

Ed Davey's speech to Conference

Read Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey's speech to Autumn Conference.

Thank you friends.

I'm afraid I have to start this afternoon with an apology.

You might remember –

After our incredible victory in Somerton and Frome in July –

When the amazing Sarah Dyke overturned a Conservative majority of nineteen thousand –

I said it's time to get these clowns out of Number Ten.

We even wrote it on the side of a big blue cannon.

Do you remember?

Well, a party member got in touch afterwards, to say he is an actual clown. And he took great offence at being compared to this Conservative Government.

On reflection, I have to admit, he's got a point.

Clowns didn't crash our economy and send interest rates soaring.

Clowns didn't let water companies make billions in profits while dumping filthy sewage into our rivers and onto our beaches.

Clowns didn't plunge our NHS into crisis, pushing waiting lists to record highs.

Clowns didn't waste billions of pounds – of our money – on dodgy PPE contracts.

Clowns didn't prop up a lying, law-breaking Prime Minister – and then put his cronies in the House of Lords.

Clowns didn't do it. The Conservatives did.

So let me take this opportunity to apologise unreservedly to that party member, and to the whole clowning community.

I'm sorry. I used the wrong c-word.

Let me try again:

It's time to get these Conservatives out of Number Ten!

And Liberal Democrats, we've made a great start.

Sarah Green in Buckinghamshire. Helen Morgan in Shropshire. Richard Foord in Devon. And now Sarah Dyke in Somerset.

And next up, of course, the wonderful Emma Holland-Lindsay in Mid Bedfordshire.

Friends, our by-election record in the last two and half years is nothing less than historic.

And so too have been our fantastic local election results.

This May, we gained an incredible four-hundred-and-seven councillors right across England – from Sunderland to South Hams, from Lewes to Lancaster.

And gained control of twelve more councils.

In Scotland last year, we boosted our councillor base by a third. We're growing back strongly there too as we hold the Nationalists to account for the total mess they have made of everything.

In Wales, we took control of Powys Council for the first time ever.

Liberal Democrats – right across our United Kingdom – you should all be so proud of what we've achieved together.

Our campaigns – our victories – are changing the future of British politics and turning the tide against the Conservatives.

We've shown the next election won't be all about the Red Wall.

It's about the Blue Wall too. Former Tory heartlands where we've shown we are the only ones who can win.

The only ones who can bring the change people crave.

And even better. With Richard's win in Devon, Sarah's in Somerset and superb local government success, we can now say proudly:

The Liberal Democrats are back in the West Country!

A second front against the Conservatives, where every Liberal Democrat vote is the powerful vote for change.

But now comes the big one.

The General Election.

For the British people, the next General Election can't come quickly enough.

People are desperate for change.

And while Rishi Sunak clings on – out of touch and out of ideas –

Our job – our responsibility – is to show the British people that positive change is possible.

And that we are ready to fight for it, whenever the election comes.

And this week, we've done just that.

We've shown we have the policies, the passion and the people – not just to get the Conservatives out, but to deliver the real change people want.

The fair deal people deserve.

Our task is to get more brilliant Liberal Democrat MPs elected – so they can be strong local champions for their communities. And lead the change our country needs.

Bringing real hope to millions in this economic crisis.

Hope to people struggling to get by and struggling to get on.

Cleaning up our environment.

Rescuing our NHS and care system.

Transforming our politics for good.

Remember at the start of the year, Sunak gave a big speech where he told the country “we're either delivering for you – or we're not”?

Well, in fairness to Rishi, he was telling the truth.

It is one of those two things.

And friends, I think we all know which one.

His Government is failing to deliver, and what's so horrific is the sheer scale of their failure.

In so many ways, our country today just isn't working the way it should.

It's not working as it should for the parents forced to travel two hours just to find their kids an NHS dentist. Or skipping meals so their children can eat.

It's not working for the couple in my constituency, who fear losing their home of thirteen years as their mortgage payments have shot up by more than four hundred pounds a month.

It's not working for the teaching assistant and her young family, evicted from their home in Ambleside so the landlord could turn it into a holiday let.

It's not working for the pensioner going without heat in the winter.

Or the commuter left on the platform by yet another cancelled train.

It's not working for the swimmer who spent thirteen days in hospital with cellulitis after swimming in sewage-infested water.

Conference, I have never known our country so badly governed.

Crimes unsolved. Backlogs in our courts. Delays to get a passport.

Crumbling school buildings. High streets in decline. And potholes, everywhere.

Now, there are many reasons why all these issues have got so bad, of course.

But there is one fundamental cause.

The Conservative Party.

Britain isn't working, because the Conservatives aren't working.

They're more like a bad TV soap than a functioning government.

The factions and the feuds.

The personal vendettas.

The shock exits. And unwelcome returns.

Each episode worse than the last.

Well it's time to change the channel.

The corruption of Boris Johnson. The chaos of Liz Truss. The carelessness of Rishi Sunak.

This whole Conservative shambles.

They all have to go.

And Liberal Democrats, our task is to get them out. And then get Britain working again.

And that of course starts with the economy.

We need to get our economy growing strongly again.

Conservative Ministers might think zero percent growth and seven per cent inflation are numbers to boast about – but the British people certainly don't.

Inflation's still higher than any time since Black Wednesday. Worse even than the height of the financial crisis.

Food prices up thirty percent in just two years. Energy bills almost doubled. Mortgage rates through the roof.

And Rishi Sunak says this all shows his plan is working.

Honestly, the Prime Minister sounds so complacent, so out of touch, sometimes I think he must be reading the graphs upside down.

Well Rishi, if this is what it looks like when your plan is working, I think we need a new plan.

And that's what the Liberal Democrats have been putting forward.

A real plan – not just to stop things getting worse, not just to return to business as usual – but to build the economy of the future.

To build an economy that is genuinely innovative, prosperous and fair.

An economic plan that gives everyone the chance to get on in life, and see their hard work and aspiration properly rewarded.

A plan that backs entrepreneurs to grow their small businesses and create worthwhile, well-paid jobs in their communities.

And yes – a plan to tackle the climate crisis, reach net zero, and embrace the clean technologies of the future.

To lead the world, instead of trying to hide from it.

Conference, after Rishi Sunak's disgraceful speech last week, the contrast between our approach and his could not be clearer.

We already knew he doesn't care about tackling climate change. That's no surprise.

But what about the damage his U-turns will do to our economy? To our car industry? To people's jobs right across the UK?

Doesn't Sunak care about any of it? Apparently not.

Frankly, instead of delivering that speech, Rishi should have torn it up and thrown it away.

If he's got seven bins, he might as well use them!

His small-minded and backward looking approach is simply not worthy of our great United Kingdom.

From the steam train to the internet, Britain has always led the world with ingenuity and innovation.

We are a nation of pioneers and inventors. Not just in our history, but in our present and our future.

Liberal Democrats understand that.

In Government, we made Britain the world leader in offshore wind.

We invested early. We had an industrial strategy. We showed we were serious.

We attracted global firms to come to the UK, and spend tens of billions of pounds to build factories and windfarms and create thousands of clean, secure jobs.

And thanks to Liberal Democrat policies, the price of wind energy has more than halved.

So now renewables are by far the cheapest form of electricity. And the most popular.

We could be doing the same with so many other new technologies.

Tidal power. Clean flight. High-speed rail.

Creating jobs and cutting prices.

But Rishi Sunak says no.

We say: build Britain's economic future here in the UK. Rishi Sunak says: outsource it to China.

That is a dismal failure of leadership. And we can do so much better.

Britain led the world, and we can lead it again.

But not with the Conservatives squabbling amongst themselves and clinging to the fossil fuels of the past.

