

Britain must lead on defence and aid

Today, the Prime Minister did what we've been urging him to do for years: commit to increasing Britain's defence spending to 2.5% of GDP.

That is essential. With Vladimir Putin waging war on our continent, and Donald Trump in the White House cosying up to him, this is the most perilous moment for Europe in my lifetime.

Trump is threatening not only to betray the brave Ukrainian people, who have heroically resisted Putin's war machine for the past three years, but also to undermine peace and security across Europe – including here in the UK.

In the face of that threat, the UK must step up and lead in Europe – and that has to include a big boost to defence spending. Today I urged the Prime Minister to go even further and bring all parties together to get to 3% of GDP as soon as possible.

But while we agree with the Government on the urgent need to spend more on defence, we have a clear difference of opinion on how to fund it. We have set out a clear plan to raise that money by increasing the Digital Services Tax on the profits of social media firms and other tech giants.



But Labour – along with the Conservatives and Reform – say it should instead

be paid for by cutting international development spending. **That is a big mistake.**

The Conservatives already cut back on international aid when they were in power, and that did enormous damage to the UK's soft power around the world. Deeper cuts now – at the same time as Donald Trump and Elon Musk are gutting America's aid programmes – will only leave a vacuum for Russia and China to fill, strengthening the hand of authoritarian regimes and further undermining our security.

I am immensely proud that the Liberal Democrats have led the way on both defence and international development. It was we who enshrined the 0.7% of national income target in law. And that aid has been transformative for millions of people in poverty and hunger. It has helped to tackle the spread of disease, and counter the harmful impacts of climate change.

At this time of great conflict and instability, the UK needs to strengthen both our Armed Forces and our soft power, including international aid. With your support, that is what the Liberal Democrats will keep fighting for.

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Author:

Ed Davey marks Holocaust Memorial Day 2025

As we commemorate 80 years since Britain and her allies defeated the Nazis and ended the Holocaust, we must never forget those appalling atrocities. We must never forget how six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis – how so much inhumanity was inflicted on humans by humans.

We must remember so that we try harder to stop it happening again – as it has so tragically in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and elsewhere.

To do this, we must be vigilant in our opposition to hatred, discrimination and oppression, and vigilant in defence of peace, human rights and compassion.

That includes combating antisemitism in all its forms – which has sadly been on the rise across our country since the horrific terror attacks on October 7th 2023.

Liberal Democrats stand with the British Jewish community and will always fight to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their communities.

Liberal Democrats stand with the British Jewish community and will always fight to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their communities. Whether that's calling on the government to support cross-community work, or pushing for the funding needed to secure the right protective security measures.

A few months ago, we marked with great sorrow the passing of Lily Ebert, who was deported to Auschwitz when she was 20. She was truly inspirational – giving hope to so many after enduring such unspeakable horror.

Lily wrote about a banknote, given to her by an American soldier after the liberation. He'd written on it "A start to a new life. Good luck and happiness".

She wrote "This was something I knew I'd keep forever, a reminder, after all the cruelty we'd endured, that people could be compassionate. There was some hope and humanity left in the world."

We must remember that too, and live up to the positive vision Lily could see, even after so much darkness.

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Author:

Britain Leading Again

On Monday, Donald Trump will be sworn in again as President of the United States.

In his first term, Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN Human Rights Council. He has praised Putin's invasion of Ukraine as "genius", and said he would encourage Russia to do "whatever the hell they want" to NATO allies. He's even refused to rule out invading a NATO ally himself.

And he's threatening to plunge the world into a trade war. He proudly calls himself "tariff man".

So let's not kid ourselves. The incoming Trump Administration is a threat to peace and prosperity in the UK, across Europe, and around the world.

For the next four years, the UK cannot depend on the President of the United States to be a reliable partner on security, defence or the economy.

So how do we deal with Donald Trump? We need to do it from a position of strength.

And that means urgently strengthening our relationships with the UK's other partners – most importantly our European neighbours, whose economic and security interests are so closely intertwined with ours.

That is why, today, I am calling on the Government to negotiate this year a brand-new deal with the EU.

