



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Liberal Democrat, SDP and Liberal Party leaders and officials since 1975

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This note lists Liberal Party, Social Democratic Party, and Liberal Democrats leaders and officials since 1975.

### Useful links and further reading

- [Liberal Democrat website](#)
- [Liberal Democrats structure and organisation](#)
- [Constitution of the Liberal Democrats](#)

David Laws, *Coalition: The Inside Story of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government*, Biteback, 2017

Duncan Brack et al (eds), *British Liberal Leaders*, Biteback, 2015

Douglas Roy, *Liberals: A History of the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties*, Hambledon Continuum, 2005

### Leadership elections

The Commons Library briefing on [Leadership Elections: Liberal Democrats](#) outlines the rules under which leadership elections are conducted by the Liberal Democrats and provides details of previous leadership contests.

### Current state of the parties

The current composition of the House of Commons and links to the websites of all the parties represented in the Commons can be found on the [Parliament website: current state of the parties](#).



### Liberal Party leaders <sup>1</sup>

Leader	start	end
Jeremy Thorpe	1967	1976
David Steel	1976	1988

Deputy leader	start	end
Vacant	1979	1985
Alan Beith	1985	1988

### Social Democratic Party leaders <sup>1</sup>

Leader	start	end
Roy Jenkins	Jul 1981	Jun 1983
David Owen	Jun 1983	Aug 1987
Robert Maclennan	Aug 1987	Mar 1988

### Social Democratic Party leaders <sup>2</sup>

Leader	start	end
David Owen	1988	1990

**Notes:**

1. Liberal Party and Social Democratic Party merged in 1988
2. Social Democratic Party continued until wound down in 1990

### Liberal Democrats leaders and officials

Leader	start	end
Paddy Ashdown	Jul 1988	Aug 1999
Charles Kennedy	Aug 1999	Jan 2006
Menzies Campbell	Mar 2006	Oct 2007
Nick Clegg	Dec 2007	Jul 2015
Tim Farron	Jul 2015	Jul 2017
Sir Vince Cable	Jul 2017	Jul 2019
Jo Swinson	Jul 2019	Jan 2020
<i>Sal Brinton (joint acting Leader)</i>	Dec 2019	Jan 2020
Sir Ed Davey (joint acting Leader)	Dec 2019	Aug 2020
<i>Mark Pack (joint acting Leader)</i>	Jan 2020	Aug 2020
Sir Ed Davey	Aug 2020	present

Deputy leader*	start	end
Russell Johnston	Oct 1988	May 1992
Sir Alan Beith	May 1992	Jan 2003
Sir Menzies Campbell	Feb 2003	Jan 2006
Vince Cable	Mar 2006	May 2010
Sir Simon Hughes	Jun 2010	Jan 2014
Sir Malcolm Bruce	Jan 2014	May 2015
<i>position vacant</i>	Jun 2015	May 2017
Jo Swinson	Jun 2017	Jul 2019
Sir Ed Davey	Sep 2019	Aug 2020
<i>position vacant</i>		

\* **Note:** The position of deputy leader has never formally existed in the party constitution. Although often referred to as Deputy leader of the LD, this post is actually deputy leader of the LD parliamentary group in the House of Commons and not the deputy leader of the LD party as a whole.

President	start	end
Ian Wrigglesworth	1988	1990
Charles Kennedy	1990	1994
Robert Maclennan	1994	1998
Diana Maddock	1998	2000
<i>Baron Navnit Dholakia</i>	2000	2004
Simon Hughes	2004	2008
<i>Ros Scott</i>	2008	2010
Tim Farron	Nov 2010	Jan 2015
<i>Baroness Sal Brinton</i>	Jan 2015	Jan 2019
<i>Mark Pack</i>	Jan 2020	present

**Note:** Non MPs are italicised

**Sources:** Liberal Democrat website; Press articles

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