



OUR OPEN MANIFESTO

FOR THE SNAP GENERAL ELECTION

SNAP
GENERAL
ELECTION
8TH JUNE 2017



ABOUT THIS MANIFESTO

I thought I had tried it all and that political parties were no longer useful. The main parties seldom represent my views and seem to already have their own agendas carved out in stone (sometimes literally).

I joined the Pirate Party when I saw a truly different voice pointing out the faults and offering a real alternative to the established old parties.

Make no mistake: our freedoms are being eroded and our digital rights are under attack. Either the major parties don't understand the problems we face, or worse, they're the cause of them.

I realised this wouldn't change until people like me, people like you, got into front-line politics. We need engaged citizens - not the same, tired old career politicians.

If they refuse to listen to us, we will make them listen. We've forged a manifesto built from your ideas. A truly open manifesto that is built from the bottom up and not from the top down. We crowd source a wide range of ideas and present that to government, instead of government turning up on your doorstep to tell you what you should believe.

You have all made your own mark here. Together we've formed policy fit for the 21st century: protecting the NHS and expanding it with radical patent reform; abolishing tuition fees so education is free to all; and going even further, reshaping copyright so knowledge itself will be opened up. Our tax system needs fixing, and we need jobs to pay for the work put into them. People deserve free access in all areas, both to the digital world online and to justice offline.

This manifesto is a collection of our work, and together we're going to make politics a little bit better by restoring trust one vote at a time.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that you're splitting a vote, that you'll never achieve anything, or you have to resign yourself to the "least bad" option.

This is our world. Let's shape it together, or someone else will.



DAVID A ELSTON
LEADER
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1.0 CORE POLICIES

1.1 COPYRIGHT & PATENT REFORM

1.1.1 COPYRIGHT

The Pirate Party wants a fair and balanced copyright law that is suitable for the 21st century. Copyright should give artists the first chance to make money from their work, however that needs to be balanced with the rights of society as a whole.

We would reduce the duration of copyright to 10 years - closer to the original duration of 14 years - reflecting the much greater ease with which works can now be made and distributed.

Shorter copyright will encourage artists to keep on creating new work, will allow new art forms (such as mash-ups) and will stop big businesses from relying on large back-catalogues rather than investing in new content.

Our 10 year copyright length will include within it a renewal after 5 years (allowing works in which the creator is no longer interested to fall into the public domain after 5 years). An exception will be made for software, where a 5 year term will apply to closed source software and a 10 year term to open source software, in recognition of the extra rights given to the public by open source licences.

1.1.1 PATENTS

We believe that patents exist to reward the inventors of truly outstanding ideas, not to allow big businesses to stifle competition with an ever-growing tide of trivial, incomprehensible, overreaching patents.

We will stop the abuse of patent law by raising the bar on how innovative an idea has to be before it can be patented, and by prohibiting patents on software, business methods, concepts and works of nature.

We will require a working model to be provided to the patent office before a patent is granted and we will strictly enforce the current rule that patents are invalid if they are "obvious to someone skilled in the art".

1.2 END MASS SURVEILLANCE

The UK is one of the most watched societies in the west. Every one of us lives under with an incredible level of scrutiny and snooping every day. Our communications are collected, our movements tracked and our actions watched by the state and others. But there has been little discussion about whether this surveillance is appropriate or necessary. We know it isn't.

There has been far too little real political opposition to ever increasing monitoring. Even while the Liberal Democrat / Conservative Coalition claimed it would reduce the 'database state' it continued to push for more monitoring and data collection. The Labour party has no credibility either, and apparently no will to change the current drive toward ever more intrusive surveillance. Quite the opposite, the Labour party has been as vocal in promoting an ever increasing surveillance state as the current Government.

All of the above was true in 2011 and many pieces of the surveillance puzzle have been known about for a long time. Some of them like Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) and Automatic Numberplate Recognition (ANPR) are a part of our every day life, not because we were asked for consent, but because we didn't do enough to oppose them.

Things changed massively in 2013 following the Snowden revelations. When we talk about surveillance today, it is we have to remember that the only reason we know about the full extent of the snooping we live under is because whistleblowers were brave enough to make that secret information public.

Our governments haven't been open with us about the broad focus of their surveillance or its scope and the machinery of surveillance is much bigger than we thought it was. Our government has hidden the truth from us, misled us when faced with evidence and we have had to rely on leaks to find the truth.

We will:

- Halt suspicionless collection of data
- Demand Transparency: Force the government to be open about the scope and scale of surveillance. We know that some surveillance and monitoring is necessary, but mass warrantless collection within the UK is unacceptable
- Limit the retention of surveillance data and ensure it is deleted when the reason it was collected no longer applies
- Put in place stronger data protection controls on both government and commercially collected data
- Move to targeted surveillance instead of warrantless mass surveillance

1.3 FREE SPEECH

Libel law needs an overhaul. Currently it presents a huge risk to us exercising free speech. Similarly we should not have a government or culture too afraid to disagree that opposition voices and unpopular opinions are merely banned.

