

The Choice in 2005

Time for Action



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Introduction

Conservatives know that governments don't have all the answers – far from it. But if they govern with the right values, they can make a real difference. Trusting free enterprise; promoting individual responsibility; cherishing a sense of nationhood; rewarding hard work; admiring excellence; encouraging ambition – these are the right values. They are Conservative values.

And they are the values of the forgotten majority – the people who make up the backbone of our country. They have been forgotten and taken for granted by Mr Blair. He asked them to trust him and when they did, he let them down.

The Choice

After eight years in power, and just before an election, Mr Blair claims he can solve the problems Britain faces. People have heard it all before. It's all talk.

At the election the British people will have a clear choice: four more years of Mr Blair, who's been all talk and thinks he can get away with it again, or a new direction with a Conservative Government that will act on the things that really matter to people.

We understand and share the concerns and priorities of the forgotten majority – more police, cleaner hospitals, school discipline, lower taxes and controlled immigration.

Under Mr Blair, Labour and the Liberal Democrats	With Michael Howard and the Conservatives
More talk	Action on the things that matter
Lenient sentences for criminals and more talk about crime	Tougher sentences and more police on the beat
More waste and higher taxes	Value for money and lower taxes
Unlimited, uncontrolled immigration	Controlled and limited immigration
Dirty hospitals and long waiting lists	Cleaner hospitals and shorter waiting lists
Schools with poor discipline and falling standards	Schools with good discipline and high standards
More means testing and higher council tax for pensioners	A bigger state pension and lower council tax for millions of pensioners
A Government that takes you for granted	An accountable Government with a clear Timetable for Action

The choice on ...

Cleaner Hospitals

People have a clear choice: cleaner hospitals and shorter waiting lists with the Conservatives, or dirty hospitals and long waiting lists under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised to “save the NHS”. All talk.

- There are over a million people on NHS waiting lists
- More people are waiting longer to be treated in dirtier hospitals
- 5,000 people die every year from hospital-acquired infections. You are now more likely to die of a hospital infection than to be killed on Britain's roads

Conservatives believe that NHS professionals, not politicians, should run hospitals. We will get our hospitals clean, get money through to front-line services and give patients the Right to Choose where and when they get their treatment – which will shorten NHS waiting lists.

- We will invest an additional £34 billion by the end of our first Parliament over the level that we inherit from Labour
- We will give patients a choice of treatment at any NHS hospital which can perform their operation – as well as any private hospital that can provide care at NHS costs
- If an independent hospital charges more for an operation than the NHS, patients will be entitled to 50% of the NHS cost as a contribution towards their bill
- We will scrap central targets and abolish regional administration



The choice on ...

School Discipline

People have a clear choice: schools with good discipline and high standards with the Conservatives, or schools with poor discipline and falling standards under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised to make education his priority. All talk.

- Each year one in three 11 year-olds leaves primary school unable to write properly
- A million children play truant each year, and a teacher is assaulted every seven minutes
- Teachers are sent the equivalent of 12 pages of paperwork every school day

Conservatives believe that teachers, not politicians, should run our schools. We will cut teachers' paperwork, restore discipline in schools and give parents the Right to Choose the best school for their child.

- We will give heads control over discipline in their schools, including over admissions and expulsions
- Parents will be able to apply to any state-funded school – local councils will no longer decide admissions. Parents will be able to send their child to any independent school that offers a good education for the cost of a state-funded school – with no fees
- We will abolish restrictions that stop good schools expanding and new schools opening
- We will scrap student fees and reform the student loan system, boosting student and university finances



The choice on ...

Value for Money and Lower Taxes

People have a clear choice: value for money and lower taxes with the Conservatives, or more waste and higher taxes under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised he had “no plans to increase tax at all”, and that Labour would be a “wise spender”. All talk.

- Taxes have gone up by stealth 66 times – the equivalent of £5,000 per household
- Council tax has gone up 70 %
- The number of tax collectors has increased almost twice as fast as the number of new doctors and nurses
- For every job the private sector lost last year, the public sector added nearly two jobs

Conservatives believe in rewarding hard work and encouraging personal responsibility. So we will stop Mr Blair's next round of stealth taxes, give taxpayers value for money, and cut taxes. We will get value for money by spending on what matters to the majority of people and cutting back on the rest.

- We will spend the same as Labour on the NHS, schools, transport and international development, and more than Labour on the police, defence and pensions
- We will save £12 billion a year by 2007-8 by cutting back on other things, including:
 - The abolition of 168 quangos
 - Cutting nearly a quarter of a million bureaucrats
 - Replacing the out-of-control immigration system with an Australian-style quota and points system, saving £1 billion
- Of £12 billion saved, we will use £8 billion to cut borrowing – avoiding Mr Blair's next round of stealth tax rises. The remaining £4 billion will be used to reduce taxes



The choice on ...

More Police

People have a clear choice:
a Conservative Government that
will introduce tougher sentences
and put more police on our streets,
or more lenient sentences and more
talk under Mr Blair and the
Liberal Democrats.

**Mr Blair promised to be “tough on crime”.
All talk.**

- Over 3,600 crimes have been committed by prisoners released under Mr Blair’s early release scheme
- Gun crime has doubled
- One million violent crimes were committed last year

Conservatives believe our society needs more respect, discipline and decent values. We will cut political correctness and police paperwork, and put more police on the beat.

- We will recruit 5,000 extra police officers every year
- We will end Labour's early release scheme
- We will build more prisons
- We will introduce elected Police Commissioners



The choice on ...

Controlled Immigration

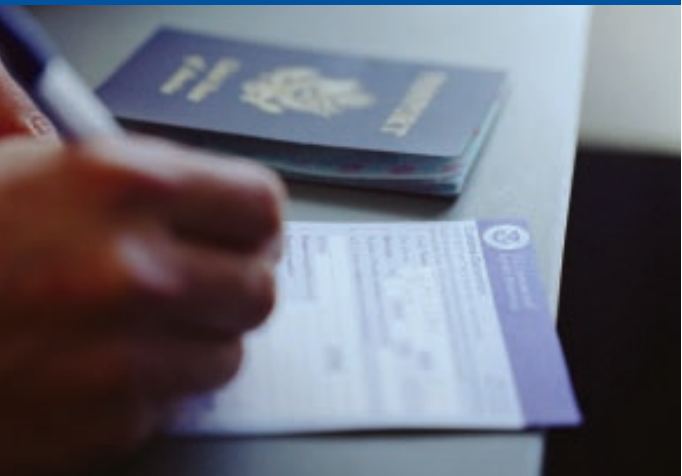
People have a clear choice:
controlled and limited immigration
with the Conservatives, or unlimited
immigration under Mr Blair and the
Liberal Democrats.

**Mr Blair promised a “swift and fair” asylum
system, and “firm and fair” immigration.
All talk.**

- Over 250,000 failed asylum seekers remain
in Britain
- Asylum applications have almost doubled
- Immigration has tripled under Mr Blair

Conservatives believe we need a fair immigration and asylum system that helps genuine refugees and gives priority to those who want to work hard and make a positive contribution.

- A Conservative Government will set an annual maximum limit on the number who can settle in Britain, including a quota for asylum seekers
- Britain will take her fair share of the world's genuine refugees. We have a moral obligation to help those fleeing persecution
- Conservatives will introduce an Australian-style points system for work permits – giving priority to people with the skills Britain needs
- We will put in place 24-hour security at ports to prevent illegal immigration



The choice on ...

Security and Dignity for Pensioners

Pensioners face a clear choice: a bigger state pension and lower council tax with the Conservatives, or more means testing and higher council tax under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised “security for all in retirement”. All talk.

- Over a third of the increase in the basic state pension since 1997 has been swallowed up by council tax increases
- Nearly half of all pensioners have been driven on to means-tested benefits
- Mr Blair has made an annual £5 billion tax raid on pension funds
- More than two million pensioners live below the poverty line – exactly the same as when Labour came to power

Conservatives believe pensioners deserve dignity and security in retirement, in recognition of the contribution they have made to our country.

- We will roll back the means testing of pensioners by increasing the basic state pension in line with earnings rather than prices. After four years, this will increase pensions by £7 a week for single pensioners and £11 a week for couples over and above increases already planned
- We would not require people with private pensions to buy an annuity at 75
- We will cut the council tax bills of millions of pensioners. The over 65s, living alone or together, will see their council bills halved – up to a maximum of £500
- We will ensure that no-one has to sell their home to pay for care
- We will introduce a new Lifetime Savings Account (LiSA) based on the simple principle of 'Buy One, Get One Free'. When people put money into a LiSA, the Government will put money in too



The choice on ...

Housing

People face a clear choice: a step up the housing ladder with the Conservatives, or soaring property taxes from Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised to ensure “everyone has the chance of a decent home”. All talk.

- Rocketing council taxes, the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief, and stealth increases in stamp duty and inheritance tax have punished both home owners and those trying to get on the housing ladder
- The wrong homes are being built in the wrong places. Hundreds of thousands of empty homes are being demolished in the north, while green fields across the south are being covered in concrete
- Liberal Democrats want VAT on new homes – adding £11,000 to the price of new houses, and a new local income tax that will cost working families £630 a year more

Conservatives believe that everyone should be given the opportunity to own their own home.

- We will give local communities a stronger say on where to build new homes, and focus on regenerating run-down urban sites rather than bulldozing green fields and the Green Belt
- We will extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants and increase support for those in social housing to buy the home of their choice
- We will increase funding for shared ownership schemes to help those on lower incomes who cannot afford to buy their home outright



The choice on ...

The Environment

People face a clear choice: action and positive incentives for the environment with the Conservatives, or more talk and taxes from Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised “the first truly green government that Britain has ever seen” and to “place the environment at the heart of government”. All talk.

- Mr Blair’s new taxes, like the climate change levy, have hurt business but not helped the environment. Carbon emissions are higher than when Labour came to power
- Unelected regional assemblies have taken away the planning powers of local councils, and are dumping sprawling concrete estates on green fields and the Green Belt
- Rural communities and consumer rights are undermined by misleading labelling and sub-standard food imports

Conservatives believe that incentives and local decision-making will help protect the environment better than red tape and taxation.

- We will cut carbon emissions with new incentives for low carbon fuels, low pollution cars and energy efficiency in the home and workplace
- We will give stronger powers to local communities to create new, additional Green Belts around towns, cities and villages to stop urban sprawl
- We will introduce new food labelling so that consumers have full information about food ingredients, where food comes from, and the environmental and animal welfare standards used to make and distribute it



The choice on ...

Transport

People face a clear choice: better roads, railways and public transport with the Conservatives, or an endless war against the motorist and worsening train services with Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised “a proper national integrated transport system”. All talk.

- Mr Blair’s stealth taxes are costing motorists almost £30 billion
- Congestion costs industry between £15 and £20 billion every year
- One in six trains now run late – almost twice the number in 1997 when Labour came to power

Conservatives will give people more choice over travel, and stop the war against motorists.

- We will make more use of private funding to pay for new roads
- We will give control over speed cameras to local police, ensuring that cameras are only installed to improve safety and not to raise revenue
- We will award longer franchises to successful train operators, giving them the stability essential for investment and expansion
- We will modernise British railway stations for the 21st century, in partnership with the private sector



The choice on ...

Europe

People face a clear choice: powers brought back from Brussels and no euro with the Conservatives, or more powers surrendered to Brussels under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised to “stand up for Britain’s interests in Europe”. All talk.

- More than half of all regulation now derives from EU law
- European rules make the UK a tougher place to do business – the Working Time Directive alone has cost UK businesses over £10 billion
- Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats want to accept the European Constitution, which would give unelected judges and bureaucrats more control over our lives – including more power over our asylum and immigration system
- Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats want to join the euro

Conservatives believe in a Europe of nation states, not a country called Europe.

- We will set the date of a referendum on the European Constitution as soon as elected, we will hold it within six months, and we will campaign actively for a 'No' vote
- We will bring back powers from Brussels including control of our employment laws and fishing grounds
- We will negotiate with our European partners for a 'live and let live' Europe of co-operating nation states
- We will not join the euro



The choice on ...

International Affairs & Defence

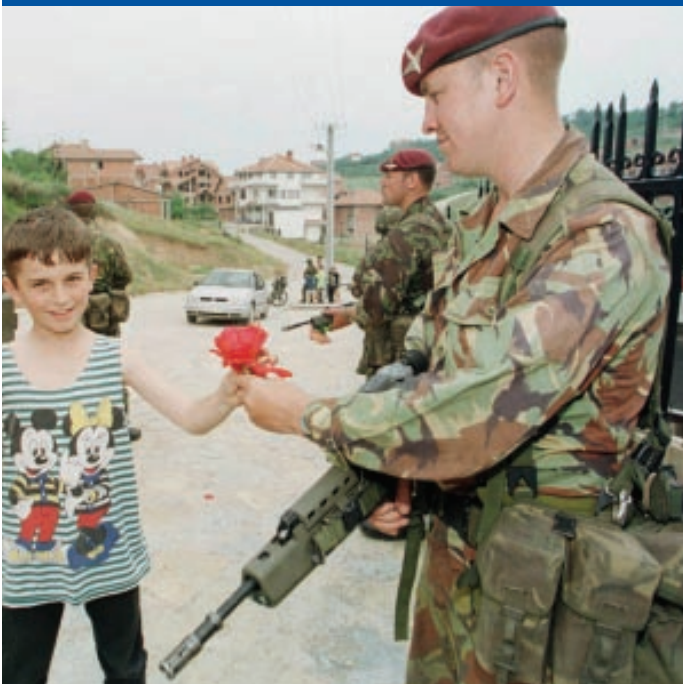
People face a clear choice: a secure Britain with the Conservatives, or our Armed Forces weakened under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised “strong defence”. All talk.

