

REVIVING LIBERAL DEMOCRAT DERELICT ASSOCIATIONS
Building urgently on by-election victories

(As presented to Yorkshire & The Humber Regional Party Executive – September 2020, revised 17 December 2021)

1 Introduction

The remarkable by-election victories in the two recent by-elections provide an opportunity to revive the party in the derelict constituencies that comprise a majority of the parliamentary seats. The party's strategy plan of August 2020 was detailed and well presented. My concern was and is that a majority of associations were and are in such an abject organisational state that they will not be able to "self start" the application of the strategy and that it would therefore be up to the regions to give practical help, including some pump priming finance, to prompt activity with the aim of making them self-sufficient within a reasonable time. The project should have a planned life of twelve months. I was asked to prepare a paper on the region's role and responsibility based on experience of earlier such work, including the efforts by the Leeds-wide Liberal Democrat body until it was caused to end its work by the withdrawal of funds from the Leeds City Council Liberal Democrat Group. This is that paper.

2 Preparation

For each constituency we need to have:

- [a] the strategy plan;
- [b] copies of a statement of the party philosophy and values;
- [c] a programme of organisational development tailored to each association's current situation and potential, including policy development, election preparation, social activities, involvement with the wider party, fundraising;
- [d] the name and contact details of its allocated mentor.

3 Mentors

- [a] should ideally be party members with a proven track record so as to provide weight to their advice;
- [b] will be appointed with the attached job description by the Regional Executive from among volunteers to work with local associations;
- [c] will be provided with training by appropriate regional executive members;
- [d] will be allocated an agreed number of associations to a maximum of six;
- [e] will be provided with a sum of money to allocated at their discretion for "pump priming", on a "pound for pound" basis, or as close to that as each mentor believes feasible given the level of organisation and resources in each association;
- [f] will be provided with travelling expenses [and an honorarium];
- [g] will report on an agreed basis to the designated member of the regional executive.

4 Finance

- [a] the regional executive will need to determine how much it can afford to budget for this project;
- [b] ideally there should be a sum of £200 per association available to each mentor as per para 3 [d] above; this will cost approximately £10,000;
- [c] mentors should not be inhibited by cost from visiting each association as required and a budget provision should be made of around £3,000 based on 50 associations at £10 per visit with an average visit every two months;
- [d] it would be an expression of goodwill and of the importance the party attaches to this project if a modest honorarium of, say, £200 could be offered to each mentor, this would cost c£2,000;
- [e] a generic recruiting leaflet with space for inserting a local association contact will be needed for associations as yet not capable of producing their own, costing around £2,000 for 20,000 for an A4 double-sided colour leaflet;
- [f] all these figures are based on 50 associations requiring intensive help and can be reduced (a) by the number of associations requiring no help, and (b) the number of associations requiring less intensive assistance than envisaged in this paper; my guess as to the sum that should be budgeted by the regional executive to make this project work effectively will be in the region of £12,500.

5 Conclusion

- [a] as set out above there is a significant cost involved in embarking on this project but I doubt whether there is a more urgent task ahead for the regional executive, particularly with the general election probably some four years away;
- [b] there will be arguments for doing in less expensively but the counter argument is that unless it is carried out professionally it may not succeed at all and even the lower sum could then be wasted;
- [c] I hope that the regional executive can make a positive decision on this project as soon as possible;
- [d] I am, of course, available to respond to any questions on this paper and to prepare further material if so required.

APPENDIX

APPLYING THE STRATEGY DOCUMENT Job Description for Mentors

1 Main purpose

To enable each Liberal Democrat association in Yorkshire and The Humber Region to be a successful and capable political and electoral organisation.

2 Experience needed

Ideally a number of years of political and electoral campaigning at ward and constituency level, preferably showing involvement in successful outcomes.

3 Length of project

A maximum of twelve months, with potential extensions in individual cases resulting from representations by mentors based on evidence as to the benefits of stated extensions.

4 Responsible to

A designated officer of the regional party executive.

5 Responsible for

Utilisation of funds for each association at the discretion of the mentor, on a “pound for pound”, or as near to this split as is considered feasible, to catalyse political, organisational and electoral development.

6 Area of work

Up to six associations as agreed with each mentor within an area accessible to the mentor for visits to each association at least bi-monthly.

7 Tasks

- [a] to initiate and follow up meetings with officers and members of the allocated associations to encourage, enthuse and enable them to engage in political activity, electoral campaigns and to develop their organisational capacity with a view to them being in a position to be independently able to maximise their political impact and electoral success at forthcoming elections at all levels;
- [b] to assist, including by training, in enabling allocated constituencies to recruit and to raise funds effectively;
- [c] to report as required to the designated officer of the Regional Executive;
- [d] any other reasonable tasks as set out by the designated officer of the Regional Executive.

8 Training will be given.

9 A token honorarium of £xxx will be provided.

Michael Meadowcroft
17 December 2021