

Only we will fix the broken system

“Getting rid of the Conservatives will not be enough to bring about the radical change we need.”

That’s how Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey began his New Year message to the country. 2024 is almost certain to see Rishi Sunak call a general election, with April or May looking increasingly likely as Conservative Party infighting grows.

Ed made clear that defeating the Conservative Government is “absolutely necessary”, but argued it is “nowhere near enough to solve the big, deep-rooted challenges in our country” – from poverty and inequality to climate change.

Underpinning these huge challenges, he said, is “a political system that has been fundamentally broken for generations.”

Ed described it as “a two-party system that leaves millions feeling powerless and excluded; makes it impossible to hold those in power properly to account; rewards short-term self-interest at the expense of actual solutions; and serves no one, except the vested interests of the Conservative and Labour parties.”

Neither the Conservatives nor Labour can really tackle the country’s most serious problems, he argued, because they are both wedded to the current system, which “suits them just fine”.

Ed said Labour “think they can simply take their turn, without ever grappling with the big challenges we face, or the radical solutions they demand.”

He pointed to Labour’s support for Conservative spending plans – including the two-child limit for benefits and cuts to international aid – as well as their rejection of the Liberal Democrats’ clear, detailed plan to fix the UK’s broken relationship with Europe. “And, of course,” he said, “the Labour Party is still wedded to First Past the Post – even though the majority of voters want change.”

“So it falls to us – to Liberal Democrats – to be the agents of change, once again.”

As Liberal Democrat campaigners make a flying start in 2024, Ed reminded the country why this year’s election is so important:

“Not just to beat the Conservatives, though beat them we must. Not just to change who sits in power, but to change where power sits. We must do nothing less than transform the nature of British politics for good.”

Ed's New Year Message

As Liberal Democrats, we know: Getting rid of the Conservatives will not be enough to bring about the radical change we need. Though absolutely necessary, it is nowhere near enough to solve the big, deep-rooted challenges in our country.

The change we seek, the change our party has always sought, the change liberals have championed for generations – is so much bigger than that.

Because, beneath the daily stream of crisis and scandal, lie much older and more fundamental problems; that neither the Conservatives nor Labour are capable of tackling.

Entrenched poverty and inequality. Systemic injustice. Climate change and the nature crisis. Britain's diminished standing in an increasingly authoritarian world. The concentration of so much power in the hands of so few.

And underpinning them all: A broken political system.

A political system that leaves millions feeling powerless and excluded. That makes it impossible to hold those in power properly to account. A political system that rewards short-term self-interest at the expense of actual solutions. A two-party system that serves no one, except the vested interests of the Conservative and Labour parties. That swings from blue to red and back again, while nothing really changes. A political system that has been fundamentally broken for generations.

And only we – Liberal Democrats – will fix it. No one else will.

Labour certainly won't. They've made that crystal clear. Because the truth is – the current system suits Labour just fine. Yes, it lets the Conservatives in most of the time. But they are bound eventually to let people down so badly that Labour think they can simply take their turn; without ever having to actually offer a convincing vision of the future. Without ever grappling with the big challenges we face, or the radical solutions they demand.

So look what we have as a result:

A Labour Party fully signed up to Conservative spending plans; even when it means leaving millions of children to grow up in poverty. A Labour Party with nothing to say about Britain's place in the world; following the Conservatives' lead on cuts to the aid budget, and rejecting our plan to rebuild our critical relationship with Europe. And, of course, a Labour Party still wedded to First Past the Post; even though the majority of voters want change.

And so **it falls to us. To Liberal Democrats. To be the agents of change**, once again. And bring millions with us, to make it happen.

That's why cold hands clutch wet phones to canvass voters. Why worn-out shoes walk miles to put leaflets through letterboxes. Why tired voices urge

neighbours to lend us their votes.

Not just to beat the Conservatives – though beat them we must. Not just to change who sits in power – but to change where power sits.

We must do nothing less than transform the nature of British politics for good.

Hand back far more control to individuals and communities. Fight for a fair deal, that empowers everyone, and holds the already powerful to account. Smash the two-party system, reform our elections, and give everyone an equal voice.

Because **that is the only way we can build a fairer, greener, more caring country.**

That is our goal. That is our calling.

So Happy New Year, and I'll see you out there!

Help us keep demanding change
– join our fight today.

[Yes, I'm in](#)

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Author:

[Merry Christmas](#)

Merry Christmas from everyone at the Liberal Democrats!

It is such a joyous time of the year. I have enjoyed watching the Christmas spirit spread across the country.

Watching Christmas trees pop up all around, the lights making the darker evenings sparkle.

It's a time when we can come together with friends and family. To sing, to eat, give and receive presents.

And, thank God for the grace and blessings we have to celebrate in our life.

Christmas time gives us a chance to reflect on the past year, whilst looking forward to a new one.

As I look to the future, I pray that we welcome a year of kindness and peace.

Although Christmas is a joyous time for so many, it may also bring added pressures.

I want to send my love and prayers to those caring for loved ones over Christmas. You are unsung heroes of our health system, and Christmas is a time when your acts of kindness and care are felt even more.

We hold in our hearts those less fortunate than ourselves. And to those who, this year, are without loved ones over Christmas.

Whether through loss or the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, if you are missing family and friends at your Christmas table, you are in my thoughts.

So, from my family to yours, I wish you a very Merry Christmas filled with peace, love and joy.

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[We can't afford more climate failures](#)

Vital though they are, climate change conferences rarely deliver. Regrettably, Dubai's COP28 was another disappointing summit. Despite hype that the agreement saw "the beginning of the end for fossil fuels", the actual text was undermined with loopholes and flawed by the absence of timescales.

This sad reality was only confirmed by the most independent of judges – the markets. The share prices of the oil and gas majors didn't move.

And as emissions continue to rise and as the world continues to heat up, we just can't afford more such failures.

If the world is going to take action and make the agreements so desperately needed, then the next two years will be critical – and three things need to happen.

First, we need to see nations deliver on their existing promises fast –

including the UK, where, like too many other countries, we are not on course to meet our own “nationally determined” target.

Second, **we need a huge international political effort** between now and Brazil’s COP30 in 2025, to remove the remaining barriers to a dramatic shift in global direction.

Third, **we need politics and technology to deliver** the combination of leadership and confidence that made the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 possible – the last COP that really did move the dial.

So how can the UK help make the difference in each of these three tests? And how can we Liberal Democrats work to make sure the UK steps up?



Domestically, we need to expose the climate hypocrisy of the Conservatives – and make sure the next Parliament votes for a radical step change in the UK’s own climate action.

I’m sure I’m not alone in getting fed up of the Conservatives taking credit for the successes of the Liberal Democrats in Government, when **we nearly quadrupled the UK’s renewable electricity, made the UK the world leader in offshore wind and embedded the policies that have seen the UK’s emissions fall and coal power decline to near zero.** Given they fought us every step of the way, the Conservatives’ hypocrisy is breathtaking – especially as they now use our success as an excuse for their inaction today.

Liberal Democrat climate policies like accelerating renewable power rapidly and increasing energy efficiency investments dramatically are essential if the UK is to deliver on our climate promises to future generations, cut energy bills and make the UK more energy independent. In contrast, at the

next election, the Conservatives' willingness to speed up oil and gas extraction, enable a new coalmine to open and oppose solar and wind investments will enable us to make this case – we are the party of the future, they are the party of the past.



The second set of necessary actions need the UK to **embrace an internationalist approach** that's totally alien to the current Government. From working closely with European allies to reaching out to geopolitical adversaries, the UK must rediscover past active climate diplomacy that saw us influence capitals from Warsaw to Washington, and Beijing to Abuja. When I had the privilege of leading the UK delegation to 3 COPs and shaping both the British and European preparations for the critical COP21, the unreported work of my team of brilliant officials and the Foreign Office's outstanding diplomats was in my view essential to the successes achieved in Paris in 2015.

The climate diplomacy needed at this moment differs from that in one crucial aspect – the extremely challenging and urgent task of convincing middle and low income countries with fossil fuel resources that if they give up the future oil and gas revenues they currently hope will speed up their development, they can still enjoy a path to prosperity. We have to convince the political leaderships from Nigeria to Uganda, from Cameroon to Colombia that climate action can be *in* their national interest and that further fossil fuel extraction will be *against* their national interest.

Liberal internationalists must take on board Anatol Lieven's important insights in "*Climate change and the nation state*", that wishful thinking that political elites around the world will somehow embrace altruistic global action because we ask them to, is dangerously naïve. A better response must

see western democracies putting their own house in order and offering the generous support for development the UK used to do. Without such realism, future COPs are bound to fail again. To date, only the Liberal Democrats are offering any credible policies to make a renewal of Britain's global climate leadership possible for the run-up to Brazil's COP30.



