



CHANGE BRITAIN'S FUTURE

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO 2017



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Democrats**

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Stronger Economy. Fairer Society.
Opportunity for Everyone.

Stronger Economy.
Opportunity for



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Your chance to change Britain's future by changing the opposition

In every other manifesto, a Liberal Democrat leader has set out a vision for government. However, I want to make a different case to the British people in this election – an election that has been called by Theresa May, very cynically, with the sole purpose of putting the Tories in a position where they can do what they like unchecked.

To be clear, Theresa May's Conservative Party is on course to win this election. Unless we make a stand, they will walk away with a landslide. We risk the arrogance and heartlessness with which she has governed for the last 10 months being reinforced by a majority that no government has had for 20 years.

The reason? There is a complete absence of real opposition from Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party.

On the biggest question facing all of us, Brexit, which has such huge implications for our young people and our future, Corbyn ordered his MPs to stand down against Theresa May's government. Where the Liberal Democrats are fighting every step of the way, Labour is holding Theresa May's hand as she jumps off the cliff edge of a hard Brexit.



That's why the Liberal Democrats will not enter into coalition with either Theresa May's Conservatives or Jeremy Corbyn's Labour.

Have no doubts – a massive Conservative majority would mean people and communities being taken for granted by a Conservative government that will believe it has the mandate to do exactly as it pleases.

Governments without a strong opposition are bad governments. They become complacent and take poor decisions. So I am asking you to give me your support to make the Liberal Democrats the official opposition to Theresa May's Conservative government.

I want the Liberal Democrats to be the party that holds Theresa May to account over spending on the National Health Service; our young people's education, skills and opportunities; the protection of our precious environment; and our future relationship with Europe.

You don't have to agree with me on everything. But the danger of an arrogant government that doesn't have to listen to us is apparent to everyone, wherever you live in Britain.

We don't share Theresa May's miserable vision. Liberal Democrats are passionate about building a Britain that is open, tolerant and united – that celebrates the very best of what it means to be British.

So on June the 8th, I am asking you to think very hard about what will be best for



you, your friends and family, and the area you live in.

Another Tory MP, to bolster Theresa May's majority? Another member of Labour's hopeless and failed opposition? Another Nationalist MP who only wants to break up the UK?

Or a strong and passionate voice sticking up for your area, challenging Theresa May's Conservative government and holding it to account as part of a real opposition?

This election is your opportunity to change Britain's future – by changing the opposition.

I love this country. It is optimistic, good-humoured and confident. It is open, fair and finds strength through its diversity. It isn't inward-looking or mean-spirited. Our young people are bright, creative and want a world that is clean and green and that the rest of us haven't wrecked. They want jobs, good health and the chance to choose who they love and how they live, with the security of a roof over their heads. They want to live in a country where the state isn't snooping into their emails and tracking their internet use.

You might feel uncertain or anxious about the way our country is going. You might worry that jobs and living standards are threatened by the extreme and divisive Brexit that Theresa May has chosen for Britain. You might be fed up with a Labour Party that has given up on opposition, supports the Conservatives on Brexit and offers no vision for our country. If so, this is your chance.

You can stand up for a Britain that is open, tolerant and united.

You can change the opposition. You can change Britain's future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Farron".

Tim Farron Leader, Liberal Democrats



Change Britain's Future

**Protect
Britain's Place
in Europe**

1.1 Giving the people the final say

Liberal Democrats are open and outward-looking. We passionately believe that Britain's relationship with its neighbours is stronger as part of the European Union. Whatever its imperfections, the EU remains the best framework for working effectively and co-operating in the pursuit of our shared aims. It has led directly to greater prosperity, increased trade, investment and jobs, better security and a greener environment. Britain is better off in the EU.

Liberal Democrats campaigned for the UK to remain in the EU. However, we acknowledge the result of the 2016 referendum, which gave the government a mandate to start negotiations to leave. The decision Britain took, though, was simply whether to remain in or to leave the European Union. There was no option on the ballot paper to choose the shape of our future relationship with the EU on vital issues including trade, travel or security.

While much remains uncertain about Theresa May's approach, it is now clear that the Conservatives are campaigning for a hard Brexit. This means leaving the single market, ending freedom of movement and abandoning the customs union – even though these choices will make the UK poorer and disappoint many leave voters who wanted a different outcome.

The effects of Brexit are already being felt. The value of the pound has plummeted. Inflation has risen. Growth in the economy has slowed and the government is already borrowing billions more to fill the gap in lost tax revenue. Young people, who voted overwhelmingly to remain, are being told their voices do not matter. Urgent problems, such as the future of the NHS, are being neglected because of the sheer scale of the challenge posed by Brexit.

A hard Brexit will make all these problems worse. It is the wrong choice for the country. Liberal Democrats will fight to prevent a hard Brexit.

At the end of negotiations there will be a decision on the deal. The Conservatives want the decision to be taken by politicians. Liberal Democrats believe the British people should have the final say.

That's why, when the terms of our future relationship with the EU have been negotiated (over the next two years on the Government's timetable), we will

put that deal to a vote of the British people in a referendum, with the alternative option of staying in the EU on the ballot paper. We continue to believe that there is no deal as good for the UK outside the EU as the one it already has as a member.

Every vote for the Liberal Democrats in this election is a vote to give the final say to the British people.

1.2 Fighting a hard Brexit

During negotiations, we commit ourselves to use our strength in parliament to press for keeping Britain as close as possible to Europe. Our priorities will include:

- **Protection of rights for EU citizens and UK citizens:** We will press for the UK to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals in the UK, ending their ongoing uncertainty. We will call for the overhaul and simplification of the registration process and the requirements for EU nationals to obtain permanent residence and UK citizenship, as the current system is not fit for purpose. We will urge the government, and use our influence with Liberal leaders in European countries, to secure the same rights for UK citizens living in European Union countries.
- **Membership of the single market and customs union:** We believe that any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must ensure that trade can continue without customs controls at the border, and must maintain membership of the single market, which smooths trade between the UK and the continent by providing a common 'rule book' for businesses and a common mechanism to ensure that everyone abides by the rules.
- **Freedom of movement:** We support the principle of freedom of movement – to abandon it would threaten Britain's prosperity and reputation as an open, tolerant society. Any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must protect the right to work, travel, study and retire across the EU. Any restrictions sought by the government must take account of the vital importance of EU workers to the British economy, including public services.
- **Opportunities for young people:** In an increasingly globalised and complex world, it is vital that our young people are afforded the same opportunities their parents enjoyed to work, study and travel abroad. To that end we will do everything we can to protect Erasmus+ and other EU-funded schemes which increase opportunities for young people.

- **Defending social rights and equalities:** Many important protections such as the right to 52 weeks' maternity leave and rights to annual leave are currently based on EU law, and many of these rights have been upheld at the European Court of Justice. Liberal Democrats will fight to ensure that these entitlements are not undermined.
- **Maintaining environmental standards:** The European Union has created the highest environmental standards in the world. We have a duty to future generations to protect our environment and tackle climate change. Liberal Democrats will ensure that everything is done to maintain those high standards in UK law, including the closest possible co-operation on climate and energy policy.
- **Law enforcement and judicial co-operation:** Europol, the European Arrest Warrant and shared access to police databases have helped make Britain's streets safer. We will fight to maintain maximum co-operation to ensure criminals are pursued quickly and effectively, and police are not frustrated by huge amounts of red tape.
- **British business and jobs:** We must protect support for domestic industries such as farming, tourism and the creative industries, as well as regional support for deprived areas. The City of London is Europe's financial capital and must retain its full rights in EU financial markets.
- **Science and research funding:** Research is vital for our long-term prosperity, security and wellbeing – but the Leave vote has already started to affect existing and proposed research programmes. We will campaign against any reduction in investment in UK universities and for their right to apply for EU funds on equal terms.
- **Travel and tourism:** Britain is an outward-looking country with commercial and leisure interests around the world, particularly in Europe. We will strive to retain traveller and tourist benefits such as the European Health Insurance Card, reduced roaming charges and pet passports, all of which are at risk by leaving the European Union.
- **Respect for the interests of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:** We will fight to ensure that the priorities and long-term interests of the nations of the UK are fully taken into account during negotiations. We will oppose any moves that threaten the political stability of Northern Ireland. We will also campaign to protect the rights of the people of Gibraltar.





Change Britain's Future

**Save our NHS
and Social
Care Services**

Good health is a prerequisite to taking full advantage of life's opportunities, and we must do all we can to help people stay healthy as well as provide high-quality care when they are ill. Mental health is just as important as physical health and we have made it a priority to deliver equality between the two.

The NHS has been the envy of the world, but it is now facing the greatest crisis in its history and we urgently need to increase its funding.

As a country, we are living longer – but that means more people are living with conditions like diabetes and dementia and they need help to live with dignity and the maximum degree of independence. We must set the highest standards in care, abolishing the artificial boundaries that prevent health and social care services working together.

Health and wellbeing are affected by far more than just the quality of health and social care services, so we will work to improve the wider factors that affect people's health such as warm homes, clean air and access to exercise and healthy food so that everyone can have the best chance to lead a healthy life.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Saving the NHS by putting a penny in the pound on Income Tax to give the NHS and social care services the cash injection they need.**
- **Transforming mental health care with waiting time standards to match those in physical health care.**
- **Home not hospital: better integration of health and social care and limiting the amount elderly people have to pay for social care.**

2.1 Saving the NHS and social care

The NHS and social care services are in a state of crisis. The Conservatives have left them chronically underfunded, while need continues to grow and patient care suffers. Social care is facing a funding black hole of £2 billion this year alone and more than a million older people are missing out on the care they need.

People are routinely left stranded in hospital after they finish their treatment because the follow-up care and support they need is not available. Nearly two-thirds of NHS trusts ended the last financial year in deficit.

Yet Labour and Conservative politicians refuse to be honest with the public about the scale of the crisis or the tough decisions which are needed to protect these vital services.

Liberal Democrats recognise that Britain's health and social care services are our most treasured national institutions. Any party seeking to lead the country after this election should be prepared to take bold action to safeguard them. This isn't about doing the easiest thing, it is about doing what is right and what is essential.

Liberal Democrats will take five key steps to put our health and social care system back on a sustainable financial footing:

1. An immediate 1p rise on the basic, higher and additional rates of Income Tax to raise £6 billion additional revenue, which would be ringfenced to be spent only on NHS and social care services.
2. Direct this additional investment to the following priority areas in the health and care system: social care, primary care (and other out-of-hospital care), mental health and public health. This represents the most efficient and effective way of spending these extra resources – ensuring they will have the greatest impact on the quality of care patients receive.
3. In the longer term and as a replacement for the 1p Income Tax rise, commission the development of a dedicated health and care tax on the basis of wide consultation, possibly based on a reform of National Insurance contributions, which will bring together spending on both services into a collective budget and set out transparently, on people's payslips, what we spend on them.

4. Establish a cross-party health and social care convention, bringing together stakeholders from all political parties, patients groups, the public and professionals from within the health and social care system to carry out a comprehensive review of the longer-term sustainability of the health and social care finances and workforce, and the practicalities of greater integration. We would invite the devolved administrations to be a part of this work.
5. Introduce a statutory independent budget monitoring agency for health and care, similar to the Office for Budget Responsibility. This would report every three years on how much money the system needs to deliver safe and sustainable treatment and care, and how much is needed to meet the costs of projected increases in demand and any new initiatives – to ensure any changes in services are properly costed and affordable.

Our longer-term objective will be to bring together NHS and social care into one seamless service – pooling budgets in every area by 2020 and developing integrated care organisations.

2.2 Valuing the NHS and social care workforce

Our health and social care services' greatest resource is their staff, working tirelessly under immense pressure. This Government has left them feeling embattled and undervalued.

To support the NHS and social care workforce we will:

- Guarantee the rights of all NHS and social care service staff who are EU nationals to stay in the UK.
- End the public sector pay freeze for NHS workers.
- Reinstate student nurse bursaries.
- Support innovation in how organisations can empower staff and patients, including learning from innovative social enterprises delivering community and mental health services.
- Protect NHS whistle-blowers.

