

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron resigns

This afternoon Tim Farron resigned as Liberal Democrat leader.

At party HQ in London he gave the following speech to party staff:

“This last two years have seen the Liberal Democrats recover since the devastation of the 2015 election.

That recovery was never inevitable but we have seen the doubling of our party membership, growth in council elections, our first parliamentary by-election win for more than a decade, and most recently our growth at the 2017 general election.

Most importantly the Liberal Democrats have established ourselves with a significant and distinctive role – passionate about Europe, free trade, strong well-funded public services underpinned by a growing market economy.

No one else occupies that space. Against all the odds, the Liberal Democrats matter again.

We can be proud of the progress we have made together, although there is much more we need to do.

From the very first day of my leadership, I have faced questions about my Christian faith. I’ve tried to answer with grace and patience. Sometimes my answers could have been wiser.

At the start of this election, I found myself under scrutiny again – asked about matters to do with my faith. I felt guilty that this focus was distracting attention from our campaign, obscuring our message.

Journalists have every right to ask what they see fit. The consequences of the focus on my faith is that I have found myself torn between living as a faithful Christian and serving as a political leader.

A better, wiser person than me may have been able to deal with this more successfully, to have remained faithful to Christ while leading a political party in the current environment.

To be a political leader – especially of a progressive, liberal party in 2017 – and to live as a committed Christian, to hold faithfully to the Bible’s teaching, has felt impossible for me.

I’m a liberal to my finger tips, and that liberalism means that I am passionate about defending the rights and liberties of people who believe different things to me.

There are Christians in politics who take the view that they should impose

the tenets of faith on society, but I have not taken that approach because I disagree with it – it's not liberal and it is counterproductive when it comes to advancing the gospel.

Even so, I seem to be the subject of suspicion because of what I believe and who my faith is in.

In which case we are kidding ourselves if we think we yet live in a tolerant, liberal society.

That's why I have chosen to step down as leader of the Liberal Democrats."

[Review into support for Publishing and Literature in Wales](#)

The wide ranging review, which was commissioned by Ken Skates in September 2015, and Chaired by Professor Medwin Hughes considered the main aims of the Welsh Government in supporting publishing and literature in Wales, and looked at whether these aims remain fit for the 21st Century.

The review also considered the current support for publishing and literature in Wales, the relationships between those bodies responsible for delivering it, the impact of digital developments on the publishing industry and the administration arrangements for the Welsh Government's support of a Welsh language, daily online news service.

Speaking in the Senedd, the Economy Secretary welcomed the contribution of partner organisations and the public into the review and said it demonstrated the importance that was attached to Wales' rich literary tradition and vibrant publishing industry.

Ken Skates said:

"I have now received the report of the independent review into Welsh Government support for publishing and literature in Wales which summarises the range of evidence that was received from key partner organisations, the industry and the public.

"The panel recognised significant good practice and effective support for publishing and literature that should be continued and built upon for the future.

"It identified areas where support needs to evolve to meet the changing needs of the digital age, and it also found clear evidence of real problems in some areas, related to strategic planning, priority setting, governance, risk management, spending

and in ensuring that activities are effective in delivering the outcomes we need.

“The report that I am publishing today sets out a series of recommendations. Some of these are for the Welsh Government, others are for the industry and the key delivery organisations.

“Given the significant weight and compelling nature of the evidence received, I am minded to accept the main recommendations and the Welsh Government will now work with the relevant organisations to implement them.”

In its report the panel makes a strong case for the Welsh Government to continue to provide appropriate financial support for Wales’ bi-lingual literary tradition, so it can enable it to thrive in the 21st century, ensure its global reach and support access and participation across Wales.

It makes the case for a strong, innovative publishing industry that provides high-quality jobs, competes internationally and allows professional writers of all backgrounds to develop career pathways in Wales.

The report includes a series of recommendations which the Welsh Government will respond formally to in due course.

One recommendation is that the Welsh Government should seek agreement from the Welsh Books Council to take on some of Literature Wales’ current functions, including Book of the Year (aiming to increase its commercial impact), bursaries, literary events and Writers on Tour and provision for children and young people.

The Economy Secretary added:

“Some of these recommended changes are extensive but they are in response to specific needs in a specific area of activity. They are in no way a reflection of the wider good work of the Arts Council or Literature Wales including the excellent delivery of major events and activities linked to our themed years, which will remain unchanged.

“I am persuaded that these steps are needed to create a support structure for publishing and literature which is more effective and fit for the future.

Press release: Brokenshire: NI public voted for strong voice at Stormont

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

The Prime Minister and I will meet the five main Northern Ireland political parties in Downing Street tomorrow to build on the political discussions that restarted on Monday in Belfast.

