



Welsh Liberal Democrats
Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru

Welsh Liberal Democrats

Manifesto 2010

fair taxes

that put money back in your pocket

a fair chance

for every child

a fair future

create jobs by making Wales greener

a fair deal

for you from politicians

change that works for you

BUILDING A FAIRER WALES

Welsh Liberal Democrats have championed the devolution of powers from Westminster to the National Assembly for Wales. Many decisions made in Westminster now affect England only and policies in Wales are increasingly different from those in England – reflecting different choices, priorities and circumstances. This manifesto sets out the policies and plans that the Welsh Lib Dems seek support for at this election.

In this manifesto, we aim to make clear what is a Westminster matter and what is a devolved matter.

We will also reform the operation of the Barnett formula, which distributes money between the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. Replacing the current formula with one based on need will help make sure that Wales has the cash she needs to become a fairer society.

a green future: protecting the planet

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that protecting the environment is one of the greatest challenges this generation faces. We must hand on to our children a planet worth living on. That requires action across government – this is everybody's responsibility, not just one climate change minister's. It is because we believe concern for the environment is important in every part of people's lives that we have identified policies to protect the planet. These policies are highlighted.

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a strong vote for the Welsh Liberal Democrats means the end of red-blue, blue-red politics. it means the beginning of real change that works for you.

Dear friend,

Elections that really make a difference don't come along very often. But this one of them.

This May, you have an opportunity to shape the future of our country for the better. For decades, we've switched between shades of red and blue, but the greatest challenges we face: high taxes and low wages, more bureaucracy and less opportunity, crushing deficits and mounting debts, have gone largely unaddressed.

This year, we cannot elect the same parties with the same policies and expect a new result. For things to be different, Wales needs a party that is different. This election, Wales needs something better.

Our shared history tells a story of innovation, progress, and a people striving for equal rights and a fair share of economic prosperity. One hundred years ago, Wales was an economic powerhouse. Doesn't it make you angry that 65 years of the same failed red-blue policies have forced our economy into endless cycles of mounting debt and stinging recessions? Doesn't it make you angry that the banks have been allowed to ride roughshod over our economy, and are still handing out bonuses by the bucketload? That politics is still the plaything of wealthy donors and corrupt MPs? That the poorest are the ones who pay the biggest chunk of their income in tax?

Across Wales, our communities are still struggling from a political system that hasn't really changed. Even the National Assembly, a body that has the potential to transform Wales and deliver the big changes we need, has not done so.

We need bold vision. We need radical action, and we need it now. But building a fairer Wales can't happen without you.

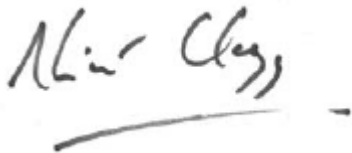
So don't settle for low politics and broken promises: be more demanding. Set your sights on the country you want for your children and your grandchildren, and use your vote to make it happen.

Only the Welsh Liberal Democrats have the big ideas for fundamental changes in the way our country works to make it fair. Only we will shake up the tax system to put £700 back in the pockets of hundreds of thousands of low and middle income families, paid for by ensuring the wealthy pay their fair share. Only we will break up the banks and only we will kickstart an economy based on building things again because we have the ideas need to create a sustainable economy. Only the Welsh Liberal Democrats will invest in our schools to give every child, no matter their background, a fair start in life.

A strong vote for the Welsh Liberal Democrats means the end of red-blue, blue-red politics. It means the end of the stitch-up between the two old parties. It means the opening up of our rotten political system. It means the beginning of real change that works for you.

If you want to make Wales a fairer country for everyone, then choose the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

Yours,



Nick Clegg
Leader of the Liberal Democrats



Kirsty Williams
Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats



introduction: values and key messages

This election can be and must be a turning point for both Wales and Britain. This must be a moment of great change, so that we emerge from the recession as a fairer, greener, stronger and more united society. To do that, we need to be clear and honest about the failures that caused these problems, and set a clear, hopeful course for a different, better future.

We are all struggling to emerge from a long and difficult recession. Families are finding it hard to make ends meet. Across Britain, millions are unemployed, and millions more have taken pay cuts or reduced hours to stay in their jobs. And there are deeper problems, too. Wales, despite its many strengths, is still too unequal and unfair, a country where the circumstances of your birth and the income of your parents still profoundly affect your chances in life. Our children's future is threatened by climate change, which we have done far too little to stop. And the political system is in crisis.

We need a fresh start. We need hope for a different, better future.

That is what this manifesto is all about. We believe that the future must be built on a different foundation: fairness. We believe there are systemic failures that underlie every one of the major problems we face. And that gives us the chance to reshape our country, fundamentally, for the better.

Fairness is an essential value. But it has been forgotten. Instead, greed and self-interest have held sway over our government and parts of our economy in recent decades. Concerned only for the moment, those at the top seem to have forgotten that growth must be shared and sustainable if it is to last.

Our core aim is to hard-wire fairness back into our national life. That way we can build a stronger society with growth that lasts, fairness and opportunity for all.

bringing back fairness

At the root of our country's problems today is the failure to distribute power fairly between people. Political power has been hoarded by politicians and civil servants; economic power has been hoarded by big businesses and global corporations. Both kinds of power have been stripped from ordinary citizens, leaving us with a fragile society marked by inequality, environmental degradation and boom-bust economics. If government merely tinkers at the edges – the Labour and Conservative approach – our problems will never be solved. We can't rely on Plaid to deliver change in this election – they are irrelevant in Westminster. We can only change this with radical action.

The Welsh Liberal Democrat philosophy is built on a simple ambition: to distribute power fairly among people. From that goal of fairness spring the four pledges which form the backbone of this manifesto. Each will redistribute power of a different kind, be it economic, social, political or financial. Each will change Wales for the better.

Those four changes are spelt out in detail in this manifesto. They will make Wales the fair country people want it to be. They are:

- Fair taxes that put money back in your pocket
- A fair chance for every child
- A fair future, creating jobs by making Britain greener
- A fair deal for you from politicians.

our tax plan

We propose the most radical tax reform in a generation, cutting taxes for millions paid for by closing loopholes at the top and increasing taxes on polluting aviation. Of course, no tax system should try to create total equality of income. But it can and should help redistribute some wealth, and power, to alleviate the worst excesses of inequality.

our schools plan

We will give every child the fair start they deserve by reducing class sizes at Key Stage 2 and increasing one-to-one tuition. This the best way to ensure, over the long term, that every child has opportunities, no matter their background, their home town or their parent's bank balance.

our economic plan

Our vision is of a very different economy, balanced and sustainable both financially and environmentally. We will reduce the deficit, break up the banks, and ensure that Britain leads in developing the new green economy that the world needs.

our plan for cleaning up politics.

The final change is the one that makes the others possible: political reform. The current system exists to block change. We will stamp out corruption and abuse by giving people power to sack corrupt MPs, end big money politics, and make sure those who seek to sit in Parliament pay full UK taxes We will re-invigorate our democracy by dispersing power, breaking open Westminster and Whitehall and embracing fair votes for every level of election.

These four changes will transform Wales. They are our core priorities. The stronger we are as a party, the more power and influence we will have to make them happen, to change our country for the better. They are all essential to delivering real change in Britain.

change that works for you

This manifesto is not limited to these four structural changes. It is a full programme for a Liberal Democrat government, setting out our approach to all public services, to fiscal discipline, and to Britain's place in the changing world.

In formulating our policies we have, throughout, been driven by our one abiding concern: fairness. We know these are difficult times. But we also know there is a way out, a way to build a fairer, greener and stronger future.

It will take courage and commitment to make Wales truly fair for our children, and for the future. It will take an extraordinary government, different from every one that has come before. That is what the Welsh Liberal Democrats offer, which no other party can or will at this election.

If you want real change, choose the Welsh Liberal Democrats.

your money fair taxes and fair bills to help every family get by

Welsh Liberal Democrats want to make our tax and benefits system fair, so that everyone, be they young or old, can afford to get by. We have plans for the most radical, far-reaching tax reforms in a generation. We will put fairness back into your relationships with businesses, too, ensuring consumers get fair treatment and the bills you pay, from energy to bank charges, are fair.

These changes are desperately needed. Hundreds of thousands of people are struggling to make ends meet, and no wonder when we have one of the most unfair tax systems in the developed world, built up over generations of Labour and Conservative governments.

We set out in this manifesto a clear plan **to bring the budget back under control**, being honest about the tough choices we need to take. We will **cut taxes for millions of working people and pensioners** across Britain, paid for by making sure polluters and the very wealthy pay their fair share. We will boost the state pension **by restoring the link with earnings** growth, and we will **protect consumers from unfair bills**.

tax fairness for everyone

Under the Liberal Democrat government, you will not have to pay any income tax on the first £10,000 you earn. Across Wales, this will free more than 200,000 people on low incomes from having to pay any income tax at all and put £700 back in the pockets of over 800,000 more people on low and middle incomes, providing an incentive to work and save.

This change will be paid for by:

- Restricting tax relief on pensions to the basic rate, so that everyone gets the same tax relief on their pensions.
- Taxing capital gains at the same rates as income, so that the money you make is taxed in the same way whether it's your salary or the return on an investment.
- Tackling tax avoidance, with new powers for HM Revenue and Customs and a law to ensure properties can't avoid stamp duty if they are put into an offshore trust.
- Ensuring pollution is properly taxed by replacing the per passenger APD with a per plane duty (PPD). We will also introduce an additional, higher rate of levy on domestic flights for which alternative, less polluting travel is readily available.
- Introducing a Mansion Tax at a rate of 1% on the value of properties over £2 million.

In addition we will reform the system of "non-domiciled" status, allowing people to hold such status for up to seven years, after which time they will become subject to tax on all offshore income in the same way as domiciled British citizens.

dealing with the deficit

The health of the economy, and everybody's job, depends on the health of the nation's finances. Public borrowing has reached unsustainable levels, and needs to be brought under control to protect our economic future.

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe politicians have to be straight with people about the tough choices ahead. Not only must waste be eliminated but we must also be bold about finding big areas of spending that can be cut completely. That way we can control borrowing, protect the services people rely on most and still find some money to invest in building a fair future for everyone.

We have already identified over £15 billion of savings in government spending per year, vastly in excess of the £5 billion per year we have set aside for additional spending commitments. All our spending commitments will be funded from this pool of identified savings, with all remaining savings used to reduce the deficit

We must ensure the timing is right. If spending is cut too soon, it would undermine the much-needed recovery and cost jobs. We will base the timing of cuts on economics, not political dogma, and have set five objective economic tests: the rate of growth; the level of unemployment; credit conditions; the extent of spare capacity in the economy and the cost of Government borrowing.

When the time comes, as well as introducing efficiency changes and reducing bureaucracy across government, our savings from the Whitehall budget will include:

- Setting a £400 pay rise cap for all public sector workers, initially for two years, ensuring the lowest paid are eligible for the biggest percentage rise.
- Ending government payments into Child Trust Funds, from the UK and Welsh Governments.
- Introducing a Banking levy so banks pay for the financial support they have received, until such time as they can be split up to insulate retail banking from investment risks.
- Scrapping ID cards and further biometric passports.
- Cancelling Eurofighter Tranche 3b.
- Reforming prisons.

In the longer term, as part of a comprehensive spending review involving wide consultation, we will seek to identify additional savings which can be used to further pay down the deficit. This will include:

- Say no to the like-for-like replacement of Trident nuclear missiles, which could cost £100bn. We will hold a full defence review to establish the best alternative for Britain's future security.
- Reform Public Sector Pensions to ensure they are sustainable and affordable for the long term, with an independent review to agree a settlement that is fair for all taxpayers as well as for public servants.

- Better government IT procurement, investigating the potential of new approaches such as cloud computing.
- A wholesale review of value for money in the public sector based on the findings of the National Audit Office and the House Commons Public Accounts Committee.

We will establish a Council on Financial Stability, involving representatives of all parties and the Governor of the Bank of England. This group would agree the timeframe and scale of a deficit reduction plan to set the framework (not the detail) for the Comprehensive Spending Review and seek to promote it externally and domestically. Any agreement would be without prejudice to parties retaining and advocating distinctive views on a wide range of issues (such as fair taxes and spending priorities).

Due to the way the Barnett formula operates, these plans will have an impact on the Welsh block grant, which funds the Welsh Government across the Parliamentary term. Full details can be found at the end of this manifesto. In the short-term, given the debt crisis facing Britain, under any Government there is likely to be a reduction in the Welsh block grant but we are satisfied that this plan minimises the impact on devolved administrations, and the Liberal Democrat spending proposals deliver a one-off boost for the Welsh Government in the first year of a Parliament.

In the medium-term, our proposed Barnett formula reform is likely to increase the Welsh block grant by several hundred million pounds and has not been factored into our calculations. We would earmark some of this money for our Pupils Fund.

fairness in pensions, savings and benefits

Labour has created one of the most complex and unfair benefits systems in the world, and it needs to be reformed. Pensions and savings have been undermined.

In Westminster, we will make pensions and benefits fair and reward savers by:

- Restoring the link between the basic state pension and earnings immediately.
- Increasing the income tax threshold to £10,000.
- Giving people greater flexibility in accessing part of their pension fund early, for example to help in times of financial hardship.
- Giving people control over their pension by scrapping the rules that compel you to buy an annuity when you reach 75.



- Allowing individuals to save through the UK Infrastructure Bank, offering secure long-term returns.
- Meeting the government's obligations towards Equitable Life policyholders who have suffered loss. We will set up a swift, simple, transparent and fair payment scheme.
- Ending the rollercoaster of tax credit overpayments by fixing payments for six months at a time. We will also target payments towards those who need them most.
- Reforming Winter Fuel Payments to extend them to all severely disabled people, paid for by delaying age-related Winter Fuel Payments until people reach 65. We will continue to pay Winter Fuel Payments to all current recipients of Pension Credit.

your job opportunities for all in a fair, green economy

A hundred years ago, the Welsh economy was the powerhouse of the world. Since then we have seen the economy decline under Labour and Conservative Governments. The current Labour-Plaid Welsh Government has not helped Wales to build a new economy. We need to build a new economy for Wales, based on innovation and cutting-edge ideas rather than attracting in cheap jobs. We want to see Wales become a country where small businesses and big individuals can thrive.

Decades of Labour and Conservative rule in Westminster have created an unsustainable economy, preoccupied with the artificial wealth of inflated property prices rather than productive work and invention. They have been too obsessed by the “Square Mile” –the City of London – instead of on all 100,000 square miles of Britain. As a result, the collapse of the banking system and the recession have left a generation of young people without hope for their future.

We will set out a clear plan to **bring the national budget back under control**, taking tough decision in public spending to **avoid the salami-slicing** of key public services. To boost the economy and **create jobs for those who need them**, we will use money made available by Westminster for a one-year economic stimulus plan, focussed on the green economy. To sustain jobs and growth for the long term, we will set up an **infrastructure bank** to direct private finance to essential projects such as new rail services and green energy. And to ensure that our economy is never again destabilised by high-risk financial industries, we will **break up the banks** and build up diverse, local sources of business finance.

sustainable finance for business growth

We have learned an important lesson from the credit crunch and the recession: we cannot build an economy on financial gambling. Radical reform of our financial infrastructure is needed to create a sustainable and balanced economy where businesses in every town, city and region can grow.

That starts with banking reform. Banks must be made to behave responsibly. And we need to support and develop new ways of financing growing businesses, with equity rather than debt, and without relying too heavily on the financial centre of the City of London.

In Westminster, the changes we will make are:

- We will break up the banks, to ensure taxpayers are never again expected to underwrite high risk banking. We would establish a clear statutory distinction between low risk retail banking and high risk investment banking.
- Get the banks lending responsibly again. There are taxpayers’ representatives on the boards of the banks we own or part-own. They should insist banks lend to viable businesses on fair terms again.

- Ensure that the bonus system can never again encourage banks to behave in a way that puts the financial system at risk or offers rewards for failure.

In the National Assembly for Wales we would:

- Support the establishment of Local Enterprise Funds and deliver a Welsh Stock Exchange. Local Enterprise Funds will help local investors put money into growing businesses in their own part of the country. And the Welsh Stock Exchange will be a route for businesses to access equity without the huge costs and regulatory requirements of a London listing.
- We will give local authorities the power to establish Economic Opportunity Areas to reduce business rates and start-up capital grants in order to attract small businesses to areas where there is a need for investment. We would also work with local authorities to ensure a co-ordinated, regional approach where appropriate.
- Help creative business ventures. We will deliver a Creative Industries Plan to develop Wales burgeoning media and film sectors, which will include recognition of the need to improve skills that are needed for this sector. Our plans to help small businesses will also help companies in the creative industries.

Through partnership between the National Assembly for Wales and Westminster we would:

- Release the Bank of Wales title and allow bids from organisations that will establish retail banking, targeting people without bank accounts. We will work with credit unions and the Post Office to examine the best way of delivering this service.

creating jobs that last

The new economy must be very different from the old if it is to be sustainable, not just financially, but environmentally, too. If we start now, Wales can lead the new green economy that the world needs.

In the first year of a Liberal Democrat government in Westminster, increased spend on and jobs and infrastructure package will see the Welsh budget increase by over £125 million, and we believe that this should be directed into a one-off jobs package – helping to deliver a fair, green economy. This programme will be a first step towards our target for a "zero carbon" Britain by 2050.

Our green stimulus plan will create hundreds of jobs. We would argue that this money be spent as follows:

- Deliver a wide-ranging plan to make our homes green by:
 - Expanding the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme in Wales to ensure that it helps deliver money-saving environmental changes to houses needed to make sure people can keep warm. We will also refocus the Scheme to ensure that it helps people who are suffering from fuel poverty.
 - Delivering an 'Eco Cash Back' scheme, for one year only, which will give you up to £400 if you make eco-friendly improvements to your home. Through Westminster, we will ensure that if you choose micro-

generation, you will be able to sell the energy back to the National Grid at a profit, with a more attractive “feed-in tariff.”

- Fund a one-off expansion of the Social Housing Grant to ensure that more and more homes are brought back into use. We will offer grants or loans to encourage homes that are currently empty to be brought back into use – grants for social housing, loans for private use. We will reform the process to ensure that Empty Dwelling Management Orders are easier to obtain.
- Release money for developing of sites across Wales for green industries, particularly renovation of disused industrial sites and ports. We will offer one-off capital investment grants for companies working in the green sector.
- Give a one-off boost to the Schools Modernisation Fund, ensuring that it is prioritised towards the oldest and most draughty schools.
- Investing £3 million in a bus scrappage scheme that helps bus companies to replace old polluting buses with new low-carbon ones and creates jobs.
- Distributing an additional £15 million pounds to FE colleges in order to alleviate immediate pressures on funding. We would work with colleges to use this money to increase access to skills learning for young people.

Wales will benefit from its fair share of nearly a million opportunities for young people affected by the recession. A work placement scheme with up to 800,000 places will ensure young people get the opportunity to gain skills, qualifications and work experience even if they can't find a job. Young people on the scheme would be paid £55 a week for up to three months

To help the transition over the longer-term, we will set up a **United Kingdom Infrastructure Bank** to attract private finance - essential to delivering the much needed expansion of our transport and energy infrastructure when public finances are tight. The UKIB will:

- Provide a new route to provide capital, guarantees and equity to infrastructure projects. The vast majority of infrastructure funding will still come from the private sector.
- Increase the funding available from the private sector by tapping into the funds of institutional investors, namely annuity funds looking for a home in the UK.
- Reduce the cost of long-term funding reduced as compared with PFI.
- Provide the opportunity for retail investors to save in safe long-term assets.
- Be a stand-alone public entity, independent from Government but with a long term strategic remit. It would have the ability to reject or accept proposals based on whether they are financially viable or within its remit.

