

# LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY 2017 ELECTION MANIFESTO

SECTIONS RELATED TO UK  
FOREIGN POLICY

Change Britain's Future

**Protect  
Britain's Place  
in Europe**

## 1.1 Giving the people the final say

Liberal Democrats are open and outward-looking. We passionately believe that Britain's relationship with its neighbours is stronger as part of the European Union. Whatever its imperfections, the EU remains the best framework for working effectively and co-operating in the pursuit of our shared aims. It has led directly to greater prosperity, increased trade, investment and jobs, better security and a greener environment. Britain is better off in the EU.

Liberal Democrats campaigned for the UK to remain in the EU. However, we acknowledge the result of the 2016 referendum, which gave the government a mandate to start negotiations to leave. The decision Britain took, though, was simply whether to remain in or to leave the European Union. There was no option on the ballot paper to choose the shape of our future relationship with the EU on vital issues including trade, travel or security.

While much remains uncertain about Theresa May's approach, it is now clear that the Conservatives are campaigning for a hard Brexit. This means leaving the single market, ending freedom of movement and abandoning the customs union – even though these choices will make the UK poorer and disappoint many leave voters who wanted a different outcome.

The effects of Brexit are already being felt. The value of the pound has plummeted. Inflation has risen. Growth in the economy has slowed and the government is already borrowing billions more to fill the gap in lost tax revenue. Young people, who voted overwhelmingly to remain, are being told their voices do not matter. Urgent problems, such as the future of the NHS, are being neglected because of the sheer scale of the challenge posed by Brexit.

A hard Brexit will make all these problems worse. It is the wrong choice for the country. Liberal Democrats will fight to prevent a hard Brexit.

At the end of negotiations there will be a decision on the deal. The Conservatives want the decision to be taken by politicians. Liberal Democrats believe the British people should have the final say.

That's why, when the terms of our future relationship with the EU have been negotiated (over the next two years on the Government's timetable), we will

put that deal to a vote of the British people in a referendum, with the alternative option of staying in the EU on the ballot paper. We continue to believe that there is no deal as good for the UK outside the EU as the one it already has as a member.

Every vote for the Liberal Democrats in this election is a vote to give the final say to the British people.

## 1.2 Fighting a hard Brexit

During negotiations, we commit ourselves to use our strength in parliament to press for keeping Britain as close as possible to Europe. Our priorities will include:

- **Protection of rights for EU citizens and UK citizens:** We will press for the UK to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals in the UK, ending their ongoing uncertainty. We will call for the overhaul and simplification of the registration process and the requirements for EU nationals to obtain permanent residence and UK citizenship, as the current system is not fit for purpose. We will urge the government, and use our influence with Liberal leaders in European countries, to secure the same rights for UK citizens living in European Union countries.
- **Membership of the single market and customs union:** We believe that any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must ensure that trade can continue without customs controls at the border, and must maintain membership of the single market, which smooths trade between the UK and the continent by providing a common 'rule book' for businesses and a common mechanism to ensure that everyone abides by the rules.
- **Freedom of movement:** We support the principle of freedom of movement – to abandon it would threaten Britain's prosperity and reputation as an open, tolerant society. Any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must protect the right to work, travel, study and retire across the EU. Any restrictions sought by the government must take account of the vital importance of EU workers to the British economy, including public services.
- **Opportunities for young people:** In an increasingly globalised and complex world, it is vital that our young people are afforded the same opportunities their parents enjoyed to work, study and travel abroad. To that end we will do everything we can to protect Erasmus+ and other EU-funded schemes which increase opportunities for young people.

- **Defending social rights and equalities:** Many important protections such as the right to 52 weeks' maternity leave and rights to annual leave are currently based on EU law, and many of these rights have been upheld at the European Court of Justice. Liberal Democrats will fight to ensure that these entitlements are not undermined.
- **Maintaining environmental standards:** The European Union has created the highest environmental standards in the world. We have a duty to future generations to protect our environment and tackle climate change. Liberal Democrats will ensure that everything is done to maintain those high standards in UK law, including the closest possible co-operation on climate and energy policy.
- **Law enforcement and judicial co-operation:** Europol, the European Arrest Warrant and shared access to police databases have helped make Britain's streets safer. We will fight to maintain maximum co-operation to ensure criminals are pursued quickly and effectively, and police are not frustrated by huge amounts of red tape.
- **British business and jobs:** We must protect support for domestic industries such as farming, tourism and the creative industries, as well as regional support for deprived areas. The City of London is Europe's financial capital and must retain its full rights in EU financial markets.
- **Science and research funding:** Research is vital for our long-term prosperity, security and wellbeing – but the Leave vote has already started to affect existing and proposed research programmes. We will campaign against any reduction in investment in UK universities and for their right to apply for EU funds on equal terms.
- **Travel and tourism:** Britain is an outward-looking country with commercial and leisure interests around the world, particularly in Europe. We will strive to retain traveller and tourist benefits such as the European Health Insurance Card, reduced roaming charges and pet passports, all of which are at risk by leaving the European Union.
- **Respect for the interests of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:** We will fight to ensure that the priorities and long-term interests of the nations of the UK are fully taken into account during negotiations. We will oppose any moves that threaten the political stability of Northern Ireland. We will also campaign to protect the rights of the people of Gibraltar.

