

on Culture, Media, Sport & Tourism

FOCUS



GENERAL ELECTION 2005: LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO FOR CULTURE, MEDIA, SPORT AND TOURISM



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Successive governments have undervalued the arts, culture and heritage, but Liberal Democrats have a proud tradition of championing them, which I am determined to maintain. Civilised societies value culture for its own sake as well as its undoubted benefits to other areas, such as the economy, health, crime prevention and education and creating a sense of community. It is an important part of personal development too.

Liberal Democrats are firm supporters of freedom of speech. It is right that our art and culture should sometimes ruffle feathers, challenge the status quo and make us all, and politicians in particular, feel uncomfortable at times.

But under Labour, we've seen excessive Government interference in the arts. We oppose the way this Government has chipped away at the principle of keeping cultural organisations at arms' length. Liberal Democrats would give the arts, culture and heritage real independence.

We would start by restoring the National Lottery funds' independence, ensuring that never again can Government dictate which schemes lottery players' money is spent on. Under Labour, the Arts Council's core budget will be frozen. Because of the value we place on the arts, we would reverse this freeze and ensure core arts' funding at least matches inflation.

Sport too is essential for the nation – inspiring, entertaining, and encouraging fitness and healthy living. At grassroots we will encourage amateur sports clubs and ensure that regular physical activity for all children within the school curriculum. We are ambitious for Britain as a sporting nation and wholeheartedly back the London bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games.

Liberal Democrats have also been unashamed supporters of one of the nation's greatest cultural institutions – the BBC. We will ensure it remains the world's leading public service broadcaster – strong, independent, and securely funded. But - in order to continue to contribute to our democracy, culture and standing in the world - the BBC must evolve. Liberal Democrats will scrap the current government-appointed Board of Governors, and introduce a new, independent and external regulator appointed by Parliament, to ensure that all public service broadcasters live up to their obligations to the public.

I'm confident that with the proposals set out in this manifesto, the Liberal Democrats offer a real alternative for culture, media and sport.

Charles Kennedy

Top 4 Liberal Democrat policies for Culture, Media, Sport & Tourism

- End Labour's freeze in the Arts Council's core budget, and emphasise arts' appreciation and participation in the school curriculum to teach the value of the arts for their own sake and to harness their undoubted benefits to the economy, health, crime prevention and education.
- Ensure the BBC is strong, independent and securely funded, not least through supporting the continuation of the licence fee and scrapping the present board of Governors to establish instead a new, independent and external regulator to ensure all public service broadcasters live up to their obligations to the public.
- Require regular physical activity for all children within the school curriculum, not simply in after school clubs. We will strengthen links between schools and sports clubs and increase grassroots sports funding to foster a love of playing sport for life.
- Reduce the £17bn tourism deficit (which has almost quadrupled under Labour) by increasing Government funding for marketing tourism domestically and creating an English tourism board.

Art, Culture & Heritage

Freedom to enjoy

- Continue to support free entry to DCMS-sponsored museums and galleries and the roll-out of Renaissance in the Regions.
- Help protect our built environment by reducing VAT on historic building repair paid for by a rise in VAT on new build.
- Widen access to film exhibition by supporting the work of the Film Council and reforming planning law to allow local authorities to offer greater protection to cinemas.
- Commission research into the impact of online and venue-based ticket touting on live music similar to Government research in Victoria State, Australia and New York State, U.S.A.
- Where possible, encourage museums and galleries to loan interesting pieces that are not displayed, and would not be put at risk, for display in public and commercial spaces.
- Enhance the protection of our historic environment for future generations by creating an inter-departmental ministerial committee on archaeology, giving statutory status to local authority Sites and Monuments Records and ensuring the long-term funding of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Freedom to create

We believe artists must have the freedom to create, not just teach others, and that the arts must be free from excessive Government interference. The Liberal Democrats would:

- Axe centrally directed government schemes such as Creative Partnerships and ensure that public spending on the arts is not prioritised directly by Government but rather by artists, arts organisations and the communities they serve.
- Restore the National Lottery funds' independence by ensuring that never again can Government dictate which schemes lottery players' money is spent on and requiring the Department for Culture to clearly separate Government spending from Lottery spending in its annual reports.
- Allow live music to flourish by reducing the currently overly bureaucratic requirements for licences for small venues while strengthening local authorities' powers over noise, disturbance and safety to prevent public nuisance.
- Bring forward legislation to

protect artists' rights and intellectual property in the creative industries, including film, television and music, to help those industries flourish and to protect the interests of UK citizens and consumers.

Sustainability

We believe that public investment in the arts should fund talent not bureaucracy, sustainability not short-term initiatives. Liberal Democrats will:

- End Labour's freeze in the core Arts Council budget, guaranteeing that growth in core arts' funding at least matches inflation.
- Change lottery rules to enable lottery funding to kick-start endowment funding for national, regional and local cultural institutions.
- Retain a defined, strong, natural and cultural heritage strand in the National Lottery in the review of Lottery funding distribution which will be implemented in 2009.
- Develop a more robust framework to enable public sector funding to provide loans and investment capital as well as grant aid.
- Streamline the plethora of public funding agencies who support the arts, culture, creative and arts-based industries, in particular by creating a new Heritage Agency whose transferred core budget we would increase by £12.5m over five years.
- Rewrite the constitutions of the National museums and galleries to make them fit for the 21st century.
- Investigate additional measures to encourage philanthropists and business to invest in the sector.
- Create a committee on the creative industries at ministerial level to ensure their huge importance is acknowledged across government.

Media

Liberal Democrats believe the media are central to freedom of expression in a democratic society.

As technologies rapidly change and converge and concerns over issues of media ownership grow, we believe that the role of public service broadcasting and the BBC in particular will be of increasing, not decreasing, value.

In the shadow of the political coverage of the Iraq war, we believe that the freedom to receive informed, impartial and independent news, and a wide range of opinion is more important than ever before.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Ensure that the BBC is strong, independent and securely funded.
- Make the BBC more independent from government by scrapping the present board of Governors and establish instead a new, independent regulator for all public service broadcasters.
- Support the continuation of the licence fee – rising at no more than inflation - for a full 10 years.
- Encourage Channel 4 to become a not-for-profit trust to preserve its distinctiveness.
- Stop any cuts in ITV's regional news coverage.
- Lobby ITV to end their satellite encryption so that those who live in remote areas can receive television at an affordable cost.
- End the current confusion and delay on digital switchover and help ensure all have access to the better sound, picture and interactivity that digital television can offer by announcing now that analogue television signals be switched off in 2012.
- Safeguard the interests of older and vulnerable people in the switch to digital television.
- Oppose the introduction of a privacy law but strengthen the powers of the newspaper regulator, the Press Complaints Commission, to promote editorial responsibility.
- Protect the long term viability of independent newsagents by ensuring that a universal service is maintained at an affordable price within the supply chain.
- Support community radio where there is not clear evidence that this will unfairly damage local commercial radio services.

Sport

We believe sport and physical activity are enormously important to society for the role they play in building confidence, inspiring and entertaining, but also for their huge benefits to other areas, such as cutting rising levels of obesity and diabetes and reducing crime. Liberal Democrats believe national sports policy must be guided by promoting social well-being and responsibility; enjoyment and choice.

A sporting chance for all

70% of school leavers drop sport as soon as they leave the school gate. We will:

- Require regular physical activity for all children within the school curriculum, not simply in after school clubs.

- Give children a chance to try out a wide range of sports and strengthen links between schools and clubs to ensure young people have greater freedom to exercise and play sport at school and beyond.

- Provide increased support for amateur and voluntary by promoting the benefits of applying for tax breaks under the 'Community Amateur Sports Club' scheme.

- Help grassroots sports by scrapping the overly-bureaucratic Sport England and devolving its responsibilities while at the same time increasing funding to community sport by £1m a year.

