



# FOR A FAIR DEAL

**Manifesto 2024**



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# 1 Foreword

This election is our chance to win the change our country desperately needs.

Everywhere I go across our great United Kingdom, I see people from all backgrounds and all walks of life, working hard, raising families, helping others and playing by the rules. But they have been let down and taken for granted for far too long by this out-of-touch Conservative Government. Families and pensioners are struggling with sky-high energy bills, food prices and housing costs – and the Conservatives have only added to the pain, because they just don't care.

The Conservatives have plunged the NHS into crisis, failing to deliver the new hospitals they promised and making people wait hours for an ambulance, weeks to see a GP or months for urgent cancer treatment. They are letting water companies get away with pumping filthy sewage into our rivers and lakes and onto our beaches.

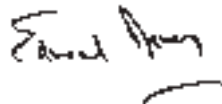
It's time for a change.

These Conservatives have got to go. And in so many parts of the country, we have shown that it is the Liberal Democrats who can get them out.

But this election is about more than a change of government. We must transform the very nature of British politics itself, so that we can fix the health and care crisis, get our economy back on track, end the appalling sewage scandal, and give people the fair deal they deserve.

Every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to elect a strong local champion who will fight for a fair deal for you and your community. A fair deal where everyone can afford a decent home somewhere safe and clean – with a comfortable retirement when the time comes. A fair deal where every child can go to a good school and have real opportunities to fulfil their potential. A fair deal where everyone can get the high-quality healthcare they need, when they need it and where they need it.

That is the fair deal the Liberal Democrats are fighting for. I know we can achieve it. So join us, and let's make it happen!



Ed Davey





# 2 Our Fair Deal

In so many ways, things in our country are broken. The economy, the National Health Service, the climate, the housing market – all are in crisis after years of Conservative neglect. Schools are crumbling and clean rivers seem a thing of the past. The Conservatives have wrecked our relationship with our nearest neighbours in Europe, and our political system is simply not fit for purpose. Millions of people feel powerless and excluded.

It doesn't have to be this way. Britain has overcome big challenges before and we can do it again now.

For more than 150 years, Liberals and Liberal Democrats have led the fight for a fair, free and open society: championing free trade, introducing the state pension and free school meals, laying the foundations of the welfare state and the NHS, legalising same-sex marriage, and taking urgent action to tackle the climate emergency.

Today, our fair deal would give everyone the power to make the most of their potential, and real freedom to decide how they live their lives. It would call the over-powerful to account. It has five key themes.

## 1. A fair deal on the economy

Everyone deserves the chance to get on in life, see their hard work properly rewarded and realise their hopes for the future. Businesses and entrepreneurs should be supported to create worthwhile jobs in every part of the UK.

**Liberal Democrats will invest in renewable power and home insulation to drive a strong economic recovery, bring down energy bills and create clean, secure, well-paid new jobs.**

We will put people first, investing in more apprenticeships and new Lifelong Skills Grants. We will overhaul parental leave to give families more choice and flexibility over how to juggle work and home life. We will support entrepreneurs, back small businesses, and reform business rates to help our high streets. We will make Britain a world leader in the new infrastructure, businesses and technologies needed to

tackle climate change. We will manage the public finances with the utmost care and responsibility. We will fix the UK's broken relationship with Europe and tear down the Conservatives' damaging barriers to trade.

## **2. A fair deal on public services**

Everyone should receive the care they need when they are ill or frail, and a helping hand when they fall on tough times. A strong NHS – open to all, regardless of wealth – gives people the freedom they need to live their lives as they choose. Every child deserves the best possible start in life. We know that education is the best possible investment in our country's future.

**Liberal Democrats will give everyone a new right to see a GP within seven days, or 24 hours if it's urgent, with the extra doctors needed to make it happen.**

We will invest in improving public health, expanding early access to health services, and fixing social care. We will give every child the support they need with more specialist teachers, free school meals for all children in poverty, and a dedicated mental health professional in every school. We will repair the broken safety net that currently consigns so many to poverty. We will restore community policing and ensure that every burglary is properly investigated. And we will fund public services through fair taxes, such as reversing the Conservatives' tax cuts for big banks.

## **3. A fair deal on the environment**

Everyone should be able to enjoy the benefits of our wonderful natural environment, and our children should inherit the future they deserve. We must act now – locally, nationally and globally. The UK can lead the world with innovation and ingenuity, while boosting the economy and enhancing everyone's quality of life.

**Liberal Democrats will hold big companies to account by giving them a duty to protect the environment, including banning water companies from dumping raw sewage into rivers, lakes and coastal areas.**



We will put tackling climate change at the heart of a new industrial strategy. We will cut emissions and bills with an emergency Home Energy Upgrade programme. We will drive a rooftop solar revolution and invest in clean energy, transport and industry. We will restore nature and tackle toxic air pollution. And we will provide skills training, incentives and advice to help families and businesses with the transition to net zero.

#### **4. A strong United Kingdom and a fair international order**

Liberal Democrats are proud internationalists. We believe that our country and our people thrive when we are open and outward-looking. The UK can be an incredible force for good when it stands tall on the world stage, and both the Covid pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine show that events beyond Britain's borders inevitably become our concern.

**Liberal Democrats will immediately fix our broken relationship with Europe, forge a new partnership built on cooperation, not confrontation, and move to conclude a new comprehensive agreement that removes as many barriers to trade as possible.**

We will stand up to authoritarianism by championing the liberal, rules-based international order. We will reverse the Conservatives' damaging cuts to the Army and international development. We will work across borders to provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees and tackle common threats such as human trafficking, cybercrime and terrorism.

#### **5. A truly fair democracy**

Every person matters. Liberal Democrats believe that basic rights and dignity are the birthright of every individual, to be respected, cherished and enhanced. Everyone should have equal power in our democracy, and be able to hold all Members of Parliament properly to account.

**Liberal Democrats will introduce proportional representation for electing MPs, and local councillors in England, and cap donations to political parties.**

We will shift power out of the centre in Westminster and Whitehall, so local decisions are made by and for the people and communities they affect. We will demand higher standards of behaviour from Government Ministers by enshrining the Ministerial Code in law. We will champion the UK's Human Rights Act and resist any attempts to weaken or repeal it.

Our goal is to transform the nature of British politics itself – to make it relevant, engaging and responsive to people's needs and dreams.

# 3 The Economy

Liberal Democrats will build a strong, fair economy that benefits everyone in the UK, by helping people back to work, supporting small businesses, improving long-term productivity, and delivering much greater stability for long-term investment, especially for the industries of the future.

Core to our economic policy for improving stability and growth will be responsible management of the public finances, fixing the broken trading relationship with Europe, and an industrial strategy focused on the skills the future UK economy will need, from the renewables industry to the digital and bioscience sectors.

The Conservatives have badly mismanaged the economy and recklessly damaged the public finances, grinding economic growth to a halt and adding billions to the cost of servicing our debt. Their botched Brexit deal has badly damaged the economy, leaving everyone worse off. By abandoning climate commitments, they have undermined industry's confidence in investment in the green products and technologies vital to both economic recovery and tackling the climate emergency.

And they have taken people for granted, failing to deliver the investment needed to bring prosperity to all nations and regions of the UK. They left families and businesses to suffer the effects of their cost-of-living crisis without enough support, hit people with years of unfair tax rises, such as the freeze on income tax thresholds, and their promises to 'level up' have proved hollow.

We will empower people and support businesses to thrive by encouraging investment and boosting productivity.

## **We will:**

- **Provide long-term help with the cost of living by cutting energy bills through an emergency Home Energy Upgrade programme, tackling rising food prices through a National Food Strategy, and getting mortgage rates under control through careful economic management.**

- **Invest in green infrastructure, innovation and skills to boost economic growth and create good jobs and prosperity in every nation and region of the UK, while tackling the climate crisis.**
- **Repair the broken relationship with Europe, which acts as a brake on the economy and costs the UK investment, jobs and tax revenue.**
- **Foster stability, certainty and confidence by managing the public finances responsibly to get the national debt falling as a share of the economy and ensure that day-to-day spending does not exceed the amount raised in taxes, while making the investments our country needs.**
- **Put an end to Conservative waste and give taxpayers real value for money, giving HMRC the resources it needs to properly tackle tax avoidance and evasion.**
- **Implement a tax policy that recognises how high the Conservatives have raised personal taxes, making the cost-of-living crisis worse, by instead focusing tax changes on reversing the Conservatives' tax cuts for big banks and imposing a proper, one-off windfall tax on the super-profits of oil and gas producers and traders.**

In addition, we will:

- Create good jobs and prosperity in every nation and region of the UK by:
  - Launching an ambitious industrial strategy to incentivise businesses to invest and create good jobs across the UK, as set out in chapter 4.
  - Continuing to champion investment in the Northern Powerhouse, Western Gateway and Midlands Engine.
  - Supporting local and regional economic partnerships to coordinate development projects and boost growth in their areas.
  - Working with the devolved administrations to develop joint policies and partnerships to boost growth across the whole UK.
  - Ensuring that gigabit broadband is available to every home and business, including in rural and remote communities, as set out in chapter 15.



- Foster the stability, certainty and confidence that are vital for economic growth and investment by:
  - Protecting the independence of the Bank of England and keeping the inflation target of 2%.
  - Ensuring that all fiscal events are accompanied by independent forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.
- Increase investment in green infrastructure, including renewable energy and zero-carbon transport, industry and housing, as set out in chapters 4, 5, 14 and 16, and give a clearer zero-carbon remit to the UK Infrastructure Bank.
- Remain committed to delivering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the UK and around the world.
- Work with partners in international forums, including the OECD and the UN, to tackle international corporate tax avoidance for the benefit of all countries and make the case for increasing the global minimum rate of corporation tax to 21%.
- Our priority for tax cuts, when the public finances allow, will be to cut income tax by raising the tax-free personal allowance, benefitting the vast majority of families and taking more low-paid workers out of paying income tax altogether.
- Make the tax system fairer and raise the money needed for our investment plans by:
  - Reversing Conservative tax cuts for the big banks, restoring Bank Surcharge and Bank Levy revenues to 2016 levels in real terms.
  - Increasing the Digital Services Tax on social media firms and other tech giants from 2% to 6%.
  - Fairly reforming capital gains tax to close loopholes exploited by the super wealthy.
  - Introducing a 4% tax on the share buyback schemes of FTSE-100 listed companies, to incentivise productive investment, job creation and economic growth.
- End retrospective tax changes such as the loan charge brought in by the Conservatives, and review the Government's off-payroll working IR35 reforms to ensure self-employed people are treated fairly.



- Expand the British Business Bank to perform a more central role in the economy, to ensure that viable small and medium-sized businesses have access to capital, and enable it to help 'crowd-in' private investment, in particular in zero-carbon products and technologies.
- Empower consumers and ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of new technology, by setting a UK-wide target for digital literacy and requiring all products to provide a short, clear version of their terms and conditions, setting out the key facts as they relate to individuals' data and privacy.
- Introduce a national financial inclusion strategy and require both the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority to have regard to financial inclusion, such as protecting access to cash, especially in remote areas, supporting banking hubs, expanding access to bank accounts, delivering Sharia-compliant student finance and supporting vulnerable consumers.



# 4 Business and Jobs

We aim to make Britain one of the most attractive places in the world for businesses to invest. Only in partnership with responsible, sustainable businesses can we tackle the cost-of-living and climate crises, and create the wealth to invest in healthcare, education and other essential public services.

Private enterprise is the principal engine of growth and prosperity in the UK. We will support it by creating a stable business environment with smart regulation and investing in skills, infrastructure, research and innovation. In return, we expect businesses to commit to promote skills, equality and good governance, and to support their local communities.

The Conservative Government has failed businesses and workers. Growth is minimal, productivity is slipping, and constant U-turns have badly damaged business confidence. Unfair tax hikes have further dented our prosperity, and our town centres and high streets are crying out for a fair business rates system.

The Conservatives' botched deal with Europe has done enormous damage to British businesses, putting up new barriers to trade and creating reams of red tape. The UK has less clout in trade negotiations, the US is not interested, and the new trade deals the Conservatives have signed will undercut high environmental standards and hurt our farmers.

We will work in partnership with business to offer stability and ensure that we maximise the opportunities for investment, growth and employment across the country. We will make the UK a world leader in ethical, inclusive new technology, including artificial intelligence, and a global centre for the development, manufacture and export of clean technologies. And we will prioritise the depth and quality of trade deals, ensuring they deliver benefits for the whole country.

## **We will:**

- **Develop an industrial strategy that will give businesses certainty and incentivise them to invest in new technologies to grow the economy, create good jobs and tackle the climate crisis.**

- **Unlock British businesses’ global potential by bringing down trade barriers and building stronger future relationships with our closest trading partners, including by fixing our broken relationship with Europe as set out in chapter 22.**
- **Fix the skills and recruitment crisis by investing in education and training, including increasing the availability of apprenticeships and career advice for young people.**
- **Boost productivity and empower more people to enter the job market – such as parents, carers and disabled people – by making the most of technology and new ways of working.**
- **Boost small businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, including by abolishing business rates and replacing them with a Commercial Landowner Levy to help our high streets.**
- **Introduce a general duty of care for the environment and human rights in business operations and supply chains.**

In addition, we will:

- Re-establish the Industrial Strategy Council and put it on a statutory footing, to ensure vital oversight, monitoring and evaluation of the industrial strategy for the long term.
- Support British industry to cut emissions while holding businesses to account for their role in tackling climate change, as set out in chapter 5.
- Support science, research and innovation, particularly among small businesses and startups, in universities and in zero-carbon, environmental and medical technologies, including by:
  - Continuing to participate in Horizon Europe and joining the European Innovation Council.
  - Aiming for at least 3% of GDP to be invested in research and development by 2030, rising to 3.5% by 2034.

