

**Autumn
Conference
September 2022**

For a Fair Deal

Policy Paper 149

Pre-manifesto

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1 Foreword

The British people are truly remarkable, showing decency and strength, even in the toughest circumstances. Everywhere I go across our great United Kingdom I've seen people working hard, raising families, helping others.

Throughout the pandemic, people stuck to the rules and made enormous sacrifices to protect everyone. Parents juggled home-working with home-schooling to stop their children falling behind. Nurses, doctors, care staff, police officers and other frontline workers have shown incredible bravery and resilience to keep us all safe.

Now more than ever, it is time for a fair deal.

A decent affordable home in a safe, clean neighbourhood – with a comfortable retirement. Children should be able to go to a good school, get a decent job, and have real opportunities to fulfil their potential. When they need help, your family should get the high-quality health care they deserve.

But that's not the reality for too many people in the UK today, because this Conservative Government is letting us all down and taking everyone for granted.

Conservative Ministers have barely lifted a finger to help families with skyrocketing bills. Everything they've done has been too little and too late. They keep adding to the pain with unfair tax rises. They refused to give our children the urgent catch-up funding desperately needed after all the learning lost to Covid.

They have let the NHS crisis spiral out of control, failing to deliver their promised new hospitals and sending ambulance response times to record highs. They are allowing water companies to pump filthy sewage into our rivers, damaging our precious local environment.

It's time for a change.

More and more people are turning to the Liberal Democrats to put an end to this terrible Conservative Government. People know that every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to elect a strong local champion who will fight for a fair deal for everyone.

A fair deal that gives everyone the opportunity to get on in life, wherever they start.

A fair deal that puts power in your hands, so you can do your bit – for your children, your community, your business and your environment.

A fair deal that holds the powerful to account, to make sure they do their bit too. Where everyone plays by the same rules.

That is the fair deal the Liberal Democrats are fighting for. I know we can achieve it. So join us, and let's make it happen!

Ed Davey

2 The Liberal Democrat Approach: Our Principles

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

2.2 We have always championed the rights and freedoms of the individual and the community against the powerful and well established, giving power to those who need it most. We believe the party's core values can be described as liberty, equality, democracy, community, human rights, internationalism and environmentalism. These were most recently set out in policy paper 142 *What Liberal Democrats Believe* (2021).

2.3 One of the most enduring liberal beliefs is that of liberty. This means the right of individuals to make their own decisions about how they live their lives, as long as they do not cause harm to others; our aim is to support individuals to pursue their dreams, to make the most of their talents and to live their lives as they wish.

2.4 Liberty goes hand in hand with equality, since people's ability to realise their own goals is critically affected by their circumstances. True equality requires an active state to: ensure that no one is held back by poverty, poor health, or discrimination, provide access to education or training, and other public services, including a welfare safety net; and guarantee that everyone enjoys equality before the law.

2.5 Democracy is a core value of Liberal Democrats; it provides the means through which individuals exercise control over the institutions that

shape their lives. But democracy in Britain is under threat. The first-past-the-post electoral system leads to gross distortions in representation and means that large numbers of voters feel unrepresented. We believe that every citizen must be empowered to make their voice heard, without being dominated by entrenched interests or the power of money. That means supporting real democracy, with checks and balances, so that those in power cannot abuse their positions; and a plurality of views, where no individual or organisation is deterred from speaking truth to power.

2.6 Individuals do not exist in isolation; we are all members of an incredibly rich weave of different communities, whether defined geographically or through work, tradition, culture, interests or family. We will always strive to empower diverse communities and individuals' rights to join or to leave them. This means that we support a diverse range of organisations that enable individuals to join together in the pursuit of common goals; and the decentralisation of political and economic power to local government and the nations and regions of the UK.

2.7 Human rights are sacrosanct to Liberal Democrats. They are what safeguards our freedom against the tyranny of the powerful, in government, in society, in business and internationally. Liberal Democrats will always defend and promote equal legal rights for everyone to pursue their lives according to their abilities, wishes and means, free from discrimination and oppression. Whenever the powerful would seek to strip us of our fundamental rights, we would defend them.

2.8 Liberal Democrats are internationalists from principle, because we believe in the worth of every individual. We are also internationalists for good pragmatic reasons, because some goals are too big for nation-states to achieve on their own. Our commitment to internationalism means

striving for a fairer and more equal, tolerant and connected world and collaboration with other countries – including, especially, our European neighbours – in guaranteeing peace and security, tackling the climate and nature emergencies, standing up to corporate power and spreading prosperity around the world.

2.9 Liberal Democrats support not just the rights and opportunities of people living today, but also those of generations to come. That's why environmentalism is at the heart of what we believe, and is reflected in everything we do. This means acting at home and internationally to promote environmentally sustainable means of production and consumption and living in harmony with nature, so that future generations can enjoy the planet in a way many take for granted today.

2.10 Liberal Democrats base all our policies on these enduring liberal principles, which inform the rest of this paper.

3 The Economy

3.1 Liberal Democrats believe in empowering people and allowing businesses to thrive by making taxes fairer and increasing investment and productivity.

3.2 We believe that strong public services are vital for the well-being of individuals and society as whole. They must be paid for by taxation which is fair and progressive.

3.3 The Conservatives are taking people for granted. They have failed to deliver the investment needed to bring growth to all nations and regions of the UK. They responded too slowly to the cost of living crisis. And their promises to “level up” have proved hollow.

3.4 We will invest to bring prosperity to every corner of the UK whilst tackling the climate emergency.

3.5 In particular we will:

- Fuel economic growth, create good jobs, spread prosperity to every region and nation of the UK, whilst tackling the climate emergency - through a revolutionary green investment programme.
- Help people with the cost of living and their energy bills by cutting VAT to 17.5% for one year and implementing a one-off windfall tax on the super-profits of oil and gas producers and traders.
- Make taxes fair by taxing income from wealth more similarly to income from work, ensuring that tax burdens don't fall

disproportionately on low earners, reversing the Conservatives' tax cuts for big banks, and clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion.

- Give taxpayers real value for money, by fighting fraud and cracking down on Conservative waste. We will aim to recover at least half of the £4.3 billion of Covid support stolen by fraudsters and written off by the Government.
- Safeguard the UK's economic prosperity, whilst making the investments the UK needs to grow the economy. We will borrow to invest in key infrastructure while making sure that day-to-day spending does not exceed the amount of money raised in taxes over the medium term, with additional flexibility during periods of economic crisis.

4 Business and Jobs

4.1 Liberal Democrats know well that business is the principal engine of growth and prosperity in the UK. British employers must be able to hire the workers they need, and those who choose to come to the UK to work or study should be welcomed for the skills and contributions that they bring.

4.2 The Conservative Government has failed businesses and workers. It has failed to support the high street by retaining the rating system, hiked employers national insurance payments and failed to provide the skills training so desperately needed.

4.3 We will work in partnership with business to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for investment, growth and employment across the country.

4.4 In return, we ask that businesses commit to promote skills, equality, good governance and support for local communities.

4.5 We will:

- Boost high street businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, by reforming business rates and reducing employment costs.
- Encourage companies to tackle the climate emergency by incentivising them to become greener and invest in new clean technologies, and introducing a general duty of care for the environment and human rights in their operations and supply chains.

- Unlock British businesses' global potential by bringing down trade barriers and building stronger future relationships with our closest trading partners, including by starting to fix the Conservatives' botched trade deal with Europe, following the four-step roadmap set out at the Spring 2022 Conference and paving the way for applying to join the Single Market.
- Improve working life and productivity by capitalising on the flexible and digital working revolution resulting from the pandemic.
- Fix the skills and recruitment crisis by investing in peoples' skills and increasing the availability of apprenticeships and career advice for young people.
- Address the acute shortages of labour that are another outcome of the Conservatives' deal with the EU by negotiating reciprocal deals on low-cost and fast-tracked work visas for key economic sectors; transfer powers over work visas from the Home Office to the Business Department, and establish a new, arms-length unit to process applications quickly and correctly.
- Support science, research and innovation, particularly in zero-carbon, environmental and medical technologies, including participating in the Horizon Europe scheme.

5 Pensions and Benefits

5.1 Covid and the cost of living crisis have caused huge financial hardship across the country – and restricted the life chances of millions. The Government response has been a series of patchy and short term fixes.

5.2 Liberal Democrats will make sure that the broadest shoulders bear the greatest burden and that those who need help receive it.

5.3 Our aim is to make the UK the best place in the world to work, raise children and enjoy retirement. No-one should fear for their future, struggle to put food on their table or heat their home.

5.4 In particular, we will:

- Ensure that work pays, and give real support to those unable to work, by making Universal Credit more generous for those in employment, reinstating the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, and extending it to people on legacy benefits, most of whom are disabled.
- Support our pensioners, by protecting the triple lock ensuring that pensions rise in line with inflation, wages or 2.5% - whichever is highest
- Ensure that women born before the 1950s are finally treated fairly, by properly compensating them in line with the recommendations of the parliamentary ombudsman.

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- Make pensions green by requiring funds to comply with the climate rules in the Paris Agreement.

6 The NHS, Health, and Mental Health Services

6.1 Liberal Democrats strongly support the NHS's mission to ensure that when people need medical help they can get it in time and free at the point of use.

6.2 At present, this is often not the case. Ambulance response times and A&E waiting times are soaring. GP services are increasingly hard to access. Tens of thousands are waiting years for routine operations. NHS dentist numbers are falling. Cancer targets are routinely missed. And mental health services remain woefully under-funded.

6.3 There is a large and growing shortage of doctors, nurses, NHS dentists and other skilled NHS staff.

6.4 Liberal Democrats would ensure that everyone in England can get an appointment when they need one and get the treatment they need as soon as they need it. Training and recruiting more staff would be a top priority.

6.5 In particular, we will:

- Train and recruit more GPs so that everyone can get an appointment when they need one.
- Investigate the life-threatening crisis in our ambulance services and provide emergency funding to tackle poor response times.
- Recruit and train more new doctors and nurses to fill the 100,000 vacancies in the NHS and cut waiting times.

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- Put mental health, finally, on the same footing as physical health.
- Reform the funding formula for NHS dentists so that no one is forced to pay hundreds of pounds for private care.

7 Social Care and Carers

7.1 Everyone deserves high-quality social care if and when they need it.

7.2 Liberal Democrats want everyone to be able to live independently and in dignity, to support those who provide care to their loved ones and ensure that no-one has to sell their house to pay for their personal care.

7.3 But social care in England is in crisis. Thousands of people are stuck in hospital when their treatment is complete because of a shortage of social care beds and at-home care provision. Workers in social care and family carers are under-valued and under-funded. And the Government's plans to cap the cost an individual might have to pay for their personal care are mean and inadequate.

7.4 In particular, we will:

- Ensure everyone receives properly-funded personal care if they need it, in their homes where possible.
- Increase the Carer's Allowance so that unpaid carers have the support they so desperately need.
- Introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers.
- Hire more social care staff, provide training and advancement, and pay them properly.

8 Political Reform

8.1 We want to ensure that your voice is heard - and we want to transfer power back to the people.

8.2 The shambolic Conservative Government has created a crisis for democracy in this country, with their cronyism, rule-breaking and constant sleaze scandals.

8.3 It is a symptom of a broken political system - which enables the Government to take families up and down the country for granted. It is clear that we need a political system with fair representation, so that politics is made to work for you again.

8.4 Liberal Democrats want to begin to repair the damage that has been done by the constant stream of Conservative sleaze, and to end the era of neglect.

8.5 In particular, we will:

- Ensure no politician can take you for granted, by introducing fair votes.
- Make sure Government Ministers are finally accountable for corruption and sleaze, by enshrining the Ministerial code in legislation.
- Transfer greater powers away from Westminster and Whitehall to the nations that make up the Union, including to regions of

England as set out in policy motion *A Framework for England in a Federal UK* (2021)

- Introduce a written constitution for a federal United Kingdom.
- Enhance and strengthen the powers and standing of local government in England in the new federal constitutional settlement.
- Ensure a strong union with Scotland by opposing both a second independence referendum and independence.
- Make it a national security priority to protect the UK's democratic processes from any threats or interference.
- Take big money out of politics, by implementing a £10,000 annual cap on donations to political parties.

9 Rights and Equality

9.1 Liberal Democrats exist to build a free society where every person's rights and liberties are protected.

9.2 Progress achieved in recent decades has stalled under this Government. People are still discriminated against on the basis of their age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or disability. Economic and social inequalities deepen and hate crimes increase.