Competition and inclusiveness

We keenly support top-level competitive sport. We will:

- Back the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic bid for the benefits it will provide to communities and athletes across the whole nation

- Ensure that all sporting events of national importance are offered to public service broadcasters by reviewing the list of events that must be offered for live and highlighted terrestrial television programmes, with particular regard to test match cricket.

- We will stop the overemphasis on winning, putting children off sport for life by scrapping the Government's latest initiative of 'competition managers' and introducing instead PE coordinators. We would put the emphasis on being active, so that young people are taught to value all physical activity whether as participant or judge.

An active nation

Physical inactivity costs £8.2bn a year. We will give sport and physical activity the prominence it deserves on the public health agenda. We would:

- Give the Department for Health a far greater role in sport and physical activity to help tackle the obesity timebomb and reduce rising levels of diabetes

- Scrap unrealistic and unfocused activity targets which the Government is failing to meet and concentrate government efforts on encouraging the groups who tend to be less active to get fit

- Through inter-departmental working, improve facilities for cycling

and walking and promote 'safer routes to schools' programmes to encourage a reduction in the number of school children driven short distances to school.

Tourism

The Liberal Democrats recognise that tourism is hugely valuable to the UK. It is our sixth largest sector, with an annual direct visitor expenditure of £76bn, and an employment force of 2.1m people or 7.4% of the working population. Yet under Labour the 'tourism deficit' (the difference between the amount spent by overseas visitors in the UK and the amount spent by UK visitors abroad) has almost quadrupled under Labour and now stands at over £17bn.

We will reform the structure of bodies dealing with tourism in the UK by:

- Establishing an English tourism board (VisitEngland) with similar responsibilities to those of Scotland and Wales, focusing particularly on marketing England domestically to help redress the tourism deficit.

- Maintaining the marketing of British tourism overseas with VisitBritain.

- Encouraging the development of Local Tourism Associations (LTAs) based on coherent tourist destinations.

We will secure and boost the funding of tourism by:

- Continuing to give VisitBritain grant-in-aid while reallocating to VisitEngland the grant-in-aid currently given to VisitBritain for its marketing of England.

- Initiating a VisitEngland research project into the funding of tourism, investigating the low Government allocated spending per head in England in comparison with Scotland and Wales.

- Increasing the budget for marketing England by £4m per year.

- Introducing Double Summertime (British Summer Time to be replaced by Central European Time with winter time remaining at GMT) to allow better use of sunlight hours, boosting tourism by an estimated £1bn per annum.

We will put sustainability and quality at the heart of the industry's employment and environmental practices by:

- Carrying out a detailed government study of the overall impact of tourism on the environment.

- Monitoring sustainable tourism

strategies and encouraging clean beach policies, demonstration farms, eco-tourism projects and projects which promote sustainable transport.

- Encouraging the hospitality and catering industries to adopt energy efficiency, waste minimisation, local purchasing (such as regional food produce), employee travel plans, and recycling measures, via an environmental quality grading scheme.

- Balancing the needs and entitlements of residents with those of visitors.

- Supporting the 'Fitness for Purpose' scheme and welcoming the long overdue moves toward a single quality grading scheme for accommodation, and working to maximise its take-up.

- Considering a statutory system of registering and grading accommodation if, within three years, less than 80% of establishments are participating in the current voluntary scheme.

- Working to improve career opportunities to secure future economic growth in tourism, rather than simply creating more seasonal, low paid, low skill jobs.

- Welcoming the efforts of the Sectors Skills Council for Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism and supporting its mission to develop recognised new qualifications, reduce skills gaps and staff shortages and improve productivity

- Encouraging the tourism sector to redouble its efforts to comply with employment law, including provisions on the minimum wage, in order to prevent well-documented employment abuses.

This document contains Federal Liberal Democrat policy, except in areas where policy of the Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats applies.

A full costing document will be published at the same time as the General Election Manifesto.



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