- Ensure the UK has the highest possible standards of environmental, health, labour and consumer protection, at least matching EU standards.
- Tackle the productivity crisis by encouraging businesses to invest in training, take up digital technologies and become more energy efficient, including through our industrial strategy and reform of business rates.
- Work with the major banks to fund the creation of a local banking sector dedicated to meeting the needs of local small and medium-sized businesses.
- Power scale-up companies, especially outside of London and the South East, using innovative ways of ‘crowding-in’ private sector investment.
- Create a clear, workable and well-resourced cross-sectoral regulatory framework for artificial intelligence that:
  - Promotes innovation while creating certainty for AI users, developers and investors.
  - Establishes transparency and accountability for AI systems in the public sector.
  - Ensures the use of personal data and AI is unbiased, transparent and accurate, and respects the privacy of innocent people.
- Negotiate the UK’s participation in the Trade and Technology Council with the US and the EU, so we can play a leading role in global AI regulation, and work with international partners in agreeing common standards for AI risk and impact assessment, testing, monitoring and audit.
- Unlock British businesses’ global potential, bring down trade barriers and use UK trade policy as a force for good by:
  - Giving Parliament real power in setting UK trade policy, by ensuring it is properly consulted on and signs off on negotiating mandates and any completed international trade agreements.
  - Ensuring that all information small and medium-sized enterprises need on trade is readily available from a single point of contact, with tailored support for those who need it.
  - Making it a clear objective of trade ministers to boost trade by small British businesses.

- Placing human rights, labour and environmental standards and protection at the heart of international trade deals.
- Support our world-renowned whisky industry by reviewing the UK excise duty structure to better support whisky exports.
- Cut resource use, waste and pollution by accelerating the transition to a more circular economy that maximises the recovery, reuse, recycling and remanufacturing of products. This will cut costs for consumers and businesses, reduce exposure to volatile commodity prices, protect the environment and create new jobs and enterprises.
- Promote a public benefit company model for monopoly utility companies.
- Encourage employers to promote employee ownership by giving staff in listed companies with more than 250 employees a right to request shares, to be held in trust for the benefit of employees.
- Reform fiduciary duty and company purpose rules to ensure that all large companies have a formal statement of corporate purpose, including considerations such as employee welfare, environmental standards, community benefit and ethical practice, alongside benefit to shareholders, and that they report formally on the wider impact of the business on society and the environment.
- Extend the scope of the existing ‘public interest’ test when considering approvals for takeovers of large or strategically significant companies by overseas-based owners to recognise the benefits to the UK economy, workers and consumers of protecting UK companies from speculative or short-term interests.
- Tackle the late payments crisis by requiring all government agencies and contractors and companies with more than 250 employees to sign up to the prompt payment code, making it enforceable.
- Invest in people’s skills by:
  - Replacing the broken apprenticeship levy with a broader and more flexible skills and training levy.



- Boosting the take-up of apprenticeships, including by guaranteeing they are paid at least the National Minimum Wage by scrapping the lower apprentice rate.
  - Creating new Lifelong Skills Grants for adults to spend on education and training throughout their lives, as set out in chapter 8.
  - Developing National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
  - Identifying and seeking to solve skills gaps, such as the lack of advanced technicians, by expanding higher vocational training like foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.
  - Improving the quality of vocational education, and strengthening careers advice and links with employers in schools and colleges, as set out in chapter 8.
- Fix the work visa system and expand the Youth Mobility Scheme, as set out in chapter 18, to help address the labour shortages that are an outcome of the Conservatives' botched deal with Europe.
  - Establish a powerful new Worker Protection Enforcement Authority unifying responsibilities currently spread across three agencies – including enforcing the minimum wage, tackling modern slavery and protecting agency workers.
  - Establish an independent review to recommend a genuine living wage across all sectors, with government departments and all other public sector employers taking a leading role in paying it.
  - Modernise employment rights to make them fit for the age of the 'gig economy', including by:
    - Establishing a new 'dependent contractor' employment status in between employment and self-employment, with entitlements to basic rights such as minimum earnings levels, sick pay and holiday entitlement.
    - Reviewing the tax and National Insurance status of employees, dependent contractors and freelancers to ensure fair and comparable treatment.
    - Setting a 20% higher minimum wage for people on zero-hour contracts at times of normal demand to compensate them for the uncertainty of fluctuating hours of work.

- Giving a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for 'zero hours' and agency workers, not to be unreasonably refused.
  - Reviewing rules concerning pensions so that those in the gig economy don't lose out, and portability between roles is protected.
  - Shifting the burden of proof in employment tribunals regarding employment status from individual to employer.
- Expand parental leave and pay, including making them day-one rights, as set out in chapter 9.
  - Fix the broken Statutory Sick Pay system by:
    - Making it available to the more than one million workers earning less than £123 a week, most of whom are women.
    - Aligning the rate with the National Minimum Wage.
    - Making payments available from the first day of missing work rather than the fourth.
    - Supporting small employers with Statutory Sick Pay costs, consulting with them on the best way to do this.

# 5 Climate Change and Energy

Climate change is an existential threat. Soaring temperatures leading to wildfires, floods, droughts and rising sea levels are affecting millions of people directly, and billions more through falling food production and rising prices. Urgent action is needed – in the UK and around the world – to achieve net zero and avert catastrophe.

At the same time, sky-high energy bills are hurting families and businesses, fuelling the cost-of-living crisis. Russia's assault on Ukraine has reinforced the need to significantly reduce the UK's dependence on fossil fuels and invest in renewables – both to cut energy bills and to deliver energy security.

The Conservative Government has failed to act with anything close to the speed or ambition these challenges demand. The independent Climate Change Committee warns that the Government is not on track to meet its legally binding targets.

Liberal Democrats are committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045 at the latest.

We will take the bold, urgent action needed to tackle climate change, cut energy bills and create hundreds of thousands of secure, well-paid new jobs. Together with innovative British businesses, we will make the UK the world leader in the clean technologies of the future. We will help households meet the cost of the transition to net zero and make sure everyone benefits from it, leaving no one behind.

## **We will:**

- **Make homes warmer and cheaper to heat with a ten-year emergency upgrade programme, starting with free insulation and heat pumps for those on low incomes, and ensure that all new homes are zero-carbon.**
- **Drive a rooftop solar revolution by expanding incentives for households to install solar panels, including a guaranteed fair price for electricity sold back into the grid.**

- **Invest in renewable power so that 90% of the UK's electricity is generated from renewables by 2030.**
- **Appoint a Chief Secretary for Sustainability in the Treasury to ensure that the economy is sustainable, resource-efficient and zero-carbon, establish a new Net Zero Delivery Authority to coordinate action across government departments and work with devolved administrations, and hand more powers and resources to local councils for local net zero strategies.**
- **Establish national and local citizens' assemblies to give people real involvement in the decisions needed to tackle climate change.**
- **Restore the UK's role as a global leader on climate change, by returning international development spending to 0.7% of national income, with tackling climate change a key priority for development spending.**

In addition, we will:

- Take the action needed now to achieve net zero by 2045, including:
  - Meeting the UK's commitment under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions by at least 68% from 1990 levels by 2030.
  - Requiring the National Infrastructure Commission to take fully into account the environmental implications of all national infrastructure decisions.
  - Putting tackling climate change at the heart of a new industrial strategy, as set out in chapter 4.
  - Investing in education and training to equip people with the skills needed for the low-carbon economy of the future, as set out in chapters 4 and 8.
  - Ensuring that nature-based solutions, including tree planting, form a critical part of the UK's strategy to tackle climate change, as set out in chapter 12.
  - Putting our farming and food system on an environmentally sustainable footing, as set out in chapter 13.
  - Making it cheaper and easier to switch to electric vehicles, restoring the requirement that every new car and small van sold from 2030 is zero-emission, investing in active travel and public transport, electrifying Britain's railways, and reducing the climate impact of flying, as set out in chapter 16.
  - Coordinating action across the UK by creating a Joint Climate Council of the Nations, as set out in chapter 20.



- Cut energy bills and emissions, and end fuel poverty, by:
  - Launching an emergency Home Energy Upgrade programme, with free insulation and heat pumps for low-income households and a central role for local authorities in delivering this programme.
  - Providing incentives for installing heat pumps that cover the real costs.
  - Immediately requiring all new homes and non-domestic buildings to be built to a zero-carbon standard, including being fitted with solar panels, and progressively increasing standards as technology improves.
  - Reintroducing requirements for landlords to upgrade the energy efficiency of their properties to EPC C or above by 2028.
  - Introducing a new subsidised Energy-Saving Homes scheme, with pilots to find the most effective combination of tax incentives, loans and grants, together with advice and support.
  - Introducing a social tariff for the most vulnerable to provide targeted energy discounts for vulnerable households.
  - Helping people with the cost of living and their energy bills by implementing a proper, one-off windfall tax on the super-profits of oil and gas producers and traders.
  - Decoupling electricity prices from the wholesale gas price.
  - Eliminating unfair regional differences in domestic energy bills.
  
- Accelerate the deployment of renewable power and deliver energy security by:
  - Removing the Conservatives' unnecessary restrictions on new solar and wind power, and supporting investment and innovation in tidal and wave power in particular.
  - Maintaining the ban on fracking and introducing a ban on new coal mines.
  - Building the grid infrastructure required, facilitated by a strategic Land and Sea Use Framework as set out in chapter 15.
  - Implementing the UK's G7 pledge to end fossil fuel subsidies, while ensuring a just transition that values the skills and experience of people working in the oil and gas industry and provides good opportunities for them, and takes special care of the regions and communities most affected.
  - Investing in energy storage, including green hydrogen, pumped storage and battery capability.
  - Working together with our European neighbours to build a sustainable supply chain for renewable energy technology.



- Building more electricity interconnectors between the UK and other countries to guarantee security of supply, located carefully to avoid disruption to local communities and minimise environmental damage.
- Support the expansion of community and decentralised energy, including:
  - Empowering local authorities to develop local renewable electricity generation and storage strategies.
  - Giving small low-carbon generators the right to export their electricity to an existing electricity supplier on fair terms.
  - Requiring large energy suppliers to work with community schemes to sell the power they generate to local customers.
  - Reducing access costs for grid connections.
  - Reforming the energy network to permit local energy grids.
  - Guaranteeing that community benefit funds receive a fair share of the wealth generated by local renewables infrastructure.
- Restore the UK's role as a global leader on climate change by:
  - Restoring international development spending to 0.7% of national income, with tackling climate change a key priority for development spending.
  - Showing leadership on the Paris Agreement by meeting the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution and arguing for greater global ambition.
  - Working together with our European neighbours to tackle the climate emergency, including by associating the UK Emissions Trading System with the EU ETS.
  - Continuing the UK's support for the UN Loss and Damage Fund for countries particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, to ensure a just transition for all.
  - Pressing for all OECD countries to agree to end subsidies for foreign fossil fuel projects.
- Hold businesses to account for their role in tackling climate change by:
  - Introducing a general duty of care for the environment, as set out in chapter 4.
  - Requiring all large companies listed on UK stock exchanges to set targets consistent with achieving the net zero goal, and to report on their progress.

- Regulating financial services to encourage climate-friendly investments, including requiring pension funds and managers to show that their portfolio investments are consistent with the Paris Agreement, and creating new powers for regulators to act if banks and other investors are not managing climate risks properly.
- Support British industry to cut emissions by:
  - Setting out a clear and stable roadmap to net zero, repairing the damage done by Conservative U-turns and giving businesses the confidence to invest.
  - Expanding the market for climate-friendly products and services with steadily higher criteria in public procurement policy.
  - Implementing the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism for high-emission products, protecting UK businesses from unfair competition.
  - Reducing emissions from industrial processes by supporting carbon capture and storage and new low-carbon processes for cement and steel production.
  - Providing more advice to companies on cutting emissions, supporting the development of regional industrial clusters for zero-carbon innovation and increasing the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.

# 6 Health

Good health gives people the freedom to live their lives as they choose. A thriving economy needs a healthy population. Universal high-quality healthcare, free at the point of use and accessible wherever and whenever it's needed, is therefore essential for both individual freedom and national prosperity.

Our NHS used to be the envy of the world. But now, too many people can't access the care they need. The Conservatives have plunged the NHS into crisis – as have the SNP in Scotland and Labour in Wales. With more than a hundred thousand staff vacancies in England alone, a crisis in staff retention, long waiting times, missed targets and poor outcomes, patient safety is being pushed into the danger zone.

Getting an appointment with a GP can take weeks and seeing an NHS dentist is almost impossible. People are no longer confident that when they ring 999 an ambulance will turn up in time. Millions are waiting for treatment, unable to work. The frontline workers who were rightly applauded are now overworked and burnt out.

Liberal Democrats believe that people should be in control of their own lives and health and that means everyone should get the care they need, when they need it, where they need it. Instead of just spending money firefighting crisis after crisis, we will invest now to save taxpayers' money in the long-run. We will strengthen patients' rights, fix crumbling hospitals, recruit and retain a workforce for the future, invest in technology that improves outcomes and saves money, and restore the UK as a world leader in health research.

Our plan will tackle the crisis at both the front door and the back door to the NHS: investing in public health and early access to community services, including GPs, pharmacists and dentists, so fewer people need to go to hospital in the first place, and fixing the crisis in social care to stop so many people being stuck in hospital beds. Liberal Democrats understand that we need to fix social care to save our NHS.

