

# Free To Be Who You Are

The freedom to live your life as the person that you are, secure in the knowledge that their fundamental rights will be protected is not a lot to ask.

But in our country there are still too many people for whom that is an aspiration.

Our LGBTQ+ community face prejudice, discrimination and hostility simply because of who they are.

Their health care, their housing, even their education can all be affected.

But today I believe we have taken an important step forward in protecting vital rights and setting out how our government should deliver a positive future for everyone in the LGBTQ+ community.

Our policy paper: 'Free To Be Who You Are' sets out how we will continue to pursue that Liberal Democrat goal of a society where nobody's life chances are limited or constrained because of who they are.

Liberal Democrats have been at the forefront of each of the great strides the UK has made towards LGBTQ+ equality. It was Ed Davey in 2003 who proposed the clause which finally repealed "Section 28", the Conservatives' law which prohibited the "promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities.

Lynne Featherstone – the first ever Liberal Democrat Equalities Minister – was the driving force behind the legislation that made Same Sex marriage happen.

And it was the former Liberal Democrat MP John Leech who spearheaded the campaign to pardon Alan Turing and Lib Dem peer Lord Sharkey, tabled the amendment to the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which posthumously pardoned thousands of gay men who had been criminalised for their sexuality.

Our party had been pushing to lift the ban on men who have sex with men's ability to donate blood for over 15 years by the time it finally happened in 2021.

That is the proud tradition of which we are the keepers.

We know there is still a lot to do but each step is important to progress in achieving that free and fair society.

The measures we voted through today will mean:

- **Ensuring LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse and hate crime** get the support they deserve, including by delivering training for police and support services
- **Ending anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care**, by commissioning an urgent

investigation into anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care with recommendations on how to prevent it.

- **Banning medically unnecessary, non-consensual treatments** or surgeries for intersex infants and children.
- Pushing for all integrated care boards in England to **immediately remove the requirement for lesbian couples to pay for artificial insemination** before accessing NHS-funded IVF services.
- **Banning all forms of conversion “therapies” and practices.**
- **Implementing a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan** to coordinate cross-government work on delivering LGBTQ+ equality.

Read our new policy in full

As liberals, we believe that true equality is achieved when individuals are not only free from prejudice and discrimination, but also free to fulfil their potential. So fighting for LGBTQ+ rights is not a choice Liberals make. It is who we are.

This comprehensive new policy readies our party to continue that fight. There is much to do, let's get to it.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

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## [Making Britain a science superpower](#)

British scientists and researchers already punch above their weight. This technological innovation is essential to tackling the major challenges of our time; climate breakdown, conflict, economic stagnation, crumbling public services, and social unrest.

The last Conservative government utterly failed UK science and innovation with a total lack of strategy and interest. From their hostile attitude towards international collaboration and ideological hostility to sensible regulation, to the shambolic adoption of technology in the public sector and chaotic management of the economy putting off investment.

Now the new Labour Government risks making the same mistakes. Already they have cancelled the exascale supercomputer in Edinburgh, a short-sighted cost-saving measure, symbolic of their lack of vision and understanding of how science and technology works.

Liberal Democrats take a different approach, one grounded in our values of internationalism, respect for individual rights, and challenging concentrations of power.

Today we're setting out the rescue plan that science and innovation in the UK needs:

- **A national and international science and technology strategy** that raises R&D spending to 3.5% of GDP.
- **Measures to invest in education**, including through a teacher workforce strategy to ensure every secondary school child is taught STEM subjects by a specialist.
- **A National People Strategy** alongside an industrial strategy to ensure the UK workforce has the necessary skills and people are protected from disruption.
- **Measures to strengthen UK universities as world leaders in research** including by fully participating in Horizon Europe, and enacting a decade-long program of increasing and improving research funding with a package of measures to improve spin-outs.
- **Sensible regulation of AI, including a National AI Strategy.**
- **A comprehensive public sector technology policy** and investment plan.
- **Tackling regional inequality** through a digital inclusion strategy, national investment in digital infrastructure and investing in local government.
- **Investing in green technologies** to help mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis.

Read our new policy in full

Technological advances must be for the benefit of all in society, not just for wealthy and powerful individuals and institutions.

For technology to benefit the whole of society and deliver the maximum benefit, government must play a comprehensive and active role, showing leadership with a national and international strategy.

The Liberal Democrats' bold plan to restore UK leadership in science and innovation will drive investment, boost global collaboration, and ensure technology benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

[Go to Source](#)

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## **Major new movie a significant boost for local screen industry**

The First Minister, deputy First Minister and Economy Minister have visited the set of 'The Death of Robin Hood' at Belfast Harbour Studios.

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## **Kimmins announces £330,000 road improvement scheme for A2 Bushmills Road / Dunluce Road, Portrush**

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has announced that a £330,000 carriageway resurfacing scheme on A2 Bushmills Road / Dunluce Road, Portrush will commence on Monday 24 March 2025.

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## **Minister Kimmins announces £225,000 road improvement scheme for Ballaghmore Road, Portballintrae**

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has announced that a £225,000 carriageway resurfacing scheme on the Ballaghmore Road, Portballintrae will commence on Monday 24 March 2025.