GPs in particular have been put under considerable strain due to severe underfunding and neglect from the Conservatives, leaving many people waiting weeks to get appointments. GPs are the core of what the NHS is and they need

support to ensure that the NHS is able to survive and thrive. We will:

- Produce a national workforce strategy, ensuring that we never again experience a shortage in the numbers of GPs, hospital doctors, nurses and other professionals that the NHS needs.

2.3 Equal care for mental health

In government, we fought tirelessly to reduce the historic inequality between the way physical and mental health are treated in the NHS and are proud of the strides forward we made. We legislated to give mental and physical health equality under the law. We introduced the first waiting time standards for access to treatment for mental health. We introduced the crisis care concordat which dramatically reduced the number of people who end up in police cells when they experience a mental health crisis; and we secured more money for children and young people's mental health services. But we know that not enough resources reach front-line services and that in the fight for parity of esteem there is still a very long way to go. We will:

- Ringfence funding from within the one penny Income Tax rise, to provide additional investment in mental health.
- Continue to roll out access and waiting time standards for children, young people and adults. This will include a guarantee that people will not wait more than six weeks for therapy for depression or anxiety and no young person will wait more than two weeks for treatment when they experience a first episode of psychosis.
- Increase access to clinically- and cost-effective talking therapies so that hundreds of thousands more people can receive this support.
- Examine the case for introducing a dedicated service for children and young people based on the Australian 'headspace' model and building on many excellent youth information, advice and counselling services.
- Transform mental health support for pregnant women, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth, and help them get early care when needed.
- Continue to promote and invest in the Frontline programme to fast-track exceptional graduates into children's social work, as well as the Think Ahead scheme aimed at encouraging high-achieving graduates to pursue a career in mental health social work.
- Ensure that no one in crisis is turned away, with new waiting time standards

and better crisis care in accident and emergency departments, in the community and via phone lines. This will enable us to end the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.

- End out-of-area placements, ensuring those admitted to hospital for mental ill-health are able to be treated close to home.
- Ensure that all front-line public service professionals, including in schools and universities, receive better training in mental health.
- Roll out the Liaison and Diversion programme nationally, helping to identify people who have mental health problems, learning disabilities, substance misuse or other vulnerabilities when they first come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- Tackle stigma against mental ill-health, including by building on the good work done by organisations such as Heads Together and changing the standard of proof in suicide conclusions in the Coroner's Court.
- Ensure that LGBT+ inclusive mental health services receive funding and support.

Medical research is vital for developing new and better treatments. We will fight the threat Brexit poses to medical research funding. We support the principle that all medical trials using public facilities or resources should comply with the Open Trials standards and that a fair proportion of all public funding for medical research should be focused on research into mental ill-health. We also favour the further development of open access academic journals.

2.4 Home not hospital: joining up health and social care

We need services that fit around people's lives, not ones that force them to fit their lives around the care they need. This will become increasingly important as our population ages and the number of people living with long-term conditions grows. It is also more cost-effective to support people to be able to live at home rather than endure lengthy stays in hospital. We must move away from a fragmented system to an integrated service with more joined-up care and more personal budgets so that people can design services for their own individual needs. We believe this should happen from the bottom up, suiting the needs of local communities.

The number of family carers is rising, including in the 'sandwich generation' who find themselves trying to care for their children and their parents at the same time. Carers are unsung heroes; we need to do more to help them. We will:

- Finish the job of implementing a cap on the cost of social care, which the Conservatives have effectively abandoned.
- Move towards single place-based budgets for health and social care by 2020, allowing local areas to decide how best to provide the full spectrum of care for their community.
- Remodel the health care funding system to eliminate perverse incentives, by moving away from payments for activity and introducing tariffs that encourage joined-up services and promote improved outcomes for patients and better preventive care.
- Ensure those who work in the social care sector are properly trained, with accessible career pathways, and are suitable to practice by introducing a statutory code of conduct backed up by a care workers' suitability register.
- Raise the amount people can earn before losing Carer's Allowance from £110 to £150 a week, and reduce the number of hours' care per week required to qualify.
- Give the NHS a legal duty to identify carers and develop a Carer's Passport scheme to inform carers of their NHS rights, such as flexible visiting hours and access to support.
- Provide more choice at the end of life and move towards free end-of-life social care, whether people spend their last days at home or in a hospice.
- Evaluate the valuable work of hospices with a view to putting them on a more sustainable financial footing and allowing them to expand their services.

2.5 Better access to community services

Most people's experience of the NHS is their local GP or the nurses and support staff who visit them at home or work in community clinics. Access to care in GP surgeries and closer to home is better for patients and will also help reduce pressure on hospitals, accident and emergency departments and ambulances. We will:

- Promote easier access to GPs, expanding evening and weekend opening to meet the needs of local patients, encouraging online, phone and Skype appointments, encouraging GPs to work together in federations and allowing people more choice.
- Provide national support to struggling GP practices, preventing mass practice closures.
- Support GPs to come together to collectively provide services such as out-of-normal-opening-hours appointments.

- Use innovation funding to promote GP-led multidisciplinary health and care hubs, including mobile services to keep people out of hospital.
- Encourage GPs and other community clinicians to work in disadvantaged areas through our Patient Premium – which would give incentive payments to clinicians.
- Ensure that any changes to the way pharmacies are funded do not leave local areas without reasonable access to a community pharmacist.
- Review the rules for exemption from prescription charges to ensure they are fair to those with long-term conditions and disabilities.

2.6 Helping people stay healthy

It is better for patients and for the NHS if we keep people healthy in the first place, rather than just waiting until people develop illnesses and come for treatment, but 40% of NHS spending is on diseases that are preventable. We need to do more to promote healthy eating and exercise, making people aware of the dangers of smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and helping to improve mental health and wellbeing. We will:

- Move towards a health and social care system that empowers and encourages people to better manage their own health and conditions and to live healthier lives.
- Publish a National Wellbeing Strategy, which puts better health and wellbeing for all at the heart of government policy.
- Implement the recommendations of the O'Neill report on antimicrobial resistance to ensure responsible prescribing and investment in diagnostics and innovation.
- Make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention available on the NHS.
- Support effective public awareness campaigns such as Be Clear on Cancer and learn from what works when designing new health promotion campaigns to change behaviour.
- Keep public health within local government, where it is effectively joined up with preventive community services, and reinstate the funding cut from public health budgets by the Conservatives.
- Develop a strategy to tackle childhood obesity, including restricting the marketing of junk food to children, restricting TV advertising before the 9pm watershed and closing loopholes in the sugary drinks tax.

- Encourage the traffic-light labelling system for food products and publication of information on calorie, fat, sugar and salt content in restaurants and takeaways.
- Introduce mandatory targets on sugar reduction for food and drink producers.
- Reduce smoking rates, introducing a levy on tobacco companies so they fairly contribute to the costs of health care and smoking cessation services.
- Implement the recommendations of the Keogh review to regulate cosmetic surgery and ensure that the NHS is not picking up the tab for private malpractice.
- Introduce minimum unit pricing for alcohol, subject to the final outcome of the legal challenge in Scotland.
- Develop a public health campaign promoting the steps people can take to improve their own mental resilience – the wellbeing equivalent of the ‘Five a Day’ campaign.
- Support good practice among employers in promoting wellbeing and ensure people with mental health problems get the help they need to stay in or find work, with a ‘wellbeing premium’ to reward employers who take clear action to measurably improve the health of their employees.
- We will develop a just settlement for haemophiliacs who were given contaminated blood, and for their families.



Change Britain's Future

Put Children First

Liberal Democrats have always put education at the heart of our agenda. Education opens the mind, it fosters understanding and tolerance, and it empowers our children and our communities. We believe every child deserves a great start in life so they are equipped to shape their own future, and are determined to make sure that the education system finds and unleashes the best in everyone. This is essential in order to break down the unfair divisions in our society, to ensure a productive, competitive economy and to overcome intolerance.

Too many people have their chances in life determined by who their parents are rather than by their own efforts and abilities. With our Pupil Premium, investing in children who might otherwise fall behind, we are finally beginning to tackle the scandalous gap in attainment between rich and poor. But now the Conservatives want to take us back 50 years, to an outdated system of grammar schools and secondary moderns, ignoring all the research and expert advice that show it will damage the life chances of so many children.

Liberal Democrats recognise the dual role of education in giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to be part of a productive, competitive economy, and helping them grow into happy, healthy and engaged members of their community.

Children's education is too often distorted by schools' need to focus on the next set of league tables and the next inspection. Teachers deserve to be treated as professionals and given the flexibility and support to apply their expertise. Schools should be free to encourage children to participate in a truly rounded curriculum including the arts, sport and culture that broaden children's learning and develop their passion for education.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Investing nearly £7 billion extra in our children's education – increasing school budgets and the Pupil Premium to protect against rising costs and pupil numbers, and introducing a fairer national funding formula.
- Investing in high-quality early years education, tripling the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,000.
- Opposing any new selective schools and giving local authorities proper democratic control over admissions and new schools.



3.1 Stop the education cuts – fair funding for every school

Schools in England are facing an unprecedented funding crisis, with rising pupil numbers and an inadequate financial settlement meaning that real-terms per-pupil funding is being squeezed. At the same time the Conservatives' flawed approach to the National Fair Funding Formula means some schools will lose out even more. Liberal Democrats believe every child deserves a high-quality education, wherever they live. We will:

- Reverse all cuts to front-line school and college budgets, protecting per-pupil funding in real terms.
- Introduce a fairer national funding system with a protection for all schools, so that no school loses money.
- Protect the Pupil Premium which targets extra help at disadvantaged children.

Over the parliament, this means nearly £7 billion more for school and college budgets.

3.2 Quality really counts in early years

Investing in high-quality early years education has a huge impact on children's attainment as they enter school. Our most vulnerable children have the most to gain from excellent early years settings, with partnerships with parents a key component. We will:

- Increase our Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,000 per pupil per year.
- Raise the quality of early years provision and aim for every formal early years setting to employ at least one person who holds an early years teacher qualification by 2022.

3.3 Teachers – our biggest asset in education

Too many good teachers are leaving the profession – in many cases because of the excessive pressure they are under from heavy workloads and funding cuts. We want to empower teachers and make sure they feel valued for the essential work they do. We want to improve the status of the teaching profession, and support and nurture teachers in their work – helping to drive up standards in every school.

We will:

- End the 1% cap on teachers' pay rises.
- Guarantee that all teachers in state-funded schools will be fully qualified or working towards qualified teacher status (QTS) from January 2019.
- Introduce a clear and properly funded entitlement to genuinely high-quality professional development for all teachers – 25 hours per year by 2020, rising to the OECD average of 50 hours by 2025.
- Support proper long-term planning of initial teacher training places, prioritising close partnerships with higher education and specialist routes such as Teach First in order to recruit the highest-quality teachers in shortage areas such as science, technology, engineering, the arts and maths.
- Tackle unnecessary teacher workloads, including by:
 - Establishing an independent Education Standards Authority to pilot, phase in and resource future policy changes in consultation with professionals and experts.
 - Reforming Ofsted inspections so that they include a focus on longer-term outcomes and sustainable improvement as well as teacher workload, sickness and retention.
 - Supporting the establishment of a new, independent Foundation for Leadership in Education, working under the umbrella of the Chartered College of Teaching, to promote high-quality, evidence-based leadership and help the best leaders into the most challenging schools.
- Continue to work with the Education Endowment Foundation to establish a comprehensive evidence base on what works in teaching.



3.4 Driving up school standards

Far too many children are still failing to get the opportunities they need. We cannot fail our children – especially when we know it is the children who need the most help who are the most likely to be let down. The Conservatives' obsession with more grammar schools is not the answer. Liberal Democrats want to give every child the chance of attending an excellent local school. We will:

- Give democratically accountable local authorities clear responsibility for local school places planning and repeal the rule that all new state-funded schools must be free schools or academies. We will encourage local head teachers with a strong record to play a key role in school improvement, working with schools and local authorities.
- Scrap the planned expansion of grammar schools and devolve all capital monies for new school spaces to local authorities.
- Allow Ofsted to inspect both local authorities and academy chains.
- Rule out state-funded profit-making schools and ensure that new schools are built in areas where there is a need for new school places, instead of wasting money on oversupply.
- Ensure that identification and support for special educational needs and disabilities takes place as early as possible. All new policies should have an assessment of how they affect pupils who have special educational needs, and ensure they adhere to duties under the Equality Act.