## 7.6 Terrorism and violent extremism

As recent events across Europe – and at the heart of our own democracy – have shown, terrorism and violent extremism threaten us all. As liberals, we must have an effective security policy which is also accountable, community and evidence-based, and does not unduly restrict personal liberty. That’s why the Liberal Democrats will:

- Continue cross-border co-operation between security forces across Europe.
- Permit intercepts where justified and permit surveillance of those suspected of serious crime and terrorism with proper judicial oversight.
- Scrap the flawed Prevent strategy and replace it with a scheme that prioritises community engagement and supports communities in developing their own approach to tackling the dangers of violent extremism.
- Roll back state surveillance powers by ending the indiscriminate bulk collection of communications data, bulk hacking, and the collection of internet connection records.
- Oppose Conservative attempts to undermine encryption.
- Notify innocent people who have been placed under targeted surveillance where this can be done without jeopardising ongoing investigations.

## 7.7 Combatting the harm done by drugs

The war on drugs has been a catastrophic failure. Every year, billions flow to organised crime while we needlessly prosecute and imprison thousands of people, blighting their employment and life chances, and doing nothing to address the impact of drugs on their health. Our current approach to drugs helps nobody except criminal gangs. For that reason Liberal Democrats will:

- End imprisonment for possession of illegal drugs for personal use, diverting those arrested for possession of drugs for personal use into treatment and education (adopting a health-based approach), or imposing civil penalties.
- Break the grip of the criminal gangs and protect young people by introducing a legal, regulated market for cannabis. We would introduce limits on potency and permit cannabis to be sold through licensed outlets to adults over the age of 18.
- Concentrate on catching and prosecuting those who manufacture, import or deal in illegal drugs.

- Repeal the Psychoactive Substances Act which has driven the sale of formerly legal highs underground.
- Move the departmental lead on drugs policy to the Department of Health.

## 7.8 Immigration and asylum

Immigration and asylum are under attack. Immigration is essential to our economy and a benefit to our society. We depend on immigration to ensure we have the people we need contributing to the UK's economy and society, including doctors, agricultural workers, entrepreneurs, scientists and so many others. Immigration broadens our horizons and encourages us to be more open, more tolerant.

Refugees are human beings fleeing from war zones and persecution, and we have a legal and moral obligation to offer them sanctuary. The Liberal Democrats are proud of the UK's historic commitments to assisting those seeking refuge from war, persecution and degradation, and believe that we should continue to uphold our responsibilities.

The immigration and asylum systems have suffered from inefficiency and severe backlogs and delays over many years, harming their credibility and ability to operate effectively. We recognise that large-scale immigration has placed strains on some local communities and services. Major improvements are urgently needed. For that reason, when it comes to immigration the Liberal Democrats will:

- Ensure that the immigration system is operated fairly and efficiently, with strict control of borders, including entry and exit checks, and adequately funded Border Force policing of entry by irregular routes.
- Hold an annual debate in parliament on skill and labour market shortfalls and surpluses to identify the migration necessary to meet the UK's needs.
- Continue to allow high-skilled immigration to support key sectors of our economy, and ensure work, tourist and family visas are processed quickly and efficiently.
- Recognising their largely temporary status, remove students from the official migration statistics.
- Ensure the UK is an attractive destination for overseas students. We will reinstate post-study work visas for graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects who find suitable employment within six months of graduating. Give the devolved administrations the right to sponsor additional post-study work visas.



- Work with universities to ensure a fair and transparent student visa process and find ways to measure accurately the number of students leaving at the end of their course.
- Establish a centrally funded Migration Impact Fund to help local communities to adjust to new migration and meet unexpected pressures on public services and housing.
- Provide additional government funding for English as an additional language classes to help migrants and residents gain independence and integrate with their local communities.