Not just tinkering around the edges of the Conservatives' botched Brexit deal, but agreeing a better deal for Britain. **A deal to form a new UK-EU Customs Union by 2030 at the latest.**

This will help to deliver on the roadmap we have already set out to fix our broken relationship – renewing the ties of trust and friendship so that we can apply to join the Single Market when the time is right and one day get the UK back in the heart of Europe.

But an agreement to work towards a Customs Union will also unlock big benefits now. We can start tearing down the Conservatives' damaging trade barriers this year. Ripping up the expensive red tape that is holding back British firms from selling into Europe, costing our economy billions in lost exports.

That is how we can protect our economy from whatever Trump decides to do. It's how we can deal with him from a position of strength, not weakness. And – most importantly – it's how we can turbocharge our economy in the medium and long term.

Yet again, the Liberal Democrats are leading the way with ambitious plans to grow our economy and restore Britain's positive role on the world stage.

Speech in Full

This year, we will celebrate eighty years since the end of the Second World War. Eighty years since Britain and her allies defeated the Nazis. Ended the Holocaust and liberated the concentration camps. Brought peace to Europe. One of our country's finest hours. We led the world – not just in standing up to Hitler and winning the war, but in building what came next.

Creating new forums to foster peace and uphold human rights: The United Nations, led at its birth by the British Liberal Gladwyn Jebb. NATO, driven by Labour's Ernest Bevin and led by its first Secretary General: the British General Lord Ismay. The European Convention on Human Rights, drafted by the Conservative Sir David Maxwell Fyfe. And new forums for trade and economic cooperation, forged at Bretton Woods where that great British Liberal, John Maynard Keynes, played such a crucial role. Ambitiously designed not just to rebuild after years of destruction, but also to prevent the tit-for-tat trade barriers and nationalist, protectionist economic policies that had caused so much hardship and ultimately led to war.

Now, some of those institutions have been more successful than others. Some have withstood the test of time well, some less so. But the point is this: When the world was in crisis, fragile and fearful, Britain took the lead, working with others to create a new order of things. Recognising that the concerns of one nation inevitably become the concerns of all nations...

And guided by our fundamental British values of democracy, liberty and respect for the rule of law, we stepped up. Amidst the rubble of war, in the shadow of the Holocaust, and with the new spectre of nuclear weapons, British leadership offered real hope. And despite all the challenges that have followed – all the trials and tribulations of the past eighty years – there is no doubt that the world has been better for it. More peaceful and more

prosperous than it would have been without Britain's leadership.

The United Kingdom, standing tall in the world. Championing our values. Working together with others. A powerful force for good. That is what the world needed eighty years ago. And it is what the world needs so badly again now.

Because the world feels very fragile right now, doesn't it?

In Eastern Europe, where Vladimir Putin continues to murder Ukrainian civilians and destroy their homes. And where he is trying to extend his grip into Georgia, Moldova and Romania too.

Across the Middle East, where we have seen so much appalling death and destruction. Where – despite the welcome news of a ceasefire – Palestinians in Gaza still face a humanitarian crisis. Where Hamas still holds innocent people hostage. And where we still have a long road towards a lasting peace.

In Sudan, where tens of thousands have been slaughtered and twelve million forced to flee their homes. Where the reports of mass killings and horrifying sexual violence against women are stomach-churning.

And from devastating wildfires in Los Angeles – To horrifying floods in Valencia – To catastrophic typhoons in the Pacific – We see the terrible effects of climate change all around us.

And we see the impact of it all here in the United Kingdom too. From the refugee crisis on our shores, to the rising food prices in our shops, to the sky-high cost of heating our homes.

The concerns of one nation inevitably become the concerns of all nations. So much instability and insecurity. So many challenges facing our country and our planet. And all of these challenges are about to be made much tougher, when President Trump is sworn in on Monday.

Because the truth is, while British leadership helped to shape so many of those crucial post-war creations – the UN, NATO and the rest. They were also built on the fundamental assumption that the United States – the world's largest economy and its most powerful military force – could be relied upon to play by the rules and uphold the agreements we forged. And whatever else you might say about Donald Trump, it is clear he cannot be relied upon to play by the rules or stick to international agreements.

