

**The
2005**

Manifesto



www.liberal.org.uk

Introduction

This is the Manifesto of the Liberal Party, not to be confused with the Liberal Democrats.

We seek to build a Liberal society in which every citizen possesses liberty, property and security, with none enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.

Our chief care is for the rights and opportunities of the individual and in all spheres we set freedom first.

The policies detailed in the following pages reflect the fundamental Liberal belief in the equality of personal worth of every individual and a society which maximises the chances of all, regardless of colour, creed, race, gender, sexual orientation, or where they live on the planet.

Liberals proclaim that everyone should enjoy freedom of thought, of speech and of action, provided they do not impinge on the freedom of others, and that everyone should be equal before the law.

We hope that, having read the enclosed, you will support us by voting Liberal, by becoming a member or by contributing to our campaign funds.

Liberal News is free to members of the Liberal Party and available to non-members at £4 for four editions (including postage). Articles and letters are welcome and should be sent to:

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What the Liberal Party stands for
by Steve Radford, (*President of the Liberal Party*)

Not just Britain but the world community as a whole would benefit from a strong dose of Liberalism.

Our belief in the liberty of the individual, government by consent, social justice and stewardship of our planet transcends national borders and ethnic division, religious affiliation and the other barriers that can be needless sources of conflict.



Steve Radford
President

Liberalism is an internationalist philosophy, which welcomes democracy, diversity and pluralism. For us the universal political solution imposed from above, is a recipe for disaster, however benign the intention.

The illegal invasion of Iraq, the neglect of Palestine and the threat of a pre-emptive strike against Iran are all reasons why this government should be ejected.

The British people were lied to over the mythical weapons of mass destruction; the truth is we had weapons of mass delusion by a government subservient to George Bush.

Liberals reject the politics of gimmicks whereby police may arbitrarily demand "papers please" and citizens may face imprisonment without a fair trial by jury.

To apologise to the Guildford Four and at the same time withdraw "Trial by Jury" is nothing less than frightening.

Liberals demand that government policies reflect the need to protect the ecology of our planet, and find inexcusable our failure to meet intended agreed targets on environmental pollution and international aid.

To see professionals in the health service and education reduced to working in a chicken factory culture of meeting artificial targets is offensive.

Today patients fear entering hospitals where hygiene standards have collapsed as a predictable consequence of the privatisation of cleaning services. The Liberal party opposed these measures and we have been brutally proven right.

Lastly, the work ethic is being undermined by layers of bureaucracy operating means-tested benefits. Liberals established the basis of a welfare state whereby National Insurance contributions bought the individual entitlement to benefits; we should look to re-engineer our benefit schemes in a simpler fashion and on the principle of universal benefits.

Britain is over governed! 60% of our current legislation is imposed by an un-elected EU Commission. Within the UK we have the endless proliferation of quango mania.

Support the Liberal Party and work with us to restore democracy and social justice and put freedom first for all the people. We are opposed to any further centralisation in the EU and will oppose both the new Constitution for Europe and oppose joining the Euro.



The Environment

Environmental pollution must be stopped. More ecological disaster awaits unless radical measures are implemented to reduce profligate and mindless consumption.

Climate change is the greatest threat to the human race. Unless we take rapid and drastic action it may be too late.

Free Trade must be made to work for the benefit of all nations, but not as a device by which developing economies are suppressed. All environmental costs must be seen as a negative entry in the free trade balance sheet. Materials, particularly food, must be grown and used locally. Exporting pollution is morally wrong. Liberals will give a lead to the reduction of greenhouse gasses. Unless we reduce our addiction to fossil fuels our planet will not be sustainable for future generations.

The fuel escalator, a device by which fuel is taxed so as to increase its real cost in relation to the cost of public transport, was supported by all parties. It must be restored until fuel (carbon) rationing can be put in place. Every opportunity should be taken to convert waste material to other uses by recycling, composting and energy recovery. For example, Liberals would ensure that kerbside recycling of non pre-sorted recyclable waste is available to all households.

We also support the introduction of pressure heat treatment plants, which reduce all organic waste to a reusable fibre and would sterilise and extract glass, metal and plastic waste.

While a global approach backed by International Law is vital, Britain can show the way out of the disposable consumer society to a future where manufactured goods are built to last longer, pollute less and are capable of recycling.

Europe



The Liberal Party is opposed to the European Union as it is currently constituted and how it operates. A body which, year after year cannot provide audited accounts, is unfit to receive our hard-earned taxes.

We oppose attempts by the new constitution to centralise powers further. We oppose both a European Army and a compulsory Euro-zone instead we believe in a more diverse and flexible Europe.

