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CISTA — General Election 2015 Manifesto



CISTA2015 9 min read · Apr 19, 2015



In brief

1. The 50 years long so-called 'War on Drugs' has been lost. It has caused far more suffering than it ever alleviated.
2. All over the world, governments are successfully implementing an array of new policy approaches as an alternative to prohibition.
3. In the UK the stasis in our public policy is radically at odds with the rest of the world. The consequences are borne by taxpayers, individuals and wider society.
4. CISTA is proposing a new approach to drug reform, starting with cannabis, one that is evidence-based, cross-party, humane and non partisan.
5. Our proposals, upon implementation, will do less harm, reduce human suffering and minimise the damage caused to the victims of drug-related crime and consumers of drugs.

Prohibition's end days

For over half a century governments across the world — including our own — have been legally regulating the sale and consumption of many drugs, including alcohol, tobacco and various pharmaceuticals, while rigidly applying policies of prohibition against other drugs, including cannabis.

Legal regulation of drugs has provided effective government control of what drugs can be sold, who they can be sold to and where they can be purchased.

Under prohibition, these decisions are taken by criminals and criminal gangs.

The sheer scale of the failure of prohibition policies globally is breathtaking and now widely acknowledged.

84% of the UK population now concede that this so-called 'War on Drugs' has failed and cannot be won.

All around the world — a new epoch in drugs policy

In recent years, across the world, new alternatives to prohibition have been successfully implemented as governments, citizens and law enforcement agencies recognise the need to address the challenges posed by drugs-use in new ways.

These policies include *decriminalisation*, *legal regulation* and *state control* and *rescheduling* of cannabis sale and consumption. They have been introduced alongside other measures to promote public health, education, prevention, treatment, recovery and clearance for certain formally prohibited drugs to be made available to patients with a variety of medical conditions.

In *Portugal* one of the biggest and more successful experiments in drug legislation in the world has taken place. In 2001 it became one of the pioneering EU countries to remove criminal penalties for people in possession of drugs. Since then anyone can carry up to 10 doses of any drug. Public concern about drug use has receded and the decriminalisation policy now has the support of all political parties and the police.

Spain has long pursued a relatively tolerant approach to drugs, particularly cannabis. Personal possession of small amounts of any illicit drug is not considered a criminal offence. This decriminalisation policy has extended to production too, with Spanish law typically being interpreted in a way that permits private cultivation of the drug for personal use. This provision, and the legal tolerance of the 'shared consumption' of cannabis has facilitated a 'cannabis club' model, through which cannabis is grown collectively and distributed to members for their own consumption.

In *Uruguay* criminals generated £20 million annually in illegal sales of cannabis. The state took over control of production and sales in 2013. All non-authorised plantations were destroyed. Production will be provided by 20 licensed farmers. Around 1,300 people have been registered as “home growers” and there are now more than 500 “cannabis clubs”. Authorised pharmacies where the drug will be available are still to be opened.

In *Colorado* a year after legalisation the state’s marijuana industry was responsible for generating \$44 million (£29 million) in state taxes that can now be used to build hospitals, and schools. The money earned with tax collection of marijuana goes to the government instead of falling into the hands of criminal organisations. On top of that there are around 2,000 marijuana business licenses in the state, and about 10,000 people are employed by the industry (0.4 per cent of the working population).

In *Australia*, the states of Queensland and New South Wales have joined forces to conduct medicinal cannabis scientific trials for patients with intractable epilepsy, chemotherapy-related nausea and end-of-life pain where standard treatments were ineffective. Use of cannabis for medicinal purposes has been decriminalised in 23 US states, Canada, Israel, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Spain.

The aims of drug policy

Drug consumption can lead to harm in a variety of ways to individuals consumers themselves; to friends and families of consumers, and through acquisitive and organised crime. Around 50% of all organised crime groups are involved in drugs and drugs account for 20% of all crime proceeds.

The fundamental objective of any government drugs policy should be to minimise the damage caused to the victims of drug-related crime, drug consumers and others.

Globally, in terms of drugs policy, we are entering a new progressive era. Prohibition is being replaced by an array of new policies that eradicate criminality, alleviate the suffering of some of the most vulnerable people in society, protect human rights and enable public funds previously spent on policing and criminal justice to be committed to treatment and education.

The UK is seriously running the risk of being left behind.

A very British impasse

In 2012 the all-party Home Affairs Committee, having spent 12 months reviewing the UK drugs laws, called for the establishment of a Royal Commission to consider the best ways of tackling drugs policy in an increasingly globalised world. In order to avoid a long and expensive review process, it recommended that such a commission be set up immediately and be required to report in 2015.

This proposal was supported by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and 60% of the British public but rejected by the Prime Minister David Cameron.

The Committee Chair Keith Vaz MP concluded: *There is no doubt that we have failed to deal with the dealers and we have not focused on the users. Only with this twin approach will we break the devastating cycle of drug addiction in society. We need to improve drug education in schools, tackle drug use in prisons and meet prison-leavers at the gates with properly funded, effective community rehabilitation*

Nothing changed.

British drug policy remains reliant upon the criminal law as its principle instrument and the criminal justice system as its most expensive component. The total cost to the UK taxpayer of criminalisation through

drug laws has never been properly counted but the UK Drug Policy Commission (2007) suggest it is most likely to be above £2 billion per annum.

Medicinal Access to Cannabis

There is a growing body of research that shows the medical properties of chemical components of cannabis. For many people cannabis is the only substance that helps relieve their condition, but not only are they stopped from accessing it officially, but have to break the law to help their health. As mentioned above, the consumption of cannabis for medicinal purposes has been decriminalised in 23 US states, Canada, Israel, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Spain. In the UK in the absence of reform patients are self-experimenting with substances and derivatives without being fully aware of their content. We will be publishing a more detailed 'Medicinal Manifesto' before the General Election.

The General Election Manifestos

General election 2015: Where the parties stand on drug policy

Labour

- Better drug treatment that focuses on the root causes of addiction
- Ban the sale and distribution of so-called “legal highs”

Green Party

- Starting with cannabis, regulate currently banned drugs
- Establish a Royal Commission to review current drug classifications “within a legalised environment of drug use”
- Treat drug use as a health problem, rather than a crime
- Transfer responsibility for drug policy from the Home Office to the Dept of Health

Conservatives

- Keep abstinence as the goal of drug treatment, instead of maintaining addiction through the use of substitute drugs
- Introduce widespread random testing of drug use in jails



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

- Portugal-style decriminalisation of all drugs
- An end to imprisonment for personal drug possession
- A system of medical cannabis prescribing
- Transfer responsibility for drug policy from the Home Office to the Dept of Health
- Keeping a watching brief on cannabis legalisation experiments around the world



- Won’t decriminalise illegal drugs, but will focus on ensuring drug suppliers, rather than users, are punished



Plaid Cymru | Party of Wales

- More drug rehabilitation places and programmes, and more drug education

Against this backdrop of catastrophic policy failure — and considering the evidence of alternative approaches — it is astonishing that the two largest political parties in the UK — the Conservative Party and the Labour Party — have made no significant reference in their respective manifestos to the issue of drug reform.

The Liberal Democrats have proposed adopting the approach used in Portugal. They propose to legislate to end the use of imprisonment for possession of drugs for personal use, diverting resources towards tackling organised drug crime instead. They also propose to establish a review to assess the effectiveness of the cannabis legalisation experiments in the United States and Uruguay in relation to public health and criminal activity.

The Green Party propose to adopt an evidence-based approach to the step-by-step regulation, starting with cannabis, of the drugs currently banned under the Misuse of Drugs Act, as well as ‘legal highs’, with a view to introducing a system that reduces harms and brings the market under state control as a potential tax revenue generator. They further propose a Royal Commission be convened to review currently controlled drug classifications, within a legalised environment of drug consumption.

For anyone who has campaigned and supported the case for legal regulation of drugs in the UK these positions, twinned with the track records of all the mainstream UK parties, evokes no optimism that change is imminent.

There is no chance that either Liberal Democrats or Green Party will win this election or make drugs reform a ‘red line’ issue in any coalition — or other partnership — agreements with the Conservatives or Labour.

Despite decades of campaigning by many distinguished individuals and groups, we are stuck in a political impasse which is leaving millions of people needlessly criminalised and stigmatised.

It’s time for a new, evidence-based political campaigning movement. One that can draw upon and be inspired by the success of drug reform campaigns around the world.

CISTA was registered as a new political party in March 2015. We are standing 32 candidates in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are the largest pro-drugs reform single-issue party to stand at a UK General Election in history and the first to have candidates in the four nations that make up the United Kingdom. We have attracted 1500 members in our first two months. We intend to contest all future Scottish Parliament, London, Welsh and Northern Ireland Assembly elections and targeted local authority elections.



Candidates: Yvonne Mclean (Scotland), Barry Brown (Northern Ireland), Gerri Smyth (England)

We believe that the best way of achieving drug policy reform in the UK — and to emulate the success of other countries — is via a consensual, all-Party and non partisan approach.

We are and will remain a single issue party with an ardent focus on creating a legally regulated drugs market.

There are compelling moral, human rights, economic, health and education cases to be made for legally regulating drug production and consumption and we will make them in this General Election and after the General Election as we grow and develop our capabilities.

Our Manifesto Pledges

Royal Commission

We will campaign to convene a *Royal Commission* to undertake a fundamental review of all UK drugs policy to establish a suite of recommendations that can be effective in combatting the harm caused by drugs in an increasingly globalised world. The Royal Commission can be established in the first year of the new Parliament report in 2017 and its findings legislated on within the term of the next Parliament.

Global Medicinal Cannabis Summit

We will convene a *Global Medicinal Cannabis Summit* in London in 2015. This Summit will welcome over 50 countries and over 500 politicians, scientists, physicians, NGOs and civil society representatives from across the world to share latest research and public policy developments relating to medical consensus that patients with AIDS, cancer, epilepsy and serious access to cannabis. It will be the biggest global meeting on the subject ever convened.

Formal Government Review of Global Drug Reform Policy Innovations

We will initiate an immediate review to report on the effectiveness of the cannabis legalisation policy innovation in Spain, Portugal, United States, Uruguay and their impact on consumption, addiction and treatment and criminal activity.

Cost-benefit economic evaluation of potential legally regulated UK cannabis market

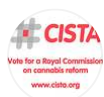
We will campaign to conduct an updated review of the cost-benefits of introducing a legally regulated cannabis market. There is a clear need for a better understanding of the demand for cannabis, which will only be achievable with better data on consumption, price and potency.



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Written by CISTA2015

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CISTA - New political party campaigning for UK drug laws to be reformed. Vote for a change in 2015 #StandInMay #BreakingTheTaboo