

Conservatives' Cost of Chaos Budget

After crashing the economy and sending mortgage bills spiralling, the government is now inflicting eye-watering tax hikes and real-terms cuts to our public services.

This is the cost of chaos budget. **Everyone is being forced to pay the price for this Conservative government's incompetence.** The country shouldn't be forced to clean up their mess.

Underneath the surface of this terrible cost of chaos Budget are yet more hidden horrors. Everything from police to social housing to our crumbling schools is being left in the dust by this Conservative Government.

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Author:

Abolish Ofwat and stop the sewage dumping

The sheer quantity of raw sewage being dumped into Britain's rivers and coastal areas is a scandal and a disgrace.

Everyone should be able to enjoy the wonderful natural beauties our country has to offer, with open green spaces and blue rivers. But the Conservatives are neglecting our natural environment and letting water companies get away with pouring millions of tonnes of sewage into our rivers.

In the last two years, across England and Wales, there have been almost a million sewage discharges, lasting more than 7 million hours in total. Meanwhile, the top water company executives took home £51 million in remuneration, including more than £30 million in bonuses.

It's time for the Government to stop ignoring the sewage scandal

Conservative MPs have utterly failed to stand up for their constituents and put a stop to this.

They have ignored the Liberal Democrat calls for a sewage tax and a ban on bonuses for the bosses responsible. They even voted against tougher action on sewage dumping, and the Government plans to let it continue until 2050.

And Ofwat – the water regulator – has become the powerless accomplice in the Conservatives' environmental crimes.

It has given six of the eleven water companies a passing grade on pollution, even as they continue pouring sewage into our rivers. Ofwat labels three companies "top performers", even though they are responsible for more than 2.6 million hours of sewage dumps in the last two years.

That has to change. **So the Liberal Democrats are calling for Ofwat to be abolished and replaced** with a tough new independent regulator with real powers to protect our beaches and rivers from sewage dumps.

Our new regulator would force water companies to clean up the mess they're making by investing their profits in fixing our sewage system and reducing leaks. It would have the power to hand out unlimited fines and, if necessary, to prosecute companies who fail to meet these legal duties.

It's time for the Government to stop ignoring the sewage scandal and start taking real action to clean up our rivers.

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Author:

The Conservative Property Penalty

The British people are suffering terribly because of the chaos of this Conservative Government.

People will be paying twice as much to heat their homes this winter as they did last year. Food prices are soaring. The country is in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis.

And now, **thanks to the Conservatives' disastrous mini-budget, we are facing a mortgage crisis too**. Millions of families are already struggling to pay a Conservative Property Penalty of hundreds of pounds on their monthly mortgage payments.

no one should lose their homes simply as a result of the Conservatives' reckless mismanagement of our economy.

Never again can the Conservatives claim to be the party of homeowners.

They are doing nothing to help. Instead, Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt are planning to make things even worse, with more cuts to pensions and benefits, more unfair tax rises, and more cuts to essential public services.

That's not good enough. **The Government must step up to help.**

Liberal Democrats have consistently led the way on action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. We were the first to call for a windfall tax on the record profits of the oil and gas giants, more than a year ago. And we were the first to call for a freeze on people's energy bills in the summer.

We have also consistently been calling on the Government to support the most vulnerable during this cost-of-living crisis, including by:

- Reinstating the £20-a-week uplift to Universal Credit, and increasing pensions and benefits at least in line with inflation.
- Doubling the Warm Homes Discount and extending it to all those on Universal Credit and Pension Credit, to take £300 a year off the heating bills of around 7.5 million vulnerable and low income households.
- Doubling the Winter Fuel Payment, giving up to £600 a year to 11.3 million elderly pensioners to help with their heating bills.
- An emergency home insulation programme to cut people's energy bills, starting with homes in or at risk of fuel poverty.

And now we say: **no one should lose their homes simply as a result of the Conservatives' reckless mismanagement of our economy.**

That's why the Liberal Democrats are proposing a new Mortgage Protection Fund, paid for by reversing the Conservatives' unfair and unnecessary tax cuts for the big banks.

This Fund would be targeted at those most at risk of repossession – homeowners on the lowest incomes and those seeing the sharpest rises in mortgage rates.

Anyone who sees their mortgage payments rise by more than 10% of their household income would get a grant to cover the cost of that rise for the next year, up to a maximum of £300 a month. Only the payments on someone's main home would qualify, so this would not apply to private landlords or second homes.

And it's not just homeowners who are paying the price for all this Conservative chaos, so **we are also calling for the Government to act urgently to protect renters.**

We are continuing our long-standing campaign for an immediate ban on "no fault" evictions, to stop landlords threatening to evict current tenants just so they can hike their rents. The Conservatives have been promising a ban for years, but failed to deliver. There should also be a moratorium on evictions purely on the grounds of rent arrears, and extended notice periods for landlords, as there was during some of the pandemic.

Liberal Democrats have long been fighting to give renters more security and protect them from unfair rent hikes, including longer tenancies of three years or more, with fair annual rent increases built in, to give renters certainty. That fight is more important now than ever.

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Author:

A new right to see your GP within 7 days

Far too many people are struggling to get a GP appointment when they need one, leaving them waiting anxiously for the care they deserve.

In September alone, 8.9 million GP appointments involved a wait of more than a week, with 5 million waiting longer than the Government's own target of two weeks.

People across the country are suffering from years of neglect under the Conservatives

This has terrible consequences for people's health, and for our NHS. It can lead to important diagnoses being missed or delayed, and can force desperate people to call an ambulance or take themselves into A&E.

The blame for this crisis is clear, and it isn't the country's overstretched GPs. It's the Conservative Government. Back in 2019, the Conservatives promised to deliver 6,000 more doctors, but the number of qualified GPs has actually fallen by 500.

People across the country are suffering from years of neglect under the Conservatives, who have repeatedly broken their promises on local health services. It's just not good enough.

we can make sure everyone gets the care they need, when they need it.

That's why the Liberal Democrats are calling for patients to have a new right: to see a GP within 7 days, or within 24 hours if they urgently need to.

Of course, delivering on that right can't mean copying the Conservatives' failed approach, of just setting the targets, cutting GP numbers, and then blaming GPs when the targets are missed.

That's why we have set out a clear plan for how the Government should step up and recruit 8,000 more GPs and free up more of their time, including by:

- Increasing training places for GPs and medical school places across the country.
- Fixing the broken NHS pension rules to help experienced GPs stay in the profession.
- Giving more prescribing rights and public health advisory services to qualified pharmacists, nurse practitioners and appropriately trained paramedics.
- Introducing a 24/7 phone line to manage the booking of appointments more efficiently.
- Empowering GPs to spend more of their budgets as they see fit by removing top-down bureaucracy.

By giving doctors the time and the tools they need to do their jobs, we can make sure everyone gets the care they need, when they need it.

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Author:

Leader's Black History Month Message – 2022

October is Black History Month – a time to celebrate the Black British community, recognise their contributions and discover their stories.

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