



# LIBERAL REFORM

BOURNEMOUTH 2017 BRIEFING



**KELLY-MARIE BLUNDELL**



**SIR EDWARD DAVEY**



**TIM CAMERON**

**Fringe event - Sunday 17th September 1pm-2pm, BIC Durley Suite**

## MAKING COMPETITION WORK

With other parties promising price caps & nationalisation, how can Liberals harness competition to stop consumers overpaying millions in banking, phone & utilities contracts? Join **Sir Ed Davey MP** - former Lib Dem secretary of state for energy and competition minister, **Tim Cameron** from Transferwise & **Kelly-Marie Blundell** Lib Dem PPC for Lewes to discuss.

### MEET LIBERAL REFORM

**Look out for Justin Trudeau, Solent Hall, Ground Floor BIC**

Snapchat time! Liberal Reform will be running an exhibition stall, so look out for Justin Trudeau at stand 38 - where you have a chance to take photos to share on Facebook/Twitter with everybody's favourite Liberal Prime Minister. While learning more about Liberal Reform from our team you also have the opportunity to buy some really cool political badges to show off.



## TIME TO BREAK OUT OF THE BUBBLE

The first party conference after a General Election is an opportunity for the party to reflect on the results, good and bad. While it is good to move forward, many of us expected more progress in the face of such a gulf in the centre. It is as if Corbyn and May fed off each other's weakness, and we did not have the strength to stand out as an alternative.

Our conference, as usual, will make policy to demonstrate our values and soft virtues, to the neglect of other qualities: the toughness required to govern in coalition while under siege from all sides, and the fierce dedication to our communities that we show in local government.

Meanwhile the world keeps changing. That Corbyn might win an election and pursue a Venezuelan style calamity should terrify supporters of all parties. Trump surely means that Europe will have to pay for its own defence. Brexit will bring more hardship. Will you hear this? We can even talk about terrorism without mentioning Daesh.

Liberal Reform appeals to the party, again, to try to think outside the conference bubble. To seek out new answers to new problems, recognising the changing world. To find a better way to earn the public's trust as the voice of the moderate, liberal, tolerant centre ground that is under siege from the other parties.

#### The Motions

**F4 Learning to Communicate in English**

**F16 Armed Forces Personnel: Recruitment, Retention and Welfare**

**F30 European Atomic Energy Community**

**F34 Gun and Knife Crime**

These motions offer policy on important topics, but are unlikely to be controversial. These policies could be formulated by the party leadership without any objections, but the debates are a chance for members to show their interest and understanding.

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## F6 The Paris Agreement and UK Climate Change Policy

This motion calls for a new policy paper on energy and climate change. It is not said what is wrong with the existing policy, and indeed from the direction given, it does appear that the new policy paper is expected to be more of the same.

## F8 The Impact of Brexit on Public Services

This is a good motion. The NHS and English schools are desperate to recruit staff from both within and outside of the EU, but the combination of Brexit, the imposition of the Immigration Skills Charge (soon to be doubled), and the NHS levy (soon to be tripled) have made working in Britain quite unattractive. We support the motion, but would like to see it go further in attacking recent increases to the costs employers face in employing foreign workers.

## F10 Natural Environment Policy

We hear in the most general terms about environmental challenges and the importance of "investment in the natural environment". It is not made clear what sort of investment is meant here or how the environmental problems we face - urban air quality and climate change being the significant ones - will be solved by "investment in the natural environment" as opposed to, for example, technological alternatives to the processes that degrade our air quality or cause climate change.

The other big theme here is that the environment needs a lot more accounting and box ticking.

This is dismal. A natural environment policy should say what the top two or three environmental problems are and what the government ought to do about them.

## F17A Opposing Brexit

This change to the agenda has been precipitated by a petition to call a special conference to debate an item rejected by the Federal Conference Committee. This does not seem to be a reasonable procedure.

The motion itself seeks to tie the party to a particular anti-Brexit strategy, that may not be the most effective, and may obstruct the building of a larger and potentially successful coalition. It is an opportunity for the proposers to claim to be more pro-European than the rest of us, and to look for traitors among their allies. It should not be indulged.

## F21 Safe Building Standards for all Homes

This is a response to Grenfell, a terrible tragedy that rightly demands our attention. We support the inquiry into the causes of the fire and to make recommendations to prevent it happening again. The motion, however, creates a hostage to fortune by speculating on causes and solutions in advance of the inquiry's findings. There has been huge investment in cladding in recent years, in the belief that this was a good idea, so it may be hard to sustain the view that the fire was caused by "failure ... to invest".

## F22 Centenary of Balfour Declaration

An important motion carefully put together by negotiation with both LD Friends of Palestine and LD Friends of Israel. While neither group will be entirely happy with it, we hope it can be passed unamended by partisans of either stripe, or what hope is there for the actual peace process?

## F24 Defeating Terrorism, Protecting Liberties

This could be stronger in emphasising the critical importance of judicial oversight for any surveillance measures, and it could say more about what we would do (as opposed to won't do) to prevent terrorist atrocities. There should be support for the liberation of captives and territory from Daesh.

## F26 Employment in the 21st Century

A sober response to the demands of the 'gig economy', protecting the rights of workers without unduly constraining radical new business models that promise to deliver great benefits to consumers.

## F28 Encouraging Companies to be Responsible Corporate Citizens

This motion proposes significant additional regulation of corporate governance. It is not very clear what problems this regulation seeks to solve or how it would be effective.

We believe this approach reflects a socialist viewpoint: that corporations are irresponsible if they focus on making and selling the best products and services they can, profiting, innovating, and creating jobs; but that they can be made responsible with sufficient well-intentioned regulation.

We take the opposite view: that making and selling good products and services, profiting, innovating and creating jobs is a good thing. Regulation should not seek to stifle the animal spirits that drive this, but rather should be applied surgically to specific problems, and judged by its consequences not the intentions behind it.

Some of the proposals are reasonable, but others seek to undermine the principle of fair and honest competition, while dressed up in good intentions. And those on executive pay are just weak.

## F32 Protecting Small Businesses

We welcome this pro-business motion recognising the vital role many small businesses play in their local communities, though it seems a little odd to single out pubs, cafes, restaurants and hotels as meriting a cap in business rate increases: these are not necessarily the businesses of the greatest community value or in the greatest need.

