

Make it Happen



It's time for a change in Britain.

Families are over-stretched. Things look bad for the economy. Schools and hospitals don't seem to be improving despite all the extra money and hard work by staff. People don't believe politicians care, or really listen.

I want to do things differently. I've always thought that if we want things to really change for the better, we've got to open things up. We need to make sure people get heard, and can make a difference to what happens.

Labour and the Conservatives cut people out. They're so used to being in power every few years, they don't listen and they don't deliver the change you want.

Liberal Democrats are a voice for people who want something different from politicians. That's why I hold open public meetings every week or so. Keeping in touch with families all over Britain is the most important thing I do.

I believe that Britain can be better. I want us all to have a fair society, where everyone gets real opportunities and chances in life. We can make that happen by taking power from government and special interests and giving it to people and communities.

You're probably fed up with the way so many politicians sound the same these days. What you really need to know is what we believe, what we'll actually do – and how we'll pay for it.

When I promise to make Britain fairer, we are talking about big tax cuts for those who are struggling, an end to the unfair council tax, and extra investment in the poorest children from their first day at pre-school right through to university.

When I promise a greener future for Britain, we have detailed plans to invest in clean energy instead of nuclear and get people out of their cars and into quality public transport.

When I promise to make politicians listen to people, we'll introduce fairer elections in which your vote really counts and end the influence of big money in politics.

And when I promise to stand up for British freedoms, we are proposing a Freedom Law to get the government off people's backs and new privacy protections for our personal data.

So if you want Britain to be fairer, you know who will make it happen: we will. Labour can't. The Conservatives won't.

I'm asking you to take a look at our ideas. Tell me what you think - and if you've got ideas of your own, I really do want to hear about them.

It's no use wishing things were different. We've got to make it happen.

If you join with me, we can.



Nick Clegg



“Why is it so hard to make ends meet these days?”





Things look bad for the economy. People are struggling with rising bills, more expensive food and huge mortgage repayments. So now's the time to sort taxes out, to take the pressure off ordinary families who still pay more of their income out in tax than the richest people in the country. The government's let things go wrong, allowing banks to lend out too much money, letting house prices get out of control, and wasting billions of pounds over Northern Rock.

To get through the tough times ahead, we need to get everyone working. But the government's created a benefits system that traps people in poverty. People trying to make a better life for their family have to struggle with endless bureaucracy. Once you take into account how much childcare costs, sometimes it doesn't seem worth working at all.

Liberal Democrats will strengthen the economy by making the Bank of England take house prices into account when setting interest rates and regulating banks properly. We'll make sure the public finances never get in such a mess again, with independent auditing of spending rules. This government's spent more and more of your money and still failed the people who are most hard up. So we'll get wasteful central government spending under control and give the economy a boost by cutting taxes from the bottom for those who need the most help.

If there's money to spare, we won't simply spend it. We're looking for ways to cut Britain's overall tax burden, so ordinary families have more of their money to help themselves. Our tax cuts will be fair. We'll change the tax and benefits system to make sure it helps ordinary people not the rich. **We'll increase the state pension in line with earnings and give women pensioners a fair deal.** We'll simplify benefits to make it easier for everyone to get out to work.

We'll be tough on tax avoidance. We'll help ordinary families struggling to pay for gas and electricity by forcing energy companies to invest windfall profits to cut bills so everyone can afford to stay warm this winter. We'll help families facing repossession by forcing banks to offer financial help and advice first. **And we'll replace the unfair council tax.** We will be frank about how we pay for this - by closing the loopholes that favour the rich, diverting unnecessary Government spending, and by taxing pollution.

We'll cut taxes for ordinary families

“Why can’t I get the treatment I need?”



We’re all proud of the NHS, but it’s frustrating when you can’t get a dentist, or an appointment with your GP. And it can be heartbreaking if the drugs for your treatment aren’t available in your area, or you lose someone in your family to a hospital superbug.

But there’s often nothing you can do to get things changed. There are marches and protests all the time about the NHS, but they’re ignored because the local officials aren’t accountable, and the elected minister is miles away in Westminster. So even though lots more money’s gone in, the change people want doesn’t happen.

The care people get seems unfair and unequal sometimes. Pensioners who need help with washing and dressing can find even basic care’s too expensive. Mental health patients get sidelined because of central targets. Vulnerable people get the worst deal because it’s so hard for them to make sense of the system. Everything’s designed to make life easy for bureaucrats and form fillers, not for patients and their families, or for hard-working doctors and nurses.

Liberal Democrats will make change happen in the NHS for everyone because we’re the only ones willing to do things differently. We’ll make it a people’s health service, designed for the individual patients it serves.

Every citizen will be entitled to a decent standard of care, and the NHS will pay for you to go private if they can’t deliver your treatment on time, so no-one gets let down or forgotten. **There’ll be guaranteed care for elderly people too, so we can all afford to be looked after in our old age without having to sell the family home.** We’ll change the rules to give mental health patients equal rights.

And we’ll put doctors, nurses and patients back in control. People with long term conditions will be able to make their own decisions about treatment. **Local people will be able to take charge of local health services in England, standing for election in their own community.** And money will be raised locally too, so communities don’t have to do what ministers tell them and can have the health system they choose for themselves.

If your local hospital can’t see you on time, we’ll pay for treatment elsewhere.



“Why is it so tough to go green?”

Climate change could destroy our way of life. We are running out of time to safeguard the future, for our children and our grandchildren. We need urgent action.

Labour have let us down. They make big promises about cutting emissions, but then they back dirty coal-fired power stations and plan another runway at Heathrow. And they build expensive new roads instead of funding proper public transport.

The government preaches to us all about “doing our bit” but they make it harder for us. Now the economy’s not looking good, and people are struggling with their finances, so going green seems harder than ever. But instead of listening, and helping, the government piles on more taxes.

The Liberal Democrats will make sure that things really change, so that Britain goes green, with everyone doing their bit.

We’ll speed up investment in renewable energy for everyone and put a stop to Labour’s plan for more nuclear power stations. We’ll help you to use energy more efficiently at home, at school and at work. That will help cut fuel bills and reduce emissions at the same time. But we’ll make sure that energy companies, who have profited from big rises in fuel prices, pay their share of the costs.

People who do their bit should be rewarded. So Liberal Democrats will cut income tax and make polluters pay instead. We’ll invest in proper public transport, taxing lorries and domestic flights to invest in a high speed railway network. We’ll switch away from petrol taxes and vehicle excise duty and charge for using busy roads instead. That way we can encourage people who can use public transport to switch out of their cars - and still be fair to those in rural areas who can’t. And we’ll make sure that households and businesses who generate their own electricity can sell it on at a good price.



We’ll switch taxes from people to pollution - so it pays to go green



**“Why doesn’t
every child get
a good start
in life?”**

**To improve standards, we’ll fund
extra help for those who need it most**

Most people just want a good local school, where their children can get the individual attention they need to get a really good start in life. But far too many families can't get into one. Thousands and thousands of children don't get the education and support they deserve. This is no way to teach the next generation.

School is one of the most important parts of a child's life. But the government expects one system to work for every child in England. They weigh down schools and teachers with paperwork and regulations, so there isn't time and space to think about the individual children and what they need.

But if your child isn't getting the education you want for them, there's often nothing you can do unless you can afford to go private or move to a wealthy area. That means your chances of getting on in life are determined by where you were born, and what your parents do - instead of your potential.

Liberal Democrats will make change happen for every child, so no-one gets left behind. We'll make sure even the poorest children get good nursery education so they're ready for primary school. **We'll support all families in getting good childcare, so parents can get out to work without worrying.**

To make things fair for everyone, we'll fund our schools in a new way, with money attached directly to the individual pupil. There'll be extra cash for children who need more help, so schools can pay for smaller class sizes, after-school lessons, or one-to one tuition. And there'll be extra support for children who don't speak English very well, so they can make progress without holding anyone else back.

We'll free schools from government interference so teachers can listen to what parents and pupils want instead of doing what ministers tell them. There'll be no more pointless targets and fewer stressful national tests, so schools can focus on what their pupils need. **And we'll make university and college affordable for everyone, too.**

We'll make sure every child gets a decent start in life no matter what their background.





“Why don’t we stand up for British values abroad?”

People in Britain are caring and compassionate about people’s suffering around the world. We donate vast amounts of our money to charities and campaign groups that help people trapped in poverty, stand up for human rights, and speak out against dictators and oppressive regimes.

But the government doesn’t follow through on these basic British values. They invaded Iraq even though a million people marched to stop it. They export arms to countries with shocking records of torture and abuse. And they even tolerate corruption in international business. Governments of both big parties have propped up dodgy regimes when it suited them, and undermined international law for short-term gain.

It’s time to base our foreign policy on our values - our belief in fairness, the value of human life, and the importance of democracy and civil rights.

We’ll lead international efforts on disarmament to rid the world of nuclear weapons. We’ll help the poorest countries in the world with aid, debt relief and trade. We’ll give our armed forces the equipment they need to be effective peacekeepers - and more - wherever they are needed. We’ll commit to always investigate corruption allegations. And we’ll make Britain a world leader in the fight against climate change.

We can achieve all those things more effectively as a fully committed member of the European Union. But we’ll never be at the heart of Europe if we don’t win the arguments at home. That’s why we’ve been arguing for a referendum on whether Britain stays in or leaves the EU. Only the Liberal Democrats can make it happen because we’re the only party confident enough to put the pro-European case to the British people.



We’ll put Britain at the heart of Europe to make us a force for good in the world



“Why can’t the government keep my information safe?”

These days, the government treats us all like children, who need to be checked up on and monitored at every turn. They’ve given up on ordinary people’s rights - like freedom of speech and privacy.

The government’s introduced more than 3000 new crimes. They stop people from speaking their mind. You can even get fined for wearing an anti-government T-shirt. Laws designed to fight terrorists are used against ordinary people for trivial reasons.

The government has a million innocent people’s DNA on file. Thousands of schools monitor children’s fingerprints, and parents aren’t allowed to stop them. The government’s planning an Identity Card scheme more complex and intrusive than anything in the world. And worst of all they keep losing all the information they hold instead of keeping it safe.

This way of doing things just isn’t right. Previous generations died to protect our freedom, and politicians shouldn’t try to take it from us. That doesn’t just mean warm words about British tradition: it means action. The Conservatives aren’t serious about freedom - they want to scrap the laws that protect our human rights and personal privacy.

Liberal Democrats will put each of us back in charge of our own privacy. **We’ll stop fingerprinting children at school.** We’ll stop identity cards and use the money to pay for more police to actually cut crime. We’ll rewrite our data protection rules to make them stronger.

We’ll stop holding innocent people’s DNA on file. We’ll stop passing pointless new laws and repeal old, useless ones. And we’ll introduce a Freedom Law to set people free again from intrusive, nanny state government.

We’ll stop ID cards so we can keep control of our privacy



“Why does the Government ignore me?”

The way Britain's run means the government doesn't have to listen to you. One party can get control over Parliament even if only a quarter of people vote for them. So individual people and families don't seem to have a voice to influence what happens.

The old parties are comfortable because they know they'll get into government every few years - so they never change things and they never will.

But people are fed up of being ignored.

It's time to make a real change. We need to have an open political system that's designed to listen to people and deliver what they need. Everyone should have an equal voice - not just people who can pay for big donations.

That means getting the money out of politics. We've got to stop big donors from bankrolling the big parties to get their way with our country. **No one should be able to buy influence over our elected Parliament, so we'll put a cap of £25,000 on donations.**

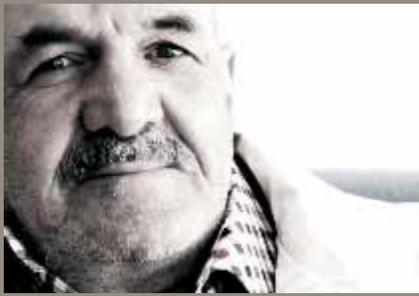
There are too many national politicians, and they cost too much, so we'll shrink Parliament by 150 MPs. **We'll introduce tough new rules so that MPs' expenses are independently audited and receipts are required for every penny.**

And we need a political system that gives every voter real power. Devolution to Scotland and Wales did not go far enough - the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly should get more powers. We need to take control away from central government, where bureaucrats and ministers are in charge, and give it to local government, people and communities. By making government smaller at the centre, we can make sure that more of the money that's spent in your area is raised locally too. That way you get a real choice over what happens.

Liberal Democrats will give people a fair voting system where every person's voice counts. It'll put power into individuals' hands to choose people who truly represent them. And it'll force politicians to listen to ordinary people all the time - not just when there's an election on.



**We'll change the voting system
so everyone's voice counts**



“Why have we lost our sense of community?”

Many communities are more fragmented than ever before. Local post offices, shops, community halls, playing fields and green spaces: all are fast disappearing. And the government doesn't seem to care.

In many parts of the country, homes are so expensive that children can't afford to live near where they grew up, so families get broken up. All this upheaval can be unsettling.

We live in a world where people move around more than ever before - there are millions of British people and families living abroad, and many people from all parts of the world are making their home in Britain. Immigration has brought amazing benefits to Britain's culture and economy, and it's just not realistic for some politicians to say we should stop it.

But we've had years of government incompetence. They've failed to plan for the effects of immigration. So some communities are struggling to cope because there are more people - but not enough more money for schools and hospitals.

Lots of people have lost faith in the system - and that's threatening the liberal approach Britain's always had to newcomers. Liberal Democrats will restore people's trust in our immigration system. **We'll have proper border checks so we know who's coming into the country, and who is leaving.** And we'll help newcomers to learn English and become part of the community.

It's time to put communities back together. We'll make it possible for local people to work together to run local services, fight crime, and take charge of the future of their neighbourhood. That's how to deliver what people actually want. We'll stop interfering from central government and help communities protect local services like post offices and small shops.

Strong communities need good homes. But too many are empty because things have gone wrong for the housing market. They need to be made available for families to rent. And we need to plan for the future. **We'll make sure we build enough homes - for people to rent as well as to buy - so everyone has a decent place to live.**

We can rebuild a sense of community in Britain that includes everyone, no matter their background.



We'll bring communities together with local people in charge

“Why doesn’t my neighbourhood feel safe anymore?”



Far too many people don't feel safe. Lots of town centres are no-go areas at night. We've got real problems with drugs and alcohol. Far too many children are getting into trouble. Our prisons are bursting because they're used as a dumping ground instead of a place where people learn to lead productive lives. Released prisoners commit at least a million crimes a year.

But too many politicians focus on talking tough, instead of doing what works. They're determined to spend billions on new prison cells instead of making prison effective. Britain spends more on criminal justice than any other country in Europe - and we're still less safe than our neighbours. Only 1 in 100 crimes gets punished in court, which is why posturing about penalties does not work. It's got to change.

With better policing, we will deter crime by catching more criminals. We'll make things change in the police force: putting thousands more officers into the community and giving local people control over what they do to fight crime. We'll cut red tape and Whitehall targets, and ensure that crime detection everywhere improves to the standards of the best police forces.

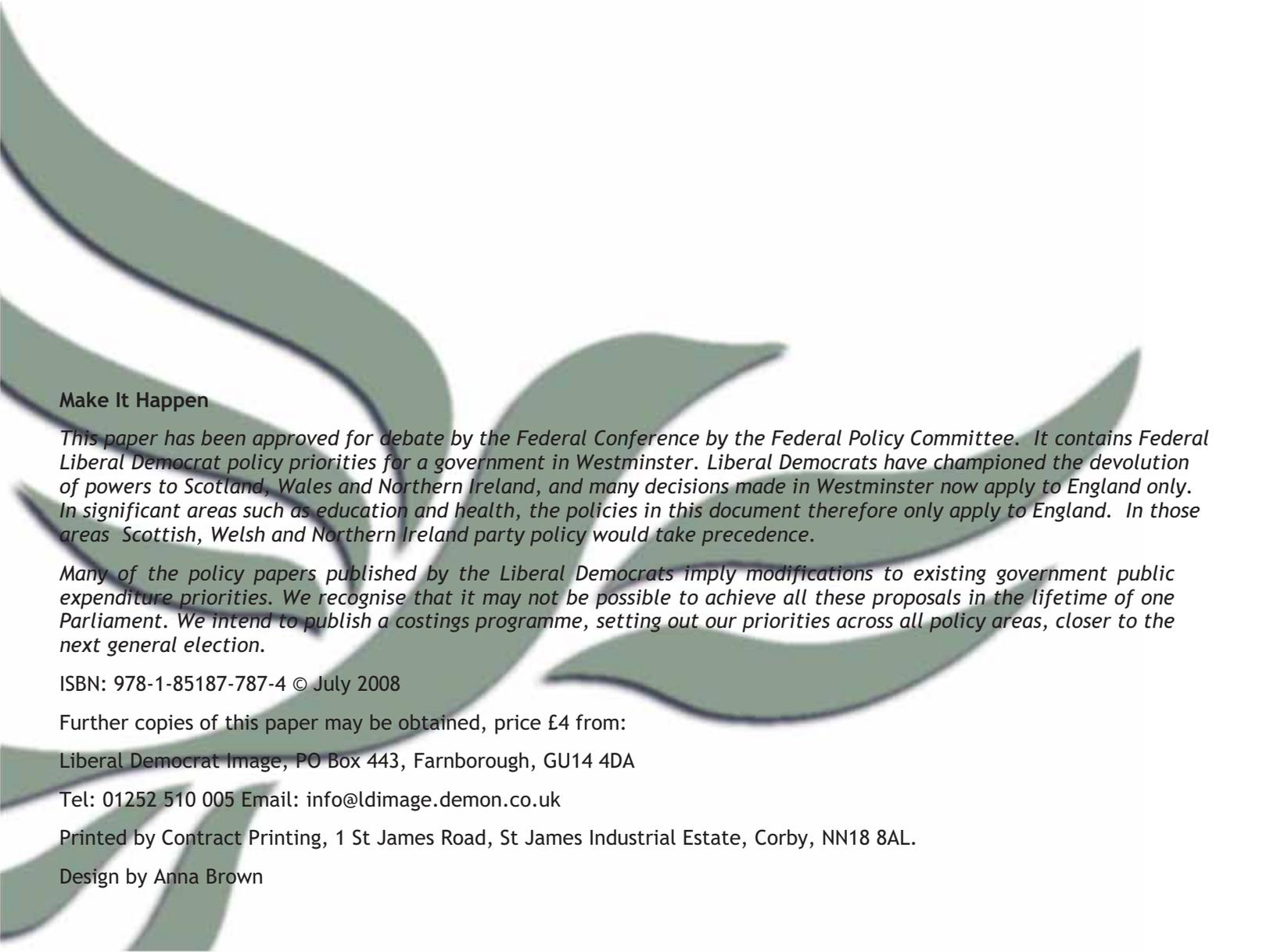
People who commit anti-social crimes should have to face up to what they've done, apologise, and make amends to their victims and the community. In our justice system, victims and communities need a voice. New community justice panels should be set up in every town and city.

Local people, charities, and community networks can best turn people away from crime. Liberal Democrat councils across England are making a difference where the others have failed. Our crime prevention efforts have cut crime from Liverpool to Watford, from Somerset to Islington.

And Liberal Democrats will transform prisons so they work. We'll get drugs out of prison by putting addicts into treatment. **We'll make education and training compulsory for prisoners, and they'll work to pay money into a victim compensation fund.**

We'll give you a say in how offenders pay for their crimes



A large, stylized green leaf graphic with a dark green outline, positioned on the left side of the page and extending towards the center.

Make It Happen

This paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee. It contains Federal Liberal Democrat policy priorities for a government in Westminster. Liberal Democrats have championed the devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and many decisions made in Westminster now apply to England only. In significant areas such as education and health, the policies in this document therefore only apply to England. In those areas Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland party policy would take precedence.

Many of the policy papers published by the Liberal Democrats imply modifications to existing government public expenditure priorities. We recognise that it may not be possible to achieve all these proposals in the lifetime of one Parliament. We intend to publish a costings programme, setting out our priorities across all policy areas, closer to the next general election.

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