

Homecoming

The Social Democratic Party
General Election Manifesto 2024

SDP
Social Democratic Party

“...the principles upon which industry should be based are simple... and if they are overlooked it is not because they are difficult, but because they are elementary.”

R. H. Tawney

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FOREWORD



Homecoming

We are proud to call ourselves Social Democrats and present a manifesto grounded in the realms which unite us - family, neighbourhood and nation.

'If only there were an alternative...' is so often the cry from citizens let down by governments too weak to protect them, too shy to defend our interests and too addicted to the short-term fix to plan for our future.

A restoration is required and is offered here. A constant theme of SDP thinking is that most of our difficulties have cultural roots - indifference, complacency and lack of confidence. In truth, if nothing can be done about cultural causes then nothing can be done about anything else.

The remedies are available but require courage and determination. We can build houses, invest in industry, procure nuclear power stations and defend our national borders - if we elect people who want to do so.

Britain is our home - not a shop or a charity. A civilised people feel the need to belong somewhere. We urge you to entrust our nation's governance to the Social Democrats who will protect it, cherish it and restore our homeland to prosperity.

William Clouston

Party Leader

Social Democratic Party

CONSTITUTION

Reform of Britain's constitution and political system is long overdue. The two-party duopoly - locked in by the first past the post voting system - is harming our nation, stifling political competition and denying new entrants a chance to contribute. Meanwhile, England - the United Kingdom's largest nation - lacks the democratic voice granted to all others. The House of Lords remains an unreformed chamber of political appointees and the nation remains fettered by outdated post-war international protocols. We will be at the forefront of reinvigorating democratic politics and national sovereignty.

- An English Parliament will be established outside London and bids to host it will be invited from cities in the Midlands and the North. The devolved parliaments of England, Wales and Scotland will have powers equivalent to, but not greater than, those of the current Scottish Parliament.
- Westminster parliamentary elections will be conducted under a system of proportional representation comprising multi-member geographically based constituencies using the D'Hondt voting method.
- The Human Rights Act will be replaced by a new Bill of Rights drawing upon the British tradition of liberty, free speech and free association and incorporating established principles such as habeas corpus and the rule of law. The Supreme Court will be abolished and the Law Lords reintroduced.
- The House of Lords will be reformed. Hereditary Peers and the Lords Spiritual will be removed and the system of political honours abolished. A new independent nominations commission will appoint a house of 400 peers to serve for a maximum of 15 years with selection criteria to include political balance, competence and capacity to function in a revising upper chamber.
- We will withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Council of Europe, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and all other international instruments which deny UK sovereignty.
- Political and economic power shall be further decentralised via existing devolved regional bodies and the creation of additional such entities within geographically and culturally coherent areas. Local authorities shall be granted greater autonomy including tax raising powers.

GOVERNMENT REFORM

We are determined to deliver public services that British people can be proud of - offering excellent service and good value for money. By refocusing government on core delivery, we will create a public sector that proudly embraces productivity, automation and a culture of service. Integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality are the key values necessary to achieve this aspiration.

- The Nolan Principles of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality will be upheld throughout government and public sector organisations. Government funding will be withdrawn from any body failing to do so.
- All specialist 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion' roles throughout the public sector will be abolished.
- Public sector organisations will select on merit, and strive to attract the best available talent regardless of identity, place of birth, or upbringing.
- We will conduct a zero-based efficiency review of all public and government bodies, including quangos. The key test will be whether taxpayers would willingly pay for the service provided and if not, activities will no longer be funded.
- Each government department will produce a 5-year productivity plan, assessing priorities for more efficient service delivery, value for money, and workforce morale.
- Taxpayers will be surveyed to test priorities for each department. Relevant performance metrics will be set and reported upon quarterly. Senior civil servants whose departments do not deliver on these plans within a reasonable time frame will be replaced.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Our quality of life partly depends on the quality of local government but this vital sector has lost its way. Our Town and City Halls have become mere agents for Whitehall with much service provision farmed out to private contractors. Key municipal decisions are increasingly out-sourced to consultants which weakens democratic responsibility. The local state must rediscover confidence in its own capacity for the direct, economical provision of services and, in doing so, re-connect with local voters.

- The existing structure of local government will be maintained. However, Parish and Community Councils will have an enhanced role, particularly in the creation and maintenance of streetscape, parks and the public realm.
- Local authorities will strengthen and increase their capacity for the direct provision of core public services.
- An independent national audit will benchmark council performance against basic metrics – rubbish collection, streetscape, road maintenance, overheads vs direct service personnel etc - one month before council elections. This will be sent to all households.
- No head of local government will be paid a higher salary than the Prime Minister.
- Police and crime commissioners will be abolished. The oversight of policing will be the responsibility of police authorities comprising elected members from local government together with co-opted members from police unions, public interest groups, the NHS and the fire service.
- Local councils will be forbidden to make financial investments or speculations not directly related to service provision.
- A National Corruption Office will be established with full investigatory and prosecuting powers to deal with public allegations of fraud and corruption in local government.

GOVERNANCE OF NATIONAL ENTERPRISES

Natural monopolies will be brought under government ownership and operated on commercial principles aligned with the service ethic. It is vital that all nationalised enterprises embody an ethos of duty to the nation and service to the citizen. We must learn the lessons of the 1970s, and ensure that these do not become insulated and uncompetitive entities managed more in the interests of management and employees than the British people.

- An audit of key operational and strategic metrics against British and international comparators will be conducted every three years by an independent review body.
- A business plan will be prepared annually by management and agreed by the relevant government department and Treasury officials.
- At least three quarters of the board members of a national enterprise will have significant experience in the industry concerned. No board member may serve for more than 7 years, have any financial interest in a commercial enterprise connected with the national enterprise or be a former minister.
- All executive appointments will be made by a committee of the Board and a Secretary of State for the area concerned.
- The Chief Executive of the national enterprise will be paid at global market rates with at least 50% of remuneration being contingent upon performance targets including customer satisfaction, project delivery and cost/efficiency benchmarks.
- National enterprises will fund their own capital investment from operating cash flow or via loans from the Treasury at the government borrowing rate + 1%.
- Employment terms and conditions (including pay, pensions, and employment security) in nationalised industries will be benchmarked to comparable roles in the private sector. This benchmark will be reviewed regularly by an ombudsman, and all employees will be appraised annually against high standards of customer service. Non-performing employees will be dismissed.

SCOTTISH REFERENDUM



The constant separatist focus on independence, and a general apathy towards Scottish politics from the national parties has left the Scottish people poorly represented and Scotland poorly governed. Scotland needs a government in Holyrood that prioritises Scots ahead of independence and focuses on improving lives using the devolved powers.

- We believe Scotland is stronger and safer for its place within the family of nations that is the UK and reject calls for independence. We propose a brighter future for Scotland, as a leading nation within a democratically reformed UK that better represents all British people.
- We do not believe a mandate for an independence referendum can be gained at a devolved election. Claiming such a mandate undermines the devolution settlement as these powers are reserved to Westminster.
- Removing the threat of a second independence referendum for at least the term of the current Westminster parliament would give Scotland a period of much needed stability.
- We will actively oppose and abstain from any unofficial referendum.

SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY

Open, competitive, free markets are the best and most efficient system for providing general goods and services. At the same time, successful nations depend on a strong and capable state to provide fundamentals such as the rule of law, public order, energy supply, transportation, education, and to ensure that free markets function properly and do not descend into cartels or monopolies. The public and private sectors are complementary parts of our society and should not be regarded as opponents. This is the SDP's distinct Social Market position.

- Natural monopolies such as railways, water, gas transportation and electricity distribution will be returned to public ownership. Capital will be raised for this via a British sovereign wealth fund and new bond issuance. Investors will be compensated at fair value. Productivity and customer service incentives will be applied across these enterprises.
- We will establish a state-run National Development Bank (NDB). It will give all UK citizens and businesses a right to basic bank account with guaranteed deposits, fair returns on savings and a no-frills ultra-low-cost superannuation and investment service. It will also lend to large UK infrastructure projects and a portfolio of UK start-up businesses in key strategic sectors. NDB profits will be returned to the Treasury.
- We will pursue an active industrial policy centred on productivity and investment and provide a long-term planning framework for the skills, technologies, energy resources and transport infrastructure required for economic growth.
- We will specifically target an increase in manufacturing as a proportion of GDP, a reduction in the UK's trade deficit and new industrial development in the UK regions.
- We will target further increases in the National Living Wage so that it exceeds the OECD definition of low pay (two thirds of median income) within a single parliamentary cycle.
- We shall maintain public expenditure at the affordable level of approximately 40% of GDP, investing strategically across the cycle in frontline public services. We shall avoid unsustainable increases above this level and target a reduction in government debt as a percentage of GDP across the business cycle.

INDUSTRY

An active industrial policy will help us transfer our nation's flair for research and technical innovation directly into industrial manufacturing. This will create competitive advantage for Britain, help reduce regional inequality, tackle our chronic trade deficits and increase the national wealth in the long-term. Decades of indifference to UK industry has resulted in failure. This ideological approach is coming to an end - and not before time.

- A national industrial strategy will be produced aimed at re-industrialisation, skills training, the reduction of regional inequalities, supply chain resilience, the creation of high quality jobs and the elimination of the UK's trade deficit.
- A British Development Board (BDB) will be established and empowered to invest £10 billion per annum via equity investment in start-up manufacturing via a network of Regional Development Boards (RDBs). Each RDB will operate from the region's key universities and will be responsible for the transmission of research and innovation into investment and industrial production.
- Specific focus will be given to electric vehicle and gigafactory capacity, modular nuclear reactors, hydrogen, solar and wind farm manufacturing, mineral fuel production, electrical machinery and plastics.
- A 'Buy British' bill will require government bodies to procure from domestic producers to strengthen industrial production. All large public infrastructure projects will be required to demonstrate the facilitation of domestic industrial capacity.
- A Critical Minerals Supply Act will be passed to bolster our domestic extraction and supply of critical metals and minerals essential to the UK's manufacturing and energy sector.
- The creation of Works Councils to give workers a stronger voice in the workplace will be supported where employees demand it. Such Works Councils will have rights to co-determination, negotiation on behalf of employees, and to be consulted on major company decisions.
- Corporation tax and non-domestic rates relief will be available to businesses establishing manufacturing in economically-deprived areas and training the local workforce. Tax policy will incentivise industrial research to enhance the existing research and development tax credit system.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Since the natural resources and endowments of countries differ, international trade is an indispensable means of securing substantial net gains to human welfare. However, successive governments have been blind to the economic harm of running large persistent trade deficits. The habit of importing far more than we export is a form of short-term gratification. It prioritises consumption over production, gradually drains our wealth and leaves a legacy of industrial decay and debt. We must reset the trade balance - Britain's future depends on it.

- The central structural target of trade policy shall be a reduction in the UK's trade deficit. Progress and policies against this target will be assessed and adjusted annually.
- The UK will continue to participate in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and will respect state aid provisions within the Northern Ireland Protocol as well as the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- The UK will pursue bilateral trade deals when in the national interest. Trade and industrial policy will support domestic resilience to minimise over-reliance on extended global supply lines and products from hostile regimes and to promote environmental sustainability.
- Trade protection for the UK's strategic industries will be legally but firmly applied under Article XXI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994. Trade and tariff policy will also be used to protect companies in strategically important sectors and to support companies in emerging sectors and technologies.
- Unfair trade - involving imports made with slave or sweatshop labour or that which disregards animal welfare or environmental standards - will be subject to unilateral sanction via import tariffs, quotas or outright bans.
- Tax-advantaged Free Ports will be established with a focus on manufacture for export. As with Special Economic Zones (SEZs), these will be allowed only if local democratic support is secured.

TAXATION

A substantial tax base is the foundation of a strong and capable state. Taxation should be as simple and understandable as possible, easy to collect and hard to avoid. However, state expenditure should broadly match tax and other revenues across the economic cycle, with borrowing used only to fund investment anticipated to yield value greater than its cost. The secular growth in government debt as a percentage of GDP will be reversed via a combination of adequate taxes raised and general prudence in state expenditure.

- The new OECD regime ensuring minimum rates of taxation on large global enterprises, which came into effect in January 2024, will be implemented as a priority.
- Until the above OECD global accord comes into full effect, companies with a global turnover of greater than £10m and operating in the UK will pay a Turnover Tax proportionate to UK sales (calculated as 20% of the company's declared global EBIT profit).
- The annual allowance will be restored at all income levels, the non-domicile rule will be abolished and the corporate tax rate for SMEs will be cut to 15%. Stamp duty will be abolished on all residential land transfers below £500k, but applied at 10% on any portion above that level.
- Any residential property unoccupied for more than 183 days per annum will be subject to a vacant residential property tax levied at 1% of the property's capital value, with all revenues from this levy flowing to the local council.
- Where a bequest is left to a direct family member, inheritance tax thresholds will be applied to each beneficiary of the estate, not the estate overall. Each child may therefore inherit £325,000 tax free. Spousal legacies will continue to be free of inheritance tax.
- A tax of 2% will be levied on all online purchases and the proceeds used to fund civic improvement in town centres across the UK.
- Pension contributions will be deductible at the basic rate of tax, not higher rates of tax as at present.

TRANSPORT

Government must provide the infrastructure for the timely, safe and efficient transportation of people and goods throughout our nation. Sadly, the neglect of our transport framework has resulted in delays, frustration and lost opportunities. Our railway system has been carved up, buses starved of funds and our roads left to deteriorate. Investment, planning and integration is required to provide a system which fully serves the citizen.

- Our railway system will be nationalised. Rail operator franchises will be taken back into public ownership as they fall due via a re-established British Railways.
- British Railways will be a comprehensive, fully integrated system encompassing the ownership of track and infrastructure, rolling stock, stations and ticketing. The Minister for Rail will be responsible and accountable for making the newly nationalised system work for the public.
- We will favour bids by UK owned and based qualified manufacturers for new contracts to supply locomotives and rolling stock, including sub-systems and components. A rolling long term programme of train-line electrification will be established.
- We will use funds saved by the scaling back of HS2 to create a Great Northern Railway Network, better linking up the towns and cities of the North of England to unleash their joint potential. We will seek to reopen at least 10 closed railway stations annually in growth corridors.
- Funding for bus travel will be increased to enable fare reductions, higher frequency, increased security, new bus lanes, integration with other modes of transport and the protection of essential rural routes.
- Contactless payment will be rolled out UK wide for all public transport but the ability to pay for public transport travel cards in cash will be maintained.
- We will invest in renewal, improvement and maintenance of the road network, introducing national regulations for major schemes to require works to be completed in compressed timeframes, avoiding extended periods of restricted traffic flow unless approved by the relevant Minister. All nationally awarded contracts will include penalties for delays.
- We will oppose new low-emission zones unless they have the clear public support of the local community. We will continue to build dedicated cycle lanes, but will not have space off crowded roads to do so.
- A licence test to ride an e-scooter will be required unless the rider already holds a full driver's licence. All e-scooters and e-bikes will be speed limited with stiff penalties for overriding speed limits or riding in pedestrian-only spaces.
- A landing fee tax will be introduced for private jet flights in the UK.

ENERGY & UTILITIES

Energy policy must provide reliable, efficient and environmentally-responsible energy to our citizens and build the foundations for industrial development and renewal. We will return natural monopolies and utilities to public ownership and build capability to manufacture and maintain our own infrastructure.

- The contribution of nuclear energy to Britain's electricity mix will be increased from 12% to 40% by 2035. We will renew our existing nuclear plants and develop new large-scale Generation IV reactors and small modular reactors. Planning rules for the approval of new nuclear facilities will be streamlined.
- We will re-nationalise power supply and distribution via a new body, 'British Energy' which will also be responsible for implementing the UK's energy strategy, and the underwriting and construction of new power generation plants and infrastructure.
- We accept the broad scientific consensus that fossil fuels are contributing to climate change and that we need to reduce our aggregate usage of them; however, we do not support unrealistic objectives such as "Net Zero" which lead to an unbalanced and costly energy regime in the UK without materially impacting global warming.
- British Energy will develop a regulatory framework to support UK gas fracking and carbon capture and storage subject to adequate environmental assessments, and for so long as natural gas remains a necessary part of our energy fuel mix. North Sea oil and gas exploration will be given a stable taxation regime to encourage investment and new permits for exploration and production will be expedited.
- An energy security programme will be developed to ensure that the UK has energy resources in place to guarantee 12 months' reserve supply. This will include the use of all domestic energy resources, from renewables through to traditional sources.
- Expenditure on heat pumps, insulation, household solar panel systems and double/triple glazing by registered suppliers will be tax deductible at the basic rate.
- Research into battery technology, hydrogen, nuclear energy, tidal, and low-energy transport will be supported by £4 billion of additional funding.
- Water supply and management is a natural monopoly and it should be returned to public ownership. This will be financed via a British Sovereign Wealth Fund and new bond issuance. We will set capital investment targets to reduce and prevent future discharges. Consumer charges/incentives for conservation and dividends to shareholders in private water companies (where applicable) will be aligned with this goal.

FAMILY



Government must defend and support traditional family life whenever possible, particularly in welfare and economic policy, education and housing. We will shelter British families from the economic and social pressures fracturing our society and seek to rebuild a prosperous and happier nation with policies that place the family at the heart of national life.

- The tax and benefit system will offer greater protection and support for family life. Couples raising children together (comprising a basic rate tax payer and a non tax payer) will benefit from full sharing of tax allowances.
- The fundamental aim of national housing policy shall be to ensure that young people seeking to start a family will be able to find a suitable, affordable home in which to do so.
- Married families will be given preference in council house and social housing allocation, which will be increased. Safe, staffed accommodation will be provided by the state for vulnerable young unpartnered parents, including education, training support and parenting skills. Absent parents will pay child maintenance in all cases.
- All parents of dependent children under school age may elect to work from home three days a week for at least two years, unless the nature of their work makes this impracticable.
- When making staff redundancies, employers will be expected to take into account family circumstances, and parents supporting children under 16 will be accorded the same protection as groups presently protected under anti-discrimination legislation.
- Parenting and household management skills will be made the centrepiece of the Wellness (formerly PSHE: Personal, Social, Health and Economic) curriculum in all schools.
- Government policy in all domains will be subject to the basic test as to whether it is supportive of the family as the foundation of society.
- Government funding for women's and men's refuges shall be increased and a national helpline will be established to help tackle all forms of domestic abuse.

HOUSING

The aim of housing policy is to make available a decent, affordable home for every citizen but no recent government has come close to securing this. Instead, the deliberate destruction of state housebuilding capacity together with mass immigration has created a perfect storm which denies millions a viable route to start a family and unfairly dashes young peoples' dreams of a home of their own. We believe in urgently reversing this trend by reinvigorating state housebuilding and removing market distortions which prevent housing supply meeting demand.

- We will establish a British Housing Corporation (BHC) to oversee and fund the construction of 100,000 social homes per year. In England, the BHC's mandate will be implemented by newly established County Housing Corporations (CHCs) and in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland by the devolved governments.
- CHCs will have powers to make Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire necessary land and the ability to grant planning permission for their developments. They will take ownership of all social housing stock currently administered by local authorities. After a transitory moratorium to allow social housing stock to be replenished, we will re-introduce Right to Buy with the proviso that sold property must be replaced one-for-one by CHCs using the receipts of sale.
- The BHC will establish skills colleges to rapidly scale Britain's construction workforce, and the ability to invest in the development of new technologies to help improve productivity.
- Private housing developers will be levied a 50% tax on the uplift to land value attributable to the granting of planning permission on all greenfield sites and undeveloped land.
- We will apply a moratorium on buy-to-let mortgages with the aim of re-balancing the housing market towards the interests of young people and owner-occupiers.
- We will bring forward legislation to increase security of tenure and to encourage longer term tenancies in the private rented sector.
- All residential let property will require a 'Conditions Certificate' (a housing 'MOT') issued by a new Housing Standards Inspectorate. It will be illegal to collect rent on any home that has failed to obtain its Conditions Certificate – for example, for poor standards of property maintenance – for the full period that it has no Conditions Certificate.
- Married British families will be given preference in social housing allocation and the housing needs of military veterans will be prioritised.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The principle that all citizens should have access to vital health care is sacrosanct to us. The method of delivery is not. The NHS requires substantial reform. It is over-managed and yet underperforms and the escalating costs of medical technology, an ageing population together with widespread lifestyle diseases will place huge future burdens on the service. The NHS must concentrate on its core function of treating the seriously ill and must properly plan its workforce requirements. Social care must be provided on a universal basis to end the geographical lottery in provision.

- The NHS will train British citizens to fully satisfy its workforce requirements and end the practice of large-scale importation of doctors, nurses and other clinicians from developing countries. Specialist clinical universities will be established to achieve this.
- A National Care Service (NCS) shall be established which will organise, implement and fund social care throughout the country to provide a good quality, comprehensive service.
- Special measures will be applied to GP surgeries whose waiting times are in the bottom decile.
- NHS England will publish a plan annually describing resource requirements to reduce waiting times for elective surgery to 6 weeks, and waiting times at A&E to under 3 hours.
- A public volunteer service for aged care will be established. Those over 65 who volunteer for front line roles in the public aged care sector will receive credits toward the costs of their own aged care, at the rate of £10,000 for each year of full-time service. In effect, this will reduce the upper limit on costs a person can be asked to pay toward his or her social care under the October 2023 cap.
- A national audit of the NHS will be undertaken and published, benchmarking its performance and costs against health care systems in other comparable nations, and issuing a headline report to all NI-eligible citizens.
- NHS management and overhead functions will be reduced in cost by 15% in real terms over the lifetime of the parliament, with the savings returned to front line care.
- Families who accommodate a parent over 80 years old in the same dwelling will be entitled to deduct 100% of the cost of state-funded aged care services from taxation.
- National Insurance ID Cards will be issued to all eligible persons to help ensure that health services are provided for those who are entitled to them.
- The NHS will not fund DEI initiatives or champion any contested political causes. Services will be provided in English and Welsh only.

PENSIONS, WELFARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Our welfare system represents the duty we have to one another as citizens, and is central to our unity and respect for each other as a society. It is part of the greatness of our nation. However, benefits provided by the state must be targeted toward the truly vulnerable. The system as a whole must be qualified, contributory, affordable and fair to taxpayers. Our urgent future challenge is, first, to help the millions of our fellow citizens trapped in welfare dependency to find viable routes into employment and self-reliance, and secondly, to re-balance old age pension provision to a level sustainable by the UK tax base.

- A national resilience strategy to inculcate principles of good mental health will be implemented across the nation in schools, colleges, universities and on social media applications.
- The 5% of people who are under 35 years of age and receive disability benefit (a majority of whom have no qualifications) will receive personally targeted medical, education and mentoring assistance to get into work.
- Long term unemployment will be abolished. All persons in receipt of unemployment benefit and deemed fit to work for more than 6 months will be employed by their local authority in civic improvement projects at the minimum wage (local authority funding to be increased to provide for associated costs).
- All future cash wage increases will be matched by an increase in the automatic enrolment pensions levy at the rate of 20p for each pound, until the total individual pension contribution reaches 8% of salary. Over time this will build up a private pension pot for every citizen and augment the pool of national savings.
- The state pension will be increased annually not by politically motivated metrics but, rather, by a quantum which is fully sustainable by the UK tax base.
- We will create Community Hubs at Local Authority level to improve access to multidisciplinary social services saving claimants time and cost while increasing the efficiency and knowledge of welfare services.
- National Insurance ID Cards will be issued to all citizens. Anyone living in Britain as a non-citizen will not be given recourse to public funds for at least 10 years after the granting of indefinite leave to remain status. NHS provision will be dependent on being 'ordinarily resident' in the UK for tax purposes, and with a history of NI contributions.
- The housing benefit budget will be gradually reduced year by year. All of the available funds will be diverted into a capital programme of state house building across the nation.

TECH REGULATION

The digital revolution brings significant benefit but has serious social costs and externalities. The scalable efficiencies which digital technology produces have coincided with an epidemic of anxiety and poor mental health - particularly in children and young adults. New threats of digital political interference, cyber warfare and AI are emerging and almost every aspect of our lives is subject to digital tracking, surveillance and a consequent loss of privacy. These challenges require a proactive and cooperative relationship between the citizen and business and - where necessary - a robust and protective approach from government.

- All smart phones and similar devices supplied to, sold to or used by under 16s will be subject to age-restricted controls on apps and content - regulated by a national kite marking authority.
- Smart phones will be banned in schools. Each school will be responsible for the confiscation and storage of such devices until the end of the school day. Schools will be required by law to impound devices found on students during the school day for 14 days.
- The Online Safety Act will be strengthened to better protect the right to freedom of speech and promote personal responsibility. Social media companies will have a duty to ensure that their strategy for combating misinformation is politically impartial, transparent and compliant with UK law.
- We will restore the British principle that speech will not be a police matter unless it clearly incites or threatens crime or terrorism. We will, however, firmly enforce existing laws against these.
- The legal age of access to online pornography will be raised to 18 and age verification will be required, via proof of credit/debit card ownership or other accredited age confirmation method.
- Advertising online gambling will be banned in the UK.
- A “digital border” application will be created to detect digital content which is malignantly pornographic, supportive of terrorism or otherwise contrary to law. All internet service providers operating in the UK will be required to utilise this scanning software and take steps to block undesirable content.

SEX-BASED RIGHTS

The liberal pursuit of individual autonomy and desire must be balanced by the common good. Some citizens feel at odds with the physiology and social role associated with their natal sex and can suffer distress. Transgender people should be treated with dignity and respect, in keeping with their acquired gender in most situations. However, these rights must be balanced against the need of natal females for safety and sporting fairness. Biological sex is real and politically significant. This requires an absolute stance on relevant legal definitions in some domains.

- We support segregation by biological sex in sport. Fair competition is not secured if male-bodied transgender athletes are permitted to compete in women's sport and, in the case of contact sports, the risk of injury can increase significantly.
- We support segregation by biological sex in prisons and women's refuges in order to safeguard the safety and privacy of natal females. Separate prisons or prison accommodation should be provided for transgender citizens to ensure their safety and privacy.
- Transgender individuals wishing to change their sex marker should be allowed to do so. However, we support the continued necessity for medical gatekeeping in any legal change of sex marker. We oppose proposals that would allow someone to change their sex marker by self-identification only.
- The Equality Act and Gender Recognition Act will be amended to ensure that sex-based rights which require protection in key domains are not undermined by a change in sex marker.
- Healthcare spending and resources for gender dysphoric individuals, including long-term psychological intervention, should be provided at sufficient levels. Physical or drug-based medical treatments for gender dysphoria should be prohibited for anyone under 18 years of age.
- We support the retention of biological sex and gender identity as distinct categories in public sector data gathering such as crime statistics, poverty metrics or public health research.
- We support the use of plain English for discussions of biological sex in health and reproductive care.

DEFENCE

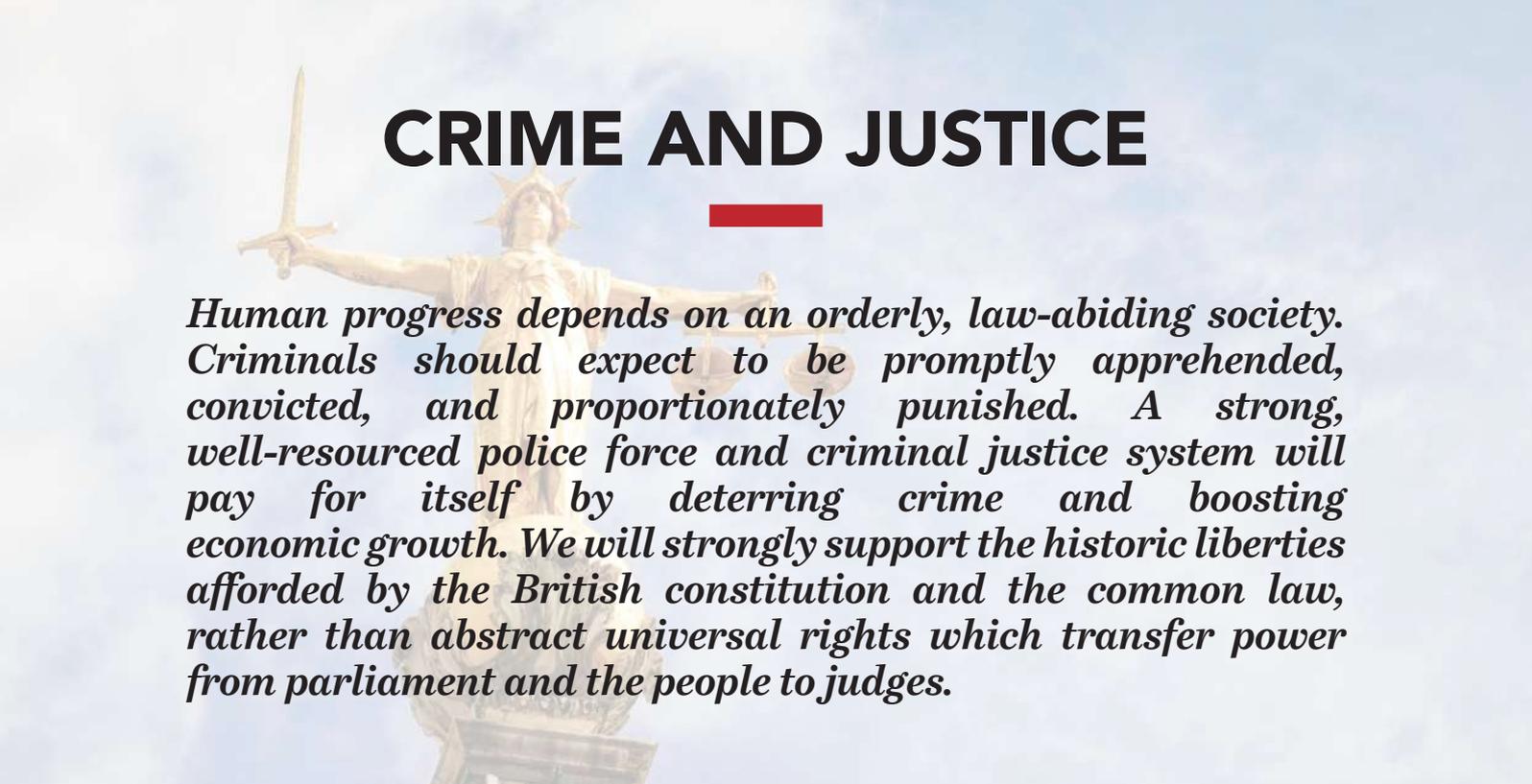
The first duty of government is defence of the realm. After decades of foreign adventurism and disastrous attempts to impose our values on other societies by force, we need to focus on homeland defence - while continuing to protect our international interests. The British military is a source of pride and a symbol of national competence, but continuous cuts have weakened it. We will protect its standing, safeguard its professional excellence, properly resource it and overhaul defence procurement. Modern threats to our way of life are not exclusively military in nature: terrorism, organised crime and cyber-attack are evolving with speed and sophistication, and we will be vigilant and uncompromising against them.

- Baseline defence expenditure will be raised to 2.5% of GDP across the lifetime of the parliament. Funds spent in support of conflicts such as Ukraine will be offset against foreign aid and not deducted from the defence budget.
- NATO is a key pillar of UK and regional defence, and we will maintain our active role in the alliance, while advocating that other key European nations boost their defence contributions to 2.5% of GDP.
- Build and maintain a continuous at sea nuclear deterrent and commit to the Dreadnought Class submarine programme as the sea-borne platform for this.
- Implement a comprehensive overhaul in defence procurement to streamline commissioning, reduce waste, shorten delivery time and increase the scale, use and resilience of UK military industrial capacity.
- Military recruitment and advancement will be based on merit and no other characteristics.
- Ex-military personnel, where suitably qualified, will be given preference in post-service government employment and preference in social housing accommodation.
- Reservists will be guaranteed a minimum of 10 days special annual leave from their employer (in addition to their statutory entitlement) to undertake military training. Small employers which may suffer financial hardship from this will be able to claim a rebate for this time from the MoD budget.
- MI5 and the National Crime Agency will have their budgets increased in line with defence overall, and they will partner with UK universities to deepen development of the specific skills required to work in mission-relevant fields, notably cyber-security, signals intelligence and surveillance of terrorism risks.
- We will restore the offence of sedition, abolished in 2009, and actively use this law to pursue those who incite terrorism overtly or covertly, or who act in flagrant support of the UK's enemies.
- We will improve national resilience through domestic ownership of key infrastructure, enhancing protections against technical and scientific espionage, and pursuing energy self-sufficiency.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Britain's foreign policy should promote, protect and defend Britain's interests. Britain is not a charity, but we are a strong promoter of parliamentary democracy and individual liberty throughout the world. As such, we will pursue alliances with trusted nations to those ends and play a leading and constructive role within the UN, NATO and the Commonwealth.

- Britain will not intervene militarily in foreign countries with a view to imposing western democracy or values, unless there is a clear and direct threat to our national security.
- Britain will retain an independent nuclear deterrent, continue its NATO membership and the corresponding commitments to national defence spending, and maintain its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.
- We will undertake a review of our involvement in all current international treaties to assess whether they remain fit for purpose, and whether they continue to serve the UK's national interest.
- We will pursue a joint strategic defence pact with Canada, Australia and New Zealand with an emphasis on force development, production and procurement aimed at domestic defence rather than projection of power.
- We recognise that China is a major world power in the 21st Century and we will engage constructively with it as a trading partner. We will, however, ensure complete transparency of Chinese influence in UK institutions and forestall control of critical UK infrastructure.
- We will pursue deeper defence and trade and investment cooperation with India, Japan and South Korea as major regional trading powers in the Pacific.
- While defending our status as an independent democratic nation-state, we will engage constructively with our friends and neighbours in the European Union on trade, scientific and economic development and defence.
- We will end the commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid.
- We condemn Russia's self-defeating invasion of Ukraine and support Ukraine's continued resistance. However, we regard a cessation of military activity as a necessary precondition to a negotiated and lasting peace settlement and we support the involvement of all parties and the UN in pursuing such.



CRIME AND JUSTICE

Human progress depends on an orderly, law-abiding society. Criminals should expect to be promptly apprehended, convicted, and proportionately punished. A strong, well-resourced police force and criminal justice system will pay for itself by deterring crime and boosting economic growth. We will strongly support the historic liberties afforded by the British constitution and the common law, rather than abstract universal rights which transfer power from parliament and the people to judges.

- British common law will remain the bedrock of the legal system: parliamentary sovereignty, trial by jury, presumption of innocence, freedom from pre-trial prejudice, and the right to legal representation.
- Resources in front-line policing will be significantly increased with a focus on the highest-crime neighbourhoods. Police will have one metric only: the reduction and detection of crime in their neighbourhood.
- We will increase funding of the criminal justice system so that courts can deliver justice no later than three months after charge, and we will build prison capacity according to need. Prisons will become safe, orderly institutions - whatever it takes.
- Sentences for repeat offences and violent crime will be doubled. Because most crime is committed by habitual criminals, anyone who is convicted of three serious offences over the age of 18 will serve a minimum of ten years in jail.
- All persons released from prison will be allocated a job at a partner employer with all employment costs (at minimum wage) borne by the government for two years, if they do not have a job to go to.
- The SDP is committed to maintenance of a high-quality public realm. Graffiti, vandalism, and anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated, with perpetrators subject to exemplary and visible community service orders.
- Non-British citizens who serve jail time will be swiftly deported upon release from prison, and permanently barred from re-entry.
- Cannabis will remain illegal and on-the-spot fines will be enforced for use.

IMMIGRATION

Selective immigration can make important contributions to society. However, in recent years successive governments have been too enthusiastic about mass immigration, too indifferent to integration and too tolerant of illegal migration. Recent levels of immigration are reckless and historically unprecedented. Excessively open labour markets have reduced wages and dis-incentivised training to the detriment of our fellow citizens, particularly the low paid. A return to moderate, controlled migration for a sustained period is essential and would benefit the nation. It would result in a less divided, more socially harmonious and more prosperous Britain.

- In the interests of Britain's community relations and the survival of our hard-won welfare state we will vigorously resist the idea of 'open borders'. Britain's immigration policy must be skills-based, needs-based, legal and subject to democratic control.
- We will withdraw from the 1951 Refugee Convention, the ECHR and all other international instruments which deny UK border sovereignty. We will promote a new set of international agreements on refugee rights which are fit for purpose, protect genuine refugees and do not facilitate illegal trafficking.
- We will reduce net migration to 50,000 per annum and promote a generation long cessation of 'mass immigration' in the interests of integration, solidarity and social cohesion. Agreements between key strategic partners may result in selective exemptions if clearly in the national interest.
- All unsolicited asylum applications via breaches of the UK border will be declined. They will result in immediate repatriation or detention offshore within British Overseas Territories until repatriation is expedited. The UK will contribute to humanitarian resettlement of genuine refugees by offering 20,000 refugee visas annually to carefully vetted families fleeing major conflict zones.
- A foreign spouse of a UK citizen will not qualify for UK residence if there is evidence that the marriage was entered into primarily to obtain admission to the UK. He or she must also demonstrate good quality spoken and written English. Family visas will be offered only to direct lineal ancestors or descendants of UK citizens.
- No person will be offered UK citizenship unless they have spent 7 years resident in the UK with 'probationary leave to remain' (PLR) status. Any indictable offence or any act considered materially hostile to Britain's social peace committed while on PLR will result in prompt deportation after a single review by a special tribunal.
- Study visas will be cut by half to approximately 250,000 per annum and only allocated to students with places at accredited universities and colleges. Work visas will be restricted to those with specifically required skills and sponsored by employers with a strong record of paying UK corporate tax. Employers of illegal immigrants will be liable to fines of up to £100,000 per employee concerned and criminal penalties where the offence is knowing or systematic.
- People who have been resident in the UK unlawfully for more than five years before this policy comes into effect will be offered PLR status if they come forward in a defined period and can show evidence of a settled family life in the UK. Exit checks at all UK points of departure will be reinstated and matched with visa entry data to ensure that overstay is tracked and prevented.

SCHOOLS

A thriving democracy depends upon an informed people: able to reason well, feel part of society, contribute to the economy, and live the fullest life possible. Children must be taught what they need for their chosen course in life, rather than corralled into academic courses which do not allow them to maximise their personal progress. We require excellence in academic education and increased opportunities for technical education.

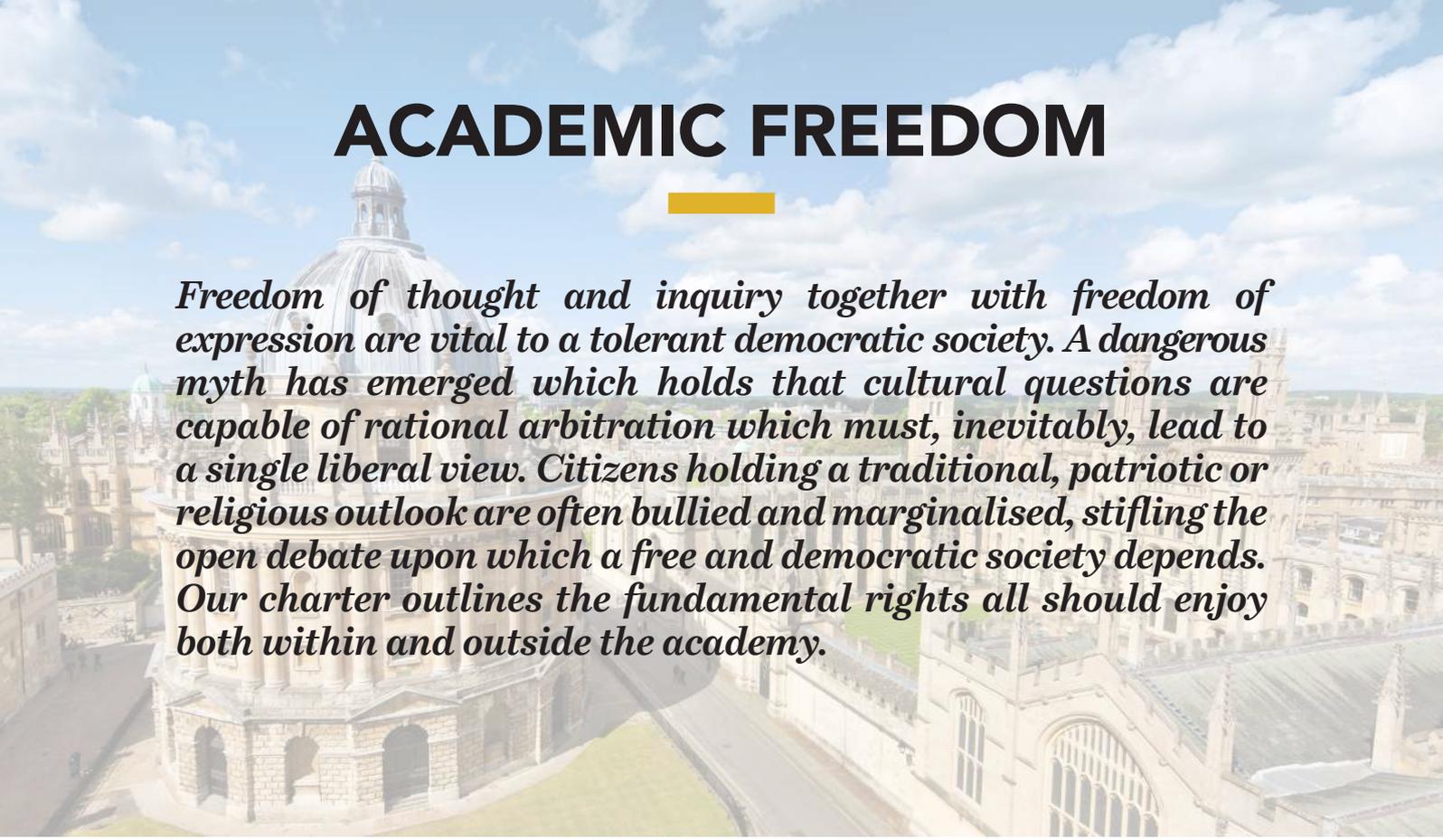
- New grammar schools will be established across the country in regional towns with relative disadvantage. Students will be admitted to these via examination and teacher assessment at KS3 (age 14).
- Free school meals will be provided to all state school educated children during term time only.
- A new subject, Wellness, will be introduced to the national curriculum in place of the current PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic). This will instruct students in good psychological and lifestyle habits, including nutritional and physical fitness goals, money management, home economics, cyberhealth, self-control, good manners, and the destructiveness of drugs.
- Schools will provide more options for those who are best suited to vocational and technical programmes, as well as academic courses. This means increasing the number of students doing BTEC programmes and increasing access for students to move into employment through this pathway.
- Employers who take on a graduate apprentice from a technical school / BTEC programme at the age of 16 will receive a rebate of 25% of the first year's wages for that employee. Employers who take on a school leaver without a basic qualification will be rebated 75% of the apprenticeship wage for two years, subject to a suitable training programme.
- Suitable technical courses (equivalent to the current BTEC Level 3 at age 18) will be the normal requirement for acceptance into paid on-job training for public sector roles such as nursing and policing, which presently require degree courses.
- We will reinforce the teaching of British history, politics, geography and literature up to GCSE level. Teaching in humanities subjects will be balanced and honest, and reflect Britain's important contribution to the world in the context of its time. Teachers will avoid advocacy of unorthodox or sectarian agendas.
- A national programme of resources and online support will be developed for parents who wish to home-school their children. Children who are home-schooled will sit invigilated key stage examinations and undergo safeguarding and socialisation checks at the appropriate ages.
- Arbitrary limits on school exclusions will be scrapped. Students who are excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour will attend specialist schools where additional psychological and parenting support will be provided.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Britain's universities are respected around the world, and the knowledge and innovation they bring must be preserved if we are to continue to flourish. However, the rapid overexpansion of the higher education sector has not returned the promised benefits for enough students, or for the country at large. Relentless loan repayments constrict the futures of graduates despite large taxpayer-funded write-offs. The structure and funding of this sector requires urgent reform. The research contribution of universities to the UK's economy and our industry strategy will continue to be well-funded. We will also reinvigorate vocational qualifications to ensure that prospective students are offered the right variety of courses to benefit them and the community.

- Reduce undergraduate tuition fees to £7,000 per year. Course costs above this level will be met by central government.
- Tuition fees for taught courses and research in critical infrastructure and key sectors will be set to zero. In some cases, this benefit will oblige a period of work within the public sector post-graduation.
- Balance national skills needs by reducing the number of new bachelor degrees and increasing funding for vocational qualifications.
- Lower the interest rate on student loans to CPI and cap total repayments at 1.2 times the original value of the loan in real terms.
- Expand access to “degree apprenticeship” programmes, hybrid degrees which balance academic study with practical workplace experience.
- Postgraduate places will be only offered to international students in fields with high academic standing or industrial relevance.
- Universities will establish a body to validate the English language skills of prospective international students before they are accepted for courses in the UK.
- Boost government funding for university-based research, preferentially in areas of strategic industrial value, but also across areas of excellence in the arts and humanities.
- Universities are for all. They will be expected to accommodate a wide variety of viewpoints, giving space for civil discussion without fear of harassment or no-platforming.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM



Freedom of thought and inquiry together with freedom of expression are vital to a tolerant democratic society. A dangerous myth has emerged which holds that cultural questions are capable of rational arbitration which must, inevitably, lead to a single liberal view. Citizens holding a traditional, patriotic or religious outlook are often bullied and marginalised, stifling the open debate upon which a free and democratic society depends. Our charter outlines the fundamental rights all should enjoy both within and outside the academy.

- The right to express your own opinions without being silenced or intimidated by those who disagree with you.
- The right to be offended by what other people might say, but to respect their right to say it – and to get over it.
- The right to be treated as an equal, irrespective of colour, creed, age, social class, sexual orientation, nationality or biological sex.
- The right – indeed the duty – to challenge all established orthodoxies, even those of the academy itself.
- The right to an education which is politically broad, free of indoctrination and introduces a wide variety of viewpoints.
- The right to be able to hear outside speakers at university who possess a wide variety of views in a civil atmosphere and without harassment or intimidation.
- The right to be judged by your lecturers purely according to academic ability, regardless of how greatly your political views might differ from theirs.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

We cherish Britain's culture which has made such a vast contribution to western and human civilisation. Our heritage is worthy of protection and we will defend it wholeheartedly against those who wish to denigrate and undermine it. Our culture is the foundation which allows everyone in these islands to nourish and support their personal growth to bring joy, contemplation, understanding, entertainment, social interaction and well-being.

- The BBC will be funded from general taxation rather than a licence fee. It will support national cohesion by focusing on news, cultural and educational content less readily funded by commercial channels. It will be audited against the highest standards of balance and impartiality.
- School league table criteria shall take greater account of provision and outcomes in music, technology, and the arts to give parents more information when choosing schools. All schools will be funded to provide after-school music or art tuition.
- Public funding of culture, media and sports organisations will be conditional on those organisations respecting the principles of balance and free speech. Institutions that fail to do so, by censoring artefacts, promoting sectarian agendas or deterring people from civil discourse, will have funding withdrawn.
- All significant statues and monuments will be listed and protected at national level.
- A tax of 1% of turnover shall be levied on all Premier League football clubs to fund the construction of new football pitches and community facilities throughout the country.
- Sports clubs shall be granted new rights to lease their sports grounds from local authority landlords on a long-term lease at a peppercorn rent – giving clubs security of tenure necessary to grow.
- Except where extenuating circumstances prevent it, all schools will undertake a mandatory 'daily mile' whereby pupils and staff run, jog or walk one mile per day.

FOOD, FARMING AND COUNTRYSIDE

*Britain's food system is broken. For every £1 we spend on food, we spend another £1 in hidden costs. These costs are externalised into areas that don't appear on the balance sheet – health, environment, animal welfare, and the well-being of food producers and wider rural communities. Successive governments have sacrificed long-term prosperity – our natural capital – for short-term gain. We propose a holistic approach to support our farmers, restore nature, revitalise rural communities, ensure food security and improve the national diet. The SDP's plan for a resilient food system and thriving countryside is presented in full in our green paper *Farms, Fields and Food*.*

- Subsidies will be set at a sufficient level to enable farmers to produce food sustainably, targeting the most intensive and polluting sectors where the greatest impact can be achieved. Ultimately, we aim to remove dependence on subsidies by aiding transition to more profitable farming methods and ensuring producers are paid a fair price, but support will be guaranteed for as long as needed.
- We will invest in agricultural technology and farmer-led research and innovation to make high-yield farming less environmentally damaging and small-scale farming more efficient.
- At least 90% of existing farmland will be maintained for agriculture. Nature restoration projects will be targeted to non-food producing land and least-productive farmland. Best and most versatile farmland will be protected from all other land use types.
- Through tax incentives and planning reform we will reverse the decline in small farms and restore diversity of farm size across the UK. A land acquisition scheme funded by inheritance tax will be used to create new market gardens, orchard villages, small farms and smallholdings. We will prohibit the sale of county farms by local authorities, and prevent the sale of any food-producing land to non-UK citizens or entities.
- We will re-establish land-based colleges and invest in apprenticeships and mentoring schemes to facilitate access to farming, forestry, horticulture and other rural careers. The integration of food and farming into the school curriculum will be strengthened and will include farm visits and practical home economics and cooking classes.
- Trade deals will not be allowed to disadvantage British farmers and food producers. A Buy British policy will be adopted for public sector procurement, with an emphasis on local sourcing. Both raw and processed foods will carry clear country of origin and animal welfare labelling.
- We will support the establishment of regional Charter Co-operatives and marketing boards, enabling farmers, food producers and retailers to work together to process and sell food locally at viable prices. The Charter Co-op scheme will make healthy food universally available and affordable. We will establish infrastructure grants to improve the resilience and sustainability of local food networks.

FISHERIES

Britain is an island nation. We have a proud maritime history, rich fishing grounds and enjoy jurisdiction over the waters of 14 overseas territories - and yet we import most of the fish we eat. Fishing rights have fallen into the hands of a small and wealthy elite - including many foreign operators - while small-scale inshore vessels are squeezed out. Our fish stocks and the ecosystems which support them are an important national asset, but mismanagement over decades has allowed their depletion and degradation. We must restore a fully UK-owned and crewed fishing fleet. Government must also strengthen local supply chains and promote domestic consumption of British fish to improve regional economic development, national public health, food security and the UK trade balance.

- The UK fishing and seafood sector will be expanded. Investment will be targeted to strengthen the economic self-reliance of smaller operators, train and maintain a workforce and equip large vessels to fish offshore stocks more sustainably.
- Quotas will be set using scientific evidence to avoid overexploitation while minimising discards in mixed fisheries. Social, economic and environmental criteria will be considered in quota allocation. Once the UK fleet has been revived, quotas will only be granted to UK-owned and crewed vessels landing their catch in the UK.
- Access to additional species quotas will be granted for small vessels along with financial support to enable them to adapt and exploit new fisheries.
- Domestic consumption of sustainably-sourced British seafood will be increased via a public sector Buy British policy, clearer labelling and investment in local supply chain infrastructure.
- The environmental impact of aquaculture will be reduced via new research and regulation, more sustainable feed sources, restrictions on antibiotic use, lower stocking densities, use of multi-trophic systems and co-location with wind farms.
- The fishing industry and their wider communities will have a stronger voice in the establishment and monitoring of Marine Protected Areas. Commercial fishing will be given equal weight with other sea uses in marine spatial planning.
- Coastal communities will be regenerated through a combination of affordable housing, selective restrictions on second homes and holiday lets, improved broadband and public transport, new industrial processing facilities, competitive business rates and tax regimes incentivising skills training.

ENVIRONMENT

The British countryside and coastal waters are part of our cultural heritage and identity. Wildlife habitats and the public realm in villages, towns and cities enrich the lives of our fellow citizens and they should be cherished. However, population growth, indifference and poor planning threaten our natural landscapes. Some institutions charged with protecting our wildlife and historic sites have abandoned their core purpose in favour of fashionable ideologies. Abstract international targets set by supranational organisations distract us from achieving meaningful local improvements. We need to protect our natural and historic environment from further loss and embark on a long period of restoration.

- A national land-use plan will be produced to optimise use of our limited space and ensure that the interests of nature conservation, food security, energy security, housing, infrastructure and landscape quality are balanced.
- We will support increased use of the greenbelt for smallholdings, county farms, allotments, market gardens and community orchards. Private sector housing development on greenbelt or high-grade agricultural land will be prohibited.
- We shall mandate energy efficiency into the planning and building regulations system. Subsidies will be available for solar panel installations on existing commercial and residential buildings. Planning consent will not be granted for solar farms on agricultural land.
- Single-use plastic in food retail and catering will be phased out within 3 years. Mandatory returnable deposits on drinks containers and toxic waste products such as batteries will be introduced.
- Ancient woodland and veteran trees will be protected in both urban and rural environments. National tree cover will be increased - always abiding by the principle of 'right tree, right place, right reason'. Agroforestry practices incorporating managed grazing will be supported. A national hedgerow protection and restoration plan will be implemented.
- We will clean up our rivers by setting capital investment targets to prevent sewage discharges, by supporting farmers to reduce livestock density in sensitive catchments, and by robust enforcement of all water pollution regulations.
- We will protect our historic buildings and landscape features, and ensure that the responsible institutions focus on this core purpose. We will support parish councils and community groups to prevent churches from falling into a state of disrepair.
- We will enhance the public realm in our towns, cities and villages through sensitive planning and development, a zero-tolerance approach to vandalism and graffiti, and by funding local authorities to recruit, train and pay unemployed people to deliver civic improvement projects.
- Overwhelming focus on climate 'catastrophe' is fostering anxiety and despair in children. From early years to key stage 3, all children will learn about British wildlife and be given opportunities to carry out practical conservation in their local area. The Natural History GCSE will teach the observation and identification of species, as well as introducing students to the inspiring achievements of Britain's pioneering naturalists.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Animals are sentient beings and are an integral part of both the local environment and the planet we share. Humankind finds itself in a position of great power over our fellow living creatures and with that power comes great responsibility. We are committed to the highest standards of animal welfare.

- Free trade agreements will require trade in animal-derived products to adhere to equivalent standards as UK animal welfare laws.
- Financial support for UK agriculture will incentivise and reward farmers whose production systems adhere to higher welfare standards.
- Species-specific limits will be introduced on maximum journey times and travel conditions for all farm animals.
- The quantity of meat slaughtered under the Religious Exemption shall not exceed UK domestic demand.
- Export of meat killed by non-stun slaughter methods is to be banned and the import of non-stun slaughter meat will also be banned unless the country of origin has equivalent animal welfare standards to the UK.
- All meat products sold or served in the UK shall include clear labelling regarding the method of slaughter. Labelling to be clear if the meat is Halal or Kosher.
- Abattoir inspections shall be increased and tougher sentencing will be introduced for individuals found to be mistreating animals.
- Funding will be increased and directed towards developing and validating humane alternatives to animal experimentation.



www.sdp.org.uk