The Liberal Party is actively campaigning against the UK joining the Euro as it would mean central control of our taxation and expenditure policies. It has already forced cuts in social expenditure in countries like Portugal and is the cause of higher unemployment in Germany, we should not make the same mistake. We in the Liberal Party will actively work with others right across Europe to challenge and change the way the EU operates.

The Common Agricultural Policy does not just increase the price of food to European consumers it also dramatically restricts third world farmers capacity to export. The European Union protects its own inefficient farmers at the direct expense of the starving.

We believe that Europe should give a lead in promoting good environmental policies and promoting peace whilst allowing each of the partners in a "Commonwealth of Europe" to set their own economic, taxation and social policies.

We welcome an enlargement of the EU by the inclusion of central and eastern European countries, and believe this will necessitate a more flexible and diverse Europe.

Health and Social Care



Liberals pioneered the Health Service and are determined to retain it as a prime provider of free health care.

We would continue the trend towards greater emphasis on preventative health care, including education on dietary issues at school age.

We are disturbed at the lack of staff and rehabilitation facilities for drug and alcohol misusers. We would ensure democratic control over the health service by giving responsibility to appropriate levels of local government.

This would lead to better co-ordinated primary care facilities working with both NHS and local authorities. We would abolish the artificial care charges, which are penalising homeowners and low paid alike.

We believe there should be greater recognition of, and support for, the work of carers.

Animal Welfare



The level of a nation's civilisation can be determined by how its animals are treated. The UK may be better than some but animal welfare legislation has been piecemeal.

Liberals want to see a new and independent Standing Committee on Animal Protection, with powers to act as an enforcement agency. Such an agency would oversee an end of battery farming, implementation of the Brambell Report, and a complete ban on the export of live animals for slaughter.

Liberals would also outlaw all laboratory experiments on live animals and the hunting of any creature for sport. We support well-resourced rare and endangered species recovery schemes, incorporating protection and expansion of wildlife habitats.



Justice for Pensioners

Liberals introduced the first old age pensions and we are appalled at the prospect that the number of pensioners on means-tested benefits will rise from two million to four million over the next five years.

We believe this is humiliating and undermines incentives for working people to join occupational or private pension schemes.

Therefore we will vigorously seek to increase basic pension to £120 for a single person and £180 for a couple subject to reasonable contributions being made.

This would help reverse the systematic reduction in the real value of pensions over the last few decades.

We urge the abolition of compulsory retirement ages and seek to encourage a flexible retirement approach for state pensions and private pension schemes.

We would review the relationship between taxes and benefits to encourage this flexibility.

We would integrate Income Tax and National Insurance into one scheme. We would establish a National Pensions and Investment Trust so taxes raised for future pensions would be invested ethically.

Education



Education is the rock upon which Liberal societies are founded. We believe that education should not just be a preparation for work but also a lifelong process, enriching the lives of individuals and the community.

We champion a free and comprehensive education service from nursery to nineteen. Small community schools would be liberated from Ofsted, league tables, SATS, and the national curriculum, all of which we would abolish.

Instead we favour local curricula agreed by teachers, parents and governors. In particular, we are concerned that "cramming" of literacy and numeracy may be damaging young children. Better paid and resourced teachers would spend less time on testing and administration and more time teaching in smaller classes.

The Liberal Party deplores the government's use of targets and quotas in higher education, in particular the target that 50% of persons aged 18 should progress into higher education.

Such targets reduce higher education to a "chicken factory" culture and smacks of the processing rather than the education of undergraduates. The number of students entering higher education should be allowed to find its own level in line with the desires and aspirations of young people and the needs of the professions, industry and the academic world.

We believe all young people who enter university or higher education should receive a grant, and employees should receive adequate incentives to run "apprenticeship" and similar schemes. Furthermore we would abolish the tuition fees charged to British students.

We believe that local authorities should have a central role in running education for their communities.



Economy & Taxation

Liberals believe in the essential benefits of free enterprise and competition. We would like to see a more vigorous scrutiny of monopolies and cartels both within the UK and world-wide.

Liberals believe in fair market access. Free trade must be made to work for the benefit of all nations and not an excuse for trade policies that disadvantage the developing world.

Liberals believe that taxation should reflect the ability to pay. We believe that the current tax system places a disproportionate burden on salaried earners whilst leaving hidden wealth, such as inherited wealth, untapped.

Liberals believe in the redistribution and wider spread of wealth as well as income.

We will explore the merits and practical considerations of introducing a potential combination of a universal inheritance scheme, wealth tax and land value taxation to fund a significant increase in the tax free personal income allowance threshold to eventually £10,000,

The aim being to take millions of low salaried earners out of the benefits trap and to reduce the need for a wasteful bureaucracy calculating and miscalculating a vast array of benefits paid to almost 40% of the population. We recognise such fundamental changes would need to be transitioned over time.

The United Kingdom is the 4th most prosperous economy in the world, so lets ensure all our citizens' share the benefit.

We believe that energy conservation work and essential commodities should be zero-rated for VAT.

Housing



Liberals call for a properly funded housing programme run by local councils who would be given primary responsibility for providing a variety of rented accommodation, for tackling homelessness, for providing follow-on and sheltered housing for vulnerable groups, for regulating mobile home parks and for acting as agents for private rented accommodation.

Councils would also act as consultants for self build schemes and for tenant/management consultation, and would be empowered to acquire long-standing vacant properties.

We would restore to councils the unfettered power to decide how to manage, dispose of, or increase their housing stock and we oppose wholesale privatisation and demolition of council houses. Local councils should be able to set their own and housing associations right to buy scales reflecting local housing market needs and not have a national scheme imposed from the centre.

We believe that second homes should not receive any tax concessions and that legislation may be needed to control second homes in areas

Young People



Co-ordinated policy on the nation's young is vital if alienation from society is to be avoided. Our support of state education and welfare is informed by the fact that many children – rich and poor – rely on schools, welfare and community services to make up for deficiencies at home.

Disaffection of young people should be addressed by including them in the decision making process; elected student councils should be set up in all secondary schools; the voting age should be reduced to 16; the need for independence should be recognised by restoring the rights of 16 and 17 year olds to claim housing and other benefits and by replacing student loans and tuition fees with a student grant fixed at the level of a basic "living wage"



Government for the United Kingdom

We would give the Welsh Assembly more powers to put it on an equal footing with Scotland.

We would replace the House of Lords with a predominately elected British Senate to recognise the federal nature of the UK, and include representation from both Channel Islands and Gibraltar.

We would introduce the Single Transferable Vote in multi-member constituencies for all UK elections.



Local Government

The imposition of a Cabinet system for central un-elected regional Assemblies, Elected Lord Mayors and the Standards Board have all undermined democracy at the local level.

The Party list system has destroyed individual accountability and created two-tier assembly members in Wales, Scotland and London. The Liberal Party would open up local government at all levels by having elections by the single transferable vote, putting power into the hands of the people, not party machines.

We would abolish the Standards Board which has become a restriction on free speech, and a vehicle for endless vindictive complaints whilst it has turned a blind eye to councillors leaving the country, and worse.

We would introduce town and parish councils throughout the UK.

We would restore the secret ballot in polling stations and are opposed to the use of all postal ballots. We are appalled at abuse of postal votes which has already led to election results being challenged in the courts.

We would establish a Democracy day Bank Holiday to encourage public participation. Liberals believe in devolution and that regional government should only be progressed where communities identify themselves as a region and support a genuine transfer of power

Law and Liberty

Liberals believe that the rights of the individual are paramount, subject only to the rights of others. To this end Liberals call for the repeal of the current anti-terrorism legislation. In particular that which allows the state to detain suspects without trial indefinitely, a provision that the House of Lords described as “the stuff of nightmares”.



Liberals oppose any legislation, which allows for house arrest. We do not believe that the United Kingdom should apply the standards of Burma, China, and North Korea to our justice system.

We propose a written constitution, a tougher freedom of information act with fewer exclusions and a Bill of Rights, which would include rights of freedom of association, lawful demonstration, privacy and abortion. We would look into euthanasia and would license rather than prohibit, drugs. We would reform PACE and tightly control CCTV. We oppose curfews, zero tolerance and any moves to introduce Identity Cards.

We call for a special offence to cover “hate” crimes and independent bodies to investigate complaints against police and judges.

We would defend the right to Trial by Jury where a person could face a custodial sentence. We believe that rehabilitation and restitution are preferable to prison for all but the most serious of crimes. We are appalled the UK has the highest proportion of adults in prison of any of the countries in the EU.



Industry & Employment

**Before wealth can be distributed,
it must first be created!**

To this end, environmentally-friendly infrastructure should be run and operated by a Well-educated, adaptable and motivated workforce who enjoy a national minimum wage, a share in the profit generated and a say in the decision-making.

We want a workers' charter, cheap long term credit for R & D, plant renewal and small business development, rebates to defray training costs, and more phased retirement and job sharing. Certain industries should be under public ownership to serve the wider interests of society.

Properly funded community employment schemes would offer work to the jobless, whose earnings from part time work should not jeopardise benefit.

The tax benefits systems should be restructured and simplified to provide realistic incentives to work and save.

There has been a series of skills shortages in science and engineering.

We believe our policy on providing University and higher education grants will improve the skills levels across all strands of British society.

Farming & Fishing



The BSE epidemic and the cod shortage are symptomatic of a serious crisis inflicting our farms and fishing fleets, for which intensive animal husbandry and over production of cheap foods are responsible.

