

The Liberal Democrats have today published their manifesto in a bid to pitch themselves to voters as an alternative to the Conservatives and Labour.

The manifesto, drafted by Danny Alexander MP, Nick Clegg's Chief of Staff and vice chair of the Manifesto Working Group, is built around four themes; fair taxes, fair chances in education, creating green jobs and cleaning up politics.

Throughout the manifesto drafting process, the Lib Dems have been keen to emphasise that every spending commitment can be accounted for they have proposed to hold an emergency budget and interim spending review by June 2010.

This focus on cost, in part caused by a past perception of the Lib Dems as the party of tax and spend, has led to internal party disputes over many of the flagship policies associated with the party, however, their policy to scrap university tuition fees remains.

The party's tax plan, to raise the income tax threshold to £10,000, is the centerpiece of the manifesto and other key policies include allocating £2.5 billion to the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils, which is the single largest spending commitment, injecting a green stimulus package into the economy to create 100,000 jobs and introducing a Freedom Bill to restore civil liberties.

Despite launching the manifesto at Bloomberg in the City of London, the Lib Dems have been critical of the square mile's influence and have proposed to break up the banks, curbing bankers' bonuses and create an Infrastructure Bank to make PFI spending more transparent for projects such as high speed rail and renewable energy installations. Where local authorities oppose them, the RDAs will be scrapped with Local Enterprise Funds created to deliver economic development for the regions.

**[Read the Liberal Democrat Manifesto in full here.](#)**

## Housing and Planning

- Introduce a 'repair and renewal loan scheme' for people who own empty properties which they are prepared to lease for five years to housing associations. The scheme would cost £400m over two years and would be paid for by scrapping Homebuy Direct.
- Begin a ten-year programme of home insulation, offering a home energy improvement package of up to £10,000 per home, paid for by the savings from lower energy bills.
- As part of the green stimulus package, they will set aside £1.4 billion to bring 250,000 empty homes back into use. The owners will receive funding to renovate the properties with grants for RSL owned homes and cheap loans for private properties.



- Introduce Safestart mortgages which would be fixed for five years at a suggested interest rate of around 4.5% and would be available to borrowers with a 15% deposit.
- To reduce the regulatory burden HIPs will be scrapped and the building regulations reviewed annually to ensure that all new build homes are energy efficient. Alongside this, the regulatory burden will be reduced and a one-in, one-out rule and reviewed annually.

## Education and Skills

- The Lib Dems flagship education policy is David Law's £2.5 billion 'Pupil Premium' which will be directed towards disadvantaged pupils. The money will be invested into the schools budget with Head Teachers able to determine how it is spent.
- An Education Freedom Act will create a fully independent Educational Standards Authority (ESA) and minimise Minister's involvement in the day-to-day running of schools. The ESA will include OFSTED and replace the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (OFQUAL) oversee the examinations system and school inspections.
- Academies will be replaced by Sponsor Managed Schools which have a charity or a parent as their sponsor. These schools will be accountable to local authorities with the role of the DCSF significantly reduced to an overall strategic function.
- Reform assessment by replacing the National Curriculum with a slimmed down 'Minimum Curriculum Entitlement' to be delivered by every state-funded school and scale back Key Stage 2 tests at age 11 with teacher assessment and external checking a measure of ability.
- They will give 14–19 year-olds the chance to take up an appropriate course at college or school depending on requirements and establish a General Diploma bringing GCSEs, A-Levels and vocational qualifications into one to enable pupils to mix vocational and academic courses.
- To increase skills for the long term unemployed, a work placement scheme of up to 800,000 places will be created. Those on the scheme will receive £55 each week for up to three months.

## Higher Education

- Phase out scrap university tuition fees over a six year period for all students taking their first degree, including part-time students, and scrap the Government's 50% target for higher education.
- Replace the Skills Funding Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council for England with a single Council for Adult Skills and Higher Education.

- 15,000 extra Foundation Degree places will be fully funded and the Adult Learning Grant will be increased to £45 a week for 18–24 year-olds in Further Education.
- Reform the bursary scheme by creating a National Bursary Scheme enabling each university to receive a bursary budget suited to the needs of its students.

## Environment

- Set a target for 100% clean energy by 2050 with the development of a clear renewable routemap detailing grid access including the development of a European Supergrid, electricity networks and incentives to promote renewable heat. Three-quarters of this new renewable energy will be generated from marine and offshore sources.
- A strong emphasis on renewable energy and community-owned renewable energy schemes in which they host communities can financially benefit from the power generated. After debate within the party, they have pledged to reject all new nuclear power stations and block all new coal fired power stations unless they are accompanied by carbon capture storage facilities.
- Encourage homes to become more energy efficient and an 'Eco Cash Bank' will be established for one year which will give all homeowners £400 to install double glazing, replace an old boiler, or install micro-generation on their home. Those homes with micro-generating capability will be able to sell the energy generated to the National Grid.
- On a pan European level they intend to progress towards a low-carbon European economy by moving unilaterally and immediately to an EU emissions reduction target of 30% by 2020.
- For cars, national road pricing will be offset by axing vehicle excise duty and they will work towards a target an EU target of zero emissions from cars by 2040.
- On aviation, all airport expansion in the South East will be scrapped and a tax will be placed each aircraft in place of the air passenger duty.