

Saturday 10 March

In addition to speeches from the platform, voting members will be able to make concise (maximum one-minute) interventions from the floor during the debate on the motion. See pages 8 and 9 for further information.

The deadline for amendments to this motion – see page 11 – and for requests for separate votes – see page 8 – is 13.00, Tuesday 6 March. Those selected for debate will be printed in Saturday's Conference Daily.

12.50 Lunch break

14.10 Policy motion

Chair: Zoë O'Connell (Vice Chair, Federal Conference Committee). Aide: Cllr Paul Tilsley. Hall Aide: Nicholas da Costa.

F8 A Rural Future: Time to Act (Rural Communities Policy Paper)

Federal Policy Committee

Mover: Baroness Bakewell (Lords Spokesperson on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

Summation: Cllr Heather Kidd (Chair of Policy Working Group).

- 1 Conference believes that all communities – whether rural or
- 2 urban – should have the opportunity to flourish. Conference notes,
- 3 however, that national policy decisions tend to be made with urban
- 4 communities in mind and, therefore, they do not always benefit rural
- 5 communities as well as they could.
- 6 Conference notes that rural communities face substantial challenges
- 7 in the following areas:
 - 8 i) Housing: Housing in rural areas is less affordable than housing
 - 9 in urban areas (excluding London); average wages are lower
 - 10 and average house prices higher, which damages communities
 - 11 by forcing key workers to live outside the communities in which
 - 12 they work.
 - 13 ii) Services: Access to services in rural areas – broadband services,
 - 14 mobile coverage, public transport, postal services and health and
 - 15 social care services – lags too far behind that which is available in
 - 16 urban areas.
 - 17 iii) Economy: There has been a large change in the type of
 - 18 employment available in rural areas – with a growth in tourism
 - 19 and other service industries – and these jobs require the rural
 - 20 population to have a broad and flexible skill base that is not
 - 21 encouraged through existing training routes.



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- 22 iv) Land use and the environment: farming, horticulture and
23 forestry need to be able to deliver a sufficient quantity of food
24 and other products for the UK market while actively protecting
25 and caring for the environment.
- 26 v) Flooding: Many rural and coastal communities are still suffering
27 the consequences of severe flooding in recent years; they lack
28 both the support to recover and the funding for new flood
29 protection.
- 30 Conference endorses the approach of policy paper 129, *A Rural*
31 *Future: Time to Act*, as a statement of Liberal Democrat policy to meet
32 these challenges.
- 33 Conference particularly calls for:
- 34 1. Increasing the availability of affordable housing in rural
35 communities:
- 36 a) Easing planning restrictions to allow agricultural buildings no
37 longer suitable for agriculture to be converted to homes.
- 38 b) Building affordable homes on all developments: require a
39 right to provision of affordable housing on developments of
40 two or more properties in very rural areas and four or more
41 properties in rural areas.
- 42 c) Reducing second home ownership in rural areas: increase
43 local authorities' powers to tax second home ownership
44 through a stamp duty surcharge or increase in council tax.
- 45 2. Investment in infrastructure in rural areas:
- 46 a) Ensuring that superfast broadband (over 30Mbps download
47 speeds and 6Mbps upload speeds) is provided to all
48 households and businesses.
- 49 b) Improving public transport by: introducing a new Young
50 Person's Bus Discount Card, for people aged 16–21, giving
51 a two-thirds discount on bus travel; giving local authorities
52 greater control over their transport network; and, planning
53 for the future by preparing for a greater number of electric
54 vehicles.
- 55 c) Developing community hubs that co-locate services around
56 medical centres, post offices and pubs.
- 57 3. Support for the rural economy:
- 58 a) Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships to support
59 the development of rural and coastal economic strategies



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- 60 including a housing element.
- 61 b) Introducing modular apprenticeships to support young
62 people to develop the wide and flexible skill set required for
63 working in rural communities.
- 64 c) Expanding the BritRail scheme to UK citizens to promote
65 tourism and make it affordable for everyone to explore the
66 country.
- 67 4. The reform of land use policy to promote economic and
68 environmental sustainability:
- 69 a) Re-defining efficiency in the context of the Common
70 Agricultural Policy (CAP) to capture the economic worth of
71 measures undertaken for the public good and ensure the
72 viability of agriculture in all parts of the UK.
- 73 b) Increasing the share of CAP payments given to support
74 rural development, prioritising: woodlands and forests, soil
75 protection and improvement, flood-prevention, generation
76 of energy from renewable sources; effective husbandry and
77 upholding of high animal welfare standards.
- 78 c) Supporting producers by broadening the remit of the
79 Groceries Code Adjudicator and proactively supporting the
80 rural population to have better access to local markets.
- 81 5. Investment in flood protection in rural and coastal communities:
- 82 a) Looking at comprehensive, whole-system approaches to
83 flood prevention by investing in flood defences that work with
84 natural processes.
- 85 b) Requiring new developments on areas at risk of flooding to
86 include flood-prevention measures and incentivize flood-
87 protection for existing at-threat properties.
- 88 c) Launching a National Fund for Coastal Change, to enable local
89 authorities to properly manage their changing coastlines.

Applicability: Federal, except 1 (lines 34–44), 2 b) lines 49–52, 2 c) lines 55–56, 3 a) and b) (lines 58–63) and 5 b) (lines 81–89) which are England only.

Mover and summation of motion: 16 minutes combined; movers and summation of any amendments: 4 minutes; all other speakers: 3 minutes. For eligibility and procedure for speaking in this debate, see page 9.

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