

currently about right - the money raised by green taxes should be given back to tax-payers by cutting income tax.

## **Housing**

The Liberal Democrats believe that every family should be able to live in affordable and sustainable housing. They therefore propose to bring in a range of provisions which will give local authorities the powers they need to tackle housing problems in their area. The current position, with 1.63 million families on waiting lists for social housing and over 93,000 families registered as homeless, make this a matter of urgency.



## **The Liberal Democrats:**

### **A Party of Principle!**

In line with our constitution, Liberal Democrat policies are based upon fairness, freedom and equality:

“The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.”

## **A Brief History**

### **Origins: The 19th Century**

The Liberal Democrat Party can trace its origins back to the middle of the 19th century when the 'Whig' party, the 'Radical' party and Tory sympathisers joined forces to promote free trade and to demand universal male suffrage. They succeeded in seeing important legislation passed, including the regulation of working hours, national insurance, old age pensions and the creation of a basic welfare state.

## **Development: Early and Middle 20th Century**

During the early and middle 20th century the Liberals continued to champion their belief in free trade, opposed the government's policy of appeasement towards the German Nazis and supported the creation of the NHS, which was based upon the ideas of a leading Liberal, William Beveridge.

## **The Alliance: The 1980s**

In the 1980s the Liberal Party entered into an alliance with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which was made up of Labour rebels. In the 1983 general election the Alliance won 25% of the national vote. Then in 1988 the two parties merged to form the Liberal Democrat Party.

## **The Liberal Democrats: 1988 onwards**

More recently the Liberal Democrats have been enjoying a revival in their popularity. They have gone from 20 MPs in the 1992 general election, to 62 MPs and 22% of the national vote in the 2005 general election. In local elections the Liberal Democrats have performed very well, coming out of the 2007 election with 2171 councillors, compared to Labour's 1877 councillors. Moreover in the local elections of 2008 the Liberal Democrats gained 25% of the vote to Labour's 24%.

## **Policy Principles**

### **Localisation and the European Union**

The Liberal Democrats believe that matters of government should be handled democratically at the appropriate level, whether that be town/city, regional, national, or continental. That means we are pro-Europe, but want the current EU organisation to be made significantly more democratic. For many issues, Westminster simply isn't the best place for democratic power - local councils, regional assemblies, or Europe, are often far more appropriate.

### **The Environment**

The Liberal Democrats believe that the environment is a vital issue. That obviously includes global warming and other ecological issues, but also deals with the environment in many other ways - for instance improving town centres and care of natural habitats.

### **Taxation**

Liberal Democrats believe in 'Progressive Taxation' - which means that those who are better off should pay proportionally higher taxes than the poorer members of our society. However, we also believe in 'Green Taxation' - that the tax burden should reflect damage to the environment, whether in terms of Carbon Footprint, or other forms of pollution. Neither of these principles relate to total taxation - which we believe is