And not with the Prime Minister refusing even to attend the United Nations General Assembly last week.

Instead of standing at his lectern in Downing Street single-handedly trashing our economic future,

Rishi Sunak should have been in New York working with global leaders to tackle this crisis together.

Britain can be an incredible force for good when it stands tall on the world stage.

But Rishi Sunak doesn't seem to care about that either.

He's getting it wrong at home, and he's getting it badly wrong abroad too.

Our vision is for a Britain that leads the world as we embrace the economy of the future.

The Conservatives would only shackle us to the past.

And there's another crucial part of our economic vision. Another area where we are different from this Government.

Something that would so obviously make an enormous difference to our economy and our standard of living.

Something we have always been proud to champion, even when no one else even dared whisper it.

Fixing our broken relationship with Europe.

The Conservatives botched the deal with Europe, and it's been a disaster for the UK.

They sold out British farmers and fishers.

They tied up British business in red tape.

And they pushed up food prices in our supermarkets.

So much unnecessary pain inflicted on so many by so few.

And only the Liberal Democrats have consistently stood up against it.

Only we have set out a plan to tear down those trade barriers, fix our broken relationship with Europe and get a better deal for Britain.

Yes – only we.

Because Labour's plan – if you can call it a plan – is nowhere near that ambitious.

To be fair, they've come a long way from when they voted for Boris Johnson's terrible deal.

But Labour has a long way still to go.

Which means it's up to us to lead the way.

A better economy. A better future. With Europe.

Opportunity. Investment. Innovation. Trade.

That's the Liberal Democrat recipe for economic success.

And one more ingredient:

People.

Because at its heart, what makes our approach different is that we understand that the economy isn't just a series of abstract percentages and meaningless slogans.

It's all of us.

It's the things we do every day, together.

It's the jobs we do. The services we rely on. The food we eat. The homes we

live in.

It's the TV shows we watch. The places we visit. The presents we give each other.

We understand that, when you strip everything else away, an economy is its people.

And if we want to get our economy growing strongly again, we need to focus far more on our people.

That means investing in people through education. Training. Skills. Of course.

But today I want to talk about another investment in people.

An investment that too often has not been linked to economic growth – even though it's central to growth.

And that's an investment in people's physical and mental health.

Because we can't build the economy we need, with seven million people stuck on NHS waiting lists.

We can't grow the economy with two and half million people shut out of the labour market by long-term physical and mental illness.

When people aren't supported to recover from long Covid.

Wait weeks for a GP appointment.

Can't get basic help, so they can get back to work, feed their families and get on in life.

A healthy economy needs a healthy population...

And a healthy NHS.

I am so proud that we Liberal Democrats have consistently led the way in highlighting the crises in the NHS and proposing solutions.

Reversing cuts to GP numbers and guaranteeing an appointment when you need one.

Tackling life-threatening ambulance delays, and improving access to NHS dentists.

There are so many parts of our NHS plan that would both treat people better and boost our economy.

And today I'd like to focus on one particular, awful part of this health crisis. That shatters lives, and takes people in their prime.

It can be very difficult to talk about. It's difficult for me, and I know

it's difficult for many of you, but we do need to talk about it.

And that's cancer.

As many of you know, my brothers and I lost both our parents to cancer when we were young.

My dad died aged thirty-eight, just a few months after being diagnosed with a cancer called Hodgkin lymphoma.

I was only four, so I don't remember it very well.

What I do remember is my mum's grief. And her incredible strength in the months and years that followed, after being widowed so young, with three boys under ten.

Then, when I was nine, cancer came for mum too.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer, and I do remember how that felt.

She had treatment, including a mastectomy. But three years later, they found secondary breast cancer – metastatic cancer – in her bones.

And they told her it was incurable.

Yet mum refused to accept that it was incurable. She battled it for three years. For her boys.

She tried everything – including a naturopath – while we looked after her.

