

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020



Reports and Documents Pack

Y&HLD Regional Conference - Reports Pack 2020

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Conference Chair Stewart Golton



This has been an odd couple of years for Conference in Yorkshire and the Humber and it seems a long time since we had been able to gather as we would normally. We were forced to cancel our 2019 Conference in Northallerton, at a fabulous venue, as a result of the General Election.

We managed to schedule a delayed Annual General Meeting for the beginning of 2020 before Covid hit and there was a number of training sessions provided. Mark Park spoke to us, as he has done today but this was not Conference as we have come to know and love.

“Lockdown” brought challenges for us all, as individuals and as Liberal Democrats active in our Communities. Perhaps naively, in June we booked a small venue and hoped to run a socially distanced conference in the latter half of this year. However as that date grew closer it was clear we would not be able to progress with that.

Rather than not have Conference we have embraced the opportunity to move online, this has not been easy. The Federal Conference Committee have many Productions Assistants and Technical Experts helping them to deliver what we are trying to do with our small staff and Regional Volunteers. Hopin (the platform we are using to host conference) is new to us all and we have all had to learn as we have gone on.

We have pulled together, over a short period of time, a pack agenda. Operating online means we are joined by Lib Dems from HQ, LGBT+ Lib Dems, The Green Lib Dems and the Federal Policy Committee and I would like to offer my thanks to them, along with our Regional Volunteers, who have come together to support Conference.

Running a conference like this has been a steep learning curve and those involved in making this happen have already begun to make the list of ways in which we could improve this. I look forward to taking what we have learnt through this Conference into 2021. We will be circulating a Feedback Survey after the close of Conference and would welcome honest and constructive comments.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy what a Hopin Conference has to offer.

Stewart Golton
Yorkshire and the Humber Region Conference Committee Chair

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Day 1 - Saturday 09:15 - 17.00

Stage

10:00AM-10:45AM · Stage
Annual General Meeting (AGM)

10:45AM-10:55AM · Stage
Business Motion : Standing Orders for a
Conference Held Remotely

11:30AM-12:30PM · Stage
Winning for Britain: rebuilding the Liberal
Democrats to change the course of our
country'.
Ian Kearns, Director of the Social Liberal
Forum will take us through their report
"Winning for Britain"

1:15PM-2:15PM · Stage
Policy Debate
Motion One: Devolution to Yorkshire and
the Humber (Leeds North West)

Motion Two: Developing Devolved
Governance for England in a Federal UK
(Sheffiled Lib Dems)

2:45PM-3:30PM · Stage
Local Leaders Q&A
Kath Pinnock (Chair) Keith Aspden -York
Hannah Kitching - Barnsley
Mike Ross - Hull

3.35PM - 3.45 PM Stage
Shaffaq Mohammed - Brexit, what next?

Training / Consutation

9:15AM-9:55AM · Sessions
Strategy Consultation with Mark Pack
(Party President) and Luke Cawley-
Harrison

10:30AM-11:30AM · Sessions
Winning the postal vote training
Robert Jacques & James Baker (ALDC)

12:30PM-1:30PM · Sessions
Introducing Affinity training
Robert Jacques & James Baker (ALDC)

2:30PM-3:30PM · Sessions
Election Law : The basics training
Kerry Buist (LDHQ)

4:00PM-5:00PM · Sessions
Campaign Surgery with ALDC
Robert Jacques & James Baker

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Day 2 - Sunday 10.00 - 15.15

Stage

10:00AM-11:00AM · Stage

Policy Debate Two

Motion Three: Motion to reassess the HS2 Project in a Post Covid 19 World

12:30PM-1:30PM · Stage

Lib Dem LGBT+ 101

2:00PM-3:15PM · Stage

Green Liberal Democrats

Universal Basic Income and the concept of "Wellbeing"

Training / Consultation

10:00AM-11:00AM · Sessions

Life of the local Treasurer : Annual Accounts and Compliance

Kerry Buist (LDHQ)

11.30 AM - 11:00AM Sessions

Digital Campaigning
Lessons from lockdown

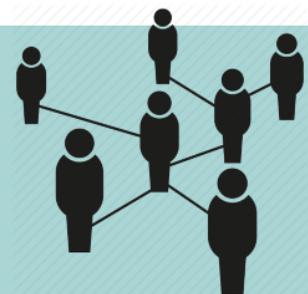
Robin Rea (LDHQ)

Throughout the weekend there will be opportunities to network with other delegates on Hopin - the conference virtual platform

Hopin - will randomly connect you to another conference attendee for you to chat. If you want to chat with someone in particular you will be able to search for them too.

Don't Forget

If you are struggling to find your way around the Hopin site has a number of helpful guides



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Strategy Consultation Paper - Mark Pack

Introduction

Key questions?

Q1 What is our purpose?

Q2 What does success look like?

Q3 How can we secure competitive advantages?

Q4 What are our key risks and how should we deal with them?

Q5 What are our electoral objectives?

Q6 How much should our electoral appeal be based on liberals?

Q7 What should our attitudes be towards other parties?

Q8 What organisational priorities are needed for this plan?

Q9 How do we make a success of adopting a strategy?

Responding to these questions

Introduction

Even beyond the chaos and uncertainty which came into play in 2019, the Liberal Democrats had not translated their beliefs into a clear and relevant vision or the strategy to put it into place, and whose structures and processes led to a culture which lacked cohesion.

A strategy should set the long-term direction – at least the duration of a parliament – aligning resources to a clear vision. Strategy by that definition was fundamentally lacking. The 2019 Election Review

As our election review found, a failure to create and adopt an effective strategy was one of the major reasons for the 2019 general election failure.

Fixing that is one of the essentials for our future success. It is not the only essential, but it is the one on which this consultation focuses. Other work over our vision and our organisation is progressing. Getting our strategy right is the way to ensure we have the plan and organisation to deliver our vision.

That requires a strategy both to be good and then to be used. During the last Parliament, party conference voted for a strategy which, whatever its theoretical merits, then had the major flaw that it was mostly ignored across the whole party. The priorities that conference voted for did little to guide what the different parts of the party subsequently did.

This consultation, therefore, looks at both what our strategy should be and also how we can make it one that is embraced across the party.

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It forms a part of the process the Board is required (under Article 5 of our constitution) to carry out every Parliament. That process also requires a future conference debate and vote, which the Board is aiming to facilitate in 2021.

Strategy, however, is a behaviour rather than a possession. It is something that you implement, rather than simply something you have. The conference vote will be a key part of the process, but it isn't simply a case of 'job done' if conference votes it through. It needs to become a key guide to what we all do.

Key questions

The following set of questions do not cover everything our new strategy will need to contain. Rather, they concentrate on the key choices and risks which need debating, where there are a variety of plausible answers and where there isn't obvious unanimity of views among members. Similarly, the questions do not cover the party's values, because the Federal Policy Committee (FPC) is running a process dedicated to that Question.

For each question, there are some brief notes to help prompt thoughts and to highlight particular angles to it.

Q1 What is our purpose?

One previous version of this is:

The Liberal Democrats exist in order to build a free and fair society by winning power through winning elections. We want everyone to be supported to have the greatest control over their own lives.

Our central way of doing this is to seek to build a mass political involvement of people who share these aims to win and exercise political power, at all levels, to help achieve this. To the extent that others share these aims, we want to work with them.

In addition, we need to think about the question on our purpose posed by the Thornhill Review, illustrated by the choices the party faced over Brexit. Should the party have prioritised timing a general election so as to maximise the number of Lib Dem MPs, or should it have prioritised timing a general election so as to maximise the chance of stopping Brexit? That question is now for the history books, but the question of the balance between securing policy ends and electoral advantage will return. Which comes back to: what is our purpose?

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Q2 What does success look like?

A good way to think about this is what we want people to be saying about us in 5 and in 10 years time - and, along the way - what the experience should be for our members and supporters.

Q3 How can we secure competitive advantages?

Being a smaller party in a predominantly first-past-the-post electoral system, especially one with a strong two-party culture in Westminster, brings many disadvantages. However, Liberal Democrats have a traditional reputation for being more committed than other parties to year-round grassroots campaigning. But that competitive advantage has been eroded in recent general elections, especially in 2015. We need renewed competitive advantages.

We have also, sometimes, secured a competitive advantage by carving out a clear public stance on issues which mattered to the public and which other parties were not able to match, either due to ideological differences or due to splits within themselves. Our opposition to the Iraq war was a notable example of this. What are the contemporary equivalents?

Q4 What are our key risks and how should we deal with them?

Our party is significantly smaller in terms of membership and annual income than rival parties. We also do not have the benefit of friendly media moguls. The party therefore always risks being defeated by the weight of rival resources. We need a plan to overcome these risks.

In addition, hung Parliaments in Westminster have not ended well. This was not only the party's experience in 2010-15 but also previously, such as in 1974-1979 and 1964-1966. It is also the experience of comparable parties in other first-past-the-post democratic systems. There is a bigger picture here than just the lessons of 2010.

Hung Parliaments are sometimes seen as a great opportunity, and have sometimes served us well in devolved bodies with other electoral systems, but they come with huge political risk. Again, we need a plan to overcome this risk - and any other major risks we can identify.

Q5 What are our electoral objectives?

Winning elections is certainly one of them. We'd like to win every seat, at every level, every time. But we won't.

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So we need to have a sense of the priority for different elections, such as how important is it to win control of an extra council compared with electing an extra MP? Even though each helps secure the other, there is still a choice to be made over the allocation of Resources.

There are also some types of elections where we do worse, on average, such as those with very large electorates and geographic areas, some list PR elections, or the contests for posts such as Police and Crime Commissioners or Metro Mayors. How important are such elections to us - and the more important they are, the better the answers we need to how to do better in them in future.

In addition, winning elections is also helped by moving to a fairer political system - voting system, party funding, etc. That is likely to require a degree of cross-party work to achieve, so we need to be clear about our aims and how we're willing to try to secure Them.

Q6 How much should our electoral appeal be based on liberals?

This has often been a cause of debate in the party, epitomised by issues such as immigration. Should we emphasise our liberal approach on such polarising issues because they reflect our values, or should we seek instead to draw in wider support by minimising our talk of such issues?

Especially under first-past-the-post elections, the party wins by putting together a coalition of voters made up of three parts: those who vote for the party because they share many of its values (core vote), those who are won over by the candidate and local campaigning (local vote), and those who vote tactically (tactical vote). So another way of thinking about this issue is to ask what balance we should look for between these three different sources of support, as that will determine the messages we should use.

Q7 What should our attitudes be towards other parties?

This was a major question through all three of the big elections in 2019 - in the local elections cross-party arrangements of many types proliferated, including, in some cases, before polling day; in the European election we held out an olive branch to some parties and also spurned others; and in the general election the party stood down in some seats but also rebuffed pressure to stand aside for Labour elsewhere. Through all that, we continued to be in coalition in the Welsh government.

This mixed, complicated picture poses plenty of questions for what our future approaches should be.

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Q8 What organisational priorities are needed for this plan?

Delivering on the answers to the above is not going to be easy, so we also need to identify where we need to change how we organise, and what should be the priorities for our resources (money, staff and volunteers). What will best help deliver the answers to the previous questions, and which parts of the party should do them?

Q9 How do we make a success of adopting a strategy?

The previous strategy was not widely embedded across the party; it is hard to find many changes in the federal organisation - and especially in the party at large - following its adoption by conference.

We, therefore, need to have a collaborative discussion about how to make more of a success of this one. A strategy is only useful if it ends up informing what we actually do. Given where resources rest in the party, that means it also cannot be successful if it is only a strategy for Lib Dem HQ or the federal organisation. It needs to end up being a strategy for all of us.

To put it at its simplest: what can we do in drawing up the strategy that will make all parts of the party aware of it and willing to change what they do as a result?
Responding to these questions

Members are very welcome to take part in the consultation session being held during the regional party conference. In addition, you can email your views to president@libdems.org.uk .

The party will be carrying out other consultations directly with members. On top of that, if you are involved in running a party body, such as a local party or an SAO, please think about organising a discussion around these questions and then sending in its conclusions to this email address.

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AGM AGENDA

14th November 2020, 10 AM

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Approval of Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting
3. Reports from Regional Executive Officers
4. Consideration of the 2019 Annual Accounts
5. Consideration of the report of the Treasurer and the outline budget for 2020
6. To report on the process for election of Officers of the Regional Party, the Ordinary Members of the Regional Executive and Members of the Regional Conference Committee, Regional Candidates Committee and Regional Policy Committee for 2020 and to elect representatives to the English Council.
7. Members Questions Time

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2019 AGM Minutes

Chair Jeanette Sunderland
Treasurer Jim Spencer
Secretary Neil Bowerman

Introduction

Jeanette Sunderland opened the meeting, pointing out that this AGM had been delayed by the General Election from November 2019, along with the Yorkshire and Humberside Liberal Democrats Conference.

The 2020 Conference to be held in November 2020 would be free to those who had paid for the 2019 conference, or refunds were available if required.

Apologies

Ruth Colman
Kamran Hussein
Tony McCobb

Approval of the 2018 Minutes

Jeanette Sunderland reported that this had been a poorly timed and attended meeting. The minutes are not available. This would not be allowed to happen again.

