

Manifesto Summary

Liberal Democrats

25/11/2019



Brexit

- If a majority is won, the Liberal Democrats will revoke Article 50 and remain in the EU.
- If a majority is not won, the Liberal Democrats will campaign for a second referendum with the option to remain in the EU, with the party campaigning for remain.
- EU citizens would be granted the right to vote in a referendum through electoral law reform.

Regional/Devolution

- Give local authorities and regions the power to make decisions about their areas.
- Introduce a **capital £50 billion Regional Rebalancing Programme for infrastructure spend across the nations and regions of the UK**, with local and devolved authorities given a say in how it is used, reinforced by a Just Transition Fund to support communities negatively affected by policies to tackle the climate emergency.
- Continue to champion investment in the **Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine**, putting significant capital resources into infrastructure projects across these regions.
- **Decentralise decision-making from Whitehall and Westminster**, by inviting local areas to take control of the services that matter to them most.
- Give democratic **local government enhanced powers to call on new income sources** appropriate to their area to support local services and investment.
- Devolve further revenue-raising powers away from Westminster, to regions from Cornwall to North East England. We will legislate to empower groups of authorities to come together to establish devolved governance and ensure that any powers devolved are matched by the funding to deliver on the needs of local people.
- **Devolve more decision-making power over key levers of economic development including transport, energy, housing and skills.**
- In some areas of England there is a 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. All areas should however have access to the same opportunities and mayoral authorities should not be ranked higher in terms of the powers with which they can be granted. We will enact permissive legislation to empower groups of authorities to come together to establish devolved

governance – for example to a Cornish Assembly or a Yorkshire Parliament, building on the One Yorkshire campaign. We will proceed by consensus as far as possible but will not allow one local authority to veto a coherent proposal.

Connectivity

- **Investing £130 billion in infrastructure** – upgrading our transport and energy systems, building schools, hospitals and homes, empowering all regions and nations of the UK and developing the climate-friendly infrastructure of the future.
- We are committed to a responsible and realistic £130 billion package of additional infrastructure investment, which will prioritise:
- Significant investment in public transport, including **converting the rail network to ultra-low-emission technology (electric or hydrogen) by 2035, and a continued commitment to HS2, Crossrail 2 and other major new strategic rail routes.**
- A programme of **installing hyper-fast, fibre-optic broadband across the UK** – with a particular focus on connecting rural areas.
- An emergency ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings, cutting emissions and fuel bills and ending fuel poverty.
- **Freeze rail fares** for commuters and season ticket holders for a parliament, while we fix our railways.
- Extend Britain's rail network, improve stations, reopen smaller stations and restore twin-track lines to major routes.
- Convert the rail network to ultra-low-emission technology (electric or hydrogen) by 2035, and provide funding for light rail and trams.
- **Support High Speed 2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, East-West Rail and Crossrail 2, but ensure far tighter financial controls and increased accountability** to ensure that these projects are value for money, and **address problems with implementation to ensure that HS2 opens as early as**

possible to meet our decarbonisation goals while minimising the destruction of precious UK habitats and woodland.

- Start a **revolution in rail franchising** by opening up the bidding process to public sector companies, local or combined authorities, not-for-profits and mutuals – which have the potential to deliver much better services than private operators.
- Build into new rail franchise agreements a stronger focus on customers, including investment in new stations, lines and modern trains.
- Create a **new Railways Agency** to oversee the operations of the railway network, removing the Department for Transport from day-to-day decision-making.
- Be far more proactive in sanctioning and ultimately sacking train operators if they fail to provide a high-quality public service to their customers.
- Improve the experience of people who rely on the railways for work by investing in commuter routes and the integration of rail, bus and cycle routes.
- Fix the broken fares and ticketing system so that it provides better value for money.

People

- Enabling an adaptable, future-focused workforce – empowering individuals through new **Skills Wallets worth £10,000** for every individual.
- Develop the skilled workforce needed to support this growth by introducing **a new two-year visa for students** to work after graduation and **a major expansion of high-quality apprenticeships including Higher Apprenticeships, backed up by new sector-led National Colleges.**
- Develop **a national skills strategy for key sectors**, including zero-carbon technologies, to help match skills and people; our new Skills Wallets will allow people to retrain and upskill when they need to.
- Support the UK's diverse, inclusive tech sector by teaching core skills such as logic, verbal reasoning and creativity in schools, and by reforming immigration rules – including enabling industry bodies to sponsor work visas.

- Enable people whose jobs are affected by automation to gain new skills and retrain with our new Skills Wallets, so that they can work in the good, well-paying jobs of the future.
- Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a genuine Living Wage across all sectors. We will pay this Living Wage in all central government departments and their agencies, and encourage other public sector employers to do likewise.
- Establish a powerful new Worker Protection Enforcement Authority to protect those in precarious work.
- Change the law so that flexible working is open to all from day one in the job, with employers required to advertise jobs accordingly, unless there are significant business reasons why that is not possible.
- Modernise employment rights to make them fit for the age of the 'gig economy', including by:
 - Establishing a new 'dependent contractor' employment status in between employment and self-employment, with entitlements to basic rights such as minimum earnings levels, sick pay and holiday entitlement.
 - Reviewing the tax and National Insurance status of employees, dependent contractors and freelancers to ensure fair and comparable treatment.
 - Setting a 20 per cent higher minimum wage for people on zero-hour contracts at times of normal demand to compensate them for the uncertainty of fluctuating hours of work.
 - Giving a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for 'zero hours' and agency workers, not to be unreasonably refused.
 - Reviewing rules concerning pensions so that those in the gig economy don't lose out, and portability between roles is protected.
 - Shifting the burden of proof in employment tribunals regarding employment status from individual to employer.
- **Expand the apprenticeship levy into a wider 'Skills and Training Levy'** to help prepare the UK's workforce for the economic challenges ahead with 25 per cent of the funds raised by the levy going into a 'Social Mobility Fund' targeted at areas with the greatest skill needs.

- Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- Identify and **seek to solve skills gaps** such as the lack of advanced technicians by **expanding higher vocational training like foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.**
- Introduce new Skills Wallets for every adult in England, giving them £10,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives:
- The government will put in £4,000 at age 25, £3,000 at age 40 and £3,000 at age 55.
- Individuals, their employers and local government will be able to make additional payments into the wallets.
- Individuals can choose how and when to spend this money on a range of approved education and training courses from providers who are regulated and monitored by the Office for Students.
- Individuals will have access to free careers guidance to help them to decide how to spend the money in their Skills Wallets.
- Government will work with industry to identify skills needs and to evaluate and certify courses.
- Establish **a review of higher education finance** in the next parliament to consider any necessary reforms in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on

access, participation and quality, and make sure there are no more retrospective raising of rates or selling-off of loans to private companies.

- Ensure that all universities work to widen participation by disadvantaged and underrepresented groups across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.

Place

- Reform building standards to ensure that all new homes built from 2022 have full connectivity to ultra-fast broadband and are designed to enable the use of smart technologies.
- **Replace Business Rates in England with a Commercial Landowner Levy** based solely on the land value of commercial sites rather than their entire capital value, thereby stimulating investment, and shifting the burden of taxation from tenants to landowners.
- **New direct spending on housebuilding to help build 300,000 homes a year** by 2024, including 100,000 social homes.
- Help finance the large increase in the building of social homes with investment from our £130 billion capital infrastructure budget.
- Build new houses to zero-carbon standards and cut fuel bills through a ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings.
- **Devolve full control of Right to Buy to local councils.**
- To support people to find and keep homes of their own we will:
 - Help people who cannot afford a deposit by introducing a new Rent to Own model for social housing where rent payments give tenants an increasing stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.
 - Allow local authorities to increase council tax by up to 500 per cent where homes are being bought as second homes with a stamp duty surcharge on overseas residents purchasing such properties.
- To reform the private rental sector, we will:

- Help young people into the rental market by establishing a new **Help to Rent scheme** to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for all first-time renters under 30.
- Promote longer tenancies of three years or more with an inflation-linked annual rent increase built in, to give tenants security and limit rent hikes.
- Improve protections against rogue landlords through mandatory licensing.
- To improve social renting, we will:
 - Set clearer standards for homes that are socially rented.
 - Require complaints to be dealt with in a timely manner.
 - Proactively enforce the regulations that are intended to protect social renters.
 - Fully recognise tenant panels so that renters have a voice in landlord governance.

Competitiveness

- Set an ambitious National Industrial Strategy to transform the economy and develop **Local Industrial Strategies** within it that incentivise clustering by businesses and universities with particular specialisations.
- Support the tourist industry which is vital for many local economies by:
 - Upgrading the status of tourism within government, by creating a Department of Digital, Culture, Media, Sport and Tourism, with a designated Minister of State for Tourism.
 - Enabling local authorities to bring in tourist levies to fund local tourism infrastructure.
- We want to lay the foundations for the UK to be the best place in the world for innovation-led businesses in the long-term – to be a place where people come from across the EU and the world to turn their ideas into reality. But with R&D and innovation investment lagging behind

other countries and being overly concentrated in South East England, it needs major change to make this vision a reality.

- Support the growth of new jobs and businesses in the tech sector by allowing companies to claim R&D tax credits against the cost of purchasing datasets and cloud computing, simplifying the regulatory landscape and speeding up regulatory change.
- Develop a mechanism to allow the public to share in the profits made by tech companies in the use of their data.
- Empower consumers and ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of new technology, by setting a UK-wide target for digital literacy and requiring all products to provide a short, clear version of their terms and conditions, setting out the key facts as they relate to individuals' data and privacy.
- **Restore Corporation Tax to 20 per cent** – reversing the Conservatives' reduction of this tax to 17 per cent – and keep the rate is stable with a predictable future path.