9.3 Through hostility and incompetence, the Conservatives have created an immigration system that no one trusts, and that fails even to respect people's basic dignity. Their Hostile Environment has turned teachers, doctors, police officers and landlords into border guards, and led members of the Windrush Generation to be evicted from their homes, detained and even deported – yet it remains in force.

9.4 Meanwhile, the Conservatives are trying to repeal the Human Rights Act, reduce the scope of judicial review and even make it harder to vote.

9.5 Liberal Democrats will champion freedom, dignity and well-being of every individual by promoting greater diversity across public life, tackle institutional biases by greater transparency and accountability, and hold the powerful to account.

9.6 In particular, we will:

- Champion the Human Rights Act and resist any attempts to weaken or repeal it.

- Ensure that all eligible voters are able to vote easily and simply without undue burdens, such as location of polling stations or voter ID requirements.
- Give everyone a new right to flexible working and every person with disabilities the right to work from home if they want to, unless there are significant business reasons why it is not possible.
- Scrap the Conservatives' Hostile Environment and invest instead in officers, training and technology to tackle smuggling, trafficking and modern slavery.
- Ban all forms of Conversion Therapy.
- Place a statutory duty of care on all social media platforms to prevent well-defined harms, based on clear evidence, and introduce a Digital Bill of Rights to protect everyone's rights online, including the rights to privacy, free expression, and participation without being subjected to harassment and abuse.
- Protect everyone's right to make independent decisions over their reproductive health without interference by the state, and ensure access to high-quality reproductive healthcare.

10 Housing

10.1 Liberal Democrats know that a good home is an absolute necessity for people's wellbeing and the base on which they build their lives. So we will ensure that everyone can have access to the housing that meets their needs.

10.2 Yet, in Britain today, many people cannot afford to buy or rent a home of good quality where they live.

10.3 Government housing targets are regularly missed and the shortage of affordable and social housing is at crisis point. Newly built homes are often energy-inefficient, many leaseholders are still facing large bills because of the building safety scandal and homelessness remains shamefully high. Local authorities' powers to build the kind of homes needed in their areas are inadequate.

10.4 Liberal Democrats are committed to tackling these housing failures head on by:

- Allowing councils to buy land for housing developments based on current use rather than on a 'hope value' based on planning application by reforming the Land Compensation Act 1961.
- Improving rights for renters in the private sector by ending Section 21 'no-fault evictions' and making longer tenancies the default, and for social housing tenants by giving them more powers over the management of their homes and estates.

- Building at least 150,000 new council and social homes a year, giving local authorities the powers to end the right to buy in their areas, and requiring them to have a landlord licensing scheme.
- Improving standards for new homes to ensure they're warm, cheap to heat and ultimately produce zero emissions
- Ensuring that leaseholders do not have to pay a penny towards removing dangerous cladding from their buildings.

11 Natural Environment

11.1 The value of our shared natural environment becomes clearer with each passing year. Liberal Democrats will safeguard and enhance the environment.

11.2 Our natural environment is suffering. The UK is failing to meet 17 of its 20 biodiversity targets. The government's own regulatory body, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) has rebuked the Conservatives on their lack of action on tackling the nature crisis.

11.3 Nowhere is the Conservatives' lack of care about the environment more apparent than in their failure to tackle sewage discharges. In the last two years there have been 772,000 instances of sewage discharges into our rivers, lakes and coastal areas, lasting over 5.5 million hours. Meanwhile, water companies made £2.8 billion in operating profits last year. They rewarded their executives with bonuses, benefits and incentives of over £27 million in the last two years.

11.4 Liberal Democrats would take strong action to tackle these problems. We will:

- Set meaningful and binding targets to stop the decline of our natural environment and "double nature" by 2050 (doubling the size of the Protected Area Network, doubling the area of most important wildlife habitats, and doubling the abundance of species).
- Strengthen the OEP and provide more funding to the Environment Agency and Natural England to help protect our environment.

- End sewage discharges by introducing a sewage tax to clean up our rivers and a ban on bonuses for sewage bosses until discharges end.