Treasurers Report

1. Jim Spencer reported by reminding the meeting that this was going back to November 2019 talking about 2018.
2. Comparing 2018 to 2017 funds increased by £11,000. This was split by an increase of £3,000 of income and a decrease of £7,000 of expenditure.
3. Accounts had been audited by Gordon Beaver.
4. Acceptance was proposed by Matt Walker and seconded by Mark ? and accepted unanimously.
5. Notes on the accounts.
 - 5.1. Income increased following appeals £25,000
 - 5.2. Increase in the membership rebate £30,000. (so this has doubled)
 - 5.3. Rowntree Trust income is ending and reduced last year.
 - 5.4. Income increased by £91,000
 - 5.5. Expenditure up by £47,000
 - 5.6. Regional conference only cost £271, because we didn't have one!
 - 5.7. 2019 accounts will be approved in the Autumn of 2020.
6. Questions and points from the floor

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- 6.1. What is the Rebate% for membership?
 - 6.1.1. 15% of income minus 12% of total, so about 12% this year
 - 6.1.2. 6500 members approx.
- 6.2. Bone of contention that Local Parties get more if they sign members up locally, but many people sign up through the National Website because it is convenient, when the local party has recruited that new member. Then the National Party keeps all the income. This breaks a Liberal Democrat principle of pushing power as low as is sensible.
- 6.3. What was the £8,000 other income?
 - 6.3.1. £5,000 returned deposits
 - 6.3.2. £3,000 selling Rob Jakes time to Leeds North West and Harrogate.
- 6.4. Where did the election expenses go?
 - 6.4.1. To the National Party to pay for:
 - 6.4.1.1. Postal Leaflets.
 - 6.4.1.2. The leaflets that were printed on the rear, to which the local parties could add the front.

Chair

- 1. Jeanette Sunderland started by saying "Thank You" to Richard Brett the Vice Chair who is retiring from the role.
- 2. Setting a vision and mission for the next year.
 - 2.1. Improved relationship with Local Parties.
 - 2.2. Contribute to the rebuilding of our Party so that we can campaign in a Liberal way by saying why and what our Liberal position is. Thinking through a Liberal position will assist us in rebuilding in a purposeful way.
 - 2.3. Refocus. We have many tools that are really good. We need to use them in a smart way.
- 3. Questions and Answers
 - 3.1. What is the Party Policy on Leeds Bradford Airport?
 - 3.1.1. Sold the Airport. The returns were used in Bradford to build 9 special schools and in Leeds to build the Arena.
 - 3.1.2. Party Policy is to
 - 3.1.2.1. Build no more runways.
 - 3.1.2.2. Move from access by car to access by rail and other public transport
 - 3.1.3. N.B. Yorkshire water are proposing a Country Park accessible only by rail, on land they no longer need beside the airport.
 - 3.2. We lost some elections and some deposits by very few votes, deposits paid for by local parties:-
 - a. Why did we send people to other constituencies that we didn't win either, when we could have stayed home and at least saved our deposits?
 - b. Why haven't we heard from anybody since, we feel abandoned?

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3.2.1. The Region did not instruct anybody to go anywhere.

3.2.2. The formula that we used to support deposits was to help constituencies with less than 50 members. Those with more than 50 members only had to make a contribution of £10 each.

3.2.3. Jeanette Sunderland.

3.2.3.1. In my role as Chair I formally apologise if you feel aggrieved at losing your deposit.

3.2.3.2. Our top objective can often be getting a stranger elected in the constituency next door.

3.2.3.3. We must support the National Strategy.

3.2.4. James Baker asked the floor how we should incentivise the membership to support target seats? Many felt that they needed to be thanked afterwards.

3.3. Will the National Party change the target seats? This was not something that can be answered at Regional Level.

3.4. Jeanette Sunderland asked how many new members had received basic training. None had. Jeanette referred back to her objectives for the year. We need to start getting the basics right.

Jeanette Sunderland closed the meeting by reminding everybody about:-

1. The Yorkshire Yellow Book 2019 (ISBN 9780993090967)
2. The applications for membership and roles on the Yorkshire and Humberside Liberal Democrats Executive Committee would close at 3pm.
3. The next meeting was to be in November, details to be announced.

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2019 AGM - Chairs Report

Yorkshire and Humber Liberal Democrats Report of the Chair of the regional Party Executive to the Regional Conference 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided the backdrop to our campaigning in 2020. I am immensely proud of the work done by Liberal Democrats across the region to support their communities. Liberal Democrats were involved in volunteer hubs, collecting and delivering food and many, unable to leave their own homes, making phone calls offering support and being the friendly phone call that others needed. To each and every one of you, thank you.

During this time the Regional Executive has put together our Regional Strategy and worked across the English Party and with colleagues, the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors and Campaigners and the Federal Party to make sure we agree and work together deliver the Regions Party's key objective to achieve the highest possible level of Liberal Democrat representation in local Government.

The Regional Executive has agreed that our principal aims are:

- No principal Council should be without a Liberal Democrat Councillor
- Every Parliamentary Constituency having at least one Liberal Democrat Councillor
- To implement the findings of the Alderdice review
- To implement the recommendations and actions of the Election Review 2019
- and to 'win at every level.

The job of the Regional Executive for the next two years will be to develop the effectiveness of local parties to campaign and ensure that all local parties have a Development Plan, are compliant with the PPERA regulations and all HQ compliance regulations, and are governed by an Executive which acts in accordance with the values and Constitution of the Liberal Democrats so we all "fit for purpose".

The next round of elections gives us the opportunity to develop sub-regional campaigning structures and increase our influence on Councils. Specifically we aim to become the majority party on the City of York Council, Harrogate District Council, Hull City Council and Sheffield City Council.

I have been the Chair of the Regional Party for the last two years. This year I will not be seeking re-election. I currently face a challenge to my health and must reset the balance. I hope that on reading this report and our Regional Strategy that many of you will step up to the challenge of working across the region and put yourself forward for election. Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats need a strong committed Regional Executive to lead our campaigning in the North. I do hope that you will play your part.

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I'd like to end by just simply saying thank you. To people who have made major contributions as Chairs of different parts of the organisation, as staff members, as volunteers who took on many of the unseen roles and tasks that make the region work – you are simply amazing people and it has been an honour to work alongside you. I wish you all success in 2021 you deserve to be successful and win.

My wish for the Regional party and its Executive is that 2021 will see a broadening of our activist base to include many others who are fed up and excluded by the old blue/red/blue class based arguments. I hope we can make more strongly the argument (and lead by example) for a more ethical world based on the values to be found in the preamble to our constitution.

Jeanette Sunderland

Chair Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats

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2019 AGM Candidates Chair Report

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

REPORT OF CANDIDATES' COMMITTEE CHAIR TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To say that this has been an unusual year would be an understatement. Many activities, including open selections, have been put on hold because of the Covid-19 emergency, and the Party has decided that none may take place until the beginning of 2021. A working group of the English Candidates' Committee is devising a system of conducting these on line, and it is hoped that open selections, which must be carried out in all seats, will be able to begin in January.

Westminster Selection Rules

A working group of the English Candidates' Committee has revised and redrafted these, and they will be submitted for approval to the 5 December meeting of English Council. No selections may take place until they have been approved.

Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs)

When selections resume in the New Year there will be an urgent need for more ROs and AROs. At present the Region has 9 ROs and 5 AROs, all of whom have worked extremely hard during the last few years, and I do not want them to continue to be overloaded. I have e-mailed all local party chairs to ask them to contact appropriate members about this; the response was not encouraging, with only 4 chairs replying to me, but I am pleased that 6 members have expressed interest in ARO training. This takes place on line, and new AROs will initially work with an experienced colleague. There will also be an opportunity for AROs who wish to upgrade to full RO status to undertake training, again on line. It continues to be a matter of concern that, despite efforts to recruit BAME AROs, we still have none. I encourage members who would like to know more about the role to e-mail me at the address given at the end of this report.

Post-General Election Candidate Reviews

The process of reviewing all 54 General Election candidates and non-standers was finally completed in August. This was a very time-consuming task, taking five months and repeated e-mails and telephone calls before the reviews were received from all candidates and local parties. As a result of the process, 78 candidates have been returned to the approved list; some asked to be removed from it for reasons of health, work priorities, moving abroad, political restriction, etc. I wish to record my gratitude to Alan Luckraft and Tony McCobb, who were of great help in reading and analysing the reviews. RCCs have expressed to the English Candidates' Committee their reservations about the format of the spreadsheets, and the Candidates' Office has undertaken to review this before the next General Election, in order to make the forms easier to complete and to analyse.

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Virtual Assessment Days (VADs)

As no assessment days have been able to take place during the Covid-19 emergency, the English Candidates' Committee is considering how the process may be carried out on line. A pilot virtual assessment day, involving candidates who had already been approved, was held last month, and was considered by candidates, assessors and the facilitator to have been very successful. The first VAD with 'real' candidates will take place on 28 November; all assessors and facilitators have been invited to observe this, in preparation for their later involvement. At present there are 141 candidates awaiting approval, including 6 from Yorkshire and the Humber; any member who is interested in applying should contact the Candidates' Office at candidates@libdem.org.uk to request an application pack. I shall be happy to give advice to anyone who e-mails me at the address at the end of this report. We shall need more good candidates in the Region, and I urge members to think about this; even though we have 78 approved candidates for 54 seats, they are not necessarily all in the parts of the Region where they are most needed.

Review of Assessment Days

I am one of a group of four English Candidates' Committee members examining the approvals process in order to see how it may be improved. When we have submitted our proposals, if they are approved, Val Jay (RCC for the North West) and I will work on how assessor training may be delivered on line.

Assessors

Given the number of candidates awaiting assessment, there is a need for more members willing to train as assessors. I encourage anyone interested to contact me.

Disciplinary Cases

I have been a member of a panel looking at complaints and disciplinary cases. In accordance with the Party's rules, none of these concerned members of our Region or others that I know.

PCCs

We have excellent PCC candidates in place in Humberside and in North, South and West Yorkshire. I am grateful to those who have come forward to stand for selection; this reflects well on our Region, as there are still some in England which have been unable to find candidates.

West Yorkshire Mayoral Selection

Two candidates, Javed Bashir and Stewart Golton, stood in this selection, and Stewart Golton was successful. I am grateful to David Crowther for acting as the RO and to Alan Luckraft and Tony McCobb for marking the conversion tests and hosting the virtual hustings.

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Thanks

As ever, I wish to express my gratitude to those who have helped and supported me over the past year:-

Alan Luckraft and Tony McCobb, the other members of the Regional Candidates' Committee, who have worked tirelessly, particularly on the candidate review process;

Margaret Joachim, Chair of the English Candidates' Committee, Amy Westcott and Lauren Winters, of the Candidates' Office, David Crowther and Val Jay, RCC for the North West, who patiently answer my questions, tactfully refrain from pointing out when I should have known the answers, and save me from making embarrassing mistakes;

My husband, Douglas Robinson, for his unfailing support and patience, especially when stress has threatened to get the better of me.

As always, it must be stressed that all those involved in candidate matters (candidates, local party chairs and executive committee members, assessors, facilitators, ROs and AROs, etc.) are volunteers, and the Party owes them a debt of gratitude for the considerable amount of work they do, generally without complaint.

Penny Robinson

Chair, Candidates' Committee

12 November 2020

penny.rcc@gmail.com

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2019 Campaigns Chairs Report

2020 Yorkshire and Humber Lib Dems Campaigns Report

Introduction

2020 is a year without precedent. However, I believe we have adapted to the Coronavirus Pandemic in a number of useful and innovative ways that will bear fruit in the coming years.

Rob Jacques, the Regional Development Officer is now line managed by ALDC and he is working constructively with James Baker to deliver objectives decided by Region.

Development Plan

Yorkshire and Humber Lib Dems wrote a Development Plan over summer and voted for its adoption in early autumn. The Campaign group is now in the process of implementation.

One of the goals of the Development Plan is that all local parties will have 5 core attributes:

- A development plan
- A campaign plan
- A diversity strategy
- A digital strategy
- A plan to stand in every election

The Campaign team is now working with local parties to develop these plans and implement these strategies.

Yorkshire and Humber Resource Centre

Additionally, the Development Plan recommended the creation of a Google Drive for activists. This is now up and running (It is called the Yorkshire and Humber Resource Centre) and is presently being rolled out to local parties.

Within this resource centre, you will find regional artwork, templates, stock photos and council motions.

The next step will be to set up a weekly email to activists explaining training opportunities, letting them know about best practice and updating them on Region's activities.

Training

Rob Jacques has carried out dozens of training sessions with the aim of increasing take-up and usage of Connect.

There are now two additional local parties that are now using the software and dozens of new users are on the system.

In March, the national party decided to migrate to a new desktop software programme, called Affinity Publisher. The RDO has conducted numerous sessions with the goal of increasing the usage of this software amongst local parties.

Rob also assists numerous local parties with other aspects of training.

Steering Groups

We have set up 2 steering groups to help with the co-ordination of the North Yorkshire County Council Election and West Yorkshire Metro Mayor. These groups are now meeting, and we have devised several campaign packs and other materials to help local parties to campaign.

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

G8 funding

Rob has assisted local parties in applying for 3 sets of grants. He assisted local parties in writing and artworking these G8 letters. He is in the process of co-ordinating the tabloids for North Yorkshire.

Artwork and campaign support

Rob has provided artwork and campaign support for Elmet and Rothwell, Leeds NW, Pudsey, Wakefield, Grimsby, Richmondshire, Hambleton, Calderdale, Harrogate and Ryedale throughout the year.

