

## The Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2015

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## 1 Overview

Launching his party's [manifesto](#) in Battersea today, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg spoke of the inevitability of another Coalition and the need to avoid "a coalition of grievance" that involves UKIP or the SNP. Clegg emphasised the undesirability of letting UKIP or the SNP "hold the Government to ransom" and used his manifesto launching speech to pitch the party as the rational middle option between the austerity of the Conservative Party and the fiscally irresponsibility of Labour.

The document makes almost constant mention of the party's achievements during the last Parliament. Clegg stressed the capacity for the Lib Dems to complement, or act as a damage limitation buffer, between the two main parties, and said "We will add a heart to a Conservative government and we will add a brain to a Labour one"



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## 2 Key Messages

The front page of the manifesto details five of the Liberal Democrat's key messages:

- Prosperity for all
- Fair taxes
- Opportunity for every child
- Our environment protected
- Quality health care for all

### 2.1 Prosperity for all

Balance the budget fairly and invest to build a high-skill, low-carbon economy

### 2.2 Fair taxes

Cut taxes by an additional £400 by raising the Personal Allowance to £12,500

### 2.3 Opportunity for every child

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

### 2.4 Our environment protected

Protect nature and fight climate change with five green laws

### 2.5 Quality health care for all

Invest £8 billion to improve our NHS and guarantee equal care for mental health

## 3 Key policies

- Eradicate the structural current budget deficit by 2017/18 and have debt falling as a percentage of national income, so it is back to sustainable levels by the middle of the next decade
- Continue to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on international development aid, helping the poorest in the world



- Introduce a UK-wide High Value Property Levy on residential properties worth over £2 million. It will have a banded structure, like Council Tax
- Legislate for the Liberal Democrat 'triple lock' of increasing the State Pension each year by the highest of earnings growth, prices growth or 2.5%
- Introduce a Land Value Tax (LVT), which would replace Business Rates in the longer term and could enable the reduction or abolition of other taxes
- Introduce a Digital Bill of Rights
- Reform to the House of Lords
- Extend free school meals to all primary pupils
- Double the numbers of businesses hiring apprentices, and give young people aged 16–21 a discount bus pass to cut the cost of travel
- Ensure Britain plays a constructive part in the European Union and any referendum triggered by the EU Act is on the big question: In or Out

## 4 Technology

Alongside the headline commitment to a Digital Bill of Rights, the manifesto acknowledges that tech companies are driving UK economic success and growing at a rate of over 10% a year. The document lays out plans to double innovation spending, expand 'digital-by-default' approaches to public services, support fast-growing tech 'scale-ups', and develop the UK's regional strengths in technology.

Regarding the tech sector, the online sphere and the digital economy, pledges were made under three main areas: "Securing global leadership in technology", "Protecting privacy in a digital age", and "Securing liberty online".

### 4.1 Securing global leadership in technology

- Complete the rollout of high-speed broadband, to reach almost every household (99.9%) in the UK as well as small businesses in both rural and urban areas
- Build on the success of Tech City, Tech North and the Cambridge tech cluster with a network across the UK acting as incubators for technology companies
- Support fast-growing businesses that could create a million jobs over 20 years, following the Sherry Coutu report into these 'Scale- Ups'
- Promote the take up of STEM subjects in schools, retain coding on the National Curriculum and encourage entrepreneurship at all levels
- Maintain and develop the award-winning Government Digital Service, and the principle of Digital by Default in public services, pressing ahead with plans to extend this to local government
- Continue to release government data sets that can facilitate economic growth in an open and accessible format, including on standards in public services



- Ensure the technology implications of government activity are properly considered by introducing Technology Impact Assessments into the policy design process
- Develop cutting-edge digital skills courses for young people and the unemployed, working with private sector employers and education and training providers

## 4.2 Protecting privacy in a digital age

- Enshrine the principle that everyone has the right to control their own personal data, and that everyone should be able to view, correct, and (where appropriate and proportionate) delete their personal data, wherever it is held
- Forbid any public body from collecting, storing or processing personal data without statutory authority, and require any such legislation to be regularly reviewed
- Give increased powers and resources for the Information Commissioner and introduce custodial sentences for egregious breaches of the Data Protection Act
- Ensure privacy is protected to the same extent in telecoms and online as in the offline world
- Ensure that privacy policies and terms and conditions of online services, including smartphone apps, must be clear, concise and easy for the user to understand
- Uphold the right of individuals, businesses and public bodies to use strong encryption to protect their privacy and security online
- Make it clear that online services have a duty to provide age-appropriate policies, guidance and support to the children and young people who use their services

## 4.3 Securing liberty online

- Safeguard the essential freedom of the internet and back net neutrality, the principle that internet service providers should enable access to all lawful content and applications regardless of the source, and without favouring or blocking particular products or websites
- Oppose the introduction of the so-called Snooper's Charter. We blocked the draft Communications Data Bill and would do so again. Requiring companies to store a record of everyone's internet activities for a year or to collect third-party communications data for non-business purposes is disproportionate and unacceptable, as is the blanket surveillance of our paper post
- We are opposed to the blanket collection of UK residents' personal communications by the police or the intelligence agencies. Access to metadata, live content, or the stored content of personal communications must only take place without consent where there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or to prevent threats to life

# 5 Health



Describing the NHS “as the envy of the world” the party has made a bold pledge on ending the “discrimination against mental health” and ensuring parity of care with physical health as the centre piece of its health agenda.

The Liberal Democrats had committed to meeting in full the recommendations of the NHS Chief Executive, Simon Stevens, and the Five Year Forward View. As such, the party has committed to deliver £8bn and ring-fencing NHS spending from departmental cuts during the course of the next Parliament.

The key points are:

- Commitment to provide the NHS with an extra £8bn by 2020 to meet the spending shortfall as identified in the Five Year Forward View
- Invest £500m in mental health care
- Commission a non-partisan Fundamental Review of NHS and social care funding this year
- Secure local agreement on full pooling of budgets between the NHS and care services with a target date of 2018
- Set clear goals for earlier diagnosis and improved aftercare for conditions like cancer and heart disease
- Support effective public awareness campaigns like ‘Be Clear on Cancer’ by working closely with charities to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of diseases
- Work with Monitor to reform NHS funding systems, moving away from payments for activity to tariffs that encourage joined-up services and preventive care
- End the role of the Competition and Markets Authority in the NHS
- Protect the NHS from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
- Doubling spending on dementia research by 2020
- Ensure the NHS gets the best out of innovative medicines and treatments while continuing to ensure value for money for the NHS in cost negotiations
- Support, including through rules on public funding and research, moves towards ensuring all clinical trials are registered, with their methods and summary results reported in public
- An annual Carer’s Bonus of £250 for carers looking after someone for 35 hours or more each week
- Publish a national wellbeing strategy, which puts better health and wellbeing for all at the heart of government policy
- Combine the public health, adult social care and health outcome frameworks into a single national wellbeing outcomes framework
- Finish implementing the Dilnot Report proposals on social care

## 6 Transport



As well as confirming historic support for local public transport and low carbon alternatives, the manifesto includes considerable focus on national transport infrastructure. The party pledges to set out 10-year rolling capital investment plans and 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.

The key points are:

- Invest in major transport improvements and infrastructure:
  - 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
- Ensure airport infrastructure meets the needs of a modern and open economy, without allowing emissions from aviation to undermine our goal of a zero-carbon Britain by 2050
- Carefully consider the conclusions of the Davies Review into runway capacity and develop a strategic airports policy for the whole of the UK in the light of those recommendations and advice from the Committee on Climate Change
- Remain opposed to any expansion of Heathrow, Stansted or Gatwick and any new airport in the Thames Estuary, because of local issues of air and noise pollution. We will ensure no net increase in runways across the UK
- Ensure new rail franchises include a stronger focus on customers, including requirements to integrate more effectively with other modes of transport and a programme of investment in new stations, lines and station facilities
- Continue the Access for All programme, improving disabled access to public transport

## **7 Energy**

The Manifesto includes significant detail in terms of energy and environment and reaffirms the party's high level commitment to the climate change agenda. High profile pledges include expanding the Green Investment Bank and setting a legally binding decarbonisation target. The manifesto also pledges to force energy companies to allow customers to change to any cheaper supplier in just 24 hours and to give people easier to understand information about their own energy use, with appropriate privacy protections, with a national rollout of smart electricity and gas meters.



Energy and climate change Pledges were made under two main categories: green Jobs and industry, and low-carbon energy.

## 7.1 Green Jobs and industry

- Pass a Zero Carbon Britain Act to set a new legally binding target to bring net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050
- Realise the full potential of the Green Investment Bank by increasing its capitalisation, expanding its remit, allowing it to raise funds independently and enabling it to issue green bonds.
- Place the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) on the same statutory footing as the Committee on Climate Change through our Nature Act. We will task the NCC with identifying the key natural resources being used unsustainably and recommending legally binding targets for reducing their net consumption; and introduce incentives for businesses to improve resource efficiency
- Help incentivise sustainable behaviour by increasing the proportion of tax revenue accounted for by green taxes
- Grow the market for green products and services with steadily higher green criteria in public procurement policy, extending procurement requirements more widely through the public sector including to the NHS and Academy schools. In particular we will deliver ambitious reductions in energy use.
- Increase research and development and commercialisation support in four key low-carbon technologies where Britain could lead the world: tidal power, carbon capture and storage, energy storage and ultra-low emission vehicles
- Ensure UK Trade and Investment and UK Export Finance can prioritise support for key sectors identified in our Industrial Strategy, including exports of green products and technologies, and press for higher environmental standards for export credit agencies throughout the OECD
- Encourage the creation of green financial products to bring consumer capital into green industries.

## 7.2 Low-carbon energy

- Make saving energy a top infrastructure priority, stimulating private sector demand with our new Electricity Demand Reduction market, new market-shaping energy efficiency standards, support for industry, particularly SMEs, and a programme of tax incentives and public investment.
- Stimulate a minimum of £100 billion more private investment in low-carbon energy infrastructure by 2020.
- Set a legally binding decarbonisation target range for 2030 for the power sector of 50–100g of CO<sub>2</sub> per kWh, which can largely be achieved by expansion of renewables, with an indicative target of 60% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. We will support investment in energy storage and smart grid technology to enable this higher reliance on renewables



- Work with the independent regulator Ofgem to ensure the costs of electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure are allocated efficiently and fairly between consumers and generators across the country, and develop more European electricity interconnection capacity.
- Regulate to end the use of unabated coal in electricity generation by 2025 because of its high carbon emissions and impact on local air quality, and require any new gas stations built after 2030 to be fitted with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology. We will implement a second phase of CCS projects by 2020.
- 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
- Accept that new nuclear power stations can play a role in low- carbon electricity supply provided concerns about safety, disposal of waste and cost are adequately addressed and without public subsidy for new build.
- Use biomass primarily for heating and small-scale power generation, act to encourage the wider use of biogas and argue for the reform of EU policies on biofuels and biomass which help drive deforestation, including ending all support for food-cropbased biofuels after 2020.
- Continue to back new entrants to the energy market, smart meters and faster switching to promote proper competition, aiming for at least 30% of the household market to be supplied by competitors to the 'Big 6' by 2020.

## **7.3 Five green laws**

In a bid to further distinguish the Liberal Democrats from Labour and the Tories in terms of their green credentials, the manifesto contains far more detail and identifies "five green laws" that would combine to establish a permanent legal framework for a prosperous, sustainable economy.

### **7.3.1 A Nature Act**

- To place the Natural Capital Committee on a statutory footing and require Government to set out a 25 year plan for recovering nature

### **7.3.2 A Resource Efficiency and Zero Waste Britain Act**

- A statutory recycling target of 70% for waste in England and increased penalties for waste crimes

### **7.3.3 A Green Transport Act**





- The electrification of all major rail routes by 2030 and a requirement for all new buses and taxis to be Ultra Low Emission by 2030

### **7.3.4 A Zero Carbon Britain Act**

- A 2030 power sector decarbonisation target of 50-100g per kWh and full borrowing powers to the Green Investment Bank

### **7.3.5 A Green Buildings Act**

- A Council Tax discount for significant improvements in energy efficiency in homes and a statutory target to bring the homes of all fuel-poor households to Band C by 2027

## **Political Intelligence**

The 2015 general election is the most unpredictable election in over a generation. The Political Intelligence team will be following developments closely both on the campaign trail and following the outcome of the 7th May. Given the current unlikelihood of an outright majority for any party, it will be important for all organisations who engage with Government to be up to speed on the new developments as soon as possible and to consider how a new coalition (potentially of more than two parties) may impact their sectors.

We will be helping clients both new and old to:

- Identify key influencers of relevance to their businesses across all political parties;
- Analyse the policy priorities within the first Queen's speech of the new Parliament;
- Develop a proposed public affairs engagement strategy for the initial 6/12 months of the new Parliament
- Develop the necessary messaging and briefing collateral to resonate most effectively among key audiences.

If you would like to consider an initial strategy workshop to discuss your current plans post-election or would like discuss ways in which Political Intelligence could support your organisation in your public affairs activity, please do not hesitate to contact us on 020 3397 3300 or our Group Managing Director [Nicholas Lansman](#) for further information.