The UK government is offering whatever support we can, working alongside the Irish government, as appropriate, honouring our respective commitments in the Belfast Agreement to serve the interests of the whole community in Northern Ireland.

There is very little time left. An agreement to restore devolved power-sharing government in Stormont must be reached by the 29 June deadline.

Ultimately, I think the parties understand people voted in the March Assembly elections for a strong voice at Stormont. Northern Ireland's political leaders now have it in their hands to take control and shape a brighter future for everyone in Northern Ireland.

Ending freedom of movement could result in 'meltdown' of health care, warns MEP



14 June 2017

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West, has said Conservative and Labour plans to end free movement will leave the country struggling to fill places in the NHS and care sectors. Recent [analysis by the GMB](#) shows that the number of EU nationals working in health and social care has increased by 72%

in the last eight years and there are now 209,000 EU nationals working in the sector – up from just 121,000 in 2009.

EU nationals now make up more than five per cent of the entire health and social care workforce – including one in ten care home staff. The latest report comes hot on the heels of a leaked Department of Health [study](#) revealed that ending freedom of movement and clamping down on immigration would leave the NHS short of 40,000 nurses by 2026. A Freedom of Information request by Heart Radio further reveals the extent to which NHS Trusts in Devon and Cornwall are dependent on overseas nurses [1].

Molly Scott Cato said:

“The catalogue of evidence should be a wake-up call to the Tories and Labour who both want to end free movement. The GMB has called for an urgent post-Brexit plan for when free movement ends. But the surest way to guarantee our hospitals and care services are adequately staffed is to immediately grant rights for all EU nationals living in the UK to remain here, and to continue to allow freedom of movement. Greens are unequivocal on this – we will continue to defend free movement.

“While we should acknowledge perceptions around immigration were key to influencing the outcome of the EU referendum last year, people did not vote to see their hospitals and care services go into meltdown over a staffing crisis. If we are to keep our health and social care services functioning properly we will continue to rely on people of all nationalities coming to work in the UK.

“Where there are problems associated with free movement in the EU – with some countries experiencing skills shortages due to the emigration of workers – these should be addressed collectively by all EU countries, working on solutions together. What is clear is that one country shutting the doors on everyone else is a self-defeating policy when it comes to addressing the differing needs of different countries in Europe.”

Notes:

1. **FOI request by Heart Radio reveals** (provided by Carrian Jones of Heart Radio: Carrian.Jones@heart.co.uk Further information on request)

Cornwall Partnership: 22 nurses from the EU, 6 non-EU

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust: 48 registered nurses and 30 healthcare support workers of non-British nationality. The Trust currently has nurse vacancies of 194.16 FTE (registered nurses) and 116.24 FTE (healthcare support workers).

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust: 116 nurses from overseas, 77 from EU countries

Other NHS Trusts did not respond or said they did not have such information.

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[News story: Minister supports police action to tackle knife crime](#)

The Home Office hosted an event for police forces across the country to try to break the cycle of knife crime.

At the briefing, minister Sarah Newton encouraged more forces to join the Operation Sceptre week of co-ordinated police action on knife crime in July.

There are currently 29 police forces expected to take part, the largest number since it launched 2 years ago.

Sarah Newton MP, The Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism said:

Knife crime has devastating effects on victims, families and communities. I am hugely encouraged that a record 29 forces have signed up to be part of next month's Operation Sceptre and I hope more join in the next couple of weeks.

We must break this cycle of violence and address the perception of young people who say they need to carry a knife to protect themselves. Let me be clear – knives have no place on our streets – and the Government is committed to working with the police to tackle this issue.

Operation Sceptre is an ongoing series of weeks of intensified action on knife crime, including targeted stop and searches, weapon sweeps, test purchases of knives from retailers, and the use of surrender bins. During a previous week of the operation in October 2016:

- 21 police forces across the country took part
- more than 1,200 weapons were seized
- more than 300 arrests were made
- more than 720 knives were placed in amnesty bins

The event at the Home Office was held in conjunction with the National Police Chiefs Council and the Metropolitan Police. In a speech to attendees, Sarah Newton set out the government's approach to tackling knife crime. This approach included:

- working closely with police and law enforcement, including by supporting Operation Sceptre
- tightening the legislative framework, for example through the introduction of mandatory minimum custodial sentences for repeat convictions and a ban on zombie knives
- working with retailers to prevent the sale of knives to under 18s
- promoting and providing early intervention by working with voluntary sector organisations

The minister stressed that she is keen to support and encourage initiatives that work directly with young people. She also highlighted that a mix of agencies working together is key to tackling the issues around knife crime.

The next Operation Sceptre week of action will begin on 17 July.