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

2019 AGM Parliamentarians Report

Yorkshire & Humber Liberal Democrats AGM 2019 REPORT FROM THE LORDS

No guessing what was the main, and which quite often felt like the only, issue that has devoured hours and hours of time in the Lords, as elsewhere.

Brexit is, and has been, all consuming.

The Liberal Democrat team in the Lords has been determined, well-organised, and unremitting in its efforts to Stop Brexit. Lord Dick Newby, as leader of the Lib Dems in the Lords, has been immense in his contributions. He has been at the forefront in engaging Peers from all sides to get together to defeat Brexit and he has spoken eloquently and persuasively in order to muster the numbers needed to defeat the Government.

And, indeed, the Government was defeated many times in this last year. Theresa May's three attempts to win a "Meaningful Vote" on a Withdrawal Agreement was defeated, with growing numbers in the Lords, in January and March.

There was something of a hiatus then until September while the Tories concentrated on internal strife. September brought the cross-Party Bill from the Commons with the aim of ensuring that the UK could not leave the EU on October 31 without a Deal and required the PM to seek a further extension. When that came to the Lords, the Tory hardliners tried to thwart its passing by tabling over 100 amendments. The Lords does not have a guillotine motion to end debate so the chance was that we would be sitting through the night and into the next day. Again, our determination, exemplified by Dick bringing his duvet into the House that day, ground down the opposition and they caved in in the early hours.

The unlawful prorogation in early September, was followed by a return and then a later lawful prorogation and Queen's Speech which is meaningless in terms of actual legislation but is a Tory Election manifesto. As I write, the EU and the Government have agreed a Deal and a Saturday sitting beckons. I am sure there will be many more twists and turns in this on-going but debilitating tragedy in the months, and possibly, years ahead. But the Lords did manage to take some effective decisions!

An Ivory Act was passed to restrict the sale of ivory and by so doing bear down even more strongly on the market in ivory which, in turn, leads to poachers killing elephants. Looking to the future, a Space Act was passed. The legislation in anything other than non-controversial topics was nil. So the year is marked as much by what has failed to be done as what has been achieved. There has been no attempt to solve the crisis in Social Care or Children's Services for example. The failure of the Universal Credit system and of growing homelessness and poor housing is a terrible blight on our country but we have a Government that is consumed by hatred of the EU and that, to them, is all that matters.

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Of course, the Yorkshire and Humber Lib Dem peers: Dick Newby, William Wallace, Angie Harris, David Shutt, Paul Scriven, and Kath Pinnock are involved in other aspects of the work of the House of Lords such as committees and scrutinising detailed secondary legislation and asking written and oral questions. For example, Kath Pinnock has just completed 4 years on an EU committee which has looked at all aspects of the impact of Brexit on domestic issues eg access to medicines.

So if anyone ever says to you that the House of Lords is full of sleeping peers then you can be absolutely confident that it will definitely not be one of us!

Having said all that, we all remain totally committed to the root and branch reform of the second chamber.

Kath Pinnock
October 2019

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

2019 AGM Conference chairs Report

Please note: this report can also be found in the forward to this pack.

This has been an odd couple of years for Conference in Yorkshire and the Humber and it seems a long time since we had been able to gather as we would normally. We were forced to cancel our 2019 Conference in Northallerton, at a fabulous venue, as a result of the General Election.

We managed to schedule a delayed Annual General Meeting for the beginning of 2020 before Covid hit and there was a number of training sessions provided. Mark Park spoke to us, as he has done today but this was not Conference as we have come to know and love.

“Lockdown” brought challenges for us all, as individuals and as Liberal Democrats active in our Communities. Perhaps naively, in June we booked a small venue and hoped to run a socially distanced conference in the latter half of this year. However as that date grew closer it was clear we would not be able to progress with that.

Rather than not have Conference we have embraced the opportunity to move online, this has not been easy. The Federal Conference Committee have many Productions Assistants and Technical Experts helping them to deliver what we are trying to do with our small staff and Regional Volunteers. Hopin (the platform we are using to host conference) is new to us all and we have all had to learn as we have gone on.

We have pulled together, over a short period of time, a pack agenda. Operating online means we are joined by Lib Dems from HQ, LGBT+ Lib Dems, The Green Lib Dems and the Federal Policy Committee and I would like to offer my thanks to them, along with our Regional Volunteers, who have come together to support Conference.

Running a conference like this has been a steep learning curve and those involved in making this happen have already begun to make the list of ways in which we could improve this. I look forward to taking what we have learnt through this Conference into 2021. We will be circulating a Feedback Survey after the close of Conference and would welcome honest and constructive comments.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy what a Hopin Conference has to offer.

Stewart Golton
Yorkshire and the Humber Region Conference Committee Chair

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2019 AGM Treasurers Report

Yorkshire and the Humber Treasurers report to AGM Nov 2020

There are 2 pages of figures in this report.

The first is the actual 2019 Year End income and expenditure account as submitted to HQ in the annual return. This format will be familiar to Local Party Treasurers as the annual return programme is the same for us all. This report was checked and authorised by Gordon Beever our long-standing auditor.

The second is the 2019 income and expenditure breakdown in the more familiar format for AGM reports. It is broken down in more recognisable categories and it shows the predicted figures for 2020 alongside those for 2019. The 2 reports should show the same figures, however.

The election commission want the figures for monies transferred between different bank accounts within the same political Party to be shown as transfers in and out, whereas the Region wants to see what monies have been donated to us and what we have spent on campaigns. This makes cross referencing difficult.

The important point is that the figures for Total Income, Total Expenditure and Income less Expenditure are the same on each page (rounded to the nearest £ in the case of the annual return)

What is immediately apparent is that the figures for the 2 years are wildly different.

2019 was a very exceptional year because we had both a Euro election and a General election in the same year which necessitated the cancellation of the regional conference.

2020 has also been a very exceptional year due to Covid-19 resulting in no elections at all and a shift to virtual meetings including conference.

Comparisons are therefore almost pointless but I will do my best to answer any questions.

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats
Accounts for the Year ended 31st December 2019
Income and Expenditure Account

	Note	2019	2018
Income			
Membership	1	£30670	£23202
Affiliations	2	£0	£0
Donations	3	£42814	£26482
Branch Income	4	£0	£0
Fundraising income	5	£317	£168
Investment income	6	£0	£0
Transfers in	7	£15738	£0
Property and rental income/Office services	8	£0	£0
Miscellaneous	9	£10232	£3326
Total Income		£99771	£53178
Expenditure			
Premises		£2950	£2113
Office costs		£1833	£1618
Branch Expenditure	4	£0	£0
Staff costs	10	£38716	£29750
Transfers out	7	£51927	£4466
Campaigning costs		£8274	£0
Fundraising costs	5	£196	£423
Financing charges and taxation	11	£165	£69
Depreciation	12	£0	£0
Profit/(Loss) on sale of assets	15	£0	£0
Miscellaneous	9	£865	£3592
Total Expenditure		£104928	£42031
(Deficit) / Surplus		£(5,157)	£11147

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

Conference Report

Account predictions up to the end of 2020

INCOME	2019 actual	2020 predicted
DONATIONS		
Euro MP	£500.00	£1000.00
LP contributions	£15737.87	£0.00
Appeals	£18188.00	£0.00
JRRT	£16125.00	£7875.00
Membership Rebate	£30669.70	£24270.79
Member Donations	£7501.00	£6634.00
TOTAL Donations	£88721.57	£39779.79
FUNDRAISING		
Lottery	£115.44	£76.22
Members meeting	£201.66	£49.16
Notional Income	£500.00	£500.00
Regional Conference Income	£1390.00	£1094.22
Other income	£8842.10	£2755.70
TOTAL Fundraising	£11049.20	£4475.30
TOTAL INCOME	£99770.77	£44255.09

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats

Virtual Conference 2020

EXPENDITURE		2019	2020
PARTY ACTIVITY			
Campaigning	Council	£300.00	£350.00
	General	£15375.00	£1500.00
	Euro/police commissioner	£42226.23	£0.00
	Mayoral	£0.00	£141.24
	Training and development	£2300.00	£875.00
Campaigning Total		£60201.23	£2866.24
Operating Expenses	Bank Charges	£165.36	£1.75
	Postage	£610.00	£248.95
	Virtual Meetings	£0.00	£143.88
	Email	£17.88	£46.66
	IT	£250.00	£600.00
	Audit (Notional)	£500.00	£500.00
Operating Expenses Total		£1543.24	£1541.24
Miscellaneous	Lottery	£196.45	£102.77
	Candidate Selection and Development	£0.00	£0.00
	members meeting	£0.00	£0.00
	Regional Conference	£57.30	£1062.56
	Local Party Committee expenses	£0.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous Total		£253.75	£1165.33
STAFF COSTS			
Local Gov Campaigns Officer	Salary	£20499.96	£20499.96
	Death in Service	£307.44	£187.67
	Pension	£1640.04	£1640.04
	NI	£1645.38	£1629.18
	Expenses	£620.10	£410.46
	staff management		£1458.00
	Total	£24712.92	£25825.31
Regional Administrator	Salary	£13909.98	£9127.08
	NI	£1021.01	£52.68
	Admin fee	£335.40	£318.18
	Expenses	£0.00	£0.00
	Total	£15266.39	£9497.94
Staff Accommodation		£2950.00	£3700.00
Total Staff Costs		£42929.31	£39023.25
TOTAL EXPENSES		£104927.53	£44596.06
Income less Expenditure NET TOTAL		(£5156.76)	(£340.97)
Accumulated Fund		£27224.81	£22068.05

Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats Virtual Conference 2020

Business Motion Standing order for a conference held remotely

The Regional Conference Committee used its power set out in the Regional Constitution to draft a new set of standing orders specifically for the virtual conference. The Yorkshire and the Humber Constitution requires that the revised standing orders be approved by Conference.

Mover: Stewart Golton, (Chair, Regional Conference Committee)

Conference welcomes the fact that Autumn Conference 2020 is being held remotely given the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conference further welcomes the opportunity that a remote conference brings to engage members who might not otherwise be able to attend a physical event, debate policy and hold party officers and Parliamentarians to account.

However, Conference notes that:

A. The current set of Standing Orders that were revised and adopted in 2018 contain certain provisions that cannot be applied to a remote conference; they need to be adapted to make a virtual conference function and, in particular, to allow votes to be taken.

C. The new set of Standing Orders adopts every provision of the original Standing Orders and makes only those modifications required to make the virtual conference function; the original Standing Orders will remain in force for use at all future physical conferences and the new set will be used only where conferences are held remotely.

D. The current Standing Orders have already been approved; however, the new set of Standing Orders for conferences held remotely must be approved by Conference in order for the remote conference to properly function.

Conference therefore resolves:

1. To approve the following Standing Orders, for operation at a remote conference:

Standing Orders for a Conference held remotely

a) In the event that the Regional Conference Committee determines it is impossible to hold a conference under the normal rules, and instead summons a special meeting of the conference to be held remotely, or the Committee otherwise directs that a conference shall be conducted remotely, these Standing Orders shall apply.

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b) A remote conference shall be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders that apply to a conference not conducted remotely ('the original Standing Orders'), save that:

i) All references in the original Standing Orders to votes, whether by ballot, show of hands or show of voting cards, shall instead be conducted via an online poll or alternative secure method of online voting, designated by the Committee; similarly all references to speakers cards shall be taken to mean electronic speakers' cards.

ii) Any communications with the chair must be made via an online channel designated by the Committee for that purpose and advertised to voting members prior to the commencement of a debate.

iii) The Conference Committee Chair may set a deadline in respect of any given full session for the receipt of electronic speakers' cards; the chair shall have discretion to accept electronic speakers' cards after the deadline.

v) Voting members shall, when appropriate, be directed by the chair to vote using the online voting tool made available to them.

vi) any voting member may signal to the Chair via the designated online channel that they are moving a point of order, in lieu of rising in their place.

vii) As, by necessity, all votes shall be counted vote ; the chair shall ensure the result of the counted vote is publicised to members, via the appropriate online channel.

2. To preserve the original Standing Orders for operation at a physical conference.

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Policy Motion 1

Devolution to Yorkshire and the Humber

Motion to the Yorkshire and Humber Region Liberal Democrats' Annual Conference 2020

By Michael Meadowcroft, Ian MacFadyen, [others] / Leeds West Liberal Democrats

Note: Liberal Democrat councillors and other Liberal Democrats in Yorkshire and the Humber have been consulted on this motion and the comments received are taken into account in the motion and background notes.

Motion

In furtherance of the Liberal Democrats' long-standing policy of devolution to Yorkshire and the Humber, in furtherance of home rule for all to achieve a federal United Kingdom; and

Noting the widespread disappointment at the government's rejection of the proposal for a One Yorkshire devolution deal, which would have empowered in legislation a single devolved authority for the region, which was supported by most local authorities in the region and by the Yorkshire and the Humber Liberal Democrats and other political parties in the region;

Noting the work of the One Yorkshire Committee, founded by former Labour MP John Grogan and co-chaired by him and Dr John Sentamu, former Archbishop of York, on which Liberal Democrat councillors sit and which has a Liberal Democrat secretary;

Noting the long but truncated history of devolution in the north of England that Liberal Democrats and others wish to restore;

Noting from the achievement of devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the importance of engaging citizens, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses in securing devolution; and

Noting that in Scotland, the Liberal Democrat and Labour led, under a neutral chair, cross-party Scottish Constitutional Convention achieved this engagement and produced the devolution proposals that were implemented as the Scottish Parliament and Government;

Conference calls for:

1. The establishment in conjunction with other political parties and organisations in the region of a **Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber**, to tour the region to hear the opinions on devolution of citizens, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses and, taking account of their views produce proposals for devolution to Yorkshire and the Humber;
2. Liberal Democrat councillors and others on the One Yorkshire Committee to pursue the establishment and conduct of the **Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber** by the One Yorkshire Committee;
3. Regional Party officers to work with Labour and other parties, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses in establishing and conducting the **Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber**;
4. Fundraising from grant giving bodies and other sources to be initiated by regional officers when the costs of the convention and its work have been identified and budgeted.

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Background notes

1. Liberal Democrat party policy is, " ... a federal future for the UK.... We will enact permissive legislation to empower groups of authorities to come together to establish devolved governance – for example to ... a Yorkshire Parliament, building on the One Yorkshire campaign," [*Our Plan for better politics: Power for the Nations and Regions in Plan for Britain's Future*, the Liberal Democrat Manifesto for the 2019 General Election].

2. Yorkshire and the Humber and the North of England had devolution in relatively recent history. The Council of the North met in York, until abolished just before the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century. Other parts of the North had palatinate powers, lost in the nineteenth century, and palatine courts until the Courts Act 1971. After all this centralisation, devolution would restore local powers and democracy.

3. One Yorkshire was a proposal for devolution under the government's City Deals programme to a single devolved authority for the whole of Yorkshire and the Humber, led by a directly elected metro mayor. It was supported by eighteen of the twenty-two local authorities in the region and by political parties and business and civic organisations. The Yorkshire and the Humber Region Liberal Democrats' Annual Conference supported the proposal and Liberal Democrat councillors in the region campaigned for its success.

4. One Yorkshire was launched with great confidence by the then Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, with local government representatives and others at the archbishop's official residence, Bishopthorpe Palace. The government invited the proposal, without commitment, although it was not the devolution deal the government had offered to the region, which was for metro mayors in South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. In South Yorkshire, a City Deal, that is a devolution deal, was struck, as the now mayor of South Yorkshire said, as a step towards One Yorkshire. The government had agreed regional, rather than city-based, deals elsewhere, for example in Lincolnshire and the South West.

5. In 2019, John Grogan, then Labour MP for Keighley, invited people in all parties, including Liberal Democrats, trade unions, businesses and voluntary organisations to join a One Yorkshire Committee to support and campaign for the One Yorkshire proposals. He and Dr Sentamu are co-chairs. The secretary is a Liberal Democrat (from Leeds East North East Local Party). Liberal Democrat councillors from throughout the region are enthusiastic members of the committee.

6. Writers in *The Yorkshire Yellow Book 2019 Essays on a Liberal future for Yorkshire and the Humber* looked forward to the One Yorkshire proposals being approved.

7. Yet, after many months, the government rejected the proposal, saying it did not meet the criteria.

8. Subsequently a City Deal has been agreed for West Yorkshire, with the mayoral election scheduled for May 2021. North Yorkshire, east Yorkshire and the south Humber authorities are being pressed by the government to accept devolution deals that it is feared could cut across established networks and weaken local democratic structures.

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9. It is understood, the One Yorkshire Committee continues its work, now trying to ensure that the devolution deals being offered by the government are well-structured to best serve local people across Yorkshire and the Humber and is working to strengthen partnerships and collaboration across the region.

10. The One Yorkshire proposal had weaknesses and the devolution it proposed was a long way short of the devolution within a federal United Kingdom that Liberal Democrats have long championed, but, although it was never taken to the people, the idea caught the imagination and provided fertile ground to campaign for real devolution.

Looking to the future

11. City Deals offer opportunities for limited additional powers and funds to deal with local, or sub-regional, priorities and Liberal Democrat councillors who have helped secure the best on offer for their areas are to be congratulated. Such deals are bold steps on the road to the devolution to a single Yorkshire and the Humber legislature and government within a federal United Kingdom for which Liberal Democrats (and our predecessor parties) have long campaigned. City Deals and full devolution to a single Yorkshire and the Humber are not contradictory. This motion proposes building on what has been achieved so far in negotiating City Deals and what is yet to be achieved. Building the case.

12. Advocates of One Yorkshire often assert that the similarity in population size of Yorkshire and the Humber and Scotland meant Yorkshire and the Humber had the same right to devolution, while missing the crucial part played by the existing pre-devolution settlement in Scotland and the importance of the public engagement achieved through the Scottish Constitutional Convention. There is no automatic right to devolution, no matter what equivalence there might be with other places. The Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber could help engage the public to a degree not managed before and help move Yorkshire and the Humber's claims forward in building a substantial case for a Yorkshire and the Humber parliament and devolved government.

13. The Scottish Constitutional Convention was Liberal Democrat and Labour-led, with other parties taking part (though not the Scottish National Party or the Conservatives). Like its Scottish forerunner, the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber could tour to take evidence from individual citizens, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses and others, on the case for and against devolution and, if for, on what powers should be devolved, on what form devolution should take, and other matters. The Constitutional Convention should produce proposals and present them in a report to the people of Yorkshire and the Humber.

14. The One Yorkshire Committee seems best placed to take this forward and be the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber or provide the foundation out of which the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber could develop. The Scottish Constitutional Convention had a neutral chair, who was a widely respected church minister. If the motion were passed, someone of similar standing should be approached to chair the Yorkshire and the Humber constitutional convention. Fortunately, in Dr John Sentamu, the One Yorkshire Committee already has a such a well-respected neutral, but sympathetic to the cause, chair.

15. On the other hand, if the One Yorkshire Committee did not see itself developing in this way and were to decline this role, the motion, if passed, would mandate regional officers to make direct approaches to the Labour and

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other parties, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses in establishing and conducting the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber. It is hoped regional officers would also make a direct approach to Dr Sentamu.

16. There are no shortcuts to devolution, but experience in Scotland, in particular, shows that the work needs to be done in advance, so that when there is a sympathetic United Kingdom government proposals for devolution to Yorkshire and the Humber can be taken forward and legislation can be made. The next scheduled general election in 2024 is close. To be ready, we hope the regional conference will adopt this motion and regional officers will act expeditiously.

Effect of conference passing the motion

17. Passing the motion would require Liberal Democrat councillors on the One Yorkshire Committee, supported by regional officers, to submit proposals to the One Yorkshire Committee for the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber to be set up without delay. If the One Yorkshire Committee were to decline this initiative, the motion, if passed, would require regional officers to approach the Labour Party and other parties, plus citizens, civic organisations, third sector bodies, trade unions and businesses, to get their agreement to the principle of the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber and to take it forward. Either approach, may involve setting up a joint committee or other structures between local authorities and between political parties and other bodies concerned, which is implied, but not stated, in the motion in order to give regional officers flexibility and not to tie their hands.

18. If passed, local parties would be committing themselves to work with regional officers and others to help make the Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber a success in order to achieve devolution to Yorkshire and the Humber. This too is implied in the motion.

Costs

19. There will be costs, including travel, room hire and a secretariat, which will have to be identified and budgeted as the convention is set up with other parties, and the motion authorises regional officers to make a budget and raise funds to meet the convention's costs from grant giving bodies and by other means, including crowdfunding. These costs cannot be assessed at this stage.

Conclusion

20. Campaigning for and achieving devolution is in the blood of Liberal Democrats. A Constitutional Convention for Yorkshire and the Humber would be an exciting way forward for Liberal Democrats to take the initiative to build a wide cross-party coalition to win devolution for the region.

21. Therefore, we ask regional conference to pass the motion overwhelmingly and let work begin.

ENDS

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Policy Motion 2

**Developing Devolved Governance for England in a Federal United Kingdom
Motion to Regional Conference from Sheffield Lib Dem Local Party.**

Proposer Joe Otten Alternative contact Sue Alston

That this conference notes

1. The agreement at Federal Conference to motion F11 The Creation of a Federal United Kingdom, calling for a federal United Kingdom, existing by the consent of the people of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, governed according to democratic principles and respecting the diverse identities of the people.
2. That this motion left open how federalism would operate within England
3. That the Federal Policy Committee is currently working on proposals for federalism in England.

That this conference believes

- a. That the United Kingdom is overly centralised and that decision making and accountability suffer as a result and that one size fits all solutions are too often imposed on nations, regions and local areas that could do better if they had the powers and budgets to do so.
- b That the disastrous UK government response to the covid-19 pandemic, including the centrally imposed failure of the Test, Trace and Isolate system demonstrates a particular weakness of out of touch central government; and that the needs of the north of England in particular have come second in considerations of pandemic control and financial support.
- c. A federal settlement would protect the rights of the nations of the United Kingdom to govern and legislate on matters internal to each. This right should be exercised by the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and that a solution for England should be found.
- d. That a devolved government for England as a whole may lead to an unbalanced federation, may come too close to wasteful duplication of federal structures and not achieve noticeable devolution.
- e. However, that making each of the regions of England constituent members of a Federal UK on a par with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be to disregard, in different ways, the strength of attachment that citizens of all four nations feel for their national identities.
- f. That federalisation of the United Kingdom is a profoundly significant constitutional reform that merits considerable citizen engagement and cross-party working.

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That this conference calls for

i) the Federal Policy Committee to consider models for a federal England that would be a constituent member of a federal UK alongside Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but within which all powers and budgets will be held by regional parliaments, except insofar as those regional parliaments choose collectively to devolve upwards to England.

ii) the English level of a federal England to be by design de minimis, not requiring a separate legislature, but rather double hatting elected representatives on other bodies.

iii) the borders of the regions of a federal England to be subject to detailed public debate and consultation, with initial options reflecting both historical identities, such as Yorkshire and Cornwall, and economic geographies such as One North and the Midlands Engine.

iv) The Liberal Democrats to seek constructive discussions with other parties and civic society to further develop and build momentum for the vision for a federal UK.

ENDS

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Policy Motion 3

Motion to Reassess the HS2 project in a Post COVID 19 World Jake Knox, Elmet and Rothwell Liberal Democrats

Conference believes that the business case for the HS2 project, which was already being officially challenged for its value for money, and environmental impact, has been fatally undermined by changes to current and forecasted future business and worker behaviour following the emergence of Covid 19. There has been an acceleration in companies conducting business online, and more workers are being offered the option of flexible and remote working, and an increased use of video conferencing. This is likely to continue after the pandemic.

Conference notes that:

1. The HS2 project was prompted by a need to increase capacity in the rail network that has experienced year on year growth in passenger numbers. The government chose a new high speed line over redesigning current mainline rail routes as the two options had comparable costs.
2. HS2 Ltd, in their development of the project, have drastically exceeded the original cost estimate, to the point where the Oakervee Review calculated that the forecast £92.6 billion value of public benefit, was set to be outweighed by the overall £114.5 billion cost.
3. The option of a high speed rail option to expand rail capacity has limited the manoeuvrability of the infrastructure, and the current planned route impacts on over 108 ancient woodlands, and countless local communities en route.
4. The proposed cost savings offered by HS2 Ltd concentrate on scaling back the environmental and compensatory mitigation measures intended to accommodate the blight suffered through construction.
5. The HS2 project was commissioned before the Climate Change Emergency was officially recognised, and both the planned construction and operational model have a poor carbon footprint in comparison with delivering traditional electrified rail.
6. The chaos associated with timetabling changes introduced by rail franchise holders in 2018/19 has prompted the Williams review of the future model of rail delivery. The sustainability of the current model has been further undermined by the successive failure of the East Coast Mainline (and other) franchise operators, and both the Social distancing restrictions and reduced passenger demand associated with the Covid Pandemic.
7. The current uncertainty facing the airline industry, with demand at historic low levels and passengers subject to quarantine and travel restrictions due to measures imposed to control the spread of Covid 19. Also the incompatibility of planned airport activity expansion with the commitment of national and local government to achieve carbon neutrality within decades, and the influence this may have on future rail provision.

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Conference believes that:

- I. Combating global warming is essential, and protecting our environment, and reducing carbon emissions is critical to achieving that.
- II. The reduction in carbon emissions and air pollution experienced during the lockdown associated with controlling the Covid 19 virus should be welcomed, and changes in work practices that helped to achieve this should be encouraged long term.
- III. The importance of active travel to deliver economic growth alongside improved health outcomes has been historically undervalued, and deserves to receive parity of esteem with other travel modes when considering public transport investment.
- IV. Because local rail services account for over 80% of rail journeys in comparison with the 20% involving inter-city travel, that rail investment should be rebalanced to reflect this to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from rail investment.

Conference therefore calls for:

1. A halt to the HS2 project and an immediate review of investment commitments so far, as well as a decoupling of the 'Northern Powerhouse Rail' project to allow this to develop separately.
2. A reassignment of public money previously assigned to HS2 to be considered for a Covid 19 associated transport investment plan to enable short term increased passenger capacity on local and regional rail services, and active travel measures.
3. A review of future national rail investment policy to reflect the lower current and future demand for business executive intercity travel, and the potential for growth for leisure passengers diverted from air travel.
4. A greater proportion of transport investment to be devolved to the regions to assign to diverse transport investment priorities to enhance emerging local economic development models responding to remote working and the climate emergency.

ENDS