3.5 Curriculum and qualifications

We want schools to have flexibility, but we also believe that parents and children need to know that the curriculum in every school will cover the essentials, and that teachers will be skilled educators who know how to inspire a love of learning.

Education should equip children with rich knowledge for life, nurturing creativity and problem-solving, and instilling a passion for lifelong learning. Children should be helped to develop the life skills they will need as adults, and every pupil should be given advice and guidance about their future. We will:

- Introduce a curriculum entitlement – a slimmed down core national curriculum, which will be taught in all state-funded schools. This will include Personal, Social and Health Education: a 'curriculum for life' including financial

literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, mental health education, citizenship and age-appropriate Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).

- Include in SRE teaching about sexual consent, LGBT+ relationships, and issues surrounding explicit images and content.
- Make the curriculum the responsibility of an Educational Standards Authority to pilot, phase in and resource future changes in consultation with professionals and experts while retaining legitimate democratic accountability.
- Prioritise primary progress measures instead of floor thresholds and work with the profession to reform tests at 11, preventing curriculum narrowing in upper Key Stage 2.
- Protect the availability of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum and act to remove barriers to pupils studying these subjects.
- Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment, and improve careers advice in schools and colleges.
- Improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in employment and enterprise schemes that promote regular experiences in business. In particular, we will seek to inspire more children and young people to follow technical and scientific careers through partnership with relevant businesses.
- Challenge gender stereotyping and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of particular academic subjects.

3.6 Getting children and families ready to learn

England's young people are some of the unhappiest and most anxious in the world. Schools are on the front line in dealing with children and young adults with mental health issues. We also know that children cannot learn properly if they are undernourished.

Parents are under huge pressure and receive little support even though home is the biggest influence on children's learning. Liberal Democrats believe that parents need to be properly empowered and supported with the tools they need to raise the next generation, and involved in the running of their children's schools. We will:

- Ensure that all teaching staff have the training to identify mental health issues and that schools provide immediate access for pupil support and counselling.

- Include promoting wellbeing as a statutory duty of a school, to be part of the Ofsted inspection framework.
- Extend free school meals to all children in primary education and promote school breakfast clubs.
- Establish a new online Family University, supported by leading organisations such as the BBC and Open University, to provide every family with advice and guidance for learning and parenting at home, as well as inspiring trips out and local opportunities.
- Ensure collaboration between leading education and family organisations to improve the flow of helpful information between home and school without increasing teacher workload.
- Tackle bullying in schools, including bullying on the basis of gender, sexuality, gender identity or gender expression.

3.7 A world-class university sector, open to all

The ability of universities to attract funding to maintain top-quality research activity and deliver the best teaching depends on being open and outward looking. The ability to attract and retain the best staff and students in our world-class universities is vital. Brexit undermines these at every turn.

In government, Liberal Democrats established a fairer system such that no undergraduate student in England had to pay a penny of their tuition fees up front or pay anything afterwards until they earn more than £21,000 per year. This meant that only high-earning graduates would pay their tuition fees in full, and eliminated systematic discrimination against part-time students. We now have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students. But the Conservatives are threatening to undermine opportunity by ending student bursaries, freezing the repayment threshold and raising the level of fees. We will:

- Reinstating maintenance grants for the poorest students, ensuring that living costs are not a barrier to disadvantaged young people studying at university.
- Establish 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 is no more retrospective raising of rates, or selling-off of loans to private companies.
- Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector,

prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.

- Reverse the damage to universities and academics by changing the country's course away from a hard Brexit.
- Recognise the value of international staff to universities and promote international collaboration.
- Fight to retain access to Horizon 2020 and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions funding.
- Reinstate quality assurance for universities applying for degree-awarding powers.

3.8 Lifelong opportunities to learn

We need to grow the country's skills base, especially in the technologies and industries that are most important to Britain's economic future. We want it to become the norm for businesses to take on and train up young people as apprentices in every sector of our economy, and for higher-level apprenticeships to be understood as a respected alternative to university education.

As our economy rapidly changes the need for people to retrain and reskill has never been more important. It is no longer the case that the skills learned at 18 or 21 will last throughout a career. The ability to learn new skills or change careers is also vital in creating the opportunity for people to succeed no matter their stage in life. That's why Liberal Democrats support the need for lifelong learning. We will:

- Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices, including by extending apprenticeships to new sectors of our economy such as creative and digital industries.
- Develop national colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- Work with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors and encourage under-represented groups to apply.
- Identify and seek to solve skills gaps – for example the lack of advanced technicians – by expanding higher vocational training such as foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.
- Ensure that all the receipts from the Apprenticeship Levy in England are spent on training, aiming to fund a wider range of types of training.

- Aim to meet all basic skills needs including literacy, numeracy and digital skills by 2030.
- Create individual accounts for funding mature adult and part-time learning and training, and provide for all adults individual access to all necessary career information, advice and guidance.
- Facilitate across the UK an effective and comprehensive system for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning and qualifications.



Change Britain's Future

**Build an
Economy that
Works for You**

Britain's economy is unbalanced. There are stark contrasts between regions, between old and young, and between the successful and those left behind.

New technologies are beginning to transform the economy. Machine learning, artificial intelligence and automation are affecting the type and the scale of employment. New global markets are opening up for low-carbon and resource-efficient goods, services and infrastructure. The scope and speed of these changes will be profound and rapid.

Britain needs a sustainable and balanced economy not just to help fund public services but because growth and enterprise create jobs and opportunities for all. Liberal Democrats believe that there is much to be done to create an economy that ensures that the whole population benefits from the technological advances ahead.

We will work to support growth now and put in place a sustainable economy that will create growth for the future – an economy that works for the long term: prosperous, green, open and fair.

The actions of the Conservatives have undermined the Coalition's work in fixing the economy. They have chosen to risk the long-term future of our economy by limiting vital spending on infrastructure and creating an over-reliance on consumer spending fuelled by debt to prop up growth. They have consistently put their own short-term ambition above long-term economic prosperity. Above all, their disastrous determination to pursue a hard Brexit casts a shadow over our economic future.

As a result, our economy is at its most fragile since the 2008 crash. We need a radical programme of investment to boost growth, develop new infrastructure fit for the future and get our economy back on track.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Boosting the economy with a major programme of capital investment aimed at stimulating growth across all areas of the UK.**
- **Eliminating the deficit on day-to-day spending by 2020 to control the national debt, and then borrowing only to invest.**
- **Ensuring strong public services by investing the proceeds of a 1p rise in Income Tax in the NHS and social care, and committing to protecting the schools budget in real terms.**

4.1 Responsible finances: investing in Britain's future

Liberal Democrats reject the Conservative Government's damaging and irrational commitment to run budget surpluses on both capital and revenue, which imposes completely unnecessary deep cuts in spending and limits the scope for much-needed capital investment. But we have no intention of just throwing away our hard-fought efforts to control the deficit during the Coalition years. Liberal Democrats will therefore commit to eliminating the deficit in day-to-day spending by 2020. This means we will be able to keep debt as a share of national wealth falling through the parliament, unless there is a recession. Once we have brought current expenditure into balance we will ensure that overall public spending grows roughly in line with the economy. This means that we can improve key public services and provide them with the investment they need.

A long-term stable economy requires more than just discipline over spending. It requires us to invest in people, innovation and infrastructure in order to give our economy the opportunity to remain competitive for the future. The Conservatives have failed to take advantage of historically low interest rates to borrow for the investment that would create jobs now and prepare us and our economy for the future.

Liberal Democrats will therefore commit to a responsible and realistic £100 billion package of additional infrastructure investment. This will prioritise:

- **New direct spending on housebuilding to help build 300,000 homes a year by 2022.**

- A programme of installing hyperfast, fibre-optic broadband across the UK.
- Capital investment in schools and hospitals to support capacity increases and modernisation.
- Significant investment in road and rail infrastructure, including a continued commitment to HS2, Crossrail 2 and rail electrification.
- Additional funding to bring more private investment into renewable energy.
- £5 billion of initial capital for a new British Housing and Infrastructure Development Bank, using public money to attract private investment for these priorities.

We will ensure that the National Infrastructure Commission takes fully into account the environmental implications of all national infrastructure decisions. We will also devolve significant infrastructure spending to local areas.

Our investment in new infrastructure is matched by our commitment to protecting vital public services, including the NHS and education. We will make the difficult decisions needed to ensure our NHS is protected for the long term and that children are given the opportunities they need to succeed. We will therefore commit to:

- Increase spending on the NHS and social care, using the proceeds of a 1p rise in Income Tax. This will be paid by taxpayers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the revenue will be ringfenced for spending on NHS and social care services in England, with the appropriate share also being transferred to Wales and Northern Ireland. This taxation will be neither levied nor spent in Scotland. There will be a commensurate 1p increase in dividend taxation which is a UK-wide tax. The receipts of this will be similarly earmarked, with Scotland also receiving its share.
- Protect the education budget in real terms per pupil from early years to age 19.
- End the 1% cap on pay rises in the public sector, and uprate wages in line with inflation.

The Conservative pursuit of hard Brexit will have serious impacts on the UK's national finances – impacts which current government plans may not fully take into account. Liberal Democrats would choose to pursue a very different European policy, and therefore would expect a better financial situation.

We will initiate a spending review after the general election focusing on delivering



efficiency, funding proven spend-to-save initiatives, pursuing local and community integration to drive efficiency, and investing in technology to get public services and front-line staff online.

Traditional indicators of economic activity such as GDP are poor guides to genuine prosperity and wellbeing. We will therefore introduce a National Wellbeing Strategy covering all aspects of government policy, including health, housing and the environment.

4.2 Fair taxes

In order to balance the books and build a sustainable economy for the future we must ensure that everyone pays their fair share. Liberal Democrats have a long-standing commitment to fairer taxation, and in government we raised the personal allowance for Income Tax. It remains our ambition to make taxes fairer and simpler, to help those on low and middle incomes, and to ensure that those on the highest incomes, and large international companies, make a fair contribution. We will:

- Aim in the long term, and as resources allow, to raise the employee national insurance threshold to the Income Tax threshold, while protecting low earners' ability to accrue pension and benefit entitlements.
- Ensure those with the highest incomes and wealth are making a fair contribution. We have identified a series of distortions, loopholes and excessive reliefs that should be removed. These include reforms to Capital Gains Tax and dividend tax relief, and refocusing entrepreneurs' relief. We would reverse a number of the Conservatives' unfair and unjustified tax cuts, including:
 - The cutting of Corporation Tax from 20% to 17%.
 - Capital Gains Tax cuts.
 - Capital Gains Tax extended relief.
 - The Marriage Allowance.
 - The raising of the Inheritance Tax threshold.
- Take tough action against corporate tax evasion and avoidance, including by:
 - Introducing a General Anti-Avoidance Rule, setting a target for HM Revenue and Customs to reduce the tax gap, and continuing to invest in staff to enable them to meet it.
 - Reforming Corporation Tax to develop a system that benefits the smallest



companies while ensuring the biggest multinationals cannot avoid paying sums comparable to nationally based competitors. We will consult on shifting away from a profits-based tax to one that takes account of a wider range of economic activity indicators, such as sales and turnover.

- Reviewing the Business Rates system, prioritising reforms that recognise the development of the digital economy, lessening the burden on smaller businesses, and ensuring high streets remain competitive. We will also consider the implementation of Land Value Taxation.
- Conduct a full-scale review into the burden of taxation and spending between generations to ensure that government policy promotes fairness between generations.

