

The Rt Hon Charles Kennedy MP



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Born in Inverness in 1959, Charles Kennedy was brought up and educated just outside Fort William, before attending Glasgow University. Following his graduation in 1982, he worked as a journalist and broadcaster with BBC Highland in Inverness.

He was then awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to attend Indiana University in the United States. In 1983 he was working towards a PhD at Indiana when the opportunity arose to seek the SDP nomination for the newly former Ross, Cromarty and Skye seat. Charles made a flying visit home, won the ballot and returned full time to the UK in April. The general election followed and - less than six weeks later - he was elected to the House of Commons, defeating the sitting Government Minister to become the youngest MP of the time.

During his term in parliament he has acted as a spokesperson on issues ranging from the welfare state to Europe, agriculture and rural affairs. He has served on the All-Party Select Committee that introduced the televising of the chamber. He was the first SDP MP to back the merger with the Liberals after the 1987 general election, and moved a successful motion to this effect at the party conference that year.

Charles Kennedy was elected the UK Liberal Democrats' Party President, the equivalent of party chairman, in 1990, and served in that post until 1994. In August 1999 he was elected as the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, and he was appointed to the Privy Council in October 1999.

In his six years as Leader he took the Liberal Democrats from strength to strength in local and national politics, taking some fundamental and hugely difficult political decisions.

He also took the Liberal Democrats to their most successful election performance for some 80 years when they returned 62 MPs in May 2005. He stood down as Leader of the Party in January 2006.

In September 2007 Charles Kennedy was unanimously elected President of the European Movement in Britain. Following a keenly fought election, he was elected as Rector of Glasgow University early in 2008.

He is the author of *The Future of Politics* (2001) and is presently researching a project on youth and minority issues, arising from his period (2007) as a Visiting Parliamentary Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford