



Manifesto 2015

Stronger Economy. Fairer Society.
Opportunity for Everyone.

Prosperity for all

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

A stronger Wales

Deliver Home Rule
for Wales with further
powers and fair
funding

Fair taxes

Cut your taxes by
an additional £400
by raising the tax-
free allowance to
£12,500

Opportunity for every child

Invest in our
schools through our
Pupil Premium

Quality health care for all

Increase resources
for our NHS and
ensure safe staffing
levels







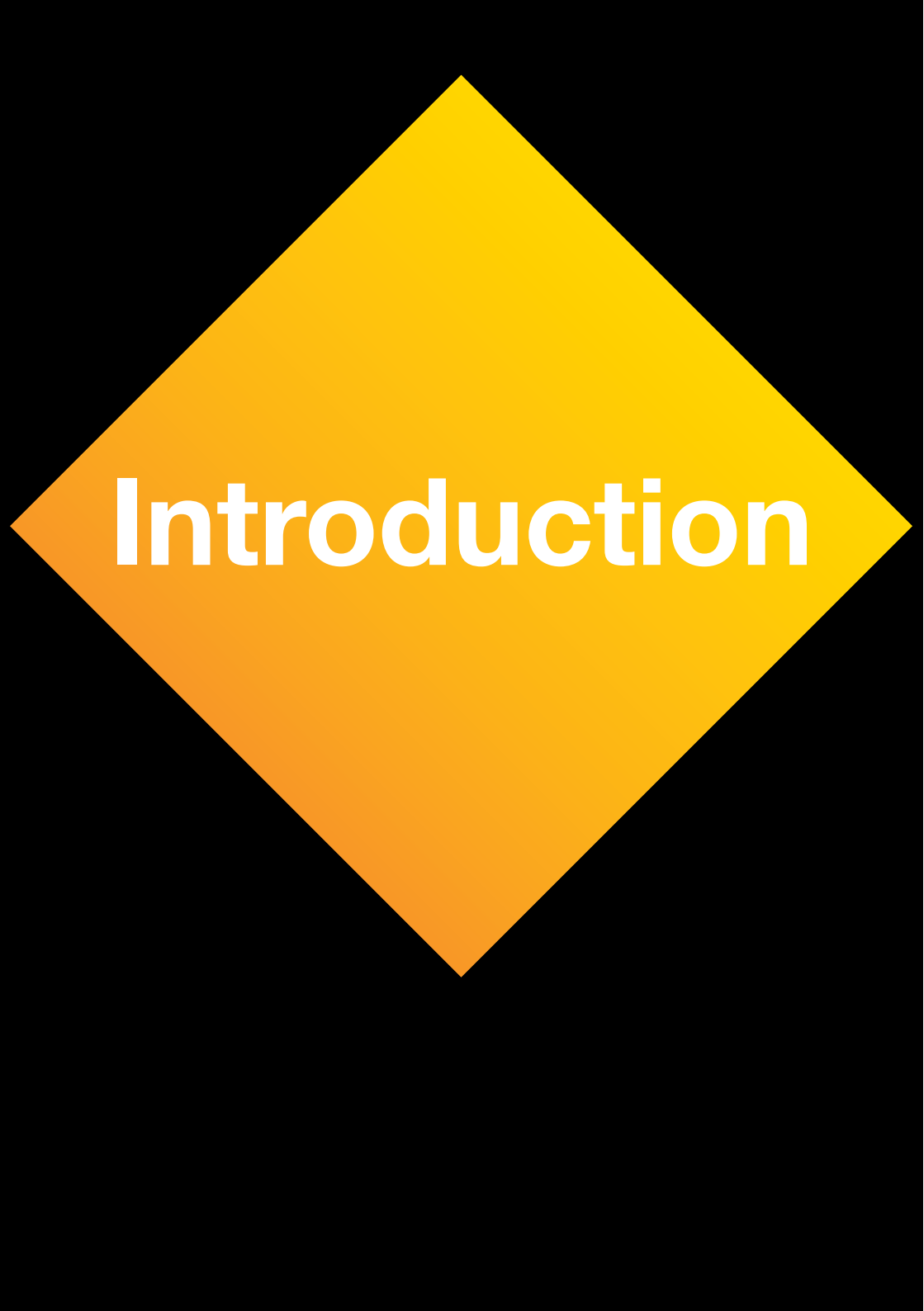
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Opportunity for Everyone.



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Introduction



Introduction by Nick Clegg and Kirsty Williams AM

Dear friend,

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

Front-page commitments like raising the Income Tax threshold and investing in the poorest schoolchildren through the Pupil Premium became flagship achievements.

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

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

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

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

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

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



allowance every year since 2010.

We can say we will invest in education for our most deprived schoolchildren because we have already made securing over £1000 for each deprived pupil through Pupil Premium central to our support for Welsh Government budgets.

We can say we will invest in the NHS, secure a safe level of nurses on Welsh wards, and ensure parity between mental and physical health because we have already secured investment in new technology for the NHS, proposed legislation to require more nurses on wards and because our party in Government in Westminster has protected the NHS budget in England.

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

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

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

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

Yours,

Nick Clegg
Party Leader
Liberal Democrats

Kirsty Williams AM
Party Leader
Welsh Liberal Democrats

Britain in 2020: the Liberal Democrat vision

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

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

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

from renewables, our rail and road networks will be more extensive and reliable, and we will be leading the world in the technologies of the future, from electric cars to tidal power.

Britain will be the place to be if you want to thrive in advanced manufacturing, science, creative, digital and green industries, and our country will be open to ambitious entrepreneurs and thinkers from overseas. We will finally be building enough homes, every year, to meet our needs, including in new garden towns, villages and suburbs built to the best standards in the world.

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

In Wales, we want young people to leave school and college more confident about their future, finding universities and apprenticeships easier to access. The cost of travel will no longer be a barrier to getting on in life: bus fares will be cheaper for young people. And those starting out will get help to rent their first place with a government-backed tenancy deposit loan.

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

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

ensure you can afford to be looked after properly no matter what your needs.

Our NHS will have the money it needs, and finally mental health will have equal status with physical health. Those facing anxiety and depression will be seen swiftly, people struggling not to harm themselves will find emergency help at every A&E department and teenagers struggling with eating disorders will get the help they need close to home.

By 2020, our plan will have delivered warmth and security at home, too. More homes will be available, to rent and buy, in our communities. Young families will benefit from our new Rent to Own homes, where your rent payments steadily buy you a stake in your home. And there will be a national plan to upgrade the energy efficiency of every home; everyone who makes a big improvement in the efficiency of their home will be entitled to £100 off their Council Tax for a decade.

Everyone should grow up with access to nature and green spaces. By 2020, five green laws will be on the statute books, protecting nature and wildlife, cleaning up our air and water and helping fight climate change. We'll reform National Park Authorities to ensure that natural conservation is balanced with local accountability, enable more community renewables projects, and establish Wales as a world leader in marine renewables.

People will have more freedom. A second Freedoms Act will have embedded citizens' rights to freedom of speech and protest. The Human Rights Act will remain. The culture of everyday sexism will be declining, with young people taught in school about respect in relationships and sexual consent. Online, people will no longer be worried that the government is monitoring their every keystroke: a Digital Bill of Rights will have enshrined enduring principles of privacy and helped keep the internet open. Prisons will be places of reform and education, and police will work effectively in our communities to cut crime.

Our politics will be open, and fairer too. 2020 will be the first General Election in which 16 year olds can vote, the first generation to cast their first ballot in a fair STV voting system and the first generation to vote for the House of Lords. Wales will have 'home rule' and a proper Parliament, which Liberals first proposed a century ago.

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

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



Responsible finances

Balancing the budget in a fair way

Responsible finances underpin every good government. High debt and deficits are a risk to economic stability and it is simply not right to borrow too much money and expect our children to pay it back. Debt interest payments last year were £46 billion: three times more than the entire Welsh Government budget.



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

1.1 Balancing the budget

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

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

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

Having a balanced approach on tax and spending enables us to

- ♦ Protect the least well off in society and users of public services from the impact of measures taken to tackle the deficit.
- ♦ Invest in our health service to ensure it meets the needs of the future.
- ♦ Invest in education, especially the future of our most deprived children.
- ♦ Limit reductions in departmental spending to less than half the rate agreed for 2015/16.
- ♦ Limit welfare reductions so we do not destroy the essential safety net that protects us all in times of crisis.
- ♦ Continue to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on international development aid, helping the poorest in the world.

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

Liberal Democrats will:

BORROW
LESS
THAN
LABOUR

CUT
LESS
THAN
TORIES

1.2 Looking to the future

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

We will follow two new fiscal rules.

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

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

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

Our plan to finish the job and balance the books

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



Prosperity for all

Building a sustainable economy

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



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

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

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

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

2

Prosperity for all | building a sustainable economy

2.1 Economic and industrial growth

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

In the National Assembly we will:

- ♦ Deliver a balanced, export-led economic strategy by improving Wales' skills and innovation, access to finance and capital and access to markets and growth across Wales in order to deliver long-term sustainable growth and increased productivity.
- ♦ Develop an overarching and long-term National Growth Strategy, setting out our vision for generating growth in Wales, and ensure accountability with a new Growth Strategy Panel.

- ♦ Support emerging City Region initiatives in Cardiff and Swansea, and explore giving them statutory status as in Greater Manchester or Scotland, and bring forward Welsh versions of bespoke city deals to decentralise power from Cardiff Bay direct to communities.
- ♦ Create a Welsh Development Bank designed to support small businesses in accessing finance and support; developing international links including export and inward investment; and financing major infrastructure projects.

In Westminster, we will:

- ♦ Continue to develop our Industrial Strategy, working with sectors which are critical to Britain's ability to trade internationally – motor vehicles, aerospace, low-carbon energy, chemicals, creative industries, offshore and subsea technology and more.
- ♦ Aim to double innovation and research spending across the economy, supported by greater public funding on a longer timescale, more 'Catapult' innovation and technology centres and support for green innovation from the Green Investment Bank. We will continue to ringfence the science budget and ensure that, by 2020, both capital and revenue spending have increased at least in line with inflation.
- ♦ Provide further support to medium-sized businesses through a one stop shop for accessing government support, a dedicated unit in HMRC and the development of management skills.

2.2 Banking and financial reform

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

Building on this progress, in Westminster we will:

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

businesses.

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

2.3 Creating a stable and competitive environment for growth.

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

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

We will:

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

from subsidy of high leverage debt and tackle the bias against equity investment.

- ♦ Reform and improve the Regulatory Policy Committee in Westminster to reduce regulatory uncertainty and remove unnecessary business regulation. We understand that well-designed regulation, focused on outcomes rather than processes, has a vital role in creating markets and driving investment and will use it, in particular, to promote low-carbon and resource-efficient innovation. In Wales, we will establish a Welsh Regulatory Policy Committee to provide an independent assessment of potential new regulations coming from the Welsh Government.

Liberal Democrats remain committed to introducing Land Value Tax (LVT), which would replace Business Rates in the longer term and could enable the reduction or abolition of other taxes. We will consider interim reforms like Site Value Rating that could be completed within five years. We will charge the Land Registry with completing registration of all substantial land and property holdings in England and Wales by 2020.

2.4 Green jobs and industry

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Pass a Zero Carbon Britain Act to set a new legally binding target to bring net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.
- ♦ Realise the full potential of the Green Investment Bank by increasing its capitalisation, expanding its remit, allowing it to raise funds independently and enabling it to issue green bonds.
- ♦ Help incentivise sustainable behaviour by increasing the proportion of tax revenue accounted for by green taxes.
- ♦ Grow the market for green products and services with steadily higher green criteria in public procurement policy.
- ♦ Increase research and development and commercialisation support in four key low-carbon technologies where Britain could lead the world: tidal power, carbon capture and storage, energy storage and ultra-low emission vehicles.

- ♦ Ensure UK Trade and Investment and UK Export Finance can prioritise support for key sectors identified in our Industrial Strategy, including exports of green products and technologies, and press for higher environmental standards for export credit agencies throughout the OECD.
- ♦ Encourage the creation of green financial products to bring consumer capital into green industries.

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

2.5 Making the connection: transport infrastructure

Liberal Democrats are leading the renewal of Britain's ageing infrastructure. In Government, we are investing in connectivity to Wales, including electrifying the South Wales Valleys line and committing £500m for a rail link to Heathrow, cutting journey times by up to 30 minutes for travellers from South Wales. But we still have decades of under-investment to catch up on. We need better transport infrastructure, a modern railway system, and less congestion on our roads.

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

We will:

- ♦ Set out 10-year rolling capital investment plans.
- ♦ Develop a comprehensive plan to electrify the overwhelming majority of the UK rail network, re-open smaller stations, restore twin-track lines to major routes and proceed with HS2, as the first stage of a high-speed rail network to Scotland. In Wales, we will campaign for the electrification of the North Wales Main Line and would provide funding for a feasibility study into re-opening rail links between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.
- ♦ Work to encourage further private sector investment in rail freight terminals and rail-connected distribution parks. We will set a clear objective to shift more freight from road to rail.
- ♦ Ensure our airport infrastructure meets the needs of a modern and open economy, without allowing emissions from aviation



to undermine our goal of a zero-carbon Britain by 2050. We will carefully consider the conclusions of the Davies Review into runway capacity and develop a strategic airports policy for the whole of the UK in the light of those recommendations and advice from the Committee on Climate Change. We remain opposed to any expansion of Heathrow, Stansted or Gatwick and any new airport in the Thames Estuary, because of local issues of air and noise pollution. We will ensure no net increase in runways across the UK.

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

2.6 Low-carbon energy

Our reforms of the electricity market have already created the world's first low-carbon electricity market and will stimulate up to 250,000 green jobs across the UK by 2020. Since 2010, energy demand has fallen by 2.5% a year and renewable electricity generation has almost trebled.

But we need to go further and faster to meet our goal of reducing energy demand by 50% by 2030; if we don't speed up energy

efficiency investment our buildings will continue to leak energy and waste money and our businesses will fail to compete internationally. We will ensure we create a low-carbon economy at the lowest cost for consumers. In Wales, our aim is to produce enough renewable and low-carbon energy to cover our own needs and provide export potential by 2050.

We will:

- ♦ Make saving energy a top infrastructure priority, stimulating private sector demand with our new Electricity Demand Reduction market, new market-shaping energy efficiency standards, support for industry, particularly SMEs, and a programme of tax incentives and public investment.
- ♦ Stimulate a minimum of £100 billion more private investment in low-carbon energy infrastructure by 2020.
- ♦ Set a legally binding decarbonisation target range for 2030 for the power sector of 50-100g of CO₂ per kWh, which can largely be achieved by expansion of renewables, with an indicative target of 60% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. We will support investment in energy storage and smart grid technology to enable this higher reliance on renewables.
- ♦ Work with the independent regulator Ofgem to ensure the costs of electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure are allocated efficiently and fairly between consumers and generators across the country, and develop more European electricity interconnection capacity.
- ♦ Regulate to end the use of unabated coal in electricity generation by 2025 because of its high carbon emissions and impact on local air quality, and require any new gas stations built after 2030 to be fitted with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology. We will implement a second phase of CCS projects by 2020.
- ♦ Expand community energy, building on Britain's first ever community energy strategy with additional financial and regulatory support.
- ♦ Develop a more equitable solution for wind power, lessening the burden on mid-Wales. In the National Assembly, we would commission an immediate review into TAN 8 renewable energy, so it can be updated to meet our current technological requirements. This to include consideration for the National Grid network; to include consideration for road/transport access to Strategic Search Areas; and to consider the impact of noise pollution. We will seek to minimise the impact of wind energy on the landscape where possible by encouraging the use of the latest technology and maximum innovation in relation to wind turbines and pylons, such as t-pylons and undergrounding.



- ♦ Accept that new nuclear power stations can play a role in low-carbon electricity supply provided concerns about safety, disposal of waste and cost are adequately addressed and without public subsidy for new build.
- ♦ Use biomass primarily for heating and small-scale power generation, act to encourage the wider use of biogas and argue for the reform of EU policies on biofuels and biomass which help drive deforestation, including ending all support for food-crop-based biofuels after 2020.
- ♦ Continue to back new entrants to the energy market, smart meters and faster switching to promote proper competition, aiming for at least 30% of the household market to be supplied by competitors to the 'Big 6' by 2020.

The UK has significant stores of unconventional gas, which could be accessed through the process known as fracking. It is vital that efforts to access this gas be properly regulated to protect our natural environment. Liberal Democrats in Westminster have introduced the world's most robust regulatory regime for unconventional gas and we support the St. David's Day Command Paper which proposed devolving licensing for unconventional gas to the National Assembly. In Wales, we would issue a new Technical Advice Note setting out the environmental and health standards expected of fracking operations and direct planning authorities to reject applications for fracking operations unless these standards are met.

In the National Assembly, we will:

- ♦ Enable a greater number of small scale community renewables projects to be completed via planning reforms.
- ♦ Ensure community renewables projects are considered with a presumption in favour of development.
- ♦ Expand community benefit schemes to a regional basis, ensuring residents along the transportation and grid corridors are also able to benefit.
- ♦ Establish Wales as a world leader in marine renewables by:
 - ◇ Establishing a suitable number of Marine Energy Hubs to provide a safe environment to manufacture and test emergent marine renewable technologies before deployment.
 - ◇ Supporting the development of tidal range power in the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel, using a range of technologies, and expand the concept to new projects should they be judged to be environmentally safe.

2.7 An open, trading nation

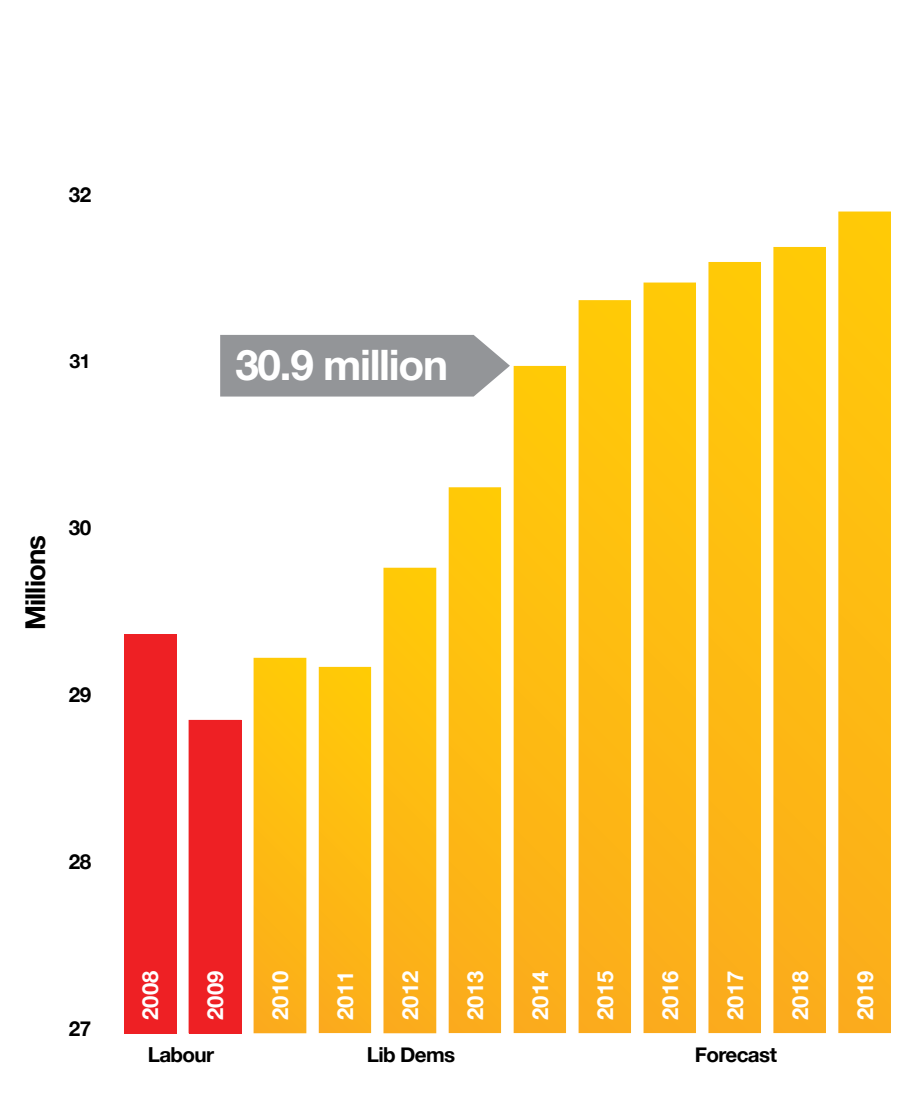
As a major global economy, we must promote open markets and free trade, both within the European Union and beyond. Only as a full member of a reformed European Union can we be certain Britain's businesses will have access to markets in Europe and beyond.

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

We will:

- ♦ Remain a committed member of the EU so we can complete the Single Market in areas including online industries, the energy market and services, and help negotiate EU international trade agreements, opening opportunities for British businesses. As an EU member, Wales benefits every year from £144 million more than we pay in. In particular, West Wales and the Valleys have received £1.8 billion in EU support.
- ♦ Support Single Market disciplines in relation to competition and state aid rules while creating a stronger public interest test for

Number of people in employment



takeovers in research-intensive activities.

- ♦ Continue to allow high skill immigration to support key sectors of the economy, and ensure work, tourist and family visit visas are processed quickly and efficiently.
- ♦ Ensure the UK is an attractive destination for overseas students, not least those who wish to study STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). We will reinstate post-study work visas for STEM graduates who can find graduate-level employment within six months of completing their degree.

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

We will:

- ♦ Give higher status to tourism within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- ♦ Build on our successful initiatives to devolve more power, resources and decision-making to local areas to promote their unique tourism propositions in the UK and globally.

2.8 Securing global leadership: technology and creativity

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

We will:

- ♦ Complete the rollout of high-speed broadband, to reach almost every household (99.9%) in the UK as well as small businesses in both rural and urban areas.
- ♦ Build on the success of Tech City, Tech North and the Cambridge tech cluster with a network across the UK acting as incubators for technology companies.
- ♦ Support fast-growing businesses that could create a million jobs over 20 years, following the Sherry Coutu report into these 'Scale-Ups'.



- ♦ Maintain and develop the award-winning Government Digital Service, and the principle of Digital by Default in public services.
- ♦ Continue to release government data sets that can facilitate economic growth in an open and accessible format, including on standards in public services.
- ♦ Ensure the technology implications of government activity are properly considered by introducing Technology Impact Assessments into the policy design process.
- ♦ Develop cutting-edge digital skills courses for young people and the unemployed working with private sector employers and education and training providers.



2.9 Pride in creativity

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

We will:

- ♦ Maintain free access to national museums and galleries in Wales, while giving these institutions greater autonomy.
- ♦ Protect the independence of the BBC while ensuring the Licence Fee does not rise faster than inflation, maintaining Channel 4 in public ownership and protecting the funding and editorial independence of Welsh language broadcasters.
- ♦ Support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by small creative businesses.



Real help for family finances

Tax, welfare, pensions and consumer rights

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



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We will continue to rebalance the tax system away from hard work and towards unearned wealth, while stamping out abusive tax avoidance. We will increase support for childcare to help parents who want to work. We will continue to reform welfare and get people the right support in Jobcentres. We will build on our world-leading reforms to the pensions system. And we will fight tirelessly for a better deal for consumers, in the private and public sectors.

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

3

3.1 Fair taxes

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Raise the tax-free Personal Allowance to at least £12,500 by the end of the next Parliament, putting around £400 back in the pockets of millions of working people and pensioners. We will bring forward the planned increase to an £11,000 allowance to April 2016.
- ♦ Consider, as a next step, and once the Personal Allowance rise

- is delivered, raising the employee National Insurance threshold to the Income Tax threshold, as resources allow, while protecting low earners' ability to accrue pension and benefit entitlements.
- ♦ Ensure those with the highest incomes and wealth are making a fair contribution. We have identified a series of distortions, loopholes and excess reliefs that should be removed, raising money to contribute to deficit reduction. These include reforms to Capital Gains Tax and Dividend Tax relief, refocusing Entrepreneurs' Relief and a supplementary Corporation Tax for the banking sector. In addition, we will introduce a UK-wide High Value Property Levy on residential properties worth over £2 million. It will have a banded structure, like Council Tax.
 - ♦ Take tough action against corporate tax evasion and avoidance, including by:
 - ◇ Setting a target for HM Revenue and Customs to reduce the tax gap and continuing to invest in staff to enable them to meet it.
 - ◇ Introducing a general anti-avoidance rule which would outlaw contrived structures designed purely or largely to avoid tax.
 - ◇ Implementing the planned new offence of corporate failure to prevent economic crime, including tax evasion, with penalties for directors up to and including custodial sentences.
 - ◇ Levying penalties on firms proven to facilitate tax evasion, equivalent to the amount of tax evaded by their clients.
 - ◇ Asking the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee to consider the approach to paying tax taken by banks for themselves, their employees and for their customers, as part of their assessment of the risks posed by the sector, supported by an annual report by HMRC.
 - ♦ Restrict access to non-domiciled status, increasing the charges paid to adopt this status and ending the ability to inherit it.

3.2 Creating jobs and helping people find work

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

We will:

- ♦ Complete the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), so people are always better off in work. We will review UC to address any issues regarding cliff edges, and ensure increased working hours are properly incentivised for all claimants. We will retain the overall cap on a household's benefits and believe this should continue to be set at around the average family income.
- ♦ Deliver a reformed and improved Work Programme in partnership between the UK and Welsh Government. By devolving this support, along with more skills funding, and involving local and regional employers, we can ensure help and training is more tailored to local employment markets and better integrated into other services. We will improve the incentives for Jobcentre staff and Work Programme providers to get more help for those furthest from the labour market.
- ♦ Establish a review of effective ways to promote rainy day saving to improve people's financial resilience, and reform hardship payments, making it easier for people to bring forward part of their benefit payments to deal with emergencies.
- ♦ Develop a package of specialist support for carers seeking part time work or a return to full time employment
- ♦ Review sanctions procedures in Jobcentres. While sanctions can be a necessary last resort to ensure jobseekers are looking for work, they should not be used to cut benefit expenditure deliberately. Reductions in benefits may not always be the best way to improve claimants' compliance: those with chaotic lives might be more successful in finding a job if they were directed to targeted support with their problems. We will ensure there are no league tables or targets for sanctions issued by Jobcentres and introduce a 'yellow card' warning so people are only sanctioned if they deliberately and repeatedly break the rules.

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

3.3 Making welfare work

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Introduce a 1% cap on the uprating of working-age benefits until the budget is balanced in 2017/18, after which they will rise with inflation once again. Disability and parental leave benefits will be exempt from this temporary cap.
- ♦ Encourage landlords to lower their rent by paying them Housing Benefit directly, with tenants' consent, in return for a fixed reduction. Our plans for a major expansion of house building and new 'family friendly' tenancies, which limit annual rent increases, will also help reduce upward pressure on rents. We will review the way the Shared Accommodation Rate in Local Housing Allowance is set, and review the Broad Rental Market Areas to ensure they fit with realistic travel patterns.
- ♦ Improve links between Jobcentres and Work Programme providers and the NHS in Wales to ensure all those in receipt of health-related benefits are getting the care and support to which they are entitled. In particular, as we expand access to talking therapies we expect many more people to recover and be able to seek work again.
- ♦ Work with Local Authorities to tackle fraud and error in a more coordinated way, in particular on Housing Benefit.
- ♦ Help everyone in work on a low wage step up the career ladder and increase their hours, reducing their need for benefits, with tailored in-work careers and job search advice.
- ♦ Withdraw eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment and free TV Licence from pensioners who pay tax at the higher rate (40%). We will retain the free bus pass for all pensioners.



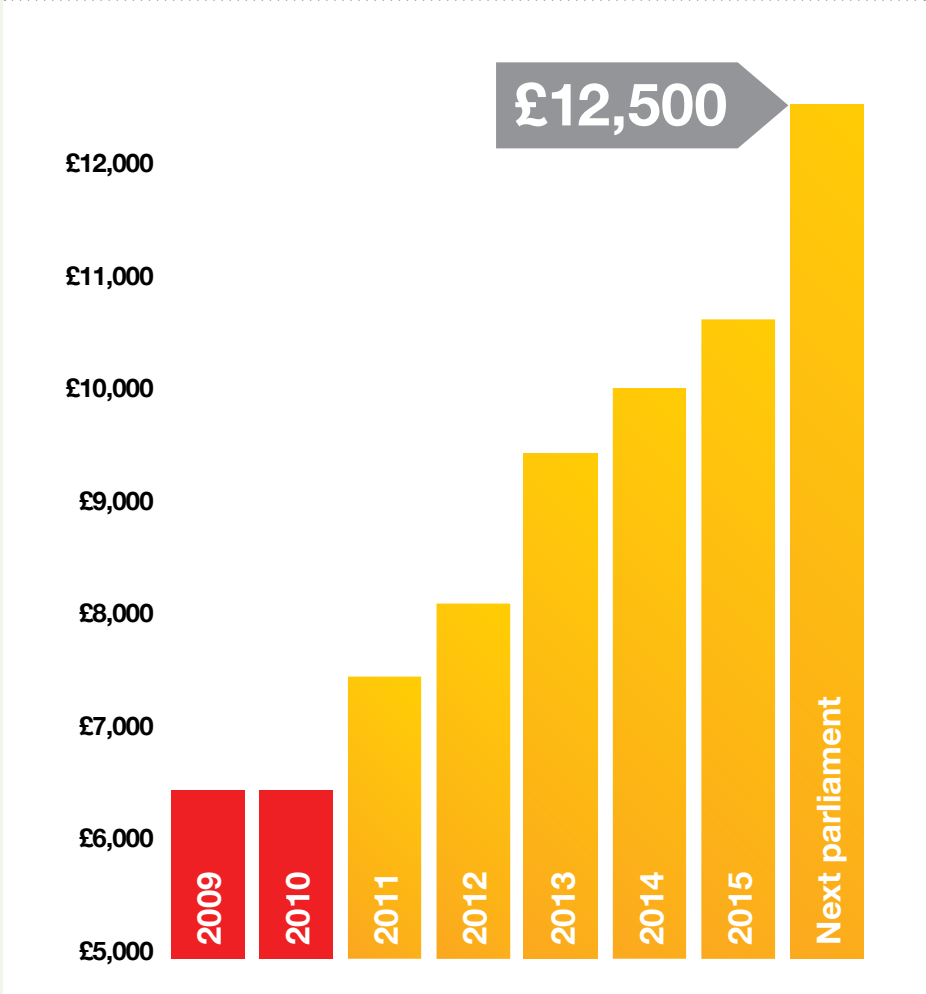
3.4 Flexibility at work and fair pay

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

We will:

- ◆ Encourage employers to provide more flexible working, expanding Shared Parental Leave with an additional 'use it or lose it' month to encourage fathers to take time off with young children. While changes to parental leave should be introduced slowly to give business time to adjust, our ambition is to see Paternity and Shared Parental Leave become a 'day one' right.
- ◆ Ensure swift implementation of the new rules requiring

Income Tax Personal Allowance



companies with more than 250 employees to publish details of the different pay levels of men and women in their organisation. We will build on this platform and, by 2020, extend transparency requirements to include publishing the number of people paid less than the Living Wage and the ratio between top and median pay. We will also consult on requirements for companies to conduct and publish a full equality pay review, and to consult staff on executive pay.

- ♦ Ask the Low Pay Commission to look at ways of raising the National Minimum Wage, without damaging employment opportunities, improve enforcement action and clamp down on abuses by employers seeking to avoid paying the minimum wage by reviewing practices such as unpaid internships.
- ♦ Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a fair Living Wage across all sectors. We will pay this Living Wage in all central government departments and their agencies from April 2016, and encourage other public sector employers to do likewise.
- ♦ Improve the enforcement of employment rights, reviewing Employment Tribunal fees to ensure they are not a barrier. We will ensure employers cannot avoid giving their staff rights or paying the minimum wage by wrongly classifying them as workers or self-employed.

Liberal Democrats understand that flexible employment contracts – including Zero Hours contracts – can work well for employees and businesses. But that is not always the case and we will continue to stamp out abuse. We will create a formal right to request a fixed contract and consult on introducing a right to make regular patterns of work contractual after a period of time.

3.5 Improving support for the hardest to help

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Conduct a review of the Work Capability Assessment and Personal Independence Payment assessments to ensure they are fair, accurate and timely and evaluate the merits of a public sector provider.
- ♦ Invest to clear any backlog in assessments for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.
- ♦ Simplify and streamline back-to-work support for people with disabilities, mental or physical health problems. We will aim for the goal of one assessment and one budget for disabled and sick people to give them more choice and control.
- ♦ Raise awareness of, and seek to expand, Access to Work, which supports people with disabilities in work.
- ♦ Reform the policy to remove the spare room subsidy. Existing social tenants will not be subject to any housing benefit reduction until they have been offered reasonable alternative accommodation. We will ensure tenants who need an extra bedroom for genuine medical reasons are entitled to one in any assessment of their Housing Benefit needs, and those whose homes are substantially adapted do not have their Housing Benefit reduced.

3.6 Help to save for and enjoy your retirement

Life expectancy is increasing. This is obviously good news, but it brings challenges; older people may need a pension income that will last for 20, 30 or even 40 years.

We want to build on the world leading reforms Liberal Democrats in government have introduced since 2010. We have abolished the default retirement ages so older people cannot be forced out of work on grounds of age. We have reversed decades of decline in pensioner incomes by uprating the state pension in line with our 'triple lock' guarantee. We have introduced a new single tier pension to make saving simple. We have auto enrolled 5 million people into a pension for the first time. And we have scrapped the rules that dictated how you receive your pension, so now you can spend your savings as you see fit.

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

We will:

- ♦ Continue the introduction of our simpler single tier pension so people can plan ahead securely, and feel the benefit of every

pound they save.

- ♦ Legislate for the Liberal Democrat ‘triple lock’ of increasing the State Pension each year by the highest of earnings growth, prices growth or 2.5%.
- ♦ Ensure pensioners are eligible to gain from the increased Personal Allowance of £12,500.
- ♦ Improve workplace pensions and continue to auto-enrol workers, completing the rollout of this scheme in full and on time. We will crack down on charges and encourage people to save more into their pension pot through this scheme.
- ♦ Press ahead with plans to allow people more freedom in the use of their pension pots and to allow existing pensioners to sell their annuity.
- ♦ Establish a review to consider the case for, and practical implications of, introducing a single rate of tax relief for pensions, which would be designed to be simpler and fairer and which would be set more generously than the current 20% basic rate relief.

3.8 Protecting consumers and keeping bills low

Confident consumers encourage innovation and competition, which strengthen our economy. We have radically overhauled consumer rights law, making it simpler and clearer and for the first time protected consumers buying digital content. We have driven competition in the energy sector, speeded up switching, and simplified tariffs so customers can always get the best deal. We have ended the era of above inflation rail fare increases. We have clamped down on unscrupulous payday lenders and strengthened protections for vulnerable consumers against rogue traders.

We will:

- ♦ Force energy companies to allow customers to change to any cheaper supplier in just 24 hours, and extend the principle of ‘gainer led’ switching, where your new provider organises your switch for you, into new sectors, including telecoms.
- ♦ Give people easier to understand information about their own energy use, with appropriate privacy protections, with a national rollout of smart electricity and gas meters. We will guarantee that anyone on a prepayment meter can choose a smart meter instead by 2017.
- ♦ Help people form new energy cooperatives so they can benefit from group discounts and cut their bills.
- ♦ Protect high streets and consumers by granting new powers to Local Authorities to reduce the proliferation of betting shops and substantially reducing the maximum stakes for Fixed Odds Betting

Terminals.

- ◆ Require the Sports Ground Safety Authority to prepare guidance under which domestic football clubs, working with their supporters, may introduce safe standing areas.
- ◆ Continue and expand the midata project into new sectors, giving consumers the right to access data businesses hold on them in an open and reusable format.

3.8 Driving up standards in public services

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

Liberal Democrats value the important role the voluntary, independent and community sectors play in the life of our communities and delivering public services. To ensure all providers of public services are accountable to their users and the public, a public authority should always take the decision about whether a service should be provided or commissioned, if possible a democratically accountable one. We will:

- ◆ Improve consumer protections in public services, with a review of complaints handling processes, exploring the option of mirroring the private sector ‘super-complaint’ system in the public sector and reforms to the current system of ombudsmen.
- ◆ Introduce a ‘community trigger’ mechanism to enable the public to require a review of the provision of a particular service being delivered consistently poorly.
- ◆ Extend Freedom of Information laws to cover private companies delivering public services.
- ◆ Work with Local Authorities to bring services together at a local level to provide a better service to citizens, and support users in pooling their personal budgets into mutual support arrangements.
- ◆ Continue and expand the What Works Network to promote evidence based policy making, establish an incubator for social enterprises developing innovative solutions to policy problems and expand the use of public competitions to encourage innovation in public services.
- ◆ Require the highest standards of data protection by public service providers, including that where data is used for research purposes it should wherever possible be anonymised, and impose a moratorium on the creation of new government databases without Parliamentary authority.



An opportunity society

World-class education for all

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



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Too many people have their chances in life determined by who their parents were, rather than by their own efforts and abilities. With our Pupil Premium, investing in children who might otherwise fall behind, we are finally tackling the scandalous gap in exam results between rich and poor, but we must do even more.

Children start learning from the moment they are born, so parents need to be supported right from the start. This includes access to education in Welsh at every stage; high-quality early years support; more money helping children who need it most; flexible choices for teenagers and young people; successful schools in every community; and World-class training at college and university to set every young adult on the path to a fulfilled working life. We will, by working in the National Assembly for Wales, ensure a World-class education for all.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Secured £282 million for the most deprived children in Wales through our Pupil Premium	Double our Pupil Premium to £2,500, investing even more to make sure children from the most deprived backgrounds can get ahead in life
Two million apprenticeships, and record numbers going to university	Reforming apprenticeships and universities to make them more accessible, particularly for people from the most deprived backgrounds
Discount bus fares for 16-18 year olds, making it easier to access education or work	Extending the discount to students and other young people

4

An opportunity society | World-class education for all

4.1 Support in the early years

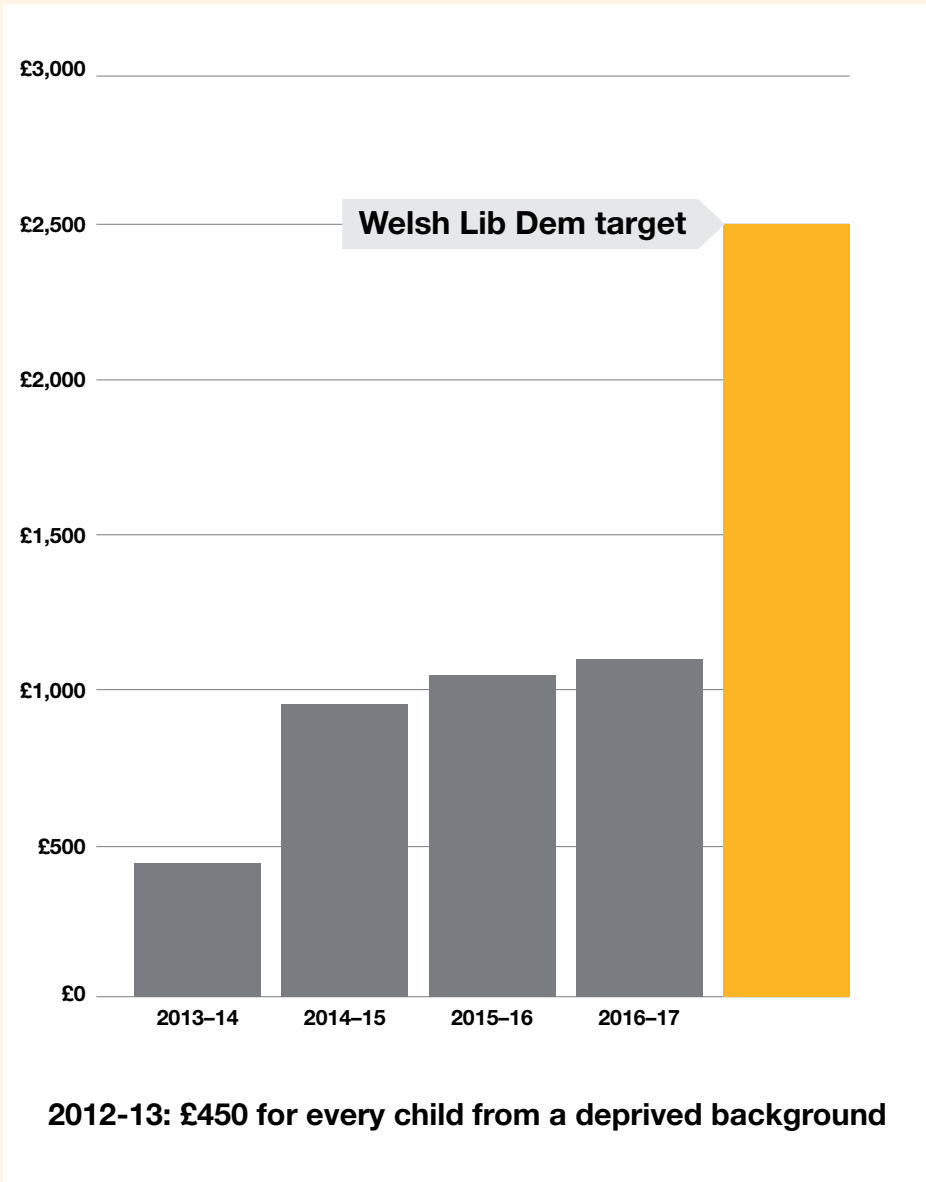
If we want a more equal society, we must get help to all those who might fall behind, and their parents, right from the start. We must improve the quality of early years teaching, and raise the status of those who work in early years. We have secured a £3.8 million extension to our highly successful Pupil Premium to extend it to pupils under 5. This will benefit over 12,500 nursery pupils in Wales, helping to ensure that every child has a fair start in life and is ready to learn when they start school.

To help parents who want to take time out from work to care for children but find the costs of childcare prohibitive, in Westminster we will complete the introduction of tax-free childcare, which will provide up to £2,000 of childcare support for each child and include childcare support in Universal Credit, refunding 85% of childcare costs so work pays for low earners.

4.2 Driving up school standards

There is much to be proud of in our schools but far too many children are still failing to get the qualifications they need. The gaps between rich and poor are too wide. We cannot fail our children – especially when we know it's the children who need the most help who are the most likely to be let down.

Welsh Pupil Premium



We will:

- ♦ Continue to expand the Pupil Premium until we reach our target of £2,500. In addition we will ensure that schools are provided with comprehensive guidance on how they can best use the Pupil Premium money and that they are accountable for their spending.
- ♦ Set a clear ambition for all children to achieve a good grasp of Maths, English and Welsh, aiming to eradicate child illiteracy and innumeracy by 2025. We will set an interim goal that all children should start school with good language skills by 2020.
- ♦ Rule out state-funded profit-making schools.
- ♦ Ensure automatic eligibility for free school meals for children whose parents are in receipt of a passported benefit and ensure good nutritional standards.

4

4.3 World-class teaching

Good teachers are essential for good schools. We need to be supporting good teachers more - giving them the chance to provide our children with the best education possible.

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

We will:

- ♦ Commission an up-to-date Teachers' Qualifications Framework as a matter of urgency, and work in partnership with professional bodies to register and up-skill educational staff.
- ♦ Overhaul the quality of teaching by setting up a new scheme to deliver cutting-edge training for teachers on a national basis. This will overcome equality of access issues and ensure that unions are able to input into what training is appropriate.
- ♦ Establish a Welsh Academy of Education Leadership to ensure we have excellent leaders in Welsh schools.
- ♦ Make completing initial teacher training contingent on a year's teaching in schools.

4.4 Curriculum and qualifications

We want schools to have flexibility and freedom, but we also believe that parents and children alike need to know that the school curriculum will cover the essentials, and that teachers will be skilled educators who know how to inspire a love of learning. We will strengthen vocational education so that it has parity of esteem with academic studies.

We want the highest standards in our schools, and will ensure that every child has a thorough grasp of the basics. But we also understand that a great education is about more than just learning facts: creativity should be nurtured, children should be helped to develop the life skills they will need as adults, and every pupil should be given advice and guidance about their future.

We will:

- ♦ Support the development of an individual pupil monitoring programme to measure pupils' progress, allowing schools to target efforts at those pupils who are not meeting their potential, as recommended by the Donaldson Review.
- ♦ Deliver a Middle Phase Strategy to support pupils through the ages of 8 to 14, including a better balance of pastoral and academic support to help pupils through this important stage.
- ♦ Support vocational education by enabling learners to mix and match vocational and academic learning, moving between the two at the same time as moving forwards, encouraging learners to keep their studies broad.
- ♦ Ensure that regional arrangements between schools and further education institutions result in collaboration and lead to a richer curriculum.
- ♦ Develop and launch a strategy for communicating the nature and advantages of Welsh qualifications across the UK and abroad.
- ♦ Work towards continual improvement of Welsh qualifications, so standards are comparable to the best performing countries.
- ♦ Review the value of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, including to examine grading for key modules.
- ♦ Ensure a sufficient level of citizenship and political systems education for students and age-appropriate sex and relationships education for all students from KS2 upwards.
- ♦ Promote the take up of STEM subjects in schools, introduce coding on the National Curriculum and encourage entrepreneurship at all levels.

4.5 Improving care for looked after children

Liberal Democrats have long championed early intervention to prevent problems before they arise, but we also need to make sure we equip social workers with the skills to address these complex issues and ensure children's safety above all. Where children do have to be taken into care we make sure they can find a loving home with as little disruption and instability as possible.

We will:

- ♦ Introduce a cohesive strategy to be put in place for children who are taught outside the school setting, to monitor and improve their educational chances and outcomes.
- ♦ Tackle delay and instability in foster care, with better support and training for foster carers, including on mental health issues.
- ♦ Prevent looked-after children and young people being drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily by promoting restorative justice.
- ♦ Ensure that tackling the impact of poverty should be central to 'whole-school' planning.

4.6 Improving support for young adults

We want young people in their teens to face the future with optimism and confidence. As children grow, their independence grows too, and the support that education and youth services provide to them and their families' needs to adapt. Whether it's supporting people with the costs of travel to college or apprenticeships, or promoting positive images of young people by celebrating their successes: Liberal Democrats are on the side of young people.

We have already secured £14.75 million in funding for a Youth Concessionary Fare scheme in Wales – this will mean a discount on fares for Welsh 16-18 year olds, starting from September 2015, helping young people get to school and assisting all bus users by helping to maintain the viability of existing routes and making it easier to open new ones.

We will

- ♦ Work to go further with our Youth Concessionary Fare Scheme by extending it to more young people as resources allow, for example to all full-time students.
- ♦ Improve careers advice and links between employers and schools. We would engage with regional education consortia to develop joint prospectuses and coordinated open days for different schools in an area.
- ♦ Develop prospectuses for business so employers can find new apprentices or employees, or upskill their existing workforce.
- ♦ Develop an NHS 'student guarantee', making it easier for students to get care and support while at university, in partnership with Local Authorities, particularly those with long term health conditions or caring responsibilities.

4.7 A World-class university sector, open to all

Liberal Democrats have ensured that no undergraduate student in England has to pay a penny up front of their tuition fees. Students in England do not have to pay anything until they are earning over £21,000 per year. We now have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students.

In Wales, the Tuition Fee Grant has been raised. However, there are serious concerns about the long-term sustainability of the policy, as the Labour-Plaid government's original official estimates that the policy would cost £173 million a year now seem hopelessly inaccurate. The increase in the Tuition Fee Grant has been funded by slashing the universities' teaching block grant. Welsh Liberal Democrats believe that higher education should be available to all on the basis of academic ability and that access should not be constrained by social background, age, geography or financial resources. We therefore propose to shift the focus of government assistance for Welsh students from tuition fee debt relief to maintenance support as a fairer and more effective way of eliminating finance as a barrier to participation in higher education.

We need to ensure higher education is accessible to all those who can benefit, including at postgraduate level. Liberal Democrats in government secured the first ever income-contingent loans scheme for graduate degrees, which we will protect and seek to extend. The Welsh Liberal Democrats endorse permitting students on taught postgraduate courses to access an income contingent loan of up to £10,000 from the Student Loans Company, and will ensure this in Westminster.

We will:

- ♦ Introduce a Student Living Support Grant for all Welsh-domiciled students registered for a first undergraduate degree at a UK university, including part-time students, payable on top of the existing means-tested Assembly Learning Grant. This will be funded by withdrawing the Tuition Fee Grant.
- ♦ Support access to higher education by introducing a programme to encourage prospective students from backgrounds with a traditionally low participation in higher education, paying the full tuition fees of care-leavers, and requiring universities to adopt a 'Fair Access Agreement' outlining measures to broaden access and improve student retention.
- ♦ Introduce an Employability Enhancement Bursary to support students on postgraduate courses at universities in Wales that emphasize employability skills and include an appropriate work placement.

4.8 Expanding and improving apprenticeships and further education

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

We will:

- ♦ Develop a school liaison programme to increase the prominence of apprenticeships in the provision of career advice to young people.
- ♦ Establish an Apprenticeship Ambassador scheme to promote positive role models.
- ♦ Trial a UCAS-style single application process and clearing house system to improve the parity of approach between career routes.
- ♦ Create a single information, application and support system to streamline information provision and reduce drop-out and disengagement rates.
- ♦ Establish a cross-party commission to examine adult education and skills in Wales.

Through working in Westminster, we will :

- ♦ Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices, including by extending them to new sectors of our economy, like creative and digital industries.
- ♦ Set up a review into the VAT treatment of Sixth Form Colleges and FE Colleges to ensure fair treatment in relation to the schools sector.



Building a healthier society

Protecting the NHS and improving health

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



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

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

We need to look at what kind of services we need to meet the needs of our ageing population, where these services should be, how they should be staffed and how they would be funded. To establish this, we will set up an all-party and non-party commission to ensure Wales has an NHS that is clinically and financially sustainable, and to secure a historic and long-term plan for health and social care. It should be led by experts for the benefit of the public, involve representatives of the healthcare professions, the third sector, representatives and advocates and patients, and lay people. It will stop politicians meddling and playing political games with one of Wales' most important services, our NHS.

Healthcare is devolved to the National Assembly for Wales, and as such, we will carry out our policy priorities through the Assembly.

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Provided over £25 million of funding for Welsh hospitals to spend on new equipment through the Health Technologies Fund	Deliver the £8 billion England's NHS leaders say is needed to keep it strong: with money for Wales, which can be spent on more nurses for Welsh hospitals
Campaigned to improve support for child and adolescent mental health care	Ensure parity between physical and mental health
Established the £50 million Intermediate Care Fund to support older people maintain their independence	Introduce a package of support for carers including a £250 Carer's Bonus every year



5.1 Investing in our NHS

The NHS is our most treasured public service. Welsh Liberal Democrats will always be guided by the founding principles of the NHS - providing free care, when you need it, regardless of your ability to pay. We are the only party which, in Westminster, has committed to closing the funding gap NHS England faces and deliver an extra £8bn a year by 2020, meaning more money for the Welsh NHS.

We will:

- ◆ Always ensure access to healthcare is based on need not ability to pay and that the NHS remains free at the point of delivery.
- ◆ Deliver the money needed for the NHS by:
 - ◇ Continuing real terms protection of the NHS budget until we have balanced the books in 2017/18 – with a £1 billion boost on top of this protection. We made a start towards this £1 billion boost in the Budget by securing a £250m a year investment in mental health.
 - ◇ Increasing NHS spending in line with economic growth from then on.
 - ◇ These commitments mean Health Service funding in England will be at least £8 billion higher a year in real terms by 2020. This will result in up to £450 million extra for the Welsh budget, which can be used to improve the health service in Wales.

- ♦ Make sure the NHS is funded and organised to carry out diagnostic tests and necessary treatments in a timely and effective manner, so that waiting times meet public expectations without distorting clinical priorities.

5.2 Equal care for mental health

One in four of us will experience mental health problems, but for decades mental health has been the last in the queue for funding and attention. Mental health problems cost the Welsh economy as much as £7.2bn each year yet less than a quarter of people with depression get the treatment they need.

In England, the Liberal Democrats wrote equality for mental health into law. We will do the same in Wales, guaranteeing equality. We will invest an extra half a billion a year in mental health in England in the next parliament, meaning more cash for investment here in Wales.

To deliver genuine equality between mental and physical health in the NHS, Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly will:

- ♦ Enshrine parity of esteem between mental and physical health on the face of future legislation.
- ♦ Seek, over the course of an Assembly term, to increase the relative size of mental health spending to match the needs of the population.
- ♦ Expand liaison psychiatry services, to ensure immediate access to specialist mental health support for people being treated in hospitals for physical health problems. This can save the average hospital £5 million per year by reducing the number and length of in patient admissions.
- ♦ Revolutionise children's mental health services. We will train GPs in child mental and physical health; train professionals with a high degree of contact with children such as teachers and youth club workers in basic mental health support for young people; and introduce a national framework to ensure continuity of treatment as young people transition between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Adult services.
- ♦ Ensure no one in crisis is turned away, with a new Crisis Care Concordat between police, paramedics and health services, to ensure that health based places of safety are available 24/7 for people experiencing a mental health crisis. This will enable us to end the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.

To improve wellbeing and make the UK more mental health-friendly, in partnership between the National Assembly and Westminster, we will:

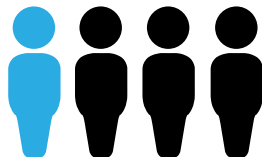
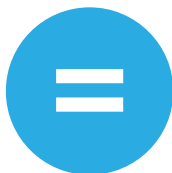


- ♦ Publish a national wellbeing strategy, which puts better health and wellbeing for all at the heart of government policy. This will cover all aspects of government policy, including transport, access to nature, and housing, at national and local level.
- ♦ Develop a clear approach on preventing mental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

Mental Health

1 in 4

of us will experience
mental health difficulties
in our lifetimes



**Mental
illness**



£7.2 bn
each year



Early
treatment



better access to

**talking
therapies**

could save millions
in fewer hospital admissions & working days lost

5.3 Joining up health and social care

We must encourage effective collaboration and break down boundaries between health care and social care services. It is patients who suffer when lack of coordination means transfers are delayed and patients are simply passed around different wards and organisations.

We would not force the merger of social care into the NHS or healthcare services into local government. We would permit health and social care providers in a local area to form a single integrated health organisation; responsible for managing the provision, cooperation between and integration of services in that area. This would be subject to public consultation, built-in arrangements for rigorous evaluation of effectiveness, and approval by Welsh Government.

After determined negotiations, we now have a clear guarantee from the EU that member states' rights to provide public services directly and not open them up to competition are explicitly enshrined in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and we will ensure this remains the case for TTIP and any future trade agreements.

5.4 Better access to GPs and community care

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

Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly will:

- ♦ Ensure easier access to GPs, through introducing a properly funded Access to GPs scheme to enable practices to employ more GPs or extend their opening hours to evenings and weekends, trialling the use of phone and skype appointments, encouraging GPs to work together in federations, and allowing people the chance to choose GPs near their work.
- ♦ Create a network of Healthy Living Pharmacies to improve patients' information about their health and lifestyle choices.
- ♦ Ensure safe levels of nursing staff on wards, and end the scandal of Welsh nurses having to look after more patients than anywhere else in the UK.



Save
Our
Services

Achubuwch
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Bwrdeistref Bwrdeistref

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Work towards a global deal to release significant additional funds for finding a cure or preventive treatment for dementia, doubling NHS research spend for this condition by 2020.
- ♦ Promote evidence-based 'social prescribing' of sport, arts and other activity to help tackle obesity, mental health problems and other health conditions, and work to widen the evidence base.
- ♦ Improve patient safety by updating the laws on regulation of health professionals and on cosmetic procedures.
- ♦ Develop new ways of measuring performance in a clinically appropriate and meaningful way.

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

5.6 Helping people keep healthy

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

In Partnership between Welsh Liberal Democrat teams in the Assembly and Westminster, we will:

- ♦ Support effective public awareness campaigns like 'Be clear on Cancer', working closely with charities to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of killer diseases.
- ♦ Create a new public health improvement role for local government, recognising that good health is not just the absence of disease but a state of physical and social well-being. Restrict

the marketing of junk food to children, including restricting TV advertising before the 9pm watershed, and maintain the effective 'Five a day' campaign

- ◆ Encourage the traffic light labelling system for food products and publication of information on calorie, fat, sugar and salt content in restaurants and takeaways.
- ◆ Ensure that an individual's freedom to use electronic cigarettes where they like is protected, unless there is evidence to suggest harm is being done to others.
- ◆ We will introduce a tax levy on tobacco companies so they fairly contribute to the costs of health care and smoking cessation services, subject to consultation on the detailed design and practicalities.
- ◆ Pass a Nature Act to increase access to green spaces and a Green Transport Act to cut air pollution.
- ◆ Encourage more walking and cycling by providing support for route development and education programmes.

5.7 Help for carers

The number of family carers is rising, including in the 'sandwich generation' who find themselves trying to care for their children and their parents at the same time. Carers are unsung heroes and we need to do more to help them. We have already invested £400m in carers' breaks, but we can and must go further.

In Westminster, we will:

- ◆ Introduce an annual Carer's Bonus of £250 for carers looking after someone for 35 hours or more each week.
- ◆ Work to raise the amount you can earn before losing Carer's Allowance from £110 to £150 a week.
- ◆ Consult on introducing five days' paid additional 'care leave' a year for carers who qualify for the carer's allowance.

5.8 Improving social care

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

We are clamping down on care workers being paid less than the National Minimum Wage by resourcing and directing HMRC

to pursue and prosecute providers who exploit their staff. We will ensure that care workers are paid for the time spent travelling - without payment for travel, there is a risk some care workers will effectively be paid at a rate below the minimum wage. We have campaigned to end fifteen minute care slots - it is simply not long enough to respond properly to the needs of people receiving care - and in government we would prohibit them.

We will:

- ♦ End the practice of fifteen-minute care slots – fifteen minutes is simply not long enough to get or provide the care you need.
- ♦ Work with local government and providers to promote a living wage for carers.
- ♦ Use the Dilnot Commission recommendations as a basis for implementing urgent reform of funding for social care in Wales.
- ♦ Provide more choice at the end of life, and free end-of-life social care for those placed on their local end-of-life register if evidence shows it is affordable and cost effective
- ♦ Raise the professional status and training of care home managers through statutory licensing.
- ♦ Ensure those who work in the care sector are properly trained and suitable to practice by introducing a statutory code of conduct backed-up by a care workers suitability register.

5



Better places to live

Communities, farming and the natural environment

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



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

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
£500m investment package to promote Ultra Low Emission cars which will cut emissions and improve air quality	Save lives by cleaning up our air, with low emission zones in towns with a pollution problem
Halted the Post Office closure programme and brought broadband to 80% of homes.	Complete broadband rollout to every home, and protect the Universal Service Obligation to support the Royal Mail.

6.1 Protecting nature

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

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

The Liberal Democrats have always been the greenest of Britain's major parties. This is no less true here in Wales, with Welsh Liberal Democrat Assembly Members working to protect the environment for future generations. In the National Assembly, we will:

- ♦ Reform National Park authorities by introducing directly elected members, to ensure that the conservation of nationally important natural and cultural environments is balanced with local accountability and sustainable economic activity
- ♦ Ensure a strong future for our countryside by increasing the amount of tree cover, in both rural and urban areas, and by tackling air pollution
- ♦ Publish a Carbon Budget alongside the Budget every year so that people can tell what impact our plans will have on the environment.
- ♦ Add a carbon impact assessment to all new Welsh legislation, so that we can assess their environmental impact

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

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

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

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

- ♦ Task the Natural Capital Committee with producing a 'Stern report' on resource use, identifying resources being used unsustainably and recommending legally binding targets for reducing their net consumption.
- ♦ Use regulation both nationally and in the EU to promote sustainable design where repairability, reuse and recyclability are prioritised, and to reduce packaging waste.
- ♦ Commission the Natural Capital Committee to investigate the potential for other resource taxes, including deposit-refund schemes.
- ♦ The creation of an Office of Resource Management working with Defra, DCLG and BIS to ensure that policies relating to waste are consistent, green and do not place too much burden on individuals or businesses.

6.3 Food and farming

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Promote share farming through the National Assembly, as a way of encouraging mobility within the industry and making it more accessible to young people interested in working the land.
- ♦ Promote succession planning through the National Assembly, thus ensuring the survival of the family farm.
- ♦ Work at EU level to ensure clear and unambiguous country of origin labelling on meat, meat products, milk and dairy products.
- ♦ Continue to support the Groceries Code Adjudicator. We will allow the Adjudicator to use discretion when holding a supermarket responsible for the treatment of suppliers so they can help ensure farmers get a fair price. This will help all suppliers, including in the dairy industry, which is under particular pressure.
- ♦ Ensure the Food Standards Agency is adequately resourced to enforce food safety standards, and strengthen food fraud surveillance.

- ♦ Help farmers and growers compete internationally by continuing to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden and developing an Animal Disease Strategy to reduce the risks and costs of animal disease.
- ♦ Continue to improve standards of animal welfare, building on Britain's leadership. We will review the use of cages, crates and routine preventive antibiotics.
- ♦ Fully implement recent reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy, working with industry and others to develop a national plan for sustainable UK fisheries, with fair treatment for the inshore small boat fleet.

6.4 Adapting to climate change

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

We will:

- ♦ Prepare a national resilience plan to help the UK economy, national infrastructure and natural resources adapt to the likely impacts of a 3-4 degree global average temperature rise.
- ♦ Promote schemes to alleviate flood risk through innovative land management – including planting trees and vegetation to slow run-off, restoring wetland areas, and creating safe flood reservoirs.
- ♦ Set up a commission to research back-to-nature flood prevention schemes, including the role of habitats including upland bogs and moors, woodlands, wetlands and species-rich grasslands in absorbing and holding water.
- ♦ Make sure that experts are consulted widely and the most reliable current to be taken into account.

6.5 Air quality and greener transport

Poor air quality is a significant health problem. After smoking, estimates suggest it is Britain's second biggest public health challenge, responsible for the equivalent of 29,000 deaths, every year. We will pass a Green Transport Act, including a National Plan to improve dramatically Britain's air quality by 2020.

Our National Air Quality Plan for consultation will include:

- ♦ A legal requirement targeted at the most polluted towns and

cities, to create Low Emission Zones.

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

To promote innovation and greener transport choices we will:

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

6.6. Improving local public transport

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

In Wales, we will:

- ♦ Create Passenger Transport Authorities in Wales to deliver more affordable, accessible transport services.
- ♦ Re-regulate bus services through PTAs to improve coverage of routes in rural and poorer areas of Wales.
- ♦ Lower ticket prices and introducing an all-Wales 'Oystercard' on bus services.
- ♦ Explore a fairer 'per mile' ticket cost for most rail journeys in Wales.



Renewable Energy



6.5%
in 2010



17.8%
in 2014

6.7 Sustainable rural communities

A thriving rural community needs local services and community facilities like schools, public transport, local shops, cultural venues and pubs. It needs enough homes, affordable for local families, to ensure those services are viable. And it needs public transport: travel costs are a major component of rural poverty. Liberal Democrats understand the change needed to support a living, working countryside.

We will:

- ♦ Renew the 2010-15 commitment that there will be no programme of Post Office closures and protect Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation to deliver across the UK for the same price.
- ♦ Introduce 'retained' police officers, fully trained officers available to respond when needed, to increase police presence in rural communities.
- ♦ Develop the Community Budgets model in Wales for use in rural areas to combine services, encouraging the breaking down of boundaries between different services. This will help keep rural services like GP surgeries, pharmacies, post offices and libraries open by enabling them to co-operate, share costs and co-locate in shared facilities.
- ♦ Continue the fuel discount scheme for remote areas implemented by Liberal Democrat Ministers and work with the European Commission to extend it to further remote areas with high fuel costs.

Green Britain Guarantee: Five Green Laws

A Nature Act which will include:

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

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

- ♦ Implementation of recommendations from our planned 'Stern Report' on resource efficiency, which the Natural Capital Committee will conduct.
- ♦ Increased penalties for waste crimes, aiming to move from an average fine of £50,000 to £75,000 and to an average sentence of 12 to 18 months.
- ♦ A statutory recycling target of 70% for waste in England.
- ♦ Regulation to promote design that enhances reparability, reuse and recycling, requiring specified products to be sold with parts and labour guarantees for at least five years.

Liberal Democrats will put the environment at the heart of government policy. We will pass five green laws to establish a permanent legal framework for a prosperous, sustainable economy.

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

- ♦ A statutory target of 2030 by which time all major, regularly used rail routes will need to be electrified.
- ♦ A requirement that every new bus and taxi is Ultra Low Emission from 2030 and every car on the road meets that standard by 2040.
- ♦ The creation of Low Emission Zones as part of a national air quality plan, including a legal requirement for the most polluted towns and cities.
- ♦ A new statutory framework that all new rail franchises include a stronger focus on customers.
- ♦ Updates to roads regulation to promote innovation in transport like driverless cars and personal electric vehicles.

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

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

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

- ♦ A Council Tax discount for significant improvements in energy efficiency in homes.
- ♦ Ambitious targets for all social and private rented homes to reach Energy Performance Certificate Band C by 2027.
- ♦ A statutory target to bring the homes of all fuel-poor households to Band C by 2027.
- ♦ A new legal framework to require regulators to facilitate the development of deep geothermal heat, large-scale heat pumps, waste industrial heat and energy storage systems.
- ♦ New powers for government to introduce new energy efficiency and heat saving regulations to reduce heat and energy use.



Affordable homes for all

Meeting our housing needs

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



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A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Campaigned to remove obstacles to building new homes in Wales	Set an ambitious goal to build 300,000 homes a year in the UK, including in 10 new Garden Cities in England
Forced the Welsh Government to help families buy a home by adopting a Help to Buy equity loans scheme	New Rent to Own homes where your monthly payments steadily buy you a stake in the property
Introduced a new licensing scheme for residents of park homes	New Help to Rent tenancy deposit loans to help young people get into their first place
Developed the Green Deal, to cover the upfront cost of energy-saving improvements such as insulation, draught-proofing and double glazing	Cut Council Tax by £100 for 10 years if you insulate your home, and ban landlords from letting out homes tenants cannot reasonably afford to heat



7.1 Building more and better homes

The Holmans Report published in 2010, provided estimates of current and projected housing need and demand for Wales between 2006 and 2026. The report estimated that 284,000 additional homes are required in Wales between 2006 and 2026, of which 183,000 are market sector and 101,000 are non- market. This equates to an annual average of 14,200 dwellings, of which 5,100 would be non-market properties such as affordable housing units. Against such an assessment of need the Welsh Government's own target of 10,000 new affordable homes in the current Assembly term seems inadequate. When combined with the failure to build enough new private sector homes in Wales, it is clear that we are facing a supply crisis that means that many people are unable to get the home they need. To tackle this problem we need to incentivise new house building and find new sources of capital for social housing providers. We also need to offer more support to small local builders in securing finance and in overcoming barriers they may face to development.

We will set an ambitious target of increasing the rate of house building to 300,000 a year in the UK. Within the first year of the next Parliament in Westminster, we will publish a long-term plan that sets out how this goal will be achieved. Our plans will include:

- ♦ A review of Compulsory Purchase legislation to facilitate site assembly, including for Garden Cities. We will also pilot techniques for capturing the increase in land values from the granting of planning permission, helping to deliver up to ten Garden Cities in England.
- ♦ A government commissioning programme to boost house building towards our 300,000 target; where the market alone fails to deliver sufficient numbers, government agencies will directly commission homes for sale and rent to fill the gap. We are already piloting this direct approach in Cambridgeshire.
- ♦ A new government-backed Housing Investment Bank to provide long-term capital for major new settlements and help attract finance for major house building projects which Welsh Liberal Democrats in the National Assembly will engage with.

7.2 Improving planning

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

- ♦ Improve housing needs assessments to ensure they respond to demand and take account of local factors such as the future of the Welsh language, including through price signals, rather than simply need, and segment more effectively demand from different kinds of household, including high-quality shared accommodation for young people.
- ♦ Make provision so that all areas are planning for the needs of older people with age-appropriate housing. This planning should also ensure that appropriate sized housing units are available in each area for those who wish to downsize their accommodation to one that is a better fit for their needs.
- ♦ Facilitate the replacement of industrial style agricultural buildings with sensitive and appropriately designed housing.

- ♦ Seek to further facilitate the use of space above shops for much needed housing and development of town centre communities.
- ♦ Take a more flexible approach to change of use where retail or business premises may be changed into much needed housing in town centres.
- ♦ Enable Local Authorities to levy up to 200% Council Tax on second homes where they judge this to be appropriate.

7.3 Affordable housing

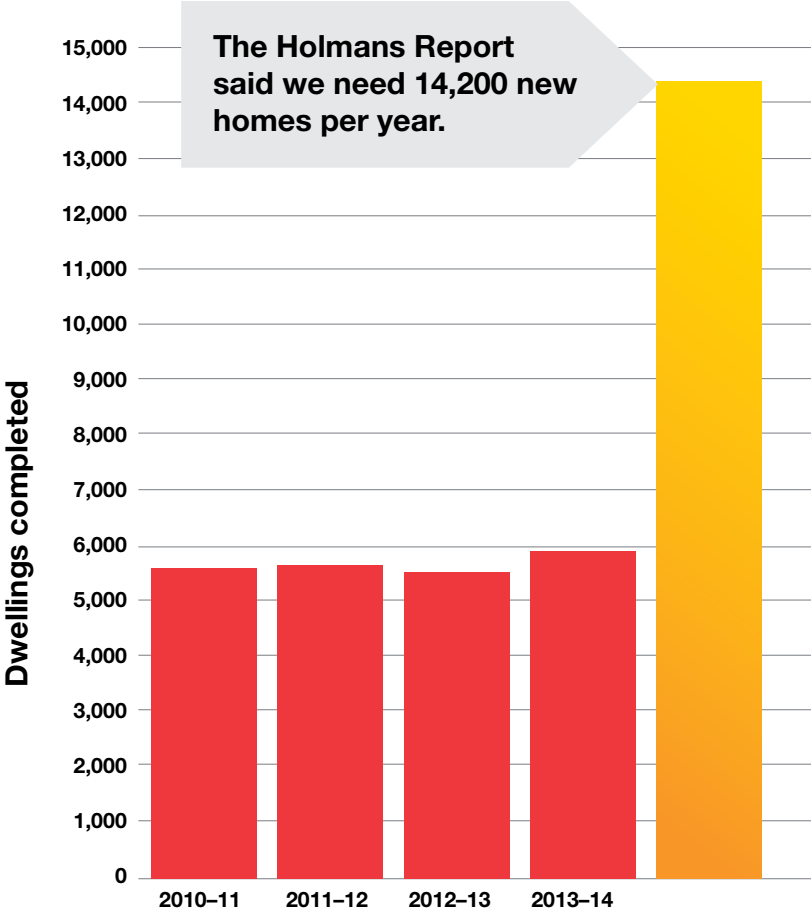
The government has an essential role to play in supporting the development of affordable housing. Fifteen years of Welsh Labour in Government has led to literally thousands of people waiting over a decade for a home. We will enable Local Authorities, Housing Associations and central government alike to build many more homes.

We will:

- ♦ Set targets for the number of affordable homes to be built in Wales during an Assembly term, to be set by Ministers within six months of the Assembly election and reported annually to the National Assembly.
- ♦ Encourage affordable housing providers – both Councils and Housing Associations – to innovate, including using the development of homes for sale or market rent to help subsidise new affordable homes.
- ♦ Have compulsory accessible housing registers and provide advice on building disability friendly homes.
- ♦ Introduce a new Intermediate Housing Fund to fund intermediate housing products, including:
 - ◇ Affordable Rent homes, at up to 80% of local market rent.
 - ◇ A new Rent to Own model where monthly payments steadily accrue the tenant a percentage stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.
 - ◇ New build shared accommodation at the local LHA Shared Accommodation Rate.

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

The homes we need in Wales



The Welsh Labour Government are building well below that

7.4 Protecting private tenants and leaseholders

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

- ♦ Improve enforcement of standards and training of landlords to ensure better housing quality.
- ♦ Stop landlords evicting tenants who make a complaint about essential repairs.
- ♦ Establish a system of redress for private sector tenants.
- ♦ Introduce a new Help to Rent scheme to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for all first time renters under 30.

7.5 Affordable warmth and greener homes

Warming our homes is an essential part of the fight against climate change, and also vital to keep bills affordable. Energy prices in Britain are lower than the EU average but our bills are higher because our homes are so poorly insulated. In 2012, 386,000 homes in Wales were estimated to be in fuel poverty, equivalent to 30 per cent of Welsh households. Fuel poverty lies at the heart of numerous other issues. By lifting people out of fuel poverty, problems with health, housing, education and wellbeing can be improved. It is vital that we tackle this crisis.

In the National Assembly, we will:

- ♦ Tackle fuel poverty by incentivising private sector landlords to insulate homes.
- ♦ Encourage a portion of any community benefit scheme to be set aside to tackle fuel poverty and high energy bills in the community.
- ♦ Create a Resource-efficient Wales tasked with providing advice on all aspects of low-carbon homes, promoting energy saving behaviour and developing local waste messaging.
- ♦ Outlaw the letting of the most inefficient commercial buildings (F and G rated) and move to include E and D rated buildings over time.
- ♦ Introduce incentives to help everyone invest in energy efficiency:



- ◇ A Council Tax reduction of at least £100 for 10 years, when the resident's home has an energy saving improvement of at least two bands.
- ◇ A new Feed Out Tariff for investment in solid wall insulation, the most expensive and difficult energy saving investment for some homes.

In Westminster, we will:

- ◆ Remove exemptions in the Zero Carbon Standard for new homes, increasing the standard steadily and extending it to non-domestic buildings from 2019. We will promote the development of off-site manufacturing techniques, which have been shown to improve energy performance of buildings.
- ◆ Pass a new Green Buildings Act to set new energy efficiency targets, including a long term ambition for every home to reach at least an energy rating of Band C by 2035.
- ◆ Reform the Green Deal 'pay as you save' scheme into a new 'Green Homes Loan Scheme' funding renewable heat and electricity alongside energy efficiency.
- ◆ Boost community energy efficiency by empowering the Green Investment Bank to develop innovative financial products for whole street or district-wide energy efficiency retrofits.
- ◆ Develop a range of targeted, innovative programmes including infrastructure funding where appropriate, such as:
 - ◇ 'Insulation on prescription' to link up the NHS with the fuel poverty agenda.
 - ◇ An 'Off-Gas-Grid Strategy' to help rural areas benefit from new technologies.
 - ◇ Interest-free loans to fund energy efficient home improvements.





Freedom and opportunity

Equal rights for all

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



Liberal Democrats have always been champions of liberty and human rights. As society and technology becomes more complex there is a never-ending struggle to re-assert the principle of individual liberty. Freedom of expression has recently been under renewed attack, and siren voices call for us to sacrifice freedom to gain illusory security. Liberal Democrats reject this false choice: true security for individuals and for our nation must be built on a platform of equal rights and civil liberties.

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

A Record of Delivery	A Promise of More
Scrapped ID cards and blocked the so-called Snooper's Charter that would have monitored everyone's internet use	Protect your privacy by updating data laws for the internet age with a Digital Bill of Rights
Freedoms Act to cut intrusive CCTV, stop fingerprinting children in schools and stop aggressive wheel clamping	A second Freedoms Act to protect free speech, stop heavy-handed policing and ban Mosquito devices that discriminate against young people.
Introduced equal marriage for gay and lesbian couples	Combat homophobic bullying and discrimination, including in schools
Reduced the gender pay gap and increased the number of women on boards	Support a million more women who want to work with better childcare, help with caring responsibilities and action against discrimination
Stopped locking up children of asylum seekers and strengthened rules on police stop and search	Fight discrimination in the criminal justice system and recruit more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic police officers

8.1 Equality and diversity

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

Our Support for

LGBT

1967

Sex between men
decriminalised in
England and Wales

1975

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

1979

Law in Scotland brought
into line with England
and Wales

1988

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

1998

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

2001

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

2008

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

2004

Civil partnerships
introduced

2010

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

2013

Equal Marriage becomes
law on 17th July 2013

2014

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

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

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

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

- ♦ Give legal rights and obligations to cohabiting couples in the event of relationship breakdown or one partner dying without a will.
- ♦ Permit humanist weddings and opposite sex civil partnerships, and liberalise the rules about the location, timing and content of wedding ceremonies.
- ♦ Require all schools in Wales tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination, and to establish a tolerant and inclusive environment for all their pupils. We will remove schools' exemption from the ban on harassment in these areas while protecting the right to teach about religious doctrine.
- ♦ Promote international recognition of same sex marriages and civil partnerships as part of a comprehensive International LGBT Rights Strategy that supports the cause of decriminalising homosexuality in other countries.
- ♦ Seek to pardon all those with historic convictions for consensual homosexual activity between adults.
- ♦ Enhance the experience of all football fans by making homophobic chanting a criminal offence, like racist chanting.
- ♦ Ask the Advisory Committee on Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs periodically to review rules around men who have sex with men donating blood to consider what restrictions remain necessary.

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

- ♦ Build on the Coalition's BAME Access to Finance report to identify ways to encourage more BAME applicants to apply for finance and set up small businesses. We will publish diversity data on government entrepreneurship programmes and seek to achieve fair representation of BAME communities.
- ♦ Encourage businesses to ensure at least one place on their board is filled by a BAME candidate.
- ♦ Monitor and tackle the BAME pay gap.
- ♦ Outlaw caste discrimination.
- ♦ Challenge discrimination in the criminal justice system by:
 - ◇ Improving the safeguards in police stop and search powers in England and Wales with tighter guidance and requiring police to wear body cameras in Section 60 areas, the establishment of which will require judicial sanction.
 - ◇ Boosting police recruitment from BAME groups.
 - ◇ Conducting a full review of the causes of the overrepresentation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.

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

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

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

- ♦ Improve the benefits system for disabled people, based on the principle of one assessment, one budget. This will bring together support like Personal Independence Payment, Employment Support Allowance, a replacement for the Independent Living Fund

and health and social care entitlements. We will implement the proposals set out in the 2015 Green Paper on Learning Disabilities.

- ♦ Ensure disabled people who need an extra room are entitled to one in any assessment of their Housing Benefit needs.
- ♦ Help greater numbers of disabled people work by encouraging employers to shortlist any qualified disabled candidate and providing advice about workplace adaptation.
- ♦ Make it easier to get around by:
 - ◇ Making more stations wheelchair accessible and giving wheelchair users priority over children's buggies when space is limited.
 - ◇ Bringing into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
 - ◇ Improving the legislative framework governing Blue Badges.
 - ◇ Building on our successes in improving wheelchair access to improve accessibility of public transport for people with other disabilities, including visual and auditory impairment.
 - ◇ Setting up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities.
- ♦ Tackle disability hate crime by ensuring proper monitoring of incidents by police forces and other public authorities.
- ♦ Formally recognise British Sign Language as an official language of the United Kingdom.

To ensure the highest standards of non-discrimination in public services we will:

- ♦ Maintain the Public Sector Equality Duty and encourage external providers to the public sector to follow best practice in terms of diversity.
- ♦ Prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion in the provision of public services.
- ♦ Move to 'name blank' recruitment wherever possible in the public sector.
- ♦ Replicate the civil service accelerated programme for underrepresented groups across the public sector
- ♦ Require diversity in Public Appointments. We will introduce a presumption that every shortlist should include a BAME candidate. We will establish an independent committee that will monitor the drive for greater diversity in public appointments and verify the independence of the appointment process to public bodies, boards and institutions.
- ♦ Work to ensure the shift to Digital by Default for public services does not leave people behind, by upholding the highest standards of accessibility in digital services and maintaining government programmes on digital inclusion.

8.2 Freedom of speech and the free press

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.3 Policing and security service powers

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

We will:

- ♦ Devolve powers over youth justice, policing and in the longer term other justice powers to the National Assembly for Wales, in line with the recommendations of the Silk Commission.
- ♦ Ensure proper oversight of the security services.
- ♦ Establish in legislation that the police and intelligence agencies should not obtain data on UK residents from foreign governments that it would not be legal to obtain in the UK under UK law.
- ♦ Back a full judicial enquiry into complicity in torture if the current investigation by the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee investigation fails to get to the truth.
- ♦ End indefinite detention for immigration purposes.
- ♦ Introduce restrictions on the indefinite use of police bail.
- ♦ Require judicial authorisation for the use of undercover police officers to infiltrate alleged criminal groups.
- ♦ Get to the full truth about corrupt practices in parts of the police and the press by ensuring that the Daniel Morgan Panel Inquiry is completed expeditiously and that Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry starts as soon as the criminal prosecutions in the hacking scandal are completed.
- ♦ Identify practical alternatives to the use of closed material procedures within the justice system, including the provisions of the 2013 Justice and Security Act, with the aim of restoring the principle of open justice.



8.4 Securing liberty online

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

We will:

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

8.5 Securing our rights and freedoms in law

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

We will:

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

Our Freedoms Act will:

- ♦ Tighten the regulation of CCTV, with more powers for the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.
- ♦ Extend the rules governing storage of DNA and fingerprints by public authorities to include all biometric data – like facial images.
- ♦ Protect free speech by ensuring insulting words, jokes, and non-intentional acts, are not treated as criminal, and that social media communications are not treated more harshly than other media.
- ♦ Prevent heavy-handed policing of demonstrations by tightly regulating the use of ‘kettling’.
- ♦ Reform joint enterprise laws.
- ♦ Ban high-frequency Mosquito devices which discriminate against young people.
- ♦ Strengthen safeguards to prevent pre-emptive arrests and misuse of pre-charge bail conditions to restrict civil liberties and stifle peaceful protest.
- ♦ End the Ministerial veto on release of information under the Freedom of Information Act.
- ♦ Cut back on the petty over-regulation of everyday life, like removing licensing requirements for leafleting for community events, liberalising the restrictions on songs and readings at wedding ceremonies, and permitting swimming in open bodies of water.

Our Digital Bill of Rights will:

- ♦ Enshrine the principle that everyone has the right to control their own personal data, and that everyone should be able to view, correct, and (where appropriate and proportionate) delete their personal data, wherever it is held.
- ♦ Forbid any public body from collecting, storing or processing personal data without statutory authority, and require any such legislation to be regularly reviewed.
- ♦ Give increased powers and resources for the Information Commissioner and introduce custodial sentences for egregious breaches of the Data Protection Act.
- ♦ Ensure privacy is protected to the same extent in telecoms and online as in the offline world. Public authorities should only invade an individual's privacy where there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or where it is otherwise necessary and proportionate to do so in the public interest, and with appropriate oversight by the courts.
- ♦ Ensure that privacy policies and terms and conditions of online services, including smartphone apps, must be clear, concise, and easy for the user to understand.
- ♦ Uphold the right of individuals, businesses and public bodies to use strong encryption to protect their privacy and security online.
- ♦ Make it clear that online services have a duty to provide age-appropriate policies, guidance and support to the children and young people who use their services.



**HEDDLU
POLICE**

Secure communities

Policing, justice and the border force

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

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



No one can fulfil their potential if they live in fear. By ensuring our laws are upheld, we can build strong communities with opportunity for all.

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

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

9.1 Preventing crime

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

We will:

- ◆ Design out opportunities for crime, by improving the built environment, the design of new technologies, and community resilience.
- ◆ Strengthen the What Works centre within the College of Policing and require HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to scrutinise the use of evidence by local forces in designing their policing plans.

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

9.2 Improving local policing

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

We will:

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

9.3 Improve support for victims of crime

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

We will:

- ♦ Enact a Victims' Bill of Rights.
- ♦ Create a single point of contact for victims to give early access to information and support.
- ♦ Change sentencing guidelines to increase sentences available for hate crimes.
- ♦ Give victims of crime a right to review what progress police have

made to investigate the crime committed against them including cases where the police have declined to investigate.

- ♦ Give victims a right to choose restorative justice.
- ♦ Implement the Modern Slavery Strategy to reduce people trafficking and support victims.

9.4 Tackling violence against women and girls

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

We will:

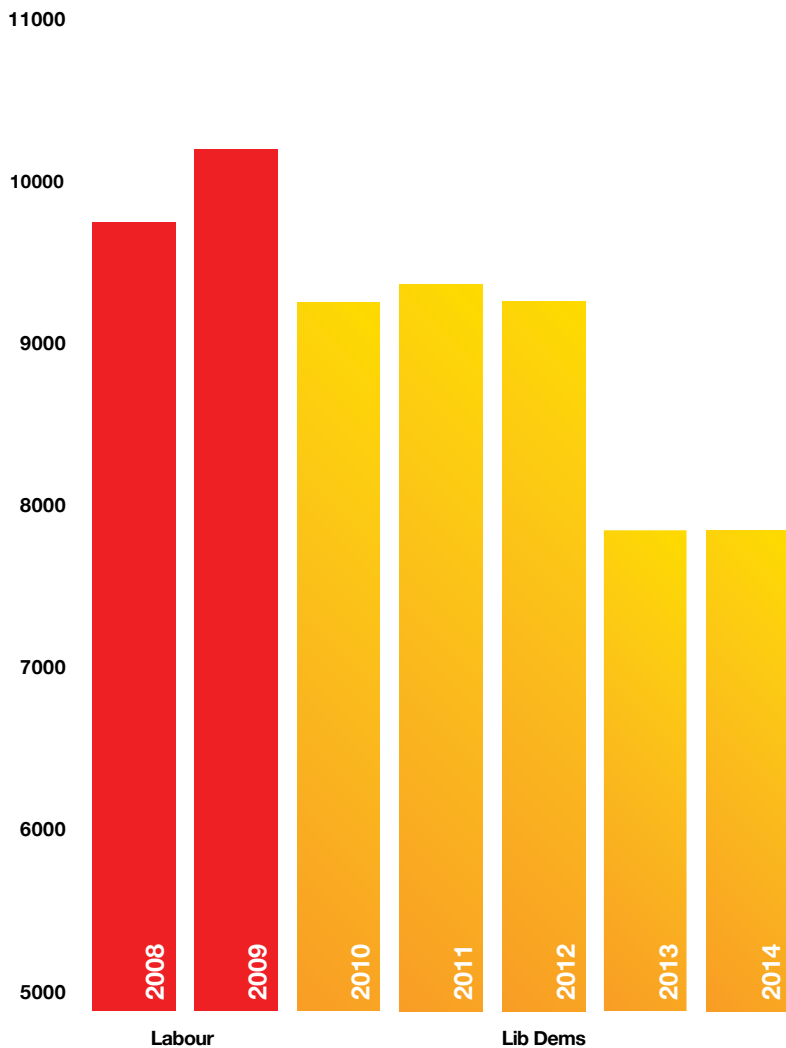
- ♦ Ensure teachers, social workers, police officers and health workers in areas where there is high prevalence of female genital mutilation or forced marriage are trained to help those at risk.
- ♦ Require, through the National Assembly, the teaching of sexual consent in Welsh schools as part of age-appropriate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

9.5 Improving justice and rehabilitating offenders

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

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

Falling crime



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

We will:

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

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

9.6 Ensuring access to justice

Access to justice is an essential part of a free society and a functioning legal system. In this Parliament we have had to make significant savings from the Legal Aid budget, but in the next

Parliament our priority for delivering efficiency in the Ministry of Justice should be prison and court reform, using technology and innovation to reduce costs.

We will:

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

9.7 Tackling terrorism and violent extremism

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

We will:

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

9.8 An effective approach to reducing drug harm

For too long the debate about effective ways to reduce the harm caused by drugs has been distorted by political prejudice. Around the world, countries are trialling new approaches that are reducing drug harm, improving lives, reducing addiction and saving taxpayers' money. In the UK we have made good progress on treatment but we continue to give 80,000 people a year a criminal record for drug possession, blighting their employment chances, and we still imprison 1,000 people a year for personal possession when they are not charged with dealing or any other offence.

We will:

- ♦ Adopt the approach used in Portugal where those arrested for possession of drugs for personal use are diverted into treatment, education or civil penalties that do not attract a criminal record.
- ♦ As a first step towards reforming the system, legislate to end the use of imprisonment for possession of drugs for personal use, diverting resources towards tackling organised drug crime instead.
- ♦ Continue to apply severe penalties to those who manufacture,

import or deal in illegal drugs, and clamp down on those who produce and sell unregulated chemical highs.

- ♦ Establish a review to assess the effectiveness of the cannabis legalisation experiments in the United States and Uruguay in relation to public health and criminal activity.
- ♦ Legislate to make the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs independent in setting the classification of drugs, while remaining accountable to Parliament and the wider public.
- ♦ Enable doctors to prescribe cannabis for medicinal use.
- ♦ Put the Department of Health rather than the Home Office in charge of drug policy.

9.9 Restoring confidence in our borders

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

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

We will:

- ♦ Complete the restoration of full entry and exit checks at our borders, to rebuild confidence in immigration control, and allow targeting of resources at those who overstay their visas.
- ♦ Speed up the processing of asylum claims, reducing the time genuine refugees have to wait before they can settle into life in the UK and making it easier to remove those who do not have a right to be here. We will require working-age asylum seekers who have waited more than six months for their claim to be processed to seek work like other benefit claimants, and only to receive benefits if they are unable to do so. We will end the use of the 'Azure Card' for administering benefits in the asylum system.
- ♦ Double the number of inspections on employers to ensure all statutory employment legislation is being respected.
- ♦ Separate students within official immigration statistics, while taking tough action against any educational institution that allows abuse of the student route into the UK.
- ♦ Present to Parliament an annual assessment of skill and labour market shortfalls and surpluses and their impact on the economy, public services and local communities, together with an audit

report on the migration control system, allowing full Parliamentary oversight of Britain's migration policies.

- ♦ Continue requirements for all new claimants for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to have their English or Welsh language skills assessed, with JSA then being conditional on attending language courses for those whose English or Welsh is poor.





Power to the people

Devolution, democracy and citizenship

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



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

Liberal Democrats have made a good start on modernising and decentralising the state. We have taken away the Prime Minister's power to call elections. We have improved Parliament with more powers for backbenchers and more internal democracy. We have devolved power to councils and communities. We have delivered the Wales Act 2014, transferring tax-varying powers to Wales for the first time. We have supported employee democracy and the mutuals movement.

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

A Record of Delivery

A Promise of More

Passed a Lobbying Act to introduce a register of consultant lobbyists and curb the influence of special interest money in elections

Get big money out of politics with a £10,000 cap on donations as part of wider funding reform

Fixed term Parliaments, taking away a Prime Minister's power to call elections when it suits their own party

Better democracy with a fair voting system in local government and at Westminster and votes at 16

A new Wales Act, delivering tax-varying powers to Wales for the first time

Deliver a raft of new powers for Wales

10.1 Better politics

Unfair votes, over-centralisation of decision-making, the power of patronage and the influence of powerful corporate lobbies mean ordinary citizens and local communities are too often excluded and side-lined in politics today. We need to reform British politics to make it more representative, more empowering of our citizens, and commanding greater public confidence.

We will:

- ♦ Take big money out of politics by capping donations to political parties at £10,000 per person each year, and introducing wider reforms to party funding along the lines of the 2011 report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, funded from savings from existing government spending on politics.
- ♦ Protect the rights of trade union members to have their subscriptions, including political levies, deducted from their salary, and strengthen members' political freedoms by letting them choose which political party they wish to support through such automatic payments. We will encourage wider participation in trade union ballots through electronic voting.
- ♦ Introduce votes at age 16 for elections and referendums across the UK, and make it easier to register to vote in schools and colleges.

- ♦ Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate, starting from the proposals in the 2012 Bill.
- ♦ Reform our voting systems for elections to local government and Westminster to ensure more proportional representation. We will introduce the Single Transferable Vote for local government elections in Wales and for electing MPs across the UK. We will reduce the number of MPs but only as part of the introduction of a reformed, fair, voting system.
- ♦ Cancel the boundary review due to report in 2018. While new constituencies would need to be established for a new voting system, we believe constituency boundary reviews should respect natural geographical communities, with greater flexibility for the Boundary Commission to deviate from exact equality to take account of community ties and continuity of representation.
- ♦ Explore options to strengthen and simplify the voting rights of UK citizens living abroad and address disenfranchisement experienced by some.
- ♦ Work with the broadcasters to formalise the process for Leaders' Debates in General Elections, helping ensure they happen and setting a clear threshold for those eligible to participate.
- ♦ Strengthen and expand the lobbying register and prohibit MPs from accepting paid lobbying work. We will consider carefully the work of the independent reviewer into the impact of third party spending regulations to ensure the right balance has been struck. We will also remove the discrimination against third parties by requiring political parties to include the cost of staffing in their national expense limits in the same way as third parties now do.

To reform Parliament in particular we will:

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

10.2 A decentralised United Kingdom with Home Rule for Wales

Liberal Democrats have a proud record of leading the way on giving greater powers to the nations of the UK. Liberal Democrat Ministers led the 2014 Wales Act through Parliament, transferring Wales' first tax powers. Now we need to go further. We need to implement the Smith Commission proposals for Scotland in full, and deliver Home Rule for Scotland. In Northern Ireland, we wish to see a permanently peaceful, stable, non-sectarian and truly democratic society. In England, we will introduce 'Devolution on Demand', enabling greater devolution of powers to councils or groups of councils.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats have always supported more devolution to Wales – without Liberal Democrats in Government the Silk Commission would never have been established. We endorse the recent St. David's Day announcement and will implement it in full, devolving powers over energy, ports, local elections, broadcasting and more, and implementing a reserved powers model.

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

- ♦ Implementing the remaining Silk Part 1 proposals on financial powers for Wales. We will consider the work of the Government's review on devolution of Air Passenger Duty (APD), with a view to devolving long haul APD.
- ♦ Implementing the Silk Part 2 proposals by:
 - ◇ Transferring powers from the UK Parliament to the National Assembly over S4C, sewerage, transport, teachers' pay, youth justice, policing and in the longer term other justice powers.
 - ◇ Devolving funding of Network Rail in relation to the Wales network,
 - ◇ Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly to scrutinise legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account.
- ♦ Allowing the Welsh Government to set its own bank holidays.
- ♦ Providing for a Welsh Parliament, preventing Westminster from being able to override Wales on devolved matters, and devolving the power to amend electoral arrangements for the Assembly and local elections in Wales with a two thirds majority.
- ♦ Giving the Children's Commissioner for Wales the power to examine issues that affect children in Wales but are not within the control of the Welsh Government.

We will deliver Home Rule to each of the nations of a strong, federal United Kingdom by transferring power to control a range of benefits for older people, carers and disabled people; manage the Crown Estate's economic assets; and borrow for investment. We will seek to increase the borrowing powers for Wales to be proportional with Scotland, by increasing the capital borrowing limit from £500 million to around £1 billion.

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

Constitutional change has taken place rapidly. We now need to make sure all the new arrangements work together coherently and we will therefore establish a UK Constitutional Convention, made up from representatives of the political parties, academia, civic society and members of the public, tasked with producing a full written constitution for the UK, to report within two years.

Funding

The nations of the United Kingdom have long had different needs with regard to funding. The Barnett Formula is the mechanism used to adjust spending allocations across the UK.

The Liberal Democrats have already delivered a substantial extension of financial powers to the nations of the UK and we will devolve further fiscal powers to the devolved governments. In order to ensure reliable funding, we will retain the Barnett Formula as the basis for future spending allocations for Scotland and Northern Ireland. This will protect the individual nations' budgets from external shocks like the recent global drop in the price of oil. We recognise the findings of the Holtham Commission that the current formula underfunds Wales and will commission work to update this analysis. We will address the imbalance by immediately entrenching a Barnett floor set at a level that reflects the need for Wales to be funded fairly, and seek over a Parliament to increase the Welsh block grant to an equitable level.

10.3 Everyday democracy

To lead a fulfilled life, people need power over more than just their government. Liberal Democrats will spread democracy in everyday life by encouraging mutuals, cooperatives, and employee participation and by increasing the opportunities for people to take democratic control over the services on which they rely.

We will encourage citizens to engage in practical social action, seeing government as an enabler and facilitator rather than just a commissioner and provider of services.

We will:

- ♦ Encourage employers to promote employee participation and employee ownership, aiming to increase further the proportion of GDP in employee-owned businesses. We will change company law to permit a German-style two-tier board structure to include employees.
- ♦ Introduce mandatory arbitration for strikes likely to cause widespread public disruption, enabling us to defend workers' rights to strike while ensuring continued service in essential public services.
- ♦ Strengthen worker participation in decision-making, including staff representation on remuneration committees, and the right for employees who collectively own 5% of a company to be represented on the board.
- ♦ Give football fans a greater say in how their clubs are run by encouraging the reform of football governance rules to promote engagement between clubs and supporters
- ♦ Spread mutual structures and employee participation through the public sector.
- ♦ Strengthen community rights to run local services and protect community assets by bringing forward, through the Assembly, a Community Right to Buy in Wales.
- ♦ Support social investment in Wales, ensuring charities and social enterprises can access the support and finance they need to develop and deliver innovative, sustainable solutions to challenges in their communities.

10.4 Protecting the space for democratic debate

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

We will:

- ♦ Give lead responsibility to Ofcom and enable it to conduct reviews periodically, as well as when triggered by proposed

Reforming the House of Lords



789

The current size of the House of Lords

450

Under Liberal Democrat reforms

mergers and acquisitions, and enable Ofcom to set down conditions to prevent the reach of any media company damaging the public interest.

- ♦ Ensure any conditions or requirements that Ofcom lays down following a plurality review can only be vetoed or interfered with by a Minister after a vote of both Houses of Parliament.
- ♦ Use a variety of measures to ensure that there is a vibrant local and ‘hyperlocal’ media to help inform citizens about their local area and their local politics, including:
 - ◇ Redirecting the current subsidies for ‘local TV’, which have failed to contribute significantly to cultural life.
 - ◇ Extending Ofcom’s community radio grant support to online hyperlocals, and allowing non-profit local media outlets to obtain charitable status where the public interest is being served.



Britain in the world

Global action for security and prosperity

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



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

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

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

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

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

11.1 Working for peace and security across the world

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

The UK has a proud record of playing a leading role in the European Union and in international institutions like the UN, NATO and the Commonwealth and should continue to do so, wherever possible promoting our values of freedom and opportunity for all.

We will:

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

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

In response to current major conflicts worldwide, we will:

- ♦ Promote democracy and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring countries against an increasingly assertive Russia. We will work closely with EU and other international partners to exert maximum economic and political pressure on Russia to stop interfering in the affairs of sovereign Eastern European nations, and will stand by our obligations under the NATO treaty in the event of threats to NATO member states. We will work with the EU to develop an EU energy strategy that will reduce reliance on Russia’s energy supplies.
- ♦ Continue to work with international partners – Western, African and Arab – to tackle Islamic fanaticism embodied by organisations like the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria and Boko Haram in Nigeria. These extremist organisations pervert Islam and carry out appalling atrocities against Muslims as well

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

- ◆ Recognising that airstrikes alone will not defeat IS, continue a comprehensive approach, in compliance with international law, to supporting the Iraqi government in standing against IS, including:
 - ◇ Assistance in strengthening its democratic institutions.
 - ◇ Training the Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters.
 - ◇ Humanitarian relief to help alleviate the suffering of displaced Syrians and Iraqis.
- ◆ Support the moderate opposition in Syria, who are fighting both President Bashar al-Assad and IS. We will continue to push for an inclusive political transition in Syria, which would enable Syrian moderates from all sides to unite against extremism and tyranny.
- ◆ Remain committed to a negotiated peace settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes a two-state solution. We condemn disproportionate force used by all sides. We condemn Hamas' rocket attacks and other targeting of Israeli civilians. We condemn Israel's continued illegal policy of settlement expansion, which undermines the possibility of a two-state solution. We support recognition of the independent State of Palestine as and when it will help the prospect of a two-state solution.
- ◆ Support multilateral negotiations to stop Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. We will continue to seek normalisation of our diplomatic relations with Iran, including reopening the British Embassy in Tehran and promoting peaceful dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

11.2 Our armed forces and security services

The UK must be able to defend itself and the territories for which it has responsibility, support its neighbours and allies, and engage in humanitarian intervention. Many of the security challenges the UK faces are shared by our partners and allies in the EU and NATO and the UK is more effective and more resilient when we work closely with those partners.

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

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

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

Liberal Democrats recognise the vital role the UK's armed forces play in the defence of the nation and believe that it is the role of government to safeguard the interests of service personnel and veterans. We strongly support the Armed Forces Covenant, now enshrined in the 2011 Armed Forces Act. We also propose:

- ♦ Transferring the Office of the Veterans' Minister to the Cabinet Office, so that the services of all departments can be marshalled in support of veterans and creating a post of Veterans' Commissioner.
- ♦ Improving support for personnel and veterans with mental health problems, including alcohol dependency.
- ♦ Strengthening local military covenants by defining more exacting guidelines and ensuring best practice is rolled out across all Local Authorities.

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

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

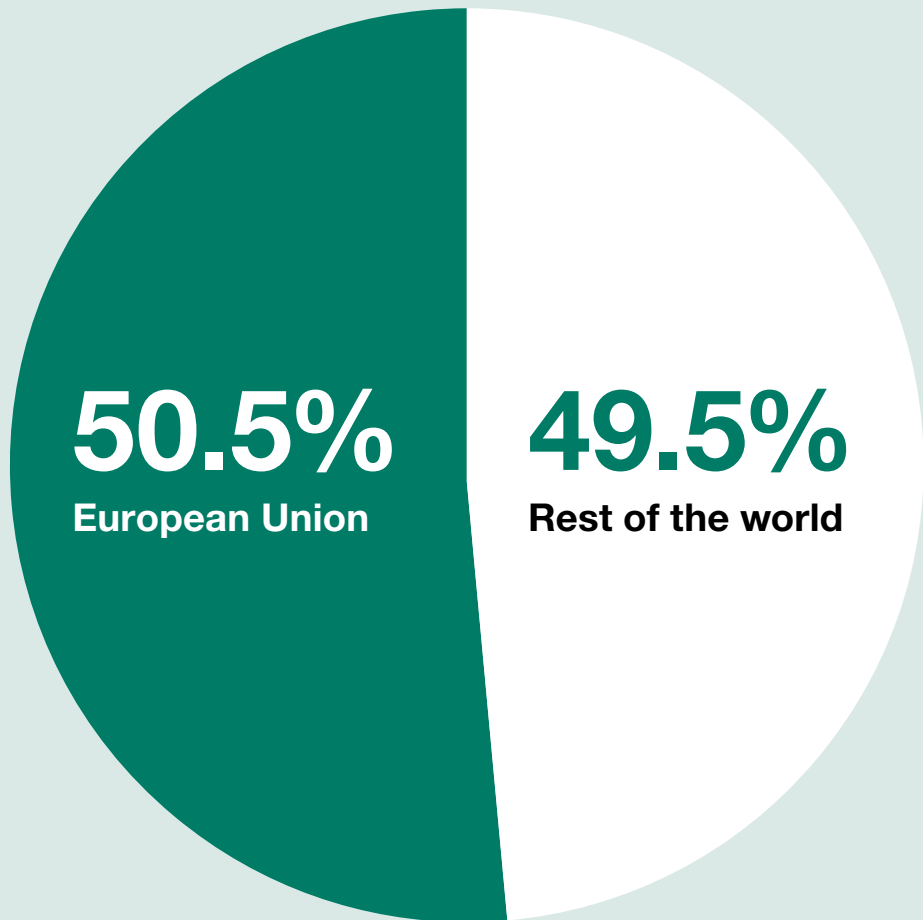
11.3 Britain in Europe: prosperity and reform.

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

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

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

British Exports



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

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

We will:

- ♦ Work to deepen the EU single market in the energy sector, in the digital economy and for services. We will boost British exports by scrapping national barriers to British firms trading online and by concluding ambitious EU trade agreements with key markets like Japan and India. We will implement the recommendations made by Michael Moore MP, in October 2015, including publishing an annual European Business White Paper and appointing an EU Business Minister to lead this competitiveness agenda.
- ♦ Support negotiations at the World Trade Organisation as well as an ambitious Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the USA, which could bring benefits of up to £10 billion a year to the British economy. We will only support an agreement that upholds EU standards of consumer, employee and environmental protection, and allows us to determine how NHS services are provided.
- ♦ Work to reform the EU to make it more efficient, reducing the proportion of the EU budget spent on the Common Agricultural Policy, abolishing unnecessary EU institutions like the European Economic and Social Committee and scrapping the second seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.
- ♦ Continue to reduce the burden of EU legislation on business by curbing unnecessary red tape, exempting small businesses from EU rules where possible and defending the UK opt-out to the Working Time Directive.
- ♦ Increase the accountability of the EU by enhancing the role of national Parliaments in scrutinising EU decision-making and by giving a combined majority of national Parliaments the automatic ability to block unwanted legislation. We will strengthen UK scrutiny of European legislation and positions taken by British Ministers in Europe including by proposing an explicit role for British Parliamentary Select Committees.
- ♦ Hold an In/Out referendum when there is next any Treaty change involving a material transfer of sovereignty from the UK to the EU. Liberal Democrats will campaign for the UK to remain in the European Union when that referendum comes.
- ♦ Reinforce the EU's tools for tackling cross border crime,

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

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

11.4 International development

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

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



We will:

- ◆ Develop a whole government approach to development.
- ◆ Continue to promote private sector economic development, ensuring this benefits local people and small businesses not just multinational corporations. We will lead international action to ensure global companies pay fair taxes in the developing countries in which they operate, including tightening anti-tax haven rules and requiring large companies to publish their tax payments and profits for each country in which they operate.
- ◆ Maintain our commitment to spend 0.7% of UK Gross National Income on Overseas Development Assistance, which the International Development Act 2015, introduced by a Liberal Democrat, now enshrines in law. We will adhere to the OECD's definition of what activities qualify.
- ◆ Conduct a full Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Review to ensure Department for International Development continues to work in the right places and through the right channels.
- ◆ Continue building the resilience of poorer countries to resist future disasters, investing in healthcare and infrastructure and training emergency response volunteers, and responding generously to humanitarian crises wherever they may occur.
- ◆ Work to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals aim to:
 - ◇ Safeguard the sustainability of the planet.
 - ◇ Leave no one behind, helping the most vulnerable as well as improving average living standards. We will ensure people do not suffer discrimination or disadvantage because of gender, sexual orientation, disability or ethnic

origin.

◇ Eliminate absolute poverty by 2030.

- ◆ Invest to eliminate within a generation preventable diseases like TB, HIV and malaria and explore new ways to support public and private research and development into treatment for these and other deadly diseases and infections.
- ◆ Create a new civil society partnership scheme to build links between peoples in rich and poor countries, including partnerships between communities, trades unions or emergency services.

11.5 International action on the environment

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

We will:

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

investment, including maintaining the UK's International Climate Fund and supporting direct bilateral programmes with developing countries on climate change.

- ♦ Create a 1 million square kilometre southern Atlantic Ocean reserve.
- ♦ Push for the creation of a marine nature reserve in the Arctic Ocean, promote the highest possible environmental standards for UK companies operating in the region and press for a ban on EU-flagged vessels undertaking industrial fishing in the previously unfished areas of the Arctic.

11.6 Standing up for Liberal values

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

- ♦ Continue to support free media and a free and open Internet around the world, championing the free flow of information.
- ♦ Maintain funding to BBC World Service, BBC Monitoring and the British Council.
- ♦ Develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting the decriminalisation of homosexuality around the world, and advancing the cause of LGBT+ rights.
- ♦ Prioritise support, protection and equal rights for women and girls, which is essential for effective, sustainable economic development. We will pursue an International Gender Equality Strategy, work to secure women's rights to education and freedom from forced marriage; and aim to end female genital mutilation worldwide within a generation.
- ♦ Extend existing reporting rules to establish consistent requirements on all large UK companies to report on the social, environmental and human rights impacts of their activities and those of their supply chains.

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



Welsh Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015

Welsh Liberal Democrats have championed the devolution of powers from Westminster to the National Assembly for Wales. Many decisions made in Westminster, such as those concerning health, education and local government, now affect England only. So, policies in Wales are increasingly different from those in England - reflecting different choices, priorities and circumstances.

This manifesto sets out the policies and plans for which the Welsh Lib Dems seek your support at this election. We explain Liberal Democrat policies and priorities set in Westminster for the whole of the UK or for England and Wales and also include priorities which our party is seeking to carry forward in the National Assembly for Wales. In this manifesto we aim to make clear what is a Westminster matter and what is decided in the National Assembly. Our manifesto for the 2016 National Assembly elections will build on these policies in the devolved areas. Our Federal party and the Scottish party produce manifestos for use in England and in Scotland respectively. Our sister party, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, makes its own policy on devolved issues in Northern Ireland.

This Manifesto can be found in alternative formats at our address:
www.welshlibdems.org.uk/manifesto2015

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