

Engaging with party conferences

Impacting policy and
communicating your
research

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12 September 2024



Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will have:

- Gained an understanding of why attending party conferences can be beneficial for researchers
- Developed insights into how to navigate party conferences and what events are worth attending
- Begun to develop a personal 'pitch' for engaging with policymakers through party conferences

Session structure

- Introduction to party conferences: what they are, how they work and why they are worth attending
- Navigating party conferences: selecting relevant sessions, what to attend and what not to attend
- Speaking at a party conference: how to pitch your contribution, networking and approaches to influencing policy
- Stories from the conference floor: Simeon Yates (Professor of Digital Culture) and Sian Penny (Head of Policy and Government Relations)
- Developing your conference pitch
- Following up on your party conference experience
- Q&A

About the Heseltine Institute

Heseltine Institute
for Public Policy,
Practice and Place

The Heseltine Institute at Labour Party Conference 2024

 UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL | Heseltine Institute
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Monday 23 September, 10.30–12.00

How can higher education help Labour deliver economic growth and devolution? (with City-REDI and Y-PERN)

Invitation-only roundtable

Monday 23 September, 14.00–15.00

How can the Labour government achieve its clean power aims and accelerate to net zero? (with the Institute for Government)

Arena Room 6, ACC Liverpool (inside the secure zone)

Tuesday 24 September, 10.30–12.00

Reframing the child poverty agenda (with Northern Health Science Alliance)

Meeting Room 1, Leonardo Hotel, Waterfront Pier Head Promenade (inside the secure zone)

 UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | CITY-REDI

 Y-PERN

 INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT

 nhsa
Northern Health Science Alliance

The Heseltine Institute at Conservative Party Conference 2024

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Tuesday 1 October, 15.45–16.45

What next for the Conservative party's approach to energy and net zero? (with the Institute for Government)

Soprano Room, Hyatt Birmingham (inside the secure zone)

 INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT

Established 2013

Based in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (but work cross-faculty)

Three roles:

- Research and thought leadership on urban and regional issues
- Work with local partners to develop research and evidence
- Promote the work of UoL researchers on policy issues

Regular presence at party conferences

What is a party conference?



- An annual event for political parties to discuss and agree policy
- They offer an opportunity for organisations to meet and lobby MPs and other senior political figures
- Labour conference has been held in Liverpool for three consecutive years, but usually alternates between Liverpool and Brighton
- Conservative conference alternates between Manchester and Birmingham
- They are very large events – around 15,000 people had passes to Labour conference in 2023
- They raise significant revenue for political parties

When are party conferences held?

Party	Location	Date
Labour	Liverpool	22-25 September 2024
Conservative	Birmingham	29 September – 2 October 2024
Liberal Democrats	Brighton	14-17 September 2024
Scottish National Party	Edinburgh	30 August – 1 September 2024
Reform	Birmingham	20-21 September 2024
Green	Manchester	6-8 September 2024
Plaid Cymru	Cardiff	11-12 October 2024

Who attends party conferences and why?

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- Politicians
- Businesses
- Think tanks and lobbyists
- Charities and voluntary organisations
- Party activists
- Experts (that's you!)

Why should researchers attend party conferences?

They provide an opportunity to:

- Hear the latest on policy developments in your field
- Develop understanding of how policy is developed
- Meet people interested in your work – policymakers and others working in your field
- Help you understand how your research can be applied
- Network with organisations you might want to work with
- Promote yourself as a 'go to' expert in your field

Navigating party conferences

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The Main Hall



- Speeches by the leader of the party and other key figures
- Votes on party policy
- In the secure zone – requires a conference pass
- Ballots for the busiest events
- Conference speeches occasionally very interesting – but very often not

Navigating party conferences

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The Exhibition Hall

- A place for a huge variety of organisations to promote themselves, network and influence
- Charities, think tanks, businesses, media organisations
- In the secure zone – requires a conference pass
- A great place to network
- Usually a fairly friendly space

Navigating party conferences

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The Conference Fringe

- A vast array of panels, speeches and drinks receptions
- Some events inside the secure zone – many outside
- Opportunities to hear debates on policy and emerging thinking
- The most policy-intense part of part of conferences
- Academics and researchers often on panels

Selecting events to attend

Why clean transport needs to be a priority for Labour's mission-led government

22nd September 2024 15:15 - 16:30
Meeting Room 4A,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

Delivering the homes the country needs

22nd September 2024 15:15 - 16:30
Meeting Room 4B,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

The Rail Interview

22nd September 2024 17:30 - 18:45
Meeting Room 4A,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

Bridging the Gap: Women's Health Reception

22nd September 2024 17:30 - 18:45
Meeting Room 4B,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

The NHBC Housing Reception

22nd September 2024 19:30 - 20:45
Meeting Room 4B,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

The Maritime Reception

22nd September 2024 19:30 - 20:45
Meeting Room 4A,
ACC Liverpool

[Details](#)

The Retail Reception

22nd September 2024 21:15 - 22:30
Meeting Room 4A,
ACC Liverpool

The Local Transport In-Tray: What can Labour do to facilitate a transport infrastructure that works for everyone?

How to Save 25 million GP Appointments: The role of self-care in delivering an NHS fit for the future

- Visit the conference website in advance and search by keyword/topic
- Download the conference app for updates
- Be selective
- Events with 'big names' may be very busy – get there early
- What do you want to get out of conference?
 - Listen to others?
 - Promote your work/network?
 - Learn about a new area/topic?

Speaking at a party conference event

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- A quite different audience from what you may be used to
- No slides (usually)
- Short and snappy – usually no more than 10 minutes
- Policy insights not research detail
- Focus on policy implications of your work and what policymakers should do in practical terms
- You will usually appear alongside at least one politician
- Be critical but constructive

Stories from the conference floor

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Professor Simeon Yates (Professor of Digital Culture at the University of Liverpool)

Sian Penny (Head of Policy and Government Relations at the University of Liverpool)

Your conference pitch

- What is your work about?
- Why does this matter?
- What's interesting about the way you approach this issue?
- What would you like policymakers to do with the information you provide?
- How can you help/work with this person/organisation?

Following up on your conference attendance

- Follow up with contacts by email – send them some of your work
- Sign up for updates from organisations/speakers you found interesting
- Write a blog about your experience for your departmental website
- Prepare for next year:
 - Is it worth getting a full conference pass?
 - Discuss potential events with partners
 - Look into funding
 - Discuss with your faculty research support team

Questions

Feedback



CONTACT

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