4.3 Supporting entrepreneurs and small business

As well as the need for public infrastructure investment, the role of entrepreneurs and small businesses in delivering a thriving economy is fundamental. Liberal Democrats believe there is a vital need for access to finance for new businesses, and those wishing to scale up. Creating true competition means allowing new businesses to rise and challenge established companies. There are also many well-established small businesses and traders which form the backbone of local economies. Our priority in supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses is to ensure that they have access to the funding they need, and in particular long-term (and patient) capital. We will:

- Expand the activities of the state-owned British Business Bank, enabling it to perform a more central role in the economy by tackling the shortage of equity capital for growing firms and providing long-term capital for medium-sized businesses.
- Create a new 'start-up allowance' to help those starting a new business with their living costs in the crucial first weeks of their business.
- Support fast-growing businesses seeking to scale up, through the provision of mentoring support.
- Review Business Rates to reduce burdens on small firms, and make them the priority for any future business tax cuts.
- Reform the Regulatory Policy Committee to remove unnecessary regulation, reduce regulatory uncertainty, and support new markets and investment, particularly in low-carbon and resource-efficient innovation.

4.4 Innovation, science and new technology

In the knowledge-based economy of the future, scientific research, innovation and skills will be crucial to prosperity. The advent of robotics and increasing artificial intelligence will also change the nature of work for many people. The government needs to act now to ensure this technological march can benefit everyone and that no areas are left in technology's wake. We will:

- Protect the science budget, including the recent £2 billion increase, by continuing to raise it at least in line with inflation. Our long-term goal is to double innovation and research spending across the economy. We would guarantee to underwrite funding for British partners in EU-funded projects such as Horizon 2020 who would suffer from cancellation of income on Brexit.
- Build on the Coalition's industrial strategy, working with sectors which are critical to Britain's ability to trade internationally, creating more 'catapult' innovation and technology centres and backing private investment in particular in green innovation.
- Develop the skilled workforce needed to support this growth with a major expansion of high-quality apprenticeships, including advanced apprenticeships, backed up with new sector-led national colleges. We will develop a national skills strategy for key sectors, including low-carbon technologies, to help match skills and people.
- Invest to ensure that broadband connections and services to be provided before 2020 have a speed of 2 Gbps or more, with fibre to the premises (FTTP) as standard and unlimited usage by 2020 across the whole of the UK. SMEs should be prioritised in the roll-out of hyperfast broadband.
- Aim to double the number of SMEs participating in the digital economy by supporting ICT capital expenditure by businesses in non-digital sectors.
- Build on the success of Tech City, Tech North and the Cambridge tech cluster with a network across the UK acting as incubators for technology companies.
- Create a new retail and business strategy to look at the impact of new technology on jobs in key sectors.
- Commit to build digital skills in the UK and retain coding on the national curriculum in England.
- Support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by continuing to support the Creative Industries Council and tailored industry-specific tax support, promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by

small creative businesses.

- Invest in the future – supporting innovative technologies including the space industry.

4.5 Helping everyone earn a decent living

Most businesses recognise the long-term value in treating their employees decently and developing their skills. However, there are still too many examples of unscrupulous employers who perpetuate bad practice, which not only exploits workers but can also undermine the competitive position of good employers. This has to change if we are to give everyone a decent chance of earning a living and move towards a more productive economy. We will:

- Encourage the creation and widespread adoption of a ‘good employer’ kitemark covering areas such as paying a living wage, avoiding unpaid internships and using name-blind recruitment to make it easier for customers and investors to exercise choice and influence.
- Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a genuine living wage across all sectors. We will pay this living wage in all central government departments and their agencies, and encourage other public-sector employers to do likewise.
- Extend transparency requirements on larger employers to include publishing the number of people paid less than the living wage and the ratio between top and median pay.
- Modernise employment rights to make them fit for the age of the ‘gig’ economy, looking to build on the forthcoming Taylor report.
- Stamp out abuse of zero-hours contracts. We will create a formal right to request a fixed contract and consult on introducing a right to make regular patterns of work contractual after a period of time.
- Strengthen enforcement of employment rights, including by bringing together relevant enforcement agencies and scrapping employment tribunal fees.

4.6 Helping everyone to share in prosperity

Too many people justifiably feel left behind. Liberal Democrats believe that it is vital that everyone is given a stake in our economy, that we can only be united and competitive as a country if the rewards are reaped by all.

A well-functioning economy which works for everyone cannot be based solely on companies owned by and operated on behalf of small groups of shareholders. It should seek to foster a diversity of types of business, including encouraging alternative models such as mutuals, social enterprises or community-interest companies.

In all cases, it is vital to ensure the engagement and involvement of employees; successful businesses work for all stakeholders. That is why we will:

- 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.
- Strengthen worker participation in decision-making, including staff representation on remuneration committees, and the right for employees of a listed company to be represented on the board. We will change company law to permit a German-style two-tier board structure to include employees.
- Reform fiduciary duty and company purpose rules to ensure that other considerations, such as employee welfare, environmental standards, community benefit and ethical practice, can be fully included in decisions made by directors and fund managers.
- Reduce the reporting requirement for disclosure of shareholdings to 1% in order to increase transparency over who owns stakes in the biggest companies.
- Require binding and public votes of board members on executive pay policies.

It is a scandal that in Britain today there are 1.7 million people without a bank account, eight million experiencing problem debt and 40% of the working-age population who have less than £100 in savings. To tackle the problem of financial exclusion Liberal Democrats will:

- Take forward the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee

on Financial Exclusion, in particular by expanding the Financial Conduct Authority's remit to include a statutory duty to promote financial inclusion as one of its key objectives.

4.7 Spreading opportunities to every part of the country

Prosperity is very unevenly spread across the nations and regions of the UK. The prospect of Brexit, including the loss of £8.9 billion of European Structural and Investment Funds, is only likely to make the problems faced by disadvantaged areas worse. Local autonomy with real financial muscle is the only sustainable answer to the regional divide. We will:

- Continue to champion the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine initiatives and invest significant capital resources in infrastructure projects across the north of England and the Midlands.
- Devolve further revenue-raising powers away from Westminster, to regions from Cornwall to the north-east. We will ensure that any powers devolved are matched by the funding to deliver on the needs of local people.
- Devolve more decision-making power over key levers of economic development including transport, housing and skills.
- Provide assistance to areas heavily dependent on fossil fuel industries, such as the north-east of Scotland, to diversify away from these industries.
- Give the immediate go-ahead to the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon project.
- Encourage local authorities and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) to work in partnership with existing business, universities and other business hubs to develop plans for building on already established success in a particular area, including the ability to raise money to incentivise clustering by businesses with particular specialisations.
- Use central government public procurement policy as a tool of local growth and community development by, for example, purchasing from diverse sources and using local labour, goods and services, and encouraging local government to do the same.
- Require the major banks to fund the creation of a local banking sector dedicated to meeting the needs of local SMEs.



Change Britain's Future

Keep our Country Green

Eighteen months ago, it seemed that the world had come to a consensus on the need to take the perils of climate change seriously. Countries across the globe had recognised that rising temperatures and pollution were not just an environmental issue, but an economic and security issue. But with the election of Donald Trump in the US and Britain's vote to leave the EU, the tides of isolationism and populism could halt or even reverse the progress that has been made.

The Conservatives seem determined to take Britain back to the 1980s, when the UK was the 'dirty man of Europe'. They have cut support for renewable energy and home insulation, sold off the Green Investment Bank and failed to control air pollution. Their actions put not just Britain's environment at risk but the health of its citizens and its economy, undermining the increasingly successful green industries which already employ more than half a million workers.

Liberal Democrats are determined that we live up to our environmental obligations. That's why we will pass five green laws: a Green Transport Act, a Zero-Carbon Britain Act, a Nature Act, a Green Buildings Act, and a Zero-Waste Act to incorporate existing EU environmental protections, maintain product standards such as for energy efficiency, and establish a framework for continual improvement.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Ensuring that four million properties receive insulation retrofits by 2022, prioritising fuel-poor households.**
- **Preventing 40,000 deaths a year with our Air Quality Plan to reduce air pollution.**
- **Ensuring British farming remains competitive and doesn't lose out – refocusing support towards producing healthy food and public benefits.**



5.1 Clean air and green transport

Air pollution in the UK is a killer. It contributes to 40,000 premature deaths a year and costs the NHS £15 billion. This year, London exceeded its annual air pollution target in just five days. The government has failed time and again to comply with EU limits on pollution.

That's why the Liberal Democrats will pass a Green Transport Act, introduce an Air Quality Plan to reduce air pollution and protect UK citizens, and support the manufacture of low-emission and electric vehicles, generating jobs and exports. This plan will include:

- A diesel scrappage scheme, and a ban on the sale of diesel cars and small vans in the UK by 2025.
- Extending ultra-low-emission zones to 10 more towns and cities.
- All private hire vehicles and diesel buses licensed to operate in urban areas to run on ultra-low-emission or zero-emission fuels within five years.

We will also reform vehicle taxation to encourage sales of electric and low-emission vehicles and develop electric vehicle infrastructure including universal charging points.

5.2 Low-carbon energy and green jobs

In government, we championed green energy, and oversaw the trebling of renewable electricity generation. But the Conservatives have repeatedly cut support for green energy producers – damaging the environment and costing British jobs. Liberal Democrats will expand renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions, cutting dependence on fossil fuel imports and generating more jobs and prosperity. We will:

- Pass a Zero-Carbon Britain Act to set new legally binding targets to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2040 and to zero by 2050.
- Set up a British Housing and Infrastructure Development Bank to mobilise investment into the low-carbon and sustainable infrastructure the UK needs to remain competitive.
- Support the Paris agreement by ensuring the UK meets its own climate commitments and plays a leadership role in international efforts to combat climate change.

- Expand renewable energy, aiming to generate 60% of electricity from renewables by 2030, restoring government support for solar PV and onshore wind in appropriate locations (helping meet climate targets at least cost) and building more electricity interconnectors to underpin this higher reliance on renewables.
- Support investment in cutting-edge technologies including energy storage, smart grid technology, hydrogen technologies, offshore wind, and tidal power (including giving the go-ahead for the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon), and investing heavily in research and development.
- Support an ambitious carbon capture and storage programme, which is essential for delivering clean industrial growth.
- Oppose ‘fracking’ because of its adverse impact on climate change, the energy mix, and the local environment.
- Accept that new nuclear power stations can play a role in electricity supply provided concerns about safety, disposal of waste and cost are adequately addressed, new technology is incorporated, and there is no public subsidy for new build.
- Maintain membership of Euratom, ensuring continued nuclear co-operation, research funding, and access to nuclear fuels.

5.3 Greener homes, lower energy bills

At more than £1,200 a year, the cost of heating and lighting an average home in the UK is too high – and with a falling exchange rate, costs will rise further. More than two million families – one in 10 households in England – cannot afford to heat their home properly.

Liberal Democrats will reduce energy bills permanently by improving home insulation and encouraging small-scale, community and local-authority renewable schemes. We will make saving energy a top infrastructure priority, slashing energy bills and carbon emissions, creating thousands of jobs and helping end the fuel poverty crisis once and for all. We will:

- Pass a new Green Buildings Act to set new energy-efficiency targets, including a long-term ambition for every home in England to reach at least an energy rating of Band C by 2035.
- Ensure that at least four million homes are made highly energy efficient (Band C) by 2022, with priority given to fuel-poor households.

- Restore the zero-carbon standard for new homes which was set by Liberal Democrats in government and since abandoned by the Conservatives, increasing the standard steadily and extending it to non-domestic buildings by 2022.
- Expand community energy schemes, encourage councils to develop community energy-saving projects and local electricity generation, and promote city-scale demonstration projects in electric vehicles and clean energy.
- Continue to back new entrants to the energy market, aiming for at least 30% of the household market to be supplied by competitors to the 'Big 6' by 2022.

5.4 Protecting nature

Britain's natural environment is precious. The countryside, wildlife and urban green spaces are critical to health, wellbeing and a sense of community. The quality of the environment also underpins key industries such as agriculture and tourism. We will:

- Establish a £2 billion flood-prevention fund focused on providing support for small community and council-led schemes to reduce upstream flooding, and the knock-on effects in downstream and coastal areas, in addition to improving flood defences, and introducing high standards for flood resilience for buildings and infrastructure in flood-risk areas.
- Pass a Nature Act to put the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) on a statutory footing, set legally binding natural capital targets, including on biodiversity, clean air and water, and empower the NCC to recommend actions to meet these targets.
- Significantly increase the amount of accessible green space, including completion of the coastal path, and create a new designation of national nature parks to protect up to one million acres of accessible green space valued by local communities.
- Protect and restore England's lakes, rivers and wetlands, including through reform of water management and higher water-efficiency standards, and establish a 'blue belt' of protected marine areas.
- Reverse the current sharp decline in the rate of woodland creation by aiming to plant a tree for every UK citizen over the next 10 years, and protect remaining ancient woodlands.
- Suspend the use of neonicotinoids until proven that their use in agriculture does not harm bees or other pollinators.



