

# Why Brighton conference should be in your diary

It's thirty years since my first autumn federal conference, appropriately also in Brighton. That 1992 conference was the start of the most successful electoral run in our party's history – record-breaking Parliamentary by-election wins, sweeping local government gains and then a huge leap in the size of the Parliamentary Party as a tired, discredited, scandal-riven Conservative Party lost office.

As part of that run of success, two years later, we were back in Brighton again, as you may have seen from the recently rediscovered BBC footage of a younger version of me (more curls, larger glasses but the same green top that I still have – and can fit into) leafleting alongside one Liz Truss.

Repeating that previous success is our challenge in the next few years – and we've already made a tremendous start with our election wins last year and this. Huge thanks are due to all our candidates, agents and helpers for their hard work in making that happen – and to their families and colleagues for tolerating their absences on the campaign trail.

An important part of that success in the 1990s was our party conferences, providing such a great opportunity for us to learn new skills, to set our policy and strategy and to be energised by meeting colleagues from all around the country, and overseas too.

I can't guarantee that if you come to our Brighton conference this September you will also get to campaign with a future Conservative Party leader. But I can guarantee that you'll find an excellent conference agenda – both the formal agenda in the main hall of speeches and debates, and the training and fringe meetings that happen alongside it.

This time around we have an advantage – the ability to bring in an even wider range of participants through online access to conference. It's a huge credit to our conference committee that our return to an in-person conference is being accompanied by a new option for online access.

Enabling those who cannot afford the time or costs of an in-person conference to still access the event is an important part of making our aspirations on diversity and our commitment to internal democracy meaningful.

This time's agenda includes debates on Britain's future relations with the European Union, our pre-manifesto policy overview, action on climate change, the future of our nuclear deterrent and more. Keynote speakers include Kira Rudik, from one of our sister parties in Ukraine, and there will also be a chance for any party member to question Ed Davey in our Leader Q+A session.

More [details are on the conference website](#), where you can also [register to attend](#).

Whether in person or online, I look forward to seeing you at conference, hearing your views and taking part in our debates. Please don't hesitate to grab me for any questions you have, or drop me an email on [president@libdems.org.uk](mailto:president@libdems.org.uk).

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## [Federal Elections 2022 – get involved!](#)

Serving on a committee is one of many great ways you can support the Party, and we are always keen to encourage new talent. The Party website has lots of information in [the internal-elections hub](#).

We have upcoming Federal elections for:

- The [Federal President](#)
- The [Federal Vice President](#) responsible for working with ethnic minority Communities
- 3 members of the [Federal Board](#) (note the reforms to the structure of the Board [summarised here](#))
- 21 members of [Federal Council](#)
- 15 members of [Federal Policy Committee](#)
- 12 members of [Federal Conference Committee](#)
- 6 members of the Federal [International relations Committee](#)
- 10 Delegates to the [Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe](#)

The rules for the election can be found at the end of the Federal Constitution, [you can read them by clicking here](#).

The Returning Officer has produced regulations and guidelines for candidates and their campaigns. Candidates must read the rules, regulations and guidelines.

- [Regulations and guidelines for the Presidential election](#)
- [Regulations and guidelines for the Vice Presidential election](#)
- [Regulations and guidelines for the Committee and ALDE election](#)

The Returning Officer will be requiring candidates to answer a few, set questions in their application. Answers to these questions will be displayed for voters. **If you would like to feedback on, or suggest, questions for candidates [you can do so by clicking here](#).**

### **Postal voting**

An important update made by Conference to our election regulations is a

change to postal voting.

We will be issuing ballots to members by email. If you usually receive a postal ballot, or have opted out of emails from us, **you will need to specifically request a postal ballot or update your preferences so that we can email you a ballot.** This change is a big step forward in meeting our green goals, also set by Conference.

If you want a postal ballot please [use this typeform by clicking here](#) or to update your email preferences contact [help@libdems.org.uk](mailto:help@libdems.org.uk).

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## [Removing the Conservatives from power](#)

*With our Brighton conference approaching ([agenda and registration here](#)), I've recently written the latest report back to conference on the Board's work. Here is a slightly expanded and updated version of that report.*

### **The next general election**

With a new Conservative Party leader nearly upon us, the range of plausible **dates for the general election is wide open.** As it now may well be much sooner than seemed likely at the time of our last conference, the Federal Board has been reviewing our general election plans.

