

Welsh Liberal Democrats



The REAL alternative



Freedom. Fairness. Trust. These are the qualities of the Welsh people at their best, and they are the guiding principles of the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

This manifesto is built on these principles – principles that we believe must underpin government.

We're on your side.

Charles Kennedy

welshlibdems.org.uk

OUR PRINCIPLES

Freedom. Fairness. Trust. These are the qualities of the Welsh and British people at their best, and they are the guiding principles of the Liberal Democrats.

This manifesto is built on these principles – principles that we believe must underpin the government of this country, but which are too often lacking in public life today.

FREEDOM

Because Liberals believe that individuals should govern their own lives, free from unnecessary interference by government or society. So we want to build a society which gives individual men and women opportunities to pursue their aims, develop their talents and shape their successes. A country where people are free to shape their future is stronger, wealthier, happier, and more fulfilled.

FAIRNESS

Because ill-health, disability, poverty, environmental pollution and the fear of crime curtail freedom, just as much

as discriminatory laws or arrest without trial. So we want government to provide the essential requirements that everyone needs to make real choices in their lives – a good education, a decent pension, a clean environment, effective policing and high quality healthcare. And we want to see fairness too in the way in which taxes are raised and minorities are treated.

TRUST

Because to deliver freedom and fairness, we need to give citizens the power to hold government to account. So we want to see government brought closer to the people it is meant to serve – which is why we are committed to curtail the personal power and patronage of the Prime Minister, strengthen our democracy, and hand many powers back from central government to local neighbourhoods, with real democratic control over those who wield power.

Throughout this manifesto we explain how we will put these beliefs into practice and how we will pay for this, to create a society where people are freer, where

government exercises its powers more fairly, and where the bond of trust is re-established between the people and their government.

Throughout this manifesto, we recognise our responsibility to future generations, to protect the precious environment that sustains all life on the planet. Policies for environmental sustainability are therefore set out in every area – because for us, environmental policy is not an optional extra but an integral part of the way in which we will govern.

Throughout this manifesto, we show how we can help achieve these aims through Britain playing a leading role in Europe and on the wider international stage, building effective global institutions and acting in accordance with international laws – because in an ever-more globalised and interdependent world, isolation is in none of our interests.

Throughout this manifesto you will find this Liberal Democrat approach. Freedom. Fairness. Trust.

This Manifesto will astonish you.

It will challenge you.

And it will make you decide something important.

It's astonishing, because in it you'll discover a Welsh Party which wants to serve the country, not to rule it.

It's challenging, because you'll need to ask yourself whether what we Lib Dems offer is what you want.

And, if you like what you read, you need to decide if you'll vote for us.

As you'll see in our manifesto, we don't waste pages slagging off the other parties. Life's too short to focus on the faults in others. Instead, we tell you how we'd do it differently. We believe in outcomes which you, as a Welsh citizen, can see.

And we're asking you to vote for us because then we can make things happen. From opposing the Iraq war to replacing the unfair Council Tax with Local Income Tax, we're dedicated to action, and specific measurable results that make a difference to you.

I think we're right to say we're "the REAL alternative" in this election. As the old parties drift closer and closer together, and look ever more similar, we've stuck to our Lib Dem principles. We've turned them into common sense policies that add up to a sensible package we really can deliver.

So, have a look at the sections which matter most to you. Consider the real alternative that we Lib Dems are offering, working together in Westminster and the National Assembly, on health, education, crime and jobs. Chat with your friends and family about what we propose. Or call us if you want to know more. And if what we say makes sense to you, then don't just think it. Vote for it!

This General Election is about asking yourself; "what sort of country do I want to live in?" NOW is the time to consider how you wish us to look on the world stage, and how free you want to feel in your own nation. For our part, Lib Dems will create a country which isn't afraid of being an international team player. And we don't think civil liberties are something to be traded for the politics of fear.

For 5 minutes of your time at the polling station, you can get 5 years of us working for you. If you want to get away from the tired old politics of the past, all you have to do is vote Lib Dem. And if you do, you'll get a team who never forget it's you who put us in, and that it's our duty to do a good job for you.

With your vote and our commitment we'll make a difference that makes you proud.


Lembit Öpik
Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats

I believe that the 2001-2005 Parliament will be remembered as the period during which the Liberal Democrats came of age, ushering in a new era of truly three party politics. That is why we enter this General Election campaign with such optimism, unity of purpose and public goodwill.

We have been tested – inside and outside parliament – as never before. We have stuck to our principles: from our opposition to the war in Iraq to our defence of fundamental civil liberties over control orders. Again and again, we have been the real opposition to Tony Blair's increasingly discredited government: over council tax, top up and tuition fees, and ID cards.

The challenge – and the opportunity – is now to provide the real alternative at this election. That is what this manifesto is all about – detailing our analysis and policy ambitions; and all of it is underpinned by costed and credible pledges. We are determined that what we promise can be achieved. Our figures – based on official costings – all add up. And at the heart of our programme is a determination to achieve a fairer and more straightforward tax system which delivers the social priorities we believe that people want.

The mark of a decent society is one which creates opportunity for young people and provides security and dignity for those in their older years. At both ends of the age spectrum, we believe Britain must do better. That's why we set our commitment to abolishing student top up and tuition fees alongside our determination to guarantee free long-term personal care for the elderly. And we can point with pride to the example of Scotland, where Liberal Democrat government ministers have already delivered both these policies. In addition, we would scrap the council tax – replacing it with a fair system based on people's ability to pay.

Society is still scarred by inequality. Tackling that is a priority for the Liberal Democrats. For example, it's time we redressed the scandalous discrimination against women in the state pension system. We propose a 'citizen's pension', based on residency instead of national insurance contributions, which would – at last – provide women who have spent time caring for children and elderly parents with a pension in their own right.

In addition, we remain proud of a Britain which is enriched precisely because it is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic society. We will not pander to fear and prejudice. We offer fair and effective policies over the distinct issues of asylum and immigration.

Through all our thinking, there is a green thread of environmental awareness and urgency. We are by far the greenest of the three main UK political parties and this manifesto again confirms that fact.

It is a privilege at this election to be leading the most socially progressive party in British politics. Our priorities here at home are clear; our instinctive internationalism – through positive and proactive engagement with Europe, the United Nations and the Commonwealth – is definitive.

I am ambitious for the Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Democrats are the real alternative at this election. Please read, reflect and and if you like what we stand for, your support can make the difference.


Charles Kennedy — Leader of the Liberal Democrats

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Liberal Democrats have championed devolution of powers to Wales (and Scotland), so many decisions made in Westminster now apply to England only. That means that policies decided in Wales are increasingly different from those in England – reflecting different choices, priorities and circumstances. This manifesto sets out the policies and plans on which the Welsh Liberal Democrats seek the support of the people of Wales at this election.

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PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST

It is not asking much, surely? A National Health Service that helps you stay healthy, and makes sure that when you do fall ill you are treated quickly, irrespective of wealth or status.

Yet despite the investment now going in – which Liberal Democrats so famously pressed the government to deliver – far too much is still wrong in the NHS.

“A recent visit to Bronglais Accident and Emergency unit reminded me that the University of Cardiff A&E crisis at Christmas was no flash in the pan. I am always deeply impressed by the dedication, commitment and sheer hard work of our health professionals. But talk to them and you’ll hear how hospital staff are overworked, often under-appreciated, and their work often hampered by other agencies. The disparity between waiting times in England and Wales is scandalous.

“Liberal Democrat policies seek to relieve pressure on our hospitals in the immediate and longer term. Liaison with social services departments to relieve the bed blocking problems is critical, and so in



an ageing population is our policy of free personal care for the elderly. This works in Scotland and will work in Wales as well.”

Mark Williams
Ceredigion

The urgent problems in the NHS, such as long waiting times, need urgent and emergency action. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will put patients first and publish a full action plan of measures. Some of the highlights of the immediate measures we would introduce include:

ESTABLISHING WALK-IN HEALTH CENTRES

Establish Walk In Health Centres across Wales. These would be open seven days a week and offer fast and convenient access to local treatment and NHS services, providing treatment for patients who might otherwise go to Accident & Emergency departments. Treatments available would include dressings, blood tests and minor ailment treatments. They would be linked to the out-of-hours services and operate ambulance triaging service, so the ambulances themselves can take patients to the most appropriate treatment facility.

PROVIDING QUICKER DIAGNOSIS, BETTER USE OF DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT

Your chances of surviving life threatening and debilitating illnesses are higher with swift diagnosis. When a GP believes you may have a serious illness, we will offer diagnosis by the quickest practical route, whether public or private, so that the NHS can treat you more quickly. More tests and scans will be available in places like GPs’ surgeries and pharmacies. We will introduce elective surgery schedules that run on a 24-hour cycle, when staffing levels allow.

MAKING BETTER USE OF COMMUNITY HOSPITALS

We would provide more community-based intermediate care facilities across Wales, reducing the risk of discharge from hospital prematurely and consequent emergency re-admission. This would offer a better route through the different stages of treatment and allow patients to receive the best care.

THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT, WE WOULD:

INTRODUCE FREE PERSONAL CARE

Those towards the end of their lives deserve dignity and the best possible care. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will provide free personal care when people most need it, for as long as they need it, funded from part of our new 50 per cent rate on incomes over £100,000. In short, we will implement in Wales the recommendations of the independent Royal Commission on long-term care. This means that care, including help with dressing, washing and feeding would be free. Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland have already done this.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO DENTAL SERVICES

Across Wales, the provision of primary care services such as dentists fails to meet the needs of communities. This is especially true in rural areas. Welsh Liberal Democrats would employ more salaried NHS dentists to ensure that everyone has access to NHS dental treatment. We would create

Primary Dental Care Centres for North, West and Mid Wales. By training dentists in areas of chronic shortage, those dentists training through the new Primary Dental Care Centres would be used to serve the public via the NHS.

