

Manifesto 2015

Stronger Economy. Fairer Society.
Opportunity for Everyone.

Prosperity for all

Balance the budget
fairly and invest to
build a high-skill,
low-carbon economy

A stronger Scotland for everyone

Transfer power from
London to Scotland
with Home Rule in
the UK

Fair taxes

Cut your taxes
by an additional
£400 by raising the
Personal Allowance
to £12,500

Our environment protected

Protect nature and
fight climate
change with five
green laws

Quality health care for all

Invest the money
needed to improve
our NHS and
guarantee equal
care for mental
health

Opportunity for every child

Guarantee education
funding from nursery
to college





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Introduction



Introduction by Nick Clegg and Willie Rennie

Dear friend,

When Liberal Democrats launched our 2010 General Election manifesto, few people expected that many of the policies it contained would be implemented by the next Government. But that's what happened: three quarters of those policies formed the backbone of the Coalition's programme.

Front-page commitments like raising the Income Tax threshold became flagship Coalition policies.

With Liberal Democrats in Government to deliver them, those policies have started the work of building a stronger economy and a fairer society, with opportunity spread across the whole United Kingdom.

Despite tough economic circumstances, those policies are making a difference to people's lives and helping make Britain a freer, greener, more liberal country.

But our mission has only just begun. You can't build a stronger economy and a fairer society, and spread opportunity to every citizen, in five years.

For the first time, this is a Liberal Democrat manifesto that builds on a record of policies delivered in UK-wide government.

We can say we will finish the job of balancing the books, but do so fairly, because we have started that job in this Parliament.

We can say we will cut taxes for working people by raising the tax-free allowance to £12,500 because we have raised the tax-free allowance every year since 2010.



We can say we will protect funding for education from nursery to 19 because we have protected schools funding and invested in early years education in Government.

We can say we will increase health funding and invest in mental health because we have protected the NHS budget in Government.

We can say we will protect our environment because we have almost trebled the amount of electricity across the UK from renewable energy in this Parliament.

And we can say we will transfer more power to Scotland from Westminster to rebalance the economy and build a fairer Scotland because we passed the Scotland Act 2012 in Government and drafted the clauses to enact the Smith Commission proposals, delivering Home Rule for Scotland.

In our fast-changing world, the fundamental question political parties face is: do we want to continue to be an open society, confident and optimistic about our place in the world, or do we want to become a closed one, increasingly insular and backward-looking?

For Liberal Democrats there is only ever one answer: we want an optimistic, open-hearted and outward-looking United Kingdom.

In Government for the next five years, Liberal Democrats will continue to build a stronger economy and a fairer society with opportunity for everyone. This manifesto sets out how.

Yours,

Nick Clegg
**Leader of the
Liberal Democrats**

Willie Rennie
**Leader of the
Scottish Liberal Democrats**

Britain in 2020: the Liberal Democrat vision

This manifesto is a five year plan to build a fair, free and open society in our United Kingdom. Follow this plan and by 2020, our economy will be strong, sustainable and fair, our public finances will be healthy again and there will be jobs that last in every part of the country. Follow this plan and there will be opportunity for everyone to get on and live the life they want – at work, at home, online and in our communities.

We have to finish the job of sorting out the UK's public finances – but we must do it fairly, making sure the wealthiest pay their fair share. Only the Liberal Democrat plan will keep the UK on track, balancing the books in 2017/18 so we can get back to investing in the public services and infrastructure that help make our country strong. In 2020, debt will be falling as a share of our economy for the fourth year in a row, steadily rebuilding our national resilience against future economic shocks.

Our economy will be thriving, delivering balanced growth with jobs that last in every nation and region. Government will take a long-term approach to supporting business and industry, helping supply credit, skilled workers and infrastructure. Over a third of

UK electricity will come from renewables, not least from Scottish generators, and we will be leading the world in the technologies of the future, from electric cars to tidal power.

Britain will be the place to be if you want to thrive in advanced manufacturing, science, creative, digital and green industries, and our country will be open to ambitious entrepreneurs and thinkers from overseas. We will finally be building enough homes, every year, to meet our needs.

By 2020, our plan will bring together a lifetime of opportunities for every generation, enhancing the quality of all our lives. Mothers and fathers will be able to share the joys and struggles of early parenthood with extended Shared Parental Leave. Free, high-quality childcare will be available the moment parental leave is over. Education will prosper under the Liberal Democrats.

Young people will leave school and college confident about their future: we will have doubled the number of businesses hiring apprentices.

Society will be more equal. A million more women will be enabled to work, with fairer rules to help everyone juggle family life, caring responsibilities and the world of work. Carers will be treated with respect and given more help, including a bonus of £250 to spend however they choose. The tax system will be fairer: people will not pay Income Tax on the first £12,500 they earn, but strict rules will be in place to make sure the richest pay their fair share and corporations cannot dodge their tax responsibilities. Targeted green taxes will discourage pollution and reward sustainability.

There will be more jobs in our economy, with steadily higher wages and better employment rights. With Universal Credit and reforms to disability benefits, it will always pay to work, and everyone who needs a helping hand will get one. As you work, and as you save, you will feel confident about life after retirement, too. Millions more will have a workplace pension. Our 'triple lock' will protect the State Pension, our new single tier pension will mean your savings are your own to keep.

Our NHS will have the money it needs, and the Scottish Parliament will have the resources to make sure mental health has equal status with physical health. Those facing anxiety and depression will be seen swiftly, people struggling not to harm themselves will find emergency help at A&E and teenagers suffering

from eating disorders will get the help they need close to home.

Five green laws will be on the statute books, protecting nature and wildlife in Britain and across the world, cleaning up our air and helping fight climate change.

People will be more free. A second Freedoms Act will have embedded citizens' rights to freedom of speech and protest. The Human Rights Act will remain, with children's rights protected in law too. The culture of everyday sexism will be declining, with young people taught in school about respect in relationships and sexual consent. Online, people will no longer be worried that the government is monitoring their every keystroke: a Digital Bill of Rights will have enshrined enduring principles of privacy and helped keep the internet open.

Our politics will be open, and fairer too. 2020 will be the first General Election in which 16 year olds can vote – the first generation to cast their first ballot in a fair STV voting system and the first generation to vote for the House of Lords. But every 16 year old will know it's not just UK elections that matter: Scotland will have Home Rule powers as proposed by the cross-party Smith Commission, and comprehensive devolution to Wales and Northern Ireland will be completed too, keeping the course to a federal UK.

In 2020 Britain will be a force for good in the world, leading global action against climate change, tax avoidance and international crime, working to prevent conflict and offer humanitarian aid, and promoting trade, development and prosperity. We will still be meeting our commitments to spend 0.7% of our national income helping the world's poorest people. And we will be standing tall in our own neighbourhood, a leader in the European Union again. We will have secured real reform of the EU to deliver more jobs, more growth, and more security. Our borders will be secure and our immigration system fair. We will be working across borders to tackle crime and keep Britain safe.

Our Liberal Democrat plan will build a stronger economy and a fairer society, in a truly United Kingdom. Our plan will deliver opportunity for everyone.



Responsible finances

Balancing the budget in a fair way

A responsible approach to tackling the deficit and our country's debts is essential because it underpins everything else we want to achieve. In the last five years, we have worked hard to bring balance back to Britain's public finances. The deficit is now half what it was when we took office in 2010. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done. Only Liberal Democrats will complete the job on time in a way that is fair, enables sustainable growth and protects public services.



Responsible finances underpin every good government. High debt and deficits are a risk to economic stability and it is simply not right to borrow too much money and expect our children to pay it back. Debt interest payments last year were £46 billion: more than we spent on schools.

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1.1 Balancing the budget

We will complete the job of balancing the budget – on time, in full, and fairly. The Liberal Democrat objective is to eradicate the structural current budget deficit by 2017/18 and have debt falling as a percentage of national income, so it is back to sustainable levels by the middle of the next decade.

In 2010, Liberal Democrats insisted the Coalition adopt a fairer approach to dealing with the deficit, using both spending cuts and tax rises, than the Conservatives had planned. This mixed approach was much more in line with proposals set out in the Liberal Democrat manifesto. The Conservatives now want to scrap this approach entirely and use only spending cuts to finish the job. We reject this proposal, which would do significant damage to Britain's public services and require punitive cuts to benefits on which some of the most vulnerable people depend.

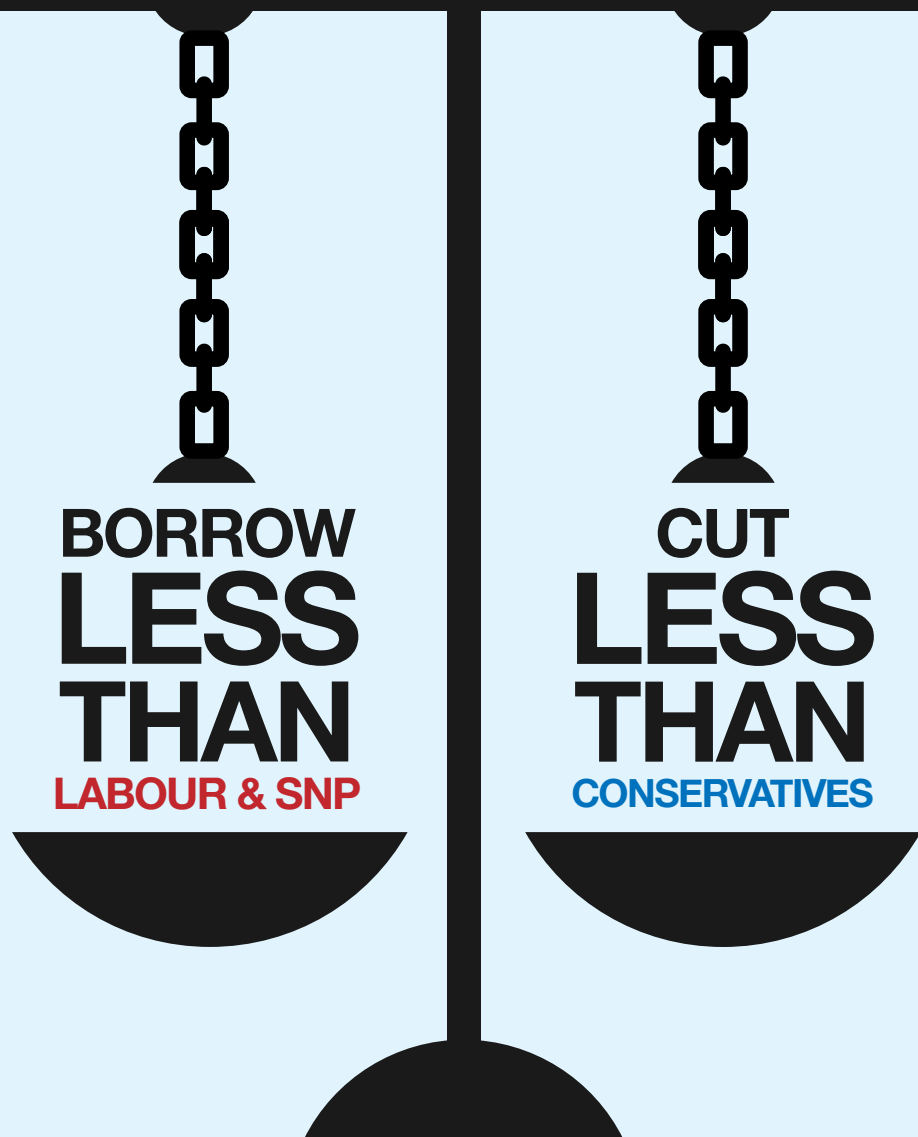
We are determined to stick with the approach we set out in 2010 – a fair way of restoring the nation's finances. So as we finish the job of balancing the books, we will use taxes on the wealthiest, on banks and big business and on polluters, and we will bear down on tax avoidance, to limit the impact of deficit reduction on public services. We do not think low and middle income earners should bear the burden of tax rises: our plans do not require any increase in the headline rates of Income Tax, National Insurance, VAT or Corporation Tax. In fact, our plans enable us to continue to cut taxes for people on low and middle incomes by raising the tax-free Personal Allowance.

Having a balanced approach on tax and spending enables us to:

- ♦ Protect the least well off in society and users of public services from the impact of measures taken to tackle the deficit.
- ♦ Invest, over the Parliament, extra money for the NHS, essential to protect our health service.
- ♦ Extend the current UK budget protection for education to include early years and 16-19 provision. This will result in a stable funding platform for the Scottish Parliament to invest in children and young people.
- ♦ Limit reductions in departmental spending to less than half the rate agreed for 2015/16.
- ♦ Limit welfare reductions so we do not destroy the essential safety net that protects us all in times of crisis.
- ♦ Continue to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on international development aid, helping the poorest in the world.

We will carry out a full Spending Review after the General Election. Building on the successes of this Parliament, we will focus on delivering efficiency, funding proven spend-to-save initiatives and investing in technology to get public services and frontline staff online. The aim of everything that government does will be to help people improve their quality of life and wellbeing, especially the most vulnerable and least well off.

Liberal Democrats will:



1.2 Looking to the future

Once we have balanced the books, we will ensure that overall public spending grows again in line with the economy. This will ensure we can improve key public services and enable public sector workers to receive fair and affordable increases in their pay. We understand that public services depend upon high-quality and dedicated staff.

We will follow two new fiscal rules.

Our first fiscal rule is that, from 2017/18, debt must fall as a proportion of our national income every year – except during a recession – so it reaches sustainable levels around the middle of the next decade.

Our second fiscal rule is that over the economic cycle we will balance the overall budget, no longer borrowing to pay for everyday expenditure. We will make one significant exception to enable us to invest in the things that will help our economy grow. Provided the debt rule is met, the government will be able to borrow for capital spending that enhances economic growth or financial stability, enabling us to increase this productive investment.

In our Spending Review we will set out long-term plans for capital expenditure, and ensure that investment in infrastructure, including in housing and energy efficiency, continues to rise both in absolute terms and as a share of the economy.

Our plan to finish the job and balance the books

- ♦ Aim to balance the structural current budget by 2017/18.
- ♦ Set a course to reduce debt as a share of national income.
- ♦ Make deficit reduction fair by ensuring the richest pay their fair share and corporations cannot avoid their tax responsibilities.
- ♦ Set new fiscal rules to balance the budget while allowing borrowing for productive investment.
- ♦ Increase public spending again in line with the economy once the budget is balanced.



Prosperity for all

Building a sustainable economy

Britain needs a strong economy not just to help fund public services but because growth and enterprise create jobs and opportunities for all. Liberal Democrats want an economy that is strong, green, open and fair. As Britain recovers, we must make sure we don't return to growth based on personal debt and speculation, but build prosperity and wellbeing that last, for everyone.



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We will grow a high-skill, low-carbon economy by supporting education, training, infrastructure, innovation and technology. With a stable, competitive business environment and investment in green industries and infrastructure, we will ensure growth is embedded in every part of the UK.

We have made a big start in government: reforming the banking system; creating the world's first Green Investment Bank, with its headquarters in Edinburgh; enabling unprecedented investment in low-carbon energy; introducing a bold new Industrial Strategy to support growth and high-skilled jobs; delivering more than two million new apprenticeships; ensuring transparency of company ownership and promoting more diversity in business leadership.

Now is the time to push forward and reject any temptation to go back to the old economy. Whether it's fighting for proper investment in renewable energy, or working to build a high-skill, flexible labour market: Liberal Democrats will ensure Britain doesn't return to the mistakes of the past.

| A Record of Delivery | A Promise of More |
|--|---|
| Billions invested in growing modern British businesses with our Industrial Strategy and Business Bank | Double innovation spend in our economy, making the UK a world leader in advanced manufacturing, clean technology and digital industries |
| Reformed the banking system to separate retail and investment banking and help rebuild our economy | Grow a competitive banking sector, support alternative finance providers and improve access to finance for business and consumers |
| The world's first Green Investment Bank and low-carbon energy market, helping almost treble renewable electricity generation | Expand the Green Investment Bank and set a legally binding decarbonisation target to green our electricity |
| Biggest rail investment since Victorian times, driving record numbers of train journeys | Enable more people to travel with rail upgrades across the country and HS2 |

2.1 Economic and industrial growth

To deliver a balanced economy, with strengths in every part of the UK, Britain needs a highly skilled workforce and flexible business support and finance. We must continue to invest to grow sectors like advanced manufacturing that can provide high-skilled, sustainable jobs, open up the supply chain to more small and medium sized businesses and support firms bringing activity back to Britain.

We will:

- ◆ Continue to develop our Industrial Strategy, working with sectors which are critical to Britain's ability to trade internationally – motor vehicles, aerospace, low-carbon energy, chemicals, creative industries, offshore and subsea technology, and Scottish food and drink.
- ◆ Continue to support the oil and gas industry to maintain

operations in challenging conditions, encourage exploration and guarantee an effective programme of decommissioning when that time comes.

- ♦ Aim to double innovation and research spending across the economy, supported by greater public funding on a longer timescale, more 'catapult' innovation and technology centres and support for green innovation from the Green Investment Bank. We will continue to ringfence the science budget and ensure that, by 2020, both capital and revenue spending have increased at least in line with inflation.
- ♦ Transfer more economic decision-making from Edinburgh and London to local areas across Scotland, building on the City Deals already announced for Glasgow and under development for Inverness and Aberdeen.
- ♦ Provide further support to medium-sized businesses through a one-stop-shop for accessing government support, a dedicated unit in HMRC and the development of management skills.
- ♦ Aim to stimulate local economies. We will:
 - ❖ Use central government public procurement policy as a tool of local growth and community development, for example by purchasing from diverse sources and using local labour, goods and services, and encourage local government to do the same.
 - ❖ Continue our work to open up public procurement to small and medium-sized companies and to the voluntary sector.
 - ❖ Develop platforms on which government can provide feedback on its suppliers to help quality providers to grow.

2.2 Banking and financial reform

The financial crisis of 2008 caused real damage to our economy including one of the largest budget deficits in the world and banks unable to support the real economy. Liberal Democrats have ensured radical reform of the banking industry to make banks safe and no longer requiring a taxpayer safety net.

Building on this progress, we will:

- ♦ Complete implementation of the new rules to separate retail banking from investment banking, working with the financial services industry to promote integrity, accountability and value across the sector.
- ♦ Expand the British Business Bank to perform a more central role in the economy, tackling the shortage of equity capital for growing firms and providing long-term capital for medium-sized

businesses.

- ♦ Develop the UK banking sector to promote competition and innovation by:
 - ❖ Facilitating new entrants, including through public procurement policy.
 - ❖ Encouraging the growth of crowdfunding and alternative finance models.
 - ❖ Promoting a new community banking sector to support small and medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises.
 - ❖ Taking forward the recently commissioned study by the British Business Bank into the sustainability of Community Development Finance Institutions.
- ♦ Ensure access to finance for all, tackling discrimination in the provision of financial services and supporting products that increase financial inclusion.
- ♦ Continue the Banking Levy and introduce a time-limited supplementary Corporation Tax charge on the banking sector to ensure it continues to make a fair contribution to fiscal consolidation.

2.3 Creating a stable and competitive environment for growth

Britain needs a stable and competitive environment for growth; this is essential to attract and sustain new businesses and new jobs. Britain is not just a part of the European economy – we have to compete with the developing economies of Asia and Latin America, which are increasingly powering ahead.

We need to lock in macroeconomic stability, including low inflation, and reduce the risks of a return to the economics of boom and bust. And we need a tax system that is simple, fair and competitive – which attracts and retains jobs in our country, while ensuring business makes a fair contribution.

We will:

- ♦ Continue to support an independent Bank of England, with a mandate to keep inflation low and stable to support sustainable growth. We will protect the new regulatory framework, which ensures the Bank of England has the necessary tools to help avoid a return to boom and bust.
- ♦ Continue to reform business tax to ensure it stays competitive, making small and medium-sized enterprises the priority for any business tax cuts. We will work to adjust the tax system away from subsidy of high leverage debt and tackle the bias against equity investment.

- ♦ Reform and improve the Regulatory Policy Committee to reduce regulatory uncertainty and remove unnecessary business regulation. We understand that well-designed regulation, focused on outcomes rather than processes, has a vital role in creating markets and driving investment and will use it, in particular, to promote low-carbon and resource-efficient innovation.

2.4 Green jobs and industry

New world markets are developing in low-carbon and resource-efficient technologies. Britain's real strengths in sectors like low-carbon vehicles and offshore wind power, with Scottish companies and researchers in the fore, and in green finance, make us well placed to compete.

We must make sure green industries can reach their full potential and build on successes in increasing recycling to shift towards a so-called 'circular economy' in which we use natural resources efficiently and minimise waste.

We will:

- ♦ Pass a Zero Carbon Britain Act to set a new legally binding target to bring net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050, adding greater strength to Scotland's existing climate change targets.
- ♦ Realise the full potential of the Green Investment Bank by increasing its capitalisation, expanding its remit, allowing it to raise funds independently and enabling it to issue green bonds.
- ♦ Help incentivise sustainable behaviour by increasing the proportion of tax revenue accounted for by green taxes.
- ♦ Grow the market for green products and services with steadily higher green criteria in public procurement policy, extending procurement requirements more widely through the public sector. In particular we will deliver ambitious reductions in energy use.
- ♦ Increase research and development and commercialisation support in four key low-carbon technologies where Britain could lead the world: tidal power, carbon capture and storage, energy storage and ultra-low emission vehicles.
- ♦ Ensure UK Trade and Investment and UK Export Finance can prioritise support for key sectors identified in our Industrial Strategy, including exports of green products and technologies, and press for higher environmental standards for export credit agencies throughout the OECD.
- ♦ Encourage the creation of green financial products to bring consumer capital into green industries.

We will improve the way government handles the cross-cutting challenges of delivering green growth and fighting climate change, establishing a senior Cabinet Committee to coordinate action and bringing together officials in inter-departmental units on issues like air quality and resource management. We will replicate the success of the Office for Budget Responsibility with an Office for Environmental Responsibility scrutinising the government's efforts to meet its environmental targets.

2.5 Making the connection: transport infrastructure

Liberal Democrats are leading the renewal of Britain's ageing infrastructure but we still have decades of under-investment to catch up on. We need better transport infrastructure, a modern railway system, and less congestion on our roads.

We have established our second fiscal rule precisely so we can invest in productive infrastructure to help the economy grow.

We will:

- ♦ Set out 10-year rolling capital investment plans.
- ♦ Develop a comprehensive plan to improve UK railways including HS2, as the first stage of a high-speed rail network to Scotland.
- ♦ Work to encourage further private sector investment in rail freight terminals and rail-connected distribution parks. We will set a clear objective to shift more freight from road to rail.
- ♦ Ensure our airport infrastructure meets the needs of a modern and open economy, without allowing emissions from aviation to undermine our goal of a zero carbon Britain by 2050. We will carefully consider the conclusions of the Davies Review into runway capacity and develop a strategic airports policy for the whole of the UK in the light of those recommendations and advice from the Committee on Climate Change. We remain opposed to any expansion of Heathrow, Stansted or Gatwick and any new airport in the Thames Estuary, because of local issues of air and noise pollution. We will ensure no net increase in runways across the UK. Power over Air Passenger Duty for flights originating in Scotland will be transferred to Scotland from London under the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals.

2.6 Low-carbon energy

Our reforms of the electricity market have already created the world's first low-carbon electricity market and will stimulate up to



250,000 green jobs across the UK by 2020. Since 2010, energy demand has fallen by 2.5% a year and renewable electricity generation has almost trebled.

But we need to go further and faster to meet our goal of reducing energy demand by 50% by 2030. If we do not speed up energy efficiency investment, our buildings will continue to leak energy and waste money and our businesses will fail to compete internationally. We will ensure we create a low-carbon economy at the lowest cost for consumers.

We will:

- ♦ Make saving energy a top infrastructure priority, stimulating private sector demand with our new Electricity Demand Reduction market, new market-shaping energy efficiency standards, support for industry, particularly SMEs, and a programme of tax incentives and public investment.
- ♦ Stimulate a minimum of £100 billion more private investment in low-carbon energy infrastructure by 2020.
- ♦ Set a legally binding decarbonisation target range for 2030 for the power sector of 50– 100g of CO₂ per kWh, which can largely be achieved by expansion of renewables, with an indicative target of 60% of UK electricity from renewable sources by 2030. We will support investment in energy storage and smart grid technology to enable this higher reliance on renewables.
- ♦ Regulate to end the use of unabated coal in electricity generation by 2025 because of its high carbon emissions and impact on local air quality, and require any new gas stations built after 2030 to be fitted with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology. We will implement a second phase of CCS projects by 2020.
- ♦ Continue to reject new nuclear power stations in Scotland and only accept that they can play a role in low-carbon electricity supply in the rest of the UK provided concerns about safety, disposal of waste and cost are adequately addressed and without public subsidy for new build.
- ♦ Use biomass primarily for heating and small-scale power generation, act to encourage the wider use of biogas and argue for the reform of EU policies on biofuels and biomass which help drive deforestation, including ending all support for food-crop-based biofuels after 2020.
- ♦ Continue to back new entrants to the energy market, smart meters and faster switching to promote proper competition, aiming for at least 30% of the household market to be supplied by competitors to the 'Big 6' by 2020.

The UK has significant stores of unconventional gas, which could be accessed through the process known as fracking. It is vital

that efforts to access this gas be properly regulated to protect our natural environment. The development of the industry is at an earlier stage in Scotland than the rest of the UK, where it is more advanced.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats support a precautionary approach to fracking in Scotland. That means looking closely at the physical and social impacts before any permission can be considered for fracking in Scotland. Power over fracking is being transferred to Scotland from London under the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals. Decisions will only be taken after that has happened.

For the rest of the UK Liberal Democrats in government have introduced the world's most robust regulatory regime for unconventional gas, including banning drilling in National Parks, and will give local communities the opportunity to receive financial returns from developers.

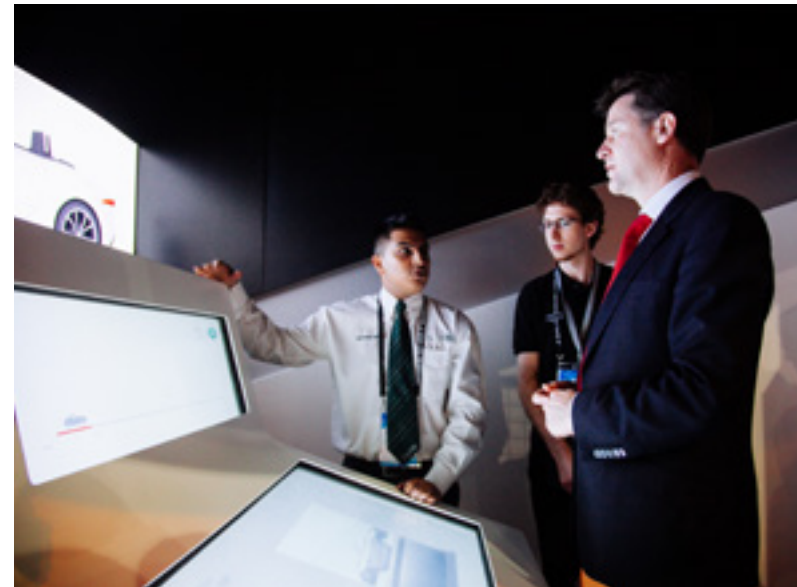
2.7 An open, trading nation

As a major global economy, we must promote open markets and free trade, both within the European Union and beyond. Only as a full member of a reformed European Union can we be certain Britain's businesses will have access to markets in Europe and beyond.

Liberal Democrats believe we should welcome talented people from abroad, encourage visitors and tourists who contribute enormously to our economic growth, and give sanctuary to refugees fleeing persecution. Immigration procedures must be robust and fair, and the UK must remain open to visitors who boost our economy, and migrant workers who play a vital role in business and public services.

We will:

- ◆ Remain a committed member of the EU so we can complete the Single Market in areas including online industries, the energy market and services, and help negotiate EU international trade agreements, opening opportunities for British businesses.
- ◆ Support Single Market disciplines in relation to competition and state aid rules while creating a stronger public interest test for takeovers in research-intensive activities.
- ◆ Continue to allow high-skill immigration to support key sectors of the economy, and ensure work, tourist and family visit visas are processed quickly and efficiently.
- ◆ Ensure the UK is an attractive destination for overseas students, not least those who wish to study STEM subjects (Science,



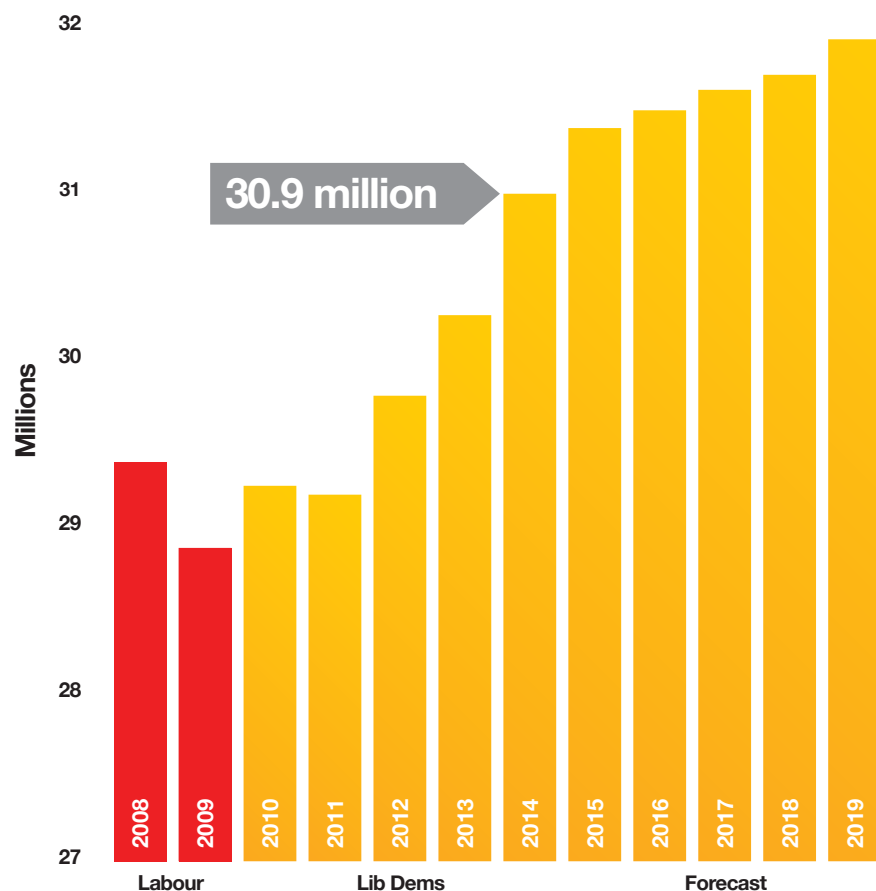
Technology, Engineering and Maths). We will reinstate post-study work visas for STEM graduates who can find graduate-level employment within six months of completing their degree. This policy was previously introduced and supported by Liberal Democrats in the Scottish Executive and is supported by universities in Scotland.

2.8 Securing global leadership in technology

The UK has a competitive advantage in key sectors of the modern economy that have the capacity to transform our lives. The UK's digital sector is growing at a rate of over 10% a year, employing nearly 1.5m people. 15% of all new companies last year were digital companies. We need to support this important sector of our economy. We will:

- ◆ Complete the rollout of high-speed broadband, to reach almost every household (99.9%) in the UK as well as small businesses in both rural and urban areas.
- ◆ Support fast-growing businesses that could create a million jobs over 20 years, following the Sherry Coutu report into these 'Scale-Ups'.
- ◆ Maintain and develop the award-winning Government Digital Service, and the principle of Digital by Default in public services, pressing ahead with plans to extend this to local government.

Number of people in employment



- ♦ Continue to release government data sets that can facilitate economic growth in an open and accessible format, including on standards in public services.
- ♦ Ensure the technology implications of government activity are properly considered by introducing Technology Impact Assessments into the policy design process.

2.9 Pride in Creativity

Liberal Democrats understand that arts, creative industries and culture are crucial to Britain's success and essential for personal fulfilment and quality of life. The UK's creative sector has been one of the great success stories of the past five years, and a critical driver of our recovery. We are proud of the arts in Britain and will support them properly, working to deliver access for all, regardless of income, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability.

We will:

- ♦ Maintain free access to UK national museums and galleries, while giving these institutions greater autonomy.
- ♦ Protect the independence of the BBC while ensuring the Licence Fee does not rise faster than inflation and maintain Channel 4 in public ownership. Continue to support moves to deliver more quality Scottish content.
- ♦ Support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by continuing to support the Creative Industries Council, promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by small creative businesses.



Real help for family finances

Tax, welfare, pensions and consumer rights

A fair society is one in which everyone has the means to get by and the chance to get on. We will continue to rebalance the tax system to move the burden away from hard work and towards unearned wealth, while stamping out abusive tax avoidance. We will increase availability of childcare to help parents who want to work. We will continue to reform welfare and get people the right support in Jobcentres. We will build on our world-leading reforms to the pensions system. And we will fight tirelessly for a better deal for consumers, in the private and public sectors.



A fair society is one in which everyone has the means to get by and the chance to get on. Liberal Democrats believe Britain should be more equal, and have worked in government to cut taxes for people on low and middle incomes, putting money back in the pockets of millions of people. We have improved childcare support, reformed benefits to make sure work pays and improved back-to-work support. And we have freed up pension savings to give older people more choice about how to manage their money in retirement.

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| A Record of Delivery | A Promise of More |
|---|--|
| An £800 tax cut for low and middle income earners, delivered by letting you earn £10,600 tax free | Raise the Personal Allowance to at least £12,500, cutting your taxes by around £400 more |
| Secured the biggest ever cash rise in the state pension with our 'triple lock' policy on uprating | Legislate to make the 'triple lock' permanent, guaranteeing decent pension rises each year |
| Cut the cost of childcare with more free hours for three and four-year olds, and help for disadvantaged two- year olds too. | Extend free childcare to all two-year olds, and to the children of working families from the end of paid parental leave |
| Helped people balance work and family life with Shared Parental Leave and the Right to Request flexible working for all | Expand Shared Parental Leave with a 'use it or lose it' month for fathers, and introduce a right to paid leave for carers |
| Kept welfare spending under control, while blocking plans to cut off young people's benefits | Make sure it pays to work by rolling out Universal Credit, and invest in back-to-work and healthcare support for those who need it |

3.1 Fair taxes

During this Parliament we have gone even further than our manifesto pledge to raise the personal Income Tax threshold to £10,000 per annum. This April's increase to £10,600 has lifted more than three million people out of Income Tax altogether and delivered a tax cut of more than £800 for millions of low and middle-income taxpayers.

We will continue to make taxes fairer and simpler, help those on low and middle incomes, and ensure those on the highest incomes make a fair contribution.

We will:

- ♦ Raise the tax-free Personal Allowance to at least £12,500 by the end of the next Parliament, putting around £400 back in the pockets of millions of working people and pensioners. We will bring forward the planned increase to an £11,000 allowance to April 2016.
- ♦ Consider, as a next step, and once the Personal Allowance rise is delivered, raising the employee National Insurance threshold to the Income Tax threshold, as resources allow, 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 excess reliefs that should be removed, raising money to contribute to deficit reduction. These include reforms to Capital Gains Tax and Dividend Tax relief, refocusing Entrepreneurs' Relief and a supplementary Corporation Tax for the banking sector. In addition, we will introduce a UK-wide High Value Property Levy on residential properties worth over £2 million. It will have a banded structure, like Council Tax.
- ♦ Take tough action against corporate tax evasion and avoidance, including by:
 - ♦ 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.
 - ♦ Introducing a general anti-avoidance rule which would outlaw contrived structures designed purely or largely to avoid tax.
 - ♦ Implementing the planned new offence of corporate failure to prevent economic crime, including tax evasion, with penalties for directors up to and including custodial sentences.
 - ♦ Levying penalties on firms proven to facilitate tax evasion, equivalent to the amount of tax evaded by their clients.
 - ♦ Asking the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee to consider the approach to paying tax taken by banks for themselves, their employees and for their customers, as part of their assessment of the risks posed by the sector, supported by an annual report by HMRC.
 - ♦ Restrict access to non-domiciled status, increasing the charges paid to adopt this status and ending the ability to inherit it.

3.2 Help with childcare costs

Many parents want to take significant time out from work to care for young children but in many families both parents want or have to work, and the costs of childcare are prohibitive.

We have made dramatic improvements over the current

Parliament – with Tax-Free Childcare and increases in childcare support through the benefits system. In Scotland more free childcare is being provided because of Scottish Liberal Democrat campaigning and budget agreements with the Scottish Government. But the current Scottish Government has not done enough and we need to do more so that all who want to work can do so.

We will:

- ♦ Commit to an ambitious goal of at least 20 hours of free childcare a week for all parents with children aged from two to four years, and all working parents from the end of paid parental leave (nine months) to two years. This will not only help parents afford to work, it will help all children start school confident, happy and ready to learn.
- ♦ Complete the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare across the UK, which will provide up to £2,000 of childcare support for each child and include childcare support in Universal Credit, refunding 85% of childcare costs so work pays for low earners.

3.3 Creating jobs and helping people find work

More people are working in the UK today than ever before. Our economic plans have created more jobs than anyone forecast. But that does not make it easy for everyone to find work. Liberal Democrats inherited a benefit system that trapped millions on out of work benefits, because it simply did not pay to be in work. Our reforms are starting to change that but we need to go further.

We will:

- ♦ Complete the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), so people are always better off in work. We will review UC to address any issues regarding cliff edges, and ensure increased working hours are properly incentivised for all claimants. We will retain the overall cap on a household's benefits and believe this should continue to be set at around the average family income.
- ♦ Deliver a reformed and improved Work Programme in Scotland by transferring responsibility for it to Scotland from London as part of the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals, to ensure help and training are more tailored to local employment markets and better integrated with other services. We will improve incentives for Jobcentre staff and Work Programme providers to ensure there is real help for those furthest from the labour market.
- ♦ Establish a review of effective ways to promote rainy day saving

to improve people's financial resilience, and reform hardship payments, making it easier for people to bring forward part of their benefit payments to deal with emergencies.

- ♦ Develop a package of specialist support for carers seeking part time work or a return to full time employment.
- ♦ Review sanctions procedures in Jobcentres. While sanctions can be a necessary last resort to ensure jobseekers are looking for work, they should not be used to cut benefit expenditure deliberately. Reductions in benefits may not always be the best way to improve claimants' compliance: those with chaotic lives might be more successful in finding a job if they were directed to targeted support with their problems. We will ensure there are no league tables or targets for sanctions issued by Jobcentres and introduce a 'yellow card' warning so people are only sanctioned if they deliberately and repeatedly break the rules.

Liberal Democrats will protect young people's entitlements to the welfare safety net, while getting them the help they need to get their first job. That means doubling the number of businesses that hire apprentices. It also means providing support that has been proven to work, like work experience placements that help them get a first foot on the career ladder. These placements should be tailored for those with disabilities, mental health problems and those with parental responsibilities and we will work to expand the availability of placements into new sectors including manufacturing, science and technology.

3.4 Making welfare work

Working-age benefits make up a significant proportion of public spending, and have long been in need of reform, which we have started in this Parliament. Through tough choices, we have found savings in the welfare budget and we must continue to do so as we balance the books. However, we do not support proposals for a lengthy freeze to working-age benefits, and we will not protect benefits for the wealthiest pensioners at the expense of people working on low wages.

Our priority is to tackle the causes of rising benefit bills – high rents, low pay, sickness and unemployment.

We will:

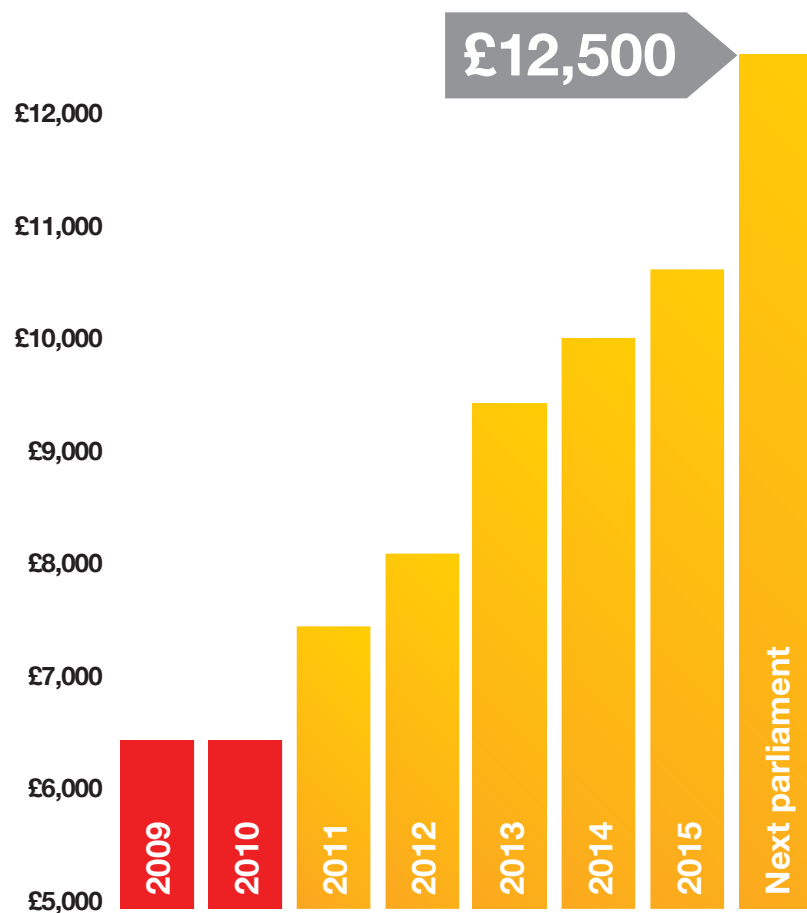
- ♦ Introduce a 1% cap on the uprating of working age benefits until the budget is balanced in 2017/18, after which they will rise with inflation once again. Disability and parental leave benefits will be



exempt from this temporary cap.

- ♦ Encourage landlords to lower their rent by paying them Housing Benefit directly, with tenant's consent, in return for a fixed reduction. Our plans for a major expansion of house building will also help reduce upward pressure on rents.
- ♦ Improve links between Jobcentres, Work Programme providers and the NHS in Scotland to help all those in receipt of health related benefits get the care and support to which they are entitled. In particular, as we expand access to talking therapies we expect many more people to recover and be able to seek work again.
- ♦ Help everyone in work on a low wage step up the career ladder and increase their hours, reducing their need for benefits, with tailored in-work careers and job search advice.
- ♦ Withdraw eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment and free TV Licence from pensioners who pay tax at the higher rate (40%). Decisions over Winter Fuel Payments will then be transferred to the Scottish Parliament. The free bus pass is a matter for the

Income Tax Personal Allowance



Scottish Parliament, but its equivalent in the rest of the UK will be retained for all pensioners.

3.5 Flexibility at work and fair pay

Britain's employment laws are among the best in the world, balancing the needs of business for flexibility with the rights of staff to fair treatment. Nonetheless there are still too many examples of low pay, exploitation, and bad practice, which contribute to unacceptable levels of inequality in our society. This has to change: the more people earn a decent wage, the fewer will be dependent on benefits or stuck in poverty.

We will:

- ◆ Encourage employers to provide more flexible working, expanding Shared Parental Leave with an additional 'use it or lose it' month to encourage fathers to take time off with young children. While changes to parental leave should be introduced slowly to give business time to adjust, our ambition is to see Paternity and Shared Parental Leave become a 'day one' right.
- ◆ Ensure swift implementation of the new rules requiring companies with more than 250 employees to publish details of the different pay levels of men and women in their organisation. We will build on this platform and, by 2020, extend transparency requirements to include publishing the number of people paid less than the Living Wage and the ratio between top and median pay. We will also consult on requirements for companies to conduct and publish a full equality pay review, and to consult staff on executive pay.
- ◆ Ask the Low Pay Commission to look at ways of raising the National Minimum Wage, without damaging employment opportunities. We will improve enforcement action and clamp down on abuses by employers seeking to avoid paying the minimum wage by reviewing practices such as unpaid internships.
- ◆ Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a fair Living Wage across all sectors. We will pay this Living Wage in all central government departments and their agencies from April 2016, and encourage the Scottish Government and other public sector employers to do likewise.
- ◆ Improve the enforcement of employment rights, reviewing Employment Tribunal fees to ensure they are not a barrier.

We will ensure employers cannot avoid giving their staff rights or paying the minimum wage by wrongly classifying them as workers or self-employed.

Liberal Democrats understand that flexible employment contracts – including Zero Hours contracts – can work well for employees and businesses. But that is not always the case and we will continue to stamp out abuse. 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.

3.6 Improving support for the hardest to help

For too long, sickness benefits were used as a way of parking people away from the unemployment statistics. Our aim is to get everyone the support and help they need, both financially and in terms of advice and support. That does require a formal assessment: but these tests have to be fair and should not be an extra burden for vulnerable people. That is why we have made many improvements to the assessments introduced by the last government.

We want to aim even higher, ensuring assessments are truly fair, with quick access to financial help for those who cannot work, and support for those who can.

We will:

- ♦ Conduct a review of the Work Capability Assessment and Personal Independence Payment assessments to ensure they are fair, accurate and timely and evaluate the merits of a public sector provider.
- ♦ Invest to clear any backlog in assessments for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.
- ♦ Simplify and streamline back-to-work support for people with disabilities, mental or physical health problems. We will aim for the goal of one assessment and one budget for disabled and sick people to give them more choice and control.
- ♦ Raise awareness of, and seek to expand, Access to Work, which supports people with disabilities in work.
- ♦ Transfer the housing elements of the Universal Credit to the Scottish Parliament as part of the implementation of the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals. A previous transfer of powers to the Scottish Parliament has already ended, in effect, the policy of the so-called 'bedroom tax' in Scotland. Completing the transfer of the powers will mean all decisions in this area will be

made in Scotland. In the rest of the UK we will also reform the policy.

3.7 Help to save for and enjoy your retirement

Life expectancy is increasing. This is obviously 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 to build on the world-leading reforms Liberal Democrats in government have introduced since 2010. We have abolished the default retirement ages so older people cannot be forced out of work on grounds of age. We have reversed decades of decline in pensioner incomes by uprating the state pension in line with our 'triple lock' guarantee. We have introduced a new Single Tier Pension to make saving simple. We have auto enrolled five million people into a pension for the first time. And we have scrapped the rules that dictated how you receive your pension, so now you can spend your savings as you see fit.

We want Britain to be the best place in the world to save for, and enjoy, your retirement.

We will:

- ♦ Continue the introduction of our simpler single tier pension so people can plan ahead securely, and feel the benefit of every pound they save.
- ♦ Legislate for the Liberal Democrat 'triple lock' of increasing the State Pension each year by the highest of earnings growth, prices growth or 2.5%.
- ♦ Ensure pensioners are eligible to gain from the increased Personal Allowance of £12,500.
- ♦ Improve workplace pensions and continue to auto-enrol workers, completing the rollout of this scheme in full and on time. We will crack down on charges and encourage people to save more into their pension pot through this scheme.
- ♦ Press ahead with plans to allow people more freedom in the use of their pension pots and to allow existing pensioners to sell their annuity.
- ♦ 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 which would be set more generously than the current 20% basic rate relief.

3.8 Protecting consumers and keeping bills low

Confident consumers encourage innovation and competition, which strengthen our economy. We have radically overhauled consumer rights law, making it simpler and clearer and for the first time protecting consumers buying digital content. We have driven competition in the energy sector, speeded up switching, and simplified tariffs so customers can always get the best deal. We have clamped down on unscrupulous payday lenders and strengthened protections for vulnerable consumers against rogue traders. In the next Parliament we want to go further.

We will:

- ♦ Force energy companies to allow customers to change to any cheaper supplier in just 24 hours, and extend the principle of 'gainer led' switching, where your new provider organises your switch for you, into new sectors, including telecoms.
- ♦ Give people easier to understand information about their own energy use, with appropriate privacy protections, with a national rollout of smart electricity and gas meters. We will guarantee that anyone on a prepayment meter can choose a smart meter instead by 2017.
- ♦ Help people form new energy cooperatives so they can benefit from group discounts and cut their bills.
- ♦ Protect high streets and consumers by substantially reducing the maximum stakes for Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.
- ♦ Require the Sports Ground Safety Authority to prepare advice which could be used by Scottish football clubs, working with their supporters, to introduce safe standing areas.
- ♦ Continue and expand the midata project into new sectors, giving consumers the right to access data businesses hold on them in an open and reusable format.

3.9 Driving up standards in public services

Citizens expect a good service from their public services, and rightly so. While many offer world-class standards, we could do so much better: integrating services and making them more accessible, as well as improving the response when things go wrong.

Liberal Democrats value the important role the voluntary, independent and community sectors play in the life of our communities and delivering public services. To ensure all providers of public services are accountable to their users and the public,

a public authority should always take the decision about whether a service should be provided or commissioned, if possible a democratically accountable one.

We will:

- ♦ Improve consumer protections in public services operated by the UK Government, with a review of complaints handling processes, exploring the option of mirroring the private sector 'super-complaint' system in the public sector and reforms to the current system of ombudsmen.
- ♦ Extend Freedom of Information laws to cover private companies delivering public services.
- ♦ Continue and expand the What Works Network to promote evidence based policy making, establish an incubator for social enterprises developing innovative solutions to policy problems and expand the use of public competitions to encourage innovation in public services.
- ♦ Require the highest standards of data protection by public service providers, including that where data is used for research purposes it must be anonymised, and impose a moratorium on the creation of new government databases without Parliamentary authority.



An opportunity society

World-class education for all

Scottish Liberal Democrats have put education at the heart of our agenda for a generation. We believe that every child deserves a great start in life, and are determined to make sure that our education system finds and nurtures the best in everyone. This is essential in order to break down the unfair divisions in our society, and to ensure a productive, competitive economy.



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Too many people have their chances in life determined by who their parents were, rather than by their own efforts and abilities. Children start learning from the moment they are born, so parents need to be supported right from the start. Our plan across the UK is to guarantee the budget from cradle to college for the duration of the next Parliament. This will provide a stable platform for the Scottish Parliament to plan to invest in young people in Scotland.

4.1 Flexible and free childcare

Our Scottish Liberal Democrat priority will be to continue to increase the amount of free childcare offered to the youngest children. We have already persuaded the Scottish Government to change their plans and start to offer free childcare to two-year-old children in Scotland. All the international evidence is that this is the age at which investment is most effective at raising attainment and closing the gap between rich and poor.

We seek to increase the current Scottish provision for two-year-olds up to the 40% level offered in England. Our ambition is then to expand this to at least 20 hours a week for all two-year-olds by 2020. Such a transformation will need careful planning to make sure that high-quality, flexible provision with qualified staff and good premises are available in every community. We share the long term aim of Liberal Democrats across the UK to move to offer free childcare to working parents from the end of maternity leave, 9 months, until formal schooling starts.

4.2 Schools

We support the Curriculum for Excellence being introduced into Scottish schools and have urged Scottish ministers to give the implementation their full and careful attention, addressing workload issues.

We have been impressed at the results in England from the introduction of the Pupil Premium whereby schools receive extra money to invest in the education of children from poorer

backgrounds. Already, in just a few years, the attainment gap has narrowed and children from all backgrounds are achieving more.

4.3 Opportunities at college and university

Scottish Liberal Democrats have been concerned at the scale of lost college places in Scotland in recent years. As many as 130,000 places have been cut as a result of decisions taken by the SNP Government. The impact has been greatest on women learners, older learners, people in rural areas and those with additional support needs.

Liberal Democrats support the work of colleges and have worked to increase the budget available to them through our negotiations and discussions with Scottish ministers.

Our UK-wide plan to guarantee the education budget gives good opportunities for the Scottish Parliament to develop the role of colleges.

4.4 Apprentices

We have supported record numbers of apprentices across the UK, more than two million people have started as apprentices in the course of the last five years. The Scottish Government has played its part, supported by UK tax incentives to help businesses pay the costs. The two governments should do more to work together to achieve even more.

Liberal Democrats want more apprentices, with strong skills leading to good long term careers. We support a new approach to boost the involvement of industry in developing the sector skills they need, particularly in new industries such as renewable energy, with a focus on getting more women into apprenticeships for science, technology, engineering and maths.

In Scotland, tuition fees were abolished in 2000 on the signature of a Scottish Liberal Democrat minister. We supported the abolition of the Graduate Endowment in 2008 and voted at budget time to increase the funding to Scottish universities. By remaining part of the United Kingdom we have retained access to above average research funding from UK bodies. We will continue this system in Scotland.

In contrast, England has moved to a tuition fees system to fund universities. There are more generous bursaries and more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds applying for courses

than ever before. Graduates pay less each month. Scottish Liberal Democrats do not advocate a move to such a system in Scotland but do want to address support for students from poorer backgrounds and raise the threshold for graduates making repayments for Scottish student loans.

Across the UK we will:

- ♦ Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices, including by extending them to new sectors of our economy, like creative and digital industries.
- ♦ Work with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors, and encourage underrepresented groups to apply.



Building a healthier society

Protecting the NHS and improving health

Good health is one of the most important assets we can have in life, and we must do all we can to help people stay healthy, as well as provide high-quality care when they are ill. Our NHS is the envy of the world, and we will fund it properly, ending the discrimination against mental health which has existed for too long, and delivering equal care.



Good health is one of the most important assets we can have in life, and we must do all we can to help people stay healthy, as well as providing high-quality care when they are ill.

Our NHS is the envy of the world, and we will fund it properly, ending discrimination against mental health which has existed for too long, and delivering equal care.

Health and wellbeing are affected by far more than just the quality of health services. Liberal Democrats will act to ensure that everything government does supports people to improve their wellbeing: we will work to improve the wider factors that affect our health like warm homes, good air quality and access to healthy food so that everyone can have the best opportunity to lead a healthy life.

5. Investing in our NHS

The NHS is our most treasured public service. Liberal Democrats are committed to the founding principles of the NHS as a taxpayer-funded system, free at the point of use. To ensure this principle is maintained, even as demand for health care grows, we will give the NHS the investment it needs.

In the UK government Liberal Democrats have protected health spending during the toughest economic times. Now we plan to invest more. Health service leaders in England have identified that the NHS there will need a further £8 billion every year above inflation by 2020 to meet the challenges they face. Under the Barnett formula system this will mean an additional £800 million will be made available to the Scottish Parliament. There is already a cross-party precedent that such money will be used to support the NHS in Scotland and we are committed to do that.

There are significant challenges in Scotland that need to be addressed so that the staff who work in our health service are given the support they need to do their jobs well.

A significant part of this extra NHS funding will need to be used to tackle the problems that have emerged in Accident and Emergency departments across Scotland. People who need urgent care should be seen promptly. Targets have been set to help them get this care but are not being met.

Investment will also be needed to tackle the bed shortage crisis in Scottish hospitals which has affected all stages of patients' treatment.

Our new investment will allow Scotland to transform the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.

For too long mental health has been neglected. One in four people suffer from mental ill-health at some time in their life. Yet those people often face stigma and difficulty accessing the



diagnosis and treatment they need. The cost to individuals, their families, communities and employers is enormous.

Our plan is to treat mental ill-health with the same seriousness as physical illness.

We will expand the provision of psychological treatments, such as talking therapies. Our UK-wide commitment to promote parity of treatment will encourage more people to train and qualify to offer treatment.

We will develop new provision to support young people who need urgent mental health support. Too often young people are taken long distances to unsuitable secure units when more effective and more local care should be available.

We will follow closely the pilot projects to have trained mental health professionals in A&E departments with a view to rolling these out to every Scottish department.

We will continue to expand the use of new technology to help people continue to live in their homes as they become elderly.

Public health will be improved by preventive health measures across the UK such as those to tackle air quality and improve food. As specific UK measures to improve health we will:

- ♦ Restrict the marketing of junk food to children, including restricting TV advertising before the 9pm watershed, and maintain the effective 'Five a Day' campaign.
- ♦ Encourage the traffic light labelling system for food products and publication of information on calorie, fat, sugar and salt content in restaurants and takeaways.
- ♦ Reduce smoking rates, including by completing the introduction of standardised packaging for tobacco products. We will introduce a tax levy on tobacco companies so they fairly contribute to the costs of health care and smoking cessation services, subject to consultation on the detailed design and practicalities.
- ♦ Carefully monitor the growing evidence base around electronic cigarettes, which appear to be a route by which many people are quitting tobacco, and ensure restrictions on marketing and use are proportionate and evidence based. For example, we support restrictions on advertising which risks promoting tobacco or targets under 18s, such as those introduced in 2014, but would rule out a statutory ban on 'vaping' in public places.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Establish a world-leading mental health research fund, investing £50m to further our understanding of mental illness and develop more effective treatments.
- ♦ Work towards a global deal to release significant additional funds for finding a cure or preventive treatment for dementia, doubling UK NHS research spend for this condition by 2020.
- ♦ Improve patient safety by updating the laws on regulation of health professionals and on cosmetic procedures.

Liberal Democrats are committed to ensure that NHS services are never subject to forced privatisation through international agreements on free markets in goods and services. After determined negotiations, we now have a clear guarantee from the EU that member states' rights to provide public services directly and not open them up to competition are explicitly enshrined in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and we will ensure this remains the case for TTIP and any future trade agreements.

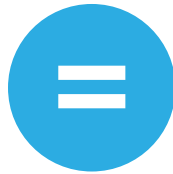
We will develop a just settlement for haemophiliacs who were given contaminated blood, and their families.

We will provide support for those with terminal conditions, such as motor neurone disease, and enough specialists to meet care needs.

Mental Health

1 in 4

of us will experience
mental health difficulties
in our lifetimes



**Mental
illness**



£100bn
each year



better access to

**talking
therapies**

**could save millions
in fewer hospital admissions & working days lost**



5.2 Help for carers

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 and we need to do more to help them. We have already invested £400m in carers' breaks, but we can and must go further.

We will:

- ♦ Introduce an annual Carer's Bonus of £250 for carers looking after someone for 35 hours or more each week.
- ♦ Work to raise the amount you can earn before losing Carer's Allowance from £102 to £150 a week.
- ♦ Consult on introducing five days of paid additional 'care leave' a year for carers who qualify for the Carer's Allowance.



Better places to live

Communities, farming and the natural environment

Liberal Democrats are the only major party that takes seriously the responsibility of protecting our natural environment. We believe it is vital to make sure everyone has access to clean water, clean air and green spaces. We want to hand our countryside and green spaces on to the next generation in a better condition than when we were children.



Liberal Democrats are the only major party that takes seriously the responsibility of protecting our natural environment. We believe it is vital to make sure everyone has access to clean water, clean air and green spaces. We want to hand our countryside and green spaces on to the next generation in a better condition than when we were children. That is why we have consistently defended the natural environment in government.

Liberal Democrats are proud to represent a large part of rural Britain and many farming constituencies. We believe a fair society is one where people can afford to work and live in the countryside, and where farmers get the support they need. We want them to have a prosperous, sustainable future, and help them cope with the challenges facing them, from floods to animal diseases. That is why we introduced the Groceries Code Adjudicator to ensure large supermarkets treat their suppliers lawfully and fairly. Liberal Democrats have kept farming and the natural environment at the top of the agenda over the past five years. We will ensure it remains a priority in the next Parliament.

Liberal Democrats believe in the highest standards of animal welfare. We will review the rules surrounding the sale of pets to ensure they promote responsible breeding and sales and minimise the use of animals in scientific experimentation, including by funding research into alternatives. We remain committed to the three Rs of humane animal research: Replace, Reduce, Refine.

6.1 Waste not, want not: using our resources to generate lasting prosperity

The successful economies of the future will be 'circular' - where waste and the use of non-renewable resources are minimised and recovery, reuse and recycling are maximised. Britain has a real opportunity to lead the way, generating sustainable prosperity and jobs.

We will bring forward a comprehensive waste strategy to build a thriving reuse and recycling industry and pass a Resource Efficiency and Zero Waste Act to:

- ♦ Task the Natural Capital Committee with producing a UK 'Stern report' on resource use, in partnership with the Scottish Government, identifying resources being used unsustainably and recommending legally binding targets for reducing their net consumption.
- ♦ Use regulation both nationally and in the EU to promote sustainable design where reparability, reuse and recyclability are prioritised, and to reduce packaging waste.

6.2 Food and farming

Our farmers do an essential job putting food on our tables and enhancing the natural environment, but food policy has been neglected for too long. We will encourage investment, growth, innovation and new entrants, securing the future of the Scottish food and farming industry.

Liberal Democrats want continued reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, eliminating the remaining production and export subsidies and supporting the development of environmentally sustainable solutions to growing demand for food.

We will:

- ♦ Ensure farming support is concentrated on sustainable food production, conservation and tackling climate change, shifting CAP payments to the active farmer rather than the landowner.
- ♦ Work at EU level to ensure clear and unambiguous country of origin labelling on meat, meat products, milk and dairy products.
- ♦ Continue to support the Groceries Code Adjudicator. We will allow the Adjudicator to use discretion when holding a supermarket responsible for the treatment of suppliers so they can help ensure farmers get a fair price. This will help all suppliers, including in the dairy industry, which is under particular pressure.

- ♦ Fully implement recent reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy, working with industry and others to develop a national plan for sustainable UK fisheries, with fair treatment for the inshore small boat fleet.
- ♦ Scottish interests in EU discussions on fishing will be enhanced by the adoption of the suggestions to improve relations between the UK Government and Scottish Government in the Smith Commission report.

6.3 Adapting to climate change

The devastating floods experienced in many parts of Britain over the past few years are a sign of accelerating climate change, exacerbated by changing patterns of land use. We need to find better ways of adapting to storms, gales, flooding and heatwaves that put increased pressure on infrastructure, water supplies and ecosystems.

We will:

- ♦ Prepare a national resilience plan to help the UK economy, national infrastructure and natural resources adapt to the likely impacts of a 3-4 degree global average temperature rise.

6.4 Air quality and greener transport

Poor air quality is a significant health problem. After smoking, estimates suggest it is Britain's second biggest public health challenge, responsible for the equivalent of 29,000 deaths across the UK, every year. We will pass a Green Transport Act, including a plan to improve dramatically Britain's air quality by 2020, with benefits in Scotland from changes to UK rules.

Our UK air quality plan for consultation will include:

- ♦ A review of the MOT process, to see whether changes could be introduced to cut emissions from existing vehicles.
- ♦ Support for new EU proposals on air quality targets and updated plans to meet more quickly existing EU air quality standards for concentrations of nitrogen dioxide.

To promote innovation and greener transport choices we will:

- ♦ Support ambitious EU vehicle emission standards and reform Vehicle Excise Duty to drive continuous reductions in greenhouse gas and other pollutants from the UK car fleet and return revenues to levels projected in 2010. This will include introducing separate banding for new diesel cars.
- ♦ Encourage the market for electric vehicles, including with targeted support for buses, taxis and light freight, and early requirements to use low emission vehicles in the public sector. We will set a target of 2040 for the date after which only Ultra-Low Emission vehicles will be permitted on UK roads for non-freight purposes.
- ♦ Work with industry to accelerate the commercial introduction of zero emission fuel cell electric vehicles, and facilitate the UK wide introduction of hydrogen fuelling infrastructure.
- ♦ Review the best way to keep our regulatory framework updated to permit use of driverless and personal electric vehicles.

6.5 Sustainable rural communities

A thriving rural community needs local services and community facilities like schools, public transport, local shops, cultural venues and pubs. It needs enough homes, affordable for local families, to ensure those services are viable. And it needs public transport: travel costs are a major component of rural poverty. Liberal Democrats understand the changes needed to support a living, working countryside. Many of these are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament or local authorities, but there are steps that can be taken by the UK Government.

We will:

- ♦ Renew the 2010-15 commitment that there will be no programme of Post Office closures and protect Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation to deliver across the UK for the same price, helping in particular Scotland's remote and rural communities.
- ♦ Continue the fuel discount scheme for remote areas implemented by Liberal Democrat ministers and work with the European Commission to extend it to further remote areas with high fuel costs.
- ♦ Support extension of the Pub Code to Scotland, after agreement with the Scottish Parliament, to give pub tenants fairer opportunities in their dealings with large PubCos.

Five Green Britain Guarantee: Green Laws

Liberal Democrats will put the environment at the heart of government policy. We will pass five green laws to establish a permanent legal framework for a prosperous, sustainable economy. Parts of each Green Law will benefit Scotland and fall within the responsibilities of the UK Parliament. Other provisions only apply in England.

A Nature Act, a Resource Efficiency & Zero Waste Act and a Green Buildings Act which will include

- ♦ Implementation of recommendations from our planned 'Stern Report' on resource efficiency, which the Natural Capital Committee will conduct.
- ♦ Regulation to promote design that enhances reparability, reuse and recycling, requiring specified products to be sold with parts and labour guarantees for at least five years.
- ♦ A new legal framework to require regulators to facilitate the development of deep geothermal heat, large-scale heat pumps, waste industrial heat and energy storage systems.
- ♦ New powers for government to introduce new energy efficiency and heat saving regulations to reduce heat and energy use.
- ♦ New powers for the regulator Ofgem to support Scottish consumers on heat networks, encouraging their expansion.
- ♦ The formation of a 1 million square kilometre southern Atlantic Ocean reserve to be known as the Shackleton Marine Reserve.

A Green Transport Act, which will include

- ♦ A requirement that every new bus and taxi is ultra low emission from 2030 and every car on the road meets that standard by 2040.
- ♦ Updates to roads regulation to promote innovation in transport, like driverless cars and personal electric vehicles.

A Zero Carbon Britain Act, which will include for Scotland

- ♦ A new legally-binding target for Zero Carbon Britain by 2050, to be monitored and audited by the Climate Change Committee (CCC). The Climate Change Act 2008 established an aim to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 based on the 1990 baseline.
- ♦ A 2030 power sector decarbonisation target of 50-100g per kWh, as recommended by the CCC.
- ♦ Emission Performance Standards for existing coal power stations, designed to ensure electricity generation from unabated coal will stop after 2025.
- ♦ Giving full borrowing powers to the Green Investment Bank, to boost further investment in low-carbon technologies.



Affordable homes for all

Meeting our housing needs

For people to live fulfilled lives they need a decent home at a cost they can afford. But that simple ambition is getting further out of reach. The whole of Britain has failed for decades to build enough homes. In Scotland the completion rates of affordable homes has dropped to a new low.



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7.1 Building more and better homes

Our UK wide plan is to meet an ambitious target to increase the rate of house building to 300,000 a year. This will include the direct government commissioning programme to boost house building where the market alone fails to deliver sufficient numbers. This will include a share of investment for Scotland.

Additional homes will reduce the upward pressure on prices and rents. The UK Government has provided resources to the Scottish Government to enable them to create a Help to Buy scheme for first-time buyers. Scottish Liberal Democrats encouraged Scottish ministers to use a proportion of this to help housing associations build homes for rent, and this started to happen in 2014.

Our plans will include:

- ♦ A government commissioning programme to boost house building towards our 300,000 target; where the market alone fails to deliver sufficient numbers, government agencies will directly commission homes for sale and rent to fill the gap.
- ♦ A new government-backed Housing Investment Bank to provide long-term capital for major new settlements and help attract finance for major house building projects.

7.2 Affordable warmth and greener homes

Warming our homes is an essential part of the fight against climate change, and also vital to keep bills affordable. Energy prices in Britain are lower than the EU average but our bills are higher because our homes are so poorly insulated. We have made huge advances in this Parliament. In the next Parliament we will transfer responsibility for shaping the Energy Company Obligation to the Scottish Parliament as part of the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals.

Across the UK we will:

- ♦ Reform the Green Deal 'pay as you save' scheme into a new Green Homes Loan Scheme, funding renewable heat and electricity alongside energy efficiency.
- ♦ Boost community energy efficiency by empowering the Green Investment Bank to develop innovative financial products for whole street or district-wide energy efficiency retrofits.
- ♦ Support an Off-Gas-Grid Strategy to help rural areas benefit from new technologies.

Freedom and opportunity

Equal rights for all

Liberal Democrats have always been champions of liberty and human rights. Freedom of expression has recently been under renewed attack, and siren voices call for us to sacrifice freedom to gain illusory security. Liberal Democrats reject this false choice: true security for individuals and for our nation must be built on a platform of equal rights and civil liberties. Discrimination and inequality can hold people back just as much as a lack of legal freedoms. Opportunities are not equally distributed in modern Britain. That must change, and will with Liberal Democrats in government.



Liberal Democrats have always been champions of liberty and human rights. No one can make the most of their lives if their basic freedoms are violated. This election comes just a month before the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta is celebrated, a foundation stone of liberties not just in England but across the world. Legal protections have come a long way since then, but as society and technology becomes more complex there is a never-ending struggle to reassert the principle of individual liberty. Freedom of expression has recently been under renewed attack, and siren voices call for us to sacrifice freedom to gain illusory security. Liberal Democrats reject this false choice: true security for individuals and for our nation must be built on a platform of equal rights and civil liberties.

At Holyrood the Scottish Liberal Democrats have led the campaign against a Scottish national identity database, unregulated stop and search and the arming of police officers carrying out general duties.

Discrimination and inequality can hold people back just as much as a lack of legal freedoms. Opportunities are not equally distributed in modern Britain. Where you are from, what your parents did, your ethnicity, health, sexuality and gender still too often affect your chances in life, your educational attainments, your work prospects, how you are treated by the police and the justice system, and even how long you will live. That must change, and will with Liberal Democrats in government.

| A Record of Delivery | A Promise of More |
|---|---|
| Scrapped ID cards and blocked the so-called Snooper's Charter that would have monitored everyone's internet use | Protect your privacy by updating data laws for the internet age with a Digital Bill of Rights |
| Freedoms Act to cut intrusive CCTV, stop fingerprinting children in schools and stop aggressive wheel clamping | A second Freedoms Act to protect free speech, stop heavy-handed policing and ban Mosquito devices that discriminate against young people. |
| Introduced equal marriage for gay and lesbian couples, including for Scots serving in the armed forces and consular corps | Promote international recognition of same sex marriages and civil partnerships |
| Reduced the gender pay gap and increased the number of women on boards | Support a million more women who want to work with better childcare, help with caring responsibilities and action against discrimination |
| Stopped locking up children of asylum seekers | Fight discrimination in the criminal justice system |

8.1 Equality and diversity

A fair society should treat its citizens equally and with dignity. In this Parliament, thanks to Liberal Democrats in government, there have been key advances in the fight for equality – like introducing the first same-sex marriage legislation in the UK and banning age discrimination. But we must continue our work to fight prejudice and discrimination based on race, age, religion or belief, gender, sexuality, and disability. We will enact the remaining unimplemented clauses of the Equality Act 2010.

To advance the cause of women and gender equality we will:

Our Support for LGBT

1967

Sex between men
decriminalised in
England and Wales

1975

Liberal Party becomes
the first party to commit
to a Gay Rights policy

1979

Law in Scotland brought
into line with England
and Wales

1988

Liberal Democrats
oppose Section 28,
which banned teachers
from presenting
homosexuality as
acceptable

1998

Allowing trans people
to change the gender
on their birth certificate
becomes Liberal
Democrat policy

2001

Age of consent lowered
to 16 and finally made
equal between gay and
straight people

2008

Liberal Democrats
adopt official policy
that asylum seekers
should not be deported
if they face imprisonment,
torture or murder as a
result of their sexuality

2004

Civil partnerships
introduced

2010

Liberal Democrats
become the first major
party to create policy on
Equal Marriage

2013

England and Wales
Equal Marriage becomes
law on 17th July 2013

2014

First UK couple married
29th March. Equal
marriage law in force
in Scotland from
December 2014

- ♦ Set an ambitious goal to see a million more women in work by 2020 thanks to more jobs, better childcare, and better back-to-work support.
- ♦ Challenge gender stereotyping and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and widespread understanding of sexual consent law, and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of particular academic subjects.
- ♦ Work to end the gender pay gap, including with new rules on gender pay transparency.
- ♦ Continue the drive for diversity in business leadership, maintaining momentum towards at least 30% of board members being women and encouraging gender diversity among senior managers, too. We will work to achieve gender equity in government programmes that support entrepreneurs.

To promote equality in relationships and for LGBT+ individuals, we will:

- ♦ Promote international recognition of same-sex marriages and civil partnerships as part of a comprehensive International LGBT Rights Strategy that promotes the cause of decriminalising homosexuality in other countries.
- ♦ Seek to pardon all those with historic convictions for consensual homosexual activity between adults.
- ♦ Ask the Advisory Committee on The Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs periodically to review rules around men who have sex with men donating blood to consider what restrictions remain necessary.

To tackle the racial discrimination faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people we will:

- ♦ Build on the Coalition's BAME Access to Finance report to identify ways to encourage more BAME applicants to apply for finance and set up small business. We will publish diversity data on government entrepreneurship programmes and seek to achieve fair representation of BAME communities.
- ♦ Encourage businesses to ensure at least one place on their board is filled by a BAME candidate.
- ♦ Monitor and tackle the BAME pay gap.
- ♦ Outlaw caste discrimination.

To tackle religious discrimination and support faith and belief communities in working together we will:

- ♦ Continue support for the Interfaith Network to promote strong and sustainable relations between different faith communities.
- ♦ Support projects aimed at tackling intolerance such as Show Racism the Red Card and the Anne Frank Trust UK.
- ♦ Work closely with faith and community organisations, such as the Community Security Trust (which works to protect the Jewish community against antisemitic attacks) and the Muslim Council of Britain, to prevent hate crime, including at places of worship like synagogues and mosques. We are determined to combat antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate in the UK and internationally.

To empower people with disabilities to live full lives and achieve their potential we will:

- ♦ Improve the benefits system for disabled people by transferring responsibility for key aspects to the Scottish Parliament as part of the Smith Commission Home Rule proposals. This will make it easier to co-ordinate support such as the Personal Independence Payment with health and social care entitlements delivered by Scottish Councils.
- ♦ Help greater numbers of disabled people work by encouraging employers to shortlist any qualified disabled candidate and providing advice about workplace adaptation.
- ♦ Make it easier to get around the UK by:
 - ❖ Bringing into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
 - ❖ Building on our successes in improving wheelchair access to improve accessibility of public transport for people with other disabilities, including visual and auditory impairment.
 - ❖ Setting up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities.
 - ❖ Formally recognise British Sign Language as an official language of the United Kingdom.

To ensure the highest standards of equality and fairness in public services we will:

- ♦ Maintain the Public Sector Equality Duty and encourage external providers to the public sector to follow best practice in terms of diversity.
- ♦ Prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion in the provision of public services.
- ♦ Move to 'name blank' recruitment wherever possible in the public sector.
- ♦ Replicate the civil service accelerated programme for underrepresented groups across the public sector
- ♦ Require diversity in Public Appointments. We will introduce

a presumption that every shortlist should include a BAME candidate. We will establish an independent committee that will monitor the drive for greater diversity in public appointments and verify the independence of the appointment process to public bodies, boards and institutions.

- ♦ Work to ensure the shift to Digital by Default for public services does not leave people behind, by upholding the highest standards of accessibility in digital services and maintaining government programmes on digital inclusion.

8.2 Freedom of speech and the free press

As the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris showed, freedom of expression cannot be taken for granted. In an open society there can be no right 'not to be offended', which is why Liberal Democrats in government have strengthened the law to make it harder for prosecutions to be brought for using "insulting words", and have led the way in protecting journalists' sources under the 2000 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). Yet censorship and self-censorship are still rife, and the threat of prosecution can have a chilling effect on the willingness of people to speak out against injustice and corruption. To change this and promote investigative journalism, we will:

- ♦ Introduce statutory public interest defences for exceptional cases where journalists may need to break the law (such as the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, the 2010 Bribery Act, and the 1998 Computer Misuse Act) to expose corruption or other criminal acts.
- ♦ Ensure judicial authorisation is required for the acquisition of communications data which might reveal journalists' sources or other privileged communications, for any of the purposes allowed under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act; and allow journalists the opportunity to address the court before authorisation is granted, where this would not jeopardise the investigation.
- ♦ Undertake a post-legislative review of the 2013 Defamation Act, which Liberal Democrats drove through Parliament, to ensure the new provisions are reducing the chill of libel threats.
- ♦ Introduce, after consultation on the detail, the changes to the 1998 Data Protection Act recommended by Lord Justice Leveson to provide a fairer balance between personal privacy and the requirements of journalism, ensuring that the position of investigative journalists is safeguarded.

To promote the independence of the media from political influence we will remove Ministers from any role in appointments to the BBC Trust or the Board of Ofcom.

To guarantee press freedom, we will pass a British 'First Amendment' law, to require the authorities and the courts to have regard to the importance of a free media in a democratic society.

To nurture public interest journalism and protect the public from press abuse, we are committed to a system of accountability that is totally independent of both government and the newspaper industry, as set out in the Royal Charter on Press Regulation.

We share the hope of Lord Justice Leveson that the incentives for the press to sign up to genuinely independent self-regulation will succeed. But if, in the judgment of the Press Recognition Panel, after 12 months of operation, there is significant non-cooperation by newspaper publishers, then – as Leveson himself concluded – Parliament will need to act, drawing on a range of options including the legislative steps necessary to ensure that independent self-regulation is delivered. Where possible, we would seek to do this on the same cross-party basis that achieved the construction of the Leveson scheme by the Royal Charter.

8.3 Policing and security service powers

Liberal Democrats believe security and liberty are two sides of the same coin: you cannot have one without the other. The police and intelligence agencies do vital work to protect the public and we are rightly proud of them. But we always have to be vigilant that the state does not overreach itself, as it has done at times through corruption, heavy-handedness or illiberal laws.

We will:

- ♦ Ensure proper oversight of the security services.
- ♦ Establish in legislation that the police and intelligence agencies should not obtain data on UK residents from foreign governments that it would not be legal to obtain in the UK under UK law.
- ♦ Back a full judicial inquiry into complicity in torture if the current investigation by the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee fails to get to the truth.
- ♦ End indefinite detention for immigration purposes.
- ♦ Get to the full truth about corrupt practices in parts of the police and the press by ensuring that the Daniel Morgan Panel Inquiry is completed expeditiously and that Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry starts as soon as the criminal prosecutions in the hacking scandal are completed.

- ♦ Identify practical alternatives to the use of closed material proceedings within the justice system, including the provisions of the 2013 Justice and Security Act, with the aim of restoring the principle of open justice.

8.4 Securing liberty online

In the modern digital age, the power of the state and of corporate interests can threaten our privacy and liberty. We have achieved much in rolling back the over-mighty state – passing the first ever Protection of Freedoms Act to restore lost civil liberties, securing the ongoing root and branch review of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and legislating for the creation of a Privacy and Civil Liberties Board – but we cannot be complacent. There will be a complete overhaul of surveillance powers in 2016. We need to ensure this and other opportunities are seized as a chance to control excessive state power, and ensure that in an era when surveillance is easier than ever before, we maintain the right to privacy and free speech. Privacy should always be the norm for personal data, meaning surveillance must always be justified and proportionate and any demand to read private encrypted communications must be targeted and proportionate.

We will:

- ♦ Pass a Digital Bill of Rights, to define and enshrine the digital rights of the citizen.
- ♦ Safeguard the essential freedom of the internet and back net neutrality, the principle that internet service providers should enable access to all lawful content and applications regardless of the source, and without favouring or blocking particular products or websites.
- ♦ Oppose the introduction of the so-called Snooper's Charter. We blocked the draft Communications Data Bill and would do so again. Requiring companies to store a record of everyone's internet activities for a year or to collect third-party communications data for non-business purposes is disproportionate and unacceptable, as is the blanket surveillance of our paper post.
- ♦ Set stricter limits on surveillance and consider carefully the outcomes of the reviews we initiated on surveillance legislation by the Royal United Services Institute and the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation David Anderson QC. We are opposed to the blanket collection of UK residents' personal communications by the police or the intelligence agencies. Access to metadata,

live content, or the stored content of personal communications must only take place without consent where there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or to prevent threats to life.

8.5 Securing our rights and freedoms in law

800 years after Magna Carta in England, the need for written, legal guarantees of our rights and liberties across the UK has not gone away.

We will:

- ♦ Protect the Human Rights Act and enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in UK law. We will take appropriate action to comply with decisions of UK courts and the European Court of Human Rights.
- ♦ Block any further attempts to limit trial by jury.
- ♦ Pass a new Freedoms Act, to protect citizens from excessive state powers

Our Freedoms Act will:

- ♦ Protect free speech by ensuring insulting words, jokes, and non-intentional acts, are not treated as criminal, and that social media communications are not treated more harshly than other media.
- ♦ Strengthen safeguards to prevent pre-emptive arrests and misuse of pre-charge conditions to restrict civil liberties and stifle peaceful protest.
- ♦ Give increased powers and resources for the Information Commissioner and introduce custodial sentences for egregious breaches of the Data Protection Act.
- ♦ End the ministerial veto on release of information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Our Digital Bill of Rights will:

- ♦ Enshrine the principle that everyone has the right to control their own personal data, and that everyone should be able to view, correct, and (where appropriate and proportionate) delete their personal data, wherever it is held.
- ♦ Forbid any public body from collecting, storing or processing personal data without statutory authority, and require any such legislation to be regularly reviewed.
- ♦ Ensure privacy is protected to the same extent in telecoms and online as in the offline world. Public authorities should only invade an individual's privacy where there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or where it is otherwise necessary and proportionate to do so in the public interest, and with appropriate oversight by the courts.
- ♦ Make it an offence to acquire personal data and sell it to third parties without explicit consent or legal authority.
- ♦ Uphold the right of individuals, businesses and public bodies to use strong encryption to protect their privacy and security online.
- ♦ Make it clear that online services have a duty to provide age-appropriate policies, guidance and support to the children and young people who use their services.



Secure communities

Policing, justice and the border force

No one can fulfil their potential if they live in fear. By ensuring our laws are upheld, we can build strong communities with opportunity for all. We will focus on what works to cut crime.



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We will focus on what works to cut crime.

Along with all parties, Liberal Democrats have supported extra police in Scotland and have urged ministers to make sure uniformed staff are available to serve the public, detect and prevent crime. We also value the role of civilian support staff who have faced pressures and upheaval recently from the SNP Government's centralisation of police functions.

We have been opposed from the start to the SNP Government's centralisation of police. It has destroyed local accountability and closed local services. The lack of effective scrutiny and national accountability is something that Liberal Democrats will insist is tackled by the Scottish Parliament elected next year if the present Scottish Government continues with an approach characterised by indifference and complacency. In the last two years in Scotland armed police officers began routine duties in the Highlands and the policy on stop and search has descended into chaos. Scottish Liberal Democrats are proposing to put stop and search onto a stronger statutory basis in Scotland to ensure powers are not abused.

We have begun to tackle abuse in our immigration system, closing colleges that break the rules, cracking down on illegal working and human trafficking, and reintroducing border checks. We will build

on this record to rebuild confidence in our borders and immigration system.

Liberal Democrats will adopt the default position that – unless there are strong reasons to the contrary in specific cases – public servants rather than commercial organisations should provide detention, prison, immigration enforcement and secure units.

We support enhanced steps to tackle people trafficking and support those who are victims.

We will reduce pressure on the criminal Legal Aid budget by requiring company directors to take out insurance against prosecution for fraud.

9.1 Tackling terrorism and violent extremism

Terrorism and violent extremism remain a serious threat to the United Kingdom, which requires a proportionate response.

We will:

- ♦ Work with religious and community leaders, civil society groups and social media sites to counter the narratives put forward by extremists, and create the space for the expression of contrary viewpoints and religious interpretations.
- ♦ Maintain laws that provide an effective defence against terrorist activity, including proscription of terrorist groups, Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures, and Temporary Exclusion Orders, which enable the security services to manage the return of those who have fought illegally in foreign conflicts.
- ♦ Ensure we continue to provide the appropriate resources to the police and intelligence agencies to meet the threat, including of cyber attack.
- ♦ Ensure efforts to tackle terrorism do not stigmatise or alienate Muslims or any other ethnic or faith group, and that government supports communities to help prevent those at risk of radicalisation from being drawn into illegal activity.
- ♦ Review the process of assessing threats against different ethnic and religious communities to ensure all groups in the UK are properly protected.

9.2 An effective approach to reducing drug harm

For too long the debate about effective ways to reduce the harm caused by drugs has been distorted by political prejudice. Around the world, countries are trialling new approaches that are

reducing drug harm, improving lives, reducing addiction and saving taxpayers' money. In the UK we have made good progress on treatment but we continue to give 80,000 people a year a criminal record for drug possession, blighting their employment chances, and we still imprison 1,000 people a year for personal possession when they are not charged with dealing or any other offence. In Scotland, around 1,500 people were convicted for possession of cannabis alone last year. Drug legislation is the responsibility of the UK Parliament whilst prosecution policy is a Scottish matter.

We will:

- ♦ Work with the Scottish Government to adopt, across the UK, the approach used in Portugal where those arrested for possession of drugs for personal use are diverted into treatment, education or civil penalties that do not attract a criminal record.
- ♦ As a first step towards reforming the system, legislate to end the use of imprisonment for possession of drugs for personal use, diverting resources towards tackling organised drug crime instead.
- ♦ Continue to apply severe penalties to those who manufacture, import or deal in illegal drugs, and clamp down on those who produce and sell unregulated chemical highs.
- ♦ Establish a review to assess the effectiveness of the cannabis legalisation experiments in the United States and Uruguay in relation to public health and criminal activity.
- ♦ Legislate to make the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs independent in setting the classification of drugs, while remaining accountable to Parliament and the wider public.
- ♦ Enable doctors to prescribe cannabis for medicinal use.

9.3 Restoring confidence in our borders

The UK secures many benefits from immigration, which boosts our economy and helps staff our public services, especially our NHS.

But we need to tackle the weaknesses in our immigration system, which threatened to undermine confidence in it. That is why we have led work fully to restore border checks on entry and exit. We need to improve the administration of our system so we deal with asylum claims and visa applications promptly and return those who do not have a valid claim to be in the UK. Then we can start to rebuild an open, tolerant Britain.

We will:

- ♦ Complete the restoration of full entry and exit checks at our borders, to rebuild confidence in immigration control, and allow targeting of resources at those who overstay their visas.
- ♦ Speed up the processing of asylum claims, reducing the time genuine refugees have to wait before they can settle into life in the UK and making it easier to remove those who do not have a right to be here. We will require 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. We will end the use of the 'Azure Card' for administering benefits in the asylum system.
- ♦ Double the number of inspections on employers to ensure all statutory employment legislation is being respected.
- ♦ Separate students within official immigration statistics, while taking tough action against any educational institution that allows abuse of the student route into the UK.
- ♦ Present to Parliament an annual assessment of skill and labour market shortfalls and surpluses and their impact on the economy, public services and local communities, together with an audit report on the migration control system, allowing full Parliamentary oversight of Britain's migration policies.
- ♦ Continue requirements for all new claimants for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) to have their English language skills assessed, with JSA then being conditional on attending English language courses for those whose English is poor.





Power to the people

Devolution, democracy and citizenship

For freedom to be meaningful, people need the power not just to make decisions about their own lives, but about the way their country, their community, their workplace and more are run. Liberal Democrats have made a good start on modernising and decentralising the state. But we were thwarted in some of our attempts to reform politics. When it came to reforming the House of Lords and giving citizens a stronger voice with fair votes, our proposals were blocked. We still believe these are essential changes and will continue our work to deliver them.



For freedom to be meaningful, people need the power not just to make decisions about their own lives, but about the way their country, their community, their workplace and more are run.

Liberal Democrats have made a good start on modernising and decentralising the state. We have taken away the Prime Minister's power to call elections. We have improved Parliament with more powers for backbenchers and more internal democracy. We have enacted the biggest transfer of fiscal power from Westminster to Scotland in three hundred years. We have supported employee democracy and the mutuals movement.

But we were thwarted in some of our attempts to reform politics. When it came to reforming the House of Lords and giving citizens a stronger voice with fair votes, our proposals were blocked. We still believe these are essential changes and will continue our work to deliver them.

10.1 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 sidelined in politics today. We need to reform British politics to make it more representative and more empowering of our citizens so it commands greater public confidence.

We will:

- ♦ 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, funded from savings from

| A Record of Delivery | A Promise of More |
|---|---|
| Passed a Lobbying Act to introduce a register of consultant lobbyists and curb the influence of special interest money in elections | Get big money out of politics with a £10,000 cap on donations as part of wider funding reform |
| Fixed term Parliaments, taking away a Prime Minister's power to call elections when it suits their own party | Better democracy with a fair voting system in local government and at Westminster and votes at 16 |
| New powers for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including more financial devolution than ever before | Deliver on our promises to Scotland in full, devolve more powers to Wales, and work for a shared future in Northern Ireland |

existing government spending on politics.

- ♦ Protect the rights of trade union members to have their subscriptions, including political levies, deducted from their salary, and strengthen members' political freedoms by letting them choose which political party they wish to support through such automatic payments. We will encourage wider participation in trade union ballots through electronic voting.
- ♦ Introduce votes at age 16 for elections and referendums across the UK, and make it easier to register to vote in schools and colleges.
- ♦ Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate, starting from the proposals in the 2012 Bill.
- ♦ Reform our voting systems for elections to local government and Westminster to ensure more proportional representation. We will introduce the Single Transferable Vote for electing MPs across the UK. We will reduce the number of MPs but only as part of the introduction of a reformed, fair, voting system.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Explore options to strengthen and simplify the voting rights

of UK citizens living abroad and address disenfranchisement experienced by some.

- ♦ Work with the broadcasters to formalise the process for Leaders' Debates in General Elections, helping ensure they happen and setting a clear threshold for those eligible to participate.
- ♦ Strengthen and expand the lobbying register and prohibit MPs from accepting paid lobbying work. We will consider carefully the work of the independent reviewer into the impact of third party spending regulations to ensure the right balance has been struck. We will also remove the discrimination against third parties by requiring political parties to include the cost of staffing in their national expense limits in the same way as third parties now do.

To reform Parliament in particular we will:

- ♦ Strengthen the role of MPs in amending the Budget and scrutinising government spending proposals.
- ♦ Make Parliament more family-friendly, and establish a review to pave the way for MP jobsharing arrangements.
- ♦ Implement a House Business committee to ensure that Parliament and not the executive decides the Parliamentary timetable, ending the 'talking out' of private members' business. Building on the Wright Committee recommendations of 2009, and experiences of Coalition, we will conduct a full review of Parliamentary procedures which should formally recognise individual political parties not just Government and Opposition.

10.2 A decentralised but United Kingdom

Liberal Democrats have a proud record of leading the way on transferring greater powers to the nations of the UK. Liberal Democrat ministers were the ones to lead the 2012 Scotland Act and the 2014 Wales Act through Parliament, transferring more financial autonomy to Scotland than ever before, and Wales' first tax powers. And in the last months, we have given the governments of all three nations the power to lower the voting age to 16.

Now we need to go further. We must deliver on the promises made to the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK to further decentralise power. In short, we will deliver Home Rule to each of the nations of a strong, federal United Kingdom.

Constitutional change has taken 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 from representatives of the political parties, academia, civic society and members of the public, tasked with producing a full written

constitution for the UK, to report within two years.

There are many powers that we think should be devolved on an equal basis to the existing Parliaments and Assemblies. We will transfer power to:

- ♦ Borrow for investment.
- ♦ Manage the Crown Estate's economic assets.
- ♦ Control a range of benefits for older people, carers and disabled people.

Scotland

After the independence referendum, the Smith Commission brought Scotland's five main parties together to agree what further powers should be assigned to the Scottish Parliament. Liberal Democrats ensured the package of powers reflects Scotland's key priorities.

The Scottish Parliament should raise in tax more than half of what it spends in its budget. A Scottish welfare system should 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 the Scottish people: an empowered and accountable Scottish Parliament in a strong and secure United Kingdom.

We will deliver Home Rule for Scotland by implementing the Smith Commission proposals in full in the first session of the next Parliament. We will continue to make the case for powers currently held at Westminster and Holyrood to be transferred directly to local government where appropriate.

We will work to honour the recommendation of Lord Smith that "Both Governments need to work together to create a more productive, robust, visible and transparent relationship. There also needs to be greater respect between them."

We will make changes to inter-governmental working between the UK Government and the Scottish Government. This will include changes to the way Joint Ministerial Committees work and the associated dispute resolution mechanisms, as well as strengthening the role of the respective Parliament to hold their ministers to account.

Together, this will lead to stronger and more collaborative governance of the UK, to the advantage of all citizens. It will include an improved role for Scottish ministers in EU discussions.

We will continue to make the case for powers currently held at Westminster and Holyrood to be transferred directly to local government where appropriate.

Over the past eight years the SNP Government has systematically and categorically stripped powers away from local authorities and communities, and centralised decisions in their power block in Edinburgh.

From the Highlands and Northern Isles, through the North East, right down to the Borders, communities across Scotland have been stripped of control of the local services they need.

Council decisions, health investment, access to justice, college courses, enterprise agency decisions, fire and police services have all been centralised.

Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that local people can be trusted with more powers. We believe that local people are best placed to make decisions about the services which affect them every day.

We have been the only party to campaign consistently against the SNP's one-size-fits-all approach. We endorse the view of the Smith Commission on the desire in Scotland for "the principle of devolution extended further, with the transfer of powers from Holyrood to local communities". Scottish Liberal Democrats support that.

Wales

We endorse the recent St. David's Day announcement and will implement it in full, devolving powers over energy, ports, local elections, broadcasting and more, and implementing a reserved powers model.

But this announcement does not go far enough. Liberal Democrats will go further and deliver proper Home Rule for Wales and a Welsh Parliament by:

- ♦ Implementing the remaining Silk Part 1 proposals on financial powers for Wales. We will consider the work of the Government's review on devolution of Air Passenger Duty (APD), with a view to devolving long-haul APD.
- ♦ Implementing the Silk Part 2 proposals by:
 - ❖ Transferring powers from the UK Parliament to the National Assembly over S4C, sewerage, transport, teachers' pay, youth justice, policing and in the longer term other justice powers.
 - ❖ Devolving funding of Network Rail in relation to the Wales network.
 - ❖ Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly to scrutinise legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account.
- ♦ Allowing the Welsh Government to set its own bank holidays.

- ♦ Providing for a Welsh Parliament, preventing Westminster from being able to override Wales on devolved matters, and devolving the power to amend electoral arrangements for the Assembly and local elections in Wales with a two-thirds majority.
- ♦ 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.

In addition, to help create jobs and boost growth in Wales, we will abolish the economically distorting tolls on the Severn Bridge once the debts are paid off.

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 ensure the political stability of the Northern Ireland Assembly and other institutions of the Belfast Agreement. To grow the economy, tackle social exclusion, overcome inequality and deliver efficiencies in public services, Liberal Democrats will support policies and initiatives that promote sharing over separation and counter the cost of division. A key aspect of this is dealing with the legacy of the past. The Stormont House Agreement represents another stage in the intensive work necessary to build long-term peace, stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

In Government we delivered on the commitment to enable the devolution of Corporation Tax to Northern Ireland by April 2017. We will continue to work with all parties to implement the full package of measures in the Stormont House Agreement and address outstanding issues. We will build on this by:

- ♦ Keeping under review the prospect of further devolution of fiscal powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly and other powers that would improve the financial accountability of the Assembly.
- ♦ Promoting a strong mechanism for working constructively with civic society in Northern Ireland.
- ♦ Working to ensure the interface is smooth and effective between national security and counter-terrorism policing on the one hand, and local policing and criminal justice activities on the other.
- ♦ Supporting changes to the powers and internal mechanisms of the Northern Ireland Assembly that reinforce the development of normal, democratic principles and enhances the creation of a shared future beyond sectarianism and division.

- ♦ Working with the political parties in Northern Ireland to tackle the cost of division and ensuring all Government policies in Northern Ireland support the aim of a genuine Shared Future for all.

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 believe an English-only stage in legislation affecting England should be considered, so English MPs can have a separate say on laws that only affect England. However, this would need to be on a proportional basis, genuinely reflecting the balance of opinion in England, not the distorted picture generated by the First Past the Post system.

Beyond Parliament, there is much to change to improve the way communities in England are governed. By returning power to the villages, towns, cities and regions of England we can drive growth, improve public services and give people freedom to run their own lives.

To rejuvenate local government in England, we will:

- ♦ Reduce the powers of ministers to interfere in democratically elected local government.
- ♦ Remove the requirement to hold local referenda for Council Tax changes, ensuring Councillors are properly accountable for their decisions by introducing fair votes.
- ♦ Build on the success of City Deals and Growth Deals to devolve more power and resources to groups of Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, starting with back-to-work support.
- ♦ 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.

In some areas of England there is an even 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. 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.

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 as the basis for future spending allocations for Scotland and Northern Ireland. This will protect the individual nations' budgets from external shocks like the recent global drop in the price of oil. 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 entrenching a Barnett floor 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.

10.3 Everyday democracy

To lead a fulfilled life, people need power over more than just their government. Liberal Democrats will spread democracy in everyday life by encouraging mutuals, cooperatives, and employee participation and by increasing the opportunities for people to take democratic control over the services on which they rely. We will encourage citizens to engage in practical social action, seeing government as an enabler and facilitator rather than just a commissioner and provider of services.

We will:

- ♦ Encourage employers to promote employee participation and employee ownership, aiming to increase further the proportion of GDP in employee-owned businesses. We will change company law to permit a German-style two-tier board structure to include employees.
- ♦ Introduce mandatory arbitration for strikes likely to cause

Reforming the House of Lords



789

The current size of the House of Lords

450

Under Liberal Democrat reforms

widespread public disruption, enabling us to defend workers' rights to strike while ensuring continued service in essential public services.

- ♦ Strengthen worker participation in decision-making, including staff representation on remuneration committees, and the right for employees who collectively own 5% of a company to be represented on the board.
- ♦ Give football fans a greater say in how their clubs are run by encouraging the reform of football governance rules to promote engagement between clubs and supporters.
- ♦ Spread mutual structures and employee participation through the public sector.
- ♦ Support social investment, ensuring charities and social enterprises can access the support and finance they need to develop and deliver innovative, sustainable solutions to challenges in their communities.

10.4 Protecting the space for democratic debate

We recognise the importance of a plural and diverse media, free from state influence or from monopolistic or dominant market control, in guaranteeing a vibrant national conversation. We will therefore reform the existing arrangements for safeguarding plurality in the media broadly in line with the recommendations of the 2014 Lords Communications Select Committee report.

We will:

- ♦ Give lead responsibility to Ofcom and enable it to conduct reviews periodically, as well as when triggered by proposed mergers and acquisitions, and enable Ofcom to set down conditions to prevent the reach of any media company damaging the public interest.
- ♦ Ensure any conditions or requirements that Ofcom lays down following a plurality review can only be vetoed or interfered with by a minister after a vote of both Houses of Parliament.
- ♦ Use a variety of measures to ensure that there is a vibrant local and 'hyperlocal' media to help inform citizens about their local area and their local politics, including:
- ♦ Extending Ofcom's community radio grant support to online hyperlocals, and allowing non-profit local media outlets to obtain charitable status where the public interest is being served.



Britain in the world

Global action for security and prosperity

In a more globalised, interdependent world, freedom for individuals is not best protected solely by the nation state. Corporations, banks and markets now operate across the globe with little respect for national borders. Climate change, one of the greatest challenges of our age, is by its nature global. And criminals, hackers and terrorists now operate across borders, too. It is in the interests of all countries to create a system of international law and governance, both treaty-based and multilateral, at the global level. We will ensure Britain actively and constructively works with our allies and partners in the European Union, Commonwealth, UN and NATO to engage with and develop policy responses when liberal internationalism and the rules-based system are challenged.



Liberal Democrats are internationalists because we respect the rights of human beings wherever they live and understand that by working together countries can achieve more than they can alone. This is particularly true for a country like the UK with a rich web of global relationships, which gives it the potential to wield greater influence than its economic or military power alone would permit.

In a more globalised, interdependent world, freedom for individuals is not best protected solely by the nation state. Corporations, banks and markets now operate across the globe with little respect for national borders. Climate change, one of the greatest challenges of our age, is by its nature global. And criminals, hackers and terrorists now operate across borders, too. It is in the interests of all countries to create a system of international law and governance, both treaty-based and multilateral, at the global level.

Liberal Democrats have worked tirelessly in government to keep Britain at the heart of the European Union, to secure the best deal for British citizens. Our ministers have represented the UK across the world on vital issues from climate change to nuclear disarmament and secured agreements that will keep us all safer, not least the International Arms Trade Treaty. We have stood up for human rights, the rule of international law and humanitarian aid, delivering for the first time on the 40 year old UN ambition for developed countries to spend 0.7% of national income as Official Development Assistance.

We will ensure Britain actively and constructively works with with our allies and partners in the European Union, Commonwealth, UN and NATO to engage with and develop policy responses when liberal internationalism and the rules-based system are challenged.

| A Record of Delivery | A Promise of More |
|--|--|
| Increased aid spending to 0.7% of national income, and guaranteed this in law | Ensure the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals aim to end poverty, protect the environment and leave no one behind |
| Secured a record £23.9 billion last year from clamping down on tax evasion, avoidance and fraud, and won G8 agreement on transparency on the real owners of businesses | Improve tax transparency including in low-income countries by extending country-by-country reporting from banks and extractive industries to all UK listed companies |
| Passed a law to guarantee a referendum before Britain passes any more powers to the EU | Ensure Britain plays a constructive part in the European Union and any referendum triggered by the EU Act is on the big question: In or Out |
| Agreed an ambitious EU target of 40% cuts to carbon emissions by 2030, and secured Rio+20 agreements on sustainable development | Work to secure a binding global agreement on cutting emissions, and a stronger commitment within the EU to a 50% reduction by 2030 |
| Supported our armed forces and veterans, enshrining the Armed Forces Covenant in law | Focus on ensuring our armed forces have the training and equipment they need for the threats of today and end continuous nuclear weapon patrols |

11.1 Working for peace and security across the world

From the recent collapse of talks between Israelis and Palestinians to Russian interference in Ukraine, this is a challenging time for peace and security across the world. At times like these we need to redouble our diplomatic efforts and work closely with our EU and NATO partners to promote an active, rights-based foreign policy for our mutual defence.

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, wherever possible promoting our values of freedom and opportunity for all.

We will:

- ♦ Use all aspects of government policy – trade, aid and diplomacy as well as military cooperation – to focus UK policy on conflict prevention. This will require a joint approach across the MOD, FCO, DFID and other departments, and we will continue to assess UK government actions for their impacts on conflict prevention and security. This will be a priority within the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which should begin immediately after the election.
- ♦ Engage with and strengthen multilateral UN and treaty-based institutions worldwide.
- ♦ Support the UN principle of Responsibility to Protect. This principle focuses on the security of individuals, rather than states.
- ♦ Improve control of arms exports by:
 - ❖ Implementing a policy of ‘presumption of denial’ for arms exports to countries listed as countries of concern in the Foreign Office’s annual human rights report.
 - ❖ Requiring end-user certification on all future arms export licenses with an annual report to Parliament on this certification.

Should all these institutions and policies fail, we recognise it will be necessary to consider military interventions to protect ourselves and fulfil our international obligations. However in these circumstances, Liberal Democrats believe the UK should intervene only when there is a clear legal and/or humanitarian case, endorsed by a vote in Parliament, working within the remit of international institutions wherever and whenever possible.

In response to current major conflicts worldwide, we will:

- ♦ Promote democracy and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring countries against an increasingly assertive Russia. We will work closely with EU 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. We will work with the EU to develop an EU energy strategy that will reduce reliance on Russia’s energy supplies.
- ♦ Continue to work with international partners – Western, African and Arab – to tackle Islamic fanaticism embodied by organisations like the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria and Boko Haram in Nigeria. These extremist organisations pervert Islam and carry out appalling atrocities against Muslims as well as

non-Muslims. This is a generational challenge that will take time and patience. We favour broadening the international Coalition against IS.

- ♦ Recognising that airstrikes alone will not defeat IS, continue a comprehensive approach, in compliance with international law, to supporting the Iraqi government in standing against IS, including:
 - ♦ Assistance in strengthening its democratic institutions.
 - ♦ Training the Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters.
 - ♦ Humanitarian relief to help alleviate the suffering of displaced Syrians and Iraqis.
- ♦ Support the moderate opposition in Syria, who are fighting both President Bashar al-Assad and IS. We will continue to push for an inclusive political transition in Syria, which would enable Syrian moderates from all sides to unite against extremism and tyranny.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Support multilateral negotiations to stop Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. We will continue to seek normalisation of our diplomatic relations with Iran, including reopening the British Embassy in Tehran and promoting peaceful dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

11.2 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. Many of 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.

Liberal Democrats are clear that the security offered by our continued membership of the EU is more crucial than ever, as are our bilateral relationships with our key European allies. We favour greater integration of military capabilities and procurement to address common problems, to overcome economic constraints and to maintain a full spectrum of defence capabilities. To achieve this, we will build on the treaty-based arrangements we have established

and extend this cooperation to other suitable European partners.

Liberal Democrats are committed to meeting our national and international obligations in security and defence. This is why in government over the last five years we met the NATO commitment to spend 2% of our GDP on defence, most recently restated in the Readiness Action Plan and Defence Industrial Pledge at the Wales NATO Summit in 2014. We are committed to completing a comprehensive Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) early in the next Parliament to inform future defence spending decisions. We recognise that the world has changed fundamentally since the last such review. It is vital that our real security and defence needs and international obligations are considered in the SDSR, and this is why we wish to move towards a Single Security Budget.

We will:

- ♦ Conduct a Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in which we will revisit and update the Future Force 2020 vision and ensure the capabilities we are invested in are relevant for keeping Britain safe.
- ♦ Use the SDSR to establish a Single Security Budget, including not just conventional defence spending but the work of our security agencies, cyber defences and soft power interventions. The Single Security Budget will be distributed by the SDSR process, as part of an overall Spending Review. This integrated approach will ensure spending choices follow the capabilities we need not, traditional departmental silos.
- ♦ Maintain strong and effective armed forces and the capability to deploy rapidly expeditionary forces.
- ♦ Set long-term budgets to invest in the right equipment at competitive prices.
- ♦ Recognise the expansion of warfare into the cybersphere, by investing in our security and intelligence services and acting to counter cyber attacks.
- ♦ Remain fully engaged in international nuclear disarmament efforts.
- ♦ Step down the nuclear ladder by procuring fewer Vanguard successor submarines and moving from continuous at-sea deterrence to a contingency posture of regular patrols, enabling a 'surge' to armed patrols when the international security context makes this appropriate. This would help us to fulfil our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments and reduce the UK nuclear warhead stockpile.
- ♦ Work for new global standards to end the use of conventional explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. 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 strongly support the Armed Forces Covenant, now enshrined in law in the 2011 Armed Forces Act. We also propose:

- ♦ Transferring the Office of the Veterans' Minister to the Cabinet Office, so that the services of all departments can be marshalled in support of veterans and creating a post of UK Veterans' Commissioner in addition to the existing Scottish Veterans' Commissioner.
- ♦ Improving support for personnel and veterans with mental health problems, including alcohol dependency.

The government in 2011 set a target for increasing the size of the Reserves to 30,000 but it is significantly behind in achieving this goal, with continued problems of retention. We acknowledge the different pressures that Reserves face and propose that:

- ♦ Emphasis be put on improving retention and training of Reserves at current levels.
- ♦ Employers be required to offer two weeks' unpaid leave annually to assist Reserves attending training camps.

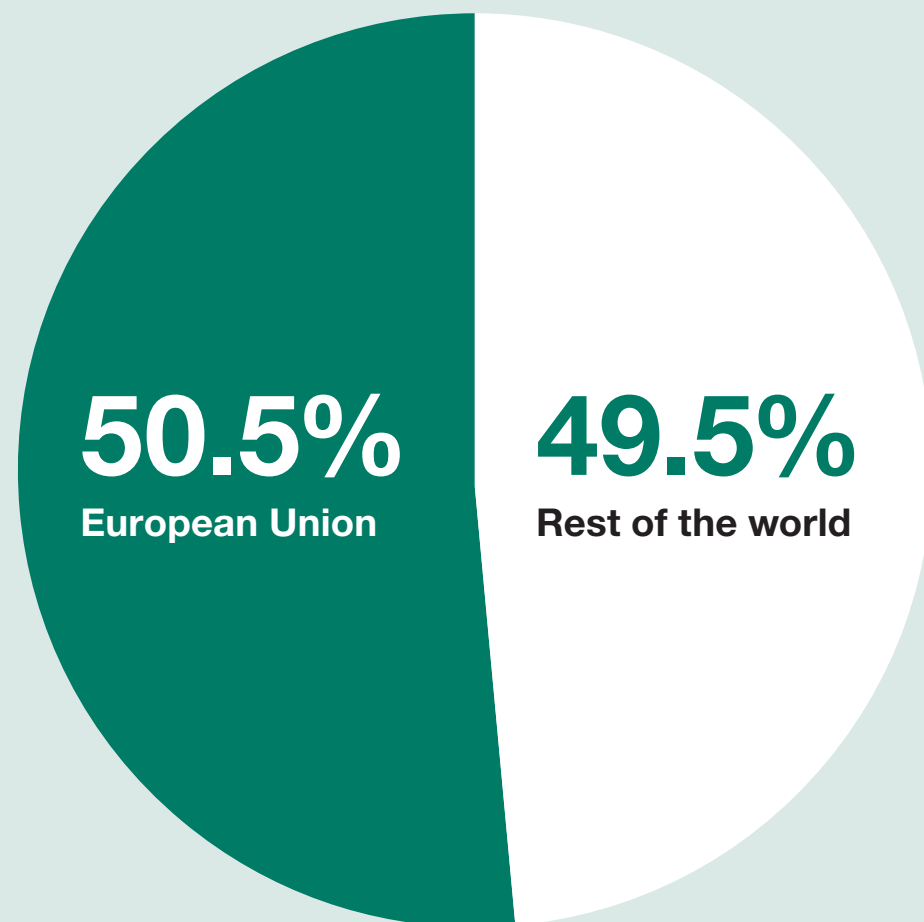
11.3 Britain in Europe: prosperity and reform

Britain's membership of the EU is essential for creating a stronger economy and for projecting influence in the world. Millions of British jobs are linked to our trade with the EU, and being in Europe puts us on a more equal footing when negotiating trade deals with global players like the USA and China and in countering security threats. A modernised EU is crucial to responding to the global challenges Britain faces, whether they are climate change, cross-border crime and terrorism, or conflict.

If the UK were to leave the EU, trade rules would be made without us, our voice would not be heard in climate change negotiations and our borders would be more vulnerable. There is no doubt the UK would be poorer and weaker if we walked away from our closest neighbours and most trusted allies and left the EU.

But that does not mean that the institutions and policies of the European Union are perfect and do not need reform. Liberal Democrats are the party of reform whether that is in Westminster, Holyrood, the Senedd or in local Councils and the EU is no exception.

British Exports



The European Union is the biggest export market for British goods.

Liberal Democrats in Government have already secured significant reforms like cutting the EU budget by £30 billion and reforming the Common Fisheries Policy, ending the discarding of usable fish. We have also shifted the balance of EU spending towards jobs, growth and innovation. Only by remaining fully engaged in the EU can we deliver the further reforms that are urgently needed not only for the UK, but also for the rest of the EU.

We will:

- ♦ Work to deepen the EU single market in the energy sector, in the digital economy and for services. We will boost British exports by scrapping national barriers to British firms trading online and by concluding ambitious EU trade agreements with key markets like Japan and India. We will implement the recommendations made by Michael Moore MP in October 2014, including publishing an annual European Business White Paper and appointing an EU Business Minister to lead this competitiveness agenda.
- ♦ Support negotiations at the World Trade Organisation as well as an ambitious Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the USA, which could bring benefits of up to £10 billion a year to the British economy. We will only support an agreement that upholds EU standards of consumer, employee and environmental protection, and allows us to determine how NHS services are provided.
- ♦ Work to reform the EU to make it more efficient, reducing the proportion of the EU budget spent on the Common Agricultural Policy, abolishing unnecessary EU institutions like the European Economic and Social Committee and scrapping the second seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.
- ♦ Continue to reduce the burden of EU legislation on business by curbing unnecessary red tape, exempting small businesses from EU rules where possible and defending the UK opt-out to the Working Time Directive.
- ♦ Increase the accountability of the EU by enhancing the role of national Parliaments in scrutinising EU decision-making and by giving a combined majority of national Parliaments the automatic ability to block unwanted legislation. We will strengthen UK scrutiny of European legislation and positions taken by British ministers in Europe including by proposing an explicit role for British Parliamentary Select Committees.
- ♦ Hold an In/Out referendum when there is next any Treaty change involving a material transfer of sovereignty from the UK to the EU. Liberal Democrats will campaign for the UK to remain in the European Union when that referendum comes.
- ♦ Reinforce the EU's tools for tackling cross border crime,

strengthening the role of the European Cyber Crime Centre and reforming the European Arrest Warrant to prevent miscarriages of justice while ensuring swift delivery of justice.

- ♦ Cooperate with other European countries to address environmental threats and tackle climate change by securing agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and developing the EU Energy Union.
- ♦ Support EU free movement, which is hugely beneficial to millions of British citizens living in other European countries as well as to the British economy and the public sector, for example the thousands of European health workers who make a vital contribution to the running of the NHS. We will prevent any perceived 'right to claim' by tightening benefit rules for EU migrants, including reducing, and ultimately abolishing, payment of Child Benefit to children who are not resident in the UK. We will also lengthen transitional controls for new EU member countries, and eliminate loopholes.
- ♦ Cooperate with other European countries to address the pressure of migration across the Mediterranean. We will push for more effective EU measures to prevent the tragic loss of life for many crossing the Mediterranean, including through greater cooperation with anti-human-trafficking operations.
- ♦ Continue to work closely with other EU governments on foreign policy issues towards Russia, Ukraine, the Middle East and North Africa. We will build on our already close defence cooperation with France, the Netherlands, the Nordic states and other European countries, as the most reliable basis for British security.

11.4 International development

In government, Liberal Democrats have led the way on international development and aid. We have worked to end the use of rape as a weapon of war. We have led international efforts to tackle the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone and, through investment in the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations, Britain is a global leader in preventing communicable diseases.

Now, we need to build on progress made since the agreement of the Millennium Development Goals and work to eliminate absolute poverty by 2030 – through aid but also through economic development.

We will:

- ♦ Develop a whole-government approach to development.
- ♦ Continue to promote private sector economic development,



ensuring this benefits local people and small businesses not just multinational corporations. We will 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.

- ♦ Maintain our commitment to spend 0.7% of UK Gross National Income on Overseas Development Assistance, which the International Development Act 2015, introduced by a Liberal Democrat, now enshrines in law. We will adhere to the OECD's definition of what activities qualify.
- ♦ Conduct a full Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Review to ensure the Department for International Development continues to work in the right places and through the right channels.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Work to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals aim to:
- ♦ Safeguard the sustainability of the planet.
- ♦ Leave no one behind, helping the most vulnerable as well as improving average living standards. We will ensure people do not suffer discrimination or disadvantage because of gender, sexual orientation, disability or ethnic origin.
- ♦ Eliminate absolute poverty by 2030.
- ♦ Invest to eliminate within a generation preventable diseases like TB, HIV and malaria and explore new ways to support public and private research and development into treatment for these and

other deadly diseases and infections.

- ♦ Create a new civil society partnership scheme to build links between peoples in rich and poor countries, including partnerships between communities, trades unions or emergency services.

11.5 International action on the environment

The open and internationalist approach Liberal Democrats have always adopted is particularly crucial when it comes to environmental policy. Pollution does not respect national borders, and wildlife and ecosystems are not constrained by political boundaries. Challenges like climate change and deforestation are too massive for individual countries to tackle alone.

We will:

- ♦ Continue pushing for a 50% reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and the greater use of EU funds to support low-carbon investments, while ensuring the UK meets its own climate commitments and plays a leadership role on efforts to combat climate change.
- ♦ Work to secure agreement on a global climate treaty at the 2015 UN Climate Conference, supported by a well-financed Green Climate Fund to assist poorer countries to tackle and adapt to climate change.
- ♦ Work with regulatory bodies and financial investors to establish a global reporting standard for fossil fuel companies on the potential impact of future restrictions on carbon emissions on their asset base.
- ♦ Provide greater resources for international environmental cooperation, particularly on actions to tackle illegal trade in timber, wildlife and fish.
- ♦ Argue for an EU and global target of halting net global deforestation by 2020 – including supporting better forest law enforcement and governance and sustainable agriculture, closing loopholes in the EU Timber Regulation and ensuring that by 2020 only legal and sustainable timber products can be sold in the UK.
- ♦ Ensure UK and EU development aid, free trade and investment agreements support environmental goals and sustainable investment, including maintaining the UK's International Climate Fund and supporting direct bilateral programmes with developing countries on climate change.
- ♦ Create a 1 million square kilometre southern Atlantic Ocean reserve.

- ♦ Push for the creation of a marine nature reserve in the Arctic Ocean, promote the highest possible environmental standards for UK companies operating in the region and press for a ban on EU-flagged vessels undertaking industrial fishing in the previously unfished areas of the Arctic.

11.6 Standing up for Liberal values

Liberal Democrats believe British foreign policy and international aid should seek to advance human rights and democracy throughout the world. We believe all people – regardless of ethnicity, disability, age, belief, gender or sexual orientation – deserve a freer, fairer and more prosperous world.

We will:

- ♦ Continue to support free media and a free and open internet around the world, championing the free flow of information.
- ♦ Maintain funding to 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 essential for effective, sustainable economic development. We will pursue an International Gender Equality Strategy, work to secure women's rights to education and freedom from forced marriage; and aim to end female genital mutilation worldwide within a generation.
- ♦ Extend existing reporting rules to establish consistent requirements on all large UK companies to report on the social, environmental and human rights impacts of their activities and those of their supply chains.

The recent Islamist extremist attacks on journalists in Europe are a sharp reminder of the need to protect freedom of speech and belief internationally. We will appoint an Ambassador-level champion for Freedom of Belief to drive British diplomatic efforts in this field, and we will campaign for the abolition of blasphemy, sedition, apostasy and criminal libel laws worldwide, having already been responsible for ending them in this country.

Scottish Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015

This manifesto sets out Liberal Democrat policies and priorities for the whole United Kingdom. Scottish Liberal Democrats set policy on devolved matters that are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and will publish a full policy platform for Holyrood in the manifesto for the 2016 Scottish Parliament election. The broad direction of policy on devolved matters such as health and education are briefly set out in this manifesto. This is especially the case where the UK manifesto contains funding proposals that will generate extra income for the Scottish Government through Barnett consequentials or funding protections.

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The manifesto can be found in alternative formats at the website

www.libdems.org.uk

Further copies can be obtained from the Scottish Liberal Democrats 4 Clifton Terrace Edinburgh EH12 5DR

This manifesto can be found in alternative formats at our address

www.scotlibdems.org.uk

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