**Preparations are being stepped up across the party.** The pre-manifesto document being debated at conference is an important part of that as is **Ed Davey's announcement of a major new package to help people with their fuel bills this winter – [axing the planned increase in the fuel bill cap and providing extra help to those most in need.](#)**

This all makes now an even more important time for us all to be out on the doorsteps, recruiting new members and campaign helpers. There's been a clear pattern in our recent electoral successes at all levels that building up campaign organisations well in advance of the formal election campaign is a central element to success.

A [Membership Incentive Scheme](#) is in place, with **generous additional payments to local parties who recruit or renew party members locally**, especially if it is done on direct debit.

Thanks in particular to our wonderful three Parliamentary by-election wins in the last year, when that general election comes, we'll be a key part of the route to removing the Conservatives from government in Westminster.

That makes the Parliamentary seats in the (variously and flexibility defined) Blue Wall an increasingly important focus for us as the next general election polling day nears. But the majority of our councillors, our members and our voters are outside the Blue Wall.

So it's not only the target seats for the next Westminster election we need to prosper at. We also **need to be winning at other levels of election more broadly**. We need to continue the sort of breadth in our recovery we saw in May's local elections – amazing progress against the Conservatives in the Blue Wall and continuing recovery elsewhere, including up against Labour and the nationalists. Both of these tracks need to be successful for us to be a growing, national party.

That's why the Board has continued to prioritise investment in the breadth of our campaigns officers network, supporting not only Parliamentary target seats but also progress in other areas too. Thank you to all the other parts of the party who have cooperated on this, giving us a much larger network of staff supporting grassroots campaigning than we had before.

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## [Scrap the energy price hike](#)

We need bold and urgent action to help families pay their bills and heat their homes this winter. There is no other choice.

Families and pensioners across the country are in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis. We have already seen energy bills rise by £700 this year. They simply cannot afford another, even bigger rise of £1,400 in October.

**This is an emergency, and the Government must step in now to save families and pensioners £1,400 by cancelling the planned rise in energy bills this October.**

We need a bold plan to spare families from soaring energy bills.

The Liberal Democrat plan is to cancel the 70% increase in the energy price cap expected to be announced by Ofgem later this month. The Government would instead pay the shortfall to energy suppliers so that they can afford to supply customers at the current rates.

'I think we could be heading for a social catastrophe.'

Leader of the Liberal Democrats Sir [@EdwardJDavey](#) is calling on the government to cover the cost of the energy price rise in October.

He is asked where the money to cover the cost will come from.  
[pic.twitter.com/NuKI1B8GEq](https://pic.twitter.com/NuKI1B8GEq)

– Good Morning Britain (@GMB) [August 9, 2022](#)

The estimated £36 billion cost should be met by **expanding the windfall tax on oil and gas company profits**, and using the Government's higher-than-expected VAT revenues as a result of soaring inflation.

A proper Windfall Tax could raise around £20 billion to help keep people's energy bills from rising in October. **Fossil fuel giants have seen their profits soar**. BP and Shell made £29 billion in profits in the first six months of the year alone.

We are also calling for more targeted support for vulnerable and low income households. This would include **doubling the Warm Homes Discount to £300 and extending it to all those on Universal Credit and Pension Credit**, while investing in insulating fuel poor homes to bring prices down in the long term.

The contest to be leader of the Conservative Party might as well be happening in a parallel universe. Neither candidate has any idea how to help families and pensioners through what could be the toughest winter in decades.

**We need a bold plan to spare families from soaring energy bills.**

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## [Federal Communications and Elections Committee July report](#)

### **General Election preparedness**

As is our key focus, in our last meeting we continued to discuss our General Election preparedness and planning.

In summary, our plan builds on what worked in the 2019 general election (and previous plans), changes what didn't work, and looks to the future for new ideas and approaches.

The plan is a live document and progress is being made in all the areas, with

a relentless focus on ensuring that we can deliver **gains at the next General Election: whenever it may be.**

## **Westminster Candidates review**

The Committee previously commissioned a review into our Westminster candidate selections. We felt strongly that the **recent round of selections have been too slow and cumbersome. Change is desperately needed.**

We are **thankful to Alison Suttie and Tim Farron** for their comprehensive review, the thirty interviewees and more than 50 others who provided input in writing. The review points to **a roadmap for a more efficient future process.**

Candidate selection is a State matter, and we are also thankful to the States for their engagement with the review. We **look forward to taking this work forward as a team.** The final version of the report will now go to the Joint Candidates Sub-Committee, the appropriate body for cross-state candidate discussions.

We must not be this delayed again.

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