

Supporting British Farming

I grew up on a farm and I worked in the farming industry. My parents and my brother still live and work on our farm. I've seen first-hand the impossible pressures farmers are under.

My brother was forced to give up his dairy herd in recent years as it simply wasn't sustainable in the current climate. And he's not alone. Instead of supporting farmers, these Conservatives are driving them out of business and endangering their livelihoods.

The Conservatives have failed to guarantee UK food standards in trade deals, undermining our farmers and risking their very livelihoods.

They are cutting farmers' existing payments before the new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) is even ready.

They have slashed business energy support and failed to class farmers as energy intensive businesses, depriving them of vital support.

Meanwhile, farmers cannot access workers due to the government's botched Brexit deal. In the first half of 2022, £60m worth of fruit and veg went to waste just because of workforce shortages.

The Conservatives' failure to back British farming is driving up food prices and it's ordinary people who are suffering.

British farmers are the best in the world, Liberal Democrats want to see them continuing to produce high quality food for our tables while protecting and enhancing our natural environment. That's why today we passed comprehensive new policy to support British farming, protect our environment and secure our food supply:

- **Ending food poverty:** extending free school meals to all children in primary education and to all secondary school pupils whose families receive Universal Credit.
- **Sustainability:** Immediately raise the Environmental Land Management scheme budget by £1 billion, supercharging the transition to environmentally sustainable farming.
- **Supporting farmers:** Funding and support for the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service to assist farmers with the transition.
- **Workforce:** Introducing a proper visa and seasonal worker system which allows our farmers and fishers to access the workforce they need.
- **Protecting the environment:** Rewarding farmers to reduce the use of costly imported and environmentally harmful artificial fertilisers and pesticides and tackling antimicrobial resistance, improving food

security and tackling food costs.

- **Cooperation:** Signing a veterinary and phytosanitary agreement with the EU as soon as possible, alongside mutual recognition and alignment on standards and quality to allow farmers trade with Europe easily.
- **Trade deals:** Prevent the undercutting of UK farmers and fishers in international trade deals by mandating proper democratic scrutiny and accountability in trade deals and ensuring all imports meet UK environmental, climate and animal welfare standards. Renegotiating the Australia and New Zealand Agreements to ensure this.
- **Innovation:** Introducing a Research and Innovation Fund to support new and emerging technologies in the sector.
- **Food safety:** Giving everyone confidence in the security and safety of the food they buy by providing local authorities with greater powers and resources to inspect and monitor food production, ensure goods are properly checked where necessary, introducing robust and clear food labelling.

Read the motion in full

Farmers are at the heart of rural communities, they feed our nation, they are custodians of our landscapes.

The Liberal Democrats are committed to supporting British farming to continue safeguarding our environment and producing the high quality food we all want for generations to come.

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[A fair deal on tax](#)

People across the UK are facing a cost of living catastrophe.

Soaring food, gas and electricity prices. Sky-high mortgage bills and rents.

And all this Conservative government does is make things worse.

Raising income tax for everyone by freezing the personal allowance & 40p threshold. Dragging more low-earners into paying tax.

While inflation soars, the country is paying more tax than at any time since the Second World War.

We cannot let the Conservatives make the people who can least afford it pay for their mistakes and economic chaos.

So it would be wrong for us to raise income tax even further on families struggling to make ends meet – that's why we won't continue our policy to add a penny to income tax. Instead we've set out other ways to fund our plans for a fair deal.

We will make sure that companies that can afford to pay more in tax, do. We will reverse the Conservatives' multi-billion-pound tax cuts for the big banks. And HMRC will be empowered to collect more of the £36bn in taxes that the Conservatives are failing to collect.

Liberal Democrats are campaigning for a fair deal, and we'll pay for it fairly too.

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.

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Author:

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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[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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[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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