It was hardest of course in the last eighteen months or so, as she became bed-ridden and the pain became excruciating.

For me, caring for her became my life. Before school and after school.

I'd sit for hours on her bed, talking to her. Telling her about my day, listening to her stories. Trying to make the most of every minute.

When she was fighting the cancer with the naturopath, my top task was mashing up carrots and apples for the healthy juice drinks she lived on.

Then there was helping her with the pain. Pouring out doses of morphine from this big bell jar we had in the kitchen. I don't think they'd allow that now.

Putting pads on her legs and sides so she could give herself small electric shocks when the pain got really bad.

That was a tough period as a teenager. But of course it was much tougher for mum.

Yet those years were also special. They gave me an incredible bond with my mum.

She was so strong, so resilient. Fighting to be with her boys, even in the face of such a cruel disease.

I like to think I learnt a lot from her.

I was fifteen when she died.

They'd put her on a totally unsuitable dementia ward in Nottingham General Hospital.

I was visiting her. On my way to school. In my school uniform. By her bedside.

When she died.

Now I don't tell you all this because I want you to feel sorry for me. It was a long long time ago and I've been very lucky since.

But I do tell you all about it because actually too many families have their cancer stories. Like mine. Today.

My family's story isn't unique: there are millions of us whose lives get turned upside down by cancer.

This very day, across the UK, a thousand people will hear that fateful diagnosis.

A thousand people, choking back tears as they try to process what it means for them.

A thousand people, trying to figure out how to tell their loved ones.

How to break the news to their partners. To their parents. To their children.

And then, a thousand people wondering what comes next.

Now, we are fortunate in this country that there are brilliant people in our NHS and in charities like Macmillan.

And there's a story of progress. And hope.

Cancer mortality rates have fallen by twenty-five percent in the last thirty years.

Ten-year survival rates have doubled in the last forty.

Diagnoses like both my parents were given are no longer necessarily the death sentence today that they were back then.

Science, and universal healthcare, really are wonderful things.

But I still think we could be doing so much better on cancer.

Far too many people are still waiting, far too long for a diagnosis. Or to

start treatment after being diagnosed.

And I'm afraid to say, they've been let down and forgotten by this Conservative Government.

Last year, the Government promised a new Ten-Year Cancer Plan.

It was supposed to be "a searching new vision for how we will lead the world in cancer care".

This year – after two changes of Prime Minister and three changes of Health Secretary – that plan has been junked.

Yet another casualty of all the Conservative chaos.

Hopes raised. Only to be cruelly dashed.

Because we do need a cancer plan.

Despite all the progress, our survival rates still lag behind France, Germany, the US and Japan.

And the Government is now missing every single one of its waiting time targets for cancer.

Not by a little. But by a lot.

Right now, there are more than twenty thousand people across England who've been told they have suspected cancer –

Who have been referred for urgent treatment by their GP –

But who've been waiting more than two months to start treatment.

More than two months.

Just imagine the fear. The anxiety. The helplessness.

Knowing you need treatment. Knowing every day could make a difference.

But powerless to do anything but wait.

Like Ian. An engineer who I was speaking to just last week.

Ian lives in Nottingham, just down the road from where I lived with mum before she passed away.

And like me, Ian lost both of his parents to cancer when he was young too.

Ian had been fit and healthy all his life, but he was diagnosed with bowel cancer two years ago, in his mid-sixties.

The national screening programme caught it early. It was a small stage one tumour.

Crucially, it was operable.

Ian needed chemotherapy and surgery – as quickly as possible.

But he was kept waiting for four months before starting any treatment.

Now his cancer has progressed to stage four and spread to his liver.

Now it's inoperable.

Ian calls those four months of waiting the worst time of his life.

He said "I would wake up every morning wondering if I had a future."

And he told me how preventing those delays could not only have saved his own despair, but also saved the NHS so much money.

Conference, it's just not right to keep people in such limbo, for so long.

We owe patients better than that.

