

[‘The Battle for Liberal Britain’ – Available now](#)

Around the world, populism and nationalism are on the rise. There is a battle for Liberal Britain and to win it, Liberal Democrats must offer a clear vision for the future of our country.

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Author:

[We can't turn our back on those fleeing Ukraine.](#)

These are families desperately fleeing war with their children. Let them in.

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[Rebuilding Trade and Cooperation with Europe](#)

Hardly a week goes by without some new evidence of the damage done by Brexit to the British economy. From rising food prices, to empty supermarket shelves, to shortages of HGV drivers and of staff in the healthcare, farming and hospitality sectors, to musicians being unable to perform abroad, to British firms, farmers and fishers facing such higher charges and bureaucracy that they give up exporting their products altogether, to scientists losing chances of collaborative projects, Brexit is affecting more and more parts of everyday life. The coronavirus pandemic has caused the biggest shock to the British economy since the war, but, as the independent Office for Budget Responsibility has predicted, the impact of Brexit will be twice as large – and, unlike the pandemic, it will not stop.

The damage is not only to the economy. Brexit has removed British citizens' opportunities to work, to be together with their loved ones, to study and

retire anywhere in the EU. Britain now has less clout in international negotiations, whether on climate change or biodiversity or trade. The existence of the UK itself is now under threat, as Brexit has weakened the arguments for Scotland and Northern Ireland – which both voted to Remain – to stay part of the union. The slogan ‘take back control’ was a lie; in reality Britain now exercises less control over the forces that determine its future than it did inside the EU.

Increasingly the electorate shares our view that Brexit is damaging Britain, and recognises that a new approach would bring benefits. The Liberal Democrat position, as agreed by conference in autumn 2020 and spring 2021, is to back the ultimate goal of the UK joining the EU once more. But support for a campaign to join the EU as soon as possible is by no means certain, and has no guarantee of success. In any case, there is no indication that the EU would want the UK back, in its current state; the Conservatives have gone out of their way to turn down offers of cooperation, to destroy the trust that is necessary to effective international relations and to diverge as much as possible from European standards and systems. The EU no longer sees Britain as a good neighbour, and it will take time to convince EU member states that the UK is serious about forging stronger links and rebuilding the relationship.

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[What Liberal Democrats believe](#)

Our principles and values

‘The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.’

These words, from the preamble to [the Liberal Democrat party constitution](#), are written on every party member’s membership card. They are the best short description of the party’s principles and values – its philosophy. But clearly, they need expanding and explaining, particularly given that so much in Britain and the world has changed so radically in recent years.

We believe the party’s core values can be described as liberty, equality, democracy, community, internationalism and environmentalism.

Liberty

Liberal Democrats trust individuals to make their own decisions about how

they live their lives, as long as they do not cause harm to others; no one else has the right to do this for them. We are optimistic about what individuals can achieve when not held back by the barriers of poverty, poor health, lack of access to education or inequality. Our predecessors in the Liberal Party had a proud record, stretching over centuries, of removing barriers to freedom erected on the basis of religion, belief, gender, sexuality or disability, and we will always defend the legal framework of human rights and civil liberties that protect individual freedoms.

An open, diverse and tolerant society is a good society. Being liberal necessitates being open-minded, and understanding that there will always be a range of different views on most issues. We embrace freedom of thought and speech, and argue for stronger protection against those who abuse free speech, use it to promote division and hatred, or spread falsehoods and 'fake news'.

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Knock on more doors

Our major item of business was a **detailed discussion with Ed Davey about our messaging.**

'Partygate' is currently on the minds of the public and how we discuss decency in politics with voters was a topic of discussion. It is **sadly unsurprising that since our meeting, indecent rhetoric from our Prime Minister should be centre stage.**

That said, as a campaigning force we must not allow Prime Minister Johnson (PM at time of writing at least) to determine our message, and we must remember that **the public want a positive voice as well as a critical one.**

In the coming months, especially with **May local elections in mind**, we need to be **knocking on more doors** and talking about the **cost-of-living crisis, education, health and care, the environment (not just climate change) and the economy.**

Our thanks for the hard work of the Federal Policy Committee to make sure we have credible, progressive, costed policies to take to the public. We will continue to discuss with, and where necessary challenge, Ed his approach to our messaging.

North Shropshire

We are incredibly thankful to everyone who made North Shropshire possible.

Two by-election victories in one year is an incredible feat, and I think we have all noticed a shift in public and media perceptions of what we are capable of. We must continue to be bold, and be [creative with our imagery](#).

The Committee received useful briefings on our approach to and lessons learned from North Shropshire. We are running better coordinated, vibrant campaigns but there is still work to do. As ever, **we won because we worked hard** as well as clever. **Winning in May and beyond will require more effort across the board.**

We are **grateful to all the members who have kicked off January with our largest ever doorstepping campaign**, and we look forward to seeing more colleagues joining them in February.

In North Shropshire there had been **strong slates of local candidates and successful local government advances that enabled us to establish ourselves as the only opposition**. It is important that we all learn from this example.

Candidate selections

We exist to fight and win elections to get more Liberal Democrats elected and change the country. To do that, we need candidates.

In our latest meeting we edited and agreed, having **consulted with the State Candidate Chairs**, Terms of Reference for a **review into our candidates process**: from attracting talent, to approval, to selection. This will be **helmed by Tim Farron and Baroness (Alison) Suttie**.

We look forward to the report and its holistic approach to matching our needs and resources.

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