

Geoff Payne (Hackney)

Longstanding member of the SLF council, apart from the last one as I had to focus on my academic studies.

When I was on the SLF council I came up with the idea of the SLF conference, something that was very much needed during the Coalition years and I helped organise the political content of all of them apart from the last one (which I also thought was well organised and put together).

I also came up with the idea of the pre-conference dinner which I helped organise for the spring Lib Dem conferences which combined much needed fund raising with a popular social occasion.

Looking forward the challenges we face vis-à-vis the Lib Dems is that today their MPs disproportionately represent the wealthiest seats in the country and this makes it harder for the party to support policies that meet the needs of those on low incomes and address the issues of inequality. The cost of living crises has to be a top priority issue for both the SLF and Lib Dems.

The Tory leadership elections show there is a bidding war for a return to neoliberalism, tax cuts and smaller state have priority over everything else. The next Tory leader could be even worse than the last one and drop the commitment to meet our climate change Net Zero commitments.

The Lib Dems cannot go into Coalition with the Tories again, but there are serious concerns about whether the Lib Dems and Labour can form an alternative government, even more so if you include the block of 40-55 SNP MPs. It is not just the traditional petty rivalries, there is also a lack of ambition, radical ideas and a narrative to bind them, both within and between the parties. We also need to consider that should we change the voting system we will need to work with the Greens in the future as well.

SLF is well placed as being on the pluralist left of centre to facilitate the debates we need to have. I am in favour of including Compass within our orbit to work with us on this as they are the only significant identifiable section of the Labour movement that supports left of centre pluralism.