The solution to bad speech isn't to ban speech, it's to have more good speech.

The conduit of free speech is important for those of us who are activists and engaged in politics but it also allows teachers to be free to teach, and the search for truth can only exist when we can speak freely. Scientists like Richard Dawkins must be allowed to freely express their views on science and atheism and conversely the church must be allowed to freely preach about their faith. A healthy tolerance to those we disagree with and a willingness to engage in passionate discussion is a cornerstone to a healthy democracy if it is to grow.

Even the most gently expressed opinions may accidentally offend someone. The solution must always be to keep the conversation going and to keep interactions flowing – or simply walk away if you aren't interested.

This desire to express ourselves is something that is inherent to the human condition. It is the base of human rights, rooted in our very nature.

Without free speech you can achieve no other objective. It comes before all other policies or principals.

2.0 PRINCIPLES

2.1 Our society is built upon the sharing of knowledge, ideas and culture. It is furthered by freedom of thought and expression, and protected by the rule of law. The Pirate Party exists to ensure the preservation and development of these foundations.

2.2 Human dignity is inviolable. Each of us has a right to life and to live, to freedom of thought and self-determination, and to participate in society.

2.3 Everyone is equal under the law. We all have a say in the structure and processes of governance and the right to know what is done on our behalf.

2.4 Respect for our private and family life by government and society is fundamental and we all have freedom of choice in our associations and relationships.

2.5 To be free to participate in society everyone must have access to justice, education and such services and infrastructure required for life within it.

2.6 To ensure the security of our society it is the responsibility of the government to provide for its defence, the mechanisms of justice and such services and infrastructure required to meet its needs.

2.7 We will act on the basis of evidence, with the consent of society through democracy, in the interests of all.

3.0 CIVIL LIBERTIES



It often feels like we live in a "say no first, ask questions later" society. Whether it's councils banning a 9 year old from blogging about school dinners or the government threatening to suspend social media, the Pirate Party has always stood up for freedom of speech. The courts must not be used to block freedom of expression and knowledge, and a reform of libel laws is overdue to ensure this. The right to speak out is fundamental in democracy.

We must protect the right to protest, assemble and strike.

There are numerous criminal laws that are poorly defined, overly broad, or easily and commonly misapplied; these laws stifle liberty. We would immediately repeal:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), sections 49 & 54, which can force people to hand over encryption keys, and prevent them from telling anyone about the request.
- Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, sections 142-149, which prevent people from protesting at or near the Houses of Parliament.
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, sections 63-66, originally aimed at ending "rave culture".

We would conduct a review of:

- Communications Act 2003, Section 127, which is out of date, and inappropriate for the Internet age. People should not be arrested for making jokes on Twitter.

Most importantly, it is time to claim back the 'commons', even on privately owned land that is used publicly. We have the right to gather and enjoy our shared spaces, and we should be free from arbitrary restrictions and intrusions if we wish to do so. We want to see a rolling back of the more authoritarian excesses of the last few governments, including a review of terrorism legislation and laws designed to limit a specific type of behaviour, but that now have an impact on every day life and have come to threaten us all.

4.0 CULTURE

Culture is a vital part of our country - it shouldn't be a luxury. The Pirate Party wants everyone to be able to take part in and share culture. Art can be controversial, but it is important we don't squash freedom of expression. After all, that is what so much of the successful culture of Britain has been about. Let's once and for all get rid of the idea that "pirates" are destroying culture.

Artists should be the focus of culture sector funding, this is where the research and development of the creative industries happens. Success in increasing and protecting money going to artists, rather than administration or overheads, must be one of the key performance indicators of National Portfolio Organisations.

We will encourage and support libraries, museums and other organisations that hold collections to digitise their content and make it available online, in open formats, wherever possible. This will both preserve access to culturally important artefacts and increase accessibility. We would prioritise the digitisation of especially rare items.

Paper books are free from VAT yet e-books are not. A book should be defined by what it provides, not the material that is used to produce it, and any tax on books is a tax on reading. Like paper books, e-books should be zero-rated for VAT as soon as possible.

It's time to update our laws for how we consume film, music, TV and books for the 21st century.

A fair and balanced copyright regime that is suitable for the 21st century is an absolute necessity for the UK to remain competitive in a global economy that is built upon ideas and innovation. Copyright should give artists and innovators the chance to make money from their work; however, that needs to be balanced with the rights of society as a whole. We will work for copyright reform and reduce copyright terms to 10 years to balance everyone's needs.

Under current copyright law it is unlawful to circumvent effective technological measures that restrict access to copyrighted material, even if doing so is required for lawful use. This includes both civil liabilities and criminal offences. In the event that such a "technological measure" prevents permitted acts, the only current remedy is to apply to the Secretary of State for a permit.

The Pirate Party seeks to abolish these laws, making it legal both to circumvent "effective technological measures" and produce, distribute and possess tools to aid in doing so. This would not change existing copyright law, merely remove the extra layer of illegality.

It's vital that we protect the new arena of digital culture for future generations. We will support preserving digital culture and introduce IP exceptions to allow the archiving of digital culture.

We would seek to remove restrictions from broadcasters on satirising footage of Parliamentary proceedings. Comedy can bring politics to a wider audience and we believe that MPs' and peers' actions should not be immune from humorous criticism.



5.0 DIGITAL RIGHTS AND SURVEILLANCE

Ever since the Pirate Party was founded we have been pointing out that the new world of technology brings new challenges and opportunities to politics. The Internet deserves a voice in parliament, as all too often our representatives have been wilfully ignorant. This is why we stand for digital rights. This is about protecting our rights and making sure that the digital revolution is available to all, and not just a few.

For many, the online world is a place to reclaim some freedom. Here too, we are increasingly watched and restricted. We're here to say it doesn't have to be like that.

Citizens' rights to private communication is vital. We will forbid third parties from intercepting or monitoring communication traffic, and require specific warrants to be issued by a court before communications traffic is monitored. We will oppose the return of the Communications Data Bill ("Snoopers' Charter") or similar legislation added to any other bill. We will ensure that the freedom to encrypt data and communications is not abridged or limited, and that access to encryption tools is not restricted.

The Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee must be truly independent and robust, it must act for UK citizens not protect vested interests.

We will strengthen data protection laws; companies must inform data subjects of their rights and be clear about their data policies.

We will make it easier to apply to a court for compensation where data protection laws have been breached, and increase the penalties for any breaches of data protection laws. We will allow the courts to apply these penalties to both the individuals and companies responsible, proportional to the scale of the breach.

We want clearer guidelines and restrictions on the use of DNA records by authorities. This will ensure samples are only taken voluntarily or when there are reasonable grounds to suspect the individual of having committed a serious offence. Samples should be promptly destroyed if the individual is acquitted or not charged with a criminal offence, and they should only be held for the length of time for which there is a reasonable suspicion that the suspect has committed a crime.

Too often the outgoing government's digital policy has been directed by tabloid headlines, not experts in the field. We will stop the imposing by government of censorship tools such as so-called "web filtering" or site blocking as blanket tools. We will cut the copyright cops PIPCU. We will repeal the sections of the Digital Economy Act which conflict with digital rights. Everyone should have equal right to access the benefits that technology can bring. We will extend the requirement to provide basic telephone services to a requirement to provide a minimum level of broadband service and extend this responsibility to all providers who operate in the UK.

We know that the UK's future success depends on a modern broadband infrastructure supporting a free and open Internet. We must aim to end the "Digital Divide". We will promote the provision of free public WiFi as well as the provision of Internet access in community centres and libraries by local authorities. It's vital no-one is excluded from the digital revolution. We will promote the inclusion of accessibility features, such as subtitles and audio descriptions for the disabled. Our aim is to make content accessible for disabled people. We will introduce an obligation for publishers to provide a DRM-free copy of their product where necessary to allow the use of accessibility programs (e.g. voice synthesiser software to "read out" an e-book to a visually impaired person).



6.0 ECONOMY

We need an economy that works for everyone. In the last 5 years the UK has seen cuts to services, a fall in wages and a cynical attack on the support the state offers those in need. We have seen publicly owned companies, including Royal Mail, the Fire Service College, and Remploy sold off for little gain to the taxpayer, but great returns for investors. UK debt is higher than it was in 2010. The deficit is higher than at any time until we bailed out the banks and unemployment is still at 4.7%. We can do better. We want to shore up government finances, and increase tax revenues while increasing pay at the lower end of the pay scale. A 50% marginal rate of tax would be added for income over £500k per year.

Austerity is not going to repair the UK economy. We face a number of challenges, from a lack of social housing to poor transport and communications links that can be dealt with by initiating infrastructure projects. Infrastructure projects provide long-term benefit to the UK, stimulating current and future growth.

We would increase the rate of high speed broadband expansion, improve public transport (particularly outside London) and make Britain a world leader in renewable energy. This will allow us to reduce unemployment and provide skills to people who have lost jobs in other parts of the economy.

We must remove Intellectual Property laws that are hampering growth. It's time to stop the tide of over-reaching patents and trivial lawsuits that are tying up new ideas and killing off start-ups.

The 'too big to fail' culture that contributed to the economic crisis is still alive and well in the UK; we want to stop the UK taxpayer from propping-up incompetent or overstretched banks. There should be no more bank bailouts, and mechanisms must be put in place to deal with failures. To reduce reckless or questionable behaviour, directors of large public companies should have a personal liability for their actions and decisions.

Taxation should be fair to the taxpayer; those earning least should pay a smaller amount of income tax, and should always have a lower marginal tax rate. That marginal tax rate should apply to all taxes on income, whether from employment, investments or other instruments. We would simplify the tax system to ensure that the tax system is as fair as possible. We want everyone to keep as much of the money that they earn as we can, but it must be the impact of taxation that is fair, not simply the amounts involved.

We would take action to reduce tax avoidance and act on tax evasion. A dedicated tax minister with clear responsibilities to us all would ensure all businesses and individuals are contributing, and that no group faces an excessive burden. Companies whose structures shift their tax burden abroad or into tax havens would be excluded from winning public sector contracts.

We support the implementation of a land value tax (LVT). LVT would raise more from the wealthiest without penalising the poor, whilst at the same time being much harder to dodge than income tax. It would support economic productivity, as those who rely on existing assets for income would be charged, whereas those who work for a living would not.

Many industries that are essential to the United Kingdom (including water, electricity generation and supply, gas supply and other utilities) have been privatised in recent decades, but continue to rely on massive government subsidy for infrastructure investment. These private organisations then take millions in support, whilst channelling profits to shareholders and directors. We believe that when taxpayers subsidise services, the taxpayer should see a return on their money before private investors are paid dividends. We would renationalise the Royal Mail and protect it from being damaged by cherry-picking private competitors. In addition we propose that any government subsidy or grant to a profit-making company for the delivery of services should be met pound-for-pound by private investment.

7.0 EDUCATION AND INNOVATION



Education

We need an education system which delivers a great education to everyone and makes it possible for people of any age to reach their full potential. It means investing in early years, primary and secondary education and removing barriers to higher education by scrapping tuition fees.

The framework for early years education must be updated to ensure it meets the needs of children before they get to school. We also need to ensure that early years teachers have time to teach, by reducing the administrative burden where possible.

Parents in some areas are facing a shortage of school places, particularly in primary schools, where they are seeing increased class sizes or small schools with too many pupils enrolled. We want to give back to local authorities the legal powers they need to plan and provide enough school places in their local areas. The Government must ensure that the funding is available to deliver school places where needed. Local authorities should be at the centre of and responsible for the local democratic control of education.

The national curriculum should be about the "what", but not "how", so that schools and teachers can teach in a way that best benefits the student. Schools should have the freedom to spend their budgets as they see fit and should be encouraged to invest in knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well qualified teachers.

Schools must aim to educate, not to simply pass exams. The number of examinations that young people sit should be reduced, and schools should be judged on a broad range of indicators. The public ranking of schools by exam results should be discontinued.

To minimise the impact of changes to grading criteria, and to ensure that exam results remain comparable in the long term, we will assess the effectiveness of a percentile based grading system.

Innovation

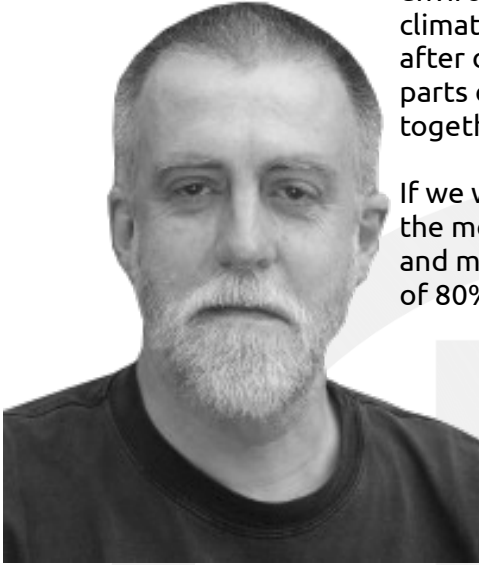
Our economy depends upon innovation. We need to make sure we have the right policies in place to support innovators in all sections of the economy.

The UK has a very strong technology development and scientific research sector, however research funding is at a 20-year low of 0.5% of GDP. We would increase funding of research to at least 0.8% of GDP, matching the G8 average.

That research investment must be open to all. For that reason we support open access to outputs of publicly funded scientific research. We need Research Councils UK (RCUK) to continue its commitment to full open access, provide grants to scholar-led open access journals and data archives. It is also important that we can build on the work of others, patents exist to reward the inventors of truly outstanding ideas. We would reform the patent system to ensure it does just that, and prevent patents from being used to stifle competition.

We will allow and encourage more competition in the manufacturing of patented devices by introducing a system of compulsory patent licensing, and we will provide exemptions to patent law for non-commercial use, personal study and academic research.

8.0 ENVIRONMENT



We need smart policy to improve our environment. The environmental challenges, from dealing with local 'grotspots' to climate change, are monumental. We have a responsibility to look after our environment and wildlife. This requires changes in all parts of our economy and in our behaviour, but if we work together we can deal with both.

If we want to be at the forefront of innovation in energy and get the most out of our resources and environment, we need to set and meet ambitious goals. We know the UK can exceed the target of 80% reductions in emissions between 1990 and 2050.

Litter is more than a blight on our landscape; it is an indication of wasted resources. We can work together to improve the areas where we live and at the same time deal with a threat to our world. Using new technologies for power generation and to fuel our cars will help a great deal too; we want to see investment in British engineering to bring about the changes and technology that we need.

There are simple solutions too, we support bringing in a bottle return scheme (paying for a deposit on bottles and cans which is given back when they are returned). This would reduce litter and the burden on recycling facilities, as well as changing attitudes towards our precious resources. Making polluters pay for the damage they do to our environment, whether they are big businesses or irresponsible landowners is the right thing to do.

Open spaces must be protected, land ownership must be transparent, our common heritage maintained and developers made to act responsibly. It is time for a fair environment policy. There should be a new focus on littered and polluted "problem" areas, and a more proactive Environment Agency.

Power generation will be a major issue facing the UK in the coming decade. The next government will have to put together an effective and environmentally sound policy to ensure we have the required generation capacity. We believe that the focus should be on renewable energy as well as investigating and developing new technologies.

Removing public subsidies to fossil fuel and hydrocarbon production and focusing support on renewable production would help to continue the UK's switch to cleaner, sustainable energy. We shouldn't just focus on large generators though, continuing the feed-in tariff would ensure that small scale renewable power generation remains attractive.

9.0 EUROPEAN UNION & INTERNATIONAL TRADE

9.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION

9.1.1 BREXIT

We recognise the result of the 2016 Referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

With a 52% share of the vote to Leave, it represents a clear desire to change our relationship with the EU. However, the Pirate Party is unable to either proceed with the exit or reverse it alone. As such, the Pirate Party would support any outcome that ensures and safeguards our principles, such as the protection of human rights, civil and digital liberties, knowledge sharing, accountability and transparency of government, and evidence-based policy-making.



9.1.2 EU

Whilst we remain a member of the EU, and should we continue to remain a member, we will push for the EU to uphold our principles, and to work further towards transparency and accountability by moving law-making powers away from the Commission and Council towards the directly-elected European Parliament, to be more in line with the UK's own Parliamentary system. We would also call for the EU to ensure it limits decision making to supranational issues, and correctly devolves responsibility for national issues to their respective national governments, only providing guidance where necessary.

We would continue to keep the UK out of the Euro. We would push to ensure the EU doesn't make joining the Euro a membership requirement now or in the future. We would also aim to ensure that non-Euro countries aren't prejudice in their decisions affecting the Common Market. We will continue to withhold support for the Euro monetary union until such a point as they can demonstrate they can use an economic model that balances the load between members of the union to ensure that a fiscal crisis such as the one that occurred in Greece isn't allowed to happen again.

We will seek to minimise or abolish EU data retention laws and remove them in the UK, to limit the amount of private information websites are required to log about their users. We do not support the Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive (IPRED), an attempt by the European Union to increase penalties and eventually criminalise commercial copyright and patent infractions within the EU. IPRED which includes confiscatory and subpoena powers to copyright holders in civil cases should be repealed and attempts to bring forward IPRED2 should be halted. SWIFT data, passenger records should not be permitted to leave the EU without a concrete suspicion of crime that is punishable within the EU state the data originated.

9.2 INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The Pirate Party will commit to pushing for negotiations that protect existing industries and without compromising our principles. The Pirate Party is wary that on leaving the European Union, we may be susceptible to being pushed into deals like ACTA by larger trading partners such as the US, which contain policies like Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) agreements that could jeopardise the independence and competitiveness of public-sector services.



10.0 FOREIGN AND DEFENCE

Defence of the realm is a primary responsibility of government. The United Kingdom must be able to meet its own defence needs as well as its obligations to defend overseas territories and allies. Whilst we are not in favour of so-called 'pre-emptive defence' or an aggressive defence posture, we realise that the UK must be ready to respond to aggression or threats to our way of life. We firmly believe that our Armed Forces must be well equipped with the appropriate equipment for the tasks we ask them to undertake, and trained for the roles in which they find themselves.

We must ensure that we take care of our Armed Forces to the best of our ability and use them only when absolutely necessary. All members of the Armed Forces should be secure in the knowledge that the country will not desert them once they complete their terms of service.



11.0 HEALTH

We are committed to an NHS that delivers a comprehensive, universal, equitable, accessible service. It is vital that the NHS is publicly funded and publicly accountable.

Since 2010 NHS funding per person has dropped in real terms. £800 million over the last government has been cut. This must be reversed if we want a health service that is fit for purpose. We want to increase NHS funding by 4% in real terms and bring UK healthcare spending in line with the G7 average. NHS funding must then continue to keep up with need, rising in line with UK population growth. The NHS is a vital service, it is right that it be funded by general taxation.

Privatisation, marketisation and private finance initiatives within the NHS have increased inefficiencies and costs. Since 1997, NHS infrastructure worth £11bn has been built under PFIs at a cost of £80bn, diverting money that should have been spent on patients to investor profits. These approaches create incentives to put profits over patients. We are committed to reversing privatisation and preventing any future PFI deals.

We want to see a more accessible NHS, one where patients are not put off, or turned away due to charges. A key founding principle of the NHS was access on the basis of need, not ability to pay, as such we must get rid of NHS prescription fees in England (they have already been eliminated in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Funding for mental health services has been cut in real terms for three years in a row, yet mental health problems account for 23% of the total burden of disease. Despite the existence of cost-effective treatments it receives only 13% of NHS health expenditure.

Mental health services must be funded appropriately to deal with demand and tackle unmet needs. To achieve this, we would rebalance the NHS budget to ensure mental health care receives the level of investment needed to improve outcomes and we would ensure that primary care staff are appropriately trained to deal with the mental health needs of their patients.

NHS staff are a vital and precious resource and we have to make sure they are able to do their jobs. It's vital that doctors, nurses and other medical staff can focus on patient care; for this to happen they must have the proper level of administrative and logistical support.

We aim to abolish patents on drugs and instead fund research directly, allowing the NHS to reduce its outlay on costly medicines.

Health care has to work for everyone, as part of that we want to follow the lead of countries like Norway that have comprehensive LGBT public health plans with clear goals, and work to end the stigma around HIV/AIDS and normalise HIV testing as a routine part of caring for our health.

It is also wrong that we discriminate when it comes to giving blood. Donations from men who have sex with men should be lifted. The focus must be on individual screening and making sure as many people as possible can donate blood and save lives.

The NHS deals with the negative consequences of alcohol and drug abuse and as such should take the lead in both research and providing advice in all areas of drug policy, from the medicinal use of marijuana to the impact or dangers of new recreational drugs.

12.0 JUSTICE



The Justice system in the UK is disproportionately applied in many cases, and many judicial mechanisms are hidden from public scrutiny. We are committed to creating a transparent, reasonable and fair justice system for all.

There should be no more secret courts. All judicial process should be fair, open and accountable, Justice must be seen to be done. The police must be transparent and accountable; we would ensure independent oversight of all investigations into police wrongdoing - police internal investigations should run their full course even if an officer under investigation resigns or retires. We will insist that searches of personal property should only be done with reasonable suspicion of a serious criminal offence.

Judicial review of all other officials should be protected; it is essential that courts prevent officials from acting outside of their legal powers. We would remove restrictions on who can ask for a judicial review, and give High Court judges the discretion to conduct reviews without interference.

Alcohol and drug abuse or dependency should no longer be treated as criminal issues; people suffering from alcohol or drug addiction need help, not punishment. Contaminated drugs can kill; people should be able to submit dangerous or contaminated drugs to officials, without fear of being prosecuted. Safe locations should be provided for heroin addicts to inject, with sterile equipment and under medical supervision.

The poor are served disproportionately by the justice system. Legal representation must be available to all; it should not be a privilege for those who can afford it. We would reverse cuts to Legal Aid and introduce reforms to guarantee access to legal representation for all. Sanctions would discourage frivolous motions.

Fines issued to convicted criminals should be proportionate to the person's wealth, in order to penalise people equally. We would introduce a system of "Day Fines", where punishments are assessed based on annual income; fines are then scaled accordingly, to punish people equally. This would also apply to commercial fines, which would scale fairly for both large multinational and small businesses.

Imprisonment should be a last resort, and should be a process of rehabilitation, rather than punishment. Removing prisoners' vote violates their human rights. Voting is an essential part of society; by allowing prisoners to meaningfully participate in society, we can rehabilitate them back into it. Prisoners would be permitted to vote in the constituency they were registered in prior to incarceration.

13.0 LOCAL

Our local policies apply to County Council or Town Council levels.

We want our libraries to remain a free source of knowledge and information but also to do so much more in a passive, user-friendly way. Our security and anonymity should be protected when using a public machine and we should look to lessen the risk of using public internet connections.

Councils should be the frontier in what open source, production-ready software can be used to save the public purse some money and increase the circulation of open alternatives.

The communication between councils and the residents needs improvements across the UK. While some consultations have a sensible layout, others are completely different. They can range from a simple survey in one town while in others a full written response is necessary. Online consultations in a standard format will remedy this.

Councils should be expected to be completely open and transparent, lessening the need for FOI requests but should a FOI request be required, they should be easily accessible.



14.0 RESTORING TRUST IN DEMOCRACY

Our democracy is in real danger. All too few people take part and vote, not enough people are able or willing to get involved. It's time to reverse that trend, and it starts with restoring trust in government and the political system.

The independence referendum in Scotland showed that when people believe they can make a difference they get involved with the process. We need to replicate that across the UK.

We can start by trusting people.

Given that self determination is one of the Party's fundamental principles, we believe that a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU should be offered to voters in the UK. We trust people to make the right decision.

We want to open up our democracy to younger people. They see their lives and futures directed by governments they have no say over. We trust young people and want to allow them to vote from the age of 16.

The government also needs to be more open and accountable.

We will introduce a new right for constituents to force a by-election in the event of a loss of confidence in their MP.

We will require minutes of all meetings of officials on government business to be accessible through Freedom of Information requests. We will also aim to ensure that all available information that could be requested under a Freedom of Information request is made public by default.

The quality of legislation must be improved, and we have to aim to avoid laws that don't do what they were claimed to do. We would investigate the possibility of permanent elected legislative committees for each government department in the Commons rather than ad hoc public bill committees. We would roll out post-legislative scrutiny on all important policy-changing acts before new bills on the same subject are to be considered.

We will require that all international treaties be passed through the UK parliament as a standard bill, requiring the full approval of both houses. The detail of the government's deals and agreements with suppliers and other businesses should be disclosed.

Independent audits of public sector spending and processes should be carried out annually, with bi-annual review of spending to identify where spending reductions or greater returns are possible without reducing the overall effectiveness of the public sector.

The delivery of services to government is littered with stories of companies exceeding budgets, delivering late and renegotiating contracts to improve profits. This seriously undermines public confidence in a government's ability to negotiate sensible contracts.

We will implement penalties for significant performance failures for government suppliers. If a company fails to deliver a government project within 125% of budget or 125% of the deadline then that company (both its parent organisations and subsidiaries) would be banned from providing services or products to the government for at least 2 years.

Beyond government, we need to improve our democracy. We see proportional representation as vital to ensuring that governments properly represent everyone, and that everyone's voice matters in elections. We intend to restart the national debate and push for a system of proportional representation to be implemented for all elections in the UK.

15.0 SOCIETY

The Pirate Party wants a free and fair society where everyone can take part, with space to live, respect for all of our communities, and where basic human rights are the cornerstone of a fair society.

We oppose any attempt to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 and believe the UK should remain a party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

We have an obligation to provide sanctuary to those individuals who have been forced to flee their homes. We should ensure that those people who come to the UK seeking asylum are treated fairly and are given decisions quickly about their status. Once asylum seekers have been granted asylum they should be given assistance, including access to employment and education.

We want to see affordable homes for all. We would enable councils to build affordable council housing. Income from council housing sales would be ring-fenced for housing construction and councils would also be permitted to borrow to fund housing construction. We would introduce new statutory regulation of letting agents that all would be required to observe. This would include an independent ombudsman and a mandatory code of practice.

The Pirate Party would give residents new rights to freely use privately owned space that is in the public realm.

The right to protest without fear of reprisal is fundamental to a democratic society; we will stand up for this right.

We recognise the value of whistleblowers to society and will defend the right of citizens to expose illegal practices in the workplace and elsewhere. Exposing corrupt or illegal activities must take precedence; no-one should fear persecution for making the public aware of a breach of the law. The UK would grant asylum to whistleblowers fleeing foreign governments. Whistleblowing would become a protected trait similar to gender, age and sexuality, making it illegal for employers to discriminate against whistleblowers. Whistleblowers would be awarded a share of any fines levied based on their disclosure.

We must protect Sure Start services. It is vitally important that all children get the best possible start in life, but that alone isn't sufficient in dealing with the problems that the UK faces. The rationale under which Sure Start Children's Centres were set up should be extended, not rolled back. They have made life easier for millions of families and could improve lives further. Sure Start should be about actively bringing down the levels of child poverty in the UK, not just a start in life, and should provide ongoing support for whole families.

The current mechanism used to determine eligibility for the Employment and Support Allowance is failing many people in dire need of support. We would call for an immediate review of the assessment methods used and look for alternative ways to administrate assessments.

16.0 TRANSPORT

Part of looking after our environment and having a dynamic economy is having a well-functioning public transport system. There must be no more private profit at public expense on our railways. When assessing rail performance, overcrowding and affordability should be taken into proper consideration. Ticket pricing needs to be transparent, easy to understand, and work between different forms of transport.

We can get Britain moving.

Rail privatisation has made a mess of rail provision in the UK. Ticket prices are on the rise, and seats are in short supply. Rail is more highly subsidised now than it was prior to privatisation - since 1985, rail subsidies have increased five-fold in real terms. Profits are increasingly funnelled out of the country via contracts with international providers.

We would renationalise the railways; we would do this gradually; as contracts expired, provision for each area would be renationalised.

The UK is far too reliant on fossil fuels, and a big part of this is our reliance on motor vehicles; if we can reduce our use of motor vehicles, it will be beneficial to all. We believe that the benefits of all modes of active transport are poorly recognised in the UK at present. Using active modes of transport such as walking or cycling for local journeys reduces the amount of traffic clogging the roads, creating shorter journey times for drivers, better health for the nation and cleaner air for everyone.

We believe in the health benefits to the extent that we would consider promotion of active transport to be a health issue; cycling promotion is currently fragmented, and split between Department of Transport and NHS budgets; we would move all such funding into the scope of a single NHS project. This would result in a net saving to the NHS, since obesity, heart disease, and other inactivity-related illnesses would be significantly reduced as a result. The NHS is therefore invested in successful promotion, via a positive feedback loop.

The biggest barrier to cycling in the UK is the poor state of the infrastructure. This is a result of two main factors:

Lack of funding, resulting in dangerous compromises and conflicts with other road users
Lack of a coherent, standardised design handbook, resulting in ad hoc design choices by inexperienced road designers

A national design handbook would put an end to the haphazard, compromise-ridden infrastructure that we see every day. We would adopt the "Making Space for Cycling" handbook proposed by Cambridge Cycle Campaign to ensure that any infrastructure created is coherent and safe, while ensuring smooth, fast and direct journeys for cyclists.

We would pay for this by committing a transport budget of £20/person per year. This is double what the Netherlands spend to develop and maintain their world-leading infrastructure - but the UK is playing catch-up. Safeguards would be put in place to ensure this money is only spent on infrastructure that primarily benefits cyclists.

The overall success of this effort would be evaluated after five years, and the budget adjusted accordingly. We would consider a reasonable target is to increase cycling modal share in all major cities to 5% by 2020, and to 10% by 2025.

17.0 WELFARE AND WORK

All UK citizens should be able to rely on the welfare system as a safety net. We believe the current system is failing and needs to be revitalised. A successful welfare system reaches everyone in need. Punitive measures on those who try to exploit the system hurt the needy.

We would introduce measures to prevent people receiving unfair blocks on benefits.

We would remove the benefit cap: either someone is eligible for benefit, or they are not. All criteria for eligibility should be considered independently of each other.

People under 25 receive a lower level of Job Seekers Allowance, and people under 35 receive a lower level of housing benefit than older people. We would end age discrimination in the benefits system; everyone who is no longer in full-time education and who has not yet reached retirement age should receive equal benefits.

The "Bedroom Tax" (a reduction in housing benefit for a house considered to be under-occupied) puts extraordinary pressure on new benefits claimants to give up established homes, at a time when they are at their most vulnerable; it has caused disruption to both landlords and tenants alike. We would revoke the "Bedroom Tax", and restore full housing benefit to those in need.

"Workfare" forces people on benefits to do unpaid work for private businesses, or face sanctions; this system has resulted in private employers exploiting free labour. We would replace Workfare with employment in a government-backed enterprise scheme. This would allow people to earn money, gain training and acquire experience without being exploited by private companies for profit.

We recognise that many people who are starting or returning to employment are also being exploited for free labour. Internships are typically full-time jobs, yet interns often go unpaid. We would ensure that providers of internships are required to pay the National Minimum Wage.

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) itself is severely lacking; a full-time job at NMW does not meet the basic cost of living in the UK. People in work should not suffer poverty; we would raise the minimum wage to match the Living Wage Foundation's recommendation, and keep NMW in line with the basic cost of living in the UK.

Trade unions provide a way for workers' interests to be represented and defended. Trade union powers, including workers' right to strike to protest unfair work conditions, have been eroded under the coalition government. We would restore the power of trade unions, by reducing the strike notice period to 7 days, and revoking the 50% turnout requirement for a strike vote.

Work should not prevent people from starting a family; the UK government's Shared Parental Leave program starts in April this year, and makes leave fairer. However, it does not take into account some situations that may affect families - including families with three or more parents (e.g. via parental responsibility agreements). We would extend this system to include all parents in a family.



18.0 EMBRACING THE FUTURE



The policies in this document represent what our candidates will support, they indicate a direction of travel. They are a principle direction.

But there is always the unknown.

We want to embrace the future, not be afraid of it. If we strive for success, guided by our principles we can face the biggest of unknown challenges. The UK economy is changing and what it will look like when technology is able to do more, when it allows fewer people to do vastly more work, across all fields, will require an up to date party, fit for the 21st century to govern.

Self service tills have replaced staff in supermarkets, robots have replaced engineers in factories and computers have replaced whole teams of analysts in offices. The range of work that can be automated is only going to increase, it will have an impact on doctors, lawyers, retail staff, soldiers, builders, mechanics and many more. These things do not need to be negative, job stealing creations but instead machines that provide abundance can enrich our lives with the right policies.

Move toward a Universal Basic Income

Move towards an innovative society that explores change, challenges and new frontiers. Our policy to introduce a UBI can solve the problem to a society that creates more goods and services than it does jobs.

This citizens' income would replace most benefits, simplify our tax system and reduce costs due to cutting out complexity. Poverty and the "unemployment trap" can be eliminated and importantly, the incentive to work would remain, as getting a job would not remove the UBI, but would raise the amount of money coming in to the household.

UBI offers Flexibility for lone parent families, carers, disabled people and people wanting to dedicate their time to community or volunteering programmes, as part-time jobs would become a viable means of bringing in an income.

We are aware of the significant hurdles to the implementation of such a system, including the need for comprehensive research into the social and economic impact it would have and whether it can be affordable. However, such a scheme is entirely possible if introduced steadily and proportionately. With any pioneering policy, starting with a trial basic income in a small area of the UK would be the most prudent.

International Challenges

Internationally there is much work to be done to repair, and re-establish relationships amongst countries on the international stage. There is much turmoil, anger and suspicion between states that should be working together.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict continues to pose challenges and divide people and countries after many decades of conflict and unrest. It is not the only serious issue we face on the world stage, but resolving it is vital.

It is only right that we encourage the UK to recognise Palestine. It is clear that Palestinians have decided that they want to be in control of their destiny and have their own state. They should be supported in that endeavour, not ignored. We would support the recognition of Palestine and recognise that such recognition would mean that Palestinians would enjoy the benefits of independence and be held to the same standards and have the same duties as other states in the family of nations.

END OF LINE

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