

Conference Chair's Report

Brendan Stubbs

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Regional Conference happen. We aimed to create a welcoming, informative one-day event with debate, training, and time for socialising with fellow Lib Dems.

Venue search and constraints

Finding an affordable Saturday venue with space for 120–150 members plus training rooms, AV, and catering has become increasingly complex within a £2,000 budget. With the support of George Sykes, we explored eight venues in Leeds over three months. Half would not host political events or couldn't accommodate us; two were more than double the budget; others were unavailable; and the HEART Centre could not reduce costs below £2,500.

Given these constraints, we secured the Huddersfield Polish Church as an accessible and excellent alternative while we continue our search in Leeds.

For context, other Northern Regions report similar pressures alongside significant membership declines since 2016:

North West: ~40 in-person at a summer conference; ~30 at a recent online event.

North East: ~70–80 expected this year (50–60 last year), even with a strong headline speaker – the Party Leader no less!

What we delivered

AGM business, policy debates, briefings, and Q&As with elected representatives—from the Lords to local councils. An accessible venue with public transport links and parking, AV, Wi-Fi and on-site catering. Registration & ticketing: Moved to the national events platform, maintained concessionary rates, and combined Jan's digital fundraising with the traditional raffle. Sustainability: Reduced printing, encouraged rail/bus travel, and used reusable or recyclable materials.

Attendance & finances (expected)

Delegates: 50 – 60,

Delegate & stall fees: ~£1,300. Additional fundraising efforts include raffles, digital and bucket donations. Overall, we expect 75–85% of the costs to be covered once the final invoices are received. Perhaps more if you are generous.

(Final figures will be confirmed in the end-of-year Accounts.)

What we'll improve

Secure venues earlier: start shortlisting and reviewing locations in light of higher costs in key cities.

Hybrid access: expand where practical and cost-effective.

Format options: Consider separating the AGM from the Conference to allow for a different time of year, potentially an early-summer event focused on celebrating electoral success and refining training/plans with Local campaign teams across the region.

I'd welcome delegates' views on these and other ideas. Please feel free to come and speak with me throughout the day.

Thank you

My sincere thanks to our volunteers, stewards, tellers, timekeepers and session chairs; to Jan and the Kirklees Liberal Democrats for their tireless work; to our Regional Executive colleagues; and to our generous stallholders and donors.

We're especially grateful to our hosts at the Huddersfield Polish Church for their warm welcome at short notice. And a final nod to members in Sheffield, who backed last November's event while also fighting a by-election.

Brendan Stubbs – Conference Chair