## **We will:**

- **Give everyone the right to see a GP within seven days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to, with 8,000 more GPs to deliver on it.**
- **Guarantee access to an NHS dentist for everyone needing urgent and emergency care, ending DIY dentistry and 'dental deserts'.**
- **Improve early access to mental health services by establishing mental health hubs for young people in every community and introducing regular mental health check-ups at key points in people's lives when they are most vulnerable to mental ill-health.**
- **Boost cancer survival rates and introduce a guarantee for 100% of patients to start treatment for cancer within 62 days from urgent referral.**
- **Help people to spend five more years of their life in good health by investing in public health.**

## In addition, we will:

- Give everyone the right to see a GP or the most appropriate practice staff member within seven days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to, by:
  - Increasing the number of full-time equivalent GPs by 8,000, half by boosting recruitment and half from retaining more experienced GPs.
  - Giving everyone 70+ and everyone with long-term health conditions access to a named GP.
  - Freeing up GPs' time by giving more prescribing rights and public health advisory services to qualified pharmacists, nurse practitioners and paramedics.
  - Introducing a universal 24/7 GP booking system.
  - Removing top-down bureaucracy to let practices hire the staff they need and invest in training.
  - Establishing a Strategic Small Surgeries Fund to sustain services in rural and remote areas.



SpO<sub>2</sub>: 98% PR: 72

OXIMETER

- Guarantee access to an NHS dentist for everyone needing urgent and emergency care by:
  - Bringing dentists back to the NHS from the private sector by fixing the broken NHS dental contract and using flexible commissioning to meet patient needs.
  - Introducing an emergency scheme to guarantee access to free NHS dental check-ups for those already eligible: children, new mothers, those who are pregnant and those on low incomes.
  - Guaranteeing appointments for all those who need a dental check before commencing surgery, chemotherapy or transplant.
- Take action to prevent tooth decay by:
  - Providing supervised toothbrushing training for children in nurseries and schools.
  - Scrapping VAT on children's toothbrushes and toothpaste.
- Work towards a fairer and more sustainable long-term funding model for pharmacies, and build on the Pharmacy First approach to give patients more accessible routine services and ease the pressure on GPs.
- Improve early access to mental health services by:
  - Opening walk-in hubs for children and young people in every community.
  - Offering regular mental health check-ups at key points in people's lives when they are most vulnerable to mental ill-health.
  - Putting a dedicated, qualified mental health professional in every school, as set out in chapter 8.
  - Ending out-of-area mental health placements by increasing capacity and coordination between services, so that no one is treated far from home.
  - Extending young people's mental health services up to the age of 25 to end the drop-off experienced by young people transitioning to adult services.
  - Increasing access to clinically effective talking therapies.
  - Taking an evidence-led approach to preventing and treating eating disorders, and challenging damaging stigma about weight.
  - Making prescriptions for people with chronic mental health conditions free on the NHS, as part of our commitment to review the entire schedule of exemptions for prescription charges.
  - Transforming perinatal mental health support for those who are pregnant, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth.

- Tackling stigma through continued support for public education including Time to Talk.
  - Cutting suicide rates with a focus on community suicide prevention services and improving prevention training for frontline NHS staff.
  - Recognising the relationship between mental health and debt, and providing better signposting between talking therapies and debt advice.
  - Ending inappropriate and costly inpatient placements for people with learning disabilities and autism.
  - Modernising the Mental Health Act to strengthen people's rights, give them more choice and control over their treatment and prevent inappropriate detentions.
  - Creating a statutory, independent Mental Health Commissioner to represent patients, their families and carers.
  - Widening the current safety investigation into mental health hospitals to look at the whole patient experience, including ward design and treatment options.
- Boost cancer survival rates by:
    - Introducing a guarantee that 100% of patients will be able to start treatment within 62 days from urgent referral.
    - Replacing ageing radiotherapy machines and increasing their number, so no one has to travel too far for treatment.
    - Recruiting more cancer nurses so that every patient has a dedicated specialist supporting them throughout their treatment.
    - Passing a Cancer Survival Research Act requiring the Government to coordinate and ensure funding for research into the cancers with the lowest survival rates.
    - Halving the time for new treatments to reach patients by expanding the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's capacity.
    - Launching a new prostate cancer screening programme for those at higher risk.
- Help people spend more years of their life in good health by:
    - Increasing the Public Health Grant, with a proportion of the extra funding set aside for those experiencing the worst health inequalities to co-produce plans for their communities.
    - Establishing a 'Health Creation Unit' in the Cabinet Office to lead work across government to improve the nation's health and tackle health inequalities.

- Introducing regulations to halt the dangerous use of vapes by children while recognising their role in smoking cessation for adults, and banning the sale of single-use vapes.
  - Improving access to blood pressure tests in community spaces.
  - Expanding social prescribing and investing in community projects that bring people together to combat loneliness.
  - Introducing a new kitemark for health apps and digital tools that are clinically proven to help people lead healthier lives.
  - Introducing a new levy on tobacco company profits to help fund healthcare and smoking cessation services.
  - Protecting children from exposure to junk food by supporting local authorities to restrict outdoor advertising and restricting TV advertising to post-watershed.
  - Extending the soft drinks levy to juice-based and milk-based drinks that are high in added sugar.
  - Tackling air pollution and poor air quality in public buildings with a Clean Air Act, as set out in chapter 12.
- Train, recruit and retain the doctors, nurses and other NHS staff we need, including by:
    - Establishing a properly independent pay review body.
    - Retaining more staff across the NHS through a ten-year retention plan.
    - Making flexible working a day-one right and expanding access to flexible, affordable childcare, as set out in chapters 4 and 9.
    - Fixing the work visa system and exempting NHS and care staff from the Immigration Skills Charge, as set out in chapter 18.
    - Ending the false economy of spending money on agency workers and encouraging the use of flexible staff banks.
  - Fix the life-threatening crisis in our ambulance services by:
    - Ending excessive handover delays for ambulances by increasing the number of staffed hospital beds to end degrading corridor care, and fixing social care as set out in chapter 7.
    - Publishing accessible, localised reports of ambulance response times.
    - Creating an emergency fund to reverse closures of community ambulance stations and cancel planned closures where needed.



- Implement a ten-year plan to invest in hospitals and the primary care estate to end the scandal of crumbling roofs, dangerous concrete and life-expired buildings.
- Create a new 'Patients Charter' to harness lived experience of patients and embed patient voice, partnership and safety standards across health and care settings, including:
  - A new legal right to a second opinion.
  - A new legal right to maintain contact in all health and care settings.
  - Protecting patient data and patients' rights to opt out of data sharing.
- Implement the recommendations of the Infected Blood Inquiry in full, including delivering full and fair compensation to all victims of the scandal in a timely and transparent manner.
- Introduce truly independent complaints processes and transparent monitoring of reports of sexual misconduct in the NHS.
- End the General Medical Council's five-year rule which prevents patients raising complaints relating to matters more than five years old.
- Enable patients to leave hospital when they no longer need to be there by investing in social care and community care, as set out in chapter 7.
- Develop and implement a post-pandemic strategy for supporting people who are immunocompromised.
- Harness the benefits of new technology and digital tools for patients by:
  - Ring-fencing budgets to enable the NHS to adopt innovative digital tools that improve patient care and experience and save staff time and costs.
  - Replacing old, slow computers to free up clinicians' time to care for patients.
  - Requiring all IT systems used by the NHS to work with each other.
  - Ensuring every care setting has electronic records that can feed into a patient's health record with the patient's consent.
  - Expanding virtual wards and investing in new technologies that free up staff time and allow people to be treated at or closer to home.

- Review diagnostic provision across the NHS and implement a new ten-year Strategic Diagnostics Plan.
- Improve faster access to new and novel medicines and medical devices by seeking a comprehensive mutual recognition agreement with the European Medicines Agency.
- Combat the harms caused by drugs by:
  - Moving the departmental lead on drugs policy from the Home Office to the Department of Health and Social Care.
  - Investing in more addiction services and support for drug users, including specialist youth support services.
  - Freeing up police time, reducing court backlogs, tackling prison overcrowding and reducing the harms of drug misuse by diverting people arrested for possession of drugs for personal use into treatment where appropriate.
  - Protecting young people, tackling the criminal gangs and taking 'skunk' off the streets by introducing a legal, regulated market for cannabis. Sales will be restricted to over-18s only, from licensed retailers with strict limits on potency and THC content.
  - Treating Scotland's drug deaths crisis as a public health emergency, and devolving powers for tailored solutions where necessary.
- Provide a fair funding deal for hospices, including children's hospices, recognising the valuable services they provide and saving money on hospital admissions.

# 7 Care

Everyone deserves high-quality care when they need it. Liberal Democrats want everyone to be able to live independently and with dignity, and receive any care they need in their own home wherever possible.

Carers – paid and unpaid, young and old – do a remarkable and important job. They deserve far more support, but are too often forgotten and ignored.

But social care services in this country are in crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people are waiting for care. Many are stranded in hospital beds because the care isn't in place for them to leave, putting even more strain on the NHS.

The Conservatives promised to “fix” the crisis in our social care system, that no one would have to sell their house to pay for personal care costs, and that they would not raise taxes to do it. They have broken all these promises.

We will empower care users, and support care workers and the millions of unpaid carers looking after loved ones. We will forge a new consensus on funding to ensure that no one has to sell their home to pay for their personal care. We will invest to save, recognising that providing care reduces demand on more expensive NHS services.

## **We will:**

- **Introduce free personal care based on the model introduced by the Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland in 2002, so that provision is based on need, not ability to pay.**
- **Create a social care workforce plan, establish a Royal College of Care Workers to improve recognition and career progression, and introduce a higher Carer's Minimum Wage.**
- **Establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care.**

- **Give unpaid carers a fair deal so they get the support they so desperately need, including paid carer's leave and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks.**
- **Develop a digital strategy to enable care users to live tech-enabled lives.**

In addition, we will:

- Provide truly personalised care that empowers individuals by:
  - Trialling personal health and social care budgets so that individuals are in control of what care they receive.
  - Rolling out digital platforms for care users to develop networks, relationships and opportunities, connecting with care workers, friends and family, voluntary groups and more.
  - Improving communication standards so carers can support care users to co-produce and monitor care plans.
  - Developing a digital strategy for tech-enabled lives.
  - Establishing an Independent Living Taskforce to help people live independently in their own homes, as set out in chapter 10.
- End the postcode lottery of service provision and provide national, high-quality care for everyone who needs it by:
  - Providing predictable, consistent funding for free personal care.
  - Increasing transparency and accountability as to how money is spent through local authorities.
  - Creating a National Care Agency to set national minimum standards of care.
  - Enabling individuals to transfer their care package so they don't feel stuck in their current locality due to their care needs.
- Give unpaid carers a fair deal by:
  - Increasing Carer's Allowance and expanding eligibility for it, as set out in chapter 10.
  - Introducing a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers.
  - Introducing paid carer's leave, building on the entitlement to unpaid leave secured by the Liberal Democrats.



- Making caring a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and requiring employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with caring responsibilities to provide that care.
- Introducing a Young Carers Pupil Premium as part of an 'Education Guarantee' for young carers.
- Make careers in social care more attractive and value experienced staff to improve retention by:
  - Creating a new Carer's Minimum Wage, boosting the minimum wage for care workers by £2 an hour, as a starting point for improved pay across the sector.
  - Creating clear career pathways, linked to recommended pay scales, which put an end to the undervaluing of skills in the sector.
  - Creating a career ladder to allow flexibility to work across the NHS and social care, allowing staff to gain experience in both.
  - Creating a Royal College of Care Workers to represent this skilled workforce.
  - Expanding the NHS Digital Staff Passport to include the care sector.
- Recruit more staff to the sector with a social care workforce plan, akin to the NHS England workforce plan, that includes ethical international recruitment.
- Support people to age well by:
  - Establishing a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing.
  - Rolling out active ageing programmes and trips and falls assessments for everyone over the age of 75 to prevent falls, avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and promote healthy ageing.
  - Opening fracture liaison services so that osteoporosis patients can get the treatment they need and prevent long-term issues and costs.
- Support children in kinship care and their family carers by:
  - Introducing a statutory definition of kinship care.
  - Building on the existing pilot to develop a weekly allowance for all kinship carers.
- Make care experience a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 to strengthen the rights of people who are in or have been in care.
- Refresh the national strategy for loneliness collaboratively with service providers and people who have lived experience of loneliness, to be overseen by a dedicated Minister for Tackling Loneliness.

# 8 Education

Liberal Democrats believe that education is the best investment we can make in our children's potential and our country's future.

The Conservatives have consistently let down children and parents and neglected schools and colleges. They have failed to grasp the scale of the damage that the Covid pandemic has done to children's learning and mental health.

We will invest in education, starting in the crucial early years and continuing throughout adulthood. We want every child to get the support and attention they need at school, so they leave with the skills, confidence and resilience to be happy and successful – whatever they choose to do next.

## **We will:**

- **Put a dedicated, qualified mental health professional in every primary and secondary school, making sure all children and parents have someone they can turn to for help, funded by increasing the Digital Services Tax on social media firms and other tech giants.**
- **Increase school and college funding per pupil above the rate of inflation every year, and end the scandal of crumbling school and college buildings by investing in new buildings and clearing the backlog of repairs.**
- **Introduce a 'Tutoring Guarantee' for every disadvantaged pupil who needs extra support.**
- **Invest in high-quality early years education and close the attainment gap by giving disadvantaged children aged three and four an extra five free hours a week and tripling the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,000 a year.**
- **Reinstate maintenance grants for disadvantaged students immediately to make sure that living costs are not a barrier to studying at university.**

- **Create new Lifelong Skills Grants, giving all adults £5,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives, and aim to increase them to £10,000 in the future when the public finances allow.**

In addition, we will:

- Tackle the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention by:
  - Creating a teacher workforce strategy to ensure that every secondary school child is taught by a specialist teacher in their subject.
  - Reforming the School Teachers' Review Body to make it properly independent of government and able to recommend fair pay rises for teachers, and fully funding those rises every year.
  - Funding teacher training properly so that all trainee posts in school are paid.
  - Introducing a clear and properly funded programme of high-quality professional development for all teachers, including training on effective parental engagement.
- Urgently establish a standing commission to build a long-term consensus across parties and teachers to broaden the curriculum and make qualifications at 16 and 18 fit for the 21st century. This will draw on best practice such as the International Baccalaureate and ensure children learn core skills such as critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity.
- Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment.
- Strengthen careers advice and links with employers in schools and colleges.
- Include arts subjects in the English Baccalaureate and give power to Ofsted to monitor the curriculum so that schools continue to provide a rich curriculum including subjects like art, music or drama.
- Expand provision of extracurricular activities, such as sport, music, drama, debating and coding, starting with a new free entitlement for disadvantaged children.





- Reform Ofsted inspections and end single-word judgements so that parents get a clear picture of the true strengths and weaknesses of each school, and schools get the guidance and support they need to improve.
- Implement a new parental engagement strategy, including a regular, published parent survey and guidance for schools on providing accessible information to parents on what their children are learning.
- Tackle persistent absence by setting up a register of children who are not in school, and working to understand and remove underlying barriers to attendance.
- Tackle the crisis in special educational needs provision, and help to end the postcode lottery in provision, by:
  - Giving local authorities extra funding to reduce the amount that schools pay towards the cost of a child's Education, Health and Care Plan.
  - Establishing a new National Body for SEND to fund support for children with very high needs.
- Give local authorities with responsibility for education the powers and resources to act as Strategic Education Authorities for their area, including responsibility for places planning, exclusions, administering admissions including in-year admissions, and SEND functions.
- Redirect capital funding for unnecessary new free schools to help clear the backlog of school repairs.
- Tackle bullying in schools by promoting pastoral leadership in schools and delivering high-quality relationships and sex education.
- When the public finances allow, give disadvantaged two-year-olds an extra five free hours of early years education a week, as another step towards a universal, full-time entitlement for all two- to four-year-olds.
- Introduce a Young People's Premium, extending Pupil Premium funding to disadvantaged young people aged 16-18.

- Review further education funding, including the option of exempting colleges from VAT.
- Support the education of children in care, extend Pupil Premium Plus funding to children in kinship care, and guarantee any child taken into care a school place within three weeks, if required to move schools.
- Safeguard the future of our world-leading universities and the wellbeing of every student by:
  - Supporting science, research and innovation in universities, including continuing to participate in Horizon Europe and joining the European Innovation Council, as set out in chapter 4.
  - Giving higher education institutions a statutory duty of care for their students.
  - Introducing a statutory Student Mental Health Charter and requiring universities to make mental health services accessible to their students.
  - Returning to the Erasmus Plus programme as an associated country, as set out in chapter 9.
  - Establishing a review of higher education finance in the next Parliament to consider any necessary reforms in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation and quality, and make sure there are no more retrospective raising of rates or selling-off of loans to private companies.
  - Reporting international student flows separately to estimates of long-term migration.
  - Ensuring that all universities work to widen participation by disadvantaged and underrepresented groups across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and requiring every university to be transparent about selection criteria.



# 9 Families, Children and Young People

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the opportunity to flourish, no matter their background or personal circumstances. Protecting their rights and wellbeing as children and ensuring they are properly nourished are top priorities.

Families come in all shapes and sizes, and parents should have the support and flexibility to juggle work with parenting as they see fit.

Flexible, affordable childcare and early years education is a critical part of our economic infrastructure and helps close the attainment gap between rich and poor. It gives parents more choice over how to organise their lives and helps them return to work if they want to. Lack of access to affordable childcare is a key driver of the gender pay gap.

But affordable childcare is only part of the picture. We will also overhaul parental leave to give parents a genuine choice over how to manage things in the first months of their child's life.

## **We will:**

- **Extend free school meals to all children in poverty, with an ambition to extend them to all primary school children when the public finances allow.**
- **Appoint a Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People.**
- **Give parents genuine flexibility and choice in the crucial early months by doubling Statutory Maternity and Shared Parental Pay to £350 a week and introducing an extra use-it-or-lose-it month for fathers and partners, paid at 90% of earnings.**
- **Make all parental pay and leave day-one rights, and extend them to self-employed parents.**

- **Expand opportunities for young people to study, teach and volunteer abroad by returning to the Erasmus Plus programme as an associated country.**

In addition, we will:

- Protect and support the rights and wellbeing of every child by:
  - Incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law.
  - Setting up an independent advocacy body for children's safety online.
  - Addressing the underfunding and neglect of children's mental health services, youth services and youth justice services.
  - Tackling child poverty, as set out in chapter 10.
  - Giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote, as set out in chapter 20.
- Ensure that all parents can access childcare that is flexible, affordable and fair by:
  - Reviewing the rates paid to providers for free hours to ensure they cover the actual costs of delivering high-quality childcare and early years education.
  - Developing a career strategy for nursery staff, including a training programme with the majority of those working with children aged two to four to have a relevant Early Years qualification or be working towards one.
  - Including a specific emphasis on identifying and supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities in the new training programme for early years staff.
- Restore childminding as a valued part of the early years system by:
  - Replacing the three different current registration processes with a single childcare register.
  - Commissioning a practitioner-led review to simplify regulation, reduce administrative burdens and attract new childminders while maintaining high standards.
- Give parents genuine flexibility and choice in the crucial early months by:
  - Making all parental pay and leave day-one rights, including for adoptive parents and kinship carers, and extending them to self-employed parents.
  - Doubling Statutory Maternity and Shared Parental Pay to £350 a week.
  - Increasing pay for paternity leave to 90% of earnings, with a cap for high earners.

- Introducing an extra use-it-or-lose-it month for fathers and partners, paid at 90% of earnings, with a cap for high earners.
  - Requiring large employers to publish their parental leave and pay policies.
  - Introducing a 'Toddler Top-Up': an enhanced rate of Child Benefit for one-year-olds.
- In the longer term, when the public finances allow, our ambition is to give all families (including self-employed parents, adoptive parents and kinship carers):
    - Six weeks of use-it-or-lose-it leave for each parent, paid at 90% of earnings.
    - 46 weeks of parental leave to share between themselves as they choose, paid at double the current statutory rate.
- Introduce paid neonatal care leave.
  - Support children in kinship care and their family carers, as set out in chapter 7.
  - Provide free access to sign language lessons for parents and guardians of d/Deaf children.
  - Tackle the backlogs in the family courts that leave children and families waiting nearly a year for cases to be resolved, by making the legal aid system simpler, fairer and more generous as set out in chapter 19.
  - Fully review and reform the Child Maintenance Service to ensure it works for all children and parents, including removing the Collect and Pay charge for receiving parents and ensuring that payments cannot be used as a form of coercive control over domestic abuse survivors.







# 10 Pensions and Safety Net

The cost-of-living crisis has caused huge financial hardship across the country and restricted the life chances of millions. The Government response has been a series of patchy and short-term fixes.

Liberal Democrats believe that no one should fear for their future, struggle to put food on the table, or worry about heating their home.

Our aim is to make the UK the best place in the world to work, raise children and enjoy retirement by ensuring that proper support is in place for those who need it.

## **We will:**

- **Tackle child poverty by removing the two-child limit and the benefit cap.**
- **Set a target of ending deep poverty within a decade, and establish an independent commission to recommend further annual increases in Universal Credit to ensure that support covers life's essentials, such as food and bills.**
- **Support pensioners by protecting the triple lock so that pensions always rise in line with inflation, wages or 2.5% – whichever is highest.**
- **Ensure that women born in the 1950s are finally treated fairly and properly compensated.**
- **Give unpaid carers the support they deserve by increasing Carer's Allowance and expanding it to more carers, and stop pursuing carers for old overpayments of Carer's Allowance.**

In addition, we will:

- Repair the broken benefits safety net by:
  - Reducing the wait for the first payment of Universal Credit from five weeks to five days.
  - Scrapping the bedroom tax.
  - Replacing the sanctions regime with an incentive-based scheme to help people into work.
  - Ending the young parent penalty for under-25s by restoring the full rate of Universal Credit for all parents regardless of age.
- Increase Carer's Allowance and expand eligibility for it by:
  - Raising the amount carers can earn and introducing an earnings taper to end the unfair cliff-edge.
  - Reducing the number of hours' care per week required.
  - Extending it to carers in full-time education.
- Reverse the Conservatives' cut to support payments for parents whose partners have died.
- Establish an Independent Living Taskforce to help people live independently in their own homes, with more choice and control over their lives.
- Make the benefits system work better for disabled people by:
  - Giving disabled people and organisations representing them a stronger voice in the design of benefits policies and processes.
  - Bringing Work Capability Assessments in-house.
  - Reforming Personal Independence Payment assessments to make the process more transparent and stop unnecessary reassessments, and end the use of informal assessments.
- Give everyone the chance to enjoy a decent retirement by:
  - Developing measures to end the gender pension gap in private pensions and ensure working-age carers can save properly for retirement.
  - Improving the State Pension system by investing in helplines to ensure quicker responses to queries and resolution of underpayments.

- Ending the scandal of lost top-up payments by overhauling the processing system and providing proper receipts.
- Fix the broken Statutory Sick Pay system, as set out in chapter 4.
- Require pension funds and managers to show that their portfolio investments are consistent with the Paris Agreement, as set out in chapter 5.
- Ensure that military compensation for illness or injury does not count towards means testing for benefits, as set out in chapter 21.



# 11 Crime and Policing

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own homes and communities. But for too many people in the UK, that's simply not the reality today.

The Conservatives have talked tough on crime, but failed even to get the basics right. Their unnecessary cuts and ineffective use of resources have contributed to the rise in unsolved crimes as police forces are left overstretched and under-resourced.

Serious violence is destroying too many young lives. Our communities are plagued by burglaries, fraud and anti-social behaviour, and far too many criminals are getting away with it. Violence against women and girls remains horrifically high.

Huge backlogs in the courts are denying victims the justice they deserve. Prisons are in crisis: overcrowded, understaffed and failing to rehabilitate offenders.

Liberal Democrats will prevent crime and build communities where people can truly feel safe, including by:

- **Restoring proper community policing, where officers are visible, trusted and focused on preventing and solving crimes – especially rape and other violent crime.**
- **Creating a new statutory guarantee that all burglaries will be attended by the police and properly investigated.**
- **Investing in the criminal justice system to tackle the backlog of court cases and ensure swift justice.**
- **Breaking the cycle of reoffending by improving rehabilitation in prisons and on release, and strengthening the supervision of offenders in the community.**

- **Ensuring survivors of violence against women and girls are properly supported in the criminal justice process, including through mandatory training for police and prosecutors in understanding the impact of trauma on survivors.**

In addition, we will:

- Free up local officers' time to focus on their communities by:
  - Creating a new Online Crime Agency to effectively tackle illegal content and activity online, such as personal fraud, revenge porn and threats and incitement to violence on social media.
  - Properly resourcing the National Crime Agency to combat serious and organised crime.
- Help rebuild public trust in policing by:
  - Scrapping Police and Crime Commissioners and replacing them with local Police Boards made up of councillors and representatives from relevant local groups, while investing the savings in frontline policing.
  - Requiring the Home Secretary, the Mayor of London and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to draw up an urgent plan to implement the recommendations of the Baroness Casey Review and tackle sexism, racism and homophobia, while encouraging other police forces to do so where appropriate.
  - Ending the disproportionate use of Stop and Search.
  - Requiring all police forces to adopt ambitious targets for improving the diversity of their workforce and make regular progress reports to Parliament.
  - Improving access to restorative justice services.
  - Introducing the Hillsborough Law: a statutory duty of candour on police officers and all public officials, as set out in chapter 20.
- Address staffing shortages in police forces by:
  - Urgently drawing up a national recruitment, training and retention strategy to tackle the shortage of detectives.
  - Ensuring fair pay rises for police officers by reforming the Police Remuneration Review Body to make it properly independent of government.

- Ensure that survivors of domestic abuse are properly supported throughout the criminal justice system by:
  - Embedding domestic abuse specialists in every police force and 999 operator assistance centre to ensure that reports from survivors are handled effectively and sensitively.
  - Addressing the delays in domestic abuse referrals from the police to the CPS and subsequent decision making by the CPS, acknowledging the unique risk these delays can pose to women's safety.
  
- Improve the police response to mental ill-health by:
  - Introducing a target of one hour for handover of people suffering from mental health crisis from police to mental health services.
  - Ensuring that all forces have a mental health professional in the control room at all times.
  - Supporting the police to achieve adequate levels of training in mental health response.
  
- Tackle the backlogs in the criminal courts and reduce the number of people in prison on remand by:
  - Setting a clear target of halving the time from offence to sentencing for all criminals, and implementing a properly funded strategy across the criminal justice system to achieve it.
  - Implementing a new data strategy across the criminal justice system to ensure that capacity meets demand, and to understand the needs of all users, especially victims, vulnerable people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.
  - Developing a workforce strategy to ensure there are enough criminal barristers, judges and court staff.
  
- Improve transparency throughout the criminal justice process by enabling all victims to request a transcript of court proceedings free of charge.
  
- Address youth violence and combat knife crime by:
  - Adopting a public health approach to the epidemic of youth violence which identifies and treats risk factors, rather than just focusing on the symptoms. This means police, teachers, health professionals, youth workers and social services all working closely together to prevent young people falling prey to gangs and violence.

- Investing in youth services that are genuinely engaging and reach more young people.
- Making youth diversion a statutory duty so that every part of the country has a pre-charge diversion scheme for young people up to the age of 25, ensuring better outcomes for young people and less strain on police resources.
- Combat the rise of fraud and scams by:
  - Naming and shaming the banks with the worst records on preventing fraud and reimbursing victims.
  - Requiring banks to reimburse victims of automated push payment scams unless there is clear evidence that they are at fault.
  - Launching a high-profile public awareness campaign to help people spot, avoid and report frauds and scams.
- Improve cooperation with our European neighbours on tackling cross-border crime, such as human trafficking, the illegal drug trade, cybercrime and terrorism, including by:
  - Working with Europol and Eurojust to develop and implement a joint strategy for dealing with cross-border threats, with the closest possible cooperation on shared priorities.
  - Restoring direct, real-time access for UK police to EU-wide data sharing systems to identify and arrest traffickers, terrorists and other international criminals.
- Tackle modern slavery and human trafficking by:
  - Reversing the Conservatives' rollbacks of modern slavery protections.
  - Establishing a powerful new Worker Protection Enforcement Authority to protect people in precarious work, with proactive intelligence-led enforcement of labour market standards and a firewall with immigration enforcement.
  - Transferring responsibility for identifying modern slavery victims from the Home Office to local safeguarding agencies.
  - Creating a financial deterrent by establishing a civil remedy for survivors seeking redress from their traffickers.
- Introduce new laws to crack down on puppy and kitten smuggling.



- Cut reoffending by:
  - Ending prison overcrowding.
  - Recruiting and retaining more prison officers.
  - Improving the provision of training, education and work opportunities in prisons.
  - Establishing a Women's Justice Board and providing specialist training for all staff in contact with women in the criminal justice system.
  - Replacing Young Offender Institutions with Secure Schools and Secure Children's Homes.
  - Ensuring that every prison has a 'through the gate' mentorship programme.
  - Introducing a National Resettlement Plan to improve the rehabilitation of people leaving prison and cut reoffending.
  - Improving and properly funding the supervision of offenders in the community, with far greater coordination between the prison service, probation service providers, the voluntary and private sectors and local authorities, achieving savings in the high costs of reoffending.



# 12 Natural Environment

Protecting our precious natural environment lies at the heart of the Liberal Democrat approach. Everyone should be able to enjoy open green spaces, clean blue rivers and the beauty of Britain's coast.

The UK is facing a nature crisis. One in six species are threatened with extinction from Britain. Air pollution claims tens of thousands of lives every year, and costs the NHS billions. The Government's own Office for Environmental Protection has rebuked the Conservatives for falling "far short" of the action needed. The Conservatives are using Brexit as an opportunity to erode previously high environmental standards.

Nowhere is the Conservatives' lack of care for the environment clearer than the national sewage scandal. They are letting water company bosses get away with paying themselves millions of pounds in bonuses while dumping millions of tonnes of raw sewage into our rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Just one in seven of England's rivers are in good ecological health, and every single one is below chemical pollution standards.

Liberal Democrats have a bold plan to restore the UK's natural environment, and give everyone access to a clean and healthy natural world.

## **We will:**

- **End the sewage scandal by transforming water companies into public benefit companies, banning bonuses for water bosses until discharges and leaks end, and replacing Ofwat with a tough new regulator with new powers to prevent sewage dumps.**
- **Set meaningful and binding targets to stop the decline of our natural environment and 'double nature' by 2050: doubling the size of the Protected Area Network, doubling the area of most important wildlife habitats, doubling the abundance of species and doubling woodland cover by 2050.**

- **Plant at least 60 million trees a year, helping to restore woodland habitats, increase the use of sustainable wood in construction, and reach net zero.**
- **Pass a Clean Air Act, based on World Health Organization guidelines, enforced by a new Air Quality Agency.**
- **Strengthen the Office for Environmental Protection and provide more funding to the Environment Agency and Natural England to help protect our environment and enforce environmental laws.**

In addition, we will:

- Tackle the national scandal of sewage-polluted rivers, waterways and beaches, and make water companies work for people by:
  - Introducing a Sewage Tax on water company profits.
  - Enforcing existing laws to ensure that the storm overflows only function in exceptional circumstances.
  - Setting legally binding targets to prevent sewage dumping into bathing waters and highly sensitive nature sites by 2030.
  - Embracing nature-based solutions to tackle the problem of sewage dumping.
  - Strengthening the powers of local authorities to monitor the health of our rivers, lakes and coastlines, restore our natural environment and tackle climate change.
  - Introducing a 'blue corridor' programme for rivers, streams and lakes to ensure clean and healthy water and setting new 'blue flag' standards.
  - Improving the quantity and quality of bathing waters and sensitive nature sites with more regular and robust testing of water quality.
  - Giving local environmental groups a place on water companies' boards.
  - Introducing a single social tariff for water bills to help eliminate water poverty within the next Parliament.
  - Implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act to require sustainable drainage systems in new developments.
  - Mandating all water companies to publish accessible real-time data on any sewage they dump.

- Ensure everyone has access to a healthy natural environment, regardless of where they live, by:
  - Significantly increasing the amount of accessible green space, including protecting up to a million acres, completing the coastal path, exploring a 'right to roam' for waterways and creating a new designation of National Nature Parks.
  - Passing a new Environmental Rights Act, recognising everyone's human right to a healthy environment and guaranteeing access to environmental justice.
  - Making sure that the UK has the highest environmental standards in the world.
  - Protecting at least 30% of land and sea areas by 2030 for nature's recovery.
  - Working together with our European neighbours to tackle the nature crisis, including applying to join the European Environment Agency.
  
- Hold businesses to account for their responsibility to the environment by:
  - Introducing a general duty of care for the environment, as set out in chapter 4.
  - Requiring large businesses to publish transition plans to become nature-positive across their activities and supply chains.
  - Introducing nature-related financial disclosure requirements for large businesses.
  
- Make planning work for our natural environment and ensure that developers pay their fair share by:
  - Ensuring new developments result in significant net gain for biodiversity, with up to a 100% net gain for large developments.
  - Introducing a strategic Land and Sea Use Framework to effectively balance competing demands on our land and oceans.
  - Empowering Local Nature Recovery Strategies to identify a new Wild Belt for nature's recovery.
  
- Create a nature-positive economy, tackle plastic pollution and waste, and get Britain recycling by:
  - Introducing a deposit return scheme for food and drink bottles and containers, working with the devolved administrations to ensure consistency across the UK, learning the lessons from the difficulties with the Scottish scheme.

- Aiming for the complete elimination of non-recyclable single-use plastics within three years and replacing them with affordable alternatives.
- Working to protect 30% of the world's oceans by 2030 through the UN High Seas Treaty and finalising a Global Plastics Treaty to cut plastic pollution worldwide.
- Setting an ambition of ending plastic waste exports by 2030.
- Ensure that nature-based solutions form a critical part of our strategy to tackle climate change by:
  - Restoring our peatlands as a carbon store, and banning the use of horticultural peat and the routine burning of heather on peatlands.
  - Protecting and enhancing our temperate rainforest.
  - Creating and restoring habitats like saltmarshes, mudflats and seagrass meadows to guard against coastal flooding and erosion and absorb carbon emissions.
  - Tackling 'greenwashing' by introducing new Blue Carbon and Soils Carbon Standards that are properly enforced and accredited.
  - Working with international partners to fight deforestation around the world.
  - Creating a real network of marine protected areas, ensuring that they are fully protected from damaging and destructive activities, protecting and restoring blue carbon and ensuring climate resilience at sea.



# 13 Food and Farming

The UK's food system is failing to serve the interests of citizens, whether they are farmers or consumers.

Too many families simply can't afford enough healthy, nutritious food. Ultra-processed foods, high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, are usually much cheaper than healthier foods – contributing to serious health problems, especially among poorer households.

Farmers are key allies in tackling climate change and the nature crisis, caring for and restoring the countryside while producing high-quality food for our tables. But their ability to do this is threatened by the Conservative Government's botched transition away from the Basic Payment Scheme. We support the move to public money for public goods, but many farmers are seeing their incomes threatened as old payments are cut and new payments are not fully rolled out or properly funded.

Meanwhile, farmers have had to contend with increases in bills for energy, fertilisers and feed. It is hardly surprising we have seen food shortages in the supermarkets.

The Conservatives' botched deal with the EU is also contributing to food shortages and high food prices, and severely damaging farmers' and fishers' ability to export to their main markets in Europe, while new trade deals undermine animal welfare and environmental protection, undercutting responsible British farmers and setting a dangerous precedent for future deals.

Liberal Democrats will stand up for British farmers and ensure everyone can get affordable, healthy and nutritious food, produced to high welfare and environmental standards.

## **We will:**

- **Introduce a holistic and comprehensive National Food Strategy to ensure food security, tackle rising food prices, end food poverty and improve health and nutrition.**
- **Accelerate the rollout of the new Environmental Land Management schemes, properly funding it with an extra £1 billion a year to support profitable, sustainable and nature-friendly farming.**
- **Maintain high health, environmental and animal welfare standards in food production and guarantee that all future trade deals will meet them too, ensuring that Britain's farmers and food manufacturers are not put at an unfair disadvantage.**
- **Give Britain's farmers the ability to trade with our European neighbours with minimal need for checks by negotiating comprehensive veterinary and plant health agreements.**
- **Support farmers properly in restoring woodland, peatland and waterways, creating new natural flood protections and managing land to encourage species recovery and carbon storage, while producing food for the table.**

In addition, we will:

- Give farmers and fishers a fair deal by:
  - Introducing a range of other 'public money for public goods' programmes, such as nature recovery, planting trees and protecting wildlife, contingent on farmers and land managers opting into an Environmental Land Management scheme.
  - Exploring additional funding options to ensure an intelligent transition to better farming practices.
  - Investing in rural and coastal infrastructure and services, including local abattoirs, so that communities are viable and can attract and retain workers, particularly from younger age groups.





- Using public procurement policy to support the consumption of food produced to high standards of environmental and social sustainability, and which is nutritious, healthy and locally and seasonally sourced.
  - Renegotiating the Australia and New Zealand trade agreements in line with our objectives for health, environmental and animal welfare standards, withdrawing from them if that cannot be achieved.
  - Ensuring that sustainability lies at the heart of fisheries policy, rebuilding depleted fish stocks to achieve their former abundance, including a ban on bottom trawling in marine protected areas. Fishers, scientists and conservationists should all be at the centre of a decentralised and regionalised fisheries management system.
- Strengthen the Groceries Code Adjudicator to protect consumers from unfair price rises and support producers.
  - Ensure our farming and food system is on an environmentally sustainable footing by:
    - Ensuring farmers receive proper, independent advice about how to transition to new environmental farm payments schemes, with proper funding for advice services.
    - Supporting farmers to reduce the pollution of rivers, streams and lakes.
    - Working with and rewarding farmers to reduce the use of costly imported and environmentally harmful artificial fertilisers and pesticides, helping to protect bees and other pollinators.
    - Introducing a Research and Innovation Fund to support new and emerging technologies in the sector including the development of alternative proteins in which the UK can become a world leader.
  - Give consumers confidence in the food they eat by:
    - Providing local authorities with greater powers and resources to inspect and monitor food production.
    - Ensuring all imported food meets UK standards for health and welfare, and that goods are properly checked.
    - Introducing robust and clear-to-understand food labelling.

- Ensure Britain continues to be a world leader in animal welfare and standards by:
  - Passing a comprehensive new Animal Welfare Bill to ensure the highest standards possible.
  - Ensuring that no animal product that would be illegal to produce in the UK can be sold here, including foie gras and food produced with antibiotic growth promoters.
  - Developing safe, effective, humane, and evidence-based ways of controlling bovine tuberculosis, including by investing to produce workable vaccines.
  - Improving standards of animal health and welfare in agriculture, including a ban on caged hens, and preventing unnecessarily painful practices in farming.
  - At least matching the EU's stricter rules on preventative use of antibiotics, and introducing a comprehensive plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance in farm animals.



# 14 Housing

Liberal Democrats know that a home is a necessity and the base on which people build their lives. So we will ensure that everyone can access housing that meets their needs.

Yet, in Britain today, many people cannot afford to buy or rent a home of good quality where they live. Too many people live in housing so poor it damages their health.

Government housebuilding targets are regularly missed and the shortage of affordable and social housing is at crisis point. Newly built homes are often energy inefficient and environmentally unfriendly. Too many new houses are built as leasehold and leaseholders still face large bills, not least because of the building safety scandal. Homelessness remains shamefully high. Local authorities' powers to build the kind of homes needed in their areas are inadequate.

Liberal Democrats are committed to tackling these housing failures head-on by:

- **Increasing building of new homes to 380,000 a year across the UK, including 150,000 social homes a year, through new garden cities and community-led development of cities and towns.**
- **Delivering a fair deal for renters by immediately banning no-fault evictions, making three-year tenancies the default, and creating a national register of licensed landlords.**
- **Giving local authorities, including National Park Authorities, the powers to end Right to Buy in their areas.**
- **Ending rough sleeping within the next Parliament and immediately scrapping the archaic Vagrancy Act.**
- **Abolishing residential leaseholds and capping ground rents to a nominal fee, so that everyone has control over their property.**



In addition, we will:

- Build the homes people desperately need, with meaningful community engagement, by:
  - Expanding Neighbourhood Planning across England.
  - Building ten new garden cities.
  - Allowing councils to buy land for housing based on current use value rather than on a hope-value basis by reforming the Land Compensation Act 1961.
  - Properly funding local planning departments to improve planning outcomes and ensure housing is not built in areas of high flood risk without adequate mitigation, by allowing local authorities to set their own fees.
  - Encouraging the use of rural exception sites to expand rural housing.
  - Trialling Community Land Auctions to ensure that local communities receive a fair share of the benefits of new development in their areas and to help fund vital local services.
  - Encouraging development of existing brownfield sites with financial incentives and ensuring that affordable and social housing is included in these projects.
  - Introducing 'use-it-or-lose-it' planning permission for developers who refuse to build.
  - Putting the construction sector on a sustainable footing by investing in skills, training and new technologies such as modern methods of construction.
- Ensure that all development has appropriate infrastructure, services and amenities in place, integrating infrastructure and public service delivery into the planning process.
- Make homes warmer and cheaper to heat with a ten-year emergency upgrade programme, and ensure that all new homes are zero-carbon, as set out in chapter 5.
- Remove dangerous cladding from all buildings, while ensuring that leaseholders do not have to pay a penny towards it.
- Help people who cannot afford a deposit to own their own homes by introducing a new Rent to Own model for social housing where rent payments give tenants an increasing stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.

- End rough sleeping within the next Parliament by:
  - Urgently publishing a cross-Whitehall plan to end all forms of homelessness.
  - Exempting groups of homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, from the Shared Accommodation Rate.
  - Introducing a 'somewhere safe to stay' legal duty to ensure that everyone who is at risk of sleeping rough is provided with emergency accommodation and an assessment of their needs.
  - Ensuring sufficient financial resources for local authorities to deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act and provide accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse.
- Give local authorities new powers to control second homes and short-term lets in their areas, as set out in chapter 15.
- Protect the rights of social renters by:
  - Proactively enforcing clear standards for homes that are socially rented, including strict time limits for repairs.
  - Fully recognising tenant panels so that renters have a voice in landlord governance.





# 15 Communities and Local Government

People want to live in flourishing communities. No community can flourish without powers and resources.

Liberal Democrats are committed to allowing communities to take the action they need to improve their areas. We believe, for example, that given sufficient powers and resources local authorities can play a major role in combating the climate and nature emergencies, whether by insulating homes or improving air quality.

Yet this Government is robbing local communities of their powers and their resources. The Conservatives have forced councils to do more and more with less and less, plunging many into financial crisis. In rural areas, the growth of second homes, the lack of public transport and poor broadband connectivity are undermining the viability of our communities.

Liberal Democrats will support local government through these difficult times, and review the burdens and costs that councils have shouldered as a result of Conservative Government policies. This includes tackling the social care funding crisis, giving councils the freedom to set planning fees to reflect the actual cost of delivering an efficient planning service, and building more homes to relieve the soaring demand for temporary accommodation.

## **We will:**

- **Tackle the funding crisis facing local authorities, including by providing multi-year settlements, boosting the supply of social housing, and forging a long-term, cross-party agreement on social care.**
- **Give communities more control over the number of second homes and short-term lets in their areas.**
- **Ensure local authorities have the powers and resources they need to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, as set out in chapters 5 and 12.**

- **Ensure that gigabit broadband is available to every home and business, including in rural and remote communities, and support local bespoke solutions so that no property is left out.**
- **End the top-down reorganisation of councils and the imposition of elected mayors on communities who do not want them.**
- **Work with communities to tackle the alarming rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia.**

In addition, we will:

- Decentralise decision-making from Whitehall and Westminster by inviting local areas to take control of the services that matter to them most.
- Strengthen local democracy as set out in chapter 20, including introducing proportional representation for electing councillors in England and scrapping the Conservatives' voter ID scheme.
- Appoint a cross-departmental Minister for Rural Communities, to make sure that rural voices are heard across government.
- Give local authorities new powers to control second homes and short-term lets in their areas by:
  - Allowing them to increase council tax by up to 500% where homes are being bought as second homes, with a stamp duty surcharge on overseas residents purchasing such properties.
  - Creating a new planning class for these properties.
- Encourage post offices to become community banking and government hubs, and keep DVLA services available at post office counters.
- Enhance powers over community assets to help local authorities protect pubs, community farms, and other vital infrastructure.

- Invest in leisure centres, swimming pools and other grassroots facilities, and support community sports clubs, as set out in chapter 17.
- Establish a Strategic Small Surgeries Fund to sustain GP services in rural and remote areas, as set out in chapter 6.
- Properly fund local planning departments and give local authorities the powers to end Right to Buy in their areas, as set out in chapter 14.
- Give local authorities the powers they need to restore bus routes and add new ones where there is local need, especially in rural areas, as set out in chapter 16.
- Help motorists in rural areas who face higher fuel costs by expanding Rural Fuel Duty Relief.
- Introduce a strategic Land and Sea Use Framework to effectively balance competing demands.



Rochdale  
via Exchange Square

3108B

# 16 Transport

Everyone should have convenient, affordable options to get around – whether to get to work or the shops, to go to school or hospital, to visit friends and families or to access other services. A safe, reliable transport system is vital for economic prosperity in all parts of the country. And improving transport is essential to combat climate change and air pollution.

Conservative Ministers have badly neglected our transport infrastructure. Their chaotic U-turns have seriously undermined the rail industry, electric vehicle manufacturing and regional development. They have failed to rollout electric charging points at anything like the speed necessary, and they have left local bus routes in rapid decline. Roads are in a terrible state, with potholes everywhere.

By investing in electric vehicles and clean public transport, as well as encouraging walking and cycling, Liberal Democrats will enhance local, regional and national connectivity while boosting the economy, protecting the environment and improving public health.

## **We will:**

- **Make it cheaper and easier for drivers to switch to electric vehicles by rapidly rolling out far more charging points, reintroducing the plug-in car grant, and restoring the requirement that every new car and small van sold from 2030 is zero-emission.**
- **Freeze rail fares and simplify ticketing on public transport to ensure regular users are paying fair and affordable prices.**
- **Significantly extend the electrification of Britain's rail network, improve stations, greatly improve disabled access, reopen smaller stations and deliver Northern Powerhouse rail.**
- **Boost bus services by giving local authorities more powers to franchise services and simplifying funding, so that bus routes can be restored or new routes added where there is local need, especially in rural areas.**

- **Transform how people travel by creating new cycling and walking networks with a new nationwide active travel strategy.**
- **Give more of the roads budget to local councils to maintain existing roads, pavements and cycleways, including repairing potholes.**
- **Invest in research and development to make the UK the world leader in zero-carbon flight, and take steps to reduce demand for flying.**

In addition, we will:

- Make it easy and cheap to charge electric vehicles by:
  - Rolling out far more charging points, including residential on-street points and ultra-fast chargers at service stations.
  - Supporting new charging points with an upgraded National Grid and a step-change in local grid capacity.
  - Cutting VAT on public charging to 5%.
  - Requiring all charging points to be accessible with a bank card.
- Protect motorists from rip-offs, including unfair insurance and petrol prices.
- Boost bus services by:
  - Supporting rural bus services and encouraging alternatives to conventional bus services where they are not viable, such as on-demand services.
  - Maintaining the £2 cap on bus fares while fares are reviewed.
  - Replacing multiple funding streams with one integrated fund for local authorities for expanding bus services and switching to zero-emission vehicles.
  - Extending current programmes to encourage local authorities and bus operators to switch entirely to zero-emission buses.
- Make rail a genuinely convenient, affordable and environmentally-friendly option for both passengers and freight by:
  - Urgently establishing a new Railway Agency: a public body which would help to join up the industry – from track to train – putting commuters first, holding train companies to account, and bringing in wholesale reform of the broken fare system.

- Being far more proactive in sanctioning and ultimately sacking train operators if they fail to provide a high-quality public service to their customers.
  - Exploring the introduction of an annual pass for all railways.
  - Improving accessibility at stations through the Access for All programme.
  - Delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail to connect cities across the North of England.
  - Reviewing the Conservatives' cancellation of the northern leg of HS2 to see if it can still be delivered in a way that provides value for money, including by encouraging private investment, or if an alternative is viable.
  - Working with local authorities to implement light rail schemes for trams and tram-trains where these are appropriate solutions to public transport requirements.
  - Establishing a ten-year plan for rail electrification to increase the number of passenger journeys covered by electric trains, investing in other zero-carbon technologies including batteries, and ensuring all new rail lines are electrified as standard.
  - Introducing a national freight strategy to move as much freight as possible from road to rail, supported by a freight growth target and electrification of freight routes.
  - Introducing an international rail strategy to support new routes and operators, and permitting other operators to use the Channel Tunnel and HS1.
- Make public transport more affordable for young people by:
    - Extending half-fares on buses, trams and trains to 18-year-olds.
    - Working with operators to introduce a 'Young Person's Buscard', similar to the Young Person's Railcard, giving 19- to 25-year-olds a third off bus and tram fares.
  - Reduce the climate impact of flying by:
    - Reforming the taxation of international flights to focus on those who fly the most, while reducing costs for ordinary households who take one or two international return flights per year.
    - Introducing a new super tax on private jet flights, and removing the VAT exemptions for private, first-class and business-class flights.
    - Requiring airlines to show the carbon emissions for domestic flights compared to the equivalent rail option at booking.

- Banning short domestic flights where a direct rail option taking less than 2.5 hours is available for the same journey, unless planes are alternative-fuelled.
- Placing a moratorium on net airport expansion until a national capacity and emissions management framework is in place, and opposing the expansion of Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted or London City airports and any new airport in the Thames Estuary.
- Devolve greater decision-making powers and resources to local authorities in England to design public transport infrastructure around community needs, including powers to introduce network-wide ticketing as in London.
- Work to integrate bus, rail and light rail ticketing systems so that a daily fare cap can be introduced for those taking several trips per day.



# 17 Culture, Media and Sport

The UK's rich and vibrant cultural heritage is a national treasure. Our creative and tourism industries contribute billions of pounds to our economy and employ millions of people. Art, music, drama and sports bring people together. They are an essential part of a thriving society.

The Covid pandemic hit culture and tourism businesses extremely hard. And instead of helping, the Conservatives have only inflicted even more damage. They have downgraded the status of arts subjects at school, slashed funding for them at university, and erected new barriers to British musicians and actors performing elsewhere in Europe following our withdrawal from the EU.

Liberal Democrats will invest in our cultural capital and nurture the next generation of talent. We will support the creative and tourism industries across the UK so that businesses can thrive and people everywhere can enjoy the benefits of sports, music and the arts.

## **We will:**

- **Protect the BBC, S4C, BBC Alba and Channel 4 as independent, publicly owned, public service broadcasters.**
- **Promote creative skills, address the barriers to finance faced by small businesses, and support modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules.**
- **Negotiate free and simple short-term travel arrangements for UK artists to perform in the EU, and European artists to perform in the UK.**
- **Boost participation in sports and physical activity by investing in leisure centres, swimming pools and other grassroots facilities and supporting community sports clubs.**

In addition, we will:

- Establish creative enterprise zones to grow and regenerate the cultural output of areas across the UK.
- Upgrade the status of tourism in government with a dedicated Minister of State for Tourism and Hospitality.
- Maintain free access to national museums and galleries.
- Boost funding for cultural and creative projects by applying to participate fully in Creative Europe.
- Require at least 80% of on-demand TV content to be subtitled, 10% audio-described and 5% signed.
- Support independent, Leveson-compliant regulation to ensure privacy, quality, diversity and choice in both print and online media, and proceed with Part Two of the Leveson Inquiry.
- Pass a comprehensive 'Anti-SLAPP Law' to provide robust protection for free speech, whistleblowers and media scrutiny against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.
- Support the BBC both to provide impartial news and information, and to take a leading role in increasing media literacy and educating all generations in tackling the impact of fake news.
- Protect fans from being exploited by ticket touts by implementing the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendations to crack down on illegal ticket resale.
- Protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery.



- Combat the harms caused by problem gambling by:
  - Introducing the planned compulsory levy on gambling companies to fund research, prevention and treatment.
  - Restricting gambling advertising.
  - Establishing a Gambling Ombudsman to redress wrongs.
  - Implementing effective affordability checks.
  - Taking tough action against black market gambling.
- Ensure a sustainable future for football clubs and give fans a stronger voice by:
  - Establishing the promised new independent regulator, placing it on a statutory footing, and giving it the power to impose a fairer financial flow that rewards well-run clubs.
  - Strengthening the propriety test for prospective owners and directors by including human rights questions.
  - Requiring all clubs to have equality, diversity and inclusion action plans.
- Expand the list of sporting fixtures which must have live free-to-air coverage to include more football matches as well as key international cricket, rugby, golf and tennis fixtures.
- Support and encourage campaigns to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in sport.

# 18 Immigration and Asylum

The UK has a proud history of welcoming newcomers – whether people seeking to build their lives here, or refugees fleeing war and persecution. People from all over the world have greatly enriched our economy, our culture and our communities.

But our immigration system has been broken by the Conservatives. Their damaging new rules mean British employers can't recruit the people they need and families are separated by unfair, complex visa requirements. Their dysfunction has made the asylum backlog soar. Public confidence in the system is shattered. The Home Office is not fit for purpose.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have closed down safe and legal routes to sanctuary, leaving desperate people to make perilous attempts to cross the Channel in small boats – often in the hands of criminal smugglers and traffickers.

Liberal Democrats are fighting for a fair, effective immigration system that treats everyone with dignity and respect.

## **We will:**

- **End the Conservatives' Hostile Environment and invest instead in officers, training and technology to tackle smuggling, trafficking and modern slavery.**
- **Transfer policy-making over work visas and overseas students out of the Home Office and into other departments.**
- **Scrap the Conservatives' Illegal Migration Act and their Rwanda scheme, uphold the Refugee Convention, and provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees, helping to prevent dangerous Channel crossings.**
- **Tackle the asylum backlog by establishing a dedicated unit to improve the speed and quality of asylum decision-making, introducing a service standard of three months for all but the most complex asylum claims to be processed, and speeding up returns of those without a right to stay.**

- **Lift the ban on asylum seekers working if they have been waiting for a decision for more than three months, enabling them to support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute to the economy.**
- **Work closely with Europol and the French authorities to stop the smuggling and trafficking gangs behind dangerous Channel crossings.**

In addition, we will:

- Replace the Conservatives' arbitrary salary threshold with a more flexible merit-based system for work visas, with the relevant department working with employers in each sector to address specific needs as part of a long-term workforce strategy that also focuses on education and training to address skills gaps from within the UK.
- Exempt NHS and care staff from the £1,000-a-year Immigration Skills Charge, and reverse the Conservatives' ban on care workers bringing partners and children.
- Expand the Youth Mobility Scheme by:
  - Negotiating with the EU to extend it on a reciprocal basis.
  - Increasing the age limit from 30 to 35.
  - Abolishing the fees for these visas.
  - Extending the length of visas from two to three years.
- Reverse the Conservatives' unfair increase to income thresholds for family visas, so that no more families are torn apart.
- Protect the rights of EU citizens and their families in the UK by:
  - Automatically granting full Settled Status to all those with Pre-Settled Status.
  - Providing them with physical proof of their right to stay.
- Reduce the fee for registering a child as a British citizen from £1,214 to the cost of administration.
- Overhaul the Immigration Rules to make them simpler, clearer and fairer, and ensure greater parliamentary scrutiny of future changes.



**UK Border**

**UK Border**



- Extend the participation of devolved administrations in the development of the evidence base for UK-wide policy on work permits and student visas, helping ensure rules are sensitive to the skills needs of every corner of the UK and every sector of the economy.
- Strengthen the powers of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.
- Implement the Windrush Lessons Learned Review in full, without further delay.
- Ensure victims of the Windrush scandal get the compensation they are entitled to by making the compensation scheme independent of the Home Office.
- Repeal the Conservatives' discriminatory 'Right to Rent' scheme that turns landlords into border guards.
- Establish a firewall to prevent public agencies from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement and repeal the immigration exemption in the Data Protection Act.
- Expand access to immigration legal advice by making the legal aid system simpler, fairer and more generous, as set out in chapter 19.
- Provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees by:
  - Expanding and properly funding the UK Resettlement Scheme.
  - Creating new humanitarian travel permits that would allow asylum seekers to travel to the UK safely to proceed with their claims.
  - Establishing a new scheme to resettle unaccompanied child refugees from elsewhere in Europe.
  - Reuniting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe with family members in the UK.
  - Expanding the scope of refugee family reunion, including enabling unaccompanied child refugees in the UK to sponsor close family members to join them.
  - Funding community-sponsorship projects for refugees, and rewarding community groups who develop innovative and successful ways of promoting social cohesion.



- Offering asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identification, ending the culture of disbelief for LGBT+ asylum seekers, and never refusing an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.
- Cancel the Conservatives' unworkable Rwanda scheme and invest the savings in clearing the asylum backlog.
- End the detention of children for immigration purposes, and reduce detention for adults to an absolute last resort, with a 28-day time limit.
- Increase the 'move-on' period for refugees to 60 days, providing vital time for new refugees to prepare for life in the UK while ensuring that other public bodies are not left to pick up the costs of them becoming destitute.



# 19 Rights and Equality

Liberal Democrats exist to build a free society where every person's rights and liberties are protected. Everyone should be able to live their lives as who they are: free to pursue their dreams and fulfil their potential, safe in the knowledge that their fundamental rights will be protected.

In decades past, the UK has led the world in advancing human rights, civil liberties and equality for women, LGBT+ people and disabled people. But under the Conservatives, progress has stalled. They are failing to stand up to hatred and prejudice, or tackle entrenched inequalities. Instead, they keep threatening to rip up the UK's Human Rights Act, which protects our fundamental British freedoms.

Liberal Democrats champion the freedom, dignity and wellbeing of every individual. We will combat all forms of prejudice and discrimination, wherever they exist, including where intersectionality means individuals face particular disadvantages.

We believe that the UK's rich diversity is one of its greatest strengths. We will celebrate that diversity and ensure it is better reflected throughout public life. We will apply the principles of openness, transparency and accountability to tackle institutional biases, promote equality and hold power to account.

## **We will:**

- **Champion the Human Rights Act and resist any attempts to weaken or repeal it.**
- **Develop and implement a comprehensive Race Equality Strategy to address deep inequalities, including in education, health, criminal justice and the economy.**
- **Make misogyny a hate crime and give police and prosecutors the resources and training they need to prevent and prosecute all hate crimes while supporting survivors.**

- **Give everyone a new right to flexible working and every disabled person the right to work from home if they want to, unless there are significant business reasons why it is not possible.**
- **Respect and defend the rights of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including trans and non-binary people.**
- **Ban all forms of conversion therapies and practices.**
- **Scrap the Conservatives' draconian anti-protest laws, restoring pre-existing protections for both peaceful assembly and public safety, and immediately halt the use of live facial recognition surveillance by the police and private companies.**

In addition, we will:

- Defend hard-won British rights and freedoms by:
  - Upholding the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and resisting any attempts to withdraw from it.
  - Establishing a new right to affordable, reasonable legal assistance, and making the Legal Aid system simpler, fairer and more generous.
  - Introducing a Digital Bill of Rights to protect everyone's rights online, including the rights to privacy, free expression, and participation without being subjected to harassment and abuse.
  - Ending the bulk collection of communications data and internet connection records.
  - Introducing a legally binding regulatory framework for all forms of biometric surveillance.
  - Upholding the Equality Act 2010, and making caring and care experience protected characteristics as set out in chapter 7.
- Ensure that survivors of violence against women and girls and domestic abuse get the support they deserve by:
  - Fully implementing the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, with protections for all survivors regardless of nationality or immigration status.
  - Expanding the number of refuges and rape crisis centres to meet demand.

- Ensuring sustainable funding for services to support survivors of domestic abuse, with a particular focus on community-based and specialist ‘by and for’ services.
- Ensuring that survivors are properly supported within the criminal justice system, as set out in chapter 11.
- Require social media companies to publish reports setting out the action they have taken to address online abuse against women and girls, and other groups who share a protected characteristic.
- Stand up to hatred by:
  - Exposing and confronting the stereotyping, demagoguery and hate speech in public life and the media that inflames hatred and leads to spikes in hate crimes.
  - Providing funding for protective security measures to places of worship, schools and community centres that are vulnerable to hate crime and terror attacks.
- Expand the rights of couples by:
  - Introducing legal recognition of humanist marriages.
  - Implementing the Law Commission’s proposals to reform wedding laws, giving couples more choice over how and where their wedding takes place, while respecting religious beliefs and practices.
  - Extending limited legal rights to cohabiting couples, to give them greater protection in the event of separation or bereavement.
- Protect everyone’s right to make independent decisions over their reproductive health without interference by the state and ensure access to high-quality reproductive healthcare, including enforcing safe access zones around abortion clinics and hospitals.
- Tackle the specific economic barriers facing women by:
  - Ending the gender price gap so that women are not charged more than men for practically identical products or services marketed at them.
  - Ending period poverty by introducing a right for anyone who needs them to access free period products.

- Expanding access to flexible, affordable childcare, doubling Statutory Maternity Pay and expanding shared parental leave, as set out in chapter 9.
- Reform the gender recognition process to remove the requirement for medical reports, recognise non-binary identities in law, and remove the spousal veto.
- Improve diversity in the workplace and public life by:
  - Requiring large employers to monitor and publish data on gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBT+ employment levels, pay gaps and progression, and publish five-year aspirational diversity targets.
  - Extending the use of name-blind recruitment processes in the public sector and encouraging their use in the private sector.
  - Improving diversity in public appointments by setting ambitious targets and requiring progress reports to Parliament with explanations when targets are not met.
  - Providing additional support and advice to employers on neurodiversity in the workplace, and developing a cross-government strategy to tackle all aspects of discrimination faced by neurodiverse children and adults.
- Implement a comprehensive Race Equality Strategy, including:
  - Reducing the disproportionately high maternal mortality rates for black women and eliminating racial disparities in maternal health, with a cross-departmental target and strategy.
  - Ending the disproportionate use of Stop and Search and requiring all police forces to adopt ambitious targets for improving the diversity of their workforce, as set out in chapter 11.
  - Ending the Conservatives' Hostile Environment, implementing the Windrush Lessons Learned Review and repealing the Conservatives' discriminatory 'Right to Rent' law, as set out in chapter 18.
  - Scrapping the Conservatives' voter ID scheme and requiring political parties to publish candidate diversity data, as set out in chapter 20.
  - Halting the use of facial recognition surveillance, which is most likely to wrongly identify black people and women.

- Make it easier for disabled people to access public life, including the world of work, by:
  - Adopting new accessibility standards for public spaces.
  - Improving the legislative framework for blue badges.
  - Incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into UK law.
  - Tackling the disability employment gap by implementing a targeted strategy to support disabled people into work, with specialist disability employment support.
  - Raising employers' awareness of the Access to Work scheme and simplifying and speeding up the application process.
  - Introducing 'Adjustment Passports' to record the adjustments, modifications and equipment a disabled person has received, and ensuring that Access to Work support and equipment stays with the person if they change jobs.
  - Building on the British Sign Language Act by increasing the use of BSL in government communications and working collaboratively with the BSL Alliance to promote and facilitate the use of BSL.
- Give Parliament time to fully debate and vote on legislation on assisted dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults with strict safeguards, subject to a free vote.

**POLLING  
STATION**





# 20 Political Reform

We want to ensure that your voice is heard – and we want to transfer power back to the people.

The shambolic Conservative Government has created a crisis for democracy in this country, with their cronyism, rule-breaking and constant sleaze scandals. Successive Conservative Prime Ministers have acted without integrity and treated Parliament and the people with disdain.

It is a symptom of a broken political system, which enables the Government to take families up and down the country for granted. It is clear that we need a political system with fair representation, so that politics is made to work for you again.

Liberal Democrats want to begin to repair the damage that has been done by the constant stream of Conservative sleaze, and to end the era of neglect.

## **We will:**

- **Ensure no politician can take you for granted, by introducing proportional representation by the Single Transferable Vote for electing MPs, and local councillors in England.**
- **Strengthen democratic rights and participation by scrapping the Conservatives' voter ID scheme and giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote.**
- **Finally hold Government Ministers to account for corruption and sleaze by enshrining the Ministerial Code in legislation.**
- **Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate.**

- **Transfer greater powers away from Westminster and Whitehall, introduce a written constitution for a federal United Kingdom with strong voices for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and oppose a second Scottish independence referendum and independence.**
- **Take big money out of politics by capping donations to political parties.**

In addition, we will:

- Reform our politics to put more power in people's hands by:
  - Giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in UK general elections and referendums, and local elections in England.
  - Extending the right to full participation in civic life, including the ability to stand for office or vote in UK referendums, local elections and general elections, to all EU citizens with settled status, and to anyone else who has lived in the UK for at least five years and has the right to stay permanently.
  - Introducing a legal requirement for local authorities to inform citizens of the steps they must take to be successfully registered with far greater efforts in particular to register underrepresented groups, and ensuring that the UK has an automatic system of inclusion in elections.
  - Enabling all UK citizens living abroad to vote for MPs in separate overseas constituencies, and to participate in UK referendums.
  - Restoring to Parliament – instead of the Prime Minister alone – the power to call and set the date of an early general election.
  - Ensuring that a new Prime Minister, and their programme for government, must win a confidence vote of MPs before taking office.
  - Taking a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying in Westminster and legislating to empower constituents to recall MPs who commit sexual harassment.
  - Bringing into force Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, requiring political parties to publish candidate diversity data.
  - Establishing national and local citizens' assemblies to ensure that the public are fully engaged in finding solutions to the greatest challenges we face, such as tackling the climate emergency and the use of artificial intelligence and algorithms by the state.

- Make it a national security priority to protect the UK's democratic processes from any threats or interference.
- Ensure justice for the victims of scandals and prevent future scandals, including by:
  - Providing full and fair compensation to all victims of the Horizon Post Office scandal and the Infected Blood scandal as quickly as possible.
  - Protecting whistleblowers by establishing a new Office of the Whistleblower, creating new legal protections, and promoting greater public awareness of their rights.
  - Introducing the Hillsborough Law: a statutory duty of candour on police officers and all public officials, including during all forms of public inquiry and criminal investigation.
- Make the role of the Adviser on Ministers' Interests truly independent by:
  - Empowering them to initiate their own investigations, determine breaches and publish their report.
  - Putting the role on a statutory basis and giving Parliament the power to appoint them.
- Introduce new rules to ensure that a Prime Minister must have served for at least one year before becoming eligible to access the Public Duty Cost Allowance fund.
- Ensure that Ministers receive annual training to prevent sleaze.
- Establish a rigorous, transparent and independent process to appoint significant public roles, involving a confirmatory vote by the relevant Parliamentary select committee.
- Bring reporting standards for the List of Ministers' Interests in line with the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests, so that publication takes place more frequently.
- Strengthen and expand the lobbying register.

- End the scandal of ‘Government by WhatsApp’ by:
  - Requiring that all Ministers’ instant-messaging conversations involving government business must be placed on the departmental record.
  - Ensuring that a record of all lobbying of Ministers via instant messages, emails, letters and phone calls is published as part of quarterly transparency releases.
  
