

Chair Report to Conference

Overview

We started this executive term off the back of a highly successful autumn federal conference, where we challenged the party leadership on housing targets and won, while also securing voting seats on Federal Policy Committee (FPC) and Federal Conference Committee (FCC), improving our voice and our representation across the party.

This year, we have built upon and developed our strong standing within the party. Our efforts during the General Election have been praised from numerous parts of the party, Young Liberals are taking up roles and responsibilities across all levels of the party, and we are developing our relationships within the party which enable us to achieve the respect, recognition, and influence that we have today. Those who have held roles across all levels of the Young Liberals this year and prior, as well as the membership as a whole, have all contributed to the successes that we've had. It's important that we continue to work hard to maintain and build upon the relationships we have and earn the respect and influence we have within the party.

Coming out on the other side of the General Election, we have a lot to be proud of:

- **Young Liberals played a critical role in the General Election, helping the party to lock down seats earlier in the campaign and divert resources to other seats.** Young Liberals were active and visible across the target seats, holding roles at every level of the party including as party staff in winning seats. We mustn't underestimate the impact that we made collectively during the General Election
- **Young Liberals shaped the narrative and policy offer in the General Election,** from Young Liberals being ahead of the curve on the caring agenda in the party, to our flagship 380,000 housing target policy making it to the manifesto. In addition, Young Liberals led in the party on period poverty, and as a result the Liberal Democrats were the only major political party to even mention periods in the manifesto. Young members shaped the manifesto in many other ways, including young women including my predecessor Eleanor Kelly writing policy on fast fashion which featured in the manifesto
- **Young Liberals have built upon years of hard work to create the community that we see today.** Without the work over a number of years, by many people, to professionalise the Young Liberals, to develop our relationships within the party, to increase our visibility within the party, and to earn the position we have secured in the party, none of our successes would have been possible. We will all continue to shape the Young Liberals and what we can collectively achieve, not just in the present but into the future too

I hope you all enjoy conference and come together to celebrate a fantastic General Election result!

General Election

Unfortunately for me personally, the General Election was called after my 2nd of 8 final university exams, which made up the entirety of my grade for my degree. However, I made sure to get things moving as soon as possible, with the executive meeting and agreeing a campaigning and communications strategy as well as a media strategy which I had led on drafting in consultation with Elections Committee, the EYL executive, and other key parties. This helped to give us structure and clarity in how we were going to approach the General Election.

The first half of the General Election period for me involved juggling 6 university exams while leading the efforts of the Young Liberals federally in the election, and thus I often found myself responding to messages or being on phone calls just before and/or just after an exam. Despite this, we started off strong, and I am immensely grateful to Elections Committee, the wider executive, the state executives, YL committees, and all the members and volunteers who helped to make the Young Liberals a strong campaigning force throughout the election. After I completed my exams, I dedicated much more time to the election.

The majority of the coordination on signposting, comms, and phonebanking sessions was done in Elections Committee, while our media strategy involved a small core team of people but with oversight of the executive. Elections Committee worked via Slack to coordinate emails which signposted people on the best places to go to campaign and phonebanking sessions for people to participate in. A lot of my time was spent organising and chasing things in Elections Committee, organising phonebanking sessions (I thank Christopher Johnson in particular who was super helpful with phonebanking), making sure things were followed up and sorting for people to step in where extra support was needed, and I also picked up the Twitter during the election in order to ensure that we had a good amount of output on the Federal Young Liberals Twitter account. Regional chairs played a critical role throughout the election, engaging with and coordinating action days and campaigning activity in their regions and feeding this up to Elections Committee for communications. The regional chairs did an excellent job and I thank them for their hard work during the General Election and outside of the election too.

We were generally effective at adapting, for example by adjusting our strategy with emails to ensure effective signposting, and I invited the English Young Liberals (EYL) Chair to invite additional EYL reps to the Elections Committee Slack to improve the flow of communication and information between the EYL executive and Elections Committee. Our strategies as set out in the beginning of the election sought to establish a principle of “no single point of failure”, both from the point of view of keeping things moving but primarily to ensure that people, who all had a number of commitments on their plate, were able to step away from YL when they needed to without leading to hold-ups or feeling that they were letting the team down or slowing progress. One example of this was that we set the expectation on regional chairs to provide email copy for emails during the election, but where this wasn't done the expectation was clearly on Elections Committee to fill the gaps. Collective responsibility was key. I hope that our reflections on the General Election will help us to come away with recommendations on how best the Young Liberals can work together to be effective while not putting undue stress or pressure on individuals, building upon our approach during this General Election.

On reflection, I think it would have been helpful for the executive to establish ahead of time some goals around what an effective General Election campaign from the Young Liberals looked like to us. Clear targets around, for example, how many phonebanking sessions we should run and when, the various aspects of communications, and other areas would have helped to give all of us clear and common metrics of success. We did exceptionally well throughout the election regardless, but I would advise that the executive and/or Elections Committee at the next General Election makes an effort to reflect upon their goals and targets, acknowledging that these may likely have to adapt throughout the election. Post-election, Elections Committee will be working towards collating key lessons and reflections from this election, in consultation with the membership, to make sure that we can pass on those key lessons to future executives.

Separately, our media strategy throughout the election was highly effective. I would like to thank Joshan Parmar (Co-Branch Development Officer), Harvey Jones (Communications Officer during the General Election), and Ulysse Abbate (Policy Officer) for the considerable amount of help all three of them gave me and others in preparing for media interviews and providing policy briefings. See later in my report for the sorts of media and hustings I did during the election!

Internal Meetings

Executive Meetings

We held executive meetings on the following dates: **26th November, 16th December, 27th January, 27th February, 6th March, 23rd March, 25th May, and 27th July.**

The executive has worked collaboratively together well this year, and I thank everyone for their continuous hard work this year, particularly during the General Election where we all had various different commitments and things on our plate.

We have continued to keep the majority of the executive's work on Slack, which I believe has helped to keep more work-life balance and to keep things in one place and therefore it has made it much easier to keep on top of things. The use of channels for different things has further helped us to keep organised and know where to find relevant discussions and information.

I would particularly like to thank Will Tennison (Membership Development Officer) for his work organising and leading on the executive awayday on the 27th January, which was a fun and helpful way for us to work on teambuilding and come together to assess our individual and collective goals.

Elections Committee

I held Elections Committee meetings on: **8th December, 8th January, 21st February, and 1st April.**

Elections Committee is a new structure in the Young Liberals, chaired by myself as the Federal Chair with committee members from the federal executive as well as representatives from the state executives. Overall, I think this committee has worked well together and as discussed previously, it was particularly useful during the General Election.

The Young & Winning side of Elections Committee was led on by Miguel Smith and Nicholas Orford-Williams (Co-Elections Officers), so I shall leave it to their report to cover that part of the committee's role. Instead, I shall focus on the campaigning and action days side of the role, where I haven't previously elaborated in the "General Election" section of this report, as that is where I have been most involved as Chair.

Prior to the General Election, I was involved in the organisation of a few action days, but most action days were organised at the regional level. As a result, I started working directly with regional chairs on a "Summer of Campaigning". As luck would have it, shortly after I had managed to coordinate and get dates in the diary for 6 action days across the summer, with Harvey Jones (Communications Officer at the time) starting on the comms for those action days, the General Election was called. A key lesson here is that in future we need to make sure we are putting in strong effort on action days well in advance of the general election. Of the 6 action days we planned for the summer, only one went ahead as a federal action day – Eastbourne on 1st June – whereas otherwise we moved into General Election mode.

Having this group of people dedicated to all things elections has been helpful in strengthening our campaigning efforts and it was critical to making sure that we were well-organised and signposting people effectively during the General Election.

The next key priority for Elections Committee will be reflecting upon the lessons we've learnt from the General Election in order to make sure that we preserve those lessons for the generation of Young Liberals at the next election. We will be seeking feedback from members in the process of doing this.

Other Internal Meetings & Events

Some of the other internal meetings I've had this term have included:

- **HVPs:** The current cohort of HVPs have been absolutely amazing and a continuous source of institutional memory and general wisdom. At the beginning of the term, I met with the HVPs to discuss the year ahead, and throughout the year the HVPs have been super helpful
- **State executives:** I attended meetings of the English Young Liberals and the Welsh Young Liberals executives, learning more about their work and projects and helping to coordinate between the federal and state levels in the organisations
- **Onboarding:** Where new individuals have joined this executive, I have set up onboarding meetings. In February, I met with Samuel Wilson for his onboarding as the Welsh Rep to the executive, in July I met with Olivia Dunn as the new Women's Rep to help with her onboarding in the absence of an Accessibility, Diversity & Standards Officer, and on the 10th August I had an onboarding call with Sarah Anderson, our new Communications Officer. After conference, I will be meeting with Tom Jordan and Rowan Fitton (Co-International Officers) for onboarding with them
- **Thank-you party, 27th July:** Katharine Macy (Secretary) and Will did an excellent job hosting the recent Young Liberals General Election thank-you party, during which I spoke about the impact that the Young Liberals made throughout the General Election and what we have to look forward to as an organisation moving forward
- Alongside **other ad-hoc meetings** with exec members and others throughout the organising to work on various projects and discuss ideas. For example, I recently met with Chang Liu (Racial Equity, Diversity and Liberation Officer) and Olivia Dunn (Women's Rep) to talk about membership engagement

External Meetings, Events, and Activities

Federal Board

As the Young Liberals representative to Federal Board, I attended the Federal Board meetings on: **20th November, 13th January** (the awayday), **19th February, 20th May, 26th May,** and **27th July.**

Throughout my time as Chair, the members of the Federal Board have been welcoming and I've quickly found myself comfortable to contribute and get involved. One particular win was my work with Claire Hudson (Chair of the Federal People Development Committee) on that committee on DBS checks, and together we took a paper to Federal Board in February.

In addition, I've gotten involved with Federal Board work outside of meetings, and I would advise the next Chair does the same in order to support the wider work of the party and the Federal Board, gain a better understanding of various aspects of the party, and develop relationships.

Federal People Development Committee (FPDC)

As the Young Liberals representative to FPDC, I have attended meetings of the Federal People Development Committee and sub-committees of it on: **7th December, 2nd January, 5th February, 6th February, 13th February, and 2nd April.**

On FPDC, I have chaired the Safeguarding & Welfare working group, working on projects such as looking at how we can further implement DBS checks in the party. In addition, I am a member of the Diversity Sub-Committee, and I have participated actively in FPDC meetings.

FPDC has provided a really useful platform for us as the Young Liberals to make a positive impact in the party. With its remit covering membership, training, and diversity, the Young Liberals should not underestimate how useful our seat on FPDC is and the amount of impact we can make through this committee.

Action Days and Campaigning

The following is a list of the action days and campaigning that I attended:

- **Chelmsford action day, 2nd December:** I went along to a Young Liberals action day I organised in Chelmsford, tagging onto an action day they had already planned, to campaign for now-MP Marie Goldman
- **Newbury action day, 9th December:** Arthur Wu hosted a fantastic action day and Christmas party in Newbury which I attended, where we campaigned for now-MP Lee Dillon
- **Winchester action day, 20th January:** Nathan Eve organised a fantastic action day in Winchester where we campaigned for Danny Chambers who, you guessed it, is now an MP!
- **Southampton action day, 21st January:** We campaigned in Southampton for YL council candidate Thomas Gravatt and Geoff Cooper, who was PPC for Romsey and Southampton North
- **Esher & Walton, 3rd February:** I joined the team in Esher & Walton campaigning for now-MP Monica Harding
- **Winchester action day, 17th February:** Nathan Eve (South Central Regional Chair) ran another brilliant action day in Winchester, which I attended
- **Eastleigh action day, 18th February:** Nathan's second action day of the weekend was also a huge success, and it was great to be out campaigning for now-MP Liz Jarvis
- **Swansea canvassing, 13th March:** This was my first time campaigning in Wales!
- **Rebecca Jones (GLA) action day, 4th April:** I supported Rebecca Jones (Non-Portfolio Officer) with her GLA campaign
- **St Helier West by-election (Carshalton & Wallington) action day, 6th April:** Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in this by-election, but I had a great time nonetheless and it was fantastic to be able to support now-MP Bobby Dean
- **Brecon, Radnor & Cym Tawe action day, 4th May:** WYL organised an action day for now-MP David Chadwick, which I attended. This action day was well-attended by WYL members and Jane Dodds, Leader of the Welsh Party, also came along

- **Campaigning in the short campaign:** I campaigned in seats including Winchester, Taunton, Cheadle, and Brecon, Radnor & Cwn Tawe during the short campaign, and I organised and participated in phonebanking within the Young Liberals
- **Maidenhead action day, 4th July:** Nathan Eve helped to organise the first major Young Liberals action day since the General Election, which was for Young Liberals MP Joshua Reynolds. This action day was well-attended and it was a positive start with campaigning for the new Parliament

Conferences

Alongside a super successful Young Liberals Winter Conference, I attended the following party conferences this term:

- **South Central Conference, 25th November**
 - I was invited to speak at the South Central regional conference, where I talked about the importance of engaging with young people
- **Welsh conference, 2nd-3rd March**
 - I attended Welsh conference for the first time, and I was highly impressed by the work of the Welsh Young Liberals
 - WYL was successful in their fundraising efforts, Welsh Young Liberals made fantastic speeches during debates, and they passed a constitutional amendment to get WYL seats on the Welsh Party constitutional affairs and finance and resources committees, meaning that there are now WYL seats on every Welsh Party committee
 - I would highly recommend going to state party conferences if you have the means – I learnt a lot from the conference
- **Federal conference, 15th-17th March**
 - The efforts at federal conference from Young Liberals across the board were fantastic – thank you to everyone who came to federal conference and helped to make our presence known and represent the Young Liberals
 - **Education Policy Institute x Magic Breakfast private roundtable:** I attended this private roundtable talking about the importance of breakfasts for school children and education policy interventions to tackle inequalities
 - **Delivering training:** Wil Tennison (Membership Development Officer) and I delivered two training sessions, one on winning the youth vote and another on recruiting young members. Thank you to Will for all the work putting these sessions together!
 - **BBC 5Live:** On the Saturday of conference, Cllr Thom Campion and I featured on BBC 5Live on Stephen Nolan's segment. I talked about the party's appeal to young people and highlighted our work on housing targets last year
 - **Informal catch-ups:** I had a handful of informal catch-ups with colleagues inside and outside of the party who were present at conference

Within the Liberal Democrats

- **Mark Pack:** I have met and had phone calls with Mark Pack (Party President) a number of times throughout this term, including Zoom calls on **27th November, 15th January,** and **1st August,** and more ad hoc communication in between

- **Meetings with key contacts across the party:** I have met or spoken over the phone to people including Wendy Chamberlain MP as Chief Whip, Candy Piercy as Chair of the Disciplinary Sub-Group, colleagues in the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors & Campaigners (ALDC) and the Local Government Association (LGA), and Nicole Turner (Federal Diversity & Inclusion Manager)
- **Manifesto launch, 10th June:** Following the General Election being called, I attended the manifesto launch along with a number of other Young Liberals

Outside the Liberal Democrats

- **Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 1st November:** Sean and Kai (Co-International Officers at the time) and myself met with Westminster Foundation for Democracy to talk about their work within the party and our work in international in the Young Liberals
- **Generation Rent, 16th November:** Generation Rent held a launch event for their report in the House of Lords, during which I learnt about patterns in voter registration and voting patterns among private renters. This was also a great opportunity to connect with people who share our ambitions on housing
- **Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) conference, 13th June:** The Higher Education Policy Institute invited me to take part in a youth hustings during their conference in London as a representative of the Liberal Democrats / the Young Liberals. It was a great opportunity to put forward our policies on Higher Education to an audience of key stakeholders in Higher Education
- **LBC youth hustings, 20th June:** Ian Dale's team reached out during the General Election to invite me to take part in their youth hustings chaired by Ian. We had a fun debate and I enjoyed representing our party and discussing our offer to young people
- **Spoke to House Magazine, 9th August:** I had a call with a journalist at the House Magazine recently to have a chat ahead of a piece they are writing on attitudes to housing within the Liberal Democrats

Projects, Ongoing Work, and Coming Up

Keeping Visible

As well as other external-facing work I have discussed throughout this report, I have continued to work to keep YL visible and to highlight our work inside the party and beyond.

On **1st August**, I published a piece on Lib Dem Voice titled "The Party of young people: The critical contribution of young members", where I highlighted the impact we made during the General Election and talked about what's next for the Young Liberals. You can read my article here: <https://www.libdemvoice.org/the-party-of-young-people-the-critical-contribution-of-young-members-75775.html>

I have also been invited to contribute an article to Chamber UK for their journal with a particular focus on the environment. This is an exciting opportunity for us to have a voice as Young Liberals outside of the party.

Fundraising

I have been assisting our new Fundraising Officer, Samuel Wilson, on his efforts to push forward our fundraising. Most recently, I helped out with a merch design and worked with Sam to get the

Young Liberals signed up to Lib Dem Draw (please buy raffle tickets to sort us! Buy tickets here: <https://libdemdraw.org.uk/young-liberals>). For the rest of my term, I will be using my position as Chair of the Young Liberals to try to secure more funding for the organisation and support fundraising efforts.

Young Liberals Future Councillors (YLFC)

Applications are now open for Young Liberals Future Councillors, a scheme we run in collaboration with ALDC to support a cohort of Young Liberals hoping to get elected as councillors in the coming year. YLFC includes support from experienced campaigners, a fully-funded spot at Kickstart, an online training programme, and a piece of direct mail for your ward. If you are running for council next year, even if you don't have a lot of support locally, do consider applying ahead of the deadline on 11th September: <https://www.aldc.org/2024/08/young-liberals-future-councillors-2024-25-last-chance-to-apply/>.

Hiring a New Staff Member

Our Young Liberals Development Officer, Alex Hartley, is moving on to start an exciting job with one of our new MPs. I thank Alex for his work for the Young Liberals, including during the General Election where he worked with colleagues in HQ to mobilise young members and ensure the work of the Young Liberals was fed into federal strategy.

Consequently, we are currently hiring for a new Young Liberals Development Officer. This is an exciting time to join our team so do consider applying for the role. The job advert is here: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/work-for-us/federal-vacancy/young-liberals-development-officer>.

Federal Conference

I am starting a master's degree at Queen's University Belfast in September, which means that I will likely be moving out to Belfast during federal conference. I hope to attend at least some of federal conference, but I will be looking for support from the executive for federal conference activities that I would usually be involved in as the Chair.

This is set to be a brilliant conference as our first federal party conference since the General Election, so do consider coming along! Register here: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference>

Thank You!

Finally, I would like to thank YL members for supporting me to be Chair of the Young Liberals for coming up two years. It has been a pleasure and an honour to do this role and I know the organisation will be in good hands when I step down at the end of this term.

Additionally, thank you to the federal executive, state executives, committees, HVPs, and members for the support and the hard work throughout my time as Chair. We have so much to be proud of together and I look forward to seeing how future executives take YL forward.