

Local Election Manifesto 2015

Building the homes we need

We will set an
ambitious goal to
build 300,000
homes a year

A fair start for all children

Guarantee
education funding
from nursery to 19
and qualified
teachers in every
class

Power to the People!

Devolve more
economic decision
making to local
communities and
away from national
government

Our environment protected

Protect nature and
fight climate change
with five green laws

Quality health care for all

Provide extra funding
for Local Care
Services



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Note 1: This document brings together all proposals in the Liberal Democrat 2015 General Election Manifesto that relate directly to local government.

Note 2: this paper sets out Liberal Democrat policies and priorities for local government in the United Kingdom. The Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats set their own policy on devolved matters, and for those policy areas, the proposals here apply to England only. Our sister party, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, makes its own policy on devolved issues in Northern Ireland.



Dear Friend,

Our party's roots are in local government and the Liberal Democrat vision is for empowered, active communities – with decisions being taken at as local a level as possible.

We want local government in England to be a powerhouse once more, elected proportionately and with extra powers devolved to it.

Building on the success of City Deals and Growth Deals, we will prioritise the transfer of transport, housing and infrastructure funding, skills training and back to work support. Indeed, the Liberal Democrat administration running Stockport is a key partner in the major transfer of powers to councils in the Greater Manchester area.

We will work with local authorities to bring services together at a local level to provide a better service.

For too long health and social care existed in separate silos. Through the Better Care Fund and building on the examples of good practice from councils like Bath and North East Somerset, Sutton and Bedford, Lib Dems have made a good start on integrated health and care services – but we want to go further.

We will secure local agreement on full pooling of budgets between the NHS and care services with a target date of 2018. We will develop Health and Well Being Boards to take a broad view of how services can

improve well-being in their area, ensuring democratic accountability for local care. The details of how services will be commissioned will remain a matter for local areas.

We will invest half of the initial £1 billion extra for the NHS in providing care in people's own homes and communities, preventing emergency admissions and making it easier to discharge people after a hospital stay.

For too many years Britain has built fewer homes than we need, so we will work with local authorities to build more – in particular more affordable homes. We'll give councils new powers to ensure development happens on any unused site in which the public sector has an interest. We will give local authorities more flexibility to build affordable housing, including traditional council housing – and devolve full control of the Right to Buy to local councils.

We will promote shared ownership schemes and launch a new “rent to own” policy where monthly payments steadily give the tenant a percentage stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.

We believe efforts protect our environment and tackle climate change must start locally. So we will encourage councils to be proactive in delivering energy saving and electricity generation. We will pass a new Green Homes Act to set new energy efficiency targets, and provide support for local councils to provide help street by street to bring all low-income homes up to an energy rating of at least Band C.

And finally, a crucial area for Liberal Democrats – education. We will give democratically elected local authorities clear responsibility for local school planning. We will only fund new mainstream schools where school places are needed, and will repeal the rule that all new state funded schools must be free schools or academies. Liberal Democrats will guarantee education funding from nursery to 19 and insist on qualified teachers in every class.

I am so proud of the hard work Liberal Democrat Councils and Councillors have put into creating fairer local communities and to build stronger local economies. This manifesto is full of ideas to help with these goals.



Introduction by Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson and Cllr Kath Pinnock



Services are run better, communities are greener and more engaged, taxes are fairer and money spent more effectively when Liberal Democrats are in charge. But Liberal Democrats will not get their hands on the levers of power to improve communities across the country unless they get elected.

There is not a Liberal Democrat in the land that will deny that this is going to be one of the toughest round of elections in the party's history – with our parliamentary seats being tested following the first coalition in UK government since the Second World War and a significant chunk of our local government representatives also up this year, 7 May will be the most important day since the party's creation in 1988.

Electoral success in both the local and general elections will depend on every sinew - every activist, councillor and parliamentarian - of this party pulling together for Liberal Democrat success. Having been through four local elections since 2010 we were well aware of the challenge this round of elections would pose which is why we at the LGA Lib Dems and ALDC made it a priority to ensure that our manifesto was one that responded to the views of our councillors and their residents. We have worked to bring forward a manifesto that would bring party members at all levels of government behind a Liberal Democrat offer to the British people based on empowering communities to improve their services and take their own decisions about how to design and fund them.

The sheer volume of manifesto policies documented here that are directly-related to local government is a solid statement, better than any warm words, of the level of commitment this party has to empowering local communities.

Our councillors and their residents will be particularly pleased to see commitments to integrate health and social care budgets so that people can decide locally where best to commission care; to put councils in the driving seat of delivering the homes we need with plans for 15 years worth of local housing and the flexibility to borrow to build social housing; to reaffirm the liberal democrat vision for education where professional freedom is combined with democratic accountability so that the local community has the final say on local schools; to build on the success of city deals and other devolution that has been driven by the Liberal Democrats in the previous parliament – bringing together a myriad of funding streams going into a local area to help with the economy, transport and back-to-work schemes.

Finally, local people will be pleased to see that a local government with these new powers will have to answer to them through a fairer and more rigorous voting system than the current one which affords complacency in so many one-party states around the country.

Local government has changed a lot since 2010, it will have to change a lot again in the next parliament. So we are pleased that our party has listened to our councillors and their residents and put policies on the table that will allow local communities to face these challenges head-on.

Whether you are a loyal Lib Dem activist or an undecided voter I hope this document leaves you in doubt that this party has a plan for improving the local services your community cares about without risking the recovery. We all now have a responsibility for the important first step before any of this can happen – get Liberal Democrats elected.



Cllr Gerald Vernon Jackson
Leader,
LGA
Liberal Democrat Group



Cllr Kath Pinnock,
President,
Association of Liberal Democrat
Councillors

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, including opening up the supply chain to more small and medium sized businesses and supporting them in bringing activity back to Britain. Communities and local government are key to this.



We will:

- ◆ Devolve more economic decision making to local areas, building on the success of City Deals and Growth Deals, prioritising the transfer of transport, housing and infrastructure funding, skills training and back-to-work support
- ◆ Develop the skilled workforce needed to support this growth with major expansion of high-quality and advanced apprenticeships, offering

vocational education on a par with academic qualifications, backed up with new sector-led National Colleges. We will develop a national skills strategy for key sectors, including low-carbon technologies, to help match skills and people.

- ◆ Build on the success of the Regional Growth Fund, which has already created more than 100,000 jobs and secured £1.8 billion of private investment. We will continue the Fund throughout the next Parliament.
- ◆ Aim to stimulate local economies, working with Local Enterprise Partnerships to improve their effectiveness and coordination.
- ◆ Use central government public procurement policy as a tool of local growth and community development, for example by purchasing from diverse sources and using local labour, goods and services, and encourage local government to do the same.
- ◆ Continue our work to open up public procurement to small and medium sized companies and to the voluntary sector
- ◆ Develop platforms on which government can provide feedback on its suppliers to help quality providers to grow.

In England we will complete the ongoing review of business rates, prioritising reforms that lessen the burden on smaller businesses, ensure high streets remain competitive and promote more efficient use of land. 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 extend the business rates review to ensure it considers the implementation of LVT, as well as 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.

Making the connection: Transport infrastructure

Liberal Democrats are leading the renewal of Britain's ageing infrastructure 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 will follow a fiscal rule to allow borrowing for investment in infrastructure to help the economy grow.

We will:

- ◆ Invest in major transport improvements and infrastructure to:
- ◆ Deliver the 'Transport for the North' strategy to promote growth, innovation and prosperity across northern England.
- ◆ Develop more modern, resilient links to and within the South West peninsula to help develop and diversify the regional economy

- ◆ Complete East-West rail, connecting up Oxford and Cambridge and catalysing major new housing development
- ◆ Ensure London's transport infrastructure is improved to withstand the pressure of population and economic growth
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive plan to electrify the overwhelming majority of the UK rail network, reopen 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.

Modern light rail systems, like Croydon Tramlink and Manchester Metrolink, have brought significant benefits to passengers. We will encourage local authorities to consider trams alongside other options, and support a new generation of light rail and ultra-light rail schemes in towns and cities where local people want them.

Community Energy

We will expand community energy, building on Britain's first ever community energy strategy with additional financial and regulatory support.

- ◆ We will encourage councils to be proactive in delivering energy saving and electricity generation.
- ◆ Encourage onshore wind in appropriate locations, helping meet our climate targets at least cost. We will end ideologically motivated interference in local planning decisions for wind farms by government ministers.

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 government have introduced the world's most robust regulatory regime for unconventional gas, including banning drilling in National Parks, and will take two further steps to ensure any shale gas contributes to a faster transition to a low carbon economy. We will:

- ◆ Establish a Low Carbon Transition Fund using 50% of any tax revenues from shale gas to fund energy efficiency, community energy, low carbon innovation and renewable heat.
- ◆ Require that once a shale gas well is finished, it must be offered at no cost to geothermal heat developers, to enable faster expansion of this renewable technology.

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. The 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:

- ◆ 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 introducing a cap on tax relief on pension pots over £1m, 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 £2m. It will have a banded structure, like Council Tax.

Help with childcare costs

Many parents want to take significant time out from work to care for young children but in many families both parents want or have to work, and the costs of childcare are prohibitive.

We have made dramatic improvements over the current parliament – with tax free childcare, increases in childcare support through the benefit system and more free childcare hours for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds. But we need to do more so that all who want to work can do so.

We will:

- ◆ Set a long term goal of 20 hours' free childcare a week for all parents with children aged from 2 to 4, and all working parents from the end of paid parental leave (9 months) to 2 years. This will not only help parents afford to work, it will help all children start school confident, happy and ready to learn.
- ◆ Start by providing 15 hours a week of free childcare to the parents of all 2 year olds. We will then prioritise 15 hours free childcare for all working parents with children aged between 9 months and 2 years.
- ◆ 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.

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 doesn't 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:

- ◆ Deliver a reformed and improved Work Programme in partnership with English local government, and the national governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. By devolving this support we can ensure help and training are more tailored to local employment markets and better integrated with other services. We will improve incentives for JobCentre staff and Work

Programme providers to ensure there is real 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 the Hardship Fund, making it easier for people to bring forward part of their benefit payments as a loan to deal with emergencies.
- ◆ Develop a package of specialist support for carers seeking part time work or a return to full time employment

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 doubling the number of businesses that hire apprentices. It also 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.

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 begun 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:

- ◆ 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 local NHS 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.

Improving support for the hardest to help

We will:

- ◆ 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.

Protecting consumers and keeping bills low

Confident consumers encourage innovation and competition, which strengthens our economy. We've radically overhauled consumer rights law, making it simpler and clearer and for the first time protecting consumers buying digital content. We've driven competition in the energy sector, sped 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.

In the next Parliament we want to go further.

We will:

- ◆ 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.

Driving up standards in public services

Citizens expect a good service from their public services, and rightly so. While many schools, hospitals and libraries 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:

- ◆ 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
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Continue and expand the What Works Network to promote evidence-based policy making, establish an incubator for social enterprises developing innovative solutions to public policy problems and expand the use of public competitions to encourage innovative solutions to policy problems.
- ◆ Require the highest standards of data protection by public service providers, including that where data is used for research purposes it must be anonymised wherever possible, and impose a moratorium on the creation of new government databases without Parliamentary authority.



**Lib Dem run
South Somerset District
Council has helped local job
creation by converting a
redundant factory building into
an Innovation Centre, with
premises to rent for smaller
businesses and
start up firms.**

High quality early years education

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. That means improving early education protecting the wide range of family support services offered in Children's Centres. We must improve the quality of early years teaching, and raise the status of those who work in early years.



We will:

- ◆ Raise the quality of early years provision and ensure that by 2020 every early years setting employs at least one person who holds an 'Early Years Teacher' qualification. Working with organisations like Teach First, we will recruit more staff with early years qualified status, and extend full Qualified Teacher status, terms and conditions to all those who are properly trained.

- ◆ Increase our Early Years Pupil Premium – which gives early years settings extra money to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds – to £1,000 per pupil per year.
- ◆ Continue to support local authorities in providing Children’s Centres, in particular in areas of high need, encouraging integration with other community services like health visitors, and reviewing the support and advice available for parents on early child nutrition and breastfeeding.
- ◆ Improve the identification of Special Educational Needs and disability at the earliest possible stage, so targeted support can be provided and primary schools are better prepared for their intake of pupils.

Driving up school standards

There is much to be proud of in our schools today, and much that has been improved in the last few years. But far too many children are still failing to get the qualifications they need. The gaps between rich and poor are still 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.

We will:

- ◆ Ensure that there is an effective, democratically accountable, ‘middle tier’ to support and intervene in schools where problems are identified. We will encourage local head teachers with a strong record to play a key role in school improvement through a local ‘Head Teacher Board’, working with schools and local authorities. We will abolish unelected regional schools commissioners.
- ◆ Strengthen school leadership and governance. We will ensure rapid support and intervention to help ensure all schools become good or outstanding. Our Talented Head Teachers programme will expand, helping move top leaders to where they are most needed.
- ◆ Give democratically accountable local authorities clear responsibility for local school places planning. We will only fund new mainstream schools in areas where school places are needed, and repeal the rule that all new state-funded schools must be free schools or academies. We will allow local authorities to select the school sponsor, where this is not the local authority itself.
- ◆ Ensure a fair local schools admissions process.
- ◆ Protect the education budget in real terms from the early years to age 19. We will at least protect the schools’ Pupil Premium in real terms, consider carefully the merits of extending the Premium, and introduce a fair national funding formula.
- ◆ Increase the number of Teaching Schools – centres of teaching excellence that provide support to other schools.
- ◆ Allow OFSTED to inspect both local authorities and academy chains. Local authorities and academy chains which are failed by OFSTED for intervention work will be required to work with stronger organisations or be replaced.

- ◆ Rule out state-funded profit-making schools.
- ◆ Implement the Children's Commissioner's report into the prevention of and positive alternatives to exclusion, and reinstate appeals panels.
- ◆ Extend free school meals to all children in primary education as resources allow and following a full evaluation of free meals for infants.

We will allow parents to continue to choose faith-based schools within the state-funded sector and allow the establishment of new faith schools. We will ensure that all faith schools develop an inclusive admissions policy and end unfair discrimination on grounds of faith when recruiting staff, except for those principally responsible for optional religious instruction.

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 have done much in Government to be proud of in helping children in care and to improve social work, but we can still go further.

We will:

- ◆ Continue to invest in early intervention, further expanding the Troubled Families Programme and building on the work of the Early Intervention Foundation to spread evidence of what works.
- ◆ Expect local authorities to set out a clear purpose for the care system: to promote emotional well-being and resilience, provide a secure base on which children can be supported in their development and provide individually tailored help with recovery.
- ◆ Raise the quality and profile of children's social work, continuing and expanding the Frontline programme - which is fast tracking the brightest and best into the profession - to at least 300 graduate recruits each year.
- ◆ Tackle delay and instability in foster care, with better support and training for foster carers, including on mental health issues.
- ◆ Continue to make it easier for children in care to find a loving home, through the national Adoption Register and the new national gateway for adoption, a first point of contact for potential adopters.
- ◆ Prevent looked-after children and young people being drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily by promoting restorative justice.

Improving support for young adults

We want young people in their teens to face the future with optimism and confidence. The education leaving age has now risen to 18, but 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 will:

- ◆ Work to introduce a new Young Person's Discount Card, for young people aged 16-21, giving a 2/3rds discount on bus travel, as resources allow. This will assist all bus users by helping maintain the viability of existing bus routes and making it easier to open new ones.
- ◆ Review access to transport for students and apprentices in rural areas where no scheduled services may be available.
- ◆ Develop an NHS 'student guarantee', making it easier for students to get care and support while at university, particularly those with long term health conditions or caring responsibilities.
- ◆ Enable government departments, local councils and private businesses to add discount offers to the Young Person's Discount Card.
- ◆ Promote social action and volunteering at school, college and university and work to raise the status of youth work and youth workers.
- ◆ Improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in mentoring schemes and programmes that seek to raise aspiration like Speakers for Schools and Inspiring Women. In particular, we will seek to inspire more children and young people into technical and scientific careers through partnership with relevant businesses.



**Lib Dem
Eastbourne
Council worked with
local employers and their
Lib Dem MP to launch a
"100 new apprentices in
100 days" scheme. This
recruited a total of 181
apprenticeships.**

Investing in our NHS

The NHS is our most treasured public service. Liberal Democrats are committed to the founding principles of the NHS as a taxpayer-funded system, free at the point of use.

To ensure this principle is maintained even as demand for health care grows, we will give the NHS the investment it needs. We are the only party with a credible plan to deliver the £8bn extra NHS leaders know our health service in England needs by 2020, with the appropriate boost to funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too.

We will:

- ◆ Immediately invest £500 million a year in providing care in people's own homes and communities, preventing emergency admissions and making it easier to discharge people after a hospital stay – and so relieving pressures on all hospital services. We will also make changes to the payment system within the NHS to incentivise more preventative care.
- ◆ Join up health and care at national level, shifting full responsibility for care policy and funding to the Department of Health.

To ensure the NHS is safeguarded for the long term we will commission a non-partisan Fundamental Review of NHS and social care funding this year. We will involve as many people as possible in this nationwide consultation.

Joining up health and social care

We need services that fit around people's lives, not ones that force them to fit their lives around the care they need. This is going to be increasingly important as our population ages and the number of people living with long-term conditions continues to grow. It is time to move away from a fragmented system to an integrated service with more joined up care, and more personal budgets so people can design services for their own individual needs. We believe this should happen from the bottom up, suiting the needs of local communities.

We will:

- ◆ Secure local agreement on full pooling of budgets between the NHS and care services with a target date of 2018, consulting on a legal duty for this. The details of how services are commissioned will remain a matter for local areas. In this way we will build on the radical proposals for Greater Manchester.
- ◆ Continue to develop Health and Well-being Boards to take a broad view of how services can improve well-being in their area, ensuring democratic accountability for local care.
- ◆ Combine the public health, adult social care and health outcome frameworks into a single national well-being outcomes framework to ensure the NHS and local government work together towards common goals.
- ◆ Support new joined up services like GPs providing services like scans and blood tests closer to home, or hospitals having GP surgeries within A&E departments.
- ◆ Encourage the development of joined up health providers, which cover hospital and community services, including GPs, learning from international best practice. We will permit NHS commissioners and providers in a local area to form a single integrated health organisation where appropriate.
- ◆ Work with Monitor to reform NHS funding systems, moving away from payments for activity to tariffs that encourage joined up services and preventative care.

Liberal Democrats are committed to repealing any parts of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which make NHS services vulnerable to forced privatisation through international agreements on free markets in goods and services. We will end the role of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in health, making it clear that the needs of patients, fairness and access always come ahead of competition, and that good local NHS services do not have to be put out to tender. 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, and we will ensure this remains the case for TTIP and any future trade agreements.

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. Better access to care in GP surgeries and closer to home is better for patients but will also help reduce pressure on hospitals, A&E departments and ambulances.

We will:

- ◆ Ensure easier access to GPs, expanding evening and weekend opening, encouraging phone and Skype appointments, encouraging GPs to work together in federations, and allowing people more choice.
- ◆ Encourage GPs and other community clinicians to work in disadvantaged areas through our Patient Premium.
- ◆ Better utilise the network of community pharmacists across the country so they become the first point of contact for advice on minor illnesses and are joined up with GPs and community health teams.
- ◆ Encourage health services to link up with local authority social care teams and voluntary services to join up care.
- ◆ Review the rules for exemption from prescription charges to ensure they are fair to those with long-term conditions and disabilities.



Helping People Keep Healthy

It's better for patients and for the NHS if we keep people healthy in the first place, rather than just 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 well-being.

In government we have taken significant steps, taking tobacco off display in shops and introducing standardised packaging, for example. We have also returned the delivery of public health services to local authorities to ensure a more coordinated and localised approach.

Improving our environment is a vital step to improving people's health. By insulating homes we can reduce the number of people who become unwell because of the cold; by tackling air pollution we can attack the root causes of 1 in 20 of all UK deaths; by opening up more sports facilities and building more cycle routes we can cut obesity and reduce heart problems.

We will:

- ◆ Keep public health within local government, where it is effectively joined up with preventative community services.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Carefully monitor the growing evidence base around electronic cigarettes, which appear to be a route by which many people are quitting tobacco, and ensure restrictions on marketing and use are proportionate and evidence based. For example, we support restrictions on advertising which risks promoting tobacco or targets under 18s, such as those introduced in 2014, but would rule out a statutory ban on "vaping" in public places.
- ◆ Introduce Minimum Unit Pricing for alcohol, subject to the outcome of the legal challenge in Scotland, and support the greater use of local authority powers and criminal behaviour orders to help communities tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder.
- ◆ Pass a Nature Act to increase access to green spaces and a Green Transport Act to cut air pollution.

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.

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.
- ◆ Give the NHS a legal duty to identify carers and develop a 'Carer's Passport' scheme to inform carers of their rights in the NHS, like more flexible visiting hours, assert their role as 'expert partners in care' and gain access to support.



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 have introduced rigorous new inspections under the Chief Inspector of Social Care and new guidance to end the use of fifteen minute visits. We will end “care cramming”, which turns care workers into clock-watchers rushing between jobs. 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:

- ◆ Finish the job of implementing the Dilnot Report proposals for a cap on the cost of social care.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Ask the Care Quality Commission to showcase examples of good and bad practice in care commissioning by councils.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Work with local government and providers to promote paying a living wage.

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.

We will:

- ◆ Pass a Nature Act to put the Natural Capital Committee on a statutory footing, set natural capital targets, including on biodiversity, clean air and water, and empower the NCC to recommend actions to meet these targets.
- ◆ Significantly increase the amount of accessible green space. We will complete the coastal path, introduce a fuller 'Right to Roam' and a new designation of National Nature Parks to protect up to a million acres of accessible green space valued by local communities.
- ◆ Tackle wildlife and environmental crime with increased enforcement of environmental regulations by all relevant authorities and higher penalties to ensure environmental crime is not a financial risk worth taking.

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.

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 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 reparability, reuse and recyclability are prioritised, and to reduce packaging waste.
- ◆ Establish a coherent tax and regulatory framework for landfill, incineration and waste collection to drive continuous increases in re-use and recycling rates and ensure only non-recyclable waste is incinerated, including reinstating the landfill tax escalator and extending it to the lower rate and consulting on the introduction of an incineration tax.

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.
- ◆ Work with local government to review the governance of flood risk and land drainage, including the role of Internal Drainage Boards, and introduce high standards for flood resilience for buildings and infrastructure in flood risk areas.

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Implement programmes to help farmers and other land users adapt to climate change impact including protecting soil and forest carbon sinks, encouraging planting in uplands and restoring flood plains.
- ◆ Improve UK enforcement of the EU birds and habitats directive.
- ◆ Review the system of approvals required by landowners to repair existing flood protection measures on their land.
- ◆ Increase the uptake of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to maximise value for money for the taxpayer. We will consult on the best ways to finance this.
- ◆ Update construction and planning standards to future-proof buildings against higher summer temperatures.

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.
- ◆ New incentives for local schemes that cut transport-related pollution, and encourage walking and cycling.
- ◆ Implement the recommendations of the 'Get Britain Cycling' report, including steps to deliver a £10 per head annual public expenditure on cycling within existing budgets. This will allow greater investment in cycling including bike lanes, high-volume secure bike parking, and road safety measures to keep cyclists safe.

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.

- ◆ Give new powers to local authorities and communities to improve transport in their areas, including the ability to introduce network-wide ticketing like in London.
- ◆ Carry out a review of bus funding and bus policies and introduce a five-year investment plan to give the industry and local authorities certainty and help plan investment. We will support local areas that want to bring forward plans for regulating the bus network in their area.
- ◆ Support the expansion of smart ticketing systems.
- ◆ Continue funding for local economic and sustainable transport infrastructure through the Local Growth Fund.

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:

- ◆ Work with local authorities to integrate transport networks in rural areas, building on the work of Liberal Democrat ministers' Total Transport pilot
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Develop the Community Budgets model for use in rural areas to combine services, encourage 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.

Building more and better homes



For far too long Britain has built many fewer homes than we need; unless we build enough to meet demand, year after year, we will find housing costs rise further out of reach.

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

- ♦ At least ten new 'Garden Cities' in England, in areas where there is local support, providing tens of thousands of high quality new homes, with gardens and shared green space, jobs, schools and public transport. We will encourage rural local authorities to follow these principles on a smaller scale, too, developing new garden villages or suburbs as part of their plans for growth.
- ♦ Up to five major new settlements along a "Garden Cities Railway" between Oxford and Cambridge.
- ♦ Ambitious targets for development on unwanted public sector sites through the Homes and Communities Agency, with local authorities given new powers to ensure development happens on any unused site in which the public sector has an interest.
- ♦ 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 our Garden Cities.

- ◆ 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.

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.

We will:

- ◆ Put local authorities in the driving seat for plan-led development by requiring them to make plan for 15 years of housing need, working collaboratively with neighbouring councils where necessary to identify sites. We will strengthen the Duty to Cooperate to help authorities - like Cambridge, Oxford and Luton - with insufficient space within the local authority boundary to meet housing demand to grow, through development on sites beyond the local authority boundaries. This long-term approach will enable us to secure the homes we need while being much stricter about proposals that deviate from the local plan. We will:
 - ✓ Create a community right of appeal in cases where planning decisions go against the approved local plan, or a local plan that is emerging and has undergone substantive consultation.
 - ✓ Not allow developers' appeals against planning decisions that are in line with the local plan.
 - ✓ Not allow planning appeals solely on the basis of challenges to the 15-year master plan.
- ◆ Improve housing needs assessments to ensure they respond to demand, 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. All areas will be expected to plan for the needs of older people for age-appropriate housing and we will work with local authorities to help people who wish to "right size" particularly in later life.
- ◆ Require Local Authorities to keep a register of people who want a self-build plot in the local area and plan to meet demand for these plots, including

**Hinckley and
Bosworth under the Lib
Dems have worked hard on
town centre regeneration,
bringing in over 5,000 new
jobs to the area. They are
working with a other
companies to create even
more jobs.**

**Lib Dem
Eastleigh Council
developed a “guaranteed
purchase” model for developers
who had existing planning
permission, but were unable to be
sure if they could sell, leading
to stalled development.
The work went ahead and
all the homes were sold.**

through “affordable land”: plots on which self-builders can take a long-term lease at an affordable rent and build or commission a home.

- ◆ Update planning law to introduce the concept of “landscape scale planning”, ensure new developments promote walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport, and improve rather than diminish access to green spaces.
- ◆ Prioritise development on brownfield and town centre sites and bring to an end the permitted development rights for converting offices to residential.
- ◆ Enable local authorities to:
 - ✓ Attach planning conditions to new development to ensure homes are occupied, tackling the growth of “buy to leave empty” investments from overseas in property hotspots like London.
 - ✓ Levy up to 200% Council Tax on second homes where they judge this to be appropriate.
 - ✓ Pilot new planning conditions to ensure local communities benefit from increased housing supply.

Affordable housing

The government has an essential role to play in supporting the development of affordable housing. We have maintained a substantial programme of affordable house building in the last five years, in part enabled by designing innovative products that can deliver new homes at a lower cost. We will continue to innovate, enabling local authorities, housing associations and central government alike to build many more homes.

We will:

- ◆ Review the Homes and Communities Agency’s grant programmes to simplify and streamline the process and enable more innovation.
- ◆ Allow local authorities more flexibility to borrow to build affordable housing, including traditional council housing, and devolve full control of the Right to Buy.
- ◆ Scrap plans to exempt smaller housing development schemes from their obligations to provide affordable homes.
- ◆ 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. We will refocus the Vacant Building Credit so it only applies to properties that have been vacant for an extended period.
- ◆ Tackle overcrowding with a new system to incentivise social landlords to reduce the number of tenants under-occupying their homes, freeing up larger properties.
- ◆ Introduce a new Intermediate Housing Fund to fund intermediate housing products, including:
 - ✓ Affordable Rent homes, at up to 80% of local market rent.

- ✓ Shared Ownership homes, where customers buy a proportion of the home and pay an affordable rent for the rest.
- ✓ 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 new build homes to prevent artificial pressure on prices, and should not discriminate on the basis of previous housing tenure.

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.

We will:

- ◆ Improve protections against rogue landlords and encourage a new multi-year tenancy with an agreed, built-in, inflation-linked annual rent.
- ◆ Enable local authorities to operate licensing schemes for rental properties in areas of high concentration or private rental accommodation.
- ◆ Conduct a full review of help single people get under homelessness legislation.

Affordable warmth and greener homes

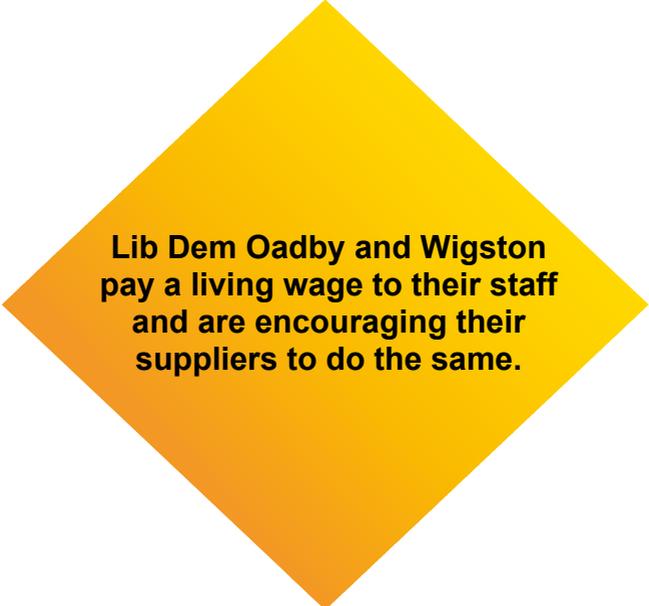
Warming our homes is an essential part of the fight against climate change, and also vital to keep bills affordable. Energy prices in Britain are lower than the EU average but our bills are higher because our homes are so poorly insulated. We have made huge advances in this Parliament, increasing standards for new build homes, and improving more than 1m homes in just two years. In the next parliament we will go further, ensuring at least 4m homes insulated by 2020, not only lowering bills and helping to tackle the scourge of fuel poverty, but generating jobs too.

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.

A yellow diamond shape with a vertical gradient, transitioning from a lighter yellow at the top to a darker orange-yellow at the bottom. It contains text about Lib Dem Stockport Council's achievements.

**Lib Dem Stockport
Council has built over
700 new affordable homes
since 2010. And at
around 65%, its recycling
rate is the highest in the
North West and one of
the best in the country.**

A yellow diamond shape with a vertical gradient, transitioning from a lighter yellow at the top to a darker orange-yellow at the bottom. It contains text about Lib Dem Oadby and Wigston's staff and supplier policies.

**Lib Dem Oadby and Wigston
pay a living wage to their staff
and are encouraging their
suppliers to do the same.**



- ◆ Pass a new Green Homes 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.
- ◆ Improve the standard of private rented and social housing, requiring these homes to be upgraded to Band C by 2027.
- ◆ 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 to support the above, including infrastructure funding where appropriate:
 - ✓ “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.

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, gender, sexuality, and disability.

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

- ◆ Ensure disabled adults 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.

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 under-represented 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 programmes on digital inclusion.

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.

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 are no longer disproportionately the victims of serious violence. 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.
- ◆ Improve the provision of rape crisis centres and refuges for victims of domestic violence with a national network and national sources of funding.

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 commands greater public confidence.

We will:

- ◆ 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 England and for electing MPs across the UK, while transferring responsibility for the local government election system in Wales to the Welsh Assembly. We will reduce the number of MPs but only as part of the introduction of a reformed, fair, voting system.
- ◆ Cancel the introduction of planned boundary changes and conduct a new boundary review. While new constituencies would need to be established for a new voting system, we believe constituency boundaries should respect natural geographical communities, with significant flexibility for the Boundary Commission to deviate from exact parity in population size.



A decentralised but United Kingdom

We must deliver on the promises made to the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK to further decentralise power. There are many powers that we think should be devolved on an equal basis to the existing parts of the UK.

England

Devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has implications for the UK Parliament and its dual role in legislating for England as well as the federal UK.

Beyond Parliament, there is much to change to improve the way communities in England are governed. Only by returning power to the villages, towns, cities and regions of England can we drive growth, improve public services and give people freedom to run their own lives.

To rejuvenate local government in England, we will:

- ◆ Reduce the powers of Ministers to interfere in democratically elected local government.
- ◆ Remove the requirement to hold local referenda for Council Tax changes, ensuring councillors are properly accountable for their decisions by introducing fair votes.
- ◆ Build on the success of City Deals and Growth Deals to devolve more power and resources to groups of local authorities and local enterprise partnerships, starting with back to work support.
- ◆ Establish a Government process to deliver greater devolution of financial responsibility to English local authorities, and any new devolved bodies in England, building on the work of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance. Any changes must balance the objectives of more local autonomy and fair equalisation between communities.

In some areas of England there is an even greater appetite for powers, but not every part of the country wants to move at the same speed and there cannot be a 'one-size-fits all' approach. We will therefore introduce 'Devolution on Demand', enabling even greater devolution of powers from Westminster to councils or groups of councils working together (for example to a Cornish Assembly).

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.

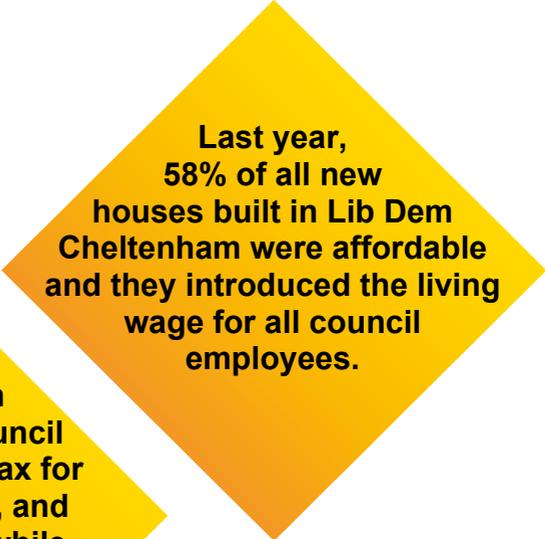
We will encourage citizens to engage in practical social action, seeing government as an enabler and facilitator rather than just a commissioner and provider of services.

We will:

- ◆ Aim to increase the numbers of neighbourhood, community and parish councils and promote tenant management in social housing.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Spread mutual structures and employee participation through the public sector.
- ◆ Strengthen community rights to run local public services, and protect community assets like pubs by bringing forward a Community Right to Buy. We will ensure planning permission is required to convert a pub into alternative uses.
- ◆ Support social investment, 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.



**Lib Dem
Bath and North
East Somerset Council
has frozen council tax for
four years in a row, and
saved £30 million while
protecting key services,
and boosting the
recycling rate.**



**Last year,
58% of all new
houses built in Lib Dem
Cheltenham were affordable
and they introduced the living
wage for all council
employees.**

5 Green Laws

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 Nature Act which will include:

- ♦ 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.

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, moving 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.

A Green Transport Act, which will include:

- ♦ A requirement that every new bus and taxi is Ultra Low Emission from 2030 and banning high emission vehicles from the road after 2040.
- ♦ The creation of Low Emission Zones with a national air quality plan including a legal requirement targeted at the most polluted towns and cities.

A Zero Carbon Britain Act, which will include:

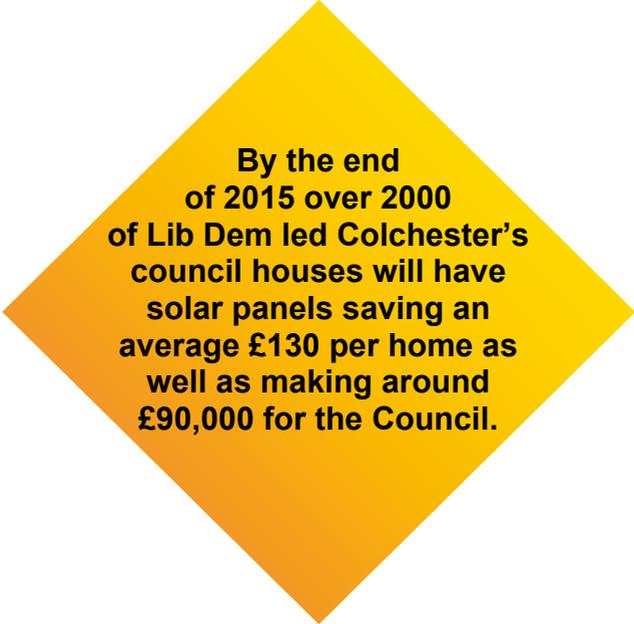
- ◆ A new legally-binding target for Zero Carbon Britain by 2050, to be monitored and audited by the Climate Change Committee (CCC). The Climate Change Act 2008 established an aim to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 (based on the 1990 baseline).

A Green Buildings Act, which will include:

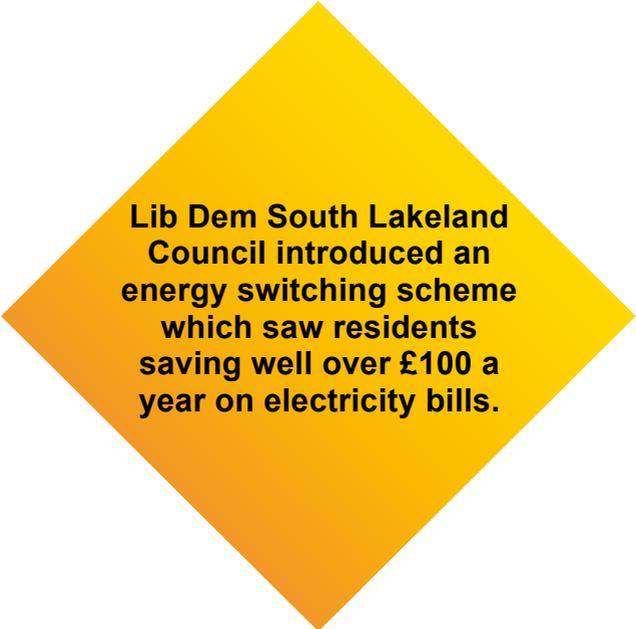
- ◆ A Council tax discount for significant improvements in energy efficiency in homes.
- ◆ Ambitious targets for all social and private rented homes to reach Energy Performance Certificates Band C by 2027.
- ◆ A statutory target to insulate the homes of all fuel-poor households by 2027.
- ◆ A new legal framework to require regulators to facilitate the development of deep geothermal heat, large-scale heat pumps, waste industrial heat and energy storage systems.



**Lib Dem
Bedford Council
installed a hydropower
facility on the River Great
Ouse. Last year it raised over
£33,000 from feed in tariffs as
well as powering nearby
lighting.**



**By the end
of 2015 over 2000
of Lib Dem led Colchester's
council houses will have
solar panels saving an
average £130 per home as
well as making around
£90,000 for the Council.**



**Lib Dem South Lakeland
Council introduced an
energy switching scheme
which saw residents
saving well over £100 a
year on electricity bills.**



**Lib Dem Watford
have worked hard to
keep council tax frozen for
another year, while making
improvements to local
services such as recycling,
ensuring the contracted waste
and recycling collection staff
are paid the living wage.**