12 Food and Farming

12.1 Liberal Democrats know that farmers are key allies in the fight against climate change, preventing flooding and promoting biodiversity. They do all this whilst producing high quality food for our tables.

12.2 Their ability to do all this is threatened by the Conservative Government's botched move from direct payment to public money for public goods, which is seeing many farmers' incomes threatened. They are faced with massive fertiliser and feed inflation. And new trade deals with Australia and New Zealand undermine animal welfare and environmental protection, whilst undercutting responsible British farmers.

12.3 Liberal Democrats support the move towards paying farmers for producing public goods. But they need proper support to do so. And they need protecting from the low standards of imports in animal health or environmental standards. We would:

- Keep payments in full to family farming businesses until the better Environmental Land Management Scheme is rolled out.
- Guarantee that all future trade deals will maintain high health, environmental and animal welfare standards for food production, and ensure that Parliament signs off negotiating mandates and completed trade deals.
- Allow Britain's farmers to trade with our European neighbours by negotiating a comprehensive veterinary agreement guaranteeing access for UK food and animal products to the Single Market, with minimal need for checks.

- Support farmers properly in restoring woodland and peatland, creating new natural flood protections and managing land to encourage species recovery and carbon storage, while producing food for the table.

13 Communities

13.1 People's daily lives revolve around the communities in which they live. They need these communities to have the resources to work well for them. Liberal Democrats are committed to empowering local communities in England and allowing them to take the action they need to improve their areas.

13.2 Yet this government is taking powers away from local communities and not giving the funding they need to do their jobs as well as they could.

13.3 Local authorities lack the powers to tackle the climate emergency, whether by insulating homes or improving air quality around schools.

13.4 In rural areas, the growth of second homes, the lack of public transport and poor broadband connectivity are undermining the viability of our communities.

13.5 We will:

- Allow communities to limit the number of second homes and holiday lets.
- Enhance powers on community assets to help local authorities protect vital infrastructure.
- Giving local governments a key role to cut emissions in their own area, including more powers and funding.

- Ensure that improving connectivity, particularly broadband and mobile, starts with the hardest to reach areas first.
- End top down reorganisation of councils, and the imposition of elected mayors on communities who do not want them.

14 Transport

14.1 Liberal Democrats believe that people can only fulfil their potential if they are able to travel at reasonable prices for education, employment and leisure. At the same time, transport needs to change fundamentally to meet our climate change targets and to cut air pollution.

14.2 This Conservative Government has done next to nothing to tackle these issues. Its bus strategy is inadequate. Cuts to planned new rail services in the North undermine the region's prospects. And the lack of investment in rapid chargers for electric cars and vans has slowed down the take-up of this essential new technology.

14.3 Liberal Democrats would take transport seriously by investing in clean public transport, helping to meet our environmental targets whilst improving local, regional and national connectivity.

14.4 We will:

- Give greater powers for local authorities in England to design public transport infrastructure around community need.
- Give local authorities more control over their bus networks, including the ability to run their own buses, so that bus routes can be restored or new routes added where there is local need, especially in rural areas.
- Extend Britain's rail network. We'll improve stations, enhance disabled access, reopen smaller stations and restore twin-track lines to major routes.

- Freeze rail fares and simplify ticketing on public transport to ensure regular users are paying a fair and affordable price.
- Invest in more charging points for electric vehicles, especially in rural areas, and reduce VAT on electric vehicles to 5% to encourage uptake.
- Pass a Clean Air Act, based on World Health Organisation guidelines, enforced by a new Air Quality Agency.
- Promote cycling and walking as alternatives for short journeys.

15 Climate Change and Energy

15.1 Climate change threatens the security of people and the planet, in the UK and throughout the world. Soaring temperatures leading to wildfires, floods, droughts and sea-level rise are affecting millions of people directly, and billions through falling agricultural production and rising food prices.

15.2 On top of this, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has reinforced the need to end reliance on fossil fuels. It has underlined the need to improve energy security by reducing demand and accelerating the transition to renewable sources of energy.

15.3 Yet it is clear that Conservative Ministers don't care about climate change. They have no credible plans for insulating the millions of homes in the UK which urgently require it; the best solution to rising energy prices. They are supporting greater oil and gas production and are flirting again with fracking and new coal mines. The independent Committee on Climate Change warns that the Government's "current strategy will not deliver net zero".

15.4 Liberal Democrats place tackling the climate crisis at the centre of all our policies. We need a green recovery plan to create tens of thousands of jobs while cutting emissions and ensuring that the UK becomes a world leader in moving to net zero.

15.5 We would:

- Implement an emergency programme of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and power generation to

near-zero over ten years, including reaching 80% renewable power by 2030, and reducing energy consumption from all the UK's buildings, cutting emissions and fuel bills and reliance on gas, and helping to end fuel poverty. This will include providing free retrofits for low-income homes and generous tax incentives for other households.

- Strengthen the powers and resources of local authorities to cut emissions in their area, and promote community energy, including requiring all new homes to be fitted with solar panels.
- Accelerate the phase-out of fossil fuels in the UK economy by banning fracking and the opening of new coal mines and pits, and phasing out subsidies for oil and gas exploration, using the revenue to provide support for affected workers and communities.
- Plant at least 60 million trees a year to cut emissions, restore woodlands and increase the use of sustainable wood in construction.

16 Children and Young People

16.1 Liberal Democrats believe that every child, from any background, can achieve great things. Nothing is more fundamental to an individual's ability to get on in life and fulfil their potential than a great education.

16.2 The pandemic has made this harder, as children have lost out on social, emotional and academic experiences which will shape them for life.

16.3 The Conservative response has failed to recognise the scale of the challenge. The education gap is widening, and far too many children are struggling with their wellbeing. Inadequate mental health and academic support threatens many children's prospects of flourishing and fulfilling their potential.

16.4 We want their education to prepare our children and young people for a changing world, by building their skills through both academic and vocational pathways and a wide range of life enhancing experiences.

16.5 In particular, we plan to:

- Employ a qualified and dedicated mental health practitioner for every school, making sure every child and every parent has someone they can turn to for help.
- Make the investment needed for our children to catch up on the vital learning they missed during the pandemic.
- Expand opportunities for young people to work and study abroad by re-engaging with the Erasmus Plus scheme.

- Put an end to the postcode lottery for SEND children by training teachers to identify these needs early and investing in new technology to aid children from cradle to college.
- Reinstate maintenance grants for disadvantaged students immediately to make sure that living costs are not a barrier to studying at university.
- Introduce free, high-quality childcare for every child aged two to four and children aged between nine and 24 months where their parents or guardians are in work.
- Create new Skills Wallets for every adult, giving them £10,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives. These Skills Wallets will empower people to develop new skills so that they can thrive in the technologies and industries that are key to the UK's economic future.

17 International

17.1 Liberal Democrats believe that we should build on our reputation as a country which acts as a force for good in the world and uses trade as a tool for peace.

17.2 At this difficult time, Britain needs to stand up on the world stage for those vital liberal values which are the cornerstone of our society: democracy, liberty, human rights and the rule of law.

17.3 But the Conservatives are taking us backwards – threatening to break international law, slashing the international development budget and failing to call out human rights abuses such as the Uighur genocide.

17.4 They have turned their backs on refugees and closed down safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK, leaving desperate people to make perilous attempts to cross the Channel in small boats – often in the hands of criminal smugglers and traffickers.

17.5 We continue to believe that Britain is at its best when we are working closely with our allies. That's why we support a longer-term objective of UK membership of the EU. We are determined to repair the damage which Boris Johnson's trade deal has done to farmers, fishers and small businesses, and in Northern Ireland. Once those trading relations are deepened and the ties of trust and friendship are renewed, we aim to place the UK-EU relationship on a more formal and stable footing by seeking to join the Single Market.

17.6 In the next Parliament, our priorities will be:

- Restoring the UK's reputation as a development superpower, by reinstating the 0.7% of GNI target and re-establishing a Department for International Development.
- Putting human rights at the heart of trade, including by banning imports from Xinjiang, controlling arms exports to countries with poor human rights records and introducing a general duty of care for the environment and human rights in companies' operations and supply chains.
- Finally putting a stop to oligarchs from corrupt regimes channelling their money through the UK, including by substantially increasing funding for the National Crime Agency.
- Taking a pragmatic approach to building the UK's new relations with Europe by following our four-step roadmap (as set out at Spring Conference 2022), including agreeing partnerships or associations with EU agencies and programmes such as the European Aviation Safety Agency.
- Providing safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees, helping to prevent dangerous Channel crossings.

18 Defence

18.1 The Ukraine conflict demonstrates why we must always take defence seriously – and work with allies to protect all our freedoms.

18.2 The Conservative approach towards the role of our armed forces has been one of complacency. Cutting troop numbers by 10,000 is plain irresponsible. Their failure to procure assets on time and on budget is leaving our Armed Forces without the equipment they need. And their failure to look after service personnel properly – from suitable housing to mental health support – is unforgivable.

18.3 Liberal Democrats will strengthen our Armed Forces and support the people who work in them by:

- Cancelling the Conservative Government's planned cut to the army.
- Maintaining the UK's support for NATO, and accordingly spending at least 2% of GDP on defence in each year of the Parliament.
- Cooperating more closely with Britain's NATO and EU partners in the joint development of innovative defence technologies.
- Introducing a fair deal for service personnel and veterans, which will include placing a legal duty on the Defence Secretary to give due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant.

19 Culture, Media and Sport

19.1 Art, music, drama and sport bring people together and are an essential part of a thriving society. Our cultural heritage is a national treasure.

19.2 Liberal Democrats will invest in our cultural capital and nurture the next generation of talent.

19.3 Covid hit the culture and tourism sectors hard. And now many cultural institutions are under threat from this Government. They are starving the BBC of funds, proposing to sell off Channel 4, downgrading the status of arts subjects in schools and universities, and have erected barriers to British artists and musicians being able to perform elsewhere in Europe.

19.4 We will support the creative and tourism industries across the UK. In particular, we will:

- Protect the BBC and Channel 4 as independent, publicly-owned, public service broadcasters.
- Support growth in the creative industries, including by promoting creative skills, addressing the barriers to finance faced by small businesses, and supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules.
- Negotiate free and simple short-term travel for UK artists to perform in the EU, and European artists to perform in the UK.
- Protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery.

20 Crime and Policing

20.1 Everyone should feel safe in their own homes and when they walk down the street. But for too many people that's not the reality they face.

20.2 Liberal Democrats will restore trust in the police and criminal justice system by promoting community policing, preventing crime and building communities where people feel safe – and are safe.

20.3 The Conservatives have talked tough on crime, but failed even to get the basics right. Serious violence is destroying too many young lives. Burglaries, anti-social behaviour, fraud and scams go largely unsolved. Violence against women and girls remains horrifically high.

20.4 Huge backlogs in the courts are denying victims the justice they deserve. Prisons are in crisis: overcrowded, understaffed and failing to rehabilitate offenders.

20.5 We will:

- Restore proper community policing, where officers are visible, trusted and focused on preventing and solving crimes – especially rape and other violent crime.
- Invest in the criminal justice system to clear the backlog of court cases and ensure swift justice for victims and offenders.
- Break the cycle of reoffending by improving rehabilitation in prison and on release, and strengthening the supervision of offenders in the community.

- Make misogyny a hate crime, and give police and prosecutors the resources and training they need to prevent and prosecute all hate crimes.

Pre-manifesto

Policy Paper 149

This paper has been approved for debate by the Federal Conference by the Federal Policy Committee under the terms of Article 7.4 of the Federal Constitution.

Within the policy-making procedure of the Liberal Democrats, the Federal Party determines the policy of the Party in those areas which might reasonably be expected to fall within the remit of the federal institutions in the context of a federal United Kingdom.

The Party in England, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Welsh Liberal Democrats and the Northern Ireland Local Party determine the policy of the Party on all other issues, except that any or all of them may confer this power upon the Federal Party in any specified area or areas.

The Party in England has chosen to pass up policy-making to the Federal level. If approved by Conference, this paper will therefore form the policy of the Federal Party on federal issues and the Party in England on English issues. In appropriate policy areas, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland party policy would take precedence.

The Manifesto Working Group

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Further copies of this paper can be found online at

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Published and promoted by Mike Dixon
on behalf of the Liberal Democrats,
1 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PN.

Printed by Sarum Colourview,
Unit 8, The Woodford Centre,
Old Sarum, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 6BU

ISBN: 978-1-915375-06-3