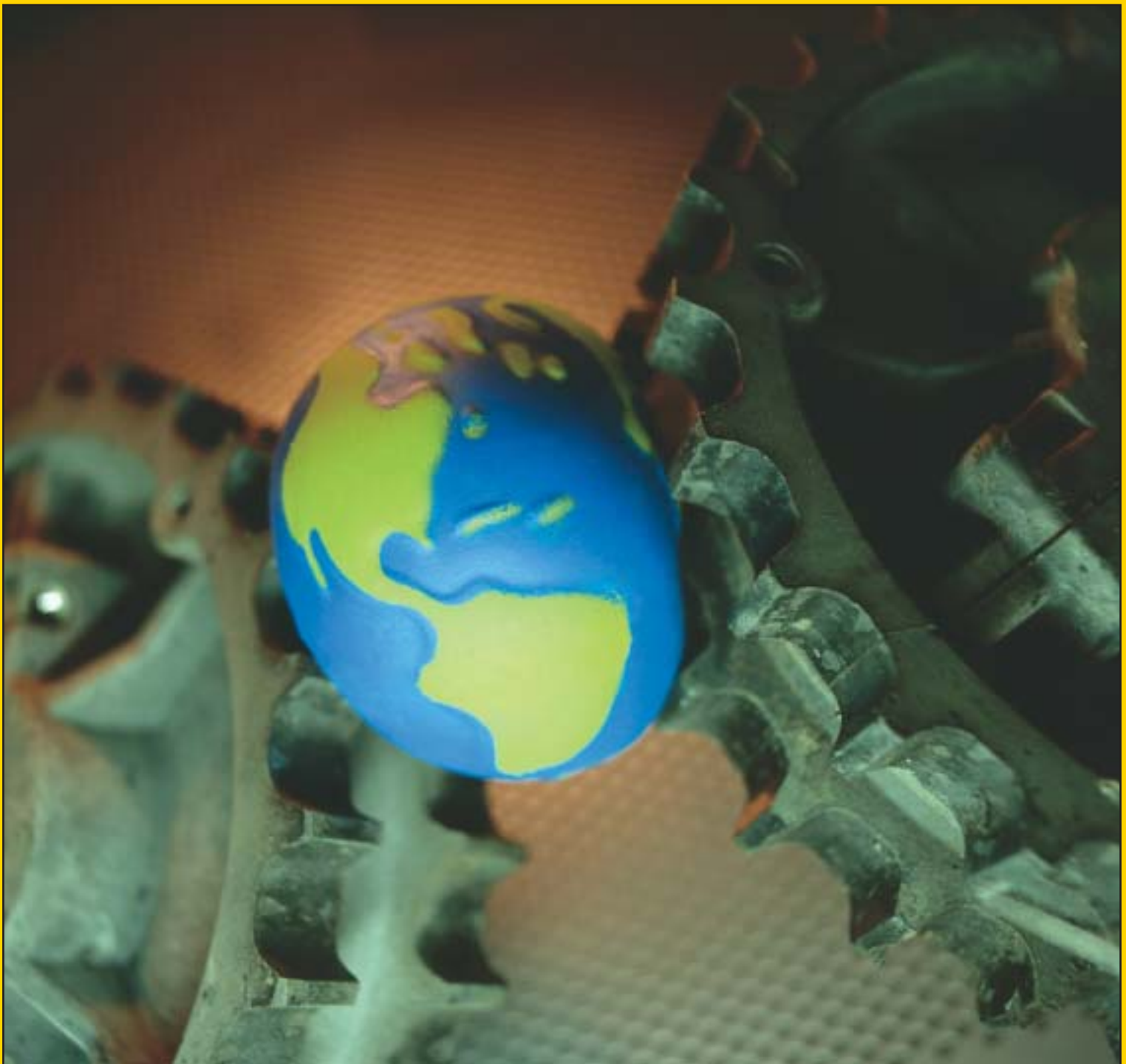


on the Environment
FOCUS



**GENERAL ELECTION 2005:
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO FOR
THE ENVIRONMENT**



Charles Kennedy MP
Liberal Democrats
4 Cowley Street
London
SW1P 3NB
020 7222 7999
www.libdems.org.uk

The environment is central to the Liberal Democrat vision of a vibrant, thriving Britain.