- Introduce stronger penalties for animal cruelty offences, increasing the maximum sentencing from six months to five years, and bring in a ban on caged hens.
- Clamp down on illegal pet imports through legal identification requirements for online sales, and minimise the use of animals in scientific experimentation, including by funding research into alternatives.

5.5 Farming, food and agriculture

The vote to leave the EU puts farming and agricultural businesses in huge danger, threatening both cuts to the support which underpin farmers' livelihoods and ability to manage the countryside, and also tariffs on exports. For agricultural products outside the EU, tariffs average 22.3% – putting Britain's £18 billion of food exports in danger.

Our system must support farmers, ensure food production and protect the environment. That's why we will:

- Continue our long campaign to reform agricultural subsidies – making sure British farming remains competitive and doesn't lose out in the event of Britain leaving the EU, rebalancing away from direct subsidy and refocusing support towards the public benefits that come from effective land management including countryside protection, flood prevention, food production and climate-change mitigation. This would ensure that smaller farms are protected and move support away from large landowners, while delivering a more localised agricultural policy.
- Encourage new and younger entrants to farming by championing different forms of ownership including longer tenancies, share farming and community ownership.
- Introduce a national food strategy to promote the production and consumption of healthy, sustainable and affordable food.
- Increase the powers of the Groceries Code Adjudicator and extend its remit to include businesses further up the supply chain, helping to ensure that farmers receive a fair price.
- Continue to improve standards of animal health and welfare in agriculture by updating farm animal welfare codes and promoting the responsible stewardship of antibiotic drugs.
- Ensure that future trade deals require high safety, environmental and animal

welfare standards for food imports, including clear and unambiguous country-of-origin labelling for meat and dairy products.

- Develop safe, effective, humane and evidence-based ways of controlling bovine TB, including by investing to produce workable vaccines.

Despite reform, the Common Fisheries Policy has failed to deliver the economic or environmental objectives necessary and has suffered from being remote, overly centralised and bureaucratic. Hard Brexit and the loss of export markets threatens to further damage the industry, which has long suffered from being used as a bargaining chip by UK governments. Liberal Democrats would defend and maintain our fishing industry by not allowing fishing rights to be traded away against other policy areas, and work with the industry and other stakeholders to develop a national plan for sustainable fisheries.

5.6 Cutting waste, using resources wisely

Britain's economy fails to make the most efficient use of natural resources. We aim to cut waste, increase recovery, reuse and recycling and move towards the so-called 'circular economy' in which resource use, waste and pollution are minimised and product lifetimes are extended. This will cut costs for consumers and businesses, and create new jobs and enterprises, helping to grow Britain's economy. We will:

- Pass a Zero-Waste Act, including legally binding targets for reducing net consumption of key natural resources, and introducing incentives for businesses to improve resource efficiency.
- Benefit consumers by promoting better product design to improve repairability, reuse and recycling.
- Establish a statutory waste recycling target of 70% in England and extend separate food waste collections to at least 90% of homes by 2022.
- Building on the success of our plastic bag charge, introduce a 5p charge on disposable coffee cups to reduce waste.
- Establish a coherent tax and regulatory framework for landfill, incineration and waste collection, including reinstating the landfill tax escalator and extending it to the lower rate, and consulting on the introduction of an incineration tax.
- Work with local government to ensure these commitments are fully funded.

To ensure the policies set out in this chapter are implemented, and to put the protection of the environment at the heart of policies across all areas of government, we will establish a Cabinet Committee on Sustainability, chaired by a cabinet minister, establish an Office for Environmental Responsibility to scrutinise the government's efforts to meet its environmental targets, and place a responsibility on every government agency to account for its contribution towards meeting climate targets in everything it does.



Change Britain's Future

Support Families and Communities

A fair society is one in which everyone has the means to get by and the chance to get on. It means being able to provide for your family, afford somewhere to live and work within your community.

That's why we will increase the availability of childcare to help parents who want to work and why we will ensure that the benefits system is fair – focusing on helping people and not just saving money. It's why we will work to build more houses and make them affordable. And it's why we will empower local councils and communities to run their own services – free from the interference of central government.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Extending free childcare to all two-year-olds and to the children of working families from the end of paid parental leave, and encouraging new fathers to take time off with an additional month's paid paternity leave.**
- **Reaching a housebuilding target of 300,000 homes a year by 2022, including half a million affordable and energy-efficient homes, with direct government commissioning where the market fails to deliver.**
- **Introducing a new Young Person's Bus Discount Card for young people aged 16–21, giving a two-thirds discount on bus travel.**



6.1 Help with childcare costs

Parents often want to take time out from paid work to care for young children but in many families both parents want, or have, to work. The costs of childcare can be prohibitive and opportunities for flexible working are scarce.

In government, we were proud to introduce Shared Parental Leave and increases in free childcare but there are still gaps in the system. We will:

- Expand Shared Parental Leave with an additional ‘use it or lose it’ month to encourage fathers to take time off with young children. We would make Paternity and Shared Parental Leave a ‘day one’ right.
- Encourage employers to provide more flexible working, making this a ‘day one’ right, so that there is a presumption that work is flexible unless there is a clear business reason it cannot be.
- Provide 15 hours a week of free childcare to the parents of all two-year-olds in England. We will then prioritise 15 hours’ free childcare for all working parents in England with children aged between nine months and two years.
- Commit to an ambitious long-term goal of 30 hours’ free childcare a week for all parents in England with children aged from two to four years, and all working parents from the end of paid parental leave to two years. This will not only help parents afford to work, but will also help all children start school confident, happy and ready to learn.
- Ensure that this provision is fully funded at sustainable levels, provides flexibility for parents who work unsocial hours and enables parents to use free hours during school holidays.

6.2 Helping people find work

Having a paid job is for many people the key opportunity they need to be able to achieve their life goals. Unemployment isn’t just an economic challenge – it’s a personal problem and government must do everything it can to help those who can work find a job and provide for themselves and their family. To that end, we will:

- Separate employment support from benefits administration – making Jobcentres places of training and support into work.
- Take 13,000 children out of poverty by letting both parents earn before their Universal Credit is cut and also reverse cuts to the Family Element.

- Encourage people into work by reversing the cuts to Work Allowances in Universal Credit, enabling people to work for longer before their benefits are cut.
- Raise awareness of, and seek to expand, Access to Work, which supports people with disabilities in work.
- Improve links between Jobcentres and Work Programme providers and the local NHS to ensure all those in receipt of health-related benefits are getting the care and support to which they are entitled.
- Accelerate the roll-out of Individual Placement and Support, a proven approach to getting people with mental ill-health back into work.

6.3 Treating people fairly

The Liberal Democrats are clear – balancing the books on the backs of the poor and disabled, and demonising people who claim benefits, is neither acceptable nor responsible. Although all government budgets must be scrutinised to minimise waste and ensure value for money, this must not be used as an excuse to attack the poor and vulnerable. In any case it is more effective to tackle the causes of the benefits bill – low pay, high rents, unemployment and ill-health.

That's why we will reverse unfair Conservative policies such as reducing support for younger people and cutting the benefits of people not fit for work. We will reinstate the legally binding poverty targets of the Child Poverty Act. We will:

- Uprate working-age benefits at least in line with inflation.
- Abandon the two-child policy on family benefits and abolish the Conservatives' 'rape clause' where a woman has to declare children that are born as a result of rape in order to access benefits.
- Help young people in need by reversing cuts to housing benefit for 18-21-year-olds and increase the rates of Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit for those aged 18-24 at the same rate as minimum wages.
- Reverse cuts to Employment Support Allowance to those in the work-related activity group.
- Increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in line with average rents in an area, ensuring that LHA is enough for a family to pay their housing costs no matter where they live.
- Scrap the 'bedroom tax', while seeking to achieve the aim of making best use of the housing supply through incentivising local authorities to help tenants 'downsize'.

- Scrap the discredited Work Capability Assessment and replace it with a new system, run by local authorities according to national rules, including a ‘real world’ test that is based on the local labour market.
- Withdraw eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment from pensioners who pay tax at the higher rate (40%). We will retain the free bus pass for all pensioners.
- Ensure that those using food banks are aware of their rights and how they can access hardship payments where relevant.

6.4 Saving for and enjoying your retirement

Life expectancy is increasing. This is good news, but it brings challenges; older people may need a pension income that will last for 20, 30 or even 40 years. We want Britain to be the best place in the world to save for, and enjoy, your retirement. We will:

- Maintain the ‘triple lock’ of increasing the state pension each year by the highest of earnings growth, prices growth or 2.5% for the next parliament.
- Establish a review to consider the case for, and practical implications of, introducing a single rate of tax relief for pensions, which would be designed to be simpler and fairer and would be set more generously than the current 20% basic rate relief.

6.5 Building more and better homes

The housing crisis in Britain has become an emergency. For far too long Britain has built many fewer homes than we need; unless we build enough to meet demand, year after year, we will find that housing costs rise further out of reach. That is why we have set an ambitious target of increasing the rate of housebuilding to 300,000 a year – almost double the current level. These new houses must be sustainably planned to ensure that excessive pressure is not placed on existing infrastructure. We will:

- Directly build homes to fill the gap left by the market, to reach our housebuilding target of 300,000 homes a year, through a government commissioning programme to build homes for sale and rent. We will ensure that half a million affordable, energy-efficient homes are built by the end of the parliament.
- Create at least 10 new garden cities in England, providing tens of thousands of

high-quality, zero-carbon homes, with gardens and shared green space, jobs, schools and public transport.

- Set up a new government-backed British Housing and Infrastructure Development Bank with a remit including providing long-term capital for major new settlements and helping attract finance for major housebuilding projects.
- End the Voluntary Right to Buy pilots that sell off housing association homes and the associated high value asset levy.
- Lift the borrowing cap on local authorities and increase the borrowing capacity of housing associations so that they can build council and social housing.
- Scrap exemptions on smaller housing development schemes from their obligation to provide affordable homes, and strengthen the hand of local government to prevent large developers renege on their commitments.
- Require local plans to take into account at least 15 years of future housing need – focusing on long-term development and community needs.
- Create a community right of appeal in cases where planning decisions go against the approved local plan.
- Enable local authorities to:
 - Levy up to 200% council tax on second homes and ‘buy to leave empty’ investments from overseas.
 - Enforce housebuilding on unwanted public sector land.
 - Penalise excessive land-banking when builders with planning permission have failed to build after three years.
 - End the Right to Buy if they choose.

6.6 Buying and renting

House prices are high across the country – even where houses are available to buy, they are often unaffordable for first-time buyers. In many areas, the rental market has also become unaffordable. Young people, in particular, need support from the government to help them find and keep a home of their own. We will:

- Help people who cannot afford a deposit by introducing a new Rent to Own model where rent payments give tenants an increasing stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.
- Improve renting by banning lettings fees for tenants, capping upfront deposits and increasing minimum standards in rented homes.
- Help young people into the rental market by establishing a new Help to Rent scheme to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for all first-time

renters under 30.

- Give British buyers a fair chance by stopping developers advertising homes abroad before they have been advertised in the UK.
- Give tenants first refusal to buy the home they are renting from a landlord who decides to sell during the tenancy at the market rate according to an independent valuation.
- Promote longer tenancies of three years or more with an inflation-linked annual rent increase built in, to give tenants security and limit rent hikes.
- Improve protections against rogue landlords through mandatory licensing and allow access for tenants to the database of rogue landlords and property agents.
- End the scandal of rough sleeping by increasing support for homelessness prevention and adequately funding age-appropriate emergency accommodation and supported housing, while ensuring that all local authorities have at least one provider of the Housing First model of provision for long-term, entrenched homeless people.

6.7 Investing in the transport we need

High-quality public transport is essential to building sustainable communities and the local and national economy. Britain needs better transport infrastructure, a modern railway system run for the benefit of its customers, and less congestion and pollution on the roads. We also need to ensure that local communities, particularly rural communities, remain connected with local rail and bus services, and that stations serve the needs of their local community. To build a transport system fit for the 21st century, we will:

- Ensure that new rail franchises include a stronger focus on customers, including a programme of investment in new stations, lines and modern trains. We will allow public sector bodies and mutual groups involving staff and passengers to bid for franchises. We will continue the Access for All programme, improving disabled access to public transport as a key priority.
- As a result of severe failings that rise to the level of breach of contract, establish government-run companies to take over the running of Southern Rail and Govia Thameslink, with a long-term plan to find more effective and sustainable ways of managing these franchises involving greater powers for local government.
- Pursue the electrification of the rail network, improve stations, reopen smaller

stations, restore twin-track lines to major routes and proceed with HS2, HS3 and Crossrail 2, including development of a high-speed network stretching to Scotland.

- Invest capital in major transport improvements and infrastructure. We will:
 - Shift more freight from road to rail.
 - Deliver the Transport for the North strategy to promote growth, innovation and prosperity across northern England.
 - Develop more modern, resilient links to and within the south-west peninsula to help develop and diversify the regional economy.
 - Complete East West Rail, connecting Oxford and Cambridge and catalysing major new housing development.
 - Ensure London's transport infrastructure is improved to withstand the pressure of population and economic growth.
 - Support the takeover of metro services in London by London Overground.
 - Encourage the swift take-up of electric and driverless vehicles.
- Develop a strategic airports policy for the whole of the UK, taking full account of the impacts on climate change and local pollution. We remain opposed to any expansion of Heathrow, Stansted or Gatwick and any new airport in the Thames Estuary and will focus instead on improving existing regional airports such as Birmingham and Manchester. We will ensure no net increase in runways across the UK.

To protect and extend local public transport, we will:

- Introduce a rail ombudsman to enforce passenger rights and improve the provision of compensation, with the power to sanction rail companies as appropriate.
- Introduce a new Young Person's Bus Discount Card, for young people aged 16–21, giving a two-thirds discount on bus travel – allowing young people to access education, apprenticeships and work.
- Halt the decline in bus services and carry out a review of bus funding and bus policies. We will give principal local authorities the power to run, commission and regulate the bus network in their area.
- Provide local authorities and communities with the powers to improve transport and ticketing with the ability to introduce network-wide and smart ticketing systems.
- Design towns and cities as safe and attractive walking spaces and implement



the recommendations of the Get Britain Cycling report.

6.8 Local communities working together

Liberal Democrats believe in community politics – in the power of local people to come together to solve their own problems and make a better life for their neighbourhoods. This means rejuvenating democratic local government in England and also supporting other forms of community organisation and empowerment. We will:

- Drastically reduce the powers of central government ministers to interfere in democratically elected local government.
- Remove the requirement to hold local referenda for council tax changes, ensuring that councillors are properly accountable for their decisions by introducing fair votes.
- Aim to increase the number of neighbourhood, community and parish councils and promote tenant management in social housing.
- Establish a government process to deliver greater devolution of financial responsibility to English local authorities and any new devolved bodies in England, building on the work of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance. Any changes must balance the objectives of more local autonomy and fair equalisation between communities.
- Support social investment, ensuring charities and social enterprises can access the support and finance they need to strengthen their governance and deliver innovative, sustainable solutions to challenges in their communities.
- Enable central and local government to prioritise employee-owned and community-benefit companies in awarding procurement contracts by strengthening the Social Value Act.
- Grant new powers to local authorities to protect high streets and consumers by reducing the proliferation of betting shops and capping the maximum amount able to be bet on fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) at one time to £2.

6.9 Sustainable rural communities

A thriving rural community needs local services and community facilities such as schools, public transport, local shops, cultural venues and pubs. It needs enough homes, affordable for local families, to ensure those services are viable. Liberal Democrats understand the changes needed to support a living, working countryside. We will:

- Ensure that every property in the UK is provided, by 2022, with a superfast broadband connection with a download speed of 30Mbps, an upload speed of 6Mbps, and an unlimited usage cap.
- Invest £2 billion in innovative solutions to ensure the provision of high-speed broadband across the rural UK, working with local authorities and providing grants to help areas replicate the success of existing community-led projects.
- Set up a £2 billion Rural Services Fund of capital investment to enable communities to establish a local base from which to co-locate services such as council offices, post offices, children's centres, libraries and visiting health-care professionals.
- Work with Ofcom to ensure that mobile phone companies provide fast and reliable coverage in rural areas.
- Commit to preventing Post Office closures and protect Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation to deliver across the UK for the same price.
- Work with local authorities to deliver a significant increase in social and affordable housing in rural areas.

6.10 Access to culture and sport

Arts, media and sports are essential for personal fulfilment and quality of life – they are part of what turns a group of people into a community. Funding for these organisations is put at risk with Brexit and the Liberal Democrats will ensure that we continue to invest in our cultural capital. We will:

- Maintain free access to national museums and galleries.
- Move towards introducing 'safe standing' at football clubs, requiring the Sports Grounds Safety Authority to prepare guidance for implementing this change.
- Protect the independence of the BBC and set up a BBC Licence Fee

Commission, maintain Channel 4 in public ownership and protect the funding and editorial independence of Welsh language broadcasters.

- Protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery.
- Maintain current standards of intellectual property (IP) protection with continuing co-operation on enforcement of IP generated in the UK and working within the EU to ensure the continuation of territorial licensing of rights.
- Create creative enterprise zones to grow and regenerate the cultural output of areas across the UK.
- Examine the available funding and planning rules for live music venues and the grassroots music sector, protecting venues from further closures.



Change Britain's Future

**Defend Rights,
Promote
Justice and
Equalities**

Liberal Democrats believe that every person is entitled to the same opportunity to succeed in life. That means breaking down the barriers that hold people back – reducing inequality, fighting discrimination and defending individuals against an overreaching government.

It means promoting universal liberal values such as openness, tolerance and unity. It also means opposing the extreme and divisive forces that now blight our politics and public life. The rise in hate crime, the abuse of refugees, and the toxic rhetoric on immigration and about immigrants themselves is not the future Liberal Democrats want for Britain. We will not let campaigners for a hard Brexit pretend that racism and discrimination are a kind of patriotism.

We will fight to make sure that what you do and where you get to in life are not affected by your gender, the colour of your skin or who you love.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Making the positive case for immigration and reducing hate crimes by targeting the people who commit them and making all hate crimes aggravated offences, allowing for harsher sentencing of perpetrators.**
- **Defending human rights: we will vote against any attempts to scrap the Human Rights Act or withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights and we will strengthen the UK's commitment to international human rights law.**
- **Offering safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees, expanding the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to offer sanctuary to 50,000 people over the lifetime of the next parliament and reopening the Dubs scheme to take 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from Europe.**



7.1 Rights and equalities

Whether by righting past wrongs, protecting citizens or increasing freedom, the Liberal Democrats believe that legislation defending rights and liberties protects individuals and drives opportunity for many underrepresented groups.

Liberal Democrats oppose all discrimination and believe that government should take an active role both in punishing discrimination and in ensuring it does not happen in the first place. Our society is only strong once it includes everybody – regardless of their background.

To extend diversity in public life and business, we will:

- Fund more extensive childcare, and provide better back-to-work support to reach an ambitious goal of one million more women in work by 2025.
- Continue the drive for diversity in business leadership, pushing for at least 40% of board members being women in FTSE 350 companies and implementing the recommendations of the Parker review to increase ethnic minority representation.
- Extend the Equality Act to all large companies with more than 250 employees, requiring them to monitor and publish data on gender, BAME, and LGBT+ employment levels and pay gaps.
- Extend the use of name-blind recruitment processes in the public sector and encourage their use in the private sector.
- Require diversity in public appointments. We will introduce a presumption that every shortlist should include at least one BAME candidate.
- Extend requirements on companies to strengthen responsibility for supply chains.
- Focus on good practice in tackling modern slavery, including training for police and prosecutors in identifying and supporting victims, and implement the Ewins report recommendations on domestic workers.

To safeguard rights and promote equalities, we will:

- Campaign to reduce intolerance, including anti-Semitism, and hate crimes alongside organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card, the Anne Frank Trust UK, and Kick It Out.

- Ask the Advisory Committee on Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs periodically to review rules around men who have sex with men and other related groups donating blood to consider what restrictions remain necessary.
- Guarantee the freedom of people to wear religious or cultural dress, and tackle the growing incidence of Islamophobic hate crime.
- Introduce an 'X' option on passports, identity documents, and official forms for those who do not wish to identify as either male or female, and campaign for their introduction in the provision of other services, for example utilities.
- Decriminalise the sale and purchase of sex, and the management of sex work – reducing harm, defending sex workers' human rights, and focusing police time and resources on those groomed, forced or trafficked into the sex industry. We would provide additional support for those wishing to leave sex work.
- Strengthen legal rights and obligations for couples by introducing mixed-sex civil partnerships and extending rights to cohabiting couples.
- Extend protection of gender reassignment in equality law to explicitly cover gender identity and expression, and streamline and simplify the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to allow individuals to change their legal gender without unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, for example the intrusive medical tests currently required.
- Remove the spousal veto, and abolish remaining marriage inequalities in areas such as pensions, hospital visitation rights and custody of children in the event of bereavement.
- Develop a government-wide plan to tackle BAME inequalities, and review the Equality and Human Rights Commission to determine whether it is effectively fulfilling its role and whether its funding is adequate.
- Increase accessibility to public places and transport by making more stations wheelchair accessible, improving the legislative framework governing blue badges, setting up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities, and bringing into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
- Address period poverty by providing free sanitary products to girls at school.
- Outlaw caste discrimination.
- Enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in UK law.

7.2 Liberty

Liberal Democrats believe that we should all be free from an overreaching state and that the individual freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Human Rights Act are central to a free and democratic society. For that reason, the Liberal Democrats will:

- Oppose any attempt to withdraw from the ECHR or abolish or water down the Human Rights Act.
- Introduce a digital bill of rights that protects people's powers over their own information, supports individuals over large corporations, and preserves the neutrality of the internet.
- In light of the press's failure to engage in effective self-regulation, seek to ensure delivery of independent self-regulation, and commence part two of the Leveson inquiry as soon as practicable.
- End the ministerial veto on release of information under the Freedom of Information Act, and take steps to reduce the proportion of FOI requests where information is withheld by government departments.
- Order Ofcom to launch an immediate full assessment of media plurality in the UK, including a review of the 'fit and proper persons test' and whether the communications regulator, and the Competition and Markets Authority, have appropriate powers to deal with concentrations of power in the digital economy.

7.3 Crime and policing

After years of reduction in traditional crime we have seen an increase, particularly in violent crime, since 2015. At the same time police forces are under pressure from reduced funding, with less money available for the community policing we all value. For these reasons Liberal Democrats will:

- Increase community policing in England and Wales by giving an additional £300 million a year to local police forces to reverse the increase in violent crime, boost community confidence and increase the flow of community intelligence.
- Maintain, as part of our fight against hard Brexit, cross-border co-operation in combatting serious organised crime, including international fraud and child sexual exploitation, by retaining the European Arrest Warrant, membership of Europol and access to EU information databases.



- End the 1% cap on police pay rises.
- Require all front-line officers to wear body cameras on duty, protecting the public from abuse of power and police officers from malicious accusations.
- Resource BAME staff associations such as the National Black Police Association to increase ethnic diversity and BAME participation in the police.
- Provide government funding for a national rape crisis helpline with increased opening hours and advertisement.
- End the anomaly that forces Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to pay VAT on their purchases.
- Replace Police and Crime Commissioners, elected at great expense in elections with very low turnout, with accountable police boards made up of local councillors.
- Build on the success of crime maps to use data more effectively to reduce crime and improve policing, including exploring the feasibility of mandatory reporting of fraud losses by individual credit and debit-card providers.

