



Fix the Met. Fix London.

London Liberal Democrats
Manifesto 2024

Introduction

Nowhere, at any point in human history, has achieved quite what London achieves today.

No other city in the world successfully attracts people from around the world, and has them living together, and loving each other, like London.

Growing up I would play in the street with my neighbours - no matter where they were from - whether they were refugees from Vietnam, or immigrants from Spain.

Working here as an adult I met people from all around the world, without ever needing to leave home. Our diversity is our greatest strength.

But far too many people are scared to walk the streets in London. Far too many people struggle to just get by, whether it's high rents or the problems caused when a tube breaks down.

Our Mayor is good at talking. But on the big issues that matter to Londoners, he's let us down.

London can do better.

We can fix the Metropolitan Police - by focussing resources on the most

serious crimes, and cancelling the Mayor's election year gimmicks.

We can tackle climate change and sewage in rivers, and get solar panels on thousands more roofs.

We can keep London welcoming for its European citizens through a London passport.

We can build a transport system that works - investing in new tube lines and keeping it reliable by running it responsibly - rather than the Mayor's funding boom and bust.

We can build more housing - so that rents come down from their absurd heights.

We can do all of this, and so much more, with a strong Liberal Democrat team in City Hall and me as your Liberal Democrat Mayor.

Back the Liberal Democrats this time and together, we will change London for the better.

Rob

Rob Blackie

*Liberal Democrat Candidate
for Mayor of London*





Chapter One

Fix the Met.

Our plan to restore trust in London's police and tackle crime in the capital.

Nobody can live happily if they feel unsafe at home or when they are out. Yet sadly too many Londoners feel that crime is getting worse and that the police are failing them.

One number sums up the collapse in the Metropolitan Police under the Mayor's leadership: the number of rapes and sexual assaults that are cleared up has halved since 2016. **As Mayor Rob's top priority will be to double the number of sexual predators we catch.**

We can only fix the Met with a clear focus on what matters to Londoners. That means better local policing and rebuilding trust. It also means that politicians stop wasting police time so they can focus on preventing and solving the crimes that matter.

We will make sure that community policing is re-established in London by ensuring police are based closer to the communities they serve and spending more of their time locally, with bases in places like shopping centres and libraries, and by stopping police station closures.

We will finance these priorities by reversing the Mayor of London's phoney election year partial fares freeze (except for bus fares). The partial freeze mainly benefits tourists instead of Londoners. We will also raise extra funds through the introduction of a voluntary Tourist Tax.

We will make sure that police time is being used effectively, and strengthen the service, by:

- Employing more police staff to free up the thousands of officers that the Commissioner currently says are stuck doing back office duties.
- Reducing time spent on paperwork allowing more time to be spent solving crimes by accelerating the adoption of new technologies - for instance better remote access to digital forensics.
- Supporting the Commissioner in lowering the priority given to investigating the possession of laughing gas or cannabis.
- Launching a campaign to recruit 500 additional Special Constables through the Employer Supported Policing Programme.

We will restore trust in policing and support the victims of crime in London by:

- Ensuring more rapes and sexual assaults are investigated effectively - with more officers freed up from back-office duties.

A photograph of Rob Blackie, a man with glasses and a grey jacket, walking outdoors with three Metropolitan Police officers. The officers are wearing traditional British police uniforms, including custodian helmets and high-visibility vests. They are standing on a city street with a Tesco Express van and a building in the background. A text box is overlaid on the image.

Rob Blackie has made fixing the Metropolitan Police the central priority of his campaign for Mayor of London. **Rob will restore trust in policing across the capital.**

London's transport network is in a mess. Trains break down, there's been a failure to build new lines and bus services have been cut.

This is because Transport for London is run for short-term political gain, by both the Conservatives in government and Labour's London Mayor. The funding boom and bust means that it's impossible to plan for the longer term

That's why Rob will reverse the Mayor's phoney fares freeze. It only really benefits tourists and the well-off, and at the same time he's cut 22 million miles of bus routes.

Instead we will aim for steady Transport for London funding - that allows us to partner with the national government to get the investment we need for long term improvements like new and improved tube lines, better buses and new cycle lanes.

We will make transport more accessible, and safe, in London by:

- Making more stations step free by 2030.
- Ensuring that the Old Oak Common station is fully step free with level boarding throughout.
- Running a trial to make buses hail-and-ride after 10pm, allowing you to flag down the next bus, even if you're not at a stop, improving safety.
- Supporting public awareness campaigns for anyone buying a battery online about the dangers of adapting them to your bike.

We will expand transport coverage in London by:

- Working to extend the London transport network wherever possible - underpinned by a responsible approach to Transport for London's finances, which will allow us to borrow responsibly and negotiate with national government for more support.
- Increasing the number of green river crossings in the East of London, including restoring the Woolwich Ferry to a full and reliable service.
- Working to bring the London Overground to Sutton and exploring extending the South East Overground to London Bridge.
- Expanding upon the Superloop scheme - particularly focused on reaching further into outer London boroughs.
- Launching a review into the quality of service offered by low-frequency bus routes, many of which fail to leave on time.

- Developing a new Transport Plan for Outer London – to speed up our transition to lower carbon transport.
- Keeping the current travel concessions including the 60+ card and the Freedom Pass and looking to extend their hours back to the 24 hours a day.
- Exploring the option of running “replacement” night buses on routes where there are no night tube services.
- Pressuring the government and working with the wider public and private sector to ensure HS2 goes to Euston.
- Campaigning to ensure that new rail timetables are focused on passenger needs rather than the interests of the rail operating company, particularly focused on reversing recent cuts to train services.

We will promote cycling and walking options by:

- Running a pilot scheme to make the Santander cycle hire scheme free to use every Sunday.
- Working to ensure that London has a significantly larger integrated and connected cycle network across boroughs, particularly focussed on gaps in the network.
- Working towards the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and the partial pedestrianisation of Parliament Square.

We will manage London's transport infrastructure effectively by:

- Continuing to lead the way in opposing the construction of Sadiq Khan's Silvertown motorway. With the tunnel set to be completed in 2025 we will now work to mitigate its impacts. It's unfair to force those who will bear the tunnel's environmental cost to fund its construction and so we will offer a significant discount for the Silvertown and Blackwall tolls for Greenwich, Newham and Tower Hamlets residents, and work to create new bus routes through the tunnel.
- Getting Hammersmith Bridge back to full operational status. We will keep up the pressure on the government and Hammersmith and Fulham Council, by demanding that the Department for Transport concludes its review of the business case for the repairs, and releases funds for the second stage of the works immediately
- Opposing extensions to London airports, and working to reverse the recent increase in night flights at Heathrow.

- Amending the ULEZ scrappage scheme to allow retrospective applications for funding, and exploring options for providing finance to tradespeople who struggle to replace their vehicles.
- Holding an international innovation competition on eliminating tube noise using the private sector and research institutions to help tackle the problem and getting London to lead.



Chapter Three

Housing.

Our plan to build more housing, support renters and tackle the housing crisis.

Londoners are experiencing a housing crisis.

Rents are soaring and far too many people are stuck in bad housing.

We will fix this by building more affordable homes and ensuring the vital, private rental sector provides healthy, safe homes.

We will ensure we build the homes Londoners need by:

- Creating a London-wide Housing development company.
- Working to release more land owned by Transport for London and other bodies.
- Pressuring the government for ambitious homebuilding targets - and to provide funding and support to deliver significantly more homes than in the current London plan. We will reopen the London Plan and work to ensure that London boroughs have local plans which are compatible with it. We will look to simplify the conditions of the London Plan to make it easier to accelerate home building.

We will support renters and promote safer, greener housing in London by:

- Establishing a "Good Developer" accreditation scheme - awarded to developers that engage properly with local communities and deliver good quality projects in line with the community's expectations.
- Establishing a fund to provide legal support for tenants, social or private, who are in substandard housing so that they can put pressure on their landlords more effectively. We will provide expert support to local authorities to enforce private rented sector legislation.
- Pressuring national government to abolish residential leasehold.
- Pledging only to work with those developers who commit to take immediate remedial action on building safety issues. We would seek to ban developers from access to housing contracts if they have failed to take action on building safety defects. Further we would seek to remove companies from the Mayor's list of approved contractors that have failed to appropriately fulfill national government contracts.

- Establishing a fire safety victims' support line.
- Prioritising apprenticeships and training to retrofit for warm homes - saving money and tackling climate change.
- Working with London's local authorities to increase the number of brownfield sites allocated for development, particularly near transport hubs. We will start by updating the Brownfield land register.



Liberal Democrat-run Sutton Council has led the way in building the homes Londoners need. Our plan for a London-wide Housing development company will bring this ambition to the whole city.



Environment.

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We're falling behind in London - with the Mayor set to miss his climate change targets by up to 10 years. And nationally the government has failed to stop sewage being dumped in rivers.

The good news is that new technologies, like electric cars and solar panels, are ready today, helping us to achieve cleaner air and to tackle climate change.

Rob will prioritise more solar on London's roofs, more electric vehicle charging points, and keeping our rivers clean.

- Develop a London Renewable energy scheme, where Londoners are paid up to £500 to install solar panels, paid back by allowing London government to sell this electricity back to the grid.
- Use the London Plan to encourage local authorities to extend permitted development rights so that it is easier to install heat pumps, insulation and solar.
- Call for a new tax on private plane and helicopter flights using London airspace, to help fund public transport. A 'Rishi Sunak tax'.
- Boost tree planting with a focus on protecting mature trees that have the best contribution to biodiversity, and trees that are most effective at countering climate change.
- Protect and enlarge London's wetlands.
- Offer pointless patches of grass owned by London government to local people as allotment space.
- Run a public awareness campaign on the dangers of woodburning.
- Lobby government and water companies to stop sewage dumping into our rivers and impose greater oversight on sewage dumping through monitoring.



Economy & Culture.

London's economy and culture bring people from all over the world to live, play and work. But in recent years with Brexit and Covid, businesses and cultural organisations have been suffering. We will work with business to make sure that London's economic success is open to everybody, and we will keep London fun.

- Pilot a London Apprenticeships Hub to offer technical support to businesses to help unlock more apprenticeships and create a platform for young Londoners to find those opportunities for skills training and work.
- Ensure that all City Hall apprenticeships are competitive so that they are available to Londoners of all social backgrounds, not just the well connected.
- Work with the hospitality and events industry to review what will boost the night time economy and make London a truly 24/7 city.
- Support bids for major sporting events, following the success of Major League Baseball, including the women's world cup, and we will work to bring Eurovision to London if the UK wins.
- Support Pride events such as UK Black Pride and Pride in London, as well as local and community Pride events (e.g. Black Pride, Trans Pride and Croydon Pride)
- Campaign to secure visa-free travel for touring artists across Europe and an extension of the Youth Mobility Scheme to make it easier for young Londoners to work in the EU and vice versa.
- Boost London's startup tech companies by working to make the Postcode Address file free.
- Campaign for greater devolution including fiscal devolution to London.
- Support London being first in the queue to trial a Guaranteed Basic Income.
- Tackle poverty by pressing the government to end the two-child limit and the benefit cap, which disproportionately affects London families.
- Pilot a London Erasmus-style programme for young people across the capital.
- Continue to make the case to the government to fix our broken relationship with Europe, forge a new partnership built on cooperation, not confrontation, and move to conclude a new comprehensive agreement which removes as many barriers to trade as possible - with the aim of eventually applying to join the Single Market and Customs Union.



Chapter Six

People & Democracy.

Our plan to ensure London stays open to the world and strengthen London's governance.

London's reputation as a welcoming melting pot of people and cultures has been let down by backwards-facing Conservatives in government and an ineffective Mayor.

We will ensure that London stays welcoming, and that our democratic institutions are strengthened.

We will ensure London stays open to the world, and maintains its welcoming reputation, by:

- Introducing a "London Passport" to help EU citizens by providing legal support for their right to remain in the UK.
- Pushing the government to lift the ban on asylum seekers working if they have been waiting for a decision for more than three months, enabling them to support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute through taxation.
- Making London a City of Sanctuary.

