

[Ed Davey responds to Philip Davies](#)

Conservative MP Philip Davies has started taking a surprising interest in the Liberal Democrats' commitment to an equal parliament, and our internal selection procedures.

Perhaps he has decided to turn his back on his sexist views, or perhaps he has a different motive.

Read Philip Davies' letter to Ed Davey, and Ed's reply:

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[Another step towards scrapping the Vagrancy Act](#)

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[Join us for an EU Policy Consultation](#)

In collaboration with the Liberal Democrat European Group, the Federal Policy Committee are organising regional events giving members a chance to shape our policy on Europe. We want to hear your thoughts on what our priority areas should be, what solutions you might have to problems raised and how we can continue to promote a close relationship with Europe.

Members and Supporters all get the opportunity to help make party policy

Below is a list of topics we will be discussing. Come to our Liberal Democrat European Group consultations to have your say!

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The new political season

The autumn party conferences traditionally mark the start of the new political season. They are a time to reflect on the past year and set out plans to succeed in the coming year.

Both politics and coronavirus have made it a tough time since the last round of conferences. But we can look forward to this new political season with confidence that if we continue to raise our game, we can prosper. We've seen signs of that already, including with Sarah Green's fantastic win in Chesham and Amersham and also with the latest net favourability leadership polling from Savanta ComRes:

- Keir Starmer: net -8
- Boris Johnson: net -7
- Ed Davey: net +1

To achieve success in the run of elections to come, we will need to think big. We need to **convince wavering Tories, Labour and nationalist voters** that backing us isn't solely a protest. It's also a vote for something positive. The antidote to the strains of the present is a liberal future. So we must **paint a picture of the society we want to build**, rather than merely the society we want to prevent.

We've made a good start on that with the debates, motions and speeches at our autumn Federal Conference. There will be more to come in the next few months too from the federal party, as we develop the **emphasis on a fair deal that was at the heart of [Ed Davey's speech](#)**. (Plans for next year's conference **[have been announced by conference committee chair](#)**, Nick Da Costa.)

Congratulations to...

Our conference closed with the party awards. We now run these twice a year in recognition of how important it is for us to thank and be inspired by our colleagues. You can **read all about this time's winners** – including a lovely family connection for one award – [here](#).

We've also started **[sending out 'top canvasser' pin badges](#)** to thank those who contribute, either on the doorsteps or on the phone, to one of the most important election-winning tasks. Each quarter we're also inviting those who have canvassed the most to a special call with Ed Davey, our Director of Campaigns Dave McCobb and others so that what people are hearing on the ground gets fed directly in. This is to make sure we never repeat the 2019 campaign mistake of people on the ground knowing a message isn't working, and it taking too long to change it from the centre.

I'm keen that we continue to look for other ways to recognise people who contribute so much to the party. We've **made changes to the party awards to recognise a wider range of contributions** but I'm sure we can do more. [Ideas very welcome](#).

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[**Conference in 2022**](#)

The Federal Conference Committee recently met to discuss the Conference format for 2022.

We considered a number of options for next year's conferences and **took the difficult decision to hold Spring Conference as an online conference and only returning to an in-person event for Autumn Conference**. The dates of **Spring Conference will be 11-13 March 2022** and we will announce the dates and venue for Autumn Conference in due course.

The Committee discussed several options with regards to the format of Spring Conference and, whilst there was a strong desire within the Committee to return to in person meetings and events as soon as possible, our challenge was that the COVID situation remains uncertain and therefore still causes significant concern. While we are seeing more in person events happening, we have also seen the Welsh Labour conference in November cancelled due to COVID concerns.

If we had taken the decision to hold an in person Spring Conference, this would have taken place in York – a venue which we usually operate at full capacity. Enforcing social distancing and COVID measures would therefore have been extremely difficult with the potential number of attendees. Furthermore, the danger that a large number of people may not have felt safe attending a crowded in person event meant there was a significant risk of a drop in the number of members attending Conference.

As a party we are very reliant on revenue from registrations to make Spring Conference financially viable. The risk of a significant shortfall in revenue, coupled with the potential loss had we been forced to cancel the event at a later date, meant the committee had to take the very hard decision to continue with an online conference format for Spring 2022.

That said, the **Committee strongly felt that this should be the final online-only conference**, if at all possible. For that reason, the Committee **strongly endorsed holding an Autumn Conference in person next year**.

We have also **established a Hybrid Working Group to look at the options for**

hybridisation of Conference and to take forward some of the better elements from an online conference, including greater accessibility and wider participation for people who would not normally be able to attend conference. While we were not confident this could be implemented in time for Spring Conference, **we are committed to finding a solution which works for Autumn Conference 2022 and beyond.**

Finally, **we strongly welcome any local or regional parties who might be interested in organising in-person events in their areas to coincide with Spring Conference.** There were a number of successful in-person events which took place on the fringe of this year's Autumn Conference and the Committee would welcome this being replicated and expanded for Spring Conference 2022.

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