7.4 Criminal justice

The criminal courts need modernising. There are too many people in prison. Our reoffending rates are terrible and our prisons, many old and squalid, are in crisis – overcrowded and woefully understaffed, with drug abuse, violence, suicide and self-harm endemic. That's why Liberal Democrats will:

- Introduce a Victims' Bill of Rights that will create a single point of contact for victims in the criminal justice system, increase victims' access to information about their cases, and give victims the right to request restorative justice rather than a prison sentence.
- Introduce a presumption against short prison sentences and increase the use of tough, non-custodial punishments including weekend and evening custody, curfews, community service and GPS tagging.
- Promote community justice panels and restorative justice that brings victims and wrongdoers together to resolve conflict, reduce harm and encourage rehabilitation.
- Extend the responsibility of the Youth Justice Board to all offenders under 21, giving it the power to commission mental-health services.
- Establish a Women's Justice Board with a remit to meet the special needs of women offenders.
- Transform prisons into places of rehabilitation, recovery, learning and work,

with suitable treatment, education or work available to all prisoners; adopt a holistic approach to prisoners with multiple problems, and ensure that courses started in custody can be completed on release.

- Review the investigation, prosecution, procedures and rules of evidence in cases of sexual and domestic violence.
- Ensure that trans prisoners are placed in prisons that reflect their gender identity, rather than their birth gender.
- Reduce the overrepresentation of individuals from a BAME background at every stage of the criminal justice system, taking into account the upcoming recommendations of the Lammy review.
- Secure further funding for criminal legal aid from sources other than the taxpayer, including insurance for company directors, and changes to restraint orders.

7.5 Civil and family justice

The justice system is under pressure. Brexit threatens international co-operation, the Conservatives have failed to defend the rule of law which is the cornerstone of our democracy, and cuts to legal aid have denied effective access to justice to many. For these reasons Liberal Democrats will:

- Ensure that the UK retains international arrangements for jurisdiction, the recognition and enforcement of judgments and for family cases currently enjoyed under the EU Brussels I and Brussels II regulation and the Hague child abduction convention.
- Conduct an urgent and comprehensive review of the effects of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act on access to justice, particularly funding for social welfare appeals, and domestic violence and exceptional cases.
- Reverse the massive increases in court and tribunal fees, which prevent many from pursuing good cases.
- Continue to modernise and simplify court procedures.
- Protect our system of judicial review from further attack, retaining government accountability for unlawful action, and offer a staunch defence of our judiciary and the rule of law.

7.6 Terrorism and violent extremism

As recent events across Europe – and at the heart of our own democracy – have shown, terrorism and violent extremism threaten us all. As liberals, we must have an effective security policy which is also accountable, community and evidence-based, and does not unduly restrict personal liberty. That’s why the Liberal Democrats will:

- Continue cross-border co-operation between security forces across Europe.
- Permit intercepts where justified and permit surveillance of those suspected of serious crime and terrorism with proper judicial oversight.
- Scrap the flawed Prevent strategy and replace it with a scheme that prioritises community engagement and supports communities in developing their own approach to tackling the dangers of violent extremism.
- Roll back state surveillance powers by ending the indiscriminate bulk collection of communications data, bulk hacking, and the collection of internet connection records.
- Oppose Conservative attempts to undermine encryption.
- Notify innocent people who have been placed under targeted surveillance where this can be done without jeopardising ongoing investigations.

7.7 Combatting the harm done by drugs

The war on drugs has been a catastrophic failure. Every year, billions flow to organised crime while we needlessly prosecute and imprison thousands of people, blighting their employment and life chances, and doing nothing to address the impact of drugs on their health. Our current approach to drugs helps nobody except criminal gangs. For that reason Liberal Democrats will:

- End imprisonment for possession of illegal drugs for personal use, diverting those arrested for possession of drugs for personal use into treatment and education (adopting a health-based approach), or imposing civil penalties.
- Break the grip of the criminal gangs and protect young people by introducing a legal, regulated market for cannabis. We would introduce limits on potency and permit cannabis to be sold through licensed outlets to adults over the age of 18.
- Concentrate on catching and prosecuting those who manufacture, import or deal in illegal drugs.

- Repeal the Psychoactive Substances Act which has driven the sale of formerly legal highs underground.
- Move the departmental lead on drugs policy to the Department of Health.

7.8 Immigration and asylum

Immigration and asylum are under attack. Immigration is essential to our economy and a benefit to our society. We depend on immigration to ensure we have the people we need contributing to the UK's economy and society, including doctors, agricultural workers, entrepreneurs, scientists and so many others. Immigration broadens our horizons and encourages us to be more open, more tolerant.

Refugees are human beings fleeing from war zones and persecution, and we have a legal and moral obligation to offer them sanctuary. The Liberal Democrats are proud of the UK's historic commitments to assisting those seeking refuge from war, persecution and degradation, and believe that we should continue to uphold our responsibilities.

The immigration and asylum systems have suffered from inefficiency and severe backlogs and delays over many years, harming their credibility and ability to operate effectively. We recognise that large-scale immigration has placed strains on some local communities and services. Major improvements are urgently needed. For that reason, when it comes to immigration the Liberal Democrats will:

- Ensure that the immigration system is operated fairly and efficiently, with strict control of borders, including entry and exit checks, and adequately funded Border Force policing of entry by irregular routes.
- Hold an annual debate in parliament on skill and labour market shortfalls and surpluses to identify the migration necessary to meet the UK's needs.
- Continue to allow high-skilled immigration to support key sectors of our economy, and ensure work, tourist and family visas are processed quickly and efficiently.
- Recognising their largely temporary status, remove students from the official migration statistics.
- Ensure the UK is an attractive destination for overseas students. We will reinstate post-study work visas for graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects who find suitable employment within six months of graduating. Give the devolved administrations the right to sponsor additional post-study work visas.

- Work with universities to ensure a fair and transparent student visa process and find ways to measure accurately the number of students leaving at the end of their course.
- Establish a centrally funded Migration Impact Fund to help local communities to adjust to new migration and meet unexpected pressures on public services and housing.
- Provide additional government funding for English as an additional language classes to help migrants and residents gain independence and integrate with their local communities.

And for asylum, the Liberal Democrats will:

- Apply the asylum system fairly, efficiently and humanely, including the process for those who have no right to be here.
- Offer safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees to prevent them from making dangerous journeys, which too often result in the loss of life, for example via reform of family reunion rules to make it easier for refugees to join relatives already living in safety in the UK.
- Expand the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to offer sanctuary to 50,000 people over the lifetime of the next parliament.
- Re-open the Dubs unaccompanied child refugee scheme, ensuring Britain meets its responsibilities by taking in 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children. Liberal Democrats would offer these children indefinite leave to remain, meaning they will not be deported once they turn 18.
- End indefinite immigration detention by introducing a 28-day limit.
- Speed up the processing of asylum claims, reducing the time genuine refugees must wait before they can settle into life in the UK.
- Expect working-age asylum seekers who have waited more than six months for their claim to be processed to seek work like other benefit claimants, and only to receive benefits if they are unable to do so.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing countries where their sexual orientation or gender identification means that they risk imprisonment, torture or execution, and stop deporting people at risk to such countries.



Change Britain's Future

Make a Better World

Liberal Democrats are internationalists – we understand that by working together, people and countries can achieve so much more than they can alone.

It is a difficult time for people who believe in international co-operation. Liberals have been challenged by the vote to leave the EU, the election of increasingly nationalist and isolationist leaders across the globe, and a Conservative government seeking new trade deals with countries who are fundamentally opposed to our liberal values. With the election of Donald Trump and an increasingly assertive Russia, we must work to defend the international liberal order.

The Liberal Democrat approach to Britain's place in the world is patriotic, optimistic and progressive. We will work with our European and other international partners to promote the ideals that bring us together and make us more secure – championing human rights, helping the poorest people in the world and protecting our country and our allies.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Defending international co-operation against the rising tides of nationalism and isolationism, supporting multilateral organisations like the UN and NATO which are increasingly under threat.**
- **Spending 0.7% of gross national income on aid: reducing poverty, defending human rights, protecting the environment and preventing violent conflict worldwide.**
- **Controlling arms exports to countries listed as human rights priority countries in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual human rights report and suspending arms sales to Saudi Arabia.**



8.1 Working for peace and security across the world

This is a challenging time for peace and security across the world. Terrorist organisations prosper, the conflict in Syria continues to present a significant problem to the region and the world, and rising tensions between Russia and the USA threaten a long-standing balance of power.

The UK has a proud record of playing a leading role in the European Union and in international institutions like the UN, NATO and the Commonwealth and should continue to do so, promoting wherever possible the liberal values of freedom and opportunity for all. We will:

- Champion the rules-based international order, which provides a strong basis for multilateral action to address the world's most pernicious problems, including poverty, armed conflict, disease, climate change and the abuse of human rights, including forced marriage, so-called 'honour' killings, and female genital mutilation.
- Use all aspects of government policy – trade, aid and diplomacy as well as military co-operation – to strengthen UK efforts to prevent violent conflict.
- Work with our international partners to address the ongoing refugee crisis, which has seen more people displaced across the world than ever before.
- Support the UN principle of Responsibility to Protect, focusing on conflict prevention and only resorting to military intervention to prevent mass civilian atrocities if all other means of resolution have been fully exhausted.
- Improve control of arms exports by:
 - Implementing a policy of 'presumption of denial' for arms exports to countries listed as human rights priority countries in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual human rights report.
 - Enforcing end-user certification on all future arms export licences with an annual report to parliament on this certification.
 - Creating a public register of arms brokers.

Liberal Democrats believe that despite efforts to prevent violent conflict, sometimes military intervention is necessary. The UK should only intervene militarily when there is a clear legal and/or humanitarian case, endorsed by a vote in parliament, working through international institutions whenever possible. We will encourage dialogue and mediation to reduce conflict between and within countries, working through the UN and other agencies.

In response to current major conflicts worldwide, we will:

- Work with international partners to tackle violent extremism manifested by organisations like Daesh and Boko Haram, paying special attention to UK citizens who have fought overseas for terrorist organisations and may become significant sources of terrorist activity if and when they return to Britain.
- Seek new ways to bring an end to the conflict in Syria, working within the UN to break the deadlock in the Security Council. We will work to deter the use of chemical and conventional attacks on civilians and demand humanitarian access and the release of political prisoners and their families.
- Remain committed to a negotiated peace settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes a two-state solution. We condemn disproportionate force used by all sides. We condemn Hamas' rocket attacks and other targeting of Israeli civilians. We condemn Israel's continued illegal policy of settlement expansion, which undermines the possibility of a two-state solution. We support recognition of the independent State of Palestine as and when it will help the prospect of a two-state solution.
- Suspend UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia in response to their consistent targeting of civilians, in breach of international humanitarian law, in Yemen. We will work with international partners to recommence the peace process in Yemen.
- Promote democracy and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring countries against an increasingly aggressive Russia. We will work closely with European and other international partners to exert maximum economic and political pressure on Russia to stop interfering in the affairs of sovereign Eastern European nations, and will stand by our obligations under the NATO treaty in the event of threats to NATO member states.

8.2 Our armed forces and security services

The UK must be able to defend itself and the territories for which it has responsibility, support its neighbours and allies, and engage in humanitarian intervention. The security challenges the UK faces are shared by our partners and allies in the EU and NATO and the UK is more effective and more resilient when we work closely with those partners. We will:

- Commit to spending 2% of GDP on defence.
- Strengthen our armed services and address critical skills shortages by

recruiting STEM graduates to be armed forces engineers, providing ‘golden handshakes’ of up to £10,000.

- Recognise the expansion of warfare into the cybersphere, by investing in our security and intelligence services and acting to counter cyberattacks.
- Work to lead international nuclear disarmament efforts.
- Maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent. We propose continuing with the Dreadnought programme, the submarine-based replacement for Vanguard, but procuring three boats instead of four and moving to a medium-readiness responsive posture. This would mean replacing continuous at-sea deterrence – instead maintaining the deterrent through measures such as unpredictable and irregular patrolling patterns.
- Build on the framework for defence co-operation that is already well-established with France, the Netherlands, Germany and other European partners, and promote European defence integration where appropriate by enhancing European defence industry co-operation.

Liberal Democrats recognise the vital role the UK’s armed forces play in the defence of the nation and believe that it is the role of government to safeguard the interests of service personnel and veterans. We will:

- Support the Armed Forces Covenant and ongoing work to support veterans’ mental health.
- Review the current Career Transition Partnership with a view to extending its remit to provide free further or higher education for anyone who has served in the armed forces for 12 years or more.
- Improve the quality of service housing by bringing the Ministry of Defence into line with other landlords, giving tenants the same legal rights to repair and maintenance as private tenants.

8.3 International development

Liberal Democrats have always been – and remain – strongly committed to ensuring justice and equity for poor people around the world. We believe that the UK must continue to play a leading role in ending poverty and promoting environmentally sustainable development, through implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will:

- Maintain our commitment to spend 0.7% of UK gross national income on

overseas development assistance, in line with the OECD definition, which we legislated for in the last parliament.

- Invest to eliminate within a generation preventable diseases like TB, HIV and malaria and explore new ways to support research and development into vaccinations and treatment to combat these and other deadly diseases and infections.
- Develop a global education strategy to address the urgent funding crisis causing 263 million children to miss out on schooling.
- Lead international action to ensure global companies pay fair taxes in the developing countries in which they operate, including tightening anti-tax haven rules and requiring large companies to publish their tax payments and profits for each country in which they operate.
- Continue building the resilience of poorer countries to resist future disasters, investing in healthcare and infrastructure and training emergency response volunteers, and respond generously to humanitarian crises wherever they may occur.
- Provide greater resources for international environmental co-operation, particularly on climate change and on actions to tackle illegal and unsustainable trade in timber, wildlife, ivory and fish.
- In light of the US government's dangerous and anti-science attacks on international programmes of vaccination and family planning, which impact disproportionately on the health of women and children, seek to protect global spending on these essential provisions.

8.4 Standing up for liberal values

Liberal Democrats believe that British foreign policy and international aid should seek to promote the liberal values of human rights and democracy throughout the world. We will:

- Support free media and a free and open internet around the world, championing the free flow of information.
- Support the current UN initiative to protect journalists and to combat the impunity with which many countries treat those who attack reporters on the front line. To this end, we will provide ad hoc funding to UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication.
- Campaign strongly for the abolition of the death penalty around the world.
- Champion global anti-corruption initiatives to safeguard global security and

economic development and maintain a strong voice in international platforms on ending corruption. We will implement outstanding commitments made by the British government at the 2016 Global Anti-Corruption Summit.

- Publish a government anti-corruption strategy.
- Introduce Sustainable Development Goals audits of new trade, investment and development deals, reviewing the impact of the deal on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.
- Maintain funding for the BBC World Service, BBC Monitoring and the British Council.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting the decriminalisation of homosexuality around the world and advancing the cause of LGBT+ rights.
- Prioritise support, protection and equal rights for women and girls, which is both right and essential for effective, sustainable economic development. We will aim to end female genital mutilation worldwide within a generation.
- Appoint an ambassador-level champion for freedom of belief to drive British diplomatic efforts in this field, and campaign for the abolition of blasphemy, sedition, apostasy and criminal libel laws worldwide, having already been responsible for ending them in this country.



Change Britain's Future

Fix a Broken System

Britain suffers from an overcentralised political system with a lack of openness and accountability. Parliament is unrepresentative of the electorate and weak in restraining the power of the government, we still have an unelected House of Lords, local government is hobbled by central control, and people feel they have no effective means of making known their concerns and priorities. It's no wonder people feel frustrated and angry at the system.

This anger found its most recent expression in the result of the EU referendum, but ironically this was as much a verdict on the performance of British political institutions as European ones. The Conservatives' proposed Great Repeal Bill threatens to centralise power even more, handing to central government powers to alter vast swathes of the statute book without proper parliamentary scrutiny.

We believe in a United Kingdom where people have power over their own lives and how their country is run. To make this happen we need to revitalise our political system – strengthen devolution, make the argument that we are stronger together than we are apart, and increase trust in our institutions.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- **Creating a better democracy with a fair voting system in local government and Westminster, with votes at 16 and preventing evasion of constituency election spending limits.**
- **Delivering on our promises to Scotland in full, devolving more powers to Wales and securing the political stability of the Northern Ireland Assembly.**
- **Meeting the needs of England with 'devolution on demand', letting local areas take control of the services that matter most to them.**

9.1 Better politics

Unfair votes, overcentralisation of decision-making, the power of patronage and the influence of powerful corporate lobbies mean ordinary citizens and local communities are too often excluded and left alienated by politics today. We need to reform British politics to make it more representative and more empowering of our citizens so it earns greater public confidence. We will:

- Introduce votes at 16 for all elections and referendums across the UK.
- Ensure that every reasonable effort is made to ensure that those people legally entitled to vote are included on the electoral registers, with far greater efforts in particular to register under-represented groups such as young people qualifying for the first time and students moving to universities.
- Introduce the Single Transferable Vote for local government elections in England and for electing MPs across the UK.
- Enable all UK citizens living abroad to vote for MPs in separate overseas constituencies, and to participate in UK referendums.
- Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate.
- Take big money out of politics by capping donations to political parties at £10,000 per person each year, and introducing wider reforms to party funding along the lines of the 2011 report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- Strengthen trade union members' political freedoms by letting them choose which political party they wish to support through the political levy.
- Cancel the boundary review due to report in 2018.

While new constituencies would need to be established for a new voting system, we believe constituency boundary reviews should respect natural geographical communities, with greater flexibility for the Boundary Commission to deviate from exact equality to take account of community ties and continuity of representation, and should take place every 10 years.

- Mandate the provision of televised leaders' debates in general elections based on rules produced by Ofcom relating to structure and balance, and allowing for the empty-chairing of party leaders who refuse to attend.
- Strengthen and expand the lobbying register and prohibit MPs from accepting paid lobbying work.
- Introduce trials of weekend voting to help raise turnouts in elections.
- Introduce legislation to allow for all-BAME and all-LGBT+ parliamentary shortlists.

- Make parliament more family friendly, and establish a review to pave the way for MP job-sharing arrangements.

The recent media, police and Electoral Commission investigations into possible breaches of spending limits by candidates in the 2015 general election show that the current system is not fit for purpose. The clear objective must be to ensure that all expenditure on campaign material targeted at an identifiable constituency, and in particular at voters within that constituency, is included in its expense return, rather than it being possible to count against a national party limit.

We do not believe that political parties themselves have an incentive to change the existing system. We will therefore task the Electoral Commission with producing a framework for an up-to-date expenses system that adequately governs the running of a modern campaign, and put these proposals to a vote in parliament.

9.2 A decentralised United Kingdom

Liberal Democrats have a proud record of leading the way on giving greater powers to the nations of the UK. Now we must deliver on the promises made to the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK to further decentralise power. We will deliver home rule to each of the nations of a strong, federal and united United Kingdom.

Change has been taking place rapidly. We now need to make sure all the new arrangements work together coherently and we will therefore establish a UK constitutional convention, made up of representatives of the political parties, academia, civic society and members of the public, tasked with producing a full, codified constitution for the UK, to report within two years.

We will work with devolved parliaments and assemblies to allocate to them any powers repatriated as a result of Brexit in their areas of responsibility, and ensure that the devolution of any repatriated powers or responsibilities does not disadvantage the nations of the UK.

9.3 Scotland

After the 2014 independence referendum, Liberal Democrats in the UK government established the Smith Commission to bring together Scotland's five biggest parties to agree what further powers should be assigned to the Scottish

Parliament. Liberal Democrats ensured the package of powers agreed reflects Scotland's priorities.

The Scottish Parliament will raise in tax half of what it spends in its budget. A Scottish welfare system will allow the Scottish Parliament to change the benefits regime where there is specific Scottish need or priority, with a starting budget of around £3 billion.

These powers and more will deliver for people in Scotland an empowered and accountable Scottish Parliament in a strong and secure United Kingdom.

Our plans for a written, federal constitution will include a permanent Scottish Parliament that could only be abolished by the sovereign will of the Scottish people.

We will work hard to ensure that Scotland remains a part of the United Kingdom. We will oppose a second independence referendum and oppose independence.

Scotland benefits from being inside the UK and EU single markets. Each is worth billions of pounds and supports tens of thousands of Scottish jobs. Under the Liberal Democrats inclusion in those single markets will continue. Keeping the UK in the EU will remove the basis for the SNP's divisive proposed referendum on independence.

9.4 Wales

We welcome the new Wales Act, which is intended to implement the St David's Day agreement secured by Liberal Democrats in government – but it does not go far enough.

Liberal Democrats will deliver proper home rule for Wales and a Welsh Parliament by implementing the remaining Silk part 1 proposals on financial powers and the Silk part 2 proposals to devolve powers over transport, youth justice, policing and other justice powers.

We will raise the status of the National Assembly to become a Welsh Parliament, strengthening its capacity to scrutinise legislation and to hold the Welsh Government to account. We will drastically reduce the number of reserved subjects and prevent Westminster from being able to override Wales on devolved matters. We will recognise Wales as a distinct legal jurisdiction. Among other powers which we would devolve are funding of Network Rail in relation to the

Wales network, allowing the Welsh Government to set its own bank holidays and giving the Children's Commissioner for Wales the power to examine issues that affect children in Wales but are not within the control of the Welsh Government.

To help create jobs and boost growth in Wales we will abolish the economically distorting tolls on the Severn Bridge, after the costs have been recouped in 2018.

9.5 Northern Ireland

Liberal Democrats wish to see a permanently peaceful, stable, non-sectarian and truly democratic society in Northern Ireland. We will work constructively with the political parties in Northern Ireland and with the Irish government to secure the political stability of the Northern Ireland Assembly and other institutions of the Belfast agreement and the implementation of all the recommendations of the report on disbanding paramilitary groups. In particular we are determined to:

- Maintain the common travel area and freedom of movement.
- Support local businesses by ensuring participation within the single market and customs union.
- Ensure that the international human rights protections hard wired into the Good Friday Agreement are not compromised.
- Protect the rights of Northern Ireland citizens living and working in the EU, and EU citizens living and working in Northern Ireland.
- Protect the current financial settlement and the funding of programmes supporting peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

To grow the economy, tackle social exclusion, overcome inequality and deliver efficiencies in public services, Liberal Democrats will support policies and initiatives, such as integrated education, that promote sharing over separation and counter the cost of division.

9.6 England

Devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has implications for the UK parliament and its dual role in legislating for England as well as the federal UK. It is possible that a future UK government could use the support of MPs representing Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland to secure the

passage of legislation that only affects England, even if the majority in England were opposed. This would be a key issue for our proposed constitutional convention to address.

Liberal Democrats support an English-only stage in legislation affecting England, so English MPs can have a separate say on laws that only affect England. However, this should be on a proportional basis, genuinely reflecting the balance of opinion in England.

In some areas of England there is a greater appetite for powers, but not every part of the country wants to move at the same speed and there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. All areas should however have access to the same opportunities and mayoral authorities should not be ranked higher in terms of the powers with which they can be granted. We will therefore introduce 'devolution on demand', enabling even greater devolution of powers from Westminster to councils or groups of councils working together – for example to a Cornish Assembly or a Yorkshire Parliament.

9.7 Funding

The nations of the United Kingdom have long had different needs with regard to funding. The Barnett formula is the mechanism used to adjust spending allocations across the UK.

The Liberal Democrats have already delivered a substantial extension of financial powers to the nations of the UK and we will devolve further fiscal powers to the devolved governments. In order to ensure reliable funding we will retain the Barnett formula and the agreed fiscal framework as the basis for future spending allocations for Scotland and Northern Ireland. This will protect the individual nations' budgets from external shocks.

We recognise the findings of the Holtham commission that the current formula underfunds Wales, and will commission work to update this analysis. We will address the imbalance by immediately ensuring that the Barnett floor is set at a level that reflects the need for Wales to be funded fairly, and seek over a parliament to increase the Welsh block grant to an equitable level.

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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