- Start with Government seed funding which it can use as a capital base to borrow against. This seed funding could be raised from the sell off of the student loan book or the Tote as the Government has already proposed. In addition borrowing could be secured against or raised from government owned assets such as the Dartford crossing, the student loan book and the Tote. We will investigate other ways of raising seed capital such as auctioning airport landing slots and radio spectrum.

enabling enterprise that benefits Wales

Building a better opportunity for small businesses is our number one priority for the Welsh economy. Only by encouraging enterprise and entrepreneurialism can we build an economy that is diverse and sustainable and delivers jobs and wealth for the whole of Wales. We will make sure Welsh businesses can thrive in the globalised world..

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Reduce the burden of unnecessary red tape by: properly assessing the cost and effectiveness of regulations before and after they are introduced, using 'sunset clauses' to ensure the need for a regulations is regularly reviewed, and working towards the principle of 'one in one out' for new rules.
- Ensure takeover rules serve the UK economy. We will restore a public interest test so that a broader range of factors than just competition can be considered by regulators when takeovers are proposed and we will ensure that the outcome of takeover bids is determined by the long-term shareholder base. We will re-introduce the Operating and Financial Review, dropped in November 2005, to ensure directors' social and environmental duties will have to be covered in company reporting.
- Keep the tax regime and allowances that apply to oil and gas industry under review to ensure we secure the maximum long term benefit to the UK economy of the remaining North Sea reserves.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Reform business rates to a fairer system where rates are based on site values rather than rental values. We will ensure that the burden is spread more equitably between small and large businesses and that small company relief is automatic. We will also return business rates to local councils, subject to a fair percentage being redistributed to areas that need the money the most.
- Support investment in the roll-out of superfast broadband, by developing an infrastructure policy which recognises that digital infrastructure is as important as other elements of infrastructure, such as road and rail links and therefore addresses issues of strategic planning and management of high-speed digital networks.
- Encourage closer links between universities and private business to ensure that Wales' best ideas are contributing to our economy. We will increase the number of patents filed by Welsh universities and develop an innovation vouchers scheme. These will also create new, high-quality jobs for graduates.

In both Westminster and the National Assembly, we would:

- Use the substantial purchasing power of government to expand the markets for green products and technologies as well as encouraging local procurement, within EU rules.
- Put an end to the so-called “gold-plating” of EU rules, so that British businesses are not disadvantaged relative to their European competitors.

supporting mutuals, co-ops and social enterprises

We believe there is a particularly important role for mutuals, social enterprises and co-operatives to play in the creation of a more balanced and mixed economy. Mutuals give people a proper stake in the places they work, in spreading wealth through society, and in bringing innovative and imaginative business ideas to bear on meeting local needs. In Westminster, we will:

- Give financial regulators a clear objective of maintaining a diversity of providers in the financial services industry.
- Seek to turn Northern Rock into a building society.
- To give both Royal Mail and post offices a long term future, we will separate Post Office Ltd from the Royal Mail and retain Post Office Ltd in full public ownership. 49% of Royal Mail will be sold to create funds for investment. The ownership of the other 51% will be divided between an employee trust and the government.
- Pass a new Mutuals, Co-operatives and Social Enterprises Bill to bring the law up to date and give responsibility for mutuals to a specific minister.

In the National Assembly, we would:

- Seek to use mutuals in the provision of services, such as housing, credit, and other sectors, where appropriate.
- Encourage community-owned renewable energy schemes where local people benefit from the power produced.

creating a dynamic environment for science and innovation

Wales has a strong university sector, with cutting-edge research facilities. There is a strong link between investment in science and economic growth - our future depends on exploiting this research base and making sure that we link Wales's scientific research and businesses.

Despite Government rhetoric overall public funding of science is in real terms no higher than it was two decades ago. Britain's R&D spend as a proportion of GDP remains near the bottom of the G8. There is no room for complacency.

In the current economic climate it is not possible to commit to growth in spending, but Welsh Liberal Democrats recognise the importance of science investment to the recovery and to the re-shaping of our economy to be less reliant on the City of London and instead to create new green industries. Our plans to refocus the economy on local investment will help the growth of science.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- While recognising the need for Government to identify broad strategic priorities, ensure that the decisions on the funding of research projects are made on the basis of peer review not Whitehall interference.
- Ensure that all publicly funded research, including clinical trials, is publicly accessible and that the results are published and subject to peer review.
- Ensure that all state-funded research, including clinical trials, is publicly accessible and that the results are published and subject to peer review.
- Reform science funding to ensure that genuinely innovative scientific research is supported, instead of basing funding decisions on narrow impact factors.
- Tackle the gender gap at all levels of scientific study and research.

In the National Assembly, we would:

- Reform bursaries for students so that each University gets a bursary budget suited to the needs of its students. We would prioritise strategic subjects (such as sciences and mathematics) as well as financial hardship.
- Work with the HEFCW and the Welsh Universities to increase the number of places in key subjects, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

fair treatment at work for everyone

Welsh Liberal Democrats want to build a society where everyone, no matter their gender, their sexuality, their race or their religion, has the opportunity to get on in life. Most businesses do a great job of supporting their employees, but there is more to do to tackle discrimination.

Women are still paid less than men. It can be hard to juggle work and family life. People from ethnic minorities are still more likely to suffer discrimination. And there are far too many barriers to work for people with disabilities.

In Westminster, we will change this by:

- Extending the right to request flexible working to all employees.
- Requiring name-blind job application forms to reduce sex and race discrimination in employment.
- Introducing fair pay audits for every large company to combat discrimination in pay, for example against women. We will require all public companies to declare in full all payments of £200,000 per year or more.
- Giving disabled job seekers better practical help to get to work, using voluntary and private sector providers, as well as public sector advisers.
- Scrapping compulsory retirement ages, allowing those who wish to continue in work to do so.

your life a fair deal and the help you need from public services

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe in our public services. They are the cornerstone of a fair society, opening up opportunities and offering protection and support at difficult times. But we want to improve the services people depend on day to day and year to year.

Despite unprecedented investment, public services are still not as good as they could be. Across Wales, too many children are being let down by a system which doesn't give them the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The NHS often feels too remote and complex for patients to handle, and doctors and nurses spend too much time trying to meet government targets. And inequality is rife: in Wales today your chances in life are more determined by your parents' income than anywhere else in the developed world.

We will provide **a fair start for all children** by giving schools the money they need to **cut class sizes** at Key Stage 2 and provide additional one-to-one teaching. And we will **scrap unfair university tuition fees** so everyone has the chance to get a degree, regardless of how rich their parents are. We will help the NHS work better with the by **making sure we crack down on waste** – because the more money we save the more we can spend on crucial frontline services.

the best chance for every child

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe education is the ladder out of poverty and believe that we need to make sure our education system gives everyone in Wales the chance to get on it life and fulfil their potential.

Too many children are still leaving school without the knowledge and skills to be successful. And your family background still has a huge effect on how you do: even a bright but poor child will fall behind a richer classmate by the age of 7 and never catch up.



Our proposed Pupils Fund will allocate money to schools and pupils that need it the most, making sure that opportunity is available to all. The extra money can be used for changes like cutting class sizes at Key Stage 2, increasing one-to-one tuition or providing catch up classes for children who are struggling, as appropriate to the needs of the local school.

And to ensure every child has the supportive environment they need at school to excel, we will improve efforts to stop bullying. We will improve monitoring of all bullying incidents, including homophobic bullying.

In the National Assembly we would:

- Introduce an £80 million fund to increase school funding for the most disadvantaged children and improve schools for everyone. We will work with schools to develop the best mechanisms to target disadvantage. We would seek to expand this fund in later years as our savings generate more money. As Wales receives more money from our proposed Barnett formula reform we will earmark some for further expansion of this fund.
- Continue to provide dedicated support to small and rural schools, allowing them to deliver the best education possible for their areas, making maximum use of new technology, federation and shared facilities.
- Extend the provision and marketing of Welsh medium education and provide additional funding for bilingual education in schools where parents want it. We will develop ways to establish Welsh medium schools more easily, including setting a duty on local authorities to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education and further promote or plan for it in future school organisational plans.
- Develop a strategy to ensure continuity between Welsh medium primary and secondary education and improve incentives to attract more Welsh medium teachers.
- Guarantee Special Educational Needs diagnostic assessments for all 5-year olds, improve SEN provision and improve SEN training for teachers.
- Fight bullying by strengthening the plans schools have in place and include bullying prevention in teacher training. We will also ensure that every school follows specific anti-homophobic bullying policies, which has stubbornly remained.

Through partnership between Westminster and the National Assembly we would:

- Provide government backing for quick-report buttons on social networking sites, helping crackdown on internet bullying

a better education: standards and the curriculum

What we teach to our children is as important as how much money we give to schools. We want to make sure every child has access to the lessons they need to for their future. We will help free up schools from the burdensome National Curriculum and make sure academic and vocational subjects are treated equally.

Through the National Assembly we would:

- Emphasise and support the Foundation Phase programme for early years education.
- Work with teachers, headteachers and education experts to replace the rigid National Curriculum with a Minimum Curriculum Entitlement, that allow schools greater flexibility to match students' interests and needs, whilst retaining a core of key subjects and personal, social and health education.

- Continue to support the Welsh Baccalaureate and work for further roll-out. We support using the Baccalaureate to emphasise vocational as well as academic subjects in 14-19 learning.
- Promote a clustering approach in primary schools centred on the appropriate local secondary school, and we support closer working between secondary schools and FE colleges.

freeing schools for excellence

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe every school has its own identity, with individual needs and success stories. We support diversity of provision. But there needs to be a fair start, so no school is favoured over the others, and local councils should take a coordinating role with schools in their area, ensuring fair access and cooperation. Once those building blocks are in place, schools should be free to experiment and improve.

We will give all schools the freedom to innovate, but make sure they all have a fair chance. That way every school will be able to improve the way they teach so their pupils get the very best opportunities.

We would:

- Affirm the independence of schools from national politicians. The day-to-day running of schools should be left to the schools themselves and should have freedom to innovate. We will give more freedom to schools so that they can make the innovations needed to improve education for every child.
- Create a level playing field for all schools by reforming funding for schools and giving appropriate weight to factors such as transportation, sparsity and deprivation in allocating education resources within the local government settlement, to ensure that weightings are based on need.
- Make it easier for schools to manage their own money by encouraging the employment of school bursars to take charge of administration, budgets and buildings in schools, to take pressure off headteachers. We will also reduce the number of complex grants available to schools by simplifying funding streams.

In partnership between the National Assembly and Westminster, we would:

- Reform the existing rigid National Pay and Conditions rules to give schools and colleges more freedom, including in offering financial and other incentives to attract and retain excellent teachers, while ensuring all staff receive the minimum national pay award.

In Wales, we would use this reform to attract the best and most experienced teachers to the most deprived schools.

opportunities at college and university

There should be a wide range of opportunities for everyone at the age of 16. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe excellence for all young people, and will create, finally, equality for vocational courses. And we will ensure adults wanting to return to education later on in life are able to do so without being put off by the cost.



Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Scrap unfair University Tuition Fees for all students taking their first degrees saving them over £10,000 each. We have a financially responsible plan to phase fees out over six years, so that the change is affordable even in these difficult economic times.
- Scrap the arbitrary target of 50% of young people attending university, focussing effort on a balance of college, vocational training and apprenticeships instead.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Reform bursaries for students so that each University gets a bursary budget suited to the needs of its students. We would prioritise bursaries for strategic subjects (such as sciences and mathematics) as well as targeting financial hardship.
- Work with the HEFCW and the Welsh Universities to increase the number of places in key subjects, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- Require the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and higher education institutions to place greater emphasis on their initiatives and strategies to attract those from low-income backgrounds, including mature students, and via part-time and community-based provision.
- We will promote the role of further and higher education institutions in regenerating local economies and community development, whilst maintaining quality and research-led teaching.
- Reverse the funding cuts to Further Education Colleges made by the Labour-Plaid Government. We will also work with FE providers to establish a more stable funding regime.

- Guarantee each adult the opportunity to have their first attempt at a level-3 qualification, such as an A-level, for free. We would undertake substantial preparatory work to establish the cost of this policy.
- Encourage increased partnership working between further education providers and 6th forms. Greater collaboration will widen student choice in the post 16 curriculum and ensure more learner-centred options and equip students for future employment.
- Encourage closer links between universities and private business to ensure that Wales' best ideas are contributing to our economy. We will increase the number of patents filed by Welsh universities and develop an innovation vouchers scheme. These will also create new, high-quality jobs for graduates.

protecting and improving our nhs

Wales is the home of the NHS and we will make sure that its vital role in our communities is protected. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe our NHS can be so much better; and we believe we can still make it better even when budgets are tight. We all know there is too much precious NHS money wasted on bureaucracy, and doctors and nurses spend too much time trying to meet government targets.

Our first priority is to help the NHS to work better with the money it has. Even senior health experts have admitted that there is room for improvement. Because of rising costs of treatments and an ageing population, there will be particular pressure on services like cancer treatment, mental health services, maternity services, and dementia care: only by going through this process of finding savings elsewhere can we defend these services in the coming years. The NHS is a huge system, and we will make changes to ensure it works as effectively as possible.

We would:

- Direct resources into preventing people getting ill. We will improve access to appropriate screening tests based on age, family and other risk factors.
- Take immediate action on claims that up to £1 billion is being misspent by the NHS in Wales. Labour and Plaid have refused to investigate these claims. We will immediately ask a group of health finance experts to review the way the NHS in Wales pays for services and will act on its findings. The more efficient we can make the NHS, the better care we can provide.
- Make the NHS work better by improving hospital discharge, increasing the number of day case operations, reducing delays prior to operations, speeding up the time between patients' admission and their surgical procedure, and where possible moving consultations into the community.
- Introduce a shared element for budgets between NHS and Social Care to deal with delayed transfers of care.

more control over the health care you need

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that the NHS should deliver healthcare when you need it and that patients should be the priority – not Government targets. The new

health structure in Wales has diminished patient voice and we need to restore people's say in how their health service is run.

In the National Assembly, we would:

- ensure a voice for patients on the Local Health Boards and on the new National Advisory Board
- Introduce nurse-led walk-in centres, working alongside larger A&E Departments and GP out-of-hours services – open seven days a week and offering simple and straightforward access to treatment and NHS services for those who might otherwise go to A&E units.
- Giving every patient the right to choose the GP they want regardless of where they live and the right to access their GP by email.
- Expand the range of treatments and services available in the community. We will encourage more GPs to become specialist GPs equipped to diagnose and treat more patients and increase and promote the use of extended prescribing so that appropriately trained nurses and pharmacists are able to prescribe a wide range of drugs.

Through the National Assembly we would increase the number of people who can receive care in their own homes by:

- establishing and fund a Welsh Home Improvement Lending Agency with charitable status to facilitate equity release loans in conjunction with care and repair agencies to enable home owners to access capital to carry out adaptations and repairs to their home.
- gradually increasing the capital threshold above which care home residents are excluded from local authority support over and above the rate of inflation and reduce the 'tariff' on capital to reflect only the income that can be earned by putting it on deposit

quality care for all patients

We all need to be assured that, if we become unwell, the care we get will be of good quality. Most of all, we need to be confident that our safety comes first, and the treatment we get doesn't put us in more danger. We will introduce a series of reforms to improve patient safety.

In the National Assembly we would:

- Introduce a guaranteed standard of service that would include what can be expected at hospital and patient access to information.
- Require hospitals to be open about mistakes, and always tell patients if something has gone wrong.
- Make it illegal for a local health board to allow a doctor to work in the UK for the first time without passing robust language and competence tests.
- Clamp down on anyone who is aggressive or abusive to staff in A&E. We would encourage better working relationships between hospitals and the local police to provide an increased police presence at times of high risk, and increase

prosecutions. At the same time, we will also ensure that problem drinkers or substance abusers are referred for appropriate treatment.

It is deeply disappointing that the UK Government has failed to respond to the Archer Review on the contamination of blood products with HIV. A Liberal Democrat government will establish a working group which involves patients groups to determine a just compensation arrangement.

access to culture and sport

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe Wales' rich cultural heritage is a calling card to the world, and crucial to developing prosperity and a high quality of life. It is important to be sure that everyone has access to culture and sport as well as the benefits that they bring.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Reform the National Lottery. We will change the way the National Lottery is taxed from a ticket tax to a gross profits tax, which is forecast to deliver more for more for good causes, prizes and the Exchequer.
- Ensure that the BBC remains strong, free from interference and securely funded, not least to provide impartial news, independent of political and commercial pressures. We will also ensure that the BBC does not undermine the viability of other media providers through unfair competition based on its public funding and dominant position.
- Cut red tape for putting on live music. We will re-introduce the rule allowing two performers of unamplified music in any licensed premises without the need for an entertainment licence and remove the requirement for Schools and Hospitals to apply for a licence.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Help creative business ventures. We will deliver a Creative Industries Plan to develop Wales' burgeoning media and film sectors, and help to stimulate Welsh film and TV production. Our plans to help small businesses will also help companies in the creative industries.
- Promote Wales further as a destination for tourism – using our natural and cultural heritage, our food and drink and our history. We will give more independence to the Visit Wales to ensure they can be innovative on attracting tourism into Wales. We will also market Wales effectively for both domestic and international tourism.
- Change the planning system to ensure that much of Wales natural and built heritage can survive. For example, we will strengthen the powers available to local authorities to prevent the demolition of buildings that meet the criteria for local listing.
- Maintain free entry to National Museums and Galleries and examine ways that museums and galleries across Wales can work with Universities to develop high-quality research. We will also work with museums to establish a role for them in Welsh schools.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will work in partnership at Westminster and in the Assembly to:

- Ensure that St David's Day is made a national holiday in Wales. We hope that this day will be used to celebrate our national day and make it a global festival of all things Welsh and a showcase for investment and tourism.
- Use cash in abandoned betting accounts to improve sports facilities. Millions of pounds are lying in abandoned betting accounts. We believe this money can be put to good use going back into grassroots sport and will set up a capital fund for improving local facilities and supporting sports clubs.
- Support diverse regional and local media. We will help to maintain independent local sources of news and information by enabling partnerships between TV, radio and newspaper companies to reduce costs, and by limiting publicly-subsidised competition for paid advertising from local council free-sheets
- Support the Independently Financed News Consortium pilot project in Wales.

your family a fair deal for families of every shape and size

Everyone is part of a family of one sort or another: we may have parents, partners, grandparents, children, aunts, uncles, and more, all of whom are a huge part of our lives. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe every family should get the support it needs to thrive, from help with childcare through to better support for carers and elderly parents.

Liberal Democrats will improve life for your family. On top of our tax cuts to put £700 in the pockets of millions of low and middle income earners, we will allow **parents to share leave between them** so they can arrange family life in the way that suits them best. We will provide **better support for children** and young adults to help them thrive. We will **restore the earnings link** for pensions and **extend the Winter Fuel Payment to people with serious disabilities**.

help for families: right from the start

The first weeks, months and years after a child is born are inspiring, life-changing, but also enormously challenging for new parents. Liberal Democrats want to ensure every family gets the help it needs.

The systems at the moment are simply too inflexible. When a baby is born, the mother gets a year's leave and the father gets just two weeks, meaning the mother has to take the lion's share of responsibility, even if the parents would rather share things equally.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Allow parents to share the full allocation of maternity and paternity leave between them in whatever way suits them best. We will seek to extend this period of leave, when resources allow.
- We will seek to extend the period of shared parental leave up to eighteen months when resources allow, providing continued support to children from birth to starting school.
- Give fathers the right to time off for ante-natal appointments.
- Extend the right to request flexible working to all employees, making it easier for grandparents, for example, to take a caring role.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Protect existing childcare support arrangements until the nation's finances can support a longer term solution: we will work to ensure that community childcare providers are funded to take more children, funded by the Government.
- Support efforts by childcare providers to encourage more men to work in this hugely important and undervalued profession.

helping families stay strong

Every child deserves the right to a happy life free from poverty, and free from fear. Children face too many difficulties in today's Wales. We are going to fall far short of out

target to cut child poverty. And young people have been demonised by a generation of politicians more interested in sounding tough than in offering help.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Maintain the commitment to end child poverty by 2020.
- Enact the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law, ending the detention of children for immigration purposes.
- Support the objective of a 70% reduction in child maltreatment by 2030, promoted by the WAVE trust
- Help protect children and young people from developing negative body images by regulating airbrushing in adverts.
- Set the minimum wage at the same level for all age groups (except for those on apprenticeships).
- Introduce a Default Contact Arrangement which would divide the child's time between the two parents in the event of family breakdown, applicable for children aged between one and fourteen (if there is no threat to the safety of the child),



In the National Assembly, we would:

- Strengthen the Youth Service, by making it a statutory service, encouraging local authorities to provide youth services in partnership with young people and the voluntary sector.
- Enhance Child Protection. We will enforce the publication of an anonymised version of Serious Case Reviews to ensure that lessons are learned. We will also reform the process to make it less bureaucratic and to streamline the process so we can apply findings sooner.

dignity and security in later life

The way we treat older people is the mark of a fair society. Older people have worked hard and contributed to society for decades: they deserve a fair deal. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe everyone deserves a pension that's enough to live on and fair treatment from government, public services and business alike. We believe that older people should not be forced out of work by an arbitrary deadline; they should be able to work on for as long as they want to.

That is why Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings immediately. We will uprate the state pension annually by whichever is the higher of earnings, prices or 2.5%.
- Increase the income tax threshold to £10,000, saving pensioners £100 a year.
- Scrap compulsory retirement ages, allowing those who wish to continue in work to do so.
- Give you control over your own pension by scrapping the rules that compel you to buy an annuity when you reach 75.
- In the long term, we aim to bring in a Citizen's Pension that will be paid to all UK citizens who are long-term residents, set at the level of the Pension Credit, but this can only be done when resources allow.

Through the National Assembly we would increase the number of people who can receive care in their own homes by:

- establish and fund a Welsh Home Improvement Lending Agency with charitable status to facilitate equity release loans in conjunction with care and repair agencies to enable home owners to access capital to carry out adaptations and repairs to their home.
- gradually increasing the capital threshold above which care home residents are excluded from local authority support over and above the rate of inflation and reduce the 'tariff' on capital to reflect only the income that can be earned by putting it on deposit

a fair deal for consumers

While open markets deliver huge benefits, sometimes people can get a rough deal. The banks have exploited their position of power to impose unfair charges. Energy bills are far too expensive for many people, and suppliers have not done enough to protect those who cannot afford to keep warm.

In Westminster, we will:

- Change the tariffs used by energy supply companies so the first, essential, energy you use is the cheapest. We'll ensure that effective energy efficiency measures are introduced to keep bills low and that 'social tariffs' are available to guarantee the best price for all those in most need.
- Address unfairness in water charges by consulting on the implementation of the Walker Review.
- Legislate to end to unfair bank and financial transaction charges, so they cannot charge more than the costs incurred.
- We will improve access to banking and secure the future of the Post Office through a PostBank.
- Impose maximum interest rates for credit cards and store cards, following consultation with the financial industry and consumer groups.

- Introduce a Universal Service Code to secure high quality customer service, for example, by requiring that the customer service phone number is free from mobiles and landlines.
- Ensure a fair balance between small and large retailers by establishing a local competition office within the OFT to investigate anti-competitive practices at a local and regional level.

- Develop an international labelling system for the social and environmental impact of products.

- Improve resource efficiency and reduce waste through requiring better design and durability product standards and reducing excess packaging.

- Cut rail fares, changing the rules in contracts with Train Operating Companies so that regulated fares fall behind inflation by 1% each year, meaning a real-terms cut.
- Make Network Rail refund a third of your ticket price if you have to take a rail replacement bus service.

In the National Assembly for Wales we would:

- Change the planning policy on out-of-town retail development so that their retail impact on town centres is fully considered and environmental assessments are undertaken as a matter of course and we would introduce a local competition test for all planning applications for new retail developments.

enhanced protection for animals

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that ownership and use of animals are a privilege and responsibility that should not be abused.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- End testing of household products on animals.
- Work for the proper enforcement of regulations for the transportation of live animals across all EU Member States.

your world securing britain's future with global action

From climate change to conflicts, terrorism and natural disasters: Welsh Liberal Democrats believe we must work together with our partners abroad if we are to have the best hope of meeting these challenges. We believe in freedom, justice, prosperity and human rights for all and will do all we can to work towards a world where these hopes become reality.

Never has there been such a need for global action. We have only a few years to take action to stop runaway climate change from taking hold, and the collapse of the Copenhagen talks dealt a devastating blow to hopes that we might succeed. The global recession proved the need for better international regulation of the financial markets. New threats are emerging, for which our armed forces are not yet fully equipped. The challenge of tackling global poverty remains, with the Millennium Development Goals still miles from being achieved. And the battle for human rights remains to be fought in far too many countries, where abuse, torture, and injustice are not just tolerated but mainstream.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will work through the European Union to deliver **a global deal on climate change**. We will transform our armed forces, meeting our obligations through the **military covenant**, and conducting a **full defence review** to ensure they are equipped for modern threats. We will push for **better global financial regulation**. We will push for global nuclear disarmament, showing leadership by **committing not to replace the Trident nuclear weapons system** on a like-for-like basis. We will meet our obligations to the developing world by committing to spending **0.7% of GDP on aid**. And we will put **Britain at the heart of Europe**, to ensure we use our influence to ensure prosperity, security and opportunity for Britain.

tackling climate change

Climate change is the greatest challenge facing our generation. Welsh Liberal Democrats are unwavering in our commitment: runaway climate change must be stopped, and politicians must follow the science in order to make that happen.

We will set a target for a "zero carbon" Britain that doesn't contribute at all to global warming - making the British economy carbon neutral overall by 2050, reducing carbon emissions in the UK by over 42% of 1990 levels by 2020 as a step on the way.

This will give the Welsh people more secure energy supplies, reduce air pollution and related health costs-- and create thousands of new jobs.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Set a target for 40 per cent of UK electricity to come from clean, non-carbon-emitting sources by 2020, rising to 100 per cent by 2050, underpinned by

guaranteed price support; at least three quarters of this new renewable energy would come from marine and offshore sources.

- Transform the electricity networks into a dynamic UK electricity grid that can better connect and integrate new, clean energy technologies.
- Improve energy efficiency in the commercial and public sectors, by strengthening the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme and requiring companies and government departments to report on their energy use and set targets for reducing it. We will set a 30% energy efficiency improvement target for 2020; and will commit the government to the goals of the 10:10 campaign as a first step.

Through the National Assembly, we would:

- Work with Westminster to ensure that we can begin a programme of home insulation, paid for by the savings from lower energy bills, and make sure every new home is fully energy-efficient by improving building regulations.
- Expand the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme in Wales to ensure that it helps deliver money-saving environmental changes to houses needed to make sure people can keep warm. We will also refocus the Scheme to ensure that it helps people who are suffering from fuel poverty.
- Deliver an 'Eco Cash Back' scheme, for one year only, which will give you up to £400 if you make eco-friendly improvements to your home. Through Westminster, we will ensure that if you choose micro-generation, you will be able to sell the energy back to the National Grid at a profit, with a more attractive "feed-in tariff."
- Release money for developing of sites across Wales for green industries, particularly renovation of disused industrial sites and ports. We will offer one of capital investment grants for companies working in the green sector.

Currently, large energy generation projects are controlled from Westminster. We have consistently argued that powers over energy generation in excess of 50 megawatts should be handed to the National Assembly.

In both the National Assembly and Westminster, as appropriate, we would:

- Block any new coal-fired power stations – the most polluting form of power generation – unless they are accompanied by the highest level of carbon capture and storage facilities.
- Say no to a new generation of nuclear power stations; nuclear power is a far more expensive way of reducing carbon emissions than promoting energy conservation and renewable energy.

leading in the fight against climate change

Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to securing a legally binding global agreement on limiting the increase in global temperatures to below 1.7 degrees Celsius. We believe that such an agreement must be based on the principles of contraction and

convergence (reducing emissions overall, while equalising emissions between the developed and developing worlds). Strong and credible EU ambition, with effective UK leadership, are essential for achieving a global agreement, so that global greenhouse gas emissions peak no later than 2015. Welsh Liberal Democrats will work within Europe and internationally to give renewed urgency to global efforts to combat climate change.

We will press the EU to:

- Promote the transition to a low carbon economy in Europe, by moving unilaterally and immediately to an EU emissions reduction target of 30% by 2020, adopting new long term targets and policies for clean energy and energy efficiency; and expand investment in energy technology innovation, within Europe and internationally;

- Boost investment in clean energy by reforming the EU emissions trading scheme - auctioning as many allowances as possible, and encouraging other European countries to increase the use of allowance auctions with reserve prices.

- Engage with major emitters and deepen diplomatic cooperation between the EU and emerging economy and developing countries who support effective international action on climate change.

- Work for the adoption of 'quick win' measures that could be initiated within the next few years such as reducing use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

protecting the global environment

Humans are living beyond the ability of the planet to support life; more than 60 per cent of the basic ecosystems that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably. Co-ordinated international action and effective global institutions are necessary to help create a sustainable future and improve the quality of life for all the world's citizens.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Work through the EU to make sure that the environment is fully integrated into the objectives of international institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

- Work to increase the resourcing of the UN Environment Programme and improve the enforcement of international environmental treaties.

- Support the provision of finance for developing countries to enable them to reduce deforestation (and therefore greenhouse gas emissions); and adopt at

EU – or, if necessary, at UK level – a new law making it illegal to import or possess timber produced illegally in foreign countries.

- Develop an international labelling system for the environmental impact of products, helping consumers choose those with the least impact on resource use and pollution.

meeting britain's obligations to the developing world

Welsh Liberal Democrats are committed to working towards a world free from poverty, inequality and injustice and meeting the Millennium Development Goals is a vital first step. But beyond this we will also ensure that action is taken to allow developing nations to grow and do not suffer unfairly the effects of climate change inflicted by developed countries.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Increase the UK's aid budget to reach the UN target of 0.7% of GNI by 2013 and enshrine that target in law. We will hold the G8 to its Gleneagles pledges on aid, including on the 0.7% target.
- Work with other countries to establish new sources of development financing, including bringing forward urgent proposals for a financial transaction tax and a cap and trade system for carbon emissions from aviation and shipping
- Support reform of global finance institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. We will ban banks from facilitating the transfer of funds obtained by corruption. We will crack down on tax-havens which allow individuals and corporations to avoid paying taxes to developing countries.
- Ensure the developing world is prepared to deal with the consequences of a changing climate. We will ensure that adaptation and mitigation measures are financed by industrialised nations on top of existing aid commitments.
- Prioritise health and education programmes aimed at promoting gender equality, focus on basic needs like clean water and reducing maternal and infant mortality, and restricting the spread of major diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.
- Support a Global Fund for social protection to help developing countries build viable welfare systems. We will prioritise health and education programmes aimed at promoting gender equality, reducing maternal and infant mortality, and restricting the spread of major diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.

equipping our armed forces for the 21st century

Protecting us from the threats of the modern era is a complex challenge which requires adaptable armed forces ready to prevent conflict, maintain peace and enable development as well as to fight conventional wars.

The world has changed enormously in the last 20 years, since the end of the Cold War. New threats are emerging and yet our armed forces remain largely equipped to fight the old ones. The Iraq War, allegations over torture and rendition, and American policy

in the Middle East highlight the dangers of a subservient relationship with the United States that neglects our core values and interests.



The threats of tomorrow are likely to be driven by failed states, mass migration, climate change and regional instability. So we will spend taxpayers' money more effectively on equipping our forces for the tasks of the future, not old Cold War threats.

In Westminster, we will:

- Hold an immediate Strategic Security and Defence Review (SSDR) to ensure that Britain

deploys its resources to face the most serious threats to its citizens' security and well-being, including non-military challenges such as climate change.

- With strong Treasury involvement, the SSDR will review all major defence procurement projects to ensure money is being spent effectively. We will not purchase tranche 3B of the Eurofighter.
- Rule out the like-for-like replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system. At a cost of £100bn over a lifetime, it is unaffordable, and our security would be better served by alternatives. We support multilateral nuclear disarmament and will ensure the UK plays a proactive role in the arms reduction talks starting later this year.
- Reinvigorate Franco-British and wider European defence co-operation to ensure procurement costs are kept low.

a fair deal for our service personnel

The brave men and women of our armed forces are the most precious military asset we have. They must be treated fairly, with pay and conditions that reflect their amazing commitment to this country, and properly valued and supported after they leave the services.

Welsh Liberal Democrats would put the welfare of our forces first. In Westminster, we will:

- Give a pay raise to the lower ranks so that their pay is brought into line with the salary of their emergency services counterparts. The cost will be met by reducing the number of administrators in the Ministry of Defence.
- Double the rate of modernisation of forces' family homes to ensure they are fit for heroes. Paid for by reducing numbers of top brass officers.

While it is necessary to find resources to support the troops properly, at the same time fairness requires that we make savings where possible within the MOD budget as a whole. We will reduce the number of civilian staff in the Ministry of Defence and reduce numbers of top brass officers.

putting britain at the heart of europe

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe European co-operation is the best way for Britain to be strong and safe and powerful in future. We will ensure Britain maximises its influence through a strong and positive commitment.

But just because Europe is essential, that doesn't mean the European Union is perfect. We will continue to campaign for improved accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. Working together, the member states of the EU have a better chance of managing the impacts of globalisation, such as cross-border crime and environmental pollution.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Keep Britain part of international crime-fighting measures such as the European Arrest Warrant, European Police Office (Europol), Eurojust, and the European Criminal Records Information System, while ensuring high standards of justice.
- Keep the pressure on for reform of agricultural subsidies so farmers, consumers and taxpayers get a fair deal.
- Fight to stop MEPs having to travel to the Strasbourg Parliament every month, wasting €200m a month.
- Campaign for continuing reform of the EU budget so that money is spent only on the things the EU really needs to do.
- Work with our European neighbours to create thousands of new jobs by breaking down trade barriers and boosting support for green jobs.
- Work through the European Union for stricter international regulation of financial services and banking.

The European Union has evolved significantly since the last public vote on membership over thirty years ago. Welsh Liberal Democrats therefore remain committed to an in/out referendum the next time a British Government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU.

We believe that it is in Britain's long-term interest to be part of the euro. But Britain should only join when the economic conditions are right, and with the present economic turbulence and volatility, they are not at the moment. Britain should only join the euro if that decision were supported by the people of Britain in a referendum.

standing up for liberal values around the world

Welsh Liberal Democrats will put British values of fairness and the rule of law back at the heart of our foreign policy. British people used to be proud of what our country stood for. But our reputation has been damaged by dodgy arms deals with dictators, allegations of involvement in torture, and of course the disastrous and illegal invasion of Iraq.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Hold a full judicial inquiry into allegations of British complicity in torture and state kidnapping as part of a process to restore Britain's reputation for decency and fairness.
- Be critical supporters of the Afghanistan mission. We support the mission in Afghanistan, but the military surge must be accompanied by a strategy to ensure a more legitimate government, tackle corruption and bring over moderate elements in the insurgency. We will continue to demand a strategy that involves others players in the region. We believe that a successful strategy will stabilise Afghanistan enough to allow British troops to start to come home during the next Parliament.
- Make the EU use its collective weight effectively in other areas of foreign policy. Britain can have a far stronger voice on relations with Russia, China, Iran and the Middle East peace process when it joins with the rest of Europe.
- Support the establishment of an International Arms Trade Treaty to limit the sale of arms to dangerous regimes and work for a full international ban on cluster munitions. We will ensure British arms are not sold to states that would use them against their own people. We will require arms brokers to register under a code of conduct and revoke the licences of those who break the code.
- Support action by the international community to stop Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. We would follow a diplomatic route of active engagement, and are ready to back targeted sanctions, but we oppose military action against Iran and believe those calling for such action undermine the growing reform movement in Iran.
- Remain committed to the search for a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. A sustainable solution can be reached in the context of two separate Israeli and Palestinian states, mutually recognised and internationally accepted within borders which are secure and based on the situation before the 1967 conflict. We condemn disproportionate force used by all sides. We believe Britain and the EU must put pressure on Israel and Egypt to end the blockade of Gaza.

your community rebuilding security, opportunity, homes and hope

Wales is a great country, but it is a country made up of many, diverse communities. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe we have it in us, as people, communities, and as a nation, to face every challenge. We want every community to be strong, fair and offer opportunities to people of every background. We want to strengthen communities across Wales to make sure people can take control over their lives, so that we can promote social inclusion and so we can tackle climate change at every level.

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe in **providing more affordable homes** and protecting people from unfair repossessions. We will protect the identity of local high streets and **keep post offices open**, as well as investing in public transport and **cutting rail fares**. We value Britain's open, welcoming character, and will protect it by **changing the immigration system to make it firm and fair** so people can once again put their faith in it. We will **put thousands more police on the beat** across the UK and make them work more effectively to cut crime. We will **protect and restore Wales' unique natural environment**.

cutting crime with more and better police

Welsh Liberal Democrats are the only party who will cut crime because we will focus on what works. Everyone knows the way to cut crime is to catch people who commit crime – and we need more police out on the streets doing that. And we need to help the police to be more effective at catching criminals, spending less time on bureaucracy and more time preventing crime, reassuring the public and helping keep us all safe.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Pay for 3000 more police (148 more in Wales) on the beat, affordable because we are scrapping pointless ID cards.
- Reduce time-wasting bureaucracy at police stations with better technology that can be deployed on the streets.
- Reform the police with a full review of the very restrictive terms and conditions for police officer employment.



- Turn the National Policing Improvement Agency into a National Crime Reduction Agency with a wider remit to test what policing techniques and sentences work and spread best practice across police services and the criminal justice system.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Strengthen the Youth Service, by making it a statutory service, encouraging local authorities to provide youth services in partnership with young people and the voluntary sector.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will also ensure that the National Assembly for Wales has the power over policing to make sure that policing reflects the needs of Wales.

practical steps to make you safer

Detecting crime is important, but the best thing to do is stop it happening in the first place. We will do all we can to prevent crime with practical measures that we know will make a difference and keep people safe.

In Westminster, we will:

- We will require better recording hate crimes against disabled, homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded.
- Ensure police and court time is not wasted on the unnecessary prosecution and imprisonment of drug users and addicts: the focus instead should be on getting addicts the treatment they need. Police should concentrate their efforts on organised drug pushers and gangs. To help ensure this, we will create a new offence of drug dealing.
- Always base drugs policy on independent scientific advice, which would include making the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs completely independent of Government and taking their advice.

Through partnership between Westminster and the National Assembly, we would:

- Make hospitals share non-confidential information with the police so they know where gun and knife crime is happening and can target stop and search in gun and knife crime hot spots.

making the justice system work to rehabilitate criminals and reduce crime

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that once a criminal has been caught, it is vital that the punishment they are given helps to turn them away from crime, and set them back on the straight and narrow.

Too many politicians have talked tough, meting out ever-longer prison sentences, but doing far too little to tackle reoffending and to stop crime happening in the first place. As a result, we are spending more and more on prison but those released are as likely as ever to commit more crimes. In Westminster we will:

- Make prisoners work and contribute from their prison wages to a compensation fund for victims. As resources allow, we will increase the number of hours prisoners spend in education and training.
- Introduce a presumption against short-term sentences of less than six months - replaced by rigorously enforced community sentences which evidence shows are better at cutting re-offending.
- Move offenders who are drug addicts or mentally ill into more appropriate secure accommodation. With these two changes, we will be able to cancel the government's billion-pound prison building programme.
- Give people a direct say in how petty criminals and those who engage in anti-social behaviour are punished by setting up Neighbourhood Justice Panels, like the one run by Liberal Democrats in Somerset where 95% of offenders have been turned away from further crimes.
- Champion restorative justice programmes, like NJPs, which make offenders confront their behaviour and are more successful at reducing crime than traditional forms of punishment.

In the long-term, we believe that control over justice, and prisons should be devolved to the National Assembly, which will allow the National Assembly to develop a distinctly Welsh approach to these issues, which tackle the unique Welsh issues. However, we believe it will need extensive preparation work to do this and will begin preparing the ground for this transfer.

firm but fair immigration system

Britain has always been an open, welcoming country, and thousands of businesses, schools and hospitals rely on people who've come to live here from overseas. Liberal Democrats believe it would be wrong to try and "pull up the drawbridge". But we also understand you have to manage migration so it benefits Britain and is fair for everyone.

The immigration system is in chaos after years of incompetent management. The Government has failed to plan properly for new migrants, making it harder for people to integrate. We have no idea how many people are here illegally, and we don't even have exit checks at our airports to ensure people here on temporary visas go home on time.

We will create a fair system that works and promotes integration. In Westminster we will:

- Immediately reintroduce exit checks at all ports and airports.
- Secure our borders by giving a National Border force police powers.
- Introduce a regional points-based system to ensure migrants can work only where they are needed. We need to enforce any immigration system through rigorous checks on businesses and a crackdown on rogue employers who profit from illegal labour.
- Focus deportation efforts on criminals by letting law-abiding families earn citizenship. We will allow people who have been in Britain without the correct papers for 10 years, but speak English or Welsh, have a clean record and want

to live here long-term to earn their citizenship. Deportation targets will be re-focused on criminals and people-traffickers.

a safe haven for those fleeing persecution

Britain has a long tradition of welcoming refugees fleeing wars and persecution around the world, and standing up for human rights. Welsh Liberal Democrats will abide by our international obligations and restore confidence in the asylum system by making it firm and fair.

In Westminster we will:

- Take responsibility for asylum away from the Home Office and give it to a wholly independent agency, as has been successful in Canada.
- Push for a co-ordinated EU-wide asylum system to ensure that the responsibility is shared proportionally between member states.
- Allow asylum seekers to work, saving taxpayers' money and allowing them the dignity of earning their living instead of having to depend on handouts.
- End the detention of children in immigration detention centres. Alternative systems such as electronic tagging, stringent reporting requirements and residence restrictions can be used on adults in families considered high flight risks.
- End deportations of homosexual refugees to countries where they face persecution, imprisonment, torture or execution and end the detention of individuals for whom removal is not possible or imminent, except where there is a significant risk of absconding.

better and more affordable homes

Wales faces an affordable housing crisis – too many people don't have access to a home they can afford. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe it is a priority to make sure that there are good quality homes available to everyone. And it should be easy to keep your home warm without harming the environment.

The housing market was stoked up by irresponsible lending, but has now collapsed. For poorer families, the struggle for somewhere decent to live has got much harder, with 92,000 families waiting for a home. And across Wales, homes of every kind are so poorly insulated people struggle to keep them warm and tens of thousands of older people die every winter from the cold.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Make repossession always the last resort.
- Scrap the burdensome Home Information Packs whilst retaining the requirement for homes to have an Energy performance certificate.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly will:

- Bring hundreds of empty homes back into use. Empty properties are not only a wasted resource but a blight on the local community, attracting crime and antisocial behaviour. We will allow local councils to charge a greater rate of Council Tax on empty homes and make sure there is money available to encourage people to bring homes back into use as social housing.
- Give communities a say over the number of second homes in your area. We would introduce a new planning 'use class' for second homes, so that communities and councils can control the number of homes given over to holidaymakers.
- Give communities the power to take real action for more affordable housing. We make sure Councils designate a fair proportion of homes in new developments as 'affordable housing' and make sure that new social housing stays as social housing for 25 years.

- Ensure warm homes for all. Britain has some of the worst insulated homes in Europe. Many older people die from the cold every year, and some pensioners can only afford to heat one room. We want homes we can be proud of, that we can afford to keep warm. We'll have a national programme to insulate every home over 10 years, paid for by the savings from lower energy bills. And we'll make sure every new home is fully energy efficient by improving building regulations.

- Develop a scheme to help pay the deposits of people who need help getting rented accommodation. We would fund this by scrapping the wasteful and ineffective first homes grant.

public transport you can rely on

Wales needs a well run, efficient transport system. This is especially true for rural Wales, where public transport can be a lifeline. We believe in public transport: it is part of fair society and the best way to cut carbon emissions from transport without trying to limit people's opportunities to travel.

We want to improve the experience for the traveller and cut carbon emissions. We will:



- Cut rail fares, changing the rules in contracts with Train Operating Companies so that regulated fares increase by 1% less than inflation, meaning a real-terms cut.
- Make Network Rail refund a third of your ticket price if you have to take a rail replacement bus service.
- Overhaul Network Rail to put the interests of passengers first and bring it under the Freedom of Information Act to make it more open.

- Set up a UK Infrastructure Bank to invest in public transport like High Speed Rail and will lobby for electrification of the Valleys Lines.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Simplify the control of public transport by establishing a smaller number of Joint Transport Authorities, controlled by Local Authorities, which are in charge of public transport in specific regions of Wales, aiming to develop an integrated public transport system across Wales. These will replace the many current transport bodies.
- Give councils greater powers to regulate bus services according to community needs so local people get a real say over routes and fares.
- Increase the amount of money we spend on public transport. Currently, Wales spends twice as much money on roads as it does on public transport. We will reverse that ratio, using the additional money available for rail transport to invest money in better stations, new rolling stock and improving access for disabled people. We will also seek powers over rail infrastructure to help facilitate this.
- Encourage local authorities to include proposals in their transport and development policies for increased cycle infrastructure and require accessibility by foot, cycle path and public transport to be considered in all applications for new commercial and residential developments.

restricting aviation growth

Aviation is important for the economy, and in order to give people opportunities to travel. But the emissions from rising aviation are a serious problem in the fight against climate change. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe we should do all we can to ensure people use alternative routes where that makes sense.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Replace the per passenger APD with a per plane duty (PPD) so capturing freight movements by air for the first time.
- Introduce an additional, higher rate of levy on domestic flights for which alternative, less polluting travel is readily available.
- Say no to the 3rd runway at Heathrow and any expansion of other airports in the South East of England.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly will:

- Scrap the subsidy for the North-South airlink, which is polluting and diverting money from other transport services.

a fair deal for motorists

Cars will continue to be a hugely important way for people to get around. We need to make it easier for people to choose low-carbon vehicles and public transport alternatives. Motorists deserve a fair deal. We will:

- Work through the EU for a zero emissions target for all new cars by 2040 and extend targets to other vehicles.

- Undertake the preparations for the introduction of a system road pricing in a second parliament. Any such system would be revenue neutral for motorists, with revenue from cars used to abolish VED and reduce fuel duty, helping those in rural areas who have no alternatives to road travel. Some of the revenue from lorries would be used to fund further extensions of High Speed Rail through the UK Infrastructure Bank.
- Introduce a rural fuel discount scheme which would allow a reduced rate of fuel duty to be paid in remote rural areas, as is allowed under EU law.

a green and beautiful country

Wales is one of the world's most beautiful countries, but we aren't protecting it well enough. This isn't fair for our children and grandchildren who deserve to inherit a country worth living in.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will stand up the environment so everyone has fair access to clean water, clean air, and open spaces. Wales' natural inheritance is crucial to our nation – and we all have the right to access it. We will protect these landscapes.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster will:

- Abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission and return decision-making, including housing targets and infrastructure planning to local people. We will create a third party right of appeal in cases where planning decisions go against locally agreed plans.
- Save lives by cutting air pollution. We will cancel plans for a third runway at Heathrow and other airport expansion in the South East, and reduce pollution from vehicle exhausts through tighter regulation. We will fully meet European air quality targets by 2012.
- Protect greenfield land and our built heritage by reducing the cost of repairs. We will equalise VAT on new build and repair on an overall revenue neutral basis. It will also help to reduce the costs of repairs to historic buildings.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly would:

- Stop "Garden Grabbing", defining gardens as greenfield sites in planning law so that they cannot so easily be built over.
- Develop the National Waste Strategy, ensuring co-operation between local authorities on waste minimisation and serious innovative work on developing energy from waste, for example developing town and community heating systems. We will aim for the long-term goal of zero waste, through minimisation, recycling and re-use. We will make it a role for the Assembly Government to develop the market for recycled goods and materials.
- Scrap the subsidy for the North-South airlink, which is polluting and depriving money from other transport links.
- Make Welsh national parks democratically accountable, allowing a proportion of the Park boards to be elected. We will also give them the power to promote economic development in their area.

- Creating a new designation – similar to SSSI status – to protect green areas of particular importance or value to the community

manage water for everyone

We have real problems managing our scarce water resources. Some people face devastating floods, while others have drought conditions every summer. To combat this, in Westminster, we will:

- Crack down on waste from the water companies and introduce compulsory smart meters in areas of shortage.

In the National Assembly we would:

- Introduce landscape-scale planning policies with a specific remit to restore water channels, rivers and wetlands and reduce flood risk by properly utilising the natural capacity of the landscape to retain water.

a fair deal for the countryside

Welsh Liberal Democrats are proud that we represent a large part of rural Wales. We believe a fair society is one where people can afford to work and live in the countryside, to be a place where the services we all depend on are accessible for everyone. We believe people in rural Wales deserve the same quality public services as everyone else.

Quality of life can be very high in rural Wales, but it can be very low for some people as well. Local services, such as shops, post offices and hospitals are under pressure. Houses can be even more expensive in rural areas and farmers are getting a raw deal.

In Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- End the Post Office closure programme to keep Post Offices open in rural areas where they're the lynchpin of community life.
- Through our policy on Capital Gains Tax would ensure that those who use second homes as speculative investments would pay tax on enhanced capital value at the same rate as on earned income, not 18% as at present.
- Exempt mountain rescue services from VAT.

In the National Assembly, Welsh Liberal Democrats would:

- Give you a say over the number of second homes in your area with a new planning 'use class' for second homes and variable Council Tax rates, so that communities and councils can control the number of homes given over to holidaymakers.
- Promote schemes for affordable homes using community land trusts, planning gains and equity mortgages and encourage farmers to convert existing unused buildings into affordable housing.
- In villages where there's only one shop or pub, allow business rates to be cut to keep them open.

fair trade for British farmers

Farming underpins so much of rural economy in Wales and it is important to our future that we have the capacity to grow the food we need. We will build on that strength and ensure farmers get the fair deal they deserve, able to earn a living wage and also help protect our natural environment and heritage.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in Westminster, in partnership with the National Assembly, will:

- Create a legal Supermarket Code and a powerful independent regulator of Britain's food market.
- Introduce a minimum level for the Single Farm Payment and concentrate future reductions on the highest claims so that big landowners get less, and the money goes to working farmers who need it not people who farm one field as a hobby.
- Use the money freed by CAP reform to provide extra support for hill farmers, cheap loans to help farmers invest in environmentally friendly biogas digesters and a new Farming Apprenticeship scheme.
- Work within Europe for further reform of the CAP, whilst continuing direct support for farmers, especially in upland and less favoured areas. We believe that a greater proportion of that support should be targeted at conservation, the environment and tackling climate change as well as providing food security for a rapidly growing world population. Organic and reduced-input foodstuffs should be encouraged.
- Help consumers to choose foods with the least environmental impact, though clearer labelling and making sure country-of-origin labels identify the source of the products, not where they are packaged. We would use government procurement policy to expand the market for sustainable and fair-traded products.

In the National Assembly we would work with Farmers Unions and Representatives to address concerns regarding the complexities and high entry requirements to the Glastir scheme and ensure that as many farmers as possible have the opportunity to participate.

supporting the voluntary sector

As Welsh Liberal Democrats, we are committed to handing power back to local communities. We believe that society is strengthened by communities coming together engaging in voluntary activity, which sets people and neighbourhoods free to tackle local problems.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will support the voluntary sector by:

- Introducing "easy giving accounts" at publicly owned banks to allow people to operate charitable giving accounts alongside their current accounts.
- Reforming Gift Aid to operate at a single rate of 23% - giving more money to charity while closing down a loophole for higher rate tax payers.
- Reform the process of criminal record checking so that volunteers need only one record that is portable, rather than multiple checks for each activity

your say fair and local politics, protecting your freedom



Welsh Liberal Democrats are the only party that believes in radical political reform to reinvent the way our country is run and put power back where it belongs: into the hands of people. We want to see a fair and open, transparent political system, with power devolved to all the nations, communities, neighbourhoods and peoples of Britain.

There is a mountain to climb. As the expenses scandal showed, our political system is rotten. Many MPs have safe seats where they can ignore their constituents. Party funding rules mean big donors have a huge, unwarranted influence on decision-making. Power has been concentrated in the hands of Westminster and Whitehall by a succession of governments. And our hard-won civil liberties have been eaten away.

Liberal Democrats will do things differently because we believe power should be in the hands of people, not politicians. We will give people a real say in who governs the country by **introducing fair votes**. We will **stop big donations** and **give people the power to sack corrupt MPs**. We will **increase the powers of the National Assembly and Scottish Parliament**. We will **cut back central government and all the stifling targets** that it sets and make sure **local taxes are spent locally**. And we will introduce a **Freedom Bill** to restore the civil liberties that are so precious to the British character.

Welsh Liberal Democrats in both Westminster and the National Assembly will work for:

- A stronger devolution settle by supporting full law-making powers for the National Assembly for Wales and seeking to devolve control over a wider range of areas to Cardiff Bay. We support the recommendations of the Richard Commission, especially fair voting.

fairer politics

Liberal Democrats will transform politics. We want people to be empowered, knowing the chance to change things in their neighbourhood or in the country as a whole is in their hands.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Change politics and abolish safe seats by introducing a fair, more proportional voting system for MPs. Our preferred Single Transferable Vote system gives

people the choice between candidates as well as parties. Under the new system, we will be able to reduce the number of MPs by 150.

- Give the right to vote from age 16.
- Introduce fixed-term parliaments to ensure that the Prime Minister of the day cannot change the date of an election to suit themselves.
- Strengthen the House of Commons to increase accountability. We will increase Parliamentary scrutiny of the budget and of Government appointments and give Parliament control over its own agenda so that all bills leaving the Commons have been fully debated.
- Replace the House of Lords with a fully elected second chamber with considerably fewer members than the current House.
- Get better politics for less. Liberal Democrats would save this country nearly £2 billion by reforms that cut back waste in central government and the Houses of Parliament.
- Introduce a written constitution. We would give people the power to determine this constitution in a citizens' convention, and subject to final approval in a referendum.
- Strengthen the Data Protection Act and the Office of the Information Commissioner, extending Freedom of Information legislation to private companies delivering monopoly public services such as Network Rail.

cleaner politics

There has been much talk of political reform from the other two parties, but nothing has happened. They have worked together to block reform, even voting against a proposal to give people the right to sack corrupt MPs. Dependent on money from the unions and big business, they have blocked changes to party funding. And determined to protect the secrecy of the House of Commons, they had to be pushed into revealing the details of MPs' expenses in the first place. Only Liberal Democrats are able to break open this system and deliver real change.

We will:

- Give you the right to sack MPs who have broken the rules. We would introduce a 'recall' system so that constituents could force a by-election for any MP found responsible for serious wrongdoing. We are campaigning for this right of recall to be introduced to the European Parliament too.
- Get big money out of politics by capping donations at £10,000 and limiting spending throughout the electoral cycle.
- Require all MPs, Lords and parliamentary candidates to be resident, ordinarily resident and domiciled in Britain for tax.
- Curb improper influence of lobbyists by introducing a statutory register of lobbyists, changing the Ministerial Code so that Ministers and officials are forbidden from meeting MPs on issues where the MP is paid to lobby, requiring companies to declare how much they spend on lobbying in their annual reports,

and introducing a statutory register of interests for parliamentary candidates based on current Register of Members' Interests.

more power for local people

The current Welsh Government is centralising more and more powers, believing that they know what is best for local people. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that local people know what is best for their area. Taxes we pay locally disappear into the Treasury and are spent elsewhere, and the way public services are provided reflects what central government wants rather than what local communities need. We want to put communities back in charge of themselves.

In partnership between the National Assembly and Westminster, Welsh Liberal Democrats would:

- Reform local taxation. We oppose the unfair Council Tax and will seek to replace it with a fairer local tax, based on people's ability to pay. It is necessary to pilot Local Income Tax to resolve any practical issues of implementation before it can be rolled out nationally, so we would invite councils to put themselves forward to be involved in the piloting phase in the second year of a Parliament.

In the National Assembly, we would strengthen local communities by:

- Return Business Rates to councils and base them on site values, as a first step to the radical decentralisation of taxation and spending powers to local people.
- Deliver fair votes to local authorities to make sure that voter choice is increased and ensure that every vote matters. We would also establish an independent review into the best and worst practices of open government, aiming to spread best practice across Wales.
- Reduce the number of complicated and expensive grants that make up local Government finance. This will include examining the Housing Revenue Account and ensuring that local Government finance is delivered through as few grants as possible. Where we introduce new grants, we will make sure they are broad and transparent.
- Introduce a 'community right to buy' to allow community councils or other community groups to register an interest in a strategic building or plot of land in the community, giving them first option to purchase the property for community purposes when it is put on the market.
- Create a third party right of appeal of planning decisions.

Wales in a federal Britain

Labour has made progress on devolution, but the job is still left unfinished. We have championed the devolution of powers from Westminster to the National Assembly for Wales. But we know that the job is not complete. We want to see the National Assembly have powers to really make life in Wales fairer – and this means we need the full range of tools to do the job.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will:

- Give the National Assembly primary legislative powers so that it becomes a proper Welsh Parliament. We also support passing on a greater number of responsibilities to the National Assembly.
- Replace the current Barnett formula for allocating funding to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments with a new needs-based formula, to be agreed by a Finance Commission of the Nations and Regions.
- Implement the recommendations of the Calman Commission to give significant new powers and responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament.
- Address the status of England within a Federal Britain, through the Constitutional Convention set up to draft a written constitution for the UK as a whole.

your freedoms

Welsh Liberal Democrats believe it is an individual's right to live their lives as they see fit, without discrimination, with personal privacy, with equal rights in front of the law.

Labour - often backed by the Tories - have made thousands of new things illegal, intruded into your privacy, and overthrown some of the basic principles of British justice such as the right to jury trial. They have turned Britain into a surveillance state.

Welsh Liberal Democrats will protect and restore your freedom. In Westminster, we will:

- Halt the increase in unnecessary new offences with the creation of a 'stop unit' in the Cabinet Office. Every department in Whitehall would have to convince this small legal unit of the need for a new offence.
- Introduce a Freedom Bill. We will regulate CCTV; protect the right to protest; stop councils from spying on people; stop unfair extradition to the US; defend trial by jury, protect freedom of speech by reforming the law on libel and stop children being fingerprinted at school.
- Scrap intrusive Identity Cards and have more police instead.
- Scrap plans for expensive, unnecessary Biometric passports.
- End plans to spy on your email and internet use.
- Remove innocent people from the police DNA database and stop storing DNA from innocent people and children in the future, too.
- Ensure everyone has the same protections under the law by protecting and strengthening the Human Rights Act.
- While maintaining control of the civil legal aid budget, we will ensure that ordinary people continue to have fair access to justice.

your Welsh language rights

The Welsh language is a treasure we can all be proud of; it enriches Welsh life and makes Wales special. But the people of Wales also have a right to use – and the language has a right to be a thriving, community language. We believe that all decisions

about the Welsh language should be made in Wales and in order to ensure that everyone can take advantage of this crucial civil liberty we will:

- Legislate to make Welsh and English the official languages of Wales and to further enshrine the right to service in Welsh from public bodies and those that have migrated from the public sector since the current Language Act was passed.
- Give the Welsh Language Board commissioner-style powers to investigate complaints made after the new rights are introduced.

In addition, we will:

- Develop and expand Language Action Areas to help reverse the trend towards de-population and ensure the welcome and integration of individuals moving into Welsh-speaking communities.

tackling terrorism

We believe the best way to combat terrorism is to prosecute terrorists, not give away hard-won British freedoms. That is why we will:

- Scrap control orders, which can use secret evidence to place people under house arrest
- Reduce the maximum period of pre-charge detention to 14 days.
- Make it easier to prosecute terrorists by allowing intercept evidence in court and making greater use of post-charge questioning.
- Reach out to the communities most at risk of radicalisation to improve the relationships between them and the police and increase the flow of intelligence.