We owe their families – their children and their loved ones – better than that.

We owe Ian better than that.

We must, must, must do better than that.

But here again, there is hope.

Just in the last few months, we have seen incredible breakthroughs that could revolutionise the way we diagnose and treat many types of cancer.

Trials of a new blood test that can detect more than fifty types of cancer are encouraging, and the head of the NHS says it could "transform cancer care forever".

A simple blood test you could even carry out at home.

Or the new breast cancer drug trialled at the Royal Marsden hospital.

It's been shown to slow the growth of tumours – and even shrink them in many cases. With far less debilitating side effects than chemotherapy.

Just think what a difference breakthroughs like these could make.

Think how much time they could save.

How much misery they could prevent.

How many lives they could save.

It's the job of government to back research like this, so scientists and doctors can make the next breakthrough, and the one after that, and the one after that.

It's the job of government to make sure that – whenever those breakthroughs happen – the NHS rolls out the benefits to patients as quickly as possible.

If someone's life can be saved by a new blood test or a new drug, no unnecessary delays should stand in their way.

And it's the job of government to make sure that we are diagnosing cancer as early as possible, that patients are starting treatment as early as possible, and that every patient gets the ongoing care and support they need.

Now, friends, none of this should be party political.

I know there are MPs in every party who have lost loved ones to cancer like I did, or who've battled it themselves.

So I fervently hope we can build a consensus across politics to make cancer a top priority in the next Parliament.

But as Leader of our party, I can at least promise you this:

For Liberal Democrat MPs, it will be a top priority.

And that's why today I am announcing our new and ambitious plan to end unacceptable cancer delays and boost survival rates.

We will hold the Government to account, for every target it misses and every patient it fails.

We will never stop fighting for better care for you and your loved ones.

Of course, it's not just cancer where the Government is letting patients down.

It's pretty much everything.

The Conservatives have broken promise after promise on the NHS.

From their forty new hospitals. To six thousand more GPs. To Rishi Sunak's pledge to bring waiting lists down.

All of it – just meaningless noise.

All a total con.

Perhaps there should be a warning on the ballot paper, like there is on cigarette packets:

Voting Conservative is bad for your health.

So it falls to us to rescue the NHS, and make sure everyone can get the care they need, when they need it.

We know it won't be easy, but we see a bright future for the NHS.

Not because we are blind to the scale of the crisis,

But because we are clear-eyed about the solutions:

More GPs, so that everyone can get an appointment within seven days, or twenty-four hours if it's urgent.

More investment in the latest technology from MRI scanners to radiotherapy machines.

And, crucially, more carers.

Conference, we know that the crisis in the NHS is inextricably linked to the crisis in care.

We know that you can't fix the NHS without fixing social care.

We know you can't fix the NHS without valuing family carers.

Fix care and you fix the NHS.

Better social care, with many more care professionals, better paid.

More support for family carers, so people can cope better looking after loved ones.

These are low-tech, affordable ways to save our NHS – investing in care.

So people can be discharged more quickly. Or don't need hospital care in the first place.

So pressure on overstretched hospitals can be reduced.

So patients aren't stuck for hours waiting to be seen in A&E.

So ambulances aren't stuck for hours waiting outside A&E to hand over patients.

It's all connected.

Our plan for social care and family care is a central part of our plan for the future Health Service.

And remember – in turn, health and care both are key parts of our plan for the economy.

The Conservatives broke our economy with their carelessness.

Liberal Democrats will fix our economy with care.

As we make our pitch to people, we need to show such real change is possible. We need to restore hope.

For when you look at the harm these Conservatives have done to people, done

to our country, one of their worst is this.

Cynicism.

When I speak to people on the doorstep or in my surgeries, I get a very clear impression of this.

The idea that nothing can be done. That people in power don't care. And won't fix things.

A sense of hopelessness.

The toxic brew of incompetence, scandal and chaos served up by this Government has poisoned not only people's view of the Conservatives, but their trust in politics as a whole.

Frankly, it's the only weapon the Conservatives have left: convince people to expect less from government.

Now, there are two ways to respond to the widespread cynicism the Conservatives foment.

One way is simply to accept it.

That's the path that the Labour Party sadly seems to have chosen:

Lower your sights. Give up on really changing things. Make your pitch nothing more than "Not as bad as the Tories".

Half-heartedly oppose what the Conservatives are doing, and then shrug your shoulders and say "we'd pretty much do the same thing".

That's one way of responding to it. But it is not the Liberal Democrat way.

Our ambition for our country is much greater than that.

Our faith in the British people is much stronger than that.

Our path – the path we have always chosen – the path we walk today – is to confront that cynicism head on, and to offer people hope.

Not with yet more platitudes and promises. Not by announcing another nebulous "mission" that's immediately forgotten when the speech is over.

No. By fighting for the big changes. The changes needed to restore people's trust in politics and rebuild their confidence in our public services.

And that starts with real political reform.

Liberal Democrats have long known that Britain's political system is broken.

Millions of people – powerless and excluded. Robbed of their rightful say and unable to hold the powerful to account.

And we've always fought to change that.

But the Conservatives... Instead of fixing our broken politics, have shattered it into pieces.

Their constant attacks on the rule of law and traditional British freedoms.

Their betrayal of integrity, truth and honesty.

Stuffing the Lords with Boris Johnson's lackeys.

Handing out billions in contracts to their cronies.

One rule for them, another rule for the rest of us.

And it wasn't just Boris Johnson.

Owen Paterson. Nadhim Zahawi. Matt Hancock. Dominic Raab.

So much sleaze. So many scandals.

No wonder people are cynical.

Clearing it up is no small task.

It will take more than tinkering around the edges.

We need to transform the nature of British politics itself.

To make it more relevant, engaging and responsive to people's needs and their dreams.

To bring together our great family of nations, instead of tearing it apart.

And yes, at the heart of those reforms must be a fair electoral system.

Proportional representation, so everyone's vote counts equally.

Because we know that the antidote to cynicism is not defeatism. It's empowerment.

Putting real power in every voter's hands, to elect MPs who can't take them for granted, who have to listen to their concerns, who must work hard for them.

Real power to hold politicians properly to account when they fail to deliver.

Real power to demand better schools and hospitals, affordable housing and safe communities, and a clean, healthy environment.

That's why fair votes is such an important part of the fair deal we're fighting for.

Empowering people at the ballot box is the only way to make the big changes we need as a country.

It's the only way to mend our broken politics, restore trust, and offer real hope.

But when we listen to people, we get it: it is hard to hope right now.

With everything we've been through, the years of Conservative neglect and the multiple crises we face.

And with a terrible war still waging on our continent.

It's hard to hope.

So I don't blame anyone for feeling cynical.

I blame the Conservatives for spreading cynicism – I don't blame anyone for feeling it.

But for myself, I'm still incredibly optimistic about our future as a country.

Because everywhere I go, I see the amazing strength, decency and courage of the British people.

And because my life has taught me that, no matter how tough things get, you can get through them. Brighter days can follow even the darkest.

That was true for me as a teenager, and I know it's true for our country today.

Our future is bright.

Better days lie ahead for our country, and – Liberal Democrats – we know what must be done to reach them.

Mend our broken politics. Put real power in people's hands.

Support people through this awful cost-of-living crisis.

Save the NHS, fix care, and make cancer a top priority.

Clean up our rivers and protect our precious environment.

Build the economy of the future, lead the world, and spread prosperity and opportunity to all.

This is our vision.

These are our priorities.

These are the big changes our country needs.

So let me be crystal clear:

Whenever the next election comes, every vote for the Liberal Democrats will

be a vote to make these changes happen.

And every Liberal Democrat elected to Parliament will fight tirelessly to make them happen.

That is how we rebuild trust, restore hope and repair our country.

So Conference,

We have our policies.

We have our priorities.

And very soon, we will have our election.

And I know you're ready.

I have seen you on the streets of Shropshire and the doorsteps of Devon.

I have seen your determination and dedication, and it makes me so proud to be one of your number.

And I firmly believe that, together, we are the strongest campaigning force in British politics.

We have taken chunks out of the Blue Wall.

We have made it start to crumble.

So now let's smash it for good.

The British people are desperate for hope.

The British people are desperate for change.

The British people are desperate for a fair deal.

And we are the ones who can make it happen.

So let's get to it!

Thank you.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

Ed Davey calls for two month cancer treatment guarantee

Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey today called for a new legal right for cancer patients to start treatment within two months of an urgent referral, as part of a five-year plan to boost survival rates.

Ed Davey, who lost both his parents to cancer as a child, made the plan the centrepiece of his keynote speech to the party's Conference in Bournemouth.

Ed Davey used his speech to highlight the Conservative Government's neglect of cancer, with waiting time targets consistently missed and ministers ditching their promised 'Ten-Year Cancer Plan'.

The Liberal Democrats are putting health at the heart of their campaign to win seats off the Conservatives in the Blue Wall at the next election. The new policy builds on existing plans such as introducing a right to see a GP within a week and expanding NHS dentistry so people aren't forced to pay for private dental treatment.

Ten-Year Cancer Plan

- **Two-month cancer treatment guarantee.** A new target for 100% of patients to start treatment for cancer within 62 days from urgent referral, with this right written into law. Currently this is only a government pledge, and 40% of patients wait longer than 62 days.
- **Boost access to radiotherapy.** Replace ageing radiotherapy machines and increase their number, as well as widening access so that no one has to travel too far for treatment.
- **Halve the time for new treatments to reach patients.** It takes an average of 11 months for a new medicine or medical technology to be approved and available to patients in England, compared to just 4 months in Germany. We will expand the MHRA's capacity to speed up that process.
- **Pass a Cancer Survival Research Act.** New legislation modelled on the US law signed by President Obama in 2013. It would require the Government to coordinate and ensure funding for research into the cancers with the lowest survival rates, including lung, liver, brain and pancreatic cancer.
- **Save the National Cancer Research Institute.** The Government is presiding over the closure of the National Cancer Research Institute, which was established in 2001 and plays a vital role in coordinating cancer research, due to uncertainty over research funding. Its closure has been described by one oncology professor as like "turning off air traffic control and hoping the planes will be fine".

- **Improve support for patients and their families.** Recruit more cancer nurses so that every patient has a dedicated specialist supporting them throughout their treatment. Ensure patients and their families are given information about charities, patient support groups and financial support at every key stage: referral, diagnosis and starting treatment.

The party has set out proposals to invest an extra £4 billion in NHS cancer treatment over the next five years to deliver this plan and improve survival rates by the end of the next Parliament.

The two-month target has been a government pledge since 2000, but hasn't been met since 2015 and has never been written into law. More than 72,000 patients or two in five were left waiting more than two months to start treatment in the last year, as NHS waiting lists soar to a new record high.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[Tackling the Nature Crisis](#)

Nature is in decline not only across the UK, but also across the world.

Successive governments have accelerated this decline in nature, which threatens the viability of species, harms our own health and wellbeing and even risks the supply of our food.

Tackling the climate emergency goes hand in hand with reversing the decline in the natural environment. We cannot address one without addressing the other.

Regrettably, the Conservatives have failed to tackle the decline in our natural environment. Their 25 Year Environment Plan lacks the crucial binding targets necessary for both short-term and long-term environmental recovery. Their newly established regulator, the Office of Environmental Protection, doesn't have the teeth to hold the government to account.

