

Connecting communities

Affordable, reliable bus, tram and rail services connect communities, but for too long the Conservatives have allowed services to decline.

Almost a quarter of bus routes have been cut in the last ten years outside London, while fares have risen by 89% since 2005. Rail passenger levels have only just recovered to their pre-pandemic levels.

Meanwhile **rail electrification is at a standstill** with just 101 miles of line due to be electrified this year and a new rail line in Bedfordshire not being built with electric trains in mind.

Buses are often relied upon by the very poorest as well as the old and the young to get to school or work. **Buses are the easiest form of public transport to introduce, improve and expand** because they require minimal infrastructure investment. Improving bus services is essential if the UK is to reduce CO2 emissions and cut air pollution.

Providing bus and rail links **boosts local economies** and enables people to access a wider range of local services. **Public transport widens opportunities** for sporting, social and cultural participation in both rural and urban areas.

Today Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy, calling for action to improve bus and rail services and bring costs down:

- **Giving local authorities more powers** to support and fund new bus services, including powers over franchising and introducing simpler tickets.
- Removing the ban on local authorities creating **their own bus companies**.
- **Extending half-fares for bus, tram and train tickets to cover everyone up to the age of 18**, while they remain in compulsory full time education.
- Introduce a **Young Person's Buscard**, similar to the Young Person's Railcard, for 19 to 25 year olds, giving them a third off bus and tram fares.
- Establish the new Great British Railways before the next election to act as a "guiding mind" for the railway, ensuring that the **needs of passengers and freight are put first**.
- Establish a ten-year plan for rail electrification to increase the number of passenger journeys covered by electric trains prioritising freight routes in the first five years to move more freight to rail.
- Supporting rural bus services and on-demand services where needed.

Reverse the government cuts to the active travel budget and introduce a nationwide strategy to **promote walking and cycling**, including the creation of dedicated safe cycling lanes.

Read the motion in full

Liberal Democrats have a positive plan to fix bus, tram and rail services – allowing people to access services, boosting local economies and protecting our environment.

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Author:

[Alex Cole-Hamilton Keynote Speech](#)

In his first speech to Federal Conference since becoming Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Alex hailed the liberal revival in Scotland.

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Author:

[Protecting our Neighbourhoods](#)

Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own homes and walking down their own streets. For too many people in the UK, however, that is simply not the reality today.

Under this Conservative Government, police resources have not been used effectively, leaving frontline policing over-stretched and under-resourced. **Over half of people now say they never see police on foot patrols in their neighbourhoods**, up from a third in 2015.

Money is wasted on expensive, ineffective Police and Crime Commissioners, while thousands of PCSOs are taken off the streets and just 12% of officers are assigned to frontline neighbourhood teams.

As a result, our communities are plagued by violent crime, burglaries, fraud and anti-social behaviour. **High rates of unsolved crime embolden criminals**, making them feel like they can get away with it.

Every day last year, an average of 5,700 crimes went unsolved across England and Wales. Only 1 in 20 crimes led to a suspect being charged or summoned.

Public trust in the police is essential for policing by consent. Building that trust requires confidence that the police will respond to and properly investigate local crime.

The damning revelations in the Casey Report, authoritarian anti-protest laws and disproportionate Stop and Search tactics against minority communities have all added to the erosion of public trust in the police.

We can fix our policing – and rebuild confidence in our communities.

Liberal Democrats are calling for a return to proper community policing – a plan which actually works to tackle crime and restore trust. Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed a comprehensive, credible plan to deliver this.

Returning to community policing

- **Free up existing officers' time to focus on local crime**, through measures like the creation of an Online Crime Agency and streamlining tasks which take up a disproportionate amount of officers' time;
- Draw up a national recruitment, training and retention strategy to **tackle the shortage of detectives**;
- **Scrap Police and Crime Commissioners** and invest the savings in frontline policing instead.

Rebuilding public trust in the police

- Implement recommendations from the Casey report on vetting and misconduct procedures;
- End the disproportionate use of Stop and Search;
- Introduce mandatory police training on the impact of trauma on victims of violence against women and girls;
- Repeal the draconic and unworkable Public Order Act 2023.

Read the motion in full

Liberal Democrats want to see a return to proper community policing, where officers are visible and trusted, with the time and resources to focus on solving and preventing local crime.

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Author:

[Daisy Cooper Keynote Speech](#)

Daisy Cooper addresses Autumn Conference, issuing a rallying call to party activists to take on the Conservatives in the Blue Wall and deliver a brighter future.

Daisy said:

"We have a huge opportunity. Right across the Blue Wall and right across the country – people are furious with the Conservatives. They're angry that nothing works – everything's broken and all the things we cherish – our NHS, our precious environment, our standing in the world – have been trashed.

"What's more: they know who did it. This appalling Conservative government – too busy fighting each other to do anything useful.

"It's not just that they've blown a hole in our economy, driven our NHS into the ground, and allowed water companies to pour sewage into our rivers and onto our beaches with impunity. The most unforgivable thing about this Conservative government is that they've broken people's hope.

"Whilst we are ashamed of this government – we are so proud of our country and of our NHS. We know that there are millions of people across the UK who share our vision and want to live in a liberal Britain. Between now and the next General Election, it's up to us to show them a brighter future is possible."

Watch the speech in full:

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Author:

[For a Fair Deal](#)

In very tough times, the British people have shown remarkable decency and strength. Everywhere I go across our great United Kingdom, I see people from all backgrounds and all walks of life, working hard, raising families,

helping others and playing by the rules – but finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

Now more than ever, **people deserve a fair deal.**

Everyone should be able to afford a decent home in a safe, clean neighbourhood – with a comfortable retirement when the time comes. Every child should be able to go to a good school and have real opportunities to fulfil their potential. If anyone in your family is ill, frail or disabled, they should get the high-quality healthcare they need.

But that's not the reality for too many people in the UK today, because **this out-of-touch Conservative Government is letting us all down and taking everyone for granted.**

Soaring energy bills, food prices and housing costs are overwhelming millions of families and pensioners. We need a Government with a plan to tackle this cost-of-living crisis, but instead the Conservatives have made it so much worse because they just don't care.

They have let the NHS crisis spiral out of control, failing to deliver the new hospitals they promised and making people wait hours for an ambulance, weeks to see a GP or months for urgent cancer treatment. They are allowing water companies to pump filthy sewage into our rivers, damaging our precious local environment.

All that must change.

More and more people are turning to the Liberal Democrats to put an end to this terrible Conservative Government. They know that every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to elect a strong local champion who will fight for a fair deal for you and your community.

A fair deal that gives everyone the opportunity to get on in life, wherever they start.

A fair deal that puts power in your hands, so you can do your bit – for your children, your community, your business and your environment.

A fair deal that holds the powerful to account, to make sure they do their bit too. Where everyone plays by the same rules.

That is the fair deal the Liberal Democrats are fighting for. I know we can achieve it.

Our Fair Deal

Today Liberal Democrat members have backed our plan for a fair deal, setting out our priorities ahead of the next generation:



A fair, prosperous and innovative economy that promotes opportunity and wellbeing

Everyone deserves the chance to get on in life and see their hard work and aspiration properly rewarded. Businesses and entrepreneurs should be supported to create worthwhile jobs in every part of the UK. But the Conservatives' botched deal with Europe has damaged trade and prosperity and is acting as a permanent brake on the economy.

Liberal Democrats are the champions of small businesses – the engines of our economy and the beating heart of local communities. We put people first, with a focus on education, training and flexible working. We believe in harnessing the benefits of new technology and innovations for everyone. And we understand that to grow the UK's economy we must fix the broken relationship with Europe.



Fair access to good public services and a strong social safety net

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. Everyone should receive the care they need when they are ill or frail, and a helping hand when they fall on tough times. Liberal Democrats believe that an active state is essential to empower people and provide the support they need.

That means a government which helps struggling families and pensioners when they face a cost-of-living crisis, rather than one which plunges them into poverty. We understand that education is the key to opportunity and the best possible investment in our country's future. We cherish the NHS, a Liberal invention and one of the UK's proudest achievements.



A flourishing environment, with fair access to nature for all

Everyone should be able to enjoy the benefits of our wonderful natural environment, and our children should inherit the future they deserve. The climate and nature emergencies are the most pressing threats to prosperity facing the UK and the world.

We must act now: investing in green technologies and skills training, cutting air and water pollution, and taking a new approach to farming and the countryside. The UK can lead the world with innovation and ingenuity, while boosting the economy and enhancing everyone's quality of life.



A strong United Kingdom and a fair international order

Liberal Democrats are proud internationalists. We believe that our country and our people thrive when we are open and outward-looking. The UK can be an incredible force for good when it stands tall on the world stage, championing the values of equality, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Both the Covid pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine show that events beyond Britain's borders inevitably become our concern.

We are passionate about close British-European cooperation, which benefits us and our allies. While we support a longer-term objective of EU membership, we recognise that the Conservatives have damaged trust in the UK so badly that there is a lot of work to do before that is possible. We have therefore set out a comprehensive step-by-step plan to rebuild our ties of trade, trust and friendship with our nearest neighbours – ties that can only be built back gradually over time.



A truly fair democracy, where everyone's rights are respected and individuals and communities are empowered

Every person matters. Every life is precious. Liberal Democrats believe that basic rights and dignity are the birthright of every individual, to be respected, cherished and enhanced. We want to shift more power out of the centre in Whitehall, so local decisions are made by and for the people and communities they affect. We want to break up concentrations of power, and put real power in everyone's hands.

For a hundred years, Liberals and Liberal Democrats have been fighting for fair votes, to give everyone equal power in our democracy and hold all Members of Parliament properly to account. Our goal is to transform the nature of British politics itself to make it more relevant, engaging and responsive to people's needs and dreams.

Read our Pre-Manifesto in full

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Author: