

Friends of the Earth (United Kingdom and Northern Ireland)
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Tim Farron

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Dear Friends of the Earth,

Party manifestos analysis

I very much welcome the comparison of the party manifestos you have published on your website – Friends of the Earth is performing an invaluable role in drawing attention to a series of critical issues that have received far too little coverage so far in this election.

Thank you also for updating your analysis of the Liberal Democrat stance on the basis of Baroness Parminter's remarks at the Greener UK hustings last Tuesday and my article in *Business Green* last week. I want to take this opportunity to clarify a few other issues which were not raised in the hustings or the article; I hope you will update your analysis further to reflect my statements, as you have done for the other parties.

Climate and Energy

In this section, your first ask is to '**urgently publish a plan to deliver carbon budgets**'. We have repeatedly called on the government to publish its long-delayed Clean Growth Plan, explaining how it intends to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets, and also to announce its proposed replacement for the Levy Control Framework. The absence of both – the victims of a blinkered government which is obsessed with its pursuit of a hard Brexit to the exclusion of all else – is driving plans for future investment in renewable energy off a cliff.

As you have highlighted in your analysis, the Liberal Democrat aim is to raise the UK's level of ambition on climate targets, amending the Climate Change Act to require an 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2040 and a 100 per cent net reduction by 2050. This would in turn require consideration of whether the fourth and fifth carbon budgets would need to be revised, but this process should not delay urgent publication of the plan; all the immediate steps that need to be taken to reopen the investment pipeline in renewables would need to be taken anyway to meet our more ambitious targets.

Nature laws and Brexit

Your first ask here is to **'ensure that all of the existing EU environmental laws and principles are fully maintained in UK or devolved nation law, and can be properly enforced here'**. This is clearly set out on page 11 of our manifesto. My colleague Kate Parminter also set out her thinking on this topic at some length last December, in the Burntwood Lecture to the Institution of Environmental Sciences (https://www.the-ies.org/sites/default/files/documents/transcript_burntwood_2016.pdf).

As you can see there, Liberal Democrats are fully committed to translating existing EU standards and policy frameworks into UK law; to ensuring that any adjustments to EU environmental laws needed to fit the realities of post-Brexit UK must provide the same or a higher level of environmental protection as those in the original regulations; and to establishing processes for continual improvements in levels of protection.

Similarly, we are committed to establishing robust systems of compliance and enforcement, including translating ECJ case law into the UK system; fully implementing the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters; increasing the resources and powers of enforcement agencies such as the Environment Agency and Health and Safety Executive; and reforming the institutions of government, including creating an Office of Environmental Responsibility, to hold government to account against its own commitments and activities.

Rights and Justice

You have a specific ask that: **'The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should commit to abolishing the special status of donors to Northern Ireland's political parties which means that Northern Ireland citizens are the only people in the UK or Ireland who cannot see the names of the individuals and organisations that give large sums of money to political parties'**.

We support this commitment, which is fully in line with our broader approach to transparency and democracy in the UK's institutions of government. We have called for this in the past, as has our partner, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland; see here for Alliance leader Naomi Long's recent statement on the topic: <https://allianceparty.org/article/2016/0010680/time-for-parties-to-come-clean-on-donors-long>

You have two asks on refugees: **'Financially support neighbouring countries who bear the greatest cost of environmental refugees in recognition of our past contribution to the factors that have forced people to leave their homes'** and **'As a compassionate and tolerant country we must welcome our fair share of environmental refugees in the future, and support the rights and protection of climate refugees in international law'**.

I have repeatedly stressed the UK's responsibility to accept more refugees since I was elected leader of the Liberal Democrats and before. Although the main focus at present tends to be on those fleeing the civil war in Syria, Liberal Democrats have always been clear that environmental stresses lie at the root of many forced movements of peoples – for example in Darfur – and this will inevitably get worse, a point I made in the BBC leaders' debate last week.

Liberal Democrats are fully committed to continuing to meet the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNI in development aid (without redefining 'aid', as the Conservatives plan to do), and to devoting a significant portion of the aid budget to working with developing countries on climate adaptation, aiming to strengthen their climate resilience. Despite this, however, we recognise that future mass

movements of environmental refugees are still likely, and we wholly support your two asks, to provide assistance to neighbouring countries which take in these refugees and to welcome our fair share here in the UK.

I hope this fully clarifies the position of the Liberal Democrats, and that as a result you will adjust our score to fairly reflect our commitments. I look forward to working with Friends of the Earth in the new Parliament to highlight these issues, and many more.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Farron". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Farron
Leader of the Liberal Democrats