- Make elections fairer and more transparent, and raise the quality of political debate, by:
  - Protecting and strengthening the independence of the Electoral Commission, following Conservative attempts to undermine it.
  - Introducing public awareness campaigns about emerging threats and misinformation campaigns online.
  - Pushing for a global convention or treaty to combat disinformation and electoral interference, supplemented by an annual conference and Global Counter-Disinformation Fund, to safeguard and promote democracy at home as well as abroad.
  - Mandating the provision of televised leaders’ debates in general elections, based on rules produced by Ofcom.
  - Working towards radical real-time transparency for political advertising, donations and spending, including an easily searchable public database of all online political adverts.
  
- Reform the UK and strengthen our family of nations around the principles of federalism, working in cooperation and partnership, including by:
  - Creating a United Kingdom Council of Ministers to bring together the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with regional leaders across England.
  - Removing the ability for the UK Parliament to unilaterally change the powers of the devolved parliaments or pass laws in their areas of responsibility.
  - Creating a Joint Climate Council of the Nations to tackle the climate emergency by helping to foster innovation and encourage collaborative action.
  - Securing cooperation and agreement through common frameworks and a new dispute resolution process, sharing power, resolving differences maturely between administrations and delivering better governance.
  - Improving joint ministerial work on new cross-cutting policies, such as the UK industrial strategy.

- Deliver a fair deal for the people of Scotland by:
  - Allocating to the Scottish Parliament all the powers set out in the Scotland Act 2016, many of which have already been used by the Scottish Parliament, with others delayed at the request of the Scottish Government.
  - Continuing to back city deals in Scotland by bringing together all spheres of government.
  
- Deliver a fair deal for the people of Wales by:
  - Completing the next stage of devolution in Wales by implementing the remaining Silk proposals, substantially reducing the number of powers reserved to Westminster, and increasing borrowing powers.
  - Creating a distinct legal jurisdiction for Wales to reflect the growing divergence in law as a result of devolution.
  - Devolving responsibility for rail services and infrastructure to Wales, with fair funding and shared governance on cross-border services.
  - Devolving powers over youth justice, probation services, prisons and policing to allow Wales to create an effective, liberal, community-based approach to policing and tackling crime.
  - Strengthening the devolution of powers over broadcasting, to tackle the lack of trusted sources of information and democratic accountability that were highlighted during the pandemic.
  - Devolving Air Passenger Duty to put Wales on a fair playing field with Scotland and Northern Ireland and put Cardiff Airport on a fair playing field with regional airports in England.
  
- Work constructively with the Northern Ireland Executive to build a permanently peaceful Northern Ireland, with a stable devolved government and a truly shared society, including by:
  - Supporting policies and initiatives that promote sharing over separation and counter the cost of division.
  - Helping to grow the economy in Northern Ireland, boost infrastructure and support local businesses.
  - Fixing the UK's broken relationship with Europe and accordingly reducing barriers to trade between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

- Ensure reliable funding for the nations of the UK by:
  - Retaining the Barnett formula to adjust spending allocations across the UK and protect the individual nations' budgets from external shocks.
  - Ensuring that the Barnett floor is set at a level that reflects the need for Wales to be funded fairly, seeking over a Parliament to increase the Welsh block grant to an equitable level.
  - Establishing a joint council to oversee the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other 'levelling up' spending, working in partnership with governments, combined authorities and councils across the UK.
- Support the creation of a UK Constitutional Convention, with the aim of drafting a new Federal Constitution that sets out the powers of the government at each tier, founded on the principles of democratic engagement, liberal values and respect for diverse identities, underpinned by a fair distribution of resources based on respective needs. The Convention will establish an inclusive approach for determining the structure of government in England.

# 21 Defence

Keeping our country secure should be the first priority of any government. We must always take defence seriously – and work with allies to protect all our freedoms.

The Conservative Government has been negligent in its approach to the defence of the United Kingdom. Cutting troop numbers by 10,000 is irresponsible. Their inability to procure assets on time and on budget is leaving our Armed Forces without the equipment they need. And their failure to look after service personnel and veterans properly – from suitable housing to mental health support – is unforgivable.

The spectre of Donald Trump returning to power in the United States – and his lack of support for Ukraine and for NATO – should shake the UK and our European partners out of their state of complacency when it comes to the defence and security of our continent.

It is time for the UK to lead within Europe on security, working closely with our democratic European allies so that we can support Ukraine, and each other, during peace and war.

Liberal Democrats will strengthen our Armed Forces and support the people who work in them, and keep the UK free, safe and secure by:

- **Reversing the Conservative Government's cut to the Army, with a longer-term ambition of increasing regular troop numbers back to over 100,000.**
- **Maintaining the UK's support for NATO, and accordingly increasing defence spending in every year of the Parliament, with an ambition to spend at least 2.5% of GDP on defence.**
- **Securing a fair deal for service personnel and veterans.**

- **Maintaining the UK's nuclear deterrent with four submarines providing continuous at-sea deterrence, while pursuing multilateral global disarmament.**
- **Controlling arms exports to countries with poor human rights records.**

In addition, we will:

- Legislate to ensure there is a parliamentary vote before engaging in military action, and support intervention only when there is a clear legal or humanitarian case, while preserving the government's ability to engage in action in emergencies with a retrospective vote or under treaty obligation.
- Introduce a 'presumption of denial' for arms exports to governments listed as human rights concerns in the Foreign Office's annual human rights report.
- Strengthen the Intelligence and Security Committee by giving it the power to decide what it publishes and when, and enabling the Houses of Parliament to elect its members.
- Tackle long-standing problems in defence procurement, including by ensuring that procurement is part of a comprehensive industrial strategy to secure a reliable long-term pipeline of equipment procurements, which will strengthen the Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Strategic Command.
- Support and promote the development of international treaties on the principles and limits of the use of technology in modern warfare.
- Secure a fair deal for the armed forces community, and improve recruitment, retention and resettlement, by:
  - Strengthening the Armed Forces Covenant by placing a legal duty on the Defence Secretary and government departments to give it due regard.
  - Improving the standard of Ministry of Defence housing, including by reviewing maintenance contracts.
  - Waiving application fees for indefinite leave for members of the armed forces on discharge, and their families.





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- Accepting the recommendations of the Atherton Report on women in the armed forces.
- Ensuring that military compensation for illness or injury does not count towards means-testing for benefits.
- Establishing a 'Fair Deal for Service Personnel, Veterans and Families Commission'.
- Work collaboratively with our democratic European partners and promote security, including through deterrence, by:
  - Strengthening cooperation with our Nordic and Baltic allies via the Joint Expeditionary Force.
  - Building on existing UK-French cooperation arrangements, including the Lancaster House Treaties.
  - Developing closer cooperation with EU agencies and member states over defence, intelligence and cyber-security.
  - Prioritising interoperability with NATO allies and other strategic partners.
  - Working more closely in the joint development of innovative defence technologies and procurement.
  - Seeking a defence and security agreement with the EU and its member states.
  - Continuing to work closely with our Five Eyes partners.

# 22 International

Whether on apartheid in South Africa, the illegal war in Iraq or the persecution of Hong Kongers, Liberal Democrats have always stood up for the vital British values of democracy, liberty, human rights and the rule of law. We will resist those states that threaten us and robustly challenge our allies when necessary.

The UK must support democracies around the world, especially those threatened by aggression such as Ukraine and Taiwan. We must stand up to states like China and Russia, resisting their attempts to undermine our democratic values and preventing them from filling the vacuum that the UK has left in Africa and the rest of the Global South, following the Government's short-sighted cut to the aid budget.

Following years of Conservative Government, our influence on the world stage is sadly but undeniably diminished. Liberal Democrats will reverse this decline. We will rebuild our relations with our allies – not trash them. We will uphold international law – not undermine it. We will restore Britain's role as an international development superpower.

With war raging on our continent, now more than ever Britain must lead within Europe. Liberal Democrats are the only party that will fix the UK's broken relationship with Europe, by following our four-stage roadmap. Not only will this leave us and our allies more secure, but it will help restore the British economy and the prosperity and opportunities of its citizens.

## **We will:**

- **Work to counter the global rise in authoritarianism by championing the liberal, rules-based international order and supporting international institutions such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, NATO and the International Criminal Court.**
- **Fix the UK's broken relationship with Europe, forge a new partnership built on cooperation, not confrontation, and move to conclude a new comprehensive agreement which removes as many barriers to trade as possible.**

- **Stand with the people of Ukraine and provide them with the support that they need in the face of Putin's illegal invasion.**
- **Restore the UK's reputation as an international development superpower, by returning spending to 0.7% of national income and re-establishing an independent international development department.**
- **Advocate for an immediate bilateral ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict to resolve the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, get the hostages out, and provide the space to reach a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with security and dignity for Israelis and Palestinians.**

In addition, we will:

- Protect, defend and promote human rights for all around the world by:
  - Working to abolish the death penalty and end the use of torture.
  - Using the UK's Magnitsky sanctions to stand up against human rights abuses.
  - Banning imports from areas with egregious abuses such as Xinjiang.
  - Enshrining in law a right for British nationals, including dual nationals, who have been politically detained or face other human rights violations abroad to access UK consular services.
  - Developing a comprehensive strategy for promoting the decriminalisation of homosexuality and advancing LGBT+ rights.
  - Appointing an ambassador-level Champion for Freedom of Belief.
- Fix the UK's broken relationship with Europe by following our four-stage roadmap:
  - Taking initial unilateral steps to rebuild the relationship, starting by declaring a fundamental change in the UK's approach and improving channels for foreign policy cooperation.
  - Rebuilding confidence through seeking to agree partnerships or associations with EU agencies and programmes such as the European Aviation Safety Agency, Erasmus Plus, scientific programmes, climate and environment initiatives, and cooperation on defence, security and crime.
  - Deepening the trading relationship with critical steps for the British economy, including negotiating comprehensive veterinary and plant health agreements and mutual recognition agreements.



- Finally, once ties of trust and friendship have been renewed, and the damage the Conservatives have caused to trade between the UK and EU has begun to be repaired, we would aim to place the UK-EU relationship on a more formal and stable footing by seeking to join the Single Market.

All these measures will help to restore the British economy and the prosperity and opportunities of its citizens, and are also essential steps on the road to EU membership, which remains our longer-term objective.

- Restore the UK's role as a global leader in tackling the climate and nature emergencies, as set out in chapters 5 and 12.
- Finally put a stop to oligarchs from corrupt regimes channelling their money through the UK by:
  - Beginning the seizure of frozen Russian assets in the UK, with proceeds being repurposed to finance support for Ukraine, so that we can stand with Ukraine even if US support wavers.
  - Properly resourcing the National Crime Agency.
  - Closing the loopholes in economic crime legislation which allow Putin's cronies and other kleptocrats to continue funnelling dirty cash into our country.
  - Effectively using the UK's sanctions regime to tackle economic crime.
  - Conducting an audit of UK-based assets owned by officials from countries listed as Foreign Office human rights priorities, including China and Iran.
- Work with our allies to help bring security and stability to the Middle East, which has become a tinderbox amidst the Israel-Gaza conflict, including by:
  - Advocating for an immediate bilateral ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict, recognising that there is no military solution to remove Hamas from Gaza.
  - Leading a diplomatic push towards a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine based on 1967 borders, to deliver the security and dignity that Israelis and Palestinians deserve.
  - Officially recognising the independent state of Palestine with immediate effect.
  - Recognising the existential threat of Iran not just in the Middle East but to Western democracies, by proscribing Iran's Revolutionary Guard.
  - Upholding and respecting international courts and international law.



- Stand with Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Uyghurs including by:
  - Continuing to fight for British National (Overseas) passport holders' rights by closing gaps in the BNO visa scheme.
  - Extending BNO integration funding for Hong Kongers in the UK for the duration of the Parliament.
  - Recognising that the human rights abuses being perpetrated against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang amount to the crime of genocide.
  - Building new diplomatic, economic and security partnerships with democratic countries threatened by China, including Taiwan.
- Work with the international community and neighbouring countries on the provision of safe, legal passages for those who wish to leave Afghanistan, and support Afghan refugees in the UK.
- Increase UK humanitarian assistance to Sudan and play a stronger role in seeking a ceasefire and long-term peace where civilians form a democratic government and war crimes are prosecuted.
- Provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees, as set out in chapter 18.
- Properly fund the impartial BBC World Service from the Foreign Office budget and restore its global reach.
- Pursue a foreign policy agenda with gender equality at its heart, focusing on:
  - The transformation of the position of women through economic inclusion.
  - Education and training, ensuring the lives of women and girls are not ignored in favour of trade or regional alliances.
  - Working to extend reproductive rights and end female genital mutilation.
  - The eradication of sexual violence in conflict, including by increasing international development funding for such initiatives.
- Ensure that the UK's international development spending is used effectively and with a primary focus on poverty reduction, as we reverse the Official Development Assistance cut, including by:
  - Putting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of the UK's international development policy.

- Funding genuine partnerships that are rooted in local needs and developed on grounds of mutual respect.
- Ensuring that the use of the international development budget continues to be consistent with the OECD/DAC rules and guidelines, and with UK legislation, and in particular its primary purpose should remain the economic development of, and poverty reduction within, the partner country.
- Recognising the role of education as a force for good, and committing to spend 15% of ODA on education in the world's most vulnerable areas, especially focusing on girls and young women.
- Increasing the proportion of ODA committed to tackling climate change and environmental degradation, in line with our commitment to climate justice.
- Tackling the growing global crisis of food insecurity and malnutrition by increasing the proportion of ODA committed to delivering life-saving nutrition interventions.





This manifesto sets out Liberal Democrat policies and priorities for the United Kingdom. The Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats set their own policy on devolved matters, and for those policy areas, the proposals here apply to England only. Our sister party, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, makes its own policy on devolved issues in Northern Ireland.

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**Email:** [info@libdemimage.co.uk](mailto:info@libdemimage.co.uk)

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