And for asylum, the Liberal Democrats will:

- Apply the asylum system fairly, efficiently and humanely, including the process for those who have no right to be here.
- Offer safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees to prevent them from making dangerous journeys, which too often result in the loss of life, for example via reform of family reunion rules to make it easier for refugees to join relatives already living in safety in the UK.
- Expand the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to offer sanctuary to 50,000 people over the lifetime of the next parliament.
- Re-open the Dubs unaccompanied child refugee scheme, ensuring Britain meets its responsibilities by taking in 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children. Liberal Democrats would offer these children indefinite leave to remain, meaning they will not be deported once they turn 18.
- End indefinite immigration detention by introducing a 28-day limit.
- Speed up the processing of asylum claims, reducing the time genuine refugees must wait before they can settle into life in the UK.
- Expect working-age asylum seekers who have waited more than six months for their claim to be processed to seek work like other benefit claimants, and only to receive benefits if they are unable to do so.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing countries where their sexual orientation or gender identification means that they risk imprisonment, torture or execution, and stop deporting people at risk to such countries.



Change Britain's Future

# **Make a Better World**

Liberal Democrats are internationalists – we understand that by working together, people and countries can achieve so much more than they can alone.

It is a difficult time for people who believe in international co-operation. Liberals have been challenged by the vote to leave the EU, the election of increasingly nationalist and isolationist leaders across the globe, and a Conservative government seeking new trade deals with countries who are fundamentally opposed to our liberal values. With the election of Donald Trump and an increasingly assertive Russia, we must work to defend the international liberal order.

The Liberal Democrat approach to Britain's place in the world is patriotic, optimistic and progressive. We will work with our European and other international partners to promote the ideals that bring us together and make us more secure – championing human rights, helping the poorest people in the world and protecting our country and our allies.

## **Our priorities in the next parliament will be:**

- **Defending international co-operation against the rising tides of nationalism and isolationism, supporting multilateral organisations like the UN and NATO which are increasingly under threat.**
- **Spending 0.7% of gross national income on aid: reducing poverty, defending human rights, protecting the environment and preventing violent conflict worldwide.**
- **Controlling arms exports to countries listed as human rights priority countries in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual human rights report and suspending arms sales to Saudi Arabia.**



## **8.1 Working for peace and security across the world**

This is a challenging time for peace and security across the world. Terrorist organisations prosper, the conflict in Syria continues to present a significant problem to the region and the world, and rising tensions between Russia and the USA threaten a long-standing balance of power.

The UK has a proud record of playing a leading role in the European Union and in international institutions like the UN, NATO and the Commonwealth and should continue to do so, promoting wherever possible the liberal values of freedom and opportunity for all. We will:

- Champion the rules-based international order, which provides a strong basis for multilateral action to address the world's most pernicious problems, including poverty, armed conflict, disease, climate change and the abuse of human rights, including forced marriage, so-called 'honour' killings, and female genital mutilation.
- Use all aspects of government policy – trade, aid and diplomacy as well as military co-operation – to strengthen UK efforts to prevent violent conflict.
- Work with our international partners to address the ongoing refugee crisis, which has seen more people displaced across the world than ever before.
- Support the UN principle of Responsibility to Protect, focusing on conflict prevention and only resorting to military intervention to prevent mass civilian atrocities if all other means of resolution have been fully exhausted.
- Improve control of arms exports by:
  - Implementing a policy of 'presumption of denial' for arms exports to countries listed as human rights priority countries in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual human rights report.
  - Enforcing end-user certification on all future arms export licences with an annual report to parliament on this certification.
  - Creating a public register of arms brokers.

Liberal Democrats believe that despite efforts to prevent violent conflict, sometimes military intervention is necessary. The UK should only intervene militarily when there is a clear legal and/or humanitarian case, endorsed by a vote in parliament, working through international institutions whenever possible. We will encourage dialogue and mediation to reduce conflict between and within countries, working through the UN and other agencies.

In response to current major conflicts worldwide, we will:

- Work with international partners to tackle violent extremism manifested by organisations like Daesh and Boko Haram, paying special attention to UK citizens who have fought overseas for terrorist organisations and may become significant sources of terrorist activity if and when they return to Britain.
- Seek new ways to bring an end to the conflict in Syria, working within the UN to break the deadlock in the Security Council. We will work to deter the use of chemical and conventional attacks on civilians and demand humanitarian access and the release of political prisoners and their families.
- Remain committed to a negotiated peace settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes a two-state solution. We condemn disproportionate force used by all sides. We condemn Hamas' rocket attacks and other targeting of Israeli civilians. We condemn Israel's continued illegal policy of settlement expansion, which undermines the possibility of a two-state solution. We support recognition of the independent State of Palestine as and when it will help the prospect of a two-state solution.
- Suspend UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia in response to their consistent targeting of civilians, in breach of international humanitarian law, in Yemen. We will work with international partners to recommence the peace process in Yemen.
- Promote democracy and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring countries against an increasingly aggressive Russia. We will work closely with European and other international partners to exert maximum economic and political pressure on Russia to stop interfering in the affairs of sovereign Eastern European nations, and will stand by our obligations under the NATO treaty in the event of threats to NATO member states.

## 8.2 Our armed forces and security services

The UK must be able to defend itself and the territories for which it has responsibility, support its neighbours and allies, and engage in humanitarian intervention. The security challenges the UK faces are shared by our partners and allies in the EU and NATO and the UK is more effective and more resilient when we work closely with those partners. We will:

- Commit to spending 2% of GDP on defence.
- Strengthen our armed services and address critical skills shortages by

recruiting STEM graduates to be armed forces engineers, providing ‘golden handshakes’ of up to £10,000.

- Recognise the expansion of warfare into the cybersphere, by investing in our security and intelligence services and acting to counter cyberattacks.
- Work to lead international nuclear disarmament efforts.
- Maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent. We propose continuing with the Dreadnought programme, the submarine-based replacement for Vanguard, but procuring three boats instead of four and moving to a medium-readiness responsive posture. This would mean replacing continuous at-sea deterrence – instead maintaining the deterrent through measures such as unpredictable and irregular patrolling patterns.
- Build on the framework for defence co-operation that is already well-established with France, the Netherlands, Germany and other European partners, and promote European defence integration where appropriate by enhancing European defence industry co-operation.

Liberal Democrats recognise the vital role the UK’s armed forces play in the defence of the nation and believe that it is the role of government to safeguard the interests of service personnel and veterans. We will:

- Support the Armed Forces Covenant and ongoing work to support veterans’ mental health.
- Review the current Career Transition Partnership with a view to extending its remit to provide free further or higher education for anyone who has served in the armed forces for 12 years or more.
- Improve the quality of service housing by bringing the Ministry of Defence into line with other landlords, giving tenants the same legal rights to repair and maintenance as private tenants.

### **8.3 International development**

Liberal Democrats have always been – and remain – strongly committed to ensuring justice and equity for poor people around the world. We believe that the UK must continue to play a leading role in ending poverty and promoting environmentally sustainable development, through implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will:

- Maintain our commitment to spend 0.7% of UK gross national income on

overseas development assistance, in line with the OECD definition, which we legislated for in the last parliament.

- Invest to eliminate within a generation preventable diseases like TB, HIV and malaria and explore new ways to support research and development into vaccinations and treatment to combat these and other deadly diseases and infections.
- Develop a global education strategy to address the urgent funding crisis causing 263 million children to miss out on schooling.
- Lead international action to ensure global companies pay fair taxes in the developing countries in which they operate, including tightening anti-tax haven rules and requiring large companies to publish their tax payments and profits for each country in which they operate.
- Continue building the resilience of poorer countries to resist future disasters, investing in healthcare and infrastructure and training emergency response volunteers, and respond generously to humanitarian crises wherever they may occur.
- Provide greater resources for international environmental co-operation, particularly on climate change and on actions to tackle illegal and unsustainable trade in timber, wildlife, ivory and fish.
- In light of the US government's dangerous and anti-science attacks on international programmes of vaccination and family planning, which impact disproportionately on the health of women and children, seek to protect global spending on these essential provisions.

## 8.4 Standing up for liberal values

Liberal Democrats believe that British foreign policy and international aid should seek to promote the liberal values of human rights and democracy throughout the world. We will:

- Support free media and a free and open internet around the world, championing the free flow of information.
- Support the current UN initiative to protect journalists and to combat the impunity with which many countries treat those who attack reporters on the front line. To this end, we will provide ad hoc funding to UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication.
- Campaign strongly for the abolition of the death penalty around the world.
- Champion global anti-corruption initiatives to safeguard global security and