CUT UNFAIR CHARGES – FREE EYE AND DENTAL CHECKS

To cut the risk of illness going undetected we will end charges for eye and dental checks which deter people from coming forward for testing. Now is the time to build on the achievement of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, when as part of the Assembly Government, we made dental checks free for everyone under 25. We would also immediately abolish prescription charges for people with long term chronic illnesses such as arthritis. Those with long term chronic illnesses who need a variety of drugs to control their condition require expensive multiple prescriptions. We would scrap these charges now, instead of these sufferers being made to wait until 2007 for their free prescriptions.

MAKE PREVENTION AS IMPORTANT AS ‘CURE’

We will help people to stay healthy, as well as caring for them when they fall ill. If the causes of ill-health aren’t tackled, the NHS won’t be able to cope – so we will give people the information and opportunities to make healthy choices, for example through clearer food and alcohol labelling. A Welsh Parliament would have the power to ban smoking in all enclosed public places. Our policies as a whole will help tackle other causes of ill-health, such as poverty, pollution and poor housing.

OFFER A MINIMUM STANDARD OF SERVICE

People with long-term conditions should be entitled to an agreed minimum standard of treatment, setting out their course of treatment, where and when they will be treated, and what other help, such as social care, they will receive. We will introduce new legislation to safeguard the rights and welfare of people with mental health problems, allowing them to exercise more control over their treatment. We will increase investment in ambulance services

to recruit more staff, increase the number of 24-hour ambulance stations in rural areas and provide adequate relief cover.

RECRUIT MORE STAFF

We would provide a grant to newly qualified health professionals prepared to work in areas where there is a shortage of such staff. In return, we will introduce a minimum contractual commitment to the NHS in Wales. This will help cut waiting times and improve the quality of care. Employing agency nurses in the Welsh NHS costs taxpayers over £21 million a year – three times as much as in 1999. Targeting more and newly qualified staff to areas of need will solve this problem and prevent NHS funding being eaten up in this expensive way.

Photo: Steve Maisey/Rex Features



Green action

CLEAN AIR AND WATER

Pollution in the air, in water and in the food chain causes or aggravates many illnesses as well as destroying the environment. We support the adoption of the EU Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) Directive. This will mean that information becomes available to the public on the consequences of exposure to all chemicals in daily use and that those of high concern are replaced by safer alternatives.

AMBITIOUS FOR EVERY CHILD

The finest investment our generation can make is to give a high-quality education to the next generation. Nothing sets a child free more than this. If we are successful, each and every child is given the opportunity to unlock their potential. If we fail then we put their whole future at risk.

"As a teacher, I know only too well the constant pressures on school budgets. Changing pupils numbers with the resultant pressures on staffing are a constant feature of school life, which makes the Liberal Democrat stance on three year budgets all the more important. Our policy is good for stability, good for staff and above all good for children.

"We also want to reduce class sizes, a practical policy helps teachers to help pupils – and improves the learning experience. The fewer pupils there are, the more attention you can give each of them."

Tudor Jones
Delyn



THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT, WE WOULD:

GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST START – SPENDING THE CHILD TRUST FUND MONEY WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

Expert opinion confirms what common sense tells us: children well taught and well –cared for in their early years have a better opportunity to lead successful and rewarding lives. Labour has the wrong priorities, handing out a one-off cash windfall to 18 year-olds at taxpayers' expense through the Child Trust Fund. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will use this money better by investing it where it matters most, allowing schools to cut infant class sizes from Labour's present maximum of 30 to an average of 20 and junior class sizes to an average of 25. We will also increase funding to improve integrated care and early years provision. Working with Estyn, parents, playgroups, schools and carers we will increase the supply of 'wrap-around' care. Building on our Maternity Income Guarantee, which will raise maternity pay for the first six months to £170 a week instead of £102.80 at present, these policies will give every child the best possible start.

GIVE GREATER SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

To improve quality of learning in primary schools, far more support for teachers is required, through both specialist peripatetic teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). Qualified teachers welcome the presence of LSAs who work under them. We will put in place an appropriate salary and career structure for LSAs, with the possibility of them achieving Qualified Teacher Status through individual development programmes, assessed by recognised teacher training establishments, and combining practical and academic studies.

IMPROVE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Children need to learn in a safe and orderly environment, where high standards of behaviour are upheld, where bullying is challenged effectively and where teachers are able to teach without disruption. Our smaller class sizes will help reduce discipline problems. To deal with more persistent disruption schools will agree externally-monitored 'positive behaviour plans' with parents and pupils. If necessary, local education authorities' Behavioural Support Units will tackle exceptional problems in

Photo: PA/EMPICS



I work in a University and see every day the under-investment that Universities and Colleges experience, and the effects of spiralling debt on students. Investment in buildings, books and other infrastructure is desperately needed. Our Young people are our future, saddling students with tens of thousands of pounds of debt is no way to invest in the future

Tom Rippeth
 Wrexham

particular schools. When all else fails we will guarantee that head teachers will have local education authority support for 'managed transfer' to other schools or special units for pupils whose behaviour remains unacceptable.

PROVIDE FAIR FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS BY INTRODUCING THREE-YEAR BUDGETS
 Schools should be funded on a fairer and more stable basis. Three-year school budgets would be good for forward planning, good for reducing class sizes and good for teacher employment. Three year budgets would mean that teacher redundancy and recruitment costs would fall; building maintenance would be done at the right time rather than when the money was there; and other spending would take place on a planned and incremental basis rather than as a one-off. School finances are inherently unstable when operating on a year-to-year basis. Introducing three-year budgets would ease the headaches for head teachers.



DEFEND ACCESS TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT
 We will defend the right of children to free school transport when they live more than two miles from their designated primary school and three miles from their designated secondary school. We will work with LEAs to take up concerns about safety on school buses. For those who live nearer school, there still need to be safe alternatives to the car. We will promote 'Safe Routes to School', with traffic calming measures, safe pavements, good lighting and adults on hand to conduct 'walking buses'.

PROTECT RURAL SCHOOLS
 There is a need to preserve popular and effective local schools. This should take the form of a presumption against the closure of rural schools. Schools have a particularly important role in rural communities. In providing the best possible education in rural areas, the Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to supporting federation and IT networking and to increase the viability and educational provision of rural schools.

IMPROVE SKILLS FOR WORK
 Employers across Wales know that school-leavers often don't have the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. The Welsh Liberal Democrats want to see further reform of education for the over 14's so that they can mix vocational and academic learning, including apprenticeships, as Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland have already done. We will phase out the disparity

in funding between schools, colleges and workplace training by ensuring the funds follow the student. The Welsh Baccalaureate, promoted by the Welsh Liberal Democrats in government, has been an important first step in this direction. We will extend and develop this, stretching the most gifted and engaging those previously turned off by schooling.

In order to give 14-19 year olds, adults and businesses the ability to deliver world class skills we have to have world class facilities. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will address Wales's skills deficit developing a new partnership between colleges, business, local authorities and the government to ensure modern, high quality college facilities across Wales.

IMPROVE CONTINUITY IN WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION
 The gap between the number of pupils studying through the medium of Welsh at the primary and secondary levels, let alone post 16, remains a barrier to a more bilingual nation. To combat this situation, the provision and marketing of Welsh medium education must be extended. Welsh Liberal Democrats would provide additional funding for bilingual education in schools where parents want it, explore ways to establish Welsh medium schools more easily, develop a strategy to ensure continuity between primary and secondary education and improve incentives to attract more Welsh medium teachers. We would provide incentives to encourage Welsh speaking post graduate students to

become lecturers and increase the provision of Welsh-medium courses in Higher and Further education.

SCRAP TUITION FEES, AND STOP THE INTRODUCTION OF TOP-UP FEES
 Labour broke their promise on tuition fees. The result: tens of thousands of able students are saddled with mortgage-sized debts or deterred altogether from going to university. Funded from part of our new 50 per cent rate on incomes over £100,000, the Welsh Liberal Democrats will abolish all tuition fees, building on the achievements of Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland. We will expand on the Assembly Learning Grants we introduced as part of the Assembly Government to help poorer students with maintenance costs. Labour has offered the false promise of no top-up fees before 2007 in Wales, but won't offer the same commitment after 2007. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will ensure that no one will be denied the opportunity of a university education because of the fear of debt, while universities will receive the improved funding they need.

The Liberal Democrat promise to scrap tuition fees and stop the introduction of top-up fees, and to improve funding for Universities and colleges is welcome. In Scotland the Liberal Democrats in government have abolished tuition fees; and in Wales in government we re-introduced student grants through the Assembly Learning Grant. Liberal Democrats have shown that in government we do deliver.

Green action

GREEN EVERY SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

All plans for new educational buildings must be good for the environment as well as good for education, for example by minimising the need for heating and using sustainable building materials. By putting the two together, children and students can learn about caring for the environment by seeing green projects in real action in their own school or college. We also believe that out-of-classroom learning is a key part of a good education, and will include the quality of out-of-classroom education in the criteria on which schools are inspected.

LOCALLY SOURCED HEALTHY MEALS

We want to see schools and local authorities working together to provide healthy, tasty food, with as much as possible produced and sourced locally. As well as improving the quality of food on their plates, we want to see children learning where their food comes from and how to get a healthy balance in their diets – a valuable skill for the rest of their lives.