The final requirement for success in the battle to stop global warming – the right combination of political leadership and technological confidence – is sadly not in the gift of any UK Government or Parliament, though an appreciation of its significance might still shape constructive actions.

Paris COP21 was partly successful because President Obama's diplomacy and the EU's unexpectedly strong climate ambition helped encourage China and India to move further than anyone had predicted. Combined with breakthroughs on the economics of solar power which gave countries confidence the transition would be more affordable, there was a happy moment where the politics and economics aligned.

Since then the politics have deteriorated significantly. **The threat of a second Trump Presidency and the relative success of authoritarian regimes have further undermined the ability of western liberal democracies credibly to persuade, incentivise and cajole the rest of the world into action.**

The march of **technology remains the brightest hope**. Policies that invest in the additional technologies we will need from clean flight to nature-based solutions, that share the know-how and support the deployment of game-changers like solar power and that switch the investments from dirty energy to clean may yet overcome the multiple barriers of vested interests of nations and corporates.

Ultimately, to make those policies happen however, we need politicians who genuinely care – ready to put in the graft and capable of taking the political initiative. No-one can possibly still believe the UK's Conservatives are up to this. I am completely convinced the Liberal Democrats are.

Ed Davey is the Leader of the Liberal Democrats. He was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, 2012-2015, and led the UK delegation to three UN Climate Change Conferences.

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Happy Hanukkah

Today, on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, I want to wish our Jewish friends in the UK and around the world a Happy Hanukkah.

As you head into eight days of festivities, gathering with family and friends, I am sure there will be joy, light and laughter.

It is of course impossible to ignore the fact that this year, Hanukkah follows a difficult time. So, I am sure that as you reflect on the past year, amongst the joy there may also be a sense of solemnity. The darkness of the past few months will be felt, as it has touched everyone in different ways.

As the warmth and glow of the candles grow each evening, I hope it may serve as a reminder that even in the darkness, there is hope. Hope for a brighter tomorrow.

This week I visited the Jewish Free School with our spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, Layla Moran, to chat with sixth form students. We were both so heartened by the brightness and kindness that the students demonstrated. Together, we covered everything from politics to world affairs, including the crisis in the Middle East. The students showed such strength and kindness, speaking of how we can move forward together, using shared pain to build a brighter future together.

So, in the spirit of growing brighter together, from your friends at the Liberal Democrats we wish you a safe, bright and Happy Hanukkah.

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[Lib Dems table new law to compensate sewage sickness victims](#)

The Liberal Democrats have tabled an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill which would provide compensation to those who have suffered illness as a result of sewage in the waterways of England and Wales.

The new amendment comes in the wake of government statistics released on Friday, which found a sharp rise in the number of bathing water sites rated as "poor quality." The Bill comes before Parliament on Monday 4th December.

It would permit anyone who has suffered illness as a direct result of criminal conduct in relation to sewage to claim compensation. It would also ensure the government establishes a compensation scheme. It has been uncovered that water firms have discharged sewage illegally, including dry spills, where sewage is discharged despite no rainfall beforehand.

Conservative Ministers have let water firms get away with their destructive ways for far too long. There needs to be justice for victims of potential environmental crimes, especially swimmers and families simply wanting to enjoy beaches and lakes.



The amendment would cover the following, with the Liberal Democrats calling on water firms profits to fund the scheme:

- Provide for the payment of compensation to people who have become unwell as a result of bathing in water contaminated by sewage.
- Make provision in relation to the medical evidence required to support a claim for compensation under the regulations.

Water company CEOs are pocketing millions in bonuses whilst swimmers get sick. This cannot carry on. If someone is poisoned by sewage, they should be compensated for it.

With growing evidence of water firms committing illegal sewage spills and letting their sewage monitors remain broken, there is an overwhelming case to provide compensation for sickness.

The amendment follows a recent report by Surfers Against Sewage, which found between October 2022 and September 2023, a staggering 1,924 water users, including swimmers, reported getting ill after entering the water. This is triple the number reported in 2021/2022.

Water companies have dumped sewage for 7.5 million hours over the last three years, this including over 450,000 hours of dumps into England's designated bathing waters. Over the same period England's top water execs were paid £73 million, including £41 million in bonuses, benefits and incentives.

The Liberal Democrats have exposed the sewage scandal and will continue to stand up for the victims of this environmental catastrophe, this amendment will hold the Conservatives and water companies to account.

Stop Sewage Dumping

Tax water companies' huge profits and fix our sewage system.

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