

# This Land is Your Land – Restoring Public Paths Through Nature



In the UK, access to public paths is shrinking. Thousands of miles of disused railway lines, canal towpaths and green spaces sit unused or blocked off.

Liberal Democrats have a vision to transform these forgotten routes into vibrant public paths for everyone to enjoy.

By creating a national legal framework to unlock thousands of miles of new walking, cycling, and horse-riding routes, we can connect communities, boost local economies, and improve health across the country.

**That's why today, Liberal Democrats members have passed new policy, to:**

- **Introduce a national legal framework** to turn disused railway lines into public rights of way, making grassroots trail campaigns easier, faster, and fairer to all parties, with fair compensation for landowners.
- **Create a long-term fund and incentives** for local authorities and communities to reclaim unused land – including railway sidings, airfields, and industrial sites – for walking and cycling routes, allotments, and green spaces.
- **Promote outdoor education** by ensuring every child experiences residential outdoor learning during their school years.
- **Improve canal and river towpaths** in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, enhancing habitats and public access.
- **Refresh and popularise the Countryside Code** to boost respect for nature and countryside etiquette.

[Read our new policy in full](#)

We believe every person should have guaranteed, fair access to Britain's beautiful green spaces, coastlines, and waterways. The Conservatives failed to deliver the investment and legal backing needed, we will fix that.

By unlocking disused routes and investing in nature and outdoor education, we can build a healthier, greener, and more connected UK.

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## For People, For Planet

The climate and nature crises are the defining challenges of our time. Yet despite the obvious urgency, both Conservative and Labour governments have failed to prepare the UK adequately for the damage already underway. Moreover, Reform and the Conservatives are now recklessly hellbent on making things worse by ditching our climate commitments, sacrificing the planet for future generations.

They have both ignored opinion polls which consistently show that a clear majority of people across the UK are worried about climate change and want the government to do more to tackle it.

The Liberal Democrats believe the UK can lead the world in fighting climate change, restoring nature, and building a cleaner, fairer economy. But this transition must be affordable, equitable, and create opportunities for communities and workers, not hardship.

**Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed policy to deliver a green transition that is good for people, good for the planet, and good for prosperity:**

- **Tackle the climate and nature emergencies equally**, rather than pitting one against the other, through integrating climate, nature and resilience policies.
- **Halve electricity bills** by investing in renewables, expanding grid capacity, and reforming the energy market to decouple gas and electricity costs.
- Set **zero carbon standards for all new buildings** and accelerate electric vehicle adoption with expanded charging infrastructure.
- Establish a **new UK-EU Energy and Climate Security Pact** to link emissions trading schemes and boost international cooperation.

- Introduce a **social energy tariff** and provide free home energy upgrades for low-income households.
- Launch a **National Climate Assembly** to involve citizens directly in climate decisions.
- Invest in **green skills and apprenticeships**, and fund innovation in sustainable farming, land use, and zero carbon flight.
- **Protect communities from climate impacts** by developing clear adaptation strategies and increasing funding for local resilience.

Read our new policy in full

The scale of the challenge is immense, but so is the opportunity.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe, with many species at risk of extinction. The net zero economy is growing fast, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, but we must ensure no community or worker is left behind. Renewable energy investments can lower bills, while nature-based solutions like flood defences save billions in damage costs.

These policies will protect our environment, strengthen our economy, and create a fair transition – so future generations inherit a healthier planet and a stronger society.

The Liberal Democrats will hold the government to account and deliver climate action that puts people and the planet first.

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## **Connecting Communities – Building a Rail Network for the 21st Century**



Trains aren't working properly for the people who rely on them.

Years of Conservative neglect left Britain's railways failing passengers. Fare rises have pushed costs up by nearly £1,100 a year in some areas since 2019, while services have become less reliable and ticketing remains too complicated.

Liberal Democrats want to put passengers first. Rail should be affordable, reliable, and simple to use so that it can connect communities, support jobs and drive economic growth.

**That's why today, Liberal Democrat members have passed a policy which would improve our rail services with:**

- **Nationwide tap-in tap-out ticketing** so passengers can travel seamlessly without fuss.
- **Automatic compensation** whenever trains are delayed or cancelled, removing the hassle for passengers.
- A **statutory duty on accessibility** so everyone, regardless of ability, can use the rail network with dignity and ease.
- All new rail lines **electrified by default**, with clear targets to speed up electrification elsewhere, plus the smart use of battery and hydrogen technology where suitable.
- Alongside new rail routes, **public rights of way for walking, wheeling,**

**and cycling** should be created, encouraging active travel and healthier communities.

- Reverse the harmful government cuts to the **Restoring Your Railway** programme, which aimed to reconnect communities cut off by the Beeching era.

Read our new policy in full

Rail is vital to building a fairer, healthier, and more connected Britain. It's time to get rail back on track, putting passengers first and investing in the future.

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## **Don't Nix Care: Protecting our Hospices**

For too long, the vital role played by hospices in our health and care system has been overlooked. These organisations provide compassionate, dignified care for people at the end of life, they support their families, and they give vital relief to our overstretched NHS. Yet years of neglect and underfunding have left them in crisis.

Under the last Conservative government vital services were put in jeopardy, with hospices and end of life charities forced to turn sick and dying people away. Between 2022 and 2024 hospices faced a £47 million real terms funding cut. A Hospice UK survey found that 7 in 10 of hospices believed they would need to cut services due to pressure from rising costs.

The Liberal Democrats believe no one should be denied dignity and comfort at the end of life because of where they live, or whether local charitable fundraising can plug the gap left by government.

**Today our members have passed new policy which calls for urgent action to end the postcode lottery in hospice care, secure fair and sustainable funding, and protect the future of these essential services:**

- **End the postcode lottery** by allocating NHS funding for hospice and

palliative care according to demand, so that areas that struggle to raise charitable income are still properly supported.

- **Exempt hospices from the increase in Employer's National Insurance Contributions**, which has placed unsustainable financial pressure on already struggling providers.
- **Tackle staffing shortages** through a dedicated hospice workforce plan, cutting vacancy rates and ensuring hospices have the skilled staff they need to deliver high quality care.
- **Establish a sustainable financial footing** for hospices through a new commission, creating a fair and consistent funding model integrated with the wider NHS and care system.
- **Support families and the bereaved** by expanding access to bereavement counselling and therapy, available from the point of diagnosis.

Read our new policy in full

Hospices already care for around 300,000 people each year, but just one third of their funding comes from the NHS. Many clinical costs are met instead by charitable donations – leaving patients' dignity at the mercy of fundraising capacity.

NHS spending on hospices varies wildly across the country, from over £10 per head in some areas to just 23p in others. This broken, incoherent model undermines services and leaves families without the support they need.

**Liberal Democrats would fix this.**

A sustainable funding model, backed by fair commissioning, would save money as well as improving care. Palliative care provided in the community or by hospices costs far less than hospital-based care, and studies have shown that services like those run by Marie Curie can save the NHS more than 50% compared with in-patient admission.

Properly funded hospices ease pressure on overstretched hospitals and deliver the care people want, where they want it.

By protecting and strengthening hospice services, we can ensure that everyone has the dignity, comfort and support they deserve at the end of life.

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# **Backing Hospitality for Growth and Jobs**

Pubs, restaurants, cafés, and hotels don't just contribute billions to our economy – they create local jobs, support vibrant town centres, and bring people together.

But the hospitality sector has been hit hard. Years of workforce shortages, the Covid pandemic, the energy crisis, and poor economic management under the Conservatives have taken a heavy toll. And now, the Labour Government's policies are making things worse.

Rachel Reeves' hike in Employer's National Insurance Contributions is hitting hospitality particularly hard. Recent surveys show 1 in 3 hospitality businesses are running at a loss, 6 in 10 have cut jobs, and many have reduced staff hours.

The Government's changes to business rates also shift the burden unfairly, forcing independent small and medium-sized enterprises to subsidise large corporate chains. On top of this, energy market failures continue to push up bills, with little competition to drive prices down.

**Liberal Democrats believe that hospitality is vital for economic growth, jobs, and thriving communities. That's why our members have today passed new policy:**

- Abolishing business rates and replacing them with a fair Commercial Landowner Levy that supports small businesses.
- Helping small and medium-sized businesses invest in training, digital technology, and energy efficiency to become more competitive.
- Reforming the apprenticeship levy into a more flexible system that truly supports skills development in hospitality and beyond.

**We are also calling on the Government to act urgently by:**

- Exempting hospitality small and medium-sized enterprises from the Employer's National Insurance Contributions increase to ease their cost pressures.
- Consulting on a new, lower NIC band for the portion of workers' salaries between £5,000 and £9,100, to support part-time workers
- Making sure the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements delivers real improvements so hospitality businesses can access better energy deals.

- Speeding up apprenticeship reforms and empowering Skills England to be truly independent and employer-focused to tackle skills shortages.

Read our new policy in full

If we want a growing economy and flourishing communities, we must back hospitality, not leave it to struggle under unfair policies.

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