

Chair's Report – Annual General Meeting November 23rd 2025

A warm welcome to everyone at our 2025 AGM.

It was another good year for the Liberal Democrats who did well in the 2025 local elections. It proved largely a straight fight between LibDems and Reform with Labour performing poorly and the Tories disastrously. It was strange to see the LibDems locked together with Reform in the age old fight between liberal democracy and nationalistic populism.

Reform follows Trump's lead. Reform are not anti-elitist, they need the monied classes. What they detest are the educated. It is a cultural war waged against universities, the press, and the bureaucracy. They celebrate those who have fallen behind and those who resent the changes brought on by globalization, the high tech/AI revolution, mass migration and gender and identity issues. They want to return to a past world of stability and shared norms. Unfortunately, they are also very coy and vague on economics.

LibDems address our most powerful needs- betterment, progress and freedom for all. We are a remarkably resilient Party simply because of these yearnings that we represent. We now have 72 M.P.s, more than we have had for over one hundred years. The future seems very bright. The only clouds on the horizon seem to be the potential for painting us into a corner as that nice Party from Southern England that really knows how to handle local government issues together with the fact that most of the UK's young people (aged 16 to 36) have gravitated to the Greens and Labour. These are, fortunately, addressable issues.

Turning now to our own Organization, LibDems Overseas together with LDF and LDE, work in developing the relatively new entity, Liberal Democrats Abroad (LDA). This year LDA representatives on LDA were originally Victoria Bateman and Michael Levett. Michael as a result of heavy commitments elsewhere was forced to retire and Terry Champion took his place. Victoria became LDA Secretary and performed admirably in that role. She is presenting a separate report on all LDA matters for this year.

LDO itself went through a very challenging year. The number of members and supporters remained stable at just over 500, although, as before, there was steady competition from other political operations. There were regular meetings of the Executive at around every six weeks.

Our principal concern was maintaining numbers. On the technical side, for the first time, we were able to establish steady relations with Liberal Democrats HQ Administration and

with their key executives namely Fern McLurg (Finance), Katy Perryment (Governance) and Simon Drage (Compliance). Maintaining and growing membership depends on the ability to pay dues. This has proved problematic, particularly in North America, where credit card companies have run into phishing problems which have caused them to refuse payments. There is the additional internal problem of matching held member address records with those held by the credit card companies. Discrepancies result in refused payments. Many of these above problems, fortunately, have now been solved. On the marketing side, we are moving over to a quota system for growing numbers by area. Of course, it is always difficult in years far from General Elections to achieve goals but we need to keep moving forward.

Our relationship with FIRC (Federal International Relations Committee) is far from clear and we are hoping that Khadija will be elected and shed some more light on the situation. If we become more involved in that Operation we shall insist on having at least two members on that Committee who are elected by LDO.

This year Terry Champion attended both the Spring Conference in Harrogate and the Autumn Conference in Bournemouth. George Cunningham also attended the Autumn Conference. We had a stand at both Conferences which enabled us to meet a number of important Party persons. Mike Dixon, Chief Executive of the LibDems told us that he would not be giving us any particular executive assistant help as any money coming in would be directed to election campaigns. We are very low on the totem pole and that is why it was very important to establish contact with people higher up within the Party who could help us. So emphasis was placed on developing relationships with the expected incoming President and Vice President, Josh Babarinde and Victoria Collins – and so fortunately it turned out. We need to stay close to them. It will help us a great deal going forward.

Our gratitude and thanks go to Tori, Michael, Nick, John, Yolly, George, Colin, Khadija, Hauwa, Edward, Vince and of course Christopher in Hong Kong as well as all other members of the Executive Committee. Sadly, Michael will be leaving us for England but will continue to help where he can as will Colin who is also going back to the UK. Nick Lord will be resigning as Treasurer which is a great loss. They will all be sorely missed.

Respectfully,

Terry Champion, Chair