



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

## JULY 2017 NEWSLETTER

**WELCOME AND CONGRATULATIONS** to all of our 12 MPs elected. COMMISERATIONS TOO for those who stood in both winnable and other seats, especially those who have been standing up for the rights and interests of those seeking sanctuary. THANK YOU to all of you who have worked for those who were and were not elected.

### FEDERAL CONFERENCE in Bournemouth 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September

#### MOTION FOR DEBATE

We are really pleased that our policy motion to conference “LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH” has been accepted for debate at our conference in September and that Wera Hobhouse MP is going to be the mover. After helpful advice and guidance from Conference Committee the wording has been changed a little and the new text is at the end of this Newsletter. We hope that those going to conference will be able to turn up for the debate and support it. If you or anyone you know is likely to be submitting an amendment it would be helpful to keep in touch with us. There is a [web article here](#)

#### STALL AT CONFERENCE.

A stall has been booked, and as a number of those who usually help cannot come to conference this time, we badly need others to help to run it. Even if you can only spare one hour, it would be most helpful. There will be general leaflets about LD4SOS and our work, as well as some on specific related subjects. We have a book on the stall to write down any queries you are not sure of the answer on, so don't worry about impossible questions!

**FRINGE MEETINGS.** Please get these into your diary now, so that you can come along, and encourage others to.

**Sunday 17th September** 19.45 - 21.00, “The European refugee 'crisis' and the UK's responsibilities”

We are lucky to have as keynote speaker Professor Brad Blitz, founder of the Migration Observatory in Malta with commentary from Dr Ruvi Ziegler, Associate Professor in International Refugee Law. The session considers failed & successful models for refugee protection drawing on engagement with European stakeholders. Refreshments provided by Liberal Democrat Voice.

**AGM, Saturday 16th September** 20.15 - 21.30 will also have an Open Forum straight after the formal business, “Asylum seekers and Refugees - WHO CARES - WE DO!” discussing the difficulties faced by those seeking Sanctuary in the UK. Contributions from those actively involved in campaigning from Parliamentarians to befrienders and those who visited Calais.

## PARLIAMENTARY NEWS

**SLAVE LABOUR IN DETENTION CENTRES.** Baroness Sally Hamwee provoked an outcry when [asking a formal question in the House of Lords](#), about those in immigration detention centres working for just £1 an hour. “What plans they have to review rates of pay for work undertaken by immigration centre detainees.” She said “Is the rate of £1 an hour for people who have committed no crime something that as a society we can be proud of?”

Lord Paddick wanted to know where the profit made by the private companies running the centres went, and Lord Roger Roberts challenged the situation where asylum seekers are not allowed to work, if living in the community, but can work in detention centres for just £1 an hour.

The issue was [raised in The Guardian](#), and afterwards Tim Farron said to Huffington Post “that this is disgusting, how can the government use immigration detainees as virtual sweatshop labour? The fact that we lock people up for administrative convenience alone and without a time-limit is already beyond the pale. But these new revelations add insult to injury.”



## **SYRIAN REFUGEES and UNACCOMPANIED CHILD REFUGEES**

Lord Roger Roberts has been standing up, and speaking out for those with no voice, and no power, and so badly let down by our Government. [Detail is here](#). Shas Sheehan was [challenging the Minister](#) about children with the right to be in the UK abandoned in France,

**FAMILY REUNION.** Baroness Sally Hamwee has put in a proposal for a better law on family reunion for refugees. It has come 10<sup>th</sup> in the Private Members Ballot. The Bill, drawn up with the help of the Refugee Council, had its first hearing. Sally said “Anyone who takes a serious interest in the UK having a civilised refugee policy is aware of the restrictions on refugees, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, being able to be with their families. My Private Member's Bill on refugee family reunion may stand little chance of becoming law, given the Government's attitude, but it is important to keep advancing the arguments. It has come high in the ballot in the Lords, so at least that will be possible” You can [read more here](#), please take time to look.

You can't [watch this family reunion](#) video & not be moved. Nine countries for a 16 year old refugee to travel through to get here. Thanks to Safe Passage UK for helping him to reunite with family. Lib Dems are continuing, wherever and whenever we can, to campaign for safe and legal routes for refugees. Reform of family reunion rules to make it easier for refugees to join relatives already living in safety in the UK is part of this.

**LORD ROGER ROBERTS PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL.** Roger had put a [proposal in for a law to make sure there is legal help for young asylum seekers](#), but sadly it is nowhere near the top of the ballot. But the point is raised, and Roger will continue to press the case when the new Immigration Bill comes to Parliament.

## **CAMPAIGNING**

**SYRIAN REFUGEE PETITION.** [One for you to sign](#) and pass onto others, re speeding up the refugee resettlement programme.

### **CHALLENGING THOSE DENYING CHILDREN THE RIGHT TO COME TO UK**

Bradley Hillier – Smith, LD4SOS Council member, who was part of the all-Party Pro-Refugee Alliance Campaign which worked to defeat 25 anti- Dubs MPs, and was successful doing just that in 13 seats, writes: So proud of our campaign this election which has succeeded in playing a small role in ensuring a more pro-refugee voice in parliament, such that a proposal to take in more refugee children would now be confident of passing and would not be defeated! Refugees are welcome here and we have worked hard to make that a reality. You can see the list of anti-Dubs MPs and a full statement is on [our website here](#)

The Government is being [challenged in the courts by Refugee Help](#) on them dropping support for the Dubs amendment. At the time of writing there has been no judgement, but it is shameful that so much time, effort and money is having to go into our Government renegeing on a commitment.