On Monday, he will become the first convicted criminal to take the oath of office. And this is the President who, in his first term, withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Deal and the UN Human Rights Council. And who started the process of withdrawing from the World Health Organization – something he reportedly plans to finish this time around. So much for "The Art of the Deal". More like the art of breaking the deal.

More dangerously, this is the man who has praised Putin's invasion of Ukraine as "genius", and said he would encourage Russia to do "whatever the hell they

want" to NATO allies. The man who has even refused to rule out invading a NATO ally himself. The man who says "trade wars are good", and proudly calls himself "tariff man". When he was last in the White House, President Trump hit our economy with tariffs on British steel and Scotch whisky. This time, he's threatening to go even further.

So the reality is, unfortunately, very clear. The incoming Trump Administration is a threat to peace and prosperity in the UK, across Europe, and around the world. For the next four years, the UK cannot depend on the President of the United States to be a reliable partner on security, defence or the economy. With Donald Trump as unpredictable as he is, we cannot leave the destiny of the free world in his hands alone. Other democracies must step up, and the UK must help lead that effort.

Whether it is supporting Ukraine as it resists Putin's war machine, securing lasting peace in the Middle East, tackling climate change, or promoting free and fair trade to grow our economies... The UK must once again stand tall, leading on the world stage and working closely with those who share our interests – including, above all, our partners in Europe. We cannot simply rely on the US to be there, as we too often have done in the past.

But let us also be clear: nor can we simply ignore Donald Trump or the United States for the next four years. The US will still be the world's largest economy. It will still spend more on its military than any other country. And it will still be our biggest trading partner after the European Union.

So the question is not whether we deal with Donald Trump. We have to. The question is how.

How we deal with The Donald.

And the answer cannot be to do what some – like Kemi Badenoch – would have us do: Approach Trump from a position of weakness. Go to him cap in hand and beg for whatever trade deal he'll give us. In the hope of avoiding the worst of his tariffs. Nor can we take the Farage approach of fawning over Trump and licking his boots. Seemingly more interested in advancing Trump's agenda over here than the UK's interests over there. Neither of those is the way to get a good deal for Britain. Neither is the way to get Trump to take us seriously.

Just look at what The Donald says in his famous book, *The Art of the Deal*: "The worst thing you can possibly do in a deal is seem desperate to make it. That makes the other guy smell blood, and then you're dead. The best thing you can do is deal from strength".

If we seem as weak or as desperate as the Conservatives or Reform would have us appear, Trump will treat the UK the same way he has treated so many throughout his career.

The Trump-led trade deal that the Conservatives would have us meekly accept would allow big American firms to buy up our NHS, or indeed to undercut responsible British farmers with lower animal welfare and environmental standards – Just like the farmer-betraying trade deals the Conservatives

signed with Australia and New Zealand in the last Parliament. And in reality it wouldn't even protect us from Trump imposing outrageous tariffs on the UK if he feels like it. Because he has repeatedly shown himself to be so unpredictable, and so willing to break America's deals if he decides they aren't working for him anymore.

So how do we deal with Trump from strength?

How do we maximise our influence on his administration, to try and prevent the worst fears of a Trump presidency becoming reality – Whether it's handing Vladimir Putin victory in Ukraine, rolling back the progress we've made on climate change, or plunging the world into a destructive trade war?

The answer is to show we are not so reliant on the United States. That the UK has alternatives, and won't be bullied into taking whatever Trump offers us.

And we do that by urgently strengthening our relationships with the UK's other partners – Whether that be Commonwealth nations like Canada or India, also figuring out how to deal with Trump – Or, most importantly, our European neighbours, whose economic and security interests are so closely intertwined with ours.

I am not going to pretend this will be easy. We have looked on with justified horror at the rise of far-right parties in many EU countries, like France and Italy, Austria and Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands. Some of those countries are led by people whose values we find as objectionable as Trump's – perhaps even more so. And other countries may soon join them.

But that doesn't change the fundamental fact that we and our European partners have closely shared interests when it comes to our economies and our national security. We are neighbours. An emboldened Putin is a direct threat to us all in Europe. A Trump trade war will mean hardship and misery for all our people, across Europe. So we must work together to prevent it. To deal with Trump together, from a position of maximum combined strength. And to make Europe more secure in its own right, at a time when we can no longer rely on America to help us secure it.

Now, there may be some who scoff at the idea of Britain leading beyond our shores, after all the damage the Conservative Party did to our reputation on the world stage and our relationship with Europe. But when you look at the crises engulfing capitals across the continent, I have no doubt that the prospect of renewed UK leadership – from a government truly committed to cooperation – would be heartily welcomed. After all, if we don't show that leadership, who will?

But there is a lot of work to do, after the Conservatives spent years cutting ties of trade, trust and cooperation, and sowing bitterness and hostility instead. The Prime Minister has at least recognised the need to reset our relationship with the EU. But so far, I'm afraid, that only seems to amount to saying "No" more politely than the Conservatives. The UK must be far more positive, far more ambitious, and act with far more urgency.

That is why, today, I am calling on the Government to negotiate this year a brand-new deal with the EU. Not just tinkering around the edges of the botched deal the Conservatives signed four years ago – But negotiating a better deal for Britain, that has at its heart a new UK-EU Customs Union, to come into force by 2030 at the latest.

Forming a Customs Union with the EU is not only the single biggest thing we can do to turbocharge our economy in the medium and long term, but an agreement to work towards one will unlock big economic benefits for the UK now. We can start tearing down those Conservative trade barriers this year... Ripping up the expensive red tape that is holding back British firms – especially small businesses – from selling into Europe, costing our economy billions in lost exports. This isn't just a plan to deal with Trump, it's a growth plan for our country – and how badly we need one of those.

And this new deal should include a reciprocal Youth Mobility Scheme – Giving our young people incredible new opportunities to live, work and travel across Europe, while also boosting British employers by helping them recruit the workers they need – especially in hospitality, construction, the creative industries and care, where they are desperately needed. It would be a win-win for our country, and I still can't understand why the Government continues to rule it out.

Let me give you one other, small but important example of the enormous benefits to be gained from a new, more positive and ambitious approach to Europe. It involves a constituent of mine who runs a new air cargo firm. Now in its second year, the business is expanding. They've just added a third Boeing seven-four-seven to their fleet. Exactly the sort of growing British start-up that will grow our economy and create jobs. But he explained how it is being hurt badly by new rules that make no sense. Rules that mean they can't have repair work done in Europe, apart from the one German workshop that is recognised by the UK. So last year they had to fly twice to the US just to get their planes serviced, at a cost of £400,000 a time, and who knows how many pointless carbon emissions.

Why don't we let European engineers service those planes? And why are we wasting time and money on a completely separate regulatory regime for aviation – for an industry that by its very nature works across borders? We can get rid of that ridiculous red tape – and so much more like it – if we are part of bodies like the EU Aviation Safety Agency... And if we negotiate mutual recognition of qualifications for engineers, for flight crew, and for other professionals from doctors and dentists to actuaries and accountants.

Those are benefits we can secure now, before we form a UK-EU Customs Union – But by making that our explicit goal by 2030, by starting the work towards it now, we can make it so much easier to negotiate so many other economic and social benefits. We can rebuild our crucial relationship with Europe so much faster.

And this isn't just about economic security. It's about defending our democracies from the threat of Vladimir Putin – and anyone else who would seek to trample on our sovereignty. With Trump coming into office, European

nations must be ready to step up our support for Ukraine if America steps back. And at the same time, we must try and influence the Trump administration to do the right thing too.

On defence, as on trade, we have no choice but to deal with The Donald – from a position of strength, not weakness, and with our eyes wide open to the kind of man he is. He's transactional, so let's treat him that way.

The good news is, we have leverage. We have something Trump desperately wants: a state visit. The pageantry at Buckingham Palace. A banquet with the King. We all know he craves it. So I say we give it to him. But only if he delivers what we need first, for Britain and Europe's defence and security.

And that is this:

President Trump must sit down with President Zelenskyy and other European leaders – in a summit convened by the UK. To agree how we collectively use the hundreds of billions of dollars, pounds and Euros of frozen Russian assets to pay for the weapons Ukraine needs to win the war and beat Putin. To put it in Donald Trump's language: we are going to protect Ukraine and we are going to make Russia pay for it.

And if Trump delivers on that deal, pushing the necessary measures through Congress... Then, and only then, do we roll out the red carpet for a state visit.

Just think of it. Britain, leading again on the world stage. Working together with our partners in Europe and beyond. For defence, security and economic prosperity. Just like we did eighty years ago.

That is how we can protect our economy from whatever Trump decides to do. That is how we can defend European security – with or without his help. That is how we can deal with President Trump from a position of strength, not weakness. And that is how the UK can once again offer real hope in turbulent times.

Thank you.

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Author:

Protecting children from sexual abuse

No child should ever have to experience sexual abuse. These are horrifying crimes that cause so much harm to the children who are victims.

We need urgent action to stop child sexual abuse in all its forms. That means

ensuring that perpetrators face the full force of the law, while steps are taken to make sure these sorts of crimes can't keep happening in the future.

Liberal Democrats will support whatever works best to bring that change forward. If another inquiry will make that happen, of course we'll support it.

But we should not forget that a seven year long inquiry into child sexual abuse – chaired by Professor Alexis Jay – has already happened, which brought forward 20 recommendations to better protect children in the future. The previous Conservative government sat on their hands and failed to make any progress at implementing these.

The Conservatives' inaction was shameful – and it's disgraceful that they are now choosing to use the victims of this scandal as a political football.

Now, the Conservatives have tabled a motion blocking the Children's Wellbeing Bill that they're saying would secure a national inquiry for victims of child sexual abuse – but that just isn't true.

Ultimately, voting for their motion would have only one result – killing the Children's Wellbeing Bill altogether. That Bill includes many important measures relating to child protection and safeguarding which we have long been calling for.

So we did not support the Conservatives' motion which – rather than introduce an inquiry – would prevent the passage of important child safeguarding measures. Instead, Liberal Democrats are laying an amendment to the Bill at committee stage calling on the recommendations to be enacted in full.

This is proper opposition, not cheap politicking. Our amendments will seek to strengthen, not wreck the Bill.

Liberal Democrats will be using every opportunity we have to push for real action to tackle the child sexual abuse scandal, including by implementing the 20 Jay recommendations as quickly as possible.

And we will keep up the pressure to make sure the government doesn't drag its heels – so that the action needed to make our communities safe for girls and all children finally happens.

Munira Wilson MP is the Liberal Democrats Spokesperson for Education, Children and Families

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Author:

This Christmas, Love is Enough

When I sang '*In the Bleak Midwinter*' in my local church, age 13, neither I nor my brothers nor my mum fully appreciated how much our lives were all about to change.

For mum's cancer was getting worse and I was becoming a young carer. The next two-and-a-half years before my mum eventually died were extremely tough, but they were also full of love.



<https://slinky.to/LoveIsEnough>

So I am delighted to team up with the Bath Philharmonia's Young Carers' Choir on a brand new, original charity Christmas single in support of Carers Trust and Bath Philharmonia.

[Download now](#)

Written by six young carers and former young carers, '***Love is Enough***' is a

tribute to the caring responsibilities of young carers and the bond they share with the people they care for. When I heard the opening lyrics, they really hit home:

“Every second we have left is worth a thousand others.”



It was a joy to spend time with this amazing group of young carers, to see their incredible talents, energy and love. And our launch yesterday was a fabulous chance to highlight the challenges facing young carers and the support available for them – with great coverage on BBC Breakfast, the Today Programme, Radio 2, ITV News and much more.

I hope you'll download the song and enjoy it this Christmas, taking some time to think about this amazing group of people who look after their loved ones from such an early age.

All the money raised will go to Carers Trust and Bath Philharmonia. Buying and downloading the song from [iTunes](#) or [Amazon](#), instead of just streaming it, will help boost us up the charts and raise more money for these great causes – but of course it is available on [Spotify](#) and [all other streaming sites](#).

This time of year is tough for all carers, particularly young ones. Let's put them in the spotlight.

Thank you and Merry Christmas!

Ed

If you are a young carer and need support, or if you know someone who is a young carer and needs support, please visit www.carers.org, and enter your postcode in the Get Support search engine to find support in your area.

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Author: