

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

Opportunity for every child

Guarantee education
funding from
nursery to 19 and
qualified teachers
in every class

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 £8 billion to
improve our NHS
and guarantee equal
care for mental
health







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Introduction



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 and investing in the poorest schoolchildren through the Pupil Premium 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 national 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 and introduced the first ever waiting-time standards for mental health.

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

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

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 will have 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:

BORROW
LESS
THAN
LABOUR

CUT
LESS
THAN
TORIES

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.



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.

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; enabling unprecedented investment in low-carbon energy; introducing a Regional Growth Fund and 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, Business Bank and Regional Growth Fund	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 more.
- ◆ Develop the skilled workforce needed to support this growth with a major expansion of high-quality and advanced apprenticeships,

offering vocational education on a par with academic qualifications, backed up with new sector-led National Colleges. We will develop a national skills strategy for key sectors, including low-carbon technologies, to help match skills and people.

- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Build on the success of the Regional Growth Fund, which has already created more than 100,000 jobs and secured £1.8 billion of private investment. We will continue the Fund throughout the next Parliament.
- ♦ Devolve more economic decision-making to local areas, building on the success of City Deals and Growth Deals, prioritising the transfer of transport, housing and infrastructure funding, skills training and back-to-work support.
- ♦ 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, working with Local Enterprise Partnerships to improve their effectiveness and coordination. 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, encouraging Local Authorities to use these platforms to improve credit access in their areas.
 - ❖ 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.

In England we will complete the ongoing review of Business Rates, prioritising reforms that lessen the burden on smaller businesses, ensure high streets remain competitive and promote more efficient use of land. Liberal Democrats remain committed to introducing Land Value Tax (LVT), which would replace Business Rates in the longer term and could enable the reduction or abolition of other taxes. We will extend the Business Rates review to ensure it considers the implementation of LVT, as well as interim reforms like Site Value Rating that could be completed within five years. We will charge the Land Registry with completing registration of all substantial land and property holdings in England and Wales by 2020.

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 offshore wind power and low-carbon vehicles, 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. (See also Section 6.2)

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.

- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Place the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) on the same statutory footing as the Committee on Climate Change through our Nature Act. We will task the NCC with identifying the key natural resources being used unsustainably and recommending legally binding targets for reducing their net consumption; and introduce incentives for businesses to improve resource efficiency.
- ♦ 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 including to the NHS and Academy schools. 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 electrify the overwhelming majority of the UK rail network, reopen smaller stations, restore twin-track lines to major routes and proceed with HS2, as the first stage of a high-speed rail network to Scotland.
- ♦ Invest in major transport improvements and infrastructure. We will:
 - ❖ Deliver the Transport for the North strategy to promote growth, innovation and prosperity across northern England.
 - ❖ Develop more modern, resilient links to and within the South West peninsula to help develop and diversify the regional economy
 - ❖ Complete East-West rail, connecting up Oxford and Cambridge and catalysing major new housing development.
 - ❖ Ensure London's transport infrastructure is improved to withstand the pressure of population and economic growth.
- ♦ 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 and change planning law to ensure new developments provide good freight access to retail, manufacturing and warehouse facilities.

- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Ensure new rail franchises include a stronger focus on customers, including requirements to integrate more effectively with other modes of transport and a programme of investment in new stations, lines and station facilities. We will continue the Access for All programme, improving disabled access to public transport.

Modern light rail systems, like Croydon Tramlink and Manchester Metrolink, have brought significant benefits to passengers. We will encourage Local Authorities to consider trams alongside other options, and support a new generation of light rail and ultra-light rail schemes in towns and cities where local people want them.

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. Our plans for insulating homes are set out in more detail in Section 7.5, below.
- ♦ 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 electricity from renewable sources by 2030. We will support investment in energy storage and smart grid technology to enable this higher reliance on renewables.
- ◆ Work with the independent regulator Ofgem to ensure the costs of electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure are allocated efficiently and fairly between consumers and generators across the country, and develop more European electricity interconnection capacity.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Expand community energy, building on Britain's first ever community energy strategy with additional financial and regulatory support. We will encourage Councils to be proactive in delivering energy saving and electricity generation.
- ◆ Encourage onshore wind in appropriate locations, helping meet our climate targets at least cost. We will end ideologically motivated interference in local planning decisions for wind farms by Government Ministers.
- ◆ Accept that new nuclear power stations can play a role in low-

carbon electricity supply 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. Liberal Democrats in government have introduced the world's most robust regulatory regime for unconventional gas, including banning drilling in National Parks, and will take two further steps to ensure any shale gas contributes to a faster transition to a low-carbon economy.

We will:

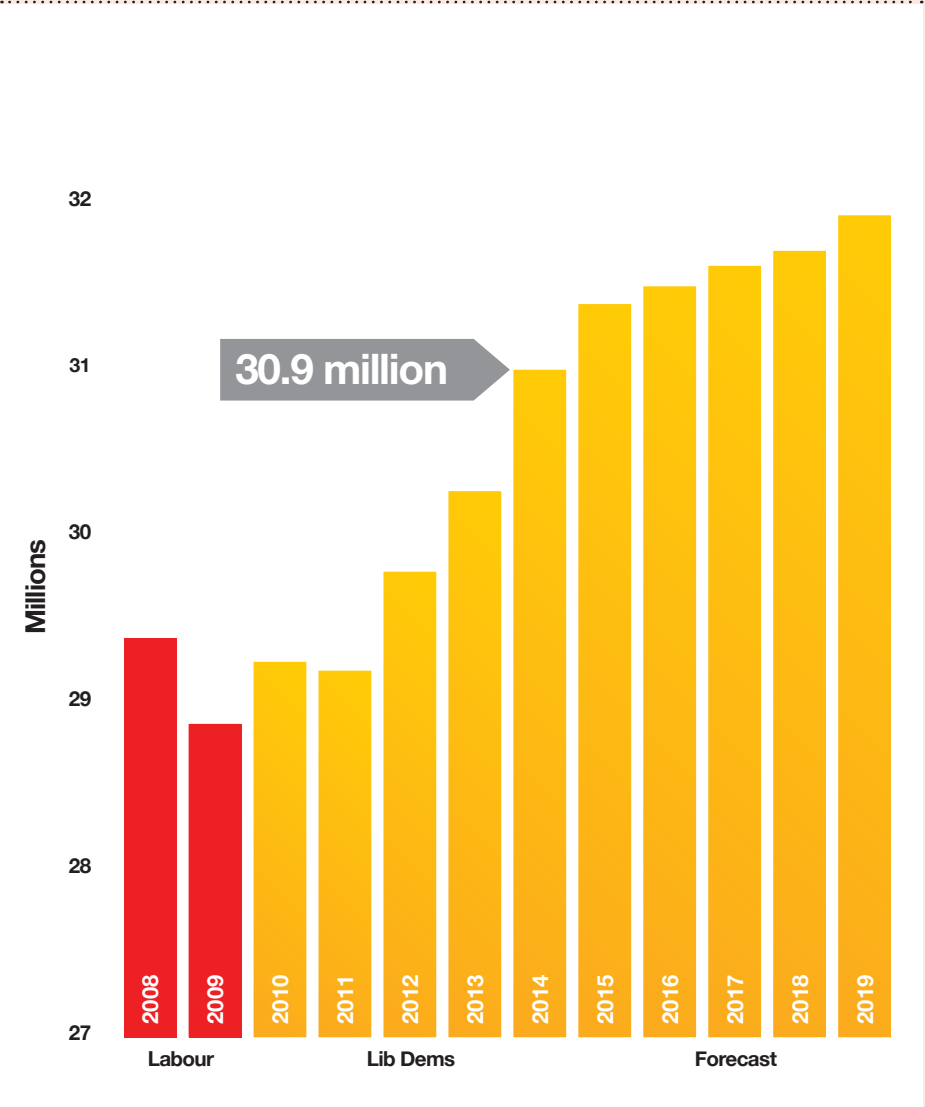
- ♦ Establish a Low-carbon Transition Fund using 50% of any tax revenues from shale gas to fund energy efficiency, community energy, low-carbon innovation and renewable heat.
- ♦ Require that once a shale gas well is finished, it must be offered at no cost to geothermal heat developers, to enable faster expansion of this renewable technology.

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.

Number of people in employment



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.

Tourism and heritage collectively make up as much as 9% of our economy, and yet these industries do not have the status they deserve in government or in wider society. We will work to make sure the British tourism industry is able to compete with other major world destinations and be a key generator of growth in the UK economy.

We will:

- ◆ Strengthen the Hospitality and Tourism Council, with the Business and Culture Secretaries as co-chairs.
- ◆ Give higher status to tourism within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- ◆ Build on our successful Tourism North and Tourism South West initiatives to devolve more power, resources and decision-making to local areas to promote their unique tourism propositions in the UK and globally.

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.
- ♦ Build on the success of Tech City, Tech North and the Cambridge tech cluster with a network across the UK acting as incubators for technology companies.
- ♦ Support fast-growing businesses that could create a million jobs over 20 years, following the Sherry Coutu report into these 'Scale- Ups'.
- ♦ Promote the take up of STEM subjects in schools, retain coding on the National Curriculum and encourage entrepreneurship at all levels.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Develop cutting-edge digital skills courses for young people and the unemployed, working with private sector employers and education and training providers.

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, age, belief, sexuality or disability. We believe the arts have an essential role in our education system and will work to encourage creativity in our schools and universities.

We will:

- ♦ Maintain free access to 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, maintain Channel 4 in public ownership and protect the funding and editorial independence of Welsh language broadcasters.
- ♦ 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 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.



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.

We will continue to rebalance the tax system 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 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 pensions 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 a year. 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, increases in childcare support through the benefit system and more free childcare hours for two, three and four-year olds. But we need to do more so that all who want to work can do so.