We propose a return to traditional and sustainable farming, free from pesticides and genetically modified crops, supported by local abattoirs and markets. We want to retain good agricultural land and to encourage small farms and co-operatives.

British farming is in crisis. The CAP is a disaster, nationally and internationally. Despite minimal CAP reform so far the pressure is still on to produce more food for less cost. This market approach increases damage to the environment, animal welfare and the rural social structure.

Agribusiness is encouraged whilst small farms disappear at an alarming rate. A separate ministry for fishing would introduce fishing zones, police pollution, scrap catch quotas and run fish stock conservation and sea bed farming projects.

Transport



As the recent fuel crisis demonstrated, transport affects everybody's everyday lives.

We have long advocated an integrated transport network, key components of which would be a re-nationalised, electrified and enlarged rail network providing fast regular trains between population centres; affordable local public transport; more use of waterways; better facilities for cycling and walking and more teleworking, international shopping and home delivery networks.

We envisage a long term strategy to ration road transport and we propose tax breaks for small environmentally friendly vehicles, funded by tax penalties on those that are not.



World Affairs

Liberals have always stressed the social and economic basis of world problems. Today as we confront terrorism, poverty and environmental degradation. Liberals call for holistic solutions that brings together economic development, social justice and peace.

This can only happen if we reform our security institutions to fully incorporate the virtues of reconciliation and non-military security.

This is why as liberals we call for a Ministry of Peace and Security that would bring together the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development. Just as the rigour of 20th Century warfare called for a joint service ministry, today the interdependence of the world requires that we cannot place our hopes for peace and security within the framework of a military response alone.

Environmental crises, inequitable distributions of wealth and political freedoms provide the foundation of legitimate grievance that leads to conflict. These social and economic problems require sensitive and considered solutions based on concepts of sustainable development. As such we declare our belief in the inter-dependence of all mankind and reject the right of any nation to unilateral military action.

The solutions to our present discontents lie in international co-operation through democratic bodies that embrace all peoples and reject nationalism or crude economic self-interest. This is why Liberals call for the strengthening of the United Nations General Assembly as a viable first step towards the creation of legitimate democratic institutions of global governance.

In this spirit the United Kingdom Government should fulfil its commitment to increase international aid to at least 07% of GNP and vigorously renew all efforts to end odious debts of the developing nations of the world.

Continued over

We believe that long term aid and the writing off of debts should be subject to the recipient countries showing appropriate standards, or progress towards standards of human rights and good economic governance.

Liberals would cease trade in arms, dismantle nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We would support all efforts against indiscriminate bombing.

Arts, Leisure & Sport



The Millennium Dome Fiasco represented everything a Liberal Arts and Leisure policy is designed to avoid; public money thrown at prestige, London-based projects which could be better spent on a multitude of smaller community schemes to foster maximum participation in artistic, cultural and sporting activities locally.

There should be greater public access to existing stadia, school facilities and open spaces. We oppose library closures, calling instead for their transformation into on-line information centres and exhibition venues to supplement their traditional function.

Despite growth of cable and satellite broadcasting, we believe that community and public service broadcasting remain vital.

The power of the media should be curbed with a statutory right of reply and redress.

How we get things done

Liberals do not believe that it is necessary to stalk the corridors of power in Whitehall to achieve results. We apply our beliefs to create policy, with which to address issues of the day.

We issue newsletters and press statements to increase awareness of problems and our ideas. We also make common cause with like-minded individuals to influence policy makers.

We field candidates at all levels of government and currently have Liberals elected to principal and parish authorities nationwide in places as diverse as Liverpool and Cornwall. Many of these are leading practitioners of community politics, in which residents are regularly informed and consulted about local issues.

Groups of our councillors play a key role on 7 councils; on Slough, we are part of a rainbow alliance running the council with our Cllr Richard Stokes as Council Leader.

As for national elections, we punch well above our weight, having increased our vote from 23,000 to 96,000 in the 2004 Euro Election.

In the last two General Elections our Cllr Steve Radford took second place in the Liverpool West Derby seat.

Our Membership & Organisation

The Liberal Party is run as a "one-member-one-vote" organisation with all members having equal rights under the party's Constitution, whether they join a local association or the Party centrally.

All members receive free copies of Liberal News, which is issued quarterly, and they are entitled to attend and vote at the Party's annual general meeting - known as the "Assembly"- which is held every Autumn to consider the work of the party and debate policy.

The party has a president and a National Executive Committee, which is elected by postal ballot of the entire membership to run the administration and the Party's office.

We have spokespersons on a wide range of issues and have played a crucial role in the gay rights movement, the stop the war coalition, actively support NO2ID campaign, the electoral reform and are working with the Democracy Movement campaigning against the Euro and the EU Constitution.

We have contributed to government consultation exercises on funding of political parties, ID cards, transport, freedom of information and reform of Local and Regional Government.

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