Nowhere is this more apparent than with their attitude to the dumping of sewage by the water companies into our rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

In the face of this crisis, Liberal Democrats are calling for meaningful action to reverse the decline in our natural environment. Our new policy, passed by members today, calls for:

- **Halting the decline in nature** by 2030 and "doubling nature" by 2050. We would do this by doubling the amount of land that is protected and managed for nature, doubling the area of the most important habitats, and doubling species abundance.

- **Introducing a 'Right to Nature'**, establishing everyone's right to healthy air, clean water and access to nature.
- **Halting sewage discharges** by mandating major sewage infrastructure upgrades as well as reducing other river pollution and setting new "blue flag" standards for rivers.
- **Reforming the planning system** to ensure decisions are compatible with nature's recovery and climate change mitigation, and designating more areas for wildlife.
- **Introducing an Environment and Wellbeing Budget**, focused on ensuring we are a country that is rich in nature.

Read the motion in full

Our new policy is a promise to future generations that we will not stand idly by while our natural world withers away. Together, we can build a greener, more sustainable future for all.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

[A Child Maintenance Service That Works For Children](#)

Every child has a legal right to be supported financially by both their parents. Child maintenance payments are vital for the well-being of children from separated families, particularly single parent families.

Yet still, around half of children in separated families, 1.8 million children, receive no support from their non-resident parent.

Child maintenance payments are primarily an agreement between the parents but in some cases the Child Maintenance Service will become involved to ensure payments are being made. But **the service is not working as it should**.

A National Audit Office review into the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) in March 2022 stated that the work of the CMS has "not, so far, increased the number of effective child maintenance arrangements across society". And the Department for Work and Pensions **upholds more complaints** for every 1,000 customers on child maintenance than any other area.

Service charges for Collect and Pay, the service operated by CMS, are grossly unfair, penalising the parent receiving funds for the unwillingness of the other parent to pay.

Withholding or artificially reducing child maintenance payments is being used as a form of **economic abuse**. Some survivors find it especially difficult to obtain the evidence necessary to get the CMS to increase the amount their abuser has to pay.

The formula used to determine maintenance payments does not accurately reflect the **true cost of raising a child**.

For many people, including survivors of domestic abuse, using the statutory child maintenance system is **not a matter of choice – it is a matter of safety**. Yet still, the Government has no strategy to improve the CMS and seems incapable of retrieving payments from parents that refuse to pay.

That's why, today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy for a Child Maintenance Service that works for children:

- A full **review and reform of the Child Maintenance Service** to ensure it works for all children and parents.
- The **removal of the 4% charge for receiving parents** using the Collect and Pay service as well as the initial £20 charge to be enrolled onto Collect and Pay.
- **Review the formula used to determine maintenance payments** to better reflect parents' circumstances, such as the age of their children and their differing needs.
- **Guidance on child maintenance payments to survivors of domestic abuse** to be written into law, including direction on extracting payment from those using payments as a form of ongoing coercive control.

Read the motion in full

All children deserve to be properly supported by their parents. Child maintenance payments are vital for the well-being of children. Liberal Democrats will keep campaigning to reform the Child Maintenance Service so it works for children.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

Protecting Human Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights protects British people's rights and freedoms.

The convention has strong British roots, counting Winston Churchill as a key architect and the UK as the first country to formally ratify it.

Yet the **Conservatives are putting these protections and our global reputation on the line.**

The only country to have left the convention is Russia. But Conservatives like Suella Braverman are pushing for us to join the rogue state. Their failed ideological approach risks undermining the Good Friday agreement and further undermining our relationship with our European neighbours.

Liberal Democrats have always led the way in working to protect human rights laws from Conservative attacks, and we're not backing down this time.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed a new policy calling on the Government to unequivocally commit to staying in the European Convention on Human Rights, and to ensure that all UK legislation is compliant with the Convention.

We will continue to protect the rights of vulnerable people in the UK and around the world against these deplorable Conservative attacks.

Read our policy in full

[Go to Source](#)

Author: