

Good morning everybody

It is wonderful to see you all here at the start of a great conference.

We are in a very good place.

Look at what we have achieved since our last conference only 6 months ago.

Number of councillors UP

Number of MEPs UP

Number of MPs UP

Membership UP

Polling UP.

Is there anything that can stop us now?

Here is an easy question: Who in this Hall is a Liberal Democrat?

And who in this hall believes the Climate Crisis is the biggest challenge of the future and we have a moral duty to solve it?

Think about it.

This is who we are.

Being a Liberal Democrat and being an environmentalist go hand in hand.

Our values for a free open tolerant and globally fair society place us right in the centre of the fight against global climate chaos.

Let me remind you of the preamble of our constitution.

'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.'

We fundamentally believe that all people are equal and have an equal right to freedom and prosperity.

That freedom and prosperity for all has to be fought for and safeguarded because it is easily threatened.

Nobody can be free who lives in poverty, nobody is free when displaced or threatened by war.

The Climate Crisis will affect us all. If we allow it to get worse it will create huge global inequalities.

Some parts of our planet will be much worse hit than others, creating extreme poverty and hardship, displacement and possibly war.

We Liberal Democrats make no distinction between people on the basis of race gender or religion.

It matters deeply to us how other people are doing not just in this country but anywhere in the world.

That is what makes us an internationalist party. People in China or Argentina or Nigeria or Iran are our neighbours.

That is why we call out against human rights abuses wherever we witness them.

And that is why we feel particularly called upon to avert a climate catastrophe.

This is our call!

This is who we are!

This is why each and every one of us should be proud to be a Liberal Democrat!

The rise of populist and nationalist leaders across the world directly threatens our democratic values.

It threatens the institutions that have guaranteed our rules based international order.

But additionally what is staring us in the face now is that these populist nationalist leaders also threaten our efforts to tackle the climate crisis.

Whether it is Trump or Bolsanaro or Putin or any other dictator across the world, they all actively encourage activities that create environmental chaos, division, social instability and economic disruption.

Because these are the conditions on which they thrive.

Populist leaders create and deliberately exaggerate the fear of foreigners.

They use this fear for their own personal and self-centred ambition.

Fear is a powerful emotion that blocks out any rational argument.

We cannot ignore the huge dangers to international peace and cooperation that these authoritarian leaders pose.

Climate breakdown will play into their hands.

The potentially huge displacement of people give the perfect excuse for populist leaders to shut down the borders and pull up the draw bridge.

The cry of each and every one of these leaders is 'my country first'.

They do not care about anyone else.

Look at the devastating destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

It would be naïve to think Bolsonaro turns a blind eye for mere short term financial gain, and has no regard for the long- term global implications of such destruction.

More important to realise is that burning down the rainforests and exacerbating the climate crisis is consistent with his disruptive political agenda.

It matters to stand up against these populists and nationalists.

Not just because of the threat to our open society but because of the threat to our planet.

We must fight this.

That is why we are in politics.

That is why we are Liberal Democrats.

Our Liberal Democrat resurgence in the local and European elections give me great hope.

There are millions of people who will not lie down in the face of populism and nationalism.

We must stand with them, and lead them.

We need to encourage action at every level from the individual to the international.

In my constituency of Bath, we swept the board in the local elections in May.

My council, along with many of your councils have now declared a climate emergency.

In contrast to other parties we are not just paying lip service to this commitment, we are actively and seriously preparing the way to a net zero future.

My council colleagues have taken immediate action after winning in May.

They have created a cabinet member for climate change.

All council departments now have to place the climate emergency at the heart of all decision making.

We are preparing for local engagement events with our residents.

And we have started to talk to every player across the council area.

We are engaging with our two universities, our schools, our hospital, our water company our energy providers, our bus company.

We are making sure that each and everyone of them take responsibility for their carbon footprint and drives it to net zero.

We are good at listening to our local communities.

We are good at partnership working.

We are good at local action.

Because we are Liberal Democrats.

We are not in government – for the moment – but many of the policies we want for the whole UK are being worked out in your and my council areas.

It is Lib Dem councillors and activists trying out and sharing ideas.

And we always use evidence to improve what we do.

In the years we were in government our record on climate change was very good.

With Ed Davey, Chris Huhne, Vince Cable and Jo Swinson we made renewable energy happen.

The UK was a pioneer in reducing greenhouse gases.

But what have the Tories done about the Climate Emergency in the last 4 years?

Apart from Theresa May's legacy bill committing the UK to net zero by 2050, the Tories have destroyed almost every bit of progress that we made during the coalition years.

They privatised the Green Investment Bank, one of the drivers of change towards a net zero future.

They have scrapped the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

They have taken away all incentives to drive forward solar energy.

They have completely stopped any further development of the on-shore wind industry, now the cheapest form of renewable energy.

They have blocked development of tidal power.

They have destroyed the Green Deal and they have done nothing to build more carbon zero homes.

IT MUST STOP

But they support fracking.

Nothing tells me more clearly that the Tories haven't got it.

Have they not read the science?

Fracked fuel is a fossil fuel.

In net zero Britain there is no place for fossil fuels.

Supporting the development of a new fossil fuel industry is complete madness.

Fracking MUST STOP.

And now like Trump, Johnson is talking about 'extreme weather events'.

He is moving away from the acceptance of climate change.

They even talk about reducing fuel duty.

These are the words and actions of climate change deniers.

I say again IT MUST STOP!

It is us who will stop it!

Our party has worked out a very detailed policy paper on how we tackle the climate crisis together.

We will debate this on Monday and I am looking forward to a very lively session.

Our approach is clear:

IF we know what we need to do,

LETS DO IT NOW!

We know how to make renewable electricity.

LET'S DO IT NOW!

In twenty-thirty, 11 years from now, under our plans eighty percent of all our electricity will be generated from renewables.

That is our target.

That means solar, marine, offshore and onshore wind.

We know how to decarbonise transport.

LETS DO IT NOW!

From twenty thirty there will be no sales of new petrol or diesel vehicles.

We know how to build energy efficient new homes.

LETS DO IT NOW!

From twenty-twenty-one all new homes will have a minimum energy efficiency requirement.

But there are some sectors where we don't know yet how to get to net zero.

Our approach is to get there through innovation.

With aviation, we urgently need to find alternatives to jet fuel.

This development could take 15 years.

Until then, Liberal Democrats will not support any airport expansion in the UK.

This approach makes us different from the Green Party.

They have no solution for aviation apart from closing it down.

For the Green Party, aviation is the problem.

For the Lib Dems, jet fuel is the problem.

Another example is how we develop so called negative emission technologies.

We need a massive program of tree planting to take carbon out of the air, but by itself that won't be enough. We need to develop and deploy completely new technologies for carbon capture and storage.

And we need to make some big decisions about hydrogen and a hydrogen grid.

Our Liberal Democrat approach is pragmatic, evidence based and decisive.

Above all it is an approach that is pro- innovation.

Liberal Democrats will put British innovators at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

Liberal Democrats will ensure that British business once again will lead the world in this field.

And we will do all this fairly.

Fairness means protecting the low paid, the elderly, the just about managing from higher costs.

Fairness is understanding that if an electric car costs more, only some people can afford to buy one.

Fairness means that the energy efficiency of social housing and rented property is not an optional extra but a requirement on the landlord.

In the Labour Party some are true green campaigners.

But beware the rest who jump on the bandwagon not to save the planet but to change society.

Getting to net zero does not require a socialist utopia.

It does not require a planned economy.

For us climate change is the most pressing issue of our age.

For the Labour Party it will only rank as one problem among many others.

We Liberal Democrats have a long and proud record of environmental campaigning and action.

For many years we have looked at the POSITIVE side of doing things differently.

Imagine our cities free from pollution where walking and cycling is the norm.

Imagine our children moving around independently free from the fear of road accidents. It would allow us all to live much healthier active lives.

Imagine our urban spaces free from congestion and noise.

Imagine well designed homes where fuel poverty is a thing of the past.

Imagine a natural environment where biodiversity thrives.

Imagine the great improvements to our mental health from a life more in tune with nature!

Being a Liberal Democrat and being an environmentalist go hand in hand.

It is in our DNA.

We take the Climate Crisis extremely seriously not out of political opportunism but because we believe in the fundamental equal right of everybody across the globe to live a good life free from fear, free from poverty, free from displacement, free from war.

I hope that having a coherent policy will support each and every one of us, and guide us as Liberal Democrat councillors, MPs and activists in our efforts to get to net zero as soon as possible.

We have a plan, we will act locally, nationally and internationally.

As liberals we are discovering the solutions to the climate crisis through innovation to save our planet from irreversible damage.

As liberals we are taking on populists and nationalists who block international efforts to fight the climate crisis.

As liberals we are protecting the conditions that underpin our open and tolerant societies.

We are not afraid of the challenge.

We know what we need to do!

We are not afraid of the fight!

We will fight.

We must win!