Officer and Committee Reports

President

Tim Sly

2026 has been a very challenging year for the party here in Wales.

Senedd Elections

The Party's main focus this year was the campaign for the Senedd elections in May.

At the end of 2025, the Board set up a Senedd Election Campaign Team to oversee campaigning for the Senedd elections. With very limited resources at our disposal, the campaign team decided to focus efforts on a small number of target seats. It would be an understatement to say that our results were disappointing, however with the benefit of hindsight, we can be proud of what we were able to achieve with a very limited budget and a small number of dedicated activists.

So I want to start by paying tribute to all our Senedd candidates who campaigned so hard, not just during the short campaign, but in many cases for well over a year before election day.

Some missed out by a relatively small number of votes, while others knew they wouldn't win but still campaigned hard to get the party message out there right across Wales. And of course congratulations to Jane Dodds on securing re-election in Brecheiniog Tawe Nedd, where many polls were suggesting that this would be an uphill struggle with changed boundaries and a new electoral system. We may still only have one member in the Senedd, but in the circumstances of this year's election, that in itself constitutes a result.

Election review

Following the Senedd election, the Board commissioned an independent review of the election campaign. This was undertaken by Lord Mark Pack, former Federal Party president and current chair of the Federal Elections and Campaigns Committee, tog ether with Baroness Christine Humphries.

They were given a completely free hand by the Board to conduct the review as they saw fit and over the course of several months they interviewed candidates, staff members, party officers, local activists and campaigners. They also analysed a mountain of data to come up with a report which is very fair and balanced and which recommends the positive steps the party can take to improve our effectiveness and win more seats at local, Senedd and Westminster level in the future.

The Board has already started to implement several of the recommendations made in the review, and this weekend's conference provides an opportunity for members to question Lord Pack on the finding of the review, as well discussing the recommendations contained in it.

A New Leadership.

Following the Senedd Elections, Jane Dodds has decided to step down after nine years as party leader and David Chadwick has secured the required nominations to succeed her as leader of the Welsh party. We all owe Jane a huge debt of gratitude for her work leading the party through some very difficult and challenging times. She has provided leadership, encouraged more women and younger members to stand for election, travelled the length and breadth of Wales to support local candidates and campaigners and even in the toughest times has always done this with a smile. And let's not forget her huge achievements in the Senedd, including more funding for social care, the expansion of free childcare and the £1 bus fare for young people.

And so we welcome David Chadwick as our new leader. David will bring a different style of leadership and a fresh energy ready to lead the Party forward into next year's local elections and the next General Election.

Building Back

During 2026, we lost several valued members of the team. On the staff side, we built up a large team in the run up to the Senedd election and sadly many of these have now left us as we can't justify keeping such a large team in place now the elction is over. Nick Beckett, our Executive Officer for Finacne and Resources also resigned due to work commitments. We thank Nick for his hard work over the last few years and look forward to welcoming his replacement soon.

As we renew our Party team in this year's internal party elections, we know we

have a big task ahead of us. We need to show we can win seats in next year's local elections, to build our base of activist in the run up to the next General Election.

We also need to significantly increase our fundraising efforts to provide the resources to support our excellent candidates and campaigners and to get our message heard right across Wales. But I know that with your help we can do this.

Deputy President

Sam Bennett

Since the Senedd Election, I have taken on designing and delivering a Governance review alongside party staff. We have completed phase 1 which was to look at what has been working well and where improvements are necessary. Phase 2 has been delayed due to other priorities.

Additionally, the committee has been working closely to tidy-up inconsistencies within the constitution, so big thanks to Nathan Tarr who has been leading on this work, and the constitutional amendments were presented at this conference.

Other amendments have been approved by constitutional affairs committee looking at Councillor recognition and group status which was absent from our constitution but present in other state party constitutions.

In the coming months we hope to get back on track with the Governance review to present findings to the party.

Diversity Officer

Nathan Tarr

Diversity officer report to conference held on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd November 2026 at Park Lodge Hotel, Fordd Parc y Llyn, SY23 3TL, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales.

Headline matters

First year in role: It's been a learning curve as to what is involved in the role, having taken up the post back in January. I've been involved with board meetings and appropriate committee meetings ensuring that the party's strategic direction, policy and approach has considered people of diverse communities.

Diversity guide for local parties: A diversity guide was put together around march time to be circulated to local parties. It was shared with the board secretary for circulation. If any local party has not received it, I have annexed it to my report and electronic copies can also be sent via email on request.

Connection with other diversity officers: I've been included in an Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) WhatsApp group with diversity officers that are based interregionally, federal staff and the diversity AOs. This will come in handy if I encounter any "blind spots" when undertaking any duties.

Observations

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues: Over the course of the year, an EDI complaint has been received and is currently being dealt with through the appropriate processes.

I would like to remind all members that the Welsh Liberal Democrats reject discrimination in all its forms. This is reflected in the party's values, the Welsh and Federal Constitutions and members' and candidates' codes of conduct. Every member should be able to participate in party activities free from discrimination, harassment or prejudice.

Any allegation of discrimination will be taken seriously and considered based

on the available evidence. Where concerns are raised with me as Diversity Officer, I will seek to establish the relevant facts and ensure that matters are referred through the appropriate procedures where necessary.

Where evidence indicates that discriminatory conduct may have occurred, I will not hesitate to refer matters to the appropriate party bodies for investigation and action. Equally, where wider organisational or systemic concerns are identified, I will raise these through the relevant governance structures so that they can be properly addressed.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion must be more than words. It must be reflected in how we treat one another, how we conduct ourselves, and how we support members from all backgrounds to participate fully within our party and in the society we wish to see.

I would also encourage any member who has concerns, requires advice, or would like support on an EDI matter to contact me. Seeking guidance will always be welcomed, and I am happy to assist local parties and individual members wherever I can. Sometimes, I may not have the answer myself, but I will liaise with other diversity officers and the diversity AOs when needed to find the best way forward.

Looking forward

As we head towards the 2027 local elections in May, there is no doubt that many local parties are going to be very busy with getting members elected, and I wish all members the very best of luck with elections to their local and town/community councils in their areas.

Although this would've been something that I would have hoped to have done this year, I plan to meet with local parties once the local elections are concluded and see what things I can do for them as diversity officer and any other matters that may need to be brought to their attention.

Executive Officer for Campaigns and Communications

Richard Marbrow

It has been an interesting first year in post with a Senedd election leading to a complete upheaval of Welsh politics ending a 100 year Labour winning streak, some success in council by-elections for our teams in North, South and Mid Wales, the arrival of a new Prime Minister in Downing Street with yet another impact in the polls and finally proof from across the Atlantic that nothing in politics is predictable (anyone have the Democrats winning the Deep South state of Mississippi on their bingo card?)

The Senedd election

This Conference is considering the aftermath of the Senedd election and I'm not going to pretend that standing still with one Senedd member wasn't disappointing. With that said there were polls in the election that predicted we would be wiped out and we held Jane Dodds' seat in Brycheiniog Tawe Nedd, retaining representation in the Senedd.

This conference is considering the review of the Senedd campaign authored by Mark Pack and Chris Humphreys and I would like to put on record my appreciation of their efforts on that report. The report makes useful and at times worrying reading and some of its recommendations are being put into action already.

Council by-elections

We have had some solid success in a number of by-elections across the country this year and we have proved out the theory that where we can establish ourselves as the alternative to Reform voters normally drawn to other parties will lend us their votes to defeat them. Gains in Swansea's Fairwood, Yscir with Honddu Isaf and Llanddew in Powys and a tricky defence in Argoed and New Brighton in Flintshire following the Senedd election are proof that our campaigning can still work and that local action counts for something with the voters.

Committee Workplan

The Campaigns and Communications Committee is meeting regularly (we still have vacancies if people want to get involved) and we are focussing on a workplan covering 6 key strands of work:

Data and Technology – where we look at how to increase our quantity and quality of data, use it to help us campaign and recruit and monitor activity across the country.

By elections – Pushing for candidates in every by election and spreading best practice from one campaign team to another. By elections are an opportunity rather than a distraction for us.

Local Elections – Working to bolster the Welsh Party contribution to local election campaigns in 2027 and the future.

Messaging – There is a substantial session on this at Conference as we seek to put in place a distinctively Welsh Liberal Democrat message that can form the basis of national campaigns. Our messaging work is not only designed to help us win votes but also to help us recruit the next generation of volunteers, activists and members.

Campaigns Development – This strand includes work on member comms, social media, younger voters and seeing Welsh language campaigning as an opportunity for us rather than as a problem or obstacle.

People – The Committee is working on regenerating our pipeline of people development to move people through providing a poster site to being a deliverer, on to membership, helping members become activists and then upskilling activists to be able to run larger campaigns and spread their expertise to others. This strand also encompasses our efforts to work better with neighbouring regions in England and with the Scottish party.

A theme running through every strand is the need for sustainability and growth. Our current numbers of members and activists isn't enough to support an active Welsh party and to get our activity levels back to a place where we can move foreard electorally. We will need to get stronger right across the country if we are going to win in proportional representation elections and with the possibility of a change in the Westminster voting system now a reality we need to be able to campaign across wider and larger areas consistently.

You will see in the election review and in messages by email that we're not managing high enough levels of activity but I don't want anyone to think that we're not recognising the work that people are doing.

I am grateful to our staff members including those who have moved are are moving on to other jobs not in the Welsh party. Thank you for your service and I recognise that you don't do it for the riches!

I'm grateful to every deliverer, activist and member who is working to promote Liberal Democracy in Wales. I am particularly grateful to the candidates who have given people the opportunity to vote Welsh Liberal Democrat in council by-elections and to all of the Senedd candidates who made sure we had the credibility of a full slate in May. A particular thanks from me to any candidate at any level who stood with little chance of winning but did it for the good of the party rather than themselves. There may be minimal glory in that for people but there is a massive amount of value in giving people a choice.

Diolch yn fawr to everyone who has delivered a leaflet, knocked on a door, addressed an envelope and organised a campaign this year and good luck for 2027.

Policy Development Committee

Steve Aicheler

The PDC was reconvened after a period of inactivity in the spring. Immediate focus was on supporting the publication of a manifesto for the Senedd Election, a task which was primarily completed by the then Chair with some limited input from committee members.

The poor Senedd result, coupled with frustration with the manifesto process appeared to result in the resignation of a number of ordinary members of the committee. A single meeting was held in the early summer, shortly after which the Chair of the committee resigned and left the party.

Limited members and holidays resulted in no further meetings being able to be scheduled until November when Steve Aicheler was elected as interim Chair and a limited amount of work was completed to contribute to the Autumn conference.

The committee is looking forwards to the appointment of a new permanent Chair and welcomes that there appears to be interest in the role. They would strongly encourage party members to stand as ordinary members to enable to committee to be in a position to become more effective.

Conference Committee

Chair: Claire Waller

I took over as Conference Committee Chair from Jon Burree at the beginning of this year, and I would like to start by thanking him for all of his hard work and diligence during his tenure. Arrangements for the Spring Conference in Cardiff were already well in hand. The Spring Conference was excellent, and we presented ourselves well as a credible and professional party. The venue suited our needs very well, and we were especially complimented on the location of the exhibition hall outside of the conference hall. The exhibition itself was at full capacity and the exhibitors reported back that they were very happy with their experience at our conference, and that it compared favourably to other party conferences that they had attended.

We also had several quality motions submitted and debated, including a sustainable future for our cultural bodies, a school leaver's guarantee designed to tackle NEETS, the Welsh economy, including a lively debate on the tourism tax, local energy generation in Wales, protecting patients prescribed medical cannabis, exploring enhanced EU alignment for Welsh trade and industry and fairer funding and increased devolution for Wales.

We also had the opportunity for a member led discussion on priorities for the Senedd manifesto, which was conducted in a very civilised and constructive manner of which I think as a party we should be proud.

The entire conference had a positive atmosphere about it. We had two conference hall debates booked, four fringes, 46 observers, and 93 members attending, and the whole venue was constantly buzzing. This culminated with the Conference Dinner, at which we had an excellent speaker in Josh Babarinde, and also reignited the traditional Conference Dinner fundraiser event (obviously in addition to the obligatory raffle) with the Letterbox Challenge, which I think caused some fun and amusement to conclude the evening, although I am of course biased. The effect of this was that Conference fundraising made a profit of £1,500. This reversed a trend of conference not having generated the resources that it should, and it is a priority of the committee going forward to aim to make conferences increasingly profitable for the party, and I would implore members to participate in our conference fundraisers where possible, especially given the

effort put in by the committee to organise them, and remember that we are doing it all to raise money for the party. We will endeavour to put as much fun as possible into the fundraising.

There were a few minor issues involving accessibility, and some interesting administrative challenges, but these are learning points for future conferences, and did not detract from an overall excellent Conference.

Of course, a lot of the external interest was on account of the upcoming Senedd elections, and everything has been a lot more challenging and difficult since then. We have been saddened as a committee by the number of members that we have lost as they have resigned for various reasons. The number of vacancies has definitely increased the pressure on other committee members who do not always have the capacity to take on more commitments. We have also faced greater budgetary pressures, since, as is the case for everyone else, everything is becoming rapidly more expensive. We really struggled to find a venue for Autumn Conference that was within the Board's budget, and that also met all of the requirements of a quality venue, which meant meeting a significant number of criteria, such as we had been asked to find in order to maintain the perception of us as a serious political party. This basically proved impossible as the venue that we needed this time did not exist. I persevered in trying to find a suitable or better venue, which regrettably proved unsuitable, and this is the reason for the late conference in less than ideal circumstances. However, we shall make the best of it, and are trialling a single thread model with only one event happening at a time, to try to encourage greater participation. We as a committee intend to look at other options regarding Autumn Conference going forward, because whilst our conferences are vital for making our policies

and conducting democratic process, none of our policies are getting the attention that they deserve whilst we're not getting people elected, and I will stretch the point in my Conference Committee report to say that as a prime function of Conference is to make policy, and we need to elect good Welsh Liberal Democrats in order to implement said policy, that it is just about within my remit to encourage people to get out there campaigning and give Reform and all of the other nasties some posterior percussive persuasion, in the best interests of Conference, as well as the rest of the party.

The committee has learned from the challenges faced in organising this conference, and plans for Spring Conference 2027 are well underway. One of our priorities is to get back to the system that we had of having conferences

being planned eighteen months in advance. In the meantime we have found a very promising and exciting new venue and are in the process of confirming its viability and affordability. Hopefully, we will have an announcement very soon.

The committee has worked well together over the past several months, and meetings have always been conducted amicably and constructively. I have very much enjoyed working with each and every member of the committee. However, particular thanks have to go to Elgan Morgan who as the member of staff dealing with the organisational side of conference is indispensable. He is the rock upon which conference is founded, and as such the committee do try our best, especially at conference itself, to make sure that he is not swamped by too much paperwork. It is humbling to see how many complex factors have to fit together to make a conference work, and how overlooking one seemingly little thing, like for example the conference set, can cause absolute chaos. On this occasion at least, I can assure Elgan that I have packed the raffle tickets.

Thank you to everyone who has come to one or more of our conferences this year. We hope that you enjoyed it, and if so please encourage others to come next year, when we will continue to strive to make Conference even better.

Welsh State Chair of Candidates

Julian Tandy

2026 has been a busy year for candidates with Senedd selections and elections and then starting the Westminster selections in July. The first half of the year was all about Wales and the Senedd and the second half all about Federal Joint Candidates Sub Committee (JCSC) and Westminster selections.

Welsh Candidates Sub Committee (WCSC) is working well despite being a couple of members short and I can't thank enough the members of that new committee for a year of hard work, all of whom are also Returning Officers running multiple selections.

Last year ended and this one started with WCSC running full day training sessions for all our Senedd candidates to prepare them for May. These were well received and very successful, both as information deliverers and as team bonding exercises for each Senedd selection team. By the nominations stage I was only a couple of candidates short, and a few persuasive conversations meant we did submit all 96 names and had a full Welsh Liberal Democrat slate for the Senedd elections. I was proud of all the work involved in getting us to a full slate including risk assessments on each candidate and I was proud of how all the candidates performed and the work they all put in.

This then led to a full post Senedd election candidate review and whilst a few stood down most of the candidates completed the review and were put back onto a very healthy looking Senedd candidates list for us to start with for 2030. This review was then incorporated into the full Senedd review which is being presented at this conference.

Finally in early 2026 the F10 motion from Federal Spring 25 conference was ratified by England and I was in the great position of now having access to a full Candidates Office (CO) in London of 5 staff. This meant that things such as the Senedd Candidates review forms could be properly set up online by CO for us and make life a lot easier for process driven procedures and support.

With the joining of Wales, Scotland and England on all things federal relating to candidates and selections it has meant that my role on JCSC has expanded significantly with me as WSCC now covering selections, “star chambers” and interviews for a whole host of non-Welsh selections, from the Greater

Manchester Mayor race to the Makerfield by-election and a host of other selections. I have also represented Wales at an internal Federal event bringing together members of a variety of official Lib Dem groups to see how we can improve diversity amongst candidates. So far this year I have attended four in person and half a dozen on-line JCSC meetings, as well as almost daily working with the CO. In addition, I am part of the JCSC team involved in a full review of the whole federal Candidate approval process which should I hope make some significant changes to the system from 2027.

As part of this combined Federal Candidates team, it did mean that the decisions across the UK for Westminster selection timings is now in the hands of the Federal campaigns team and we were instructed to start our Westminster 2029 selections in July with it all to be completed within 5 Quarters. We started in Q3 2026 in July, and all our Welsh seats will have been advertised by January 2027 with any unfilled going back out in Q3 July 2027 as Q2 next year is obviously out for selections when we have Wales wide council elections to concentrate upon.

To start all these selections JCSC decided to completely rewrite the selection rules now that we have the full CO in place who can run and support selections with an RO in place. I think the work of the selection process has been halved for our Returning Officers with everything being done now electronically from a Central London Candidates Office as CO staff can deal with all the paperwork. Selections have been very much standardised with much less work for Local Parties, (CO in London even send out the paper ballots by post where needed). This has really professionalised our selections and means every candidate can be properly risk assessed, know the much-simplified process, make all selections equal and allow us Federally to run all 600+ UK selections in a two-year window so we have PPCs in place early.

So far in Wales 21 of 32 seats have been advertised for (re)-selection with the other 11 due to be advertised in January. We have six filled seats and six more are going to ballots soon. That does mean that disappointingly 9 have been shelved until next July but we do have a few new candidates going through approvals and a few candidates who wanted a rest post Senedd so hopefully they will be filled next year and my report to conference in 2027 will have 32 PPCs in place.

I humbly submit this report to Conference.

Representative to the Federal Policy Committee

Alec Dauncey

Background

I'm pleased to be our elected person to speak for our Welsh party on this committee (Scotland and England have one each as well). The committee is officially chaired by the Party Leader with other members from direct elections and Parliamentary Party. It makes UK policy and policy specifically for England. It signs off UK (and England) General Election manifestos.

A lot of work in the last year has been setting up and receiving reports from large policy working groups. These take evidence and then report to the committee which has the final say, and submits motions often with detailed Policy Papers, which make policy in the Federal Conferences.

In 2026 Conferences the Committee proposed:

- Strength, Resilience and Partnership: Securing Britain and Defending Liberalism in Turbulent Times (International Security Policy Paper)
- Defending Democracy (Policy Paper) re-iterating our PR policy but much more on political funding and foreign influence.
- Patient-Centred, Accessible and Preventive: A Liberal Vision for Primary Health Care (Primary Healthcare Policy Paper)
- Revitalising Town Centres and High Streets, policy paper.

The last two mainly apply to England alone. I'm often in the position of voting on things which don't formally make policy for our Welsh party! But we can consider the useful output of England working groups for our own policy.

As Welsh Rep., I have to remind others sometimes that devolution is a fact, and we stand for more of it!

Sometimes the committee can feel just a little sidelined by our fantastic MP spokespeople, they have to react to issues fast, but have recently been happy to come to the committee to coordinate their work. Please do feel free to

contact me directly with any questions about this policy work!

alec@dauncey.org

Representative to the Federal Conference Committee

Chloe Hutchinson

I have been an active participant in Federal Conference Committee meetings and the Communications Sub-Group, advocating for policies that are more relevant or helpful for our work in Wales. Where possible and time permits, I have tried to do this in consultation with our parliamentary and staff teams.

In addition to collating drafting advice on my assigned topic area (Environment and Rural Affairs), I continue to provide drafting advice from a Welsh perspective across as many relevant policy areas as possible, and additional feedback on the applicability of motions.

I'm grateful to members that highlighted issues between the publication of motions and amendments deadlines, as this allowed for changes to be made.

Moving forward, I plan to work with the Scottish Lib Dems to develop a devolution checklist to support other members of FCC in providing drafting advice so the work to ensure more devo-aware policy is spread more fairly and improve awareness of devolution internally.

ALDE Council

There have now been 2 ALDE Council meetings since the start of my term.I continue to look out for opportunities to support our work in Wales, including sharing training opportunities (such as the ALDE Accelerator programme), international best practice (such as needs based funding formulas for regional governments in Denmark), and potential guest conference speakers from our sister parties.

The next meeting will be in Copenhagen on the 28-29th May. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining the Congress Delegation as applications will take place closer to the time.