We will make sure that the health of all Londoners is put at the heart of our policy by:

- Introducing the Mayor's first ever London Wellbeing Strategy.
- Working with borough councils to improve sex and relationship education in schools, including educating boys about respect, consent and healthy relationships.
- Continuing to provide free school meals for primary school children.

We will strengthen effective government in London and protect our city's democracy by:

- Lobbying to reverse the Conservatives' regressive switch to First-Past-the-Post for mayoral elections, and bring in proportional representation by Single Transferable Vote for all other elections.
- Ensuring Deputy Mayors are appointed on basis of skills for the job, not political party.
- Strengthening the powers of the London Assembly.

A portrait of Rob, a man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt and a grey blazer. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred cityscape.

Rob's story.

Rob, 50, is a lifelong Londoner and lives with his wife Tam and their two children in Herne Hill.

He runs a business advising start-up tech companies, working on challenges from tackling climate change to accelerating cancer treatments.

Rob recently celebrated the all-clear from cancer himself after the removal of a cancerous kidney.

A long-standing Lib Dem, Rob has campaigned in every London borough - and now has his sights set on leading the whole city. During the Iraq War, he was a key advisor to Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy.

Rob founded the award-winning *Breaking Putin's Censorship* campaign fighting Russian propaganda about the war in Ukraine. More than 400 million digital ads have now given independent news to people in Russia.

A passionate environmentalist, Rob spent two years working on elephant conservation projects and climate change with the Namibian government. He now wants to green London with clean rivers and solar panels on every roof.

He was inspired to stand for mayor after a police officer told Baroness Casey that conviction rates for sex offences and rape had fallen so low that 'it may as well be legal' in London. Fixing the Met is his top priority.

In 2003 his neck was broken when he was attacked in Vauxhall. Surgeons later gave him a titanium neck, which led to the press dubbing him the 'bionic man'.

In his spare time, Rob loves watching live bands and meeting friends down the pub. He keeps himself fit with kickboxing videos from Pop Sugar and Joe Wicks.



“The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.”

Preamble to the constitution of the Liberal Democrats

This manifesto sets out the policies and priorities of the Liberal Democrats standing for election to the Greater London Authority (GLA) in the elections taking place on 2nd May 2024.

The Liberal Democrats are a federal political party made up of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and the Liberal Democrats in England. The Party in England is itself a federation of 11 regional parties, with the London Liberal Democrats being one such regional party, the one covering an area coterminous with Greater London.

UK-wide and England-specific party policy is made by the federal Liberal Democrats via its Federal Policy Committee and biannual Federal Conference. Policy for Greater London, including the policies detailed in this manifesto, is the preserve of the London Liberal Democrats. This manifesto was drafted over several months with input from both candidates for and members of the London Liberal Democrats, the Campaigns Department of the federal Liberal Democrats, members and leaders of recognised Liberal Democrat Council Groups across Greater London, Liberal Democrat parliamentarians, and members of the Regional Executive of the London Liberal Democrats.

Guy Russo, Chair of the Regional Policy Committee of the London Liberal Democrats, would like to thank Alice Bridges-Westcott, Rob Blackie, Hina Bokhari, Caroline Pidgeon, Ann Glaze, Matt J. McLaren, Bobby Dean, Chessie Flack, Irina von Weise, Christophe Noblet, Callum Robertson, Warwick Danks, Simon McGrath, Chris Annous, Pete Dallimore and countless others who contributed to the creation of this document at any point in the process.

Use all of your votes on May 2nd

In these London elections you will have three ballot papers you can use to bring about change.

This is how you can use ALL three votes in May to make the difference:

1

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



X

The Lib Dems have been a strong voice in City Hall. Vote for the Lib Dems on the ORANGE ballot paper.

2

Rob BLACKIE



X

It's time for change in London. Vote for Lib Dem Rob Blackie on the PINK ballot paper for Mayor.

3

Your Local LIB DEM



X

Liberal Democrats have a strong record of being local champions for their area. Vote for your local Lib Dem candidate on the YELLOW ballot paper.