice. A president who speaks for the members, but more importantly, one who listens to what they want and communicates that to the leadership.

We have a fantastic team at HQ with so many bright, capable people working to fulfil our vision for the party whether it's in campaigns, fundraising, policy or the press team.

I see the President's role there as facilitating what they do.

Not directing the operation, after all they are the ones with the expertise, but supporting and making sure that they have what they need from the party infrastructure.

The new chief executive will run the party day to day. I would be there to oversee.

Most of all I see the President as the link between the members, the staff, the parliamentarians and the public.

Communication is the key, both within the party and to the outside world.

If we are going to build a grassroots movement, we have to reach the voters and convince them that we have something to offer.

We have to create a movement, with a goal and an image that they believe in and want to be part of.

In the third decade of the 21st Century that will mean mass communication on TV, radio and online.

As president I think I will have the skills and the platform to convey our

message there.

As the party grows we will increasingly be talking about a national message.

Talking to the country with one voice, as well as to our individual constituencies, both geographic and social.

We have to use that national exposure to add a new string to our bow. Or rather, return to a string we played well in the past.

There will always be an important role for our hugely successful door to door grassroots campaigning and delivering.

But in a General Election we can reach so many more people with an effective social media, TV and radio presence.

Take an average nightly regional or national new programme like Reporting Scotland. Six hundred thousand people watch it every night.

When I worked there, Jim Wallace and Charles Kennedy, who was President at the time, were on constantly. We won 15 seats in the Scottish Parliament and had 11 MPs in Scotland because the public heard what we had to say in an effective media message.

And it wasn't just in Scotland; it worked across the country when Simon was President, they used their existing platform and built a bigger profile as President.

That's what I want to do.

But as well as having a message, we have to make it an attractive proposition to be a member. We need to encourage the people who don't just want to do something good and make a contribution.

We need to convince people to see us as a long-term investment and something to be part of and get something from.

It's not just about a quick vote and move on. I want people to put down roots in this party.

I want to make them feel welcome. Make it clear that as members they have a President who will listen to what they say and make sure it gets to the people who need to hear it.

I want to be a President who listens and then gets it done.

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Heidi Allen: Why I joined the Liberal Democrats

When I became an MP in 2015, I could never have imagined we would find ourselves in this position. Through the prudent and practical decisions taken during the coalition years, the economy was recovering and our country was on the up.

Coming from business, joining the Conservative Party seemed the logical thing to do. But two general elections and an EU referendum later, the landscape has shifted beyond all recognition.

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Heidi Allen joins the Liberal Democrats

I am delighted to announce that Heidi Allen has joined the Liberal Democrats.

I'm delighted to welcome Heidi to the party. She has been a tireless campaigner for a people's vote and has time and time again put the country's interests ahead of her own.

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