Our Lib Dem policy is: *Re-open the Dubs unaccompanied child refugee scheme, ensuring Britain meets its responsibilities by taking in 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children. Liberal Democrats would offer these children indefinite leave to remain, meaning they will not be deported once they turn 18*

**REFUGEE CRISIS** Every single minute 20 people are forced to leave their homes, [according to findings of UNHCR](#). 84% of them are living in poor developing countries. We have seen recently the trauma of people having to leave their homes in the UK, but cannot imagine how hard it must be. As the Refugee Council says, there must be global working together, and not just leave to the poorest countries to look after those in the refugee crisis.

**UNHCR SCHEME FOR RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES.** Good news that the Home Secretary has ruled that [all nationalities fleeing Syria will be eligible for the resettlement scheme](#). We agree with the Refugee Council statement that *“Today’s announcement that the Syrian Vulnerable Person’s Scheme will be a lifeline for refugees of any nationality fleeing Syria, not just Syrian natives, is welcome news. The harm caused by the bitter Syrian conflict does not discriminate on the basis of nationality and neither should our humanitarian response. With the number of refugees at a record high, we urge the Government to go further and commit to resettling people from around the world, at least at current numbers, for as long as it is needed.”*

**HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT** The Government is [creating a hostile environment](#) for people who are from other countries, and expecting other agencies such as landlords, the NHS and schools to enforce harsh rules. Lib Dems must continue to stand up for, and promote, us being a welcoming society.

**DETENTION** [Report from ECRE](#) (European Council on Refugees and Exiles) by Aida (Asylum Information Database) on the detention of asylum seekers in Europe makes one ashamed to be in the UK. There is a worrying increase in detention around Europe, especially the Mediterranean countries. But on a number of ways of measuring the situation, in 2016, the UK detained more than any other country; of all immigration detention the UK had the highest proportion of asylum seekers detained; Only Bulgaria had a greater proportion of asylum seekers as a whole detained than the UK. And the report showing UK asylum seekers needed to be detained more than elsewhere is? – Well there isn’t one of course.

**PUBLIC OPINION?** A [report from Migration News Sheet](#), published by ECRE shows that contrary to what the media portrays, European populations are much more open to welcoming refugees, and politicians need to realise that. There is an increasing polarisation, and the extremists are very vocal and organised – but it does not mean they speak for more people.

**GENOCIDE IN RWANDA SURVIVORS.** SURF is a charity set up to help survivors of the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda. It is active in Rwanda but also helps survivors in the UK. Here is a [link to a presentation highlighting UK survivors' issues](#) In 2009 there were 1,500 of these living in the UK and they face issues of trauma, loneliness, maybe a guilty conscience and difficulty in making their voice heard. These are issues typically faced by many other refugee groups living in the UK The charity helps them through working in partnership with the Medical Foundation, through hardship funds and with advocacy. They also attend commemoration events in the UK.

**INFORMATION FOR WOMEN.** Important [useful information](#) from Asylum Women’s Aid for women seeking asylum if you know of anyone in this situation or helping them.

### **CITIZENS OF THE WORLD CHOIR**

To end on a more joyful note, [listen to this choir](#). You can read more about the choir that our President, Lord Roger Roberts has initiated [here](#).

## **Text of motion, LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH**

Conference notes with concern that:

- A. England does not have a strategy for the teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), unlike Scotland and Wales;

- B. According to the 2011 Census, at least 726,000 people in the UK do not speak English 'well', and this is likely to be an underestimate;
- C. Government funding for ESOL has been cut by 60% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2015/16, whilst additional funding for job seekers and ring-fenced funding for community education have both been removed;
- D. Consequently, enrolment in state-funded ESOL classes has fallen by 43% over the same period.

Conference believes that:

- 1) In order to champion the freedom of individuals and enable them to contribute to their communities, the Government and devolved administrations must have a crucial role in funding ESOL provision;
- 2) Funding for ESOL classes should be allocated with transparency and based on robust evidence.

Conference calls on the Government to:

- 1. Establish a national ESOL strategy for England that will include recommendations to improve collaboration between local ESOL providers and to create a national ESOL champion;
- 2. Require every local education authority to publish a 'Language Needs Assessment' that must identify the need for ESOL provision in the authority's area, identify target groups and outline how it intends to address this need, and provide the necessary funding to allow them to carry this out;
- 3. Require local authorities to maintain an 'ESOL hub' website with information about how to access learning opportunities;
- 4. Incentivise employers to contribute towards the cost of ESOL classes for their employees;
- 5. Work on a cross-party basis and with awarding organisations and ESOL providers to modernise the ESOL Qualifications and Curriculum Framework;
- 6. Create 'fast-track' pathways for ESOL learners into employment by promoting partnerships between adult education colleges and businesses in need of language skills, such as export firms.