We will:

- ♦ Commit to an ambitious goal of 20 hours' 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.
- ♦ Start by providing 15 hours a week of free childcare to the parents of all two-year olds. We will then prioritise 15 hours free childcare for all working parents with children aged between nine months and two years.
- ♦ Complete the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare, 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 partnership with English local government, and the national governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. By devolving this support we can 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 or 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:

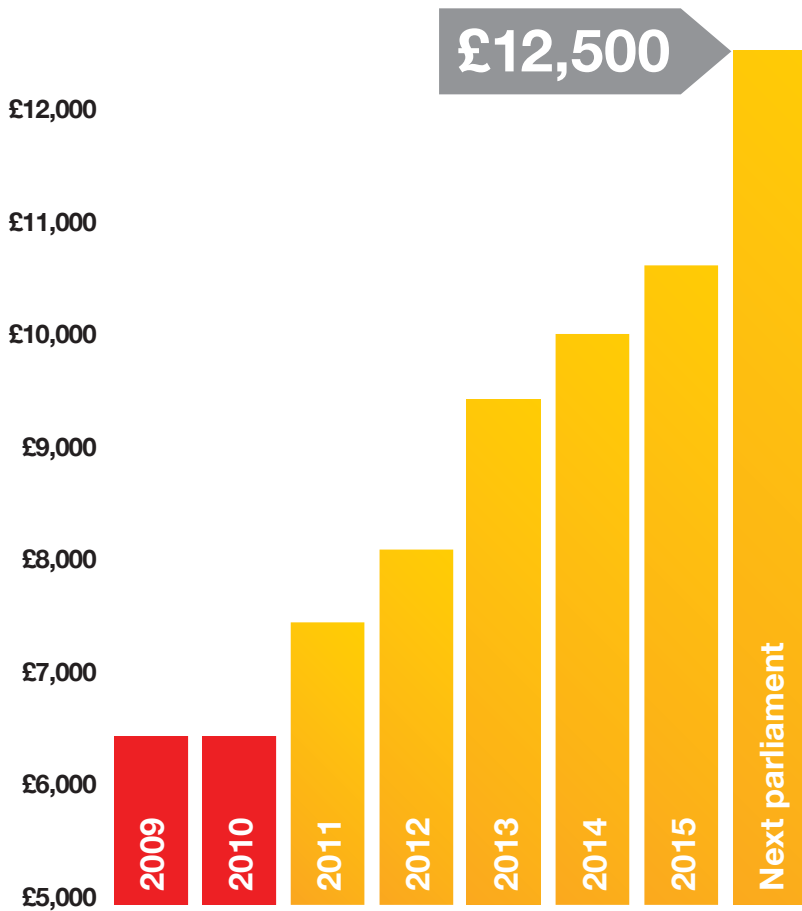
- ◆ Introduce a 1% cap on the uprating of working-age benefits until



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 tenants' consent, in return for a fixed reduction. Our plans for a major expansion of house building and new 'family friendly' tenancies, which limit annual rent increases, will also help reduce upward pressure on rents. We will review the way the Shared Accommodation Rate in Local Housing Allowance is set, and review the Broad Rental Market Areas to ensure they fit with realistic travel patterns.
- ◆ Improve links between Jobcentres and Work Programme providers and the local NHS to ensure all those in receipt of health-related benefits are getting the care and support to which they are entitled. In particular, as we expand access to talking therapies we expect many more people to recover and be able to seek work again.
- ◆ Work with Local Authorities to tackle fraud and error in a more

Income Tax Personal Allowance



coordinated way, in particular on Housing Benefit.

- ♦ 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%). We will retain the free bus pass 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 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.
- ♦ Reform the policy to remove the spare room subsidy. Existing social tenants will not be subject to any housing benefit reduction until they have been offered reasonable alternative accommodation. We will ensure tenants who need an extra

bedroom for genuine medical reasons are entitled to one in any assessment of their Housing Benefit needs, and those whose homes are substantially adapted do not have their Housing Benefit reduced.

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 ended the era of above-inflation rail fare increases. 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 granting new powers to Local Authorities to reduce the proliferation of betting shops and substantially reducing the maximum stakes for Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.
- ◆ Ensure rail fares rise no faster than inflation over the Parliament as a whole.
- ◆ Require the Sports Ground Safety Authority to prepare guidance under which domestic football clubs, working with their supporters, may 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 schools, hospitals, libraries and other public institutions 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 in delivering public services. To ensure all providers of public services are accountable to their users and the public, a public authority (if possible a democratically accountable one) should always take the decision about whether a service should be provided or commissioned.

We will:

- ♦ Improve consumer protections in public services, with a review of complaints handling processes, exploring the options of mirroring the private sector ‘super-complaint’ system in the public sector and reforms to the current system of ombudsmen.
- ♦ Introduce a ‘community trigger’ mechanism to enable the public to require a review of the provision of a particular service being delivered consistently poorly.
- ♦ Extend Freedom of Information laws to cover private companies delivering public services.
- ♦ Work with Local Authorities to bring services together at a local level to provide a better service to citizens, and support users in pooling their personal budgets into mutual support arrangements.
- ♦ 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 requiring that where data is used for research purposes it must be anonymised wherever possible, and impose a moratorium on the creation of new government databases without Parliamentary authority.



An opportunity society

World-class education for all

Liberal Democrats have put education at the heart of our agenda for a generation. We believe every child deserves a great start in life, and are determined to make sure that the 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 are, rather than by their own efforts and abilities. With our Pupil Premium, investing in children who might otherwise fall behind, we are finally tackling the scandalous gap in exam results between rich and poor, but we must do even more.

Children start learning from the moment they are born, so parents need to be supported right from the start. Our plan stretches from cradle to college: high-quality early years education; qualified teachers and successful schools in every community; more money helping the children who need it most; flexible choices for teenagers and young people; and world-class training at college and university to set every young adult on the path to a fulfilled working life.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Protection for school budgets and new Pupil Premium cash for your local school to help children who might otherwise fall behind	Protect early years, school, sixth form and college budgets – investment from nursery to 19 to raise standards for all
A million more children now taught in good or outstanding schools	Parents' Guarantee: core curriculum in every school and every child taught by qualified teachers
Driven up standards and narrowed the attainment gap between rich and poor children	End illiteracy and innumeracy by 2025, with action in nurseries to get all 4 year olds ready for school by 2020
Free school meals for the youngest children in primary school	Extend free school meals to all primary pupils
Two million apprenticeships, training our young people for 21st century jobs, and record numbers going to university	Double the numbers of businesses hiring apprentices, and give young people aged 16–21 a discount bus pass to cut the cost of travel

4

An opportunity society | world class education for all

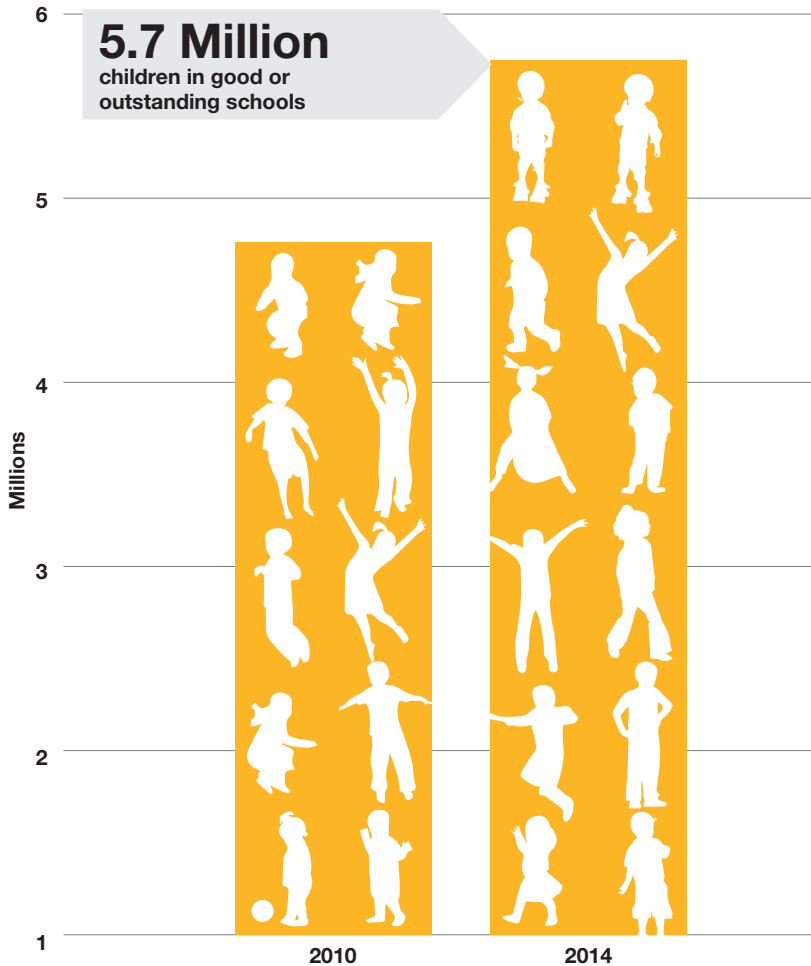
4.1 High-quality early years education

If we want a more equal society, we must get help to all those who might fall behind, and their parents, right from the start. That means improving early education and protecting the wide range of family support services offered in Children's Centres. We must improve the quality of early years teaching, and raise the status of those who work in early years.

We will:

- ♦ Raise the quality of early years provision and ensure that by 2020 every formal early years setting employs at least one person

Improving standards in schools



Under the Liberal Democrats the proportion of pupils in good and outstanding schools increased from 66% to 79% – that's a million more pupils getting a good education.

who holds an Early Years Teacher qualification. Working with organisations like Teach First, we will recruit more staff with Early Years Qualified status, and extend full Qualified Teacher status, terms and conditions to all those who are properly trained.

- ♦ Increase our Early Years Pupil Premium – which gives early years settings extra money to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds – to £1,000 per pupil per year.
- ♦ Continue to support Local Authorities in providing Children's Centres, especially in areas of high need, encouraging integration with other community services like health visitors, and in particular reviewing the support and advice available for parents on early child nutrition and breastfeeding.
- ♦ Improve the identification of Special Educational Needs and disability at the earliest possible stage, so targeted support can be provided and primary schools are better prepared for their intake of pupils.

4.2 Driving up school standards

There is much to be proud of in our schools today, and much that has been improved in the last few years. But far too many children are still failing to get the qualifications they need. The gaps between rich and poor are still too wide. We cannot fail our children – especially when we know it is the children who need the most help who are the most likely to be let down.

We will:

- ♦ Protect the education budget in real terms from the early years to age 19. We will at least protect the schools' Pupil Premium in real terms, consider carefully the merits of extending the Premium, and introduce a fair National Funding Formula.
- ♦ Set a clear ambition for all children to achieve a good grasp of Maths and English, aiming to eradicate child illiteracy and innumeracy by 2025. We will set an interim goal that all children should start school with good language skills by 2020.
- ♦ Strengthen school leadership and governance. We will provide rapid support and intervention to help ensure that all schools become good or outstanding. Our Talented Head Teachers programme will expand, helping move top leaders to where they are most needed.
- ♦ Increase the number of Teaching Schools – centres of teaching excellence that provide support to other schools.
- ♦ Ensure there is an effective, democratically accountable, 'middle tier' to support and intervene in schools where problems are identified. We will encourage local head teachers with a strong record to play a key role in school improvement through a local Head Teacher

Board, working with schools and Local Authorities. We will abolish unelected Regional Schools Commissioners.

- ◆ Allow Ofsted to inspect both Local Authorities and academy chains. Local authorities and academy chains which are failed by Ofsted for intervention work will be required to work with stronger organisations or be replaced.
- ◆ Rule out state-funded profit-making schools.
- ◆ Give democratically accountable Local Authorities clear responsibility for local school places planning. We will only fund new mainstream schools in areas where school places are needed, and repeal the rule that all new state funded schools must be free schools or academies. We will allow Local Authorities to select the school sponsor, where this is not the Local Authority itself.
- ◆ Ensure a fair local schools admissions process.
- ◆ Implement the Children's Commissioner's report *They Go The Extra Mile* into the prevention of and positive alternatives to exclusion, and strengthen appeals panels.
- ◆ Extend free school meals to all children in primary education as resources allow and following a full evaluation of free meals for infants.
- ◆ Continue to promote the local integration of health, care and educational support for children with Special Educational Needs and health problems.

We will allow parents to continue to choose faith-based schools within the state-funded sector and allow the establishment of new faith schools. We will ensure all faith schools develop an inclusive admissions policy and end unfair discrimination on grounds of faith when recruiting staff, except for those principally responsible for optional religious instruction.

4.3 World-class teaching

Great teachers are at the heart of a successful education system. We will continue our work to attract the best into the profession and support teachers throughout their careers.

We want to build the status of the teaching profession, support and nurture teachers in their work, and so drive up standards in every school.

We will:

- ◆ Guarantee all teachers in state-funded schools will be fully qualified or working towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from September 2016.

- ♦ Introduce a clear and properly funded entitlement to professional development for all teachers. We will raise the bar for entry to the profession, requiring a B grade minimum in GCSE Maths and English, allowing us to abolish the separate Maths and English tests.
- ♦ Help establish a new profession-led Royal College of Teachers, eventually to oversee Qualified Teacher Status and professional development. We do not believe Ministers should dictate teaching practice and will not issue instructions about how to structure the school day or what kind of lessons to conduct.
- ♦ Continue to support the Teach First programme to attract high calibre graduates into teaching, in particular in STEM subjects.
- ♦ Tackle unnecessary teacher workload, including by:
 - ❖ Avoiding policy changes while children are within a key stage.
 - ❖ Establishing the right accountability framework for schools.
 - ❖ Ensuring Ofsted inspections are high-quality, fair to all schools and focus on outcomes and not processes.
- ♦ Establish a new National Leadership Institute to promote high-quality leadership and help the best leaders into the most challenging schools.
- ♦ Continue to work with the Education Endowment Foundation to establish a comprehensive evidence base on what works in teaching, including assessing play-based learning in early education, and tackling the attainment gap.

We need to encourage and inspire more children to study STEM subjects. At primary level we will encourage schools to have at least one science specialist among the staff, and at secondary level work to maximise the number of teachers who have degree qualifications in the subjects they teach.

4.4 Curriculum and qualifications

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

That is why we have developed our Parents' Guarantee: every child will be taught by qualified teachers, and the core curriculum will be taught at every state-funded school. We want the highest standards in our schools, and will ensure that every child has a thorough grasp of the basics. But we also understand that a great education is about more than just learning facts: creativity should be nurtured, children should be helped to develop the life skills they

will need as adults, and every pupil should be given advice and guidance about their future.

We will:

- ♦ Establish an independent Educational Standards Authority (ESA) entirely removed from Ministerial interference. The ESA will have responsibility for curriculum content and examination standards.
- ♦ Introduce a minimum curriculum entitlement – a slimmed down core national curriculum, which will be taught in all state-funded schools. This will include Personal, Social and Health Education: a ‘curriculum for life’ including financial literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, citizenship, and age-appropriate sex and relationship education. To ensure all children learn about a wide range of religious and nonreligious world views, religious education will be included in the core curriculum; however we will give schools the freedom to set policy on whether to hold acts of collective worship, while ensuring any such acts are strictly optional.
- ♦ Complete the introduction of reformed GCSEs, while continuing to oppose Conservative plans for a return to the old O-level/CSE divide.
- ♦ Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment, and improve careers advice in schools and colleges.

4.5 Improving care for looked after children

Liberal Democrats have long championed early intervention to prevent problems before they arise, but we also need to make sure we equip social workers with the skills to address these complex issues and ensure children’s safety. Where children do have to be taken into care we must make sure they find a loving home with as little disruption and instability as possible. We have done much in Government to be proud of in helping children in care and to improve social work, but we can still go further.

We will:

- ♦ Continue to invest in early intervention, further expanding the Troubled Families Programme and building on the work of the Early Intervention Foundation to spread evidence of what works.
- ♦ Expect Local Authorities to set out a clear purpose for the care system: to promote emotional wellbeing and resilience, provide a secure base on which children can be supported in their development and provide individually tailored help with recovery.

- ♦ Raise the quality and profile of children's social work, continuing and expanding the Frontline programme – which is fast-tracking the brightest and best into the profession – to at least 300 graduate recruits each year.
- ♦ Tackle delay and instability in foster care, with better support and training for foster carers, including on mental health issues.
- ♦ Continue to make it easier for children in care to find a loving home, through the national Adoption Register and the new national gateway for adoption, a first point of contact for potential adopters.
- ♦ Prevent looked after children and young people being drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily by promoting restorative justice.

4.6 Improving support for young adults

We want young people to face the future with optimism and confidence. The education leaving age has now risen to 18, but as children grow, their independence grows too, and the support that education and youth services provide to them and their families needs to adapt. Whether it is supporting people with the costs of travel to college or apprenticeships, or promoting positive images of young people by celebrating their successes: Liberal Democrats are on the side of the next generation.

We will:

- ♦ Work to introduce a new Young Person's Discount Card, for young people aged 16–21, giving a 2/3rds discount on bus travel, as resources allow. This will assist all bus users by helping maintain the viability of existing bus routes and making it easier to open new ones.
- ♦ Enable government departments, local Councils and private businesses to add discount offers to the Young Person's Discount Card.
- ♦ Review access to transport for students and apprentices in rural areas where no scheduled services may be available.
- ♦ Develop an NHS 'student guarantee', making it easier for students to get care and support while at university, particularly those with long-term health conditions or caring responsibilities.
- ♦ Promote social action and volunteering at school, college and university and work to raise the status of youth work and youth workers.
- ♦ Improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in mentoring schemes and programmes that seek to raise aspiration like Speakers for Schools and

Inspiring The Future. In particular, we will seek to inspire more children and young people to follow technical and scientific careers through partnership with relevant businesses.

4.7 A world class university sector, open to all

Liberal Democrats have ensured that no undergraduate student in England has to pay a penny up front of their tuition fees. Students in England do not have to pay anything until they are earning over £21,000 per year – a figure which will increase in line with earnings – and over that income, monthly repayments are linked to earnings. This means only high-earning graduates pay their tuition fees in full. We now have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students.

But we need to ensure higher education is accessible to all those who can benefit, including at postgraduate level. Liberal Democrats in government secured the first ever income-contingent loans scheme for graduate degrees, which we will protect and seek to extend.

We will:

- ◆ Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector, prioritising early intervention in schools and colleges. This will include running summer schools and setting up mentoring programmes between students or alumni and school pupils.
- ◆ Require universities to be transparent about their selection criteria.
- ◆ Work with university ‘mission groups’ to develop a comprehensive credit accumulation and transfer framework to help students transfer between and within institutions, enable more part-time learning, and help more people to complete qualifications.
- ◆ Improve the Key Information Set and explore the option of a standardised student contract. We will legislate to reform regulation of the higher education sector, improving student protection.
- ◆ Establish a review of higher education finance within the next Parliament to consider any necessary reforms, in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation (including of low-income groups) and quality. The review will cover undergraduate and postgraduate courses, with an emphasis on support for living costs for students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.8 Expanding and improving apprenticeships and further education

More people have started an apprenticeship in this Parliament than ever before. As we grow our economy, we must protect and enhance adult skills training and our further education colleges. We need to grow our skill base, especially in the technologies and industries that are most important to our economic future. We want it to become the norm for businesses to take on and train up young people as apprentices in every sector of our economy, and for higher level apprenticeships to be understood as a respected alternative to university education.

We will:

- ◆ Increase the number of apprenticeships and improve their quality, extending the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers for the remainder of the next Parliament, delivering 200,000 grants to employers and expanding the number of degree-equivalent Higher Apprenticeships.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, like renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- ◆ Establish a cross-party commission to secure a long-term settlement for the public funding of reskilling and lifelong learning.
- ◆ Set up a review into the VAT treatment of Sixth Form Colleges and FE Colleges to ensure fair treatment in relation to the schools sector.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Identify and seek to solve skills gaps like the lack of advanced technicians by expanding higher vocational training like foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.



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.



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As a nation, we are living longer but that means we have more people living with conditions like cancer, diabetes and dementia who need care and support to live with dignity and the maximum degree of independence. We must set the highest standards in care, with a well-trained and motivated workforce, and get health and care services to work together without artificial boundaries.

Health and wellbeing are affected by far more than just the quality of health and care 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 everyone can have the best opportunity to lead a healthy life.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Increased the NHS budget every year in real terms, helping fund nearly 10,000 more doctors and 7,000 more nurses	Deliver the £8 billion England's NHS leaders say is needed to keep it strong, with money for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too
Improved access to talking therapies: 2.6 million patients have been treated since 2010	Invest £500m to transform mental health care with waiting time standards to match those in physical health care
£400m invested to give carers a break with our respite fund	Introduce a package of support for carers including a £250 Carer's Bonus every year
Capped the cost of care, so older people can afford to get the help they need	Crack down on bad care, with better pay and conditions for care staff and higher standards for all

5

5.1 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. We are the only party with a credible plan to deliver the extra £8 billion NHS leaders know our health service in England needs by 2020, with the appropriate boost to funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too.

We will:

- ♦ Always ensure access to health care is based on need not ability to pay and that the NHS remains free at the point of delivery.
- ♦ Deliver the money needed for England's NHS by:
 - ❖ Continuing real-terms protection of the NHS budget until

we have balanced the books in 2017/18 – with a £1 billion boost on top of this protection. We made a start towards this £1 billion increase in the Budget by securing a £250m a year investment in mental health.

- ❖ Increasing NHS spending in line with economic growth from then on.
- ♦ These commitments mean NHS funding in England will be at least £8 billion higher a year in real terms by 2020. This will lead to higher funding for the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments, too, which Liberal Democrats believe should be spent on their health services.
- ♦ Invest half the initial £1 billion in providing care in people's own homes and communities, preventing emergency admissions and making it easier to discharge people after a hospital stay – and so relieving pressures on all hospital services.
- ♦ Make sure the NHS is funded and organised to carry out diagnostic tests and necessary treatments in a timely and effective manner, so that waiting times meet public expectations without distorting clinical priorities.
- ♦ Join up health and care at national level, shifting full responsibility for care policy and funding to the Department of Health.

To ensure the NHS is safeguarded for the long term we will commission a non-partisan Fundamental Review of NHS and social care funding this year. We will involve as many people as possible in this nationwide consultation.

5.2 Equal care for mental health

One in four of us will experience mental health problems, but for decades mental health has been the last in the queue for funding and attention. Mental health problems cost the country as much as £100 billion each year yet less than a quarter of people with depression get the treatment they need.

In 2012, we called a halt to this and wrote equality for mental health into law. We are now making real progress, introducing the first ever waiting time standards in mental health. We have invested £400m in increasing access to talking therapies and £150m in help for people with eating disorders, but there is still a long way to go. That is why we will increase mental health spending in England's NHS by £500m a year by 2016/17 – half of which we delivered in this year's Budget – and provide the cash for similar investments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



To deliver genuine equality between mental and physical health in the NHS we will:

- ♦ Continue to roll out access and waiting time standards for children, young people and adults. This will include a waiting time standard from referral of no more than six weeks for therapy for depression or anxiety and a two-week wait standard for all young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- ♦ Increase access to clinically and cost-effective talking therapies so hundreds of thousands more people can get this support. Our long-term goal is to see everyone who can benefit being treated, but we will set an interim target of getting 25% of those suffering into treatment.
- ♦ Transform care for pregnant women, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth, and help them get the early care they need.
- ♦ Revolutionise children's mental health services. With the £250m a year announced in this year's Budget we will implement the proposals outlined in the report of the Government's Children's Mental Health Taskforce. This means building better links with schools, ensuring all children develop mental resilience, and getting support and care quickly to those who are struggling. Our investment will help ensure children can access high-quality care closer to home.

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

- ♦ Ensure no one in crisis is turned away, with new waiting time standards and better crisis care in Accident and Emergency (A&E), in the community and via phone lines. This will enable us to end the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.
- ♦ Radically transform mental health services, extending the use of personal budgets, integrating care more fully with the rest of the NHS, introducing rigorous inspection and high-quality standards, comprehensive collection of data to monitor outcomes and waiting times and changing the way services are funded so they do not lose out in funding decisions in future.
- ♦ Introduce care navigators so people get help finding their way around the system, and set stretching standards to improve the physical health of people with mental health problems.

To improve wellbeing and make the UK more mental health-friendly, we will:

- ♦ Publish a national wellbeing strategy, which puts better health and wellbeing for all at the heart of government policy. This will cover all aspects of government policy, including transport, access to nature, and housing, at national and local level.
- ♦ Develop a clear approach on preventing mental illness, with a public health campaign promoting the steps people can take to improve their own mental resilience – the wellbeing equivalent of the ‘Five a Day’ campaign.
- ♦ Support good practice among employers in promoting wellbeing and ensure people with mental health problems get the help they need to stay in or find work.
- ♦ Establish a world-leading mental health research fund, investing £50m to further our understanding of mental illness and develop more effective treatments.
- ♦ Continue to support the Time to Change programme to tackle stigma against mental health.
- ♦ Ensure all frontline public service professionals, including in schools and universities, get better training in mental health – helping them to develop their own mental resilience as well as learning to identify people with mental health problems.
- ♦ Support community services and volunteers working to combat loneliness, particularly in later life.

5.3 Joining up health and social care

We need services that fit around people’s lives, not ones that force them to fit their lives around the care they need. This is going to be increasingly important as our population ages and the number of

ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY



people living with long-term conditions continues to grow. It is time to move away from a fragmented system to an integrated service with more joined-up care, and more personal budgets so people can design services for their own individual needs. We believe this should happen from the bottom up, suiting the needs of local communities.

We will:

- ♦ Secure local agreement on full pooling of budgets between the NHS and care services with a target date of 2018, consulting on a legal duty for this. The details of how services are commissioned will remain a matter for local areas. In this way we will build on the radical proposals to integrate health and care funding in Greater Manchester.
- ♦ Continue to develop Health and Wellbeing Boards to take a broad view of how services can improve wellbeing in their area, ensuring democratic accountability for local care.
- ♦ Combine the public health, adult social care and health outcome frameworks into a single national wellbeing outcomes framework to ensure the NHS and local government work together towards common goals.
- ♦ Support new joined-up services such as GPs providing services like scans and blood tests closer to home, or hospitals having GP surgeries within A&E departments.
- ♦ Encourage the development of joined-up health providers, which cover hospital and community services, including GPs, learning from international best practice. We will permit NHS commissioners and providers in a local area to form a single integrated health organisation where appropriate.
- ♦ Work with Monitor to reform NHS funding systems, moving away from payments for activity to tariffs that encourage joined-up services and preventive care.

Liberal Democrats are committed to repealing any parts of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which make NHS services vulnerable to forced privatisation through international agreements on free markets in goods and services. We will end the role of the Competition and Markets Authority in health, making it clear that the needs of patients, fairness and access always come ahead of competition, and that good local NHS services do not have to be put out to tender. 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.

5.4 Better access to GPs and community care

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

We will:

- ♦ Ensure easier access to GPs, expanding evening and weekend opening, encouraging phone and Skype appointments, encouraging GPs to work together in federations, and allowing people more choice.
- ♦ Encourage GPs and other community clinicians to work in disadvantaged areas through our Patient Premium.
- ♦ Better utilise the network of community pharmacists across the country so they become the first point of contact for advice on minor illnesses and are joined-up with GPs and community health teams.
- ♦ Encourage health services to link up with Local Authority social care teams and voluntary services to join up care.
- ♦ Review the rules for exemption from prescription charges to ensure they are fair to those with long-term conditions and disabilities.

5.5 Aiming higher: following the evidence to improve health and care

We will set ambitious goals so everything we do in the NHS is focused on helping people in Britain live longer, healthier, lives. Early diagnosis is absolutely crucial and can make a life-saving difference, so we will support screening programmes where these are proven to be both clinically and cost-effective. It is also vital we invest in research to develop new treatments and find new ways of delivering innovative treatments in affordable ways.

We will:

- ♦ Set ambitious goals to improve outcomes for the most serious life-threatening diseases like cancer and long-term conditions like dementia.
- ♦ Work towards a global deal to release significant additional funds for finding a cure or preventive treatment for dementia, doubling NHS

research spend for this condition by 2020.

- ♦ Set clear goals for earlier diagnosis and improved aftercare for conditions like cancer and heart disease.
- ♦ Promote evidence-based ‘social prescribing’ of sport, arts and other activity to help tackle obesity, mental health problems and other health conditions, and work to widen the evidence base.
- ♦ Continue to introduce evidence-based screening programmes, encouraging increased participation with informed consent.
- ♦ Improve patient safety by updating the laws on regulation of health professionals and on cosmetic procedures.
- ♦ Ensure targets in the NHS are evidence-based and do not distort clinical priorities.
- ♦ Improve support for groups that often face lower standards of care, such as older people and people with mental health problems or learning disabilities.
- ♦ Get the best for the NHS out of innovative medicines and treatments while continuing to ensure value for money for the NHS in negotiations on the cost of medicines, promoting the use of generic medicines where appropriate.
- ♦ Support, including through rules on public funding and research, moves towards ensuring all clinical trials are registered, with their methods and summary results reported in public.

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

5.6 Helping people keep healthy

It is better for patients and for the NHS if we keep people healthy in the first place, rather than just waiting until people develop illnesses and come for treatment. This means doing more to promote healthy eating and exercise, making people aware of the dangers of smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and helping to improve mental health and wellbeing.

In government we have taken significant steps, taking tobacco off display in shops and introducing standardised packaging, for example. We have also returned the delivery of public health services to Local Authorities to ensure a more coordinated and localised approach.

Improving our environment is a vital step to improving people’s health. By insulating homes we can reduce the number of people who become unwell because of the cold; by tackling air pollution we can attack the root causes of many deaths; by opening up more sports facilities and building more cycle routes we can cut obesity and reduce heart problems.

We will:

- ♦ Support effective public awareness campaigns like Be Clear on Cancer, working closely with charities to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of killer diseases.
- ♦ Keep public health within local government, where it is effectively joined-up with preventive community services.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Introduce Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol, subject to the outcome of the legal challenge in Scotland, and support the greater use of Local Authority powers and criminal behaviour orders to help communities tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder.
- ♦ Pass a Nature Act to increase access to green spaces and a Green Transport Act to cut air pollution.

5.7 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 £110 to £150 a week.

- ♦ Consult on introducing five days' paid additional 'care leave' a year for carers who qualify for the Carer's Allowance.
- ♦ Give the NHS a legal duty to identify carers and develop a Carer's Passport scheme to inform carers of their rights in the NHS, like more flexible visiting hours, assert their role as expert partners in care and gain access to support.

5.8 Improving social care

Although we want to support people to remain independent as long as possible, many people will eventually need to rely on the care system. Liberal Democrats fought hard to secure the cap on the cost of care that will be introduced in 2017, but the quality of care is vital too.

We have introduced rigorous new inspections under the Chief Inspector of Social Care and new guidance to end the use of fifteen-minute visits. We will end 'care cramming', which turns care workers into clockwatchers rushing between jobs. We are clamping down on care workers being paid less than the National Minimum Wage by resourcing and directing HMRC to pursue and prosecute providers who exploit their staff.

We will:

- ♦ Finish the job of implementing the Dilnot Report proposals for a cap on the cost of social care.
- ♦ Provide more choice at the end of life, and free end-of-life social care for those placed on their local end-of-life register if evidence shows it is affordable and cost effective.
- ♦ Ask the Care Quality Commission to showcase examples of good and bad practice in care commissioning by Councils.
- ♦ Raise the professional status and training of care home managers through statutory licensing.
- ♦ Ensure those who work in the care sector are properly trained and suitable to practice by introducing a statutory code of conduct backed up by a care workers' suitability register.
- ♦ Work with local government and providers to promote paying a Living Wage.



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, bringing forward plans for a 5p charge for plastic bags, planting a million extra trees in England and ensuring Natural England remains a strong and independent organisation able to speak up for nature. We have fought to protect the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and we have increased public access to our coastal paths.

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. We have spent £3.2 billion on flood management and defences over the course of this Parliament. 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.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Planted a million trees and protected our national forests by blocking plans to sell them off	Expand accessible green space with new National Nature Parks chosen by local communities, and plant a tree for every child born
Introduced a 5p charge on throwaway plastic bags to reduce waste	Drive up recycling to 70% of household waste and minimise landfill
£500m investment package to promote Ultra Low Emission vehicles which will cut emissions and improve air quality	Save lives by cleaning up our air, with low emission zones in towns with a pollution problem
Halted the Post Office closure programme and brought broadband to 80% of homes.	Complete broadband rollout to every home, and create an innovation fund to help keep local GPs, post offices and libraries open

6

Better places to live | communities, farming and the natural environment

6.1 Protecting nature

Britain's natural environment is precious. Without our green spaces, we would live less satisfying lives; they are critical to health, wellbeing and our sense of community. Even in cash terms, short-term profits from exploiting the environment carry a longer-term penalty in squandered resources, clear-up costs and the impact on health.

We will ensure that protecting the natural environment becomes a core commitment of every government department and agency.

We will:

- ♦ Pass a Nature Act to put the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) on a statutory footing, set natural capital targets, including on biodiversity, clean air and water, and empower the NCC to recommend actions to meet these targets.
- ♦ Significantly increase the amount of accessible green space.

We will complete the coastal path, introduce a fuller Right to Roam and a new designation of National Nature Parks to protect up to a million acres of accessible green space valued by local communities.

- ◆ Place the management of public forests on a sustainable footing, in line with the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Forestry, and plant at least an additional tree for every child born – about 750,000 every year – as part of a major afforestation plan.
- ◆ Tackle wildlife and environmental crime with increased enforcement of environmental regulations by all relevant authorities and higher penalties to ensure environmental crime is not a financial risk worth taking.
- ◆ Improve UK enforcement of the EU Birds and Habitats Directive.
- ◆ Bring forward a package of measures to protect bees and other pollinators, including legal protection for bumblebee nests.
- ◆ Designate an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas with appropriate management by 2020.
- ◆ Encourage the uptake of water metering, including introducing metering in all defined water-stressed areas by 2025, coupled with the development of national social tariffs to protect low-income households.

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.

6.2 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 ‘Stern report’ on resource use, 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.

- ♦ Establish a coherent tax and regulatory framework for landfill, incineration and waste collection to drive continuous increases in reuse and recycling rates and ensure only non-recyclable waste is incinerated, including reinstating the Landfill Tax escalator and extending it to the lower rate and consulting on the introduction of an Incineration Tax.
- ♦ Commission the Natural Capital Committee to investigate the potential for other resource taxes, including deposit refund schemes.
- ♦ Establish a statutory waste recycling target of 70% in England.
- ♦ Encourage the growth of anaerobic digestion to produce biogas for heat and transport, and sustainable fertiliser, working with Local Authorities to extend separate food waste collections to at least 90% of homes by 2020.

6.3 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 UK 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.
- ♦ Introduce a National Food Strategy to promote the production and consumption of healthy, sustainable and affordable food. Our strategy will increase the use of locally and sustainably sourced, healthy and seasonal food, including in public institutions like schools and the NHS, implementing and expanding Defra's Plan for Public Procurement.
- ♦ 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.

- ♦ Ensure the Food Standards Agency is adequately resourced to enforce food safety standards, and strengthen food fraud surveillance.
- ♦ Help farmers and growers compete internationally by continuing to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden and developing an Animal Disease Strategy to reduce the risks and costs of animal disease.
- ♦ Continue to improve standards of animal welfare, building on Britain's leadership. We will review the use of cages, crates and routine preventive antibiotics.
- ♦ Introduce effective, science-led ways of controlling bovine TB, including by investing to produce workable vaccines, in line with the TB Eradication Strategy. We will only support extending the existing cull pilots if they are shown to be effective, humane and safe.
- ♦ 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.

6.4 Adapting to climate change

The devastating floods experienced 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 heat waves that put increased pressure on infrastructure, water supplies and ecosystems.

We will:

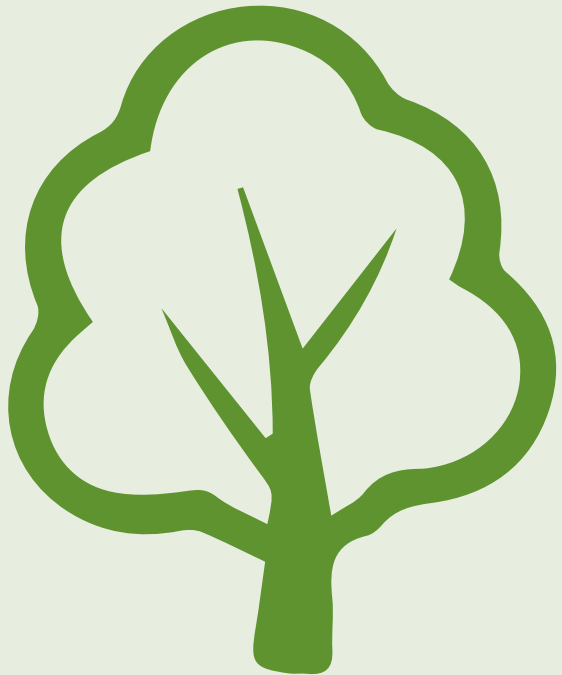
- ♦ Prepare a national resilience plan to help the UK economy, national infrastructure and natural resources adapt to the likely impacts of a 3-4 degree global average temperature rise.
- ♦ Work with local government to review the governance of flood risk and land drainage, including the role of Internal Drainage Boards, and introduce high standards for flood resilience for buildings and infrastructure in flood risk areas.
- ♦ Set up a commission to research back-to-nature flood prevention schemes, including the role of habitats such as upland bogs and moors, woodlands, wetlands and species-rich grasslands in absorbing and holding water.
- ♦ Implement programmes to help farmers and other land users adapt to climate change impacts including protecting soil and forest carbon sinks, encouraging planting in uplands and restoring flood plains.
- ♦ Review the system of approvals required by landowners to repair



Planting a new tree for every child born



1 million trees planted
2010 – 2015



3.75 million planted
2015 – 2020

existing flood protection measures on their land.

- ♦ Increase the uptake of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to maximise value for money for the taxpayer. We will consult on the best ways to finance this.
- ♦ Update construction and planning standards to futureproof buildings against higher summer temperatures.

6.5 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 every year. We will pass a Green Transport Act, including a National Plan to improve dramatically Britain's air quality by 2020.

Our National Air Quality Plan for consultation will include:

- ♦ A legal requirement targeted at the most polluted towns and cities, to create Low Emission Zones.
- ♦ New incentives for local schemes that cut transport-related pollution, and encourage walking and cycling.
- ♦ 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 more quickly meet 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.
- ♦ Support options for an intercity cycleway along the HS2 route, within the overall budget for the project.

- ♦ Implement the recommendations of the Get Britain Cycling report, including steps to deliver a £10 a head annual public expenditure on cycling within existing budgets. This will allow greater investment in cycling including bike lanes, high-volume secure bike parking, and road safety measures to keep cyclists safe.

6.6. Improving local public transport

High-quality public transport is essential to building sustainable communities and local economies, and two thirds of public transport journeys are made by bus. With more people commuting to work by bus than any other mode of public transport, buses are of significant importance to the economy. Bus services are also particularly important to many rural and isolated communities, where one in five of the population lives.

- ♦ Carry out a review of bus funding and bus policies and introduce a five-year investment plan to give the industry and Local Authorities certainty and help plan investment. We will support local areas that want to bring forward plans for regulating the bus network in their area.
- ♦ Give new powers to Local Authorities and communities to improve transport in their areas, including the ability to introduce network-wide ticketing like in London.
- ♦ Support the expansion of smart ticketing systems.
- ♦ Continue funding for local economic and sustainable transport infrastructure through the Local Growth Fund.
- ♦ Help bus companies trade in older, more polluting buses and coaches for newer, low emissions ones, helping develop the market for low-carbon buses.

6.7 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.

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.

- ♦ Introduce ‘retained’ police officers, fully trained officers available to respond when needed, to increase police presence in rural communities.
- ♦ Develop the Community Budgets model for use in rural areas to combine services, encouraging the breaking down of boundaries between different services. This will help keep rural services like GP surgeries, pharmacies, post offices and libraries open by enabling them to cooperate, share costs and co-locate in shared facilities.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Work with Local Authorities to integrate transport networks in rural areas, building on the work of Liberal Democrat Ministers’ Total Transport pilot.

Green Britain Guarantee: Five Green Laws

A Nature Act which will include:

- ♦ Placing the Natural Capital Committee on a statutory footing. The Committee was set up in 2012; it provides advice to the government on the state of England's natural assets including forests, rivers, land, minerals and oceans.
- ♦ A requirement for government to set out a 25-year plan for recovering nature, with annual updates to Parliament, including how to reverse the decline of UK species and their habitats and ensure that bees and other insects are able to fulfil their important role as crop pollinators.
- ♦ The introduction of a new Public Sector Sustainability Duty, requiring steadily higher green criteria in public procurement policy, and placing requirements on public authorities to act in a sustainable manner.
- ♦ Implementation of the findings of the Independent Panel on Forestry, creating a new public body, free from political interference and securely funded, to own and manage the national forests.
- ♦ Transposition of EU air and water quality targets into UK law to confirm our commitments.
- ♦ A sustainable water abstraction regime, for the public, industry and the natural environment.
- ♦ The formation of a one million square kilometre southern Atlantic Ocean reserve.

A Resource Efficiency and Zero Waste Britain Act which will include:

- ♦ Implementation of recommendations from our planned 'Stern Report' on resource efficiency, which the Natural Capital Committee will conduct.
- ♦ Increased penalties for waste crimes, aiming to move from an average fine of £50,000 to £75,000 and to an average sentence of 12 to 18 months.
- ♦ A statutory recycling target of 70% for waste in England.
- ♦ 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.

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.

**A Green Transport Act
which will include:**

- ♦ A statutory target of 2030 by which time all major, regularly used rail routes will need to be electrified.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ The creation of Low Emission Zones as part of a national air quality plan, including a legal requirement for the most polluted towns and cities.
- ♦ A new statutory framework that all new rail franchises include a stronger focus on customers.
- ♦ Updates to roads regulation to promote innovation in transport like driverless cars and personal electric vehicles.

**A Zero Carbon Britain
Act which will include:**

- ♦ 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 by 2025.
- ♦ Giving full borrowing powers to the Green Investment Bank, to boost further investment in low-carbon technologies.

**A Green Buildings Act
which will include:**

- ♦ A Council Tax discount for significant improvements in energy efficiency in homes.
- ♦ Ambitious targets for all social and private rented homes to reach Energy Performance Certificate Band C by 2027.
- ♦ A statutory target to bring the homes of all fuel-poor households to Band C by 2027.
- ♦ 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.



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 and further out of reach. Britain has failed for decades to build enough homes, and in many places property prices and rents have risen beyond what normal working families can afford. We have to speed up house building and stop prices from getting any further out of reach of families.



For people to live fulfilled lives they need a decent home at a cost they can afford. But that simple ambition is getting further and further out of reach. Britain has failed for decades to build enough homes, and in many places property prices and rents have risen beyond what normal working families can afford. Meanwhile many older people in homes that are no longer right for their circumstances would like to move but do not have suitable options.

We have made a start in addressing this. The supply of affordable rented housing has been increasing. We have liberalised the planning system, while protecting important green spaces. We have pushed government departments to release unwanted sites for homes.

But the problems are now in danger of becoming a crisis, with home ownership plummeting among the under 40s, many young people priced out of even renting a place of their own, and the risk of a new housing bubble, focused on London and the South East. We have to speed up house building and stop prices from getting any further out of reach of families.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Restored house building from record lows to nearly 150,000 a year	Set an ambitious goal to build 300,000 homes a year, including in 10 new Garden Cities in areas where homes are needed most
Helped families buy a home with Help to Buy equity loans	New Rent to Own homes where your monthly payments steadily buy you a stake in the property
Banned 'revenge evictions' where rogue landlords evict tenants who make complaints	New Help to Rent tenancy deposit loans to help young people get into their first place
Improved the energy efficiency of a million homes since 2013, cutting overall UK energy use by 2.5% a year	Cut Council Tax by £100 for 10 years if you insulate your home, and ban landlords from letting out homes tenants cannot reasonably afford to heat

7

7.1 Building more and better homes

For far too long Britain has built many fewer homes than we need; unless we build enough to meet demand, year after year, we will find housing costs rise further out of reach. That is why we have set an ambitious target of increasing the rate of house building to 300,000 a year. Within the first year of the next Parliament, we will publish a long-term plan that sets out how this goal will be achieved.

Our plans will include:

- ♦ At least ten new Garden Cities in England, in areas where there is local support, providing tens of thousands of high-quality new homes, with gardens and shared green space, jobs, schools and public transport. We will encourage rural Local Authorities to follow these principles on a smaller scale, too, developing new garden villages or suburbs as part of their plans for growth.

- ♦ Up to five major new settlements along a Garden Cities Railway between Oxford and Cambridge.
- ♦ Ambitious targets for development on unwanted public sector sites through the Homes and Communities Agency, with Local Authorities given new powers to ensure development happens on any unused site in which the public sector has an interest.
- ♦ A review of Compulsory Purchase legislation to facilitate site assembly, including for Garden Cities. We will also pilot techniques for capturing the increase in land values from the granting of planning permission, helping to deliver our Garden Cities.
- ♦ 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. We are already piloting this direct approach in Cambridgeshire.
- ♦ 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 Improving planning

Good planning is essential to delivering sustainable communities. With effective planning rules, we can ensure the new homes we build are well connected to public transport, resilient to the threats of climate change, safe, warm and secure, and situated in real communities where people can easily come together. We will work with Local Authorities to ensure they think for the long term, and use their powers to facilitate an affordable local housing market.

We will:

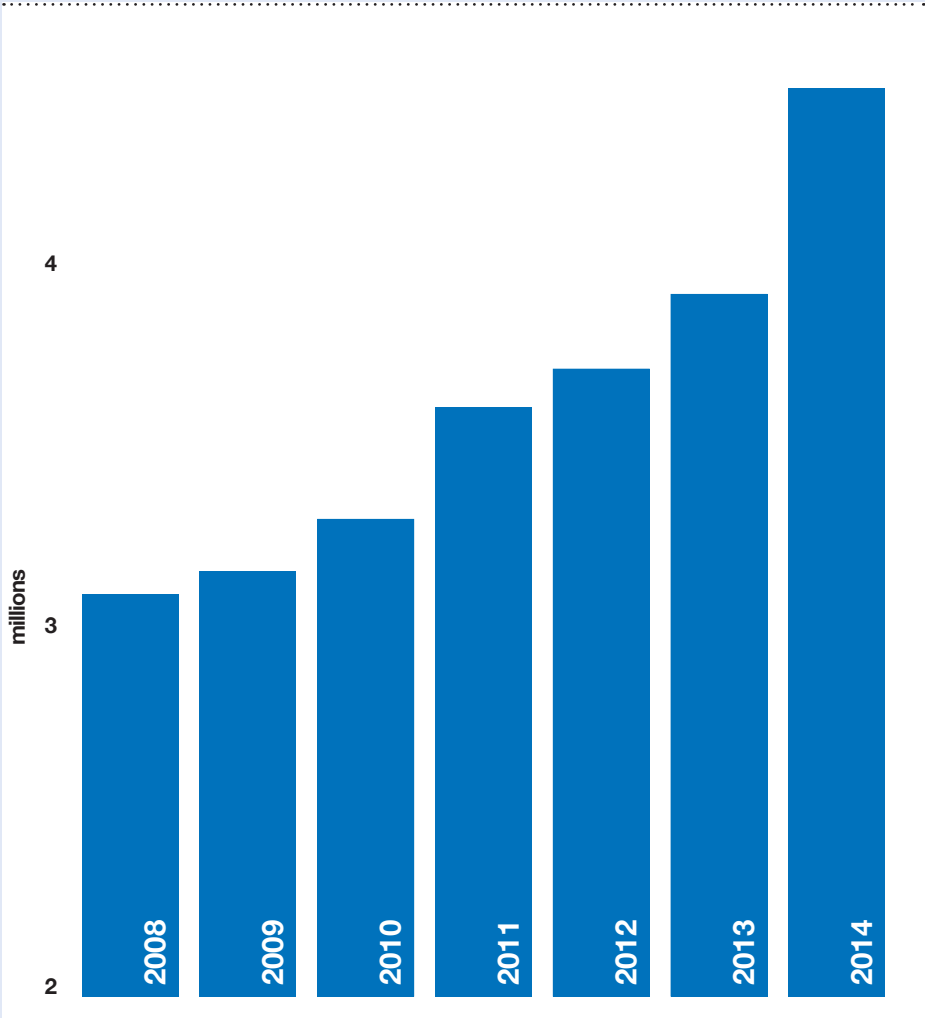
- ♦ Put Local Authorities in the driving seat for plan-led development by requiring them to make a plan for 15 years of housing need, working collaboratively with neighbouring Councils where necessary to identify sites. We will strengthen the Duty to Cooperate to help authorities – like Cambridge, Oxford and Luton – with insufficient space within the Local Authority boundary to meet housing demand to grow, through development on sites beyond the Local Authority boundaries. This long-term approach will enable us to secure the homes we need while being much stricter about proposals that deviate from the Local Plan. We will:
 - ❖ Create a Community Right of Appeal in cases where planning decisions go against the approved local plan, or a Local Plan that is emerging and has undergone substantive consultation.

- ❖ Not allow developers' appeals against planning decisions that are in line with the local plan.
- ❖ Not allow planning appeals solely on the basis of challenges to the 15-year master plan.
- ♦ Improve housing needs assessments to ensure they respond to demand, including through price signals, rather than simply need, and segment more effectively demand from different kinds of household, including high-quality shared accommodation for young people. All areas will be expected to plan for the needs of older people for age-appropriate housing and we will work with Local Authorities to help people who wish to 'right size', particularly in later life.
- ♦ Require Local Authorities to keep a register of people who want a self-build plot in the local area and plan to meet demand for these plots, including through 'affordable land': plots on which self-builders can take a long-term lease at an affordable rent and build or commission a home.
- ♦ Update planning law to introduce the concept of 'landscape scale planning' and ensure new developments promote walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport and improve rather than diminish access to green spaces.
- ♦ Prioritise development on brownfield and town centre sites and bring to an end the permitted development rights for converting offices to residential.
- ♦ Enable Local Authorities to:
 - ❖ Attach planning conditions to new developments to ensure homes are occupied, tackling the growth of 'buy to leave empty' investments from overseas in property hotspots like London.
 - ❖ Levy up to 200% Council Tax on second homes where they judge this to be appropriate.
 - ❖ Pilot new planning conditions to ensure local communities benefit from increased housing supply.

7.3 Affordable housing

The government has an essential role to play in supporting the development of affordable housing. We have maintained a substantial programme of affordable house building in the last five years, in part enabled by designing innovative products that can deliver new homes at a lower cost. We will continue to innovate, enabling Local Authorities, Housing Associations and central government alike to build many more homes.

Rising number of private rented dwellings



We will:

- ♦ Review the Homes and Communities Agency's grant programmes to simplify and streamline the process and enable more innovation.
- ♦ Allow Local Authorities more flexibility to borrow to build affordable housing, including traditional council housing, and devolve full control of the Right to Buy.
- ♦ Scrap plans to exempt smaller housing development schemes from their obligation to provide affordable homes.
- ♦ Encourage affordable housing providers – both Councils and Housing Associations – to innovate, including using the development of homes for sale or market rent to help subsidise new affordable homes. We will refocus the Vacant Building Credit so it only applies to properties that have been vacant for an extended period.
- ♦ Tackle overcrowding with a new system to incentivise social landlords to reduce the number of tenants under-occupying their homes, freeing up larger properties.
- ♦ Introduce a new Intermediate Housing Fund to fund intermediate housing products, including:
 - ❖ Affordable Rent homes, at up to 80% of local market rent.
 - ❖ Shared Ownership homes, where customers buy a proportion of the home and pay an affordable rent for the rest.
 - ❖ A new Rent to Own model where monthly payments steadily accrue the tenant a percentage stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.
 - ❖ New build shared accommodation at the local LHA Shared Accommodation Rate.

We recognise that most people aspire to own their own home, and believe in supporting people on the journey to home ownership. But policies that promote home ownership should be focused on newly built homes to prevent artificial pressure on prices, and should not discriminate on the basis of previous housing tenure.

7.4 Protecting private tenants and leaseholders

More and more people – including families – are renting in the private sector for the long term. We believe private renting is an important part of the housing market, but the balance has shifted too far against the tenant, and more needs to be done to help people making a home in rented property.

We will:

- ◆ Improve protections against rogue landlords and encourage a new multi-year tenancy with an agreed inflation-linked annual rent increase built in.
- ◆ Enable Local Authorities to operate licensing schemes for rental properties in areas where they believe it is needed.
- ◆ Establish a voluntary register of rented property where either the landlord or the tenant can register the property, to improve enforcement and tax transparency.
- ◆ Ban letting agent fees to tenants if the transparency requirements we introduced are not successful in bringing fees down to an affordable level by the end of 2016.
- ◆ Extend the use of Rent Repayment Orders to allow tenants to have their rent refunded when a property is found to contain serious risks to health, and withhold rent from landlords who have not carried out court-ordered improvements within a reasonable period of time.
- ◆ Introduce a new Help to Rent scheme to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for all first-time renters under 30.
- ◆ Conduct a full review of the help single people get under homelessness legislation.

7.5 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, increasing standards for newly built homes, and improving more than a million homes in just two years. In the next Parliament we will go further, ensuring at least four million homes are improved by 2020, not only lowering bills and helping to tackle the scourge of fuel poverty, but generating jobs too.

We will:

- ◆ Remove exemptions in the Zero Carbon Standard for new homes, increasing the standard steadily and extending it to non-domestic buildings from 2019. We will promote the development of off-site manufacturing techniques, which have been shown to improve energy performance of buildings.
- ◆ Pass a new Green Buildings Act to set new energy efficiency targets, including a long-term ambition for every home to reach at least an energy rating of Band C by 2035.



- ♦ Act to tackle fuel poverty, ensuring all low-income homes are brought up to Band C by 2027, with continued support for the Green Deal Communities programme, enabling local Councils to provide help street by street.
- ♦ Improve the standard of private rented and social housing, requiring these homes to be upgraded to Band C by 2027.
- ♦ Introduce incentives to help everyone invest in energy efficiency:
 - ❖ A Council Tax reduction of at least £100 for 10 years, when the resident's home has an energy saving improvement of at least two bands.
 - ❖ A new Feed Out Tariff for investment in solid wall insulation, the most expensive and difficult energy saving investment for some homes.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Develop a range of targeted, innovative programmes to support the above, including infrastructure funding where appropriate, such as:
 - ❖ 'Insulation on prescription' to link up the NHS with the fuel poverty agenda.
 - ❖ An Off-Gas-Grid Strategy to help rural areas benefit from new technologies.
 - ❖ Interest-free loans to fund energy efficiency home improvements.



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 we celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, a foundation stone of our liberties. 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.

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	Combat homophobic bullying and discrimination, including in schools
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 and strengthened rules on police stop and search	Fight discrimination in the criminal justice system and recruit more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic police officers

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 same-sex marriage 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.

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

Equal Marriage becomes
law on 17th July 2013

2014

The first couple married
on March 29th at the
stroke of midnight

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

- ♦ 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:

- ♦ Give legal rights and obligations to cohabiting couples in the event of relationship breakdown or one partner dying without a will.
- ♦ Permit humanist weddings and opposite sex civil partnerships, and liberalise the rules about the location, timing and content of wedding ceremonies.
- ♦ Support schools to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination, and to establish a tolerant and inclusive environment for all their pupils. We will remove schools' exemption from the ban on harassment in these areas while protecting the right to teach about religious doctrine.
- ♦ Promote international recognition of same sex marriages and civil partnerships as part of a comprehensive International LGBT Rights Strategy that supports the cause of decriminalising homosexuality in other countries.
- ♦ Seek to pardon all those with historic convictions for consensual homosexual activity between adults.
- ♦ Enhance the experience of all football fans by making homophobic chanting a criminal offence, like racist chanting.
- ♦ Ask the Advisory Committee on 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 (BAME) 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.
- ♦ Maintain funding for people to develop and improve their English language skills to enable them to fully participate in society and achieve their potential.
- ♦ Challenge discrimination in the criminal justice system by:
 - ❖ Improving the safeguards in police stop and search powers in England and Wales with tighter guidance and requiring police to wear body cameras in Section 60 areas, the establishment of which will require judicial sanction.
 - ❖ Boosting police recruitment from BAME groups.
 - ❖ Conducting a full review of the causes of the overrepresentation of BAME individuals in the criminal justice system.

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, based on the principle of one assessment, one budget. This will bring together support like Personal Independence Payment, Employment Support Allowance, a replacement for the Independent Living Fund and health and social care entitlements. We will implement the proposals set out in the 2015 Green Paper on Learning Disabilities.

- ♦ Ensure disabled people who need an extra room are entitled to one in any assessment of their Housing Benefit needs.
- ♦ Help greater numbers of disabled people work by encouraging employers to shortlist any qualified disabled candidate and providing advice about workplace adaptation.
- ♦ Maintain Disabled Students' Allowance to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate support in their university studies, and review the impact of any changes to consider additional protections for the most vulnerable students with disabilities.
- ♦ Make it easier to get around by:
 - ❖ Making more stations wheelchair accessible and giving wheelchair users priority over children's buggies when space is limited.
 - ❖ Bringing into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
 - ❖ Improving the legislative framework governing Blue Badges.
 - ❖ 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.
- ♦ Tackle disability hate crime by ensuring proper monitoring of incidents by police forces and other public authorities.
- ♦ 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 RIPA, 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 RIPA; 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 enquiry into complicity in torture if the current investigation by the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee investigation fails to get to truth.
- ♦ End indefinite detention for immigration purposes.
- ♦ Introduce restrictions on the indefinite use of police bail.
- ♦ Require judicial authorisation for the use of undercover police officers to infiltrate alleged criminal groups.
- ♦ 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 procedures 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 RIPA 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, the need for written, legal guarantees of our rights and liberties 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 the right to trial by jury.
- ♦ Pass a new Freedoms Act, to protect citizens from excessive state powers.

Our Freedoms Act will:

- ♦ Tighten the regulation of CCTV, with more powers for the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.
- ♦ Extend the rules governing storage of DNA and fingerprints by public authorities to include all biometric data – like facial images.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Prevent heavy-handed policing of demonstrations by tightly regulating the use of ‘kettling’.
- ♦ Reform joint enterprise laws.
- ♦ Ban high-frequency Mosquito devices which discriminate against young people.
- ♦ Strengthen safeguards to prevent pre-emptive arrests and misuse of pre-charge bail conditions to restrict civil liberties and stifle peaceful protest.
- ♦ End the Ministerial veto on release of information under the Freedom of Information Act.
- ♦ Cut back on the petty over-regulation of everyday life, like removing licensing requirements for leafleting for community events, liberalising the restrictions on songs and readings at wedding ceremonies, and permitting swimming in open bodies of water.

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.
- ♦ Give increased powers and resources for the Information Commissioner and introduce custodial sentences for egregious breaches of the Data Protection Act.
- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Ensure that privacy policies and terms and conditions of online services, including smartphone apps, must be clear, concise and easy for the user to understand.
- ♦ 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

With Liberal Democrats in government, crime is down 10%. That means fewer homes burgled, fewer communities blighted and fewer people hurt. But there is much more to do to reduce crime and free people from fear.

The best way to protect the public is to stop crime from happening in the first place, whether by designing out crime, intervening early, or with effective punishments that challenge offenders and address their criminal behaviour. We will make sure the number one priority for the criminal justice system is to prevent crime by cutting reoffending.



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.

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We have begun to tackle abuse in our immigration system, too, 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.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Cut crime by 10%, with evidence-based policing directed at the front line	Focus policing on crime prevention, saving money by scrapping Police and Crime Commissioners
Improved treatment for addiction and mental health problems in prison	Cut crime with specialist drug courts and non-criminal punishments that help addicts get clean
More prisoners working longer hours with wages contributing to a Victims' Fund	Reform prisons to focus on turning offenders away from a life of crime
National strategy on fighting violence against women and girls and ending the awful practice of Female Genital Mutilation	End FGM at home and abroad in a generation, teach sexual consent in our schools, and crack down on domestic violence
Reintroduced border checks so we know who is coming in and leaving the UK	Complete border checks and use the information to improve our visa rules and deport people with no right to stay

9.1 Preventing crime

Crime and fear of crime are amongst the greatest threats to our security and our ability to live our lives to the full. Our focus is on trying to prevent crime from happening in the first place.

We will:

- ♦ Design out opportunities for crime, by improving the built environment, the design of new technologies, and community resilience.
- ♦ Strengthen the What Works centre within the College of Policing and require HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to scrutinise the use

- of evidence by local forces in designing their policing plans.
- ♦ Build on the success of crime maps to use data more effectively to reduce crime, working towards the publication of business-by-business data for crimes committed on commercial premises, and exploring the feasibility of mandatory reporting of fraud losses by individual credit and debit card providers.

9.2 Improving local policing

We are successfully bringing down crime and improving the efficiency of our police forces, but there is more to do. We believe the police could be far more effective with proper support and shared best practice.

We will:

- ♦ Guarantee the police pursue the public's priorities by replacing Police and Crime Commissioners with Police Boards made up of Councillors from across the force area.
- ♦ Encourage police forces and other emergency services to work together at a local, regional and national level to reduce back office costs and deliver efficiency savings.
- ♦ Support and expand Police Now, which is bringing high-flying graduates and skilled mid-career professionals into our police forces.
- ♦ Explore the case for transferring responsibility for more serious national crime to the National Crime Agency, enabling local police forces to focus on local crime and anti-social behaviour.
- ♦ Step up our work with EU partners to tackle serious and organised crime.

9.3 Improve support for victims of crime

The criminal justice system exists to protect the public from crime; where crime does occur victims are our first priority. We need to make sure they, and their families, are supported both in the aftermath of crimes and throughout the justice system.

We will:

- ♦ Enact a Victims' Bill of Rights.
- ♦ Create a single point of contact for victims to give early access to information and support.
- ♦ Change sentencing guidelines to increase sentences available for hate crimes.

- ♦ Give victims of crime a right to review what progress police have made to investigate the crime committed against them including cases where the police have declined to investigate.
- ♦ Give victims a right to choose restorative justice.
- ♦ Implement the Modern Slavery Strategy to reduce people trafficking and support victims.

9.4 Tackling violence against women and girls

A fair society cannot tolerate today's unacceptable level of violence against women and girls in Britain. We have made progress since 2010 but we will not rest until women feel safe and respected.

We will:

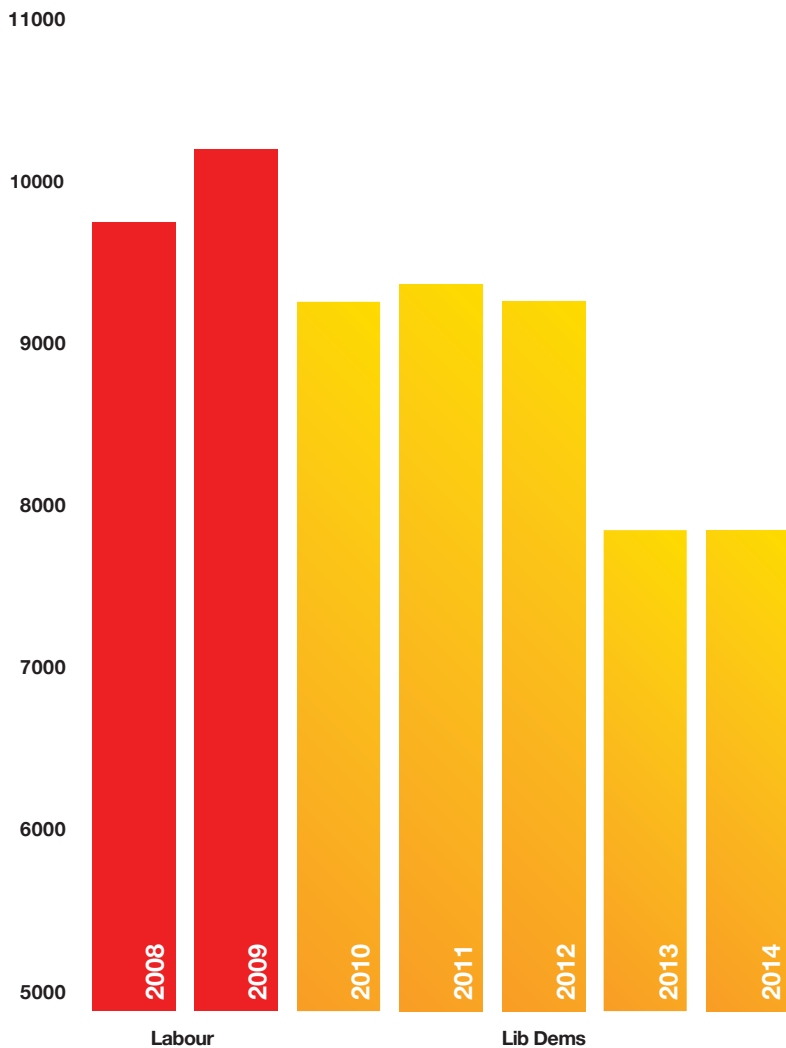
- ♦ Ensure teachers, social workers, police officers and health workers in areas where there is high prevalence of female genital mutilation or forced marriage are trained to help those at risk.
- ♦ Require the teaching of sexual consent in schools as part of age-appropriate sex and relationships education.
- ♦ Improve the provision of rape crisis centres and refuges for victims of domestic violence with a national network and national sources of funding.
- ♦ Protect funding for tackling violence against women and girls and maintain the post of International Champion for preventing this violence.
- ♦ Create a national helpline for victims of domestic and sexual violence – regardless of gender – to provide support, encourage reporting and secure more convictions.
- ♦ Work to ensure the whole criminal justice system updates practice in line with the Director of Public Prosecutions' guidance on sexual consent.

9.5 Improving justice and rehabilitating offenders

The criminal justice system can do more to turn people away from a life of crime. We have made progress in government, for the first time providing probation support for offenders serving sentences of less than twelve months. Yet still, far too many people are simply warehoused in prison, instead of learning skills that will enable them to earn an honest living when they are released.

We believe that a large prison population is a sign of failure to rehabilitate, not a sign of success. So our aim is to significantly reduce the prison population by using more effective alternative punishments and correcting offending behaviour.

Falling crime



This shows the falling trend in crime from the Crime Survey England and Wales.

We will:

- ♦ Prioritise prison for dangerous offenders and those who commit the most serious offences with increased use of tough non-custodial punishments including weekend or evening custody, curfews, unpaid work in the community and GPS tagging. This will enable us to introduce a presumption against short-term sentences that will help reduce the prison population and cut crime.
- ♦ Promote Community Justice Panels and other local schemes designed to stop problems from escalating.
- ♦ Extend the role of the Youth Justice Board to all offenders aged under 21, give them the power to commission mental health services and devolve youth custody budgets to Local Authorities.
- ♦ Create a Women's Justice Board, modelled on the Youth Justice Board, to improve rehabilitation of female offenders.
- ♦ Reform prisons so they become places of work, rehabilitation and learning, with offenders receiving an education and skills assessment within one week, starting a relevant course and programme of support within one month and able to complete courses on release.
- ♦ Improve prison governance and accountability with a new value added measure to assess progress in reducing reoffending, providing education and tackling addiction and mental health issues, enabling good prisons to earn greater autonomy. We will strengthen the independence of the Chief Inspectors of Prisons and Probation.
- ♦ Provide experts in courts and police stations to identify where mental health or a drug problem is behind an offender's behaviour so they can be dealt with in a way that is appropriate. We will pilot US-style drug and alcohol courts.
- ♦ Strengthen the 'realistic prospect of custody' test to reduce the use of remand for suspected offenders who can be safely monitored in the community and are unlikely to receive a prison sentence if found guilty.

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.

9.6 Ensuring access to justice

Access to justice is an essential part of a free society and a functioning legal system. In this Parliament we have had to make significant savings from the Legal Aid budget, but in the next Parliament our priority for delivering efficiency in the Ministry of Justice should be prison and court reform, using technology and innovation to reduce costs.

We will:

- ♦ Review the criminal Legal Aid market and ensure there are no further savings without an impact assessment as to the viability of a competitive and diverse market of Legal Aid providers.
- ♦ Reduce pressure on the criminal Legal Aid budget by requiring company directors to take out insurance against prosecution for fraud and permitting the use of restrained assets to pay reasonable legal bills.
- ♦ Carry out an immediate review of civil Legal Aid, judicial review and court fees, in consultation with the judiciary, to ensure Legal Aid is available to all those who need it, that those of modest means can bring applications for judicial review of allegedly unlawful government action and that court and tribunal fees will not put justice beyond the reach of those who seek it. This will mean reversing any recent rises in up-front court fees that make justice unaffordable for many, and instead spreading the fee burden more fairly.
- ♦ Retain access to recoverable success fees and insurance premiums in asbestosis claims and where an individual is suing the police; and also for both claimant and defendant in publication and data protection claims, except where one party is significantly better resourced than the other.
- ♦ Promote the use of alternative buildings for magistrates' courts and local dispute resolution programmes like Community Justice Panels to bring justice back into the community.
- ♦ Support innovation like the provision of civil justice online and expansion of alternative dispute resolution procedures.
- ♦ Encourage the widespread use of mediation for separating couples, while protecting access to the family courts where necessary
- ♦ Develop a strategy that will deliver advice and legal support to help people with everyday problems like personal debt and social welfare issues, working across government and involving non-profit advice agencies.

9.7 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.

9.8 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.

We will:

- ♦ Adopt 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.
- ◆ Put the Department of Health rather than the Home Office in charge of drug policy.

9.9 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 Jobseekers 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.
- ♦ Encourage schools with high numbers of children with English as a second language to host English lessons for parents.





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 devolved power to Councils and communities. 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.

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
Devolved £7 billion of funding for transport and economic growth to local areas in England.	Meet the needs of England with Devolution on Demand, letting local areas take control of the services that matter most to 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 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 local government elections in England and 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 giving 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 Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the power to lower the voting age to 16.

Now we need 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.

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:

- ♦ Aim to increase the number of Neighbourhood, Community and Parish Councils and promote tenant management in social housing.
- ♦ 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 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.
- ♦ Support local libraries and ensure any libraries under threat of closure are offered first for transfer to the local community.
- ♦ Spread mutual structures and employee participation through the public sector.

Reforming the House of Lords



789

The current size of the House of Lords

450

Under Liberal Democrat reforms

- ♦ Strengthen community rights to run local public services, and protect community assets like pubs by bringing forward a Community Right to Buy. We will ensure planning permission is required to convert a pub into alternative uses.
- ♦ 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:
 - ❖ Redirecting the current subsidies for ‘local TV’, which have failed to contribute significantly to cultural life.
 - ❖ 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 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 (SDSR), 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 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 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 Veterans' Commissioner.
- ♦ Improving support for personnel and veterans with mental health problems, including alcohol dependency.
- ♦ Strengthening local military covenants by defining more exacting guidelines and ensuring best practice is rolled out across all Local Authorities.

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.

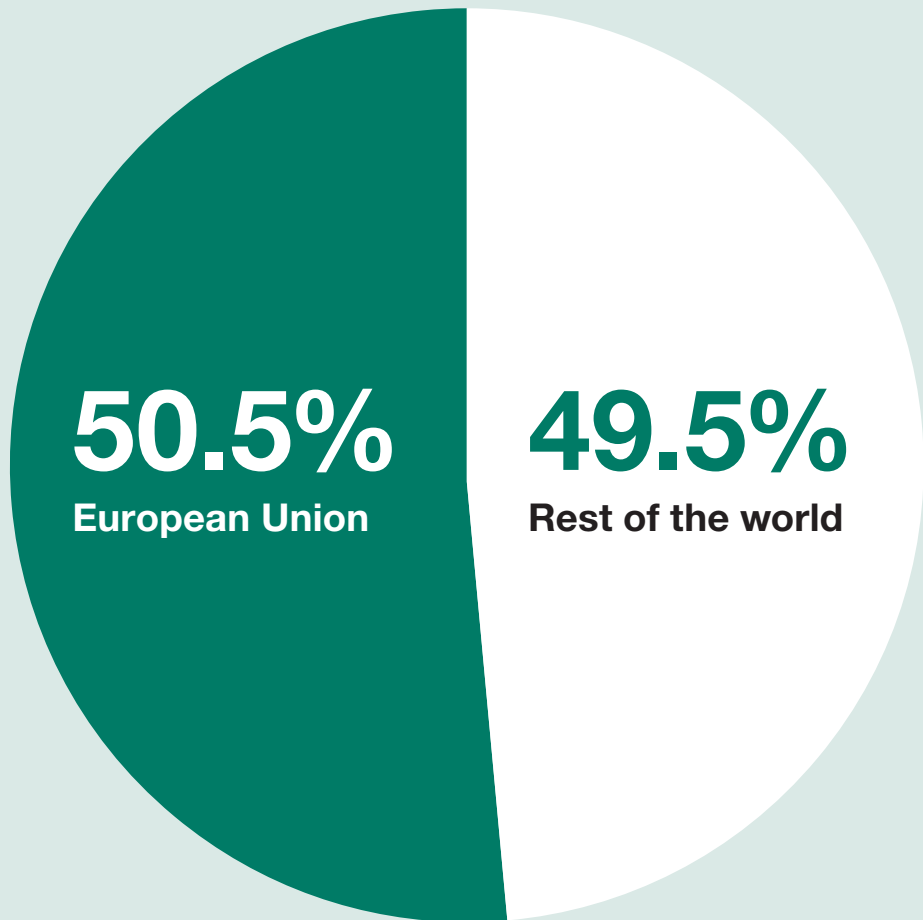
11.3 Britain in Europe: prosperity and reform

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 (GAVI), 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, 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 that 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, trade 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 in 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 one 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.

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Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015

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

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