We want to see a Britain in which sustainable living is a reality so that we minimise the impact of the way we live on the world around us. A Britain that champions the environment on the international stage. A Britain that acts not at the expense of competitive business, but together with business to encourage the development of new products and processes and to put Britain at the forefront of the new green revolution.

If only a tenth of the political energy, wealth and resources that have been expended on the war in Iraq had been devoted to the environmental threat, imagine where we could be by now.

And let us be under no illusion about the damage from climate change here in the United Kingdom. The cost of environmental damage and inaction to the economy in 2004 was a massive £67 billion based on government figures - over £1000 for every man, woman and child - the equivalent of 19 pence in the pound on income tax.

Liberal Democrats understand that environmental improvements are vital to solving the problems people face in their daily lives. Promoting sustainability can improve our quality of life by promoting warm homes and lower fuel bills, clean air and rivers, safer streets, and affordable public transport.

That is why Liberal Democrats have always integrated environmental concerns into all our policy-making, at local, national and international level, and why we have a green backbone running through our General Election Manifesto. While action at the global level is vital, we want to promote environmental improvement from the grassroots up.

Sustainability often means giving local people greater control over the things that affect their lives, for example by allowing them to set their own speed limits in local streets, or establishing community trusts to protect green spaces or to develop local renewable energy sources for the benefit of the community.

Liberal Democrats believe that by helping the environment, we can help our own pockets, our families, our communities and our world. This manifesto sets out how we plan to achieve this.



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.



The Liberal Democrat Pledge for Green Action:

Tackle climate change - cleaner transport, cleaner energy and a cleaner environment.

The environment has always been a major concern for Liberal Democrats. Our policies are focused on three main areas.

- **Tackle climate change.** This is the major threat to our planet – and urgent action is needed. Liberal Democrat plans will ensure that Britain achieves its targets from the Kyoto Protocol (the international agreement on the pollution that causes climate change) well before the deadline. Britain and the EU must take the lead on negotiations for the next set of targets for greenhouse gas emissions, prioritising inclusion of the USA and Australia and bringing in the developing countries, on the basis of the long term goal of 'contraction and convergence'.
- **Cleaner transport and environment.** Pollution and congestion have a major impact on people's quality of life. Many of the policies to remedy these problems are related to transport and this document includes plans to promote public transport, especially the railways. However, pollution can also be reduced by cutting down on domestic waste and promoting recycling – sustainable development means tackling pollution in all its forms.
- **Cleaner Power.** Our energy policy is based on two approaches. First, we will introduce measures to reduce energy use overall, for example, through better home insulation, which will also tackle 'fuel poverty' faced by pensioners. Second, we will ensure that 20% of the UK's electricity comes from renewable sources by the year 2020, and not replace existing nuclear power stations as they come to the end of their safe and economic operating lives.

A Cleaner World

Britain accounts for more than its fair share of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, at 2% compared to just 1% of the world population. But clearly Britain alone cannot solve the emissions creating climate change - we have to work internationally to deliver effective action on a global scale. Solving environmental problems is also vital to tackling many of the problems of poverty and conflict in the world. Our international policies include:

● **Put Britain at the forefront of climate change negotiations.**

This is the major threat to our planet – and urgent action is needed. Liberal Democrat plans will ensure that Britain achieves its targets from the Kyoto Protocol (the international agreement on the pollution that causes climate change) well before the deadline. Britain and the EU must take the lead on negotiations for the next set of targets for greenhouse gas emissions, prioritising inclusion of the USA and Australia and bringing in the developing countries, on the basis of the long term goal of 'contraction and convergence'.

● **Promote environmentally sustainable development.**

We will ensure that development assistance, whether delivered from the UK, EU, or multilateral institutions, not only meets the needs of the poor, but does so in ways that contribute to environmental sustainability. This means, in particular, targeting aid on renewable energy, clean water and sustainable agriculture and increasing market access for green products from the developing world; and increase support for international environmental agreements of particular benefit for the developing world. We will devote resources to protecting the biodiversity in developing countries, where many species of rare plants and wildlife are heavily endangered. We will also provide more customs officers with Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species



training so that the law can be enforced more effectively.

● **Take effective action to protect the global environment.** We will support international agreements and activities designed to stop international environmental crime, such as illegal logging or illegal trade in endangered wildlife. We will argue for reforms of the WTO, World Bank and IMF to ensure that trade and development policies support rather than hinder environmental sustainability. We will work through the EU to promote effective and enforceable international agreements to protect the global environment, such as the Kyoto Protocol (on climate change) and Cartagena Protocol (on GM Products).

Cleaner Transport

The social and environmental costs of the current transport system are heavy. Transport accounts for about a quarter of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the United Kingdom – and the steep rise in aviation emissions is particularly worrying. Millions suffer health problems associated with traffic fumes, and the countryside is threatened by road schemes. Congestion on the roads and lack of public transport options in many areas leaves people frustrated or isolated. Our policies to tackle the transport crisis include:

● **Reward owners of less polluting cars with lower taxes.**

For many people, particularly in rural areas, cars are a necessity and cannot be replaced by public transport. But they can be far less damaging to the environment when they use less fuel or alternative fuels. We will start by reforming the VED system for taxing cars to cut tax on those that pollute less, funded by increasing it on those that pollute more. Congestion charging in London (first proposed by the Liberal Democrats) has cut pollution, cut traffic jams and paid for new investment in buses. We will encourage more cities and towns, where traffic congestion is a problem, to extend congestion charging, linked to upfront investment in better public transport, so millions more have the chance to drive less. In the longer term, as technology allows, we will scrap petrol duties and VED altogether, replacing the revenue with a national road user charging system based on location, congestion and pollution (including the level of pollution of the particular vehicle). As a result, pollution and congestion will be better targeted rather than the present heavy taxes on every journey: Department for Transport research shows most journeys will be cheaper as a result, while congestion and pollution will be more effectively

cut.

● **Make the railways work again.** Conservative privatisation left the railways in a mess, but Labour hasn't solved the problems - delays have doubled, bureaucracy increased fivefold, and services are now being cut. Liberal Democrats will streamline the rail system, with fewer, larger franchises given longer contracts in return for more investment and better services. We will use savings from the roads budget to prioritise safety at stations and restore key upgrades postponed or cancelled under Labour.

● **Reform aviation taxes.** To encourage more fuel-efficient aircraft and to discourage half empty planes and so cut the number of flights, we will press for multinational agreement on aviation pollution, including extending emissions trading to aviation, and meanwhile introduce per aircraft rather than per passenger charges. We will oppose the construction of international airports on new sites. We will insist that airports in the South East are not expanded unless existing capacity is fully utilised after our other policies have taken effect. To ensure aviation meets its own true costs, we will require airport landing charges to cover the full costs without subsidy from airport shopping. We will protect essential "lifeline" routes.

● **Cut lorry traffic, reduce pollution, and make our towns and villages safer.** We will encourage the development of freight interchanges to facilitate growth in rail freight, and develop a shipping, ports and waterways strategy. Transport has to learn to live within its environmental means. We will not proceed with major new road build schemes unless the benefits are clear, including environmental and safety factors and a full assessment of alternative public transport schemes. Resources switched from the roads programme will be used to increase investment into public transport. We will also work with industry to find ways of reducing the transport of goods (so-called "product miles"), through shorter and more local supply chains and more efficient distribution systems.

● **Free off-peak local bus travel – for all pensioners and disabled people. Outside the rush hour, thousands of local buses run virtually empty. Liberal Democrats will give all pensioners and disabled people free off-peak local travel on local buses. That will mean more freedom for them; better use made of our expensive transport system; and less congestion and pollution for everyone.**

Cleaner Communities

The environment touches on almost every aspect of our lives – it is essential to the cleanliness and safety of our local neighbourhoods, and to our health and the health of our children. Our policies for cleaner communities include:

● **Tackle waste.** Liberal Democrats will set a long-term goal of zero municipal waste, through waste minimisation, reuse and recycling. As a first step, we will ensure that within 7 years 60% of all household waste is recycled, and we will aim to offer every household regular kerbside recycling collections. Manufacturers will be held responsible for disposing of their products and materials that are difficult to reuse or recycle. We will not allow new incinerators for municipal waste unless they can be shown to be the best environmental option after considering all alternatives, including new technologies such as pyrolysis and anaerobic digestion, where waste reduction and re-use are not possible.

● **Planning for sustainability.** We will reform the planning system to ensure that local authority development plans incorporate targets for CO2 emission reductions to encourage the development of renewable energy facilities and account for the climate change consequences of their policies, including transport. We will also use building regulations to improve the environmental quality of new buildings, for example by requiring recycling of rainwater. We will strongly encourage the use of water meters for domestic households in areas with scarce supplies, with effective measures to provide security for disadvantaged people.

● **Clean air and water.** Pollution in the air, in water and in the food chain causes or aggravates many illnesses, as well as destroying the environment. We support the principles of the EU Registration,





Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) Directive, which will ensure information is available on the consequences of exposure to all chemicals in daily use, and that those of high concern are replaced by safer alternatives.

● **Promote walking and cycling.** Children walking to school get fit for life – but it must be safe. Fewer school-run car journeys also mean less pollution, less congestion and fewer road deaths. Liberal Democrats will encourage and promote Safe Routes to School with calmed traffic, safe pavements, good lighting and grown-ups on hand to conduct “walking buses”. Adults need to exercise too, so we will provide more cycle routes and reform planning rules to make sure key services are more easily accessible by foot or bicycle.

● **Green every school to teach children how it can be done.** All plans for new buildings under the Building Schools for the Future Programme and our ‘Colleges for the Future’ programme must be good for the environment as well

as good for education. By putting the two together children and students can learn about caring for the environment by seeing green projects in real action in their own school or college.

Cleaner Power

The burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – is a major contributor to climate change, and also causes acid rain and local air pollution. Our top priorities are to reduce energy consumption overall, by improving the efficiency with which it is used, and to switch from polluting forms to a range of clean energy sources. Our policies include:

● **Energy Efficiency.** Mandatory standards and labels for buildings, machinery, vehicles and appliances, will help and encourage householders and businesses to cut energy use. We will also encourage Combined Heat and Power schemes to reduce the energy wasted in power generation, including a setting a target for 30% of electricity used in the public sector to be generated from Combined

Heat and Power by 2015.

● **Promote clean energy.** Liberal Democrats will ensure that 20% of the UK’s electricity comes from renewable sources by the year 2020, by increasing and reforming the obligation on energy suppliers to use renewable energy. We will also set a target of 50% renewable energy by 2050. Liberal Democrats will not replace existing nuclear power stations as they come to the end of their safe and economic operating lives – we will use renewables and conserve energy instead. We will also wind up the THORP and MOX plants as soon as it is practical to do so. We will encourage the use of hydrogen fuels as technology develops.

● **Save energy and cut bills.** Thousands of people die each year from preventable cold-related illnesses - mostly pensioners. On average, around fifty people die unnecessarily in each constituency every year. Poor home insulation and poor quality housing lead to cold homes and high fuel bills, the main causes of this ‘fuel poverty’.

The average pensioner household spends £500 a year on energy. We will help pensioners and severely disabled people cut this bill by allowing them to take their Winter Fuel Payment as a voucher redeemable against insulation and energy saving materials. These would be made available at about half price through a partnership with fuel suppliers. A pensioner could save more than £100 from their energy bill by investing just one year's Winter Fuel Payment, and help the environment as well. This way we will invest in cutting energy use in the long term and at the same time help pensioners and severely disabled people stay warm and save money.

Cleaner Government and Business

To tackle the range of environmental problems we face, we need to integrate environmental thinking into every aspect of government, and to engage the energy and creativity of business, in particular by using

market incentives. Our policies include:

● **Make government greener.** It is vital that government and business are made to take their environmental obligations seriously. We would establish reporting obligations for government and business as part of an Environmental Responsibility Act, holding government as well as business to account. We would use the purchasing power of government to boost the market for green products and services. We will unite those areas of government with the biggest impact on the environment in a single Environment, Transport and Energy department.

● **Using economic instruments to benefit the environment.** Green tax reforms and traded permits should be used more to encourage people to act in a more environmentally responsible way. We will change the Climate Change Levy into a Carbon Tax. This will be more effective at discouraging the use of polluting

fuels and energy sources that harm our environment. We will also strengthen tax incentives to use smaller and less polluting vehicles and more energy efficient homes. We will launch a Treasury-led Environmental Incentive Programme examining tax reforms that will reduce pollution and protect the environment, on the clear principle of taxing differently, not taxing more.

● **Corporate Environmental Liability.** We will support the forthcoming EU Directive on Corporate Environmental Liability, provided that it ensures that that costs of recovery and clean-up after environmental incidents and damage are met by those companies who are responsible for them, based on the polluter pays principle.

● **Tougher action to enforce high environmental standards.** The Environment Agency has too few inspectors to effectively enforce environmental standards – and courts have struggled to effectively enforce the rules in cases that are often highly technical and specialised. We will improve enforcement of pollution controls through an expanded inspectorate for the Environment Agency, and a new specialist Environmental Court to deal with enforcing environmental rules. We will also ensure the level of penalties which polluters have to pay are appropriate to the offence - at present they are often trivial compared to the profits from environmental crime. We will promote greater access to justice in environmental matters.

Cleaner Countryside and Cleaner Seas

Liberal Democrats are committed to protecting our countryside and our seas and reducing the damage caused by intensive farming methods. Our policies include:

● **Speed up reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.** The CAP fails to protect the interests of rural communities, family



farms and the environment. We will press the EU to speed up reform so that available public funding is used to provide public benefits including improved access and environmental protection, and support traditional farming, organic systems, new opportunities for agricultural products, and local markets.

● **Save our fish and marine environment.** We will introduce a Marine Act to create a marine planning system to resolve problems of conflicting uses of the sea and sea-bed, to establish conservation zones for highly sensitive areas and to strengthen protection of commercial fish

stocks, dolphins, porpoises and other endangered marine wildlife. We will seek early further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to give fishermen and other stakeholders a real say in the management of their own regional waters.

● **Improving animal welfare.** We will establish an Animal Protection Commission, so that all animal welfare matters are brought under the responsibility of a dedicated, expert body, with the duty to ensure animal protection laws are properly enforced and kept up to date. We will introduce a new Animal Welfare Act to guarantee high

standards of animal welfare across the board for farm livestock, working animals and domestic pets, and will close the loophole in existing legislation which allows people who have been banned for life from keeping animals to still own animals if someone else has 'custody' of them.

● **No commercial GM crops unless we know they're safe for the environment.** We support the right of communities to create GM-free zones. We will insist on rigorous schemes of labelling and traceability in food to guarantee consumer choice.



Printed on recycled paper to preserve our environment for future generations.

Published & promoted: Chris Rennard on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, both at 4 Cowley Street, London SW1P 3NB.

Printed: Park Communications, Lea Mill, Eastway, London, E9 5NU. 020 8525 6200