TACKLING CRIME, DEFENDING LIBERTY

Crime – and the fear of crime – wrecks people's lives.

Governments keep talking tough, but everyone knows it isn't working. It's time to concentrate on the basics: more police on the beat, more effort to stop prisoners re-offending, more help for victims of crime.

"In my work for Victim Support I come face to face with the real impact of crime in Wales today. The statistics only tell half the story. They don't convey the damage that crime does to people and communities.

"Labour coined the phrase – 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime', but when they got in to power they forgot the second part. We need long-term answers if we are to stop people's lives being blighted by nuisance behaviour.

"That's why we're promising to recruit 10,000 more police officers and 20,000 community support officers. We want to make offenders pay back to victims and their communities through tough community work and give prisoners skills for work not crime."

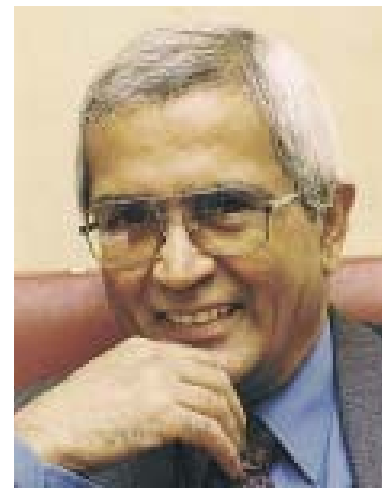
Jenny Willott
Cardiff Central



THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WE WOULD:

PUT 500 MORE POLICE ON THE STREETS – CUTTING CRIME AND THE FEAR OF CRIME

We will get rid of Labour's expensive, illiberal and ineffective ID card scheme. Doing this will allow us to pay for 500 more police in Wales on top of Labour's plans. Across the UK, Liberal Democrats will pay for 10,000 police on top of Labour's plans. We will complete existing plans for around 1,000 extra community support officers to support them. The average police officer spends more time in the police station today than they do on the street. We will give the police the tools they need, and simplify the bureaucracy they face, to allow them to spend more time on patrol and less time tied to the desk. We will concentrate police effort on tackling drug traffickers and those drug users who resort to crime to feed their habits, rather than on criminalising people possessing cannabis only for their own personal use.



"I have been been horrified to find that Labour doesn't seem to understand that in fighting crime and terrorism, the point is to defend Britain's justice and democracy, not give it away. Tough Liberal policies put more police on the beat and tackle the causes of crime. We won't surrender Britain's liberties."

Navnit Dholakia
Liberal Democrat Deputy
Leader in the Lords and
Spokesperson on Home Affairs

MAKE OFFENDERS PAY BACK TO VICTIMS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Welsh Liberal Democrats will make more non-violent criminals, such as fine defaulters, shoplifters and petty vandals, do tough community work as an alternative to jail. Experience shows that this reduces re-offending, gives them skills for legitimate work, and means that they pay back to the community. Through Community Justice Panels, local people will have more say in the punishment offenders carry out in the community – for example, by making them clean off graffiti or repair damage to victims’ property.

GET TOUGH ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The fear of binge-drinkers and the effects of binge-drinking have made many of our streets, particularly in city centres, no-go areas for many at the weekend. We will tackle excessive drinking by cracking down on licensees who serve people when clearly drunk or underage, and will require big late night venues to contribute to the extra cost of late night policing. Officers are drawn away from their normal roles to police city centres leaving communities with less protection and bigger tax bills. If it is good enough for football clubs

to pay for more police on match days, then night clubs should have to do the same. Unacceptable noise and offensive behaviour will be tackled with Acceptable Behaviour Contracts agreed between the individual, their family, the police and the local authority. Where individuals do not co-operate we will use Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, plus appropriate measures to tackle underlying causes.

GIVE PRISONERS SKILLS FOR WORK, NOT CRIME

With four out of five prisoners functionally illiterate, and over half of prisoners re-offending, it’s time to make prison work. Prisoners will be subject to a tough working day, with increased resources for education and training a top priority so that they learn the skills to acquire a legitimate job. The effort a prisoner puts into their education and work-related skills will be one of the factors used when considering their release date, as part of our emphasis on tackling the causes of crime.

PRIORITISE HIGH QUALITY INVESTIGATIONS, SAFE CONVICTIONS, FIGHTING CRIME AND TERROR

We will increase police resources to improve the detection and

investigation of crime. We will create a co-ordinated UK Border Force to strengthen the country’s borders against terrorism, people-trafficking and drug smuggling. We oppose moves to reduce or remove rights to jury trial, and the routine use of hearsay evidence or revelation of previous convictions. We opposed Labour’s plans to allow the Home Secretary to order house arrest and other restrictions on personal liberty – a British citizen’s liberty must only be removed through a fair judicial process, not on the command of politicians. Liberal Democrats achieved substantial amendment of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but it still has serious flaws. We will repeal it. Effective action against terrorism is vital, and our priority will be to extend the criminal law to enable terrorist suspects to be prosecuted in the mainstream courts. We will admit evidence from communications interception. If control orders are still required they must be granted by a judge, time-limited and subject to a high standard of proof.

STRENGTHEN THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

We will introduce a Single Equality Act to outlaw all unfair discrimination, (including on the grounds of race, gender, religion or

belief, sexual orientation, disability, age or gender identity), thus giving equal protection for all. We will establish hate-crimes investigation units in each police force to co-ordinate information and action against racist, homophobic and other hate crimes. Our Equality Act will stop same-sex couples in civil partnerships being treated unfairly compared with married couples in pension arrangements.

IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE

Liberal Democrats will establish an Animal Protection Commission, bringing all animal welfare matters under the responsibility of a dedicated, expert body, with the duty to ensure that animal protection laws are properly enforced and kept up to date. We will introduce a new Animal Welfare Act to guarantee high standards of animal welfare across the board for farm livestock, working animals and domestic pets, and will close the loophole in existing legislation which allows people who have been banned from keeping animals still to own them if someone else has ‘custody’.



Green action

TOUGHER ACTION TO ENFORCE HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS.

The Environment Agency has too few inspectors to enforce environmental standards effectively – and courts have struggled to enforce the rules in cases that are often highly technical and specialised. We will improve the enforcement of pollution controls through an expanded inspectorate for the Environment Agency, and a specialist Environmental Tribunal to deal with enforcing environmental rules. We will ensure that the level of penalties that polluters have to pay are appropriate to the offence – at present they are often trivial compared to the profits from environmental crime.

BUILDING PROSPERITY FOR WALES

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER WILL:

HAVE COSTED AND AFFORDABLE POLICIES

Unlike the other parties, we have consistently set out costings for our manifesto pledges, explaining how much money they will need and how they will all be paid for. So this manifesto includes a specific section outlining our main costings. Our package of tough choices on spending, and fairer taxes, means that most people will be better off. There is only one

proposed net tax rise (to 50 per cent on the proportion of incomes over £100,000 a year, affecting just 1 per cent of taxpayers) which will allow us to pay for abolition of student tuition fees, free personal care for the elderly, and lower local taxes. Most people's tax will be cut by replacing Council Tax with a system based on ability to pay, saving the typical household around £450 per year.

MAKE TOUGH CHOICES IN PUBLIC SPENDING

Liberal Democrats have different spending priorities from Labour. We believe that in order to concentrate resources on under-funded areas such as pensions, policing and early years education, funding should be switched from lower priority areas. That means reducing unnecessary subsidies to industry, and cutting wasteful new initiatives like the ID card and the Child Trust Fund handouts for future 18 year olds. This allows us to spend more on the things that really matter, like better pensions, more police and smaller class sizes.

RUN A STABLE AND WELL-MANAGED ECONOMY

We welcome the greater economic stability that has been established since interest rates were set independently by the Bank of England (which the Liberal Democrats were the first political party to advocate). Now, there needs to be more independent scrutiny and discipline in fiscal policy. We will give the National Audit Office the power to scrutinise the budget figures, including public borrowing, so that no Chancellor can fiddle the figures. We will ensure that the Office for National Statistics is independent and accountable to Parliament, not subservient to ministers. We will tackle irresponsible credit expansion in mortgages and personal loans by curbing misleading advertising and anti-competitive practices by promoters of insurance for mortgages and loans, and of credit

cards. We oppose the increasing complexity of business taxes and we will consult with business on a simpler and fairer system, giving priority to helping small businesses.

INTRODUCE FAIRER TAXES

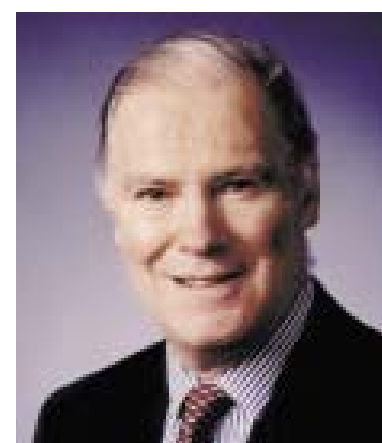
Under Labour ordinary hard-working families pay more as a share of their incomes in tax than the very rich. Under Labour, the elderly have to sell their homes to pay for their care, while rising Council Tax, and university top-up fees are making the system even more unfair. Taking all taxes together, the poorest 20 per cent of the population pay 38 per cent of their income in tax, compared to just 35 per cent for the richest 20 per cent. That's not what people expected from a Labour Government. Liberal Democrats will make the tax system fairer and simpler. As a first step towards reducing tax paid by low earners we will axe the unfair Council Tax and replace it with a Local Income Tax based on people's ability to pay. This will cut the typical household's tax bill by over £450. To pay for our policies of abolition of student top-up and tuition fees, ending elderly and disabled people paying for their care, and cutting Local Taxes, the richest 1 per cent of the population will pay 50 per cent tax (up from 41 per cent) on that part of their income over £100,000 per year.

CUT STAMP DUTY

People are increasingly struggling to afford their first home. We will raise the starting point for stamp duty from £120,000 to £150,000. This step takes around 150,000 mainly first-time buyers across Britain, including up to 8,000 in Wales, out of paying stamp duty altogether, and cuts the cost of home ownership.

RUN AN OUTWARD-LOOKING ECONOMY

Liberal Democrats support a liberal economic approach to trade, investment and migration in the



"It comes down to this: government needs to concentrate on its own job – delivering a stable, sustainable economy, a skilled workforce, and a modern infrastructure. It should only intervene in the market where it can show that the benefits clearly outweigh the costs. Regulation is a last resort. Red tape must be cut. In my experience this combination is unique to the Liberal Democrats."

Iain Vallance
Former Chairman of BT and former President of the CBI

Welsh Liberal Democrats have always been open and honest about how we will pay for our policies. At the last three general elections we set out full details of how much our policies would cost and how we would pay for them. None of the other parties did this.

Since Labour's Westminster government have increased taxes we don't need to put up taxes for most of our proposals – we have detailed plans to fund them by savings in current budgets. At Westminster we have put forward proposals to move over £5bn a year from lower priority programmes to our priorities. In the Assembly, our proposals would move about £100m a year from Labour's priorities to our priorities.

All of our policies have been costed in detail over the 5 years of a parliament. We have shown here the average cost of our policies for one year.

At Westminster our proposals include:

- Scrapping the Chancellor's Child Trust Fund and using the money for schools.
- Not introducing ID cards.
- Reforms to the notoriously inefficient defence procurement system.

In the Assembly we are proposing changes to fund higher priorities. We would cut the running costs of quangos, stick to current spending on trunk roads, and scrap Labour's free school breakfasts gimmick.

Three of our key policies are about creating a fairer distribution of the costs of public services:

1. Scrapping tuition and top-up fees for students

Cost in Wales of just over £60m a year

2. Introducing free personal care elderly and disabled people

Cost in Wales of just over £70m a year

3. Scrapping the council tax and moving towards a fairer local income tax

Cost in Wales of just over £100m a year

Our one tax change, introducing a new 50% rate on very high incomes over £100,000 a year, raises over £5bn a year across the UK. Using the present government's own rules, this change would boost the Assembly budget by hundreds of millions. This, coupled with our changes to the Assembly's present priorities pays for these priorities

national interest. We want Wales and Britain to be at the centre of a liberalised, reformed European Union. Liberal Democrats believe that Britain should work to create the right economic conditions to join the euro (subject to a referendum) in order to safeguard investment in the UK and reduce the cost and risk of trade with the rest of Europe. We will work to break down the trade barriers that prevent the poorest countries in the world selling their goods to the richer countries on fair terms.

SAFEGUARD WALES’S INTERESTS IN EUROPE

European investment is integral to jobs and economic development in Wales. Securing the best possible deal on European funding is critical to the future of the Welsh economy. The Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to supporting future funding at a similar level to current investment, for the next funding period between 2007 – 2013.

RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION

Economic migrants have helped make Britain one of the richest states in the world, both economically and culturally. There remains a positive economic benefit from managed immigration to fill the demand for skills and labour that are in short supply. We will consult with business and the public services to agree numbers of work permits for economic migration to ensure that Britain continues to prosper.

BUSINESS

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER AND THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WOULD:

CUT THE RED TAPE THAT STOPS BUSINESSES FROM GROWING

Liberal Democrats will slash the red tape, bureaucracy and over-regulation that are holding British businesses – especially small businesses – back. We will start with these three measures:

- No new regulation will be passed until a full assessment of its costs and necessity is published.
- New regulations affecting



business will automatically be scrapped unless their renewal is specifically approved after a period specified in a ‘sunset clause’.

- Endless visits by all sorts of inspectors will be replaced in most cases by one all-purpose inspection.

INTRODUCE SMALL-BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

Many small businesses pay a disproportionate amount in

rates – as much as 35 per cent of their profits. We will help small businesses by reforming the business rates system to allow firms in Wales with a rateable value of less than £25,000 to claim a business rate allowance of up to £1,500. This would represent a saving of over £600 a year for the majority of small businesses. More than 90,000 small businesses in Wales would benefit from this policy. We will also reform the valuation system to base rates on

site values, rather than rental value, which penalises businesses that invest in improving their premises.

SUPPORT BUSINESS

Wales has one of the lowest levels of business start-ups per head in Europe. If we are to encourage greater entrepreneurial activity in Wales we must help businesses develop and grow. We want to see improved and integrated business support system and make sure that targeted support is available for the growth sectors that Wales can lead on, such as the creative industries, cultural and green tourism and food processing.

PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM RIP-OFFS

We will introduce a new legal duty on businesses to trade fairly, while cutting back unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy. Enforced by the courts, this will require less form-filling than Labour’s complex rules, yet provide more effective protection for consumers, close business loopholes and promote free competition.

“In my work, promoting businesses in South Wales, I have seen how hard the Government policies hit business. Red tape costs business £40 billion a year in the UK. At the same time, revaluation has increased business rates.

“Liberal Democrats would introduce a Business Rate Allowance, similar to a Personal Tax Allowance, in order to deliver relief on business rates for smaller firms. This is especially needed in Wales, where the Welsh Assembly Government has refused to introduce the transitional relief available to firms in England to cushion the effects of revaluation.

“Businesses must be freed from bureaucracy if they are to prosper.”

Ed Townsend
Newport East.

A portrait photograph of Ed Townsend, a man with dark hair, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

Green action

USING ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS TO BENEFIT THE ENVIRONMENT

Green tax reforms and traded permits should be used to encourage people to act in a more environmentally responsible way. We will change the Climate Change Levy into a Carbon Tax, making it more effective at discouraging the use of the polluting fuels and energy sources that harm the environment. We will also strengthen tax incentives to use smaller and less polluting vehicles and create more energy-efficient homes. We will launch a Treasury-led Environmental Incentive Programme examining tax reforms that will reduce pollution and protect the environment, on the clear principle of taxing differently, not taxing more.

PROMOTE CLEAN ENERGY

Through the Welsh Parliament, Welsh Liberal Democrats will make sure that 15% of Wales’ electricity comes from renewable sources by 2010. This to be increased by 1% per year thereafter. Liberal Democrats will phase out existing nuclear power stations as they come to the end of their life since there is no safe option for dealing with their waste.

FAIRNESS AND OPPORTUNITY

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER WILL:

ADD OVER £100 MORE ON THE PENSION EVERY MONTH FROM AGE 75: A MILLION PENSIONERS OFF MEANS-TESTING

Millions of elderly people are failing to receive the pensions they've earned – and deserve and need – because of demeaning and unworkable means tests. Liberal Democrats will simplify the system, immediately guaranteeing a basic pension at 75 of at least £109.45 per week, with future increases linked to earnings.

That's over £100 a month more at 75 for every single pensioner and every pensioner couple over 75 will receive at least £167.05 per

week state pension – over £140 a month more than at present. This will abolish the need for means tests altogether for around 50,000 people in Wales.

INTRODUCE A CITIZEN'S PENSION
Many women who gave up work to bring up their children receive as little as a penny a week because they haven't paid enough national insurance. From the age of 75 we will give pensioners our increased 'Citizen's Pension' as of right, making sure that 140,000 women pensioners in Wales get the full pension.

HELP PENSIONERS BY AXING THE COUNCIL TAX

Too often, pensioners are forced to pay huge Council Tax bills despite being on low incomes, and many will be faced with further massive increases due to revaluation. Replacing Council Tax with Local Income Tax means eight out of ten pensioners will be better off and around 300,000 of the poorer pensioners in Wales will pay no local tax at all. Unlike the other parties' proposals, no-one will be denied help simply because of their age or who they live with – everyone will only pay what they can afford.

HELP WORKING PARENTS SPEND MORE TIME WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Becoming a parent for the first time is a daunting and expensive task. Giving new working parents more support has benefits for them, their babies, their employers and the economy. Liberal Democrats will give working families having their first child increased maternity pay for the first six months at the rate of the minimum wage – that's £170 a week instead of £102.80 at present, a lot more just when parents really need it.

REFORM THE NEW DEAL TO GET MORE PEOPLE INTO WORK

The present New Deal leaves too many people on unnecessary or ineffective schemes rather than getting them into real jobs. Liberal Democrats will instead tailor the assistance so that jobseekers receive the package of support they need to get proper, permanent work. We will also scrap benefit sanctions which leave genuine claimants unable to feed and house themselves.

SCRAP THE CSA
The Child Support Agency is failing. Some parents are required to pay an unrealistic amount for maintenance, whilst other payments are never enforced. We would scrap the CSA and hand over its initial assessment and enforcement functions to the Inland Revenue so that payment is enforced fairly and effectively. Special circumstances would be addressed by appeal to a specialist tribunal able to take account of individual circumstances, instead of the present unfair rigid formula.

PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Many severely disabled people feel the cold intensely and cannot afford to heat their homes adequately, despite the fact that the cold will often make their conditions worse. We will help severely disabled people of working age with their fuel bills by giving them the same £200 a year Winter Fuel Payment that pensioners receive. We will also implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care to guarantee free personal care for disabled people who need it.

PROTECT PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR PENSIONS

Across the UK more than 60,000 employees worked for companies that have gone out of business leaving insufficient money in their pension funds. We will bolster the Government's compensation scheme to ensure that these workers are compensated at the same level available under the new Pension Protection Fund. This will ensure a fair deal for those workers who find themselves in a similar situation to the former ASW employees. Unlike Labour, we will give proper time for consultation before making changes to existing public sector pension schemes, and we will honour the entitlements already built up.

TACKLE FRAUD AND ERROR
Each year, around £3 billion is lost to the UK taxpayer due to fraud and error in the social security



"I am appalled that in the fourth richest country in the world, so many pensioners, particularly older women, are trapped in so much poverty. I left the Labour Party and joined the Liberal Democrats four years ago because the more I saw Labour failing in action, the more I realised it was time to face the truth: that the Liberal Democrats are now the only party I can trust to deliver the decent pensions, and above all the free care when it's needed, to guarantee everyone dignity and security in retirement."

Claire Rayner
President of the Patients Association and member of the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care for the Elderly

"Every week I am contacted by people needing help with problems caused by the unfair and complex pensions and benefits system.

"I receive letters from pensioners in poverty, struggling with unfair and demeaning means tests, or forced to pay for the care they need. I hear from women denied even the basic pension simply because they took time out of work to care for their children.

"Then there are letters from people who want work to support themselves, fobbed off with government 'New Deal' schemes that just don't give them the training and skills they need to get a job. Letters from workers who are angry that they have been robbed of their company pensions. Letters from people with severe disabilities who are at their wits' end because of the bureaucracy and complexity of the benefits system.

"We are all growing older. Anyone can be suddenly disabled. These days no job is for life. Everyone wants to know that there is a safety net if they, or their family, need it – but equally, no one wants to pay benefits to cheats, or keep people on the dole longer than necessary.

"Yet, over and over again successive governments have

just complicated the system, hitting decent people with unfair and demeaning means tests and sanctions, introducing computer 'systems' that don't work – and yet have still failed to tackle the frauds effectively.

"Before entering parliament, I was Professor of Social Policy at Bath University, studying the mistakes governments kept making. Since being elected, I have sought to use my professional skills to develop alternatives that will work – plans that will guarantee everyone a decent old age, help when they are disabled or lose their job, and a decent start for every child. These principles of fairness and opportunity are close to the hearts of the British people, and are values held deeply by Liberal Democrats. In one of the richest countries in the world, we should not settle for less."

Steve Webb
Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions



Green action

SAVE ENERGY AND CUT FUEL BILLS

Thousands of people – mostly pensioners – die each year from preventable cold-related illnesses. On average, around fifty people die unnecessarily in each constituency every year. Poor home insulation and poor-quality housing lead to cold homes and high fuel bills, the main causes of this 'fuel poverty', while the average pensioner household spends £500 a year on energy. We will help pensioners and severely disabled people cut this bill by allowing them to take a year's Winter Fuel Payment as a voucher redeemable against insulation and energy saving materials. These would be made available at about half price through a partnership with fuel suppliers. A pensioner could save more than £100 from their energy bill every year by investing just one year's Winter Fuel Payment, and help the environment as well. In this way we will invest in cutting energy use and at the same time help pensioners and severely disabled people stay warm and save money.

PROMOTING LOCAL SERVICES

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER AND THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WOULD

AXE THE UNFAIR COUNCIL TAX AND INTRODUCE THE FAIR AND AFFORDABLE LOCAL INCOME TAX

The random effect of this year's Council Tax revaluation in Wales only serves to highlight the unfairness of council tax. The Revaluation exercise has not made council tax fairer – all it has done is spread its unfairness to different groups of people, communities and local authorities; an exercise that communities in Wales have suffered from a whole two years ahead of England. The Council Tax penalises pensioners and people on low incomes. They pay a far higher proportion of their income in Council Tax than the very rich. A Local Income Tax is based on the ability to pay. It would be run through the existing Inland Revenue Income Tax mechanism – so saving hundreds of millions by abolishing Council Tax administration. The typical household will save around £450 per year, and eight out of ten pensioners' will have lower bills.

TACKLE THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

Finding affordable housing in

many areas of Wales has become an extreme problem of overcoming limited availability, high property prices and poor quality stock. The affordable housing crisis affects all parts of the country, from the traditional Welsh speaking rural heartlands to the urban South. We will take thousands of homebuyers a year out of paying stamp duty altogether, by raising the threshold to £150,000. We will reform VAT to encourage developers to repair and reuse empty buildings.

We will give greater priority to the Homebuy scheme to ensure that housing is available to all throughout Wales, particularly in areas of high property prices.

In areas where second homes are overwhelming the local housing markets, we will permit local authorities to require a change of use application for a property bought as a second home. We will encourage the use of compulsory purchase orders to acquire appropriate land at affordable housing value for social housing development. We will promote the development of Community Land Trusts.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

It is important that local government is connected with local communities. Local government provides opportunity to the community it serves. We

will encourage the formation of community councils in those parts of Wales where they currently do not exist and local people want it. We will extend the powers of town and community councils to give them a strengthened role in the provision of local services. We will make councils more representative and accountable to their local communities by introducing the fairer Single Transferable Vote system for all council elections.

PUT A STOP TO THE PROGRAMME OF POST OFFICES CLOSURES

More than one in eight of Post offices in Wales have closed under Labour, and more closed under the Conservatives. Our priority is to secure a viable future for the post office network based on providing a combination of commercial services, benefits transactions and government information. This will help keep more post offices open. We will maintain the obligation on Royal Mail to provide universal same-price delivery of letters throughout the UK.

PROTECT AND PROMOTE OUR LOCAL SERVICES

Basic services such as shops and pubs are traditionally a focus of rural community life, but they are

rapidly disappearing from many villages. We believe that action to protect and support these facilities is best undertaken by rural communities themselves, but government can help by providing grant support and cutting bureaucratic barriers.

We would promote the establishment of Community Development Trusts to enable communities to assume ownership of basic services such as shops, pubs and petrol stations. We would also look to provide grants through regional and local agencies to support the creation of 'community hubs', which can perform a range of functions, such as grocery store, post office and library, from a single facility. Village pubs are often well placed to provide such a focal point.

Building on 'Rural Community Action' introduced by the Welsh Liberal Democrats as part of the Assembly Government, we want to empower communities and enable them to take responsibility for the regeneration of their area.



"As a School Governor, PTA Chair, Secretary of a Charitable Football Trust, and Chair of a Communities First Partnership, community involvement is very high on my list of priorities: genuine grass roots involvement by groups and individuals working together to improve their own environment and future prospects.

"Liberal Democrat philosophy is based on empowerment, giving individuals the skills and confidence to shape their own future. Providing adequate funding for education; affordable housing so that people are not forced to move elsewhere; making Government at all levels representative and accountable.



Real community and partnership working – not just glib words in a glossy brochure, but practical help and support to make it happen."

Karen Roberts
Rhondda

Green action

TACKLE WASTE

Through the Welsh Parliament, the Welsh Liberal Democrats will set a long-term goal of zero municipal waste, through waste minimisation, reuse and recycling. As a first step, by 2010 we believe that 60 per cent of all household waste should be recycled and we will aim to offer every household regular kerbside recycling. We will extend the practise of manufacturers being held responsible for disposing of their products and materials that are difficult to reuse or recycle. We will not allow new incinerators for municipal waste unless they can be shown to be the best environmental option after considering all alternatives, including new technologies where waste reduction and reuse are not possible.

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

We will reform the planning system to ensure that local authority development plans are sustainable. That means incorporating targets for CO2 emission reductions to encourage the development of renewable energy facilities, and accounting for the climate change consequences of policies, including transport. We will also use building regulations to improve the environmental quality of new buildings.

BRITAIN'S PLACE IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD

"It is often said that foreign affairs is not a determining issue in UK elections. But on this occasion I believe the conduct of Britain's foreign affairs, particularly in relation to Iraq, goes right to the heart of the Labour Government's credibility. Both at home and abroad trust has been eroded, and Britain's reputation diminished.

"It need not have been so. Britain, as a member of the G8, the Security Council of the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and the Commonwealth, has a unique opportunity to be a force for good in the world. British practice has been one of operating through multilateral institutions – and experience shows that when Britain does this, it provides leadership and influence.

"But Britain was taken to war against Iraq without express UN authority and on a flawed prospectus. The Government built its case on unreliable intelligence, in circumstances of doubtful legality. Who would have thought Labour would lead us into a war which has been compared to the fiasco of Suez?

"This must never be allowed to happen again. The work of rebuilding trust and confidence should begin immediately. We can start by committing ourselves to the reforms of the United Nations set out in the High-Level Panel's sagacious report. We can influence the whole of the Middle East by an unwavering commitment to peace between Israel and the Palestinians. We can sharpen the focus on assistance for the poorest countries in the world through aid, debt relief and

trade. We can pursue the cause of human rights wherever they are abused and neglected.

"We can truly put ourselves at the heart of Europe and at the heart of its reform.

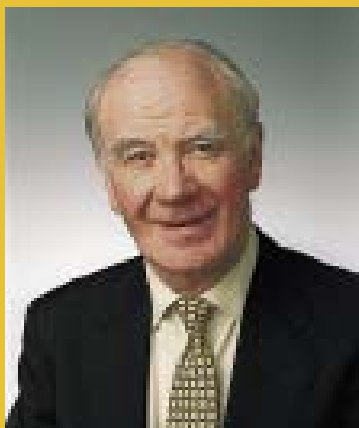
"We can make sure that British arms exports neither encourage conflict nor assist repression.

"We can fashion a new relationship with the United States: a partnership of influence, not one of uncritical subordination.

"We can base foreign policy on liberal values, respect for the rule of law, and human rights.

"I believe that only in this way can we maximise Britain's influence, and restore Britain's reputation."

Sir Menzies Campbell
Liberal Democrat Shadow
Foreign Secretary



WE SHOULD NOT HAVE GONE TO WAR IN IRAQ

There were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no serious and current threat, and inspectors were denied the time they needed to finish their job. Thousands of soldiers and civilians have been killed and it has cost the UK over £3.5 billion. But by invading Iraq the UK Government has imposed on us a moral obligation to work towards a stable, secure and free Iraq. We welcome the recent elections. We will seek to strengthen and enlarge Iraqi security forces so that they can assume greater responsibility, include Sunni leaders in the political process, and ensure adequate provision of food, water, sanitation and health care for all the Iraqi people. We will support the transition to a fully democratic



"You just have to look around Wales to see the benefits that membership of the EU has bought. Since the start of the Objective One programme massive injections of cash have gone to the least prosperous areas of Wales creating new jobs and training workers. The EU is not perfect, but we must work with our neighbours if we are to make it better.

"As well as acting locally, Europe also has a global role which is becoming increasingly important. With Tony Blair jumping to George Bush's orders it is the leading EU countries that millions sided with in protesting against the War in Iraq."

Alison Goldsworthy
Cardiff West

and legitimate government, aiming to withdraw British troops by the expiry of the UN mandate at the end of the year; the open-ended presence of coalition forces is destabilising and fuels the insurgency.

BUILD SECURITY AT HOME AND ABROAD

The best way to achieve security and to tackle the threat from terrorism is through international action. Britain must work through the United Nations, as a committed member of the EU, and with the US to promote international law, democracy and respect for human rights. We will work to reform the UN and the EU to make them more responsive to international challenges.

EUROPE

MAKE EUROPE MORE EFFECTIVE AND DEMOCRATIC

Membership of the EU has been hugely important for British jobs, environmental protection, equality rights, and Britain's place in the world. But with enlargement to 25 member states, the EU needs reform to become more efficient and more accountable. The new Constitution helps to achieve this by improving EU coherence, strengthening the powers of the elected European Parliament compared to the Council of Ministers, allowing proper oversight of the unelected Commission, and enhancing the role of national parliaments. It also more clearly defines and limits the powers of the EU, reflecting diversity and preventing over-centralisation. We are therefore clear in our support for the Constitution, which we believe is in Britain's interest – but ratification must be subject to a referendum of the British people.

DEFENCE

OUR TROOPS PROTECT THE NATION – WE MUST PROTECT THEM

Britain’s armed forces protect the country and are a force for good in the world. But with increasing overseas commitments, they are overstretched. The Government should not be cutting the size of the armed forces while at the same time asking them to take on ever more difficult tasks. New equipment continues to arrive late and over-budget, so we will make military procurement more open and competitive. By switching funding from unnecessary programmes, for example by cutting the third tranche of the Eurofighter programme, we will be able to invest more in protecting the welfare of our forces, ensuring that they are well-trained and well-equipped. We will seek new ways of sharing the military burden, by working with allies through NATO and the EU. Liberal Democrats will be realistic about what Britain can, and should, take on, and British

forces must always be able to deal with emergencies at home, such as terrorism or natural disasters.

WORK FOR THE ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND TACKLE THE ARMS TRADE

We will press for a new round of multilateral arms reduction talks, retaining the UK’s current minimum nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future, until sufficient progress has been made towards the global elimination of such weapons. Arms sales contribute to conflict, so we will establish a cross-party Parliamentary Arms Export Committee to monitor arms exports and scrutinise individual licence applications. We will require arms brokers to register under a code of conduct and revoke the licences of those who break the code. We will support the establishment of an International Arms Trade Treaty.

Green action

PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We will ensure that development assistance, whether delivered from the UK, EU, or multilateral institutions, not only meets the needs of the poor, but does so in ways that contribute to environmental sustainability. This means, in particular, targeting aid on renewable energy, clean water and sustainable agriculture, and increasing market access for green products from the developing world. We will devote resources to protecting biodiversity in developing countries, where many species of rare plants and wildlife are seriously endangered.

FOREFRONT OF CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

Catastrophic climate change is the major environmental threat to the planet. Urgent action is needed. Liberal Democrat plans will ensure that Britain achieves its targets from the Kyoto Protocol (the international agreement on the pollution that causes climate change)

well before the deadline. Britain and the EU must take the lead on negotiations for the next set of targets for greenhouse gas emissions. It is vital that we include the US and Australia but we also need to work with developing countries. The long-term goal is ‘contraction and convergence’ – this means agreeing for every country a sustainable population-related allowance for emissions.

TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION TO PROTECT THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

We will work through the EU to promote effective and enforceable international agreements to protect the global environment, such as the Kyoto Protocol (on climate change) and Cartagena Protocol (on GM products). We will support international agreements and activities designed to stop international environmental crime, such as illegal logging or illegal trade in endangered wildlife, and improve customs training to tackle these illegal activities more effectively. We will argue for reforms of the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund to ensure that trade and development policies support rather than hinder environmental sustainability.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Liberal Democrat international development policy is built on two foundations. First, we believe that this country has the wealth to help those much poorer than ourselves, and should do so. Second, we believe that we all benefit from achievement of sustainable development in the poorest countries in the world.

“This country has never lived up to the promise it made long ago to devote 0.7 per cent of its annual income to aid; it is time that it did. The response of the British people to the Asian tsunami disaster was extraordinarily generous – but every day millions of families around the world are caught up in similar tragedies of famine, drought, war and terrible poverty. So it is time Britain lived up to its promises, to build the sustainable development to end such poverty once and for all.

“But it is not just about aid. For example, opening European markets to the products of the poorest countries helps their economies and lifts them out of poverty. Stopping subsidised European food being dumped helps their farmers prosper and grow more. Neither policy would cost a penny.

“We need to reform international institutions to make them more responsive to developing country needs; make aid more productive; make trade fairer; and take action to promote good governance, the rule of law and human rights.

“The people of this country have an outstanding record of helping those in need around the world. It is time for our government to match their commitment.”

Tom Brake
Liberal Democrat
spokesperson for international
development



MEET BRITAIN’S PROMISE ON AID

Liberal Democrats are committed to realising a world free from poverty. In order to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (which include tackling extreme poverty and hunger, providing universal primary education, and combating HIV/AIDS) the UK needs to provide more effective international assistance. Liberal Democrats will increase British aid spending from 0.35 per cent of Gross National Income today to at least 0.5 per cent by 2007/08, and set out detailed plans for it to reach 0.7 per cent by 2011 at the latest.

FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Working through the EU and the World Trade Organisation, we will seek to remove the subsidies and tariff barriers that prevent the poorest countries in the world selling their goods on fair terms. We will work to end the dumping of subsidised agricultural exports by developed economies which is wrecking farming in Africa and other parts of the world. We will work to ensure that agreements to liberalise new sectors proceed on a genuinely voluntary basis, without undue pressure on developing countries. We will require companies benefiting from open markets to behave responsibly, and we will promote a new international agreement to encourage investment, particularly in the poorest countries.

A FAIR DEAL FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES



"The future of Welsh rural areas depends upon the continued success and vigour of small family farms and businesses. I have been amazed at the capacity of the countryside to recover from the tragedy of the Foot and Mouth outbreak. Liberal Democrats will ensure border protections are in place and minimise the regulatory burden on businesses.

"My private members bill to preserve rural services and facilities ran out of time before the election, but we will continue to fight to ensure service providers must consult fully and make

detailed assessments before they propose reducing services. Liberal Democrats will provide targeted support ensuring that popular and successful public services such as schools and community hospitals will continue to thrive in attractive, vibrant communities."

Roger Williams
Brecon & Radnorshire



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER AND THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WOULD

CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR PRICES FOR FOOD

Of every pound consumers spend on food in supermarkets just eight pence goes to the farmer. Liberal Democrats will introduce a legal duty to trade fairly, supported by a Food Trade Inspector within the Office of Fair Trading. This will protect farmers and consumers from unfair practices by supermarkets and processing companies. We would also encourage the establishment of a Fair Deal brand of Welsh milk, promoting a healthy Welsh product, whilst ensuring an honest deal for the public and farming industry.

SPEED UP REFORM OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

The CAP fails to protect the interests of rural communities, family farms and the environment. We will press within the EU to speed up reform so that the public funding available is used to provide public benefits. These should include improved access and environmental protection, support for traditional farming and organic systems and new opportunities for agricultural products and local markets. We will use the UK's

CAP flexibility to support family farms and aid new entrants more effectively.

SAVE THE UK'S FISH AND MARINE ENVIRONMENT

We will seek early further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to give local fishermen and other stakeholders a real say in the management of their own regional waters. We will introduce a Marine Act to create a marine planning system to resolve problems of conflicting uses of the sea and seabed. This would establish conservation zones for highly sensitive areas and strengthen protection of commercial fish stocks, dolphins, porpoises and other endangered marine wildlife.

PROMOTE FARMERS' CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION

Through improved processing, sales and marketing, individual farmers and businesses can benefit from increased income and new job opportunities. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will aim to bring farmers and retailers in rural towns together, to identify market opportunities and formulate guarantees of product supply from producers. This will mean that stronger links are established amongst farmers and with retailers. Alongside this we will support the development of growers groups working on a rotational basis in a co-ordinated manner in order to ensure a steady and continuous supply of produce.

SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

The promotion of produce from rural Wales involves both developing external markets and encouraging more local consumption of local produce. Through the Welsh Parliament, we will encourage public sector organizations in Wales to procure food and other appropriate products from local sources whenever possible and practicable; identify ways of increasing the use of local produce in school meals as part of a healthy eating strategy and support initiatives to encourage consumers to buy local products, including the branding of local produce; schemes identifying retailers sourcing products locally; farmers' markets;

and the production of guides promoting local producers.

IMPROVE GM LABELLING

More stringent and clearer labelling of GM related products would offer peace of mind and allow informed choices on the contents and risks of the food we eat. Currently any food containing a GM ingredient or derivative of more than 0.9% has to be labelled as "containing genetically modified organisms". This still allows for accidental contamination, GM ingredients in products without being labelled as such, denying consumers the chance to make informed choices. We will campaign for the threshold for labelling products to be reduced to 0.1%. This is the current lowest level of reliable detection. If traces of GM can be detected in the food, it must be labelled as "containing genetically modified organisms."

POWERS ON FOX-HUNTING

Liberal Democrats at Westminster would give the Welsh Parliament the power to decide on the future of fox-hunting.

Green action

MOST RESTRICTIVE POLICY POSSIBLE ON COMMERCIAL GM CROPS

Through the Welsh Parliament, we would maintain the most restrictive policy possible under EU law on GM crop development. This will mean taking the arguments on co-existence and protection of organic crops to the heart of EU decision making, ensuring Wales' distinctive voice on GM is heard.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FARMING

We would increase the availability of funding for organic farming and build on the Tir Gofal initiative and further develop the availability of an environmental grant scheme.

GETTING WALES MOVING



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS IN WESTMINSTER AND THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WOULD:

MAKE THE RAILWAYS WORK AGAIN

Conservative privatisation left the railways in a mess, but Labour hasn't solved the problems. Whilst delays have doubled, bureaucracy has increased fivefold, while services are being cut. Liberal Democrats will streamline the system, giving longer contracts in return for more investment and better services. Through the Welsh Parliament, we will promote the development of an integrated public transport system in Wales, connecting bus, rail and community transport services.

"I feel that transport in Wales is a mess. We've been left a legacy of burgeoning congestion on the roads, expensive, sparse and crumbling rail networks, and all of this despite paying high taxes on fuel.

"Public transport doesn't meet the demands placed on it and is still too expensive, too fragmented and uncoordinated.

"The railways still suffer from years of under investment. I want to see

more frequent trains and reasonable ticket prices. Long-distance freight also needs to be encouraged away from the roads and onto an efficient and reliable rail network. This would reduce congestion, and cut pollution too."

Paul Warren
Bridgend



SUPPORT COMMUNITY RAIL

We support the establishment of a Community Rail Development strategy. Its aims of developing local and rural lines with community support can enhance the rail network, increase passenger numbers and promote community development. However, as part of their Strategy the SRA have designated only 6 lines in Wales and none as part of the pilot scheme. We want to see an extended strategy that includes more communities in Wales. The promotion of Community Rail in Wales, particularly in rural areas, would provide a boost to business in those areas, offer greater mobility to local people and provide better tourism links. We will also increase and prioritise safety at stations.

REWARD OWNERS OF LESS POLLUTING CARS WITH LOWER TAXES

For many people, particularly in rural areas, cars are a necessity and cannot be replaced by public transport. But they can be far less damaging to the environment when they use less fuel or alternative fuels. We will start by reforming the Vehicle Excise Duty system ('road tax') to cut tax altogether on cars and motorcycles that pollute least, funded by increasing it on those that pollute more. Congestion charging in London (first proposed by the Liberal Democrats) has cut pollution, cut traffic jams and paid for new investment in buses. We will encourage more cities and towns where traffic congestion is a problem to consider congestion charging, linked to upfront investment in better public transport to give real alternatives to the car and reducing the need to drive. In the longer term, as technology allows, we will scrap petrol duties and VED altogether, replacing the revenue with a national road user charging system based on location, congestion and pollution (including the level of pollution of the particular vehicle). As a result, pollution and congestion will be better targeted, with no need for the present system of heavy taxes on every journey.

EXTEND FREE BUS TRAVEL

Free bus travel has meant more freedom for elderly and disabled people in Wales. The Welsh Liberal Democrats will extend free bus travel for the elderly and disabled to include community transport. That will mean more freedom for them; better use made of our transport system; and less congestion and pollution for everyone.

CUT LORRY TRAFFIC, REDUCE POLLUTION, AND MAKE TOWNS AND VILLAGES SAFER

In office, Labour has now increased road building, while the Conservatives' plans would concrete over an area half the size of London with new roads. Their approach means more traffic and pollution, not less. We will not proceed with major new road-building schemes unless the benefits are clear, including environmental and safety factors and a full assessment of alternative public transport schemes. Resources switched from the roads programme will be used to increase investment in public transport and we will promote safer cycle and pedestrian routes throughout towns and cities. In addition, we will encourage the development of freight interchanges to facilitate growth in rail freight, and we will develop a shipping, ports and waterways strategy.

REFORM AVIATION TAXES

To encourage more fuel-efficient aircraft and discourage half-empty planes we will press for international agreement on extending emissions trading to aviation, while at the same time implementing per-aircraft rather than per-passenger charges. We will oppose the construction of international airports on new sites, and also the expansion of airports in the South East of England. We will end the regulation on busy national airports which results in retail rents subsidising landing charges and encouraging congestion and pollution. We will protect essential 'lifeline' routes to remote UK communities and encourage investment in the regional airport network.



"Getting people from A to B – whether it be Aberystwyth to Bangor, or Aberdare to Bodelwyddan – is crucial to a modern country. Strong transport links between towns and villages is a vital part of contemporary life both in rural and urban Wales. People travel for work, to see their friends and families, and for leisure. That's why improving the transport network in Wales is such a pressing priority.

"Business too needs to be able to transport its products. It's no use making the best widgets in the world, if you can't deliver them to the world. That's why we are committed to investing in public transport, to reducing congestion on our roads, and to preserving the freedom to travel that we all take for granted.

"In today's global economy we need global links – by air and sea – connecting Wales and the World."

John Dixon
Cardiff North

Green action

GREEN TRANSPORT POLICIES

All our transport policies are designed to encourage more environmental transport options, including cutting the cost of using more environmentally friendly vehicles, boosting public transport, discouraging heavily polluting vehicles and reforming aviation policies to cut emissions.

THE TOOLS TO DO THE JOB



A WELSH PARLIAMENT – GIVING WALES THE TOOLS TO DO THE JOB

The Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that Wales needs a Senedd, its own Parliament. The country requires the tools to do the job that is needed to improve our economy, health, education, housing and infrastructure. A parliament with powers equivalent to that of the Scottish Parliament would be right and fair for the people of Wales.

After two years of extensive

independent investigation the Richard Commission – including members of all four parties – unanimously recommended greater powers for the Assembly, giving Wales greater freedom to do what is needed for itself. The report therefore provides a golden opportunity to create a new Parliament.

Our commitment to a Parliament would mean that much law making would be achieved in Wales. Currently the Assembly creates policy but has to wait for the Westminster Parliament to legislate on behalf of the Assembly, on behalf of Wales. Since devolution, Westminster has only found time to pass three Wales-only bills. Allowing a Welsh Parliament to create and implement laws on behalf of the country will allow Wales to do what's best for itself.

To be clear about where we stand on all issues, this manifesto outlines what Liberal Democrats at Westminster will achieve as well as what the Welsh Liberal Democrats would do with powers of a Welsh Parliament.

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER WILL:

● Give Wales the tools to do the job.

Re-establish the National Assembly as a Welsh Parliament with primary legislative powers, comparable to those of the Scottish Parliament.

● Introduce income tax-varying powers.

Tax varying powers for the Welsh Parliament, such as they have in Scotland, subject to backing in a referendum.

● Establish a clear division of powers.

Establish a clear division of powers between the Executive and Legislature in the Welsh Parliament.

● Establish an independent Welsh civil service.

Establish an independent Welsh civil service with greater capacity for joined-up local and national government and policy-making.

● Make sure that everybody's vote counts.

Reforming the way Members of the Welsh Parliament are elected. There should be 80 members elected by the Single Transferable Vote in multi-member

constituencies. This would ensure a more representative Parliament with greater equality between Members, more influence for the voter and less for the political parties.

● Promote the Welsh Language.

Support, facilitate and promote the use of the Welsh language across all aspects of Welsh life.

● Give Wales fairer Funding.

Give Wales a fairer slice of the cake by reforming the inequitable way money is allocated to the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. Everybody accepts that the current 'Barnett Formula' for funding Wales fails to take account of its needs. The Liberal Democrats will establish a Finance Commission for the Nations and Regions to agree a new needs-based formula. Such a formula would provide a massive boost for public funding in Wales.

CURB THE POWER OF THE PRIME MINISTER

In recent decades Prime Ministers have exercised a growing domination over the political system, insufficiently accountable to Parliament or the people. We will curb this excessive concentration of power. We will cut back the powers of patronage, in particular through our plans to elect the second chamber. We will make the Royal Prerogative powers which the Prime Minister exercises – such as decisions over war and peace – subject to Parliamentary accountability, including a War Powers Act to require Parliament's authority before a government takes Britain to war. A Civil Service Act will introduce a barrier to politicisation of the civil service. We will also strengthen the powers of Parliament to scrutinise the actions of the government, enhancing the Select Committee system.

CUT BACK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

We will cut the excessive number of government departments from 16 to 14. The number of government ministers will be cut by 40 from the current total of 115. We will also move government bureaucracy out of London, saving money on office rents and spreading wealth and jobs more equally through the UK. The savings will be ploughed back into better public services. We will scrap the Department of Trade and Industry.

MAKE BRITAIN MORE DEMOCRATIC

Liberal Democrats will improve and strengthen the UK's democratic systems. Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland are already bringing in the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system for local elections, so that local councillors will genuinely represent their community. We will extend this fair voting system to all local elections in Britain, and to the House of Commons, Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales. At the age people can marry, leave school and start work, they will have the right to vote. We will review the European electoral system so people can choose their MEPs personally, rather than just vote by party list as at present. Reform of the House of Lords has been botched by Labour, leaving it unelected and even more in the patronage of the Prime Minister – we will replace it with a predominantly elected second chamber.

"Every time you open a newspaper or see the news, the government seems to be taking more power for itself, and in particular for the Prime Minister.

"It started with Mrs. Thatcher. It has got worse since Tony Blair became Prime Minister. His Policy Unit at No. 10 Downing Street tells ministers what to do. His Cabinet no longer makes the key decisions; he does. The House of Commons is no longer supreme; it is treated as a rubber-stamp, rather than as the people's representatives to whom government is accountable.

"Local councils are controlled by centrally imposed rules and regulations, or by-passed by government-appointed boards and quangos. I remember the remarkable record of great towns and counties in the past, and the pride local people felt in them. Why does the government so undermine them?

"Professional men and women, like doctors, teachers and nurses are constantly told by the government exactly what they should do. The blizzard of orders and directives is relentless. Today we have the nanny state with a vengeance.

"Yet the Government does not have a popular majority for what it is doing. Even in 2001, the last election, only four out of ten voters supported it. If Britain had a fair voting system, Labour would never have had its current huge majority of parliamentary seats.

"I have served in parliament for thirty years, nearly twenty in the Commons and ten in

the Lords. I have never felt so worried about the safety of British democracy. It is being eroded bit by bit. Only the opposition parties in the House of Lords, and some independent cross-benchers, saved the country from a regime of detention without trial, determined not by judges but by ministers. Up to now, that kind of behaviour only happened in tyrannies like Pinochet's Chile, or Verwoerd's South Africa.

"The arrogant abuse of power must be stopped, by restoring cabinet government, protecting the independence of civil servants, giving greater power to local government, and ensuring that parliament has the time to do its crucial job of holding the executive to account.

"Liberties, once lost, are rarely restored. The freedom of the individual lies at the heart of liberal democracy, and we Liberal Democrats are determined to defend it."

Shirley Williams
Former Liberal Democrat
Leader in the Lords



Green action

MAKE GOVERNMENT TAKE THE ENVIRONMENT SERIOUSLY

It is vital that government and business are made to take their environmental obligations seriously. We will strengthen reporting obligations for government and business as part of an Environmental Responsibility Act, holding government as well as business to account. We will use the purchasing power of government to boost the market for green products and services. We will unite those areas of government with the biggest impact on the environment in a single Environment, Transport and Energy department.

OUR PLEDGE FOR GREEN ACTION



Tackle climate change – cleaner transport, cleaner energy and a cleaner environment.

“Catastrophic climate change is the greatest man-made threat to the planet. Fertile plains turning to desert; extreme weather conditions; rising sea levels; the spread of diseases; water shortages. These are not distant threats – in particular, the UK is likely to become much more vulnerable to flooding and tropical diseases such as malaria. Yet governments here and abroad have lamentably failed to rise to the challenge.

“Conservative and Labour politicians have preferred short-term popularity to taking the tough decisions for the long term. This year, the Labour Government actually decided to raise the UK ceiling for emissions of the greenhouse gases that are causing climate change, and the environment does not even feature on Labour’s ‘pledge card’.

“Too often people feel powerless in the face of these global challenges. But if we are to reduce our footprint on the world, we have to start locally.



That means improving recycling and reducing waste in our communities. Cleaning up our rivers, streams and oceans, and creating a cleaner, greener environment which is attractive for people to live in.”

“Ministers say they care, but do nothing. The Liberal Democrats can be trusted to make that change.”

Dewi Smith
Preseli Pembrokeshire

Concern for the environment has always been a core Welsh Liberal Democrat value. Our policies are focused on three main areas:

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE
Catastrophic climate change is the major environmental threat to the planet. Urgent action is needed. Liberal Democrat plans will ensure that Britain achieves its targets from the Kyoto Protocol (the international agreement on the pollution that causes climate change) well before the deadline. Britain and the EU must take the lead on negotiations for the next set of targets for greenhouse gas emissions. It is vital that we include the US and Australia but we also need to work with developing countries. The long-term goal is ‘contraction and convergence’ – this means agreeing for every country a sustainable population-related allowance for emissions.

CUTTING CONGESTION AND POLLUTION
Pollution and congestion have a major impact on people’s quality of life, as well as climate change. Many of the solutions to these problems involve transport and

this document includes plans to promote public transport, especially the railways. However, pollution can also be cut by reducing domestic waste and promoting recycling. Pioneering Liberal Democrat-controlled local authorities are leading the way in cutting unnecessary waste and we will expand these practices nationally.

USING CLEANER POWER
Energy use is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions and hazardous waste. We will introduce measures to reduce energy use overall. One example is through better home insulation

which will also tackle the ‘fuel poverty’ faced in particular by pensioners. We will ensure that 15% of Wales’s electricity comes from renewable sources by 2010. This to be increased by 1% per year thereafter. Finally, given their long-term problems of cost, pollution and safety, we will not replace existing nuclear power stations as they reach the end of their safe and economic operating lives. We will use renewables and save energy instead.

More detailed proposals for achieving sustainable development are set out in every policy section of this manifesto.



THE CULTURAL LIFE OF WALES



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AT WESTMINSTER AND THROUGH THE WELSH PARLIAMENT WOULD:

MAKE THE BEST OF DIGITAL BROADCASTING

Digital switchover offers a golden opportunity for an improved and expanded broadcasting service in Wales. We want all residents of Wales to have free access to all the current terrestrial analogue services in their new format, ensuring Wales-wide receipt of Welsh digital channels. By analogue switch-off the technical infrastructure must be in place for all of Wales to access digital services on a free-to-view basis.

MAKE THE BBC MORE INDEPENDENT FROM GOVERNMENT

The BBC has, over the last eighty years, made a major contribution to Britain's democracy, culture and standing in the world. The Liberal Democrats will ensure it remains the world's leading public service broadcaster – strong, independent, and securely funded. But the regulation of the BBC has been insufficiently independent of its own management, and of the government. Labour's proposals fail to address this. Liberal Democrats will scrap the current

government-appointed Board of Governors. We will introduce a new, independent and external regulator appointed by Parliament, which would include a designated Welsh representative, to ensure that all public service broadcasters live up to their obligations to the public.

INTRODUCE A NEW WELSH LANGUAGE ACT

A new Welsh Language Act is needed primarily to incorporate those utilities that have migrated from the public sector to the private sector since the current Act was passed. The current Act is increasingly out of date as changes in public service delivery continue to develop. We want to make it easier for all people in Wales to use the language in everyday life. A new Act will facilitate this by increasing the level of services available in Welsh. We oppose the merger of the Welsh Language Board with the Assembly Government.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL TOURISM NETWORKS

All local authorities have some form of tourism attraction, however most do not attract as many visitors as they would like.

We will encourage local authorities to work together on marketing and promotion to help attract more visitors. Local tourist authorities working together in alliance across Wales will create a better tourism product. For example, authorities in the South Wales valleys could work together to produce a definitive Welsh Industrial heritage experience, which would be easier to market than a single attraction, or group of attractions, in a single authority.

PROTECT HISTORIC BUILDINGS

We would reduce VAT on the repair of historic buildings as a simple way of contributing to their upkeep. We would abolish entry charges to historical monuments protected by CADW to encourage individuals to visit them, as we did with museums when we were in government. We will examine ways of utilising monuments and their sites as venues for cultural and other events thus generating tourism and boosting the local economy.

ENCOURAGE THE ARTS AND ARTISTS OF WALES

We will restore independence in deciding how money is allocated to the arts and creative industries and we oppose the transfer of the Arts Council of Wales's functions to the Assembly Government. We will encourage organisations and artists in Wales to participate in European networks and to build partnerships in other countries, and make sure that at a Welsh and UK level, both governments are positive partners in European and World cultural institutions.

PROMOTE SPORT AND RECREATION

We would encourage local authorities and the Sport Council to develop a network of local peripatetic coaches and co-ordinators to work with schools, colleges and community organisations to develop local sporting ability and identify and encourage future talent.

SUPPORT THE 2012 BID

We support London's 2012 Olympic and Paralympic bid, and back the use of as many Welsh facilities as possible should the bid be successful.



"Culture is Wales's calling card to the world. Whether it's the superb spectacles in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium and Centre, the heritage locked into the landscape, or the work of our writers and performers, Wales is a cultural force to be reckoned with.

"I believe Government can do more to ensure that everybody can participate in and enjoy all that Wales can offer. The Welsh Liberal Democrats proved their commitment when they were in government. We supported the arts across Wales, invested in sport and community facilities and opened up Wales's heritage to all."

Gavin Cox
Cardiff South & Penarth

Green action

GREEN TOURISM

We will encourage local authorities to promote integrated public transport ticketing as part of tourism initiatives. This would offer an alternative to car use, cutting down on emissions and congestion and promote Wales' status as a 'green' tourist attraction.