- Mr Blair is cutting four infantry regiments
- Mr Blair is also cutting six warships
- Mr Blair failed to tell the truth about the reasons for going to war in Iraq and failed to plan properly for the aftermath

Conservatives believe we should support our Armed Forces and that foreign policy should serve our national interest.

- If a Conservative Government has to take the country to war, we will tell the British people the truth and plan properly to secure the peace
- By spending £2.7 billion more on the front line, we will keep the regiments and three of the warships Labour would scrap
- We will work towards the UN's target for spending 0.7% of gross national income on overseas aid by 2013



The choice on ...

The Constitution

People face a clear choice: a stronger parliament and more accountability with the Conservatives, or less accountability under Mr Blair and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair promised “to clean up politics” and restore the “bond of trust” with the British people. All talk.

- Labour promised to make the House of Lords more "democratic and representative", but in 2003 Mr Blair voted for a totally appointed second chamber
- Over 60% of all Labour peers and more than 40% of all peers sitting in the Lords have been appointed by Mr Blair
- The number of ministerial special advisers has more than doubled since 1997, while their cost to taxpayers has trebled

Conservatives believe that we must improve our democracy by strengthening Parliament and cutting back on unaccountable political appointees.

- We will end the power of unaccountable appointees to give orders to senior civil servants and will place a legal limit on the number of special advisers
- We will cut the number of MPs and Ministers by a fifth
- We will seek cross-party consensus for a substantially elected House of Lords
- We will strengthen the Commons by making Committees more independent of Government and allowing more legislation to be considered in draft



Mr Blair: the Truth

After eight years in power, and in the run-up to a General Election, Mr Blair is making more promises. We've heard it all before. He's all talk. Given the chance, he would continue to take Britain in the wrong direction.

- Labour pledge '*Your country's borders protected.*' We've heard it all before.
In 1997, Mr Blair promised to establish a 'swift and fair'¹ asylum system but asylum applications have doubled under Labour and there are over 250,000 failed asylum seekers living in Britain
- Labour pledge '*Your community safer.*' We've heard it all before.
In 1994, Mr Blair promised to be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime',² but there are a million violent crimes a year and a gun crime every hour
- Labour pledge '*Your family better off.*' We've heard it all before.
In 1995, Mr Blair promised he had 'no plans to raise tax at all'³ but he's put them up 66 times. Under Mr Blair, tax has gone up by £5,000 per household in the UK

- Labour pledge ‘*Your family treated better and faster*’. We’ve heard it all before.

In 1997, Mr Blair promised to ‘save our National Health Service’,⁴ but each year 5,000 people are dying from infections they picked up in hospital; there are still over one million people on waiting lists; and people are waiting for longer

- Labour pledge ‘*Your child achieving more*’. We’ve heard it all before.

In 1997, Mr Blair promised that education would be his priority,⁵ but a teacher is assaulted every seven minutes and one in three children leaves primary school unable to write properly

- Labour pledge ‘*Your children with the best start*’. We’ve heard it all before.

In 1994 Mr Blair said ‘childcare is a prime example where active help is needed’⁶ but childcare in Britain is the most expensive in Europe and the number of childminders in England has fallen by 25,000 under Mr Blair

¹ Labour Party Manifesto, 1997

² Labour Party Conference Speech, 1994

³ Financial Times, 21 September 1995

⁴ Speech to Trimdon Labour Club, 30 April 1997

⁵ Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1997

⁶ Speech in Southampton, 13 July 1994

Liberal Democrats: the Truth

Like Mr Blair, the Liberal Democrats are out of touch with the values of mainstream Britain. They think that murderers should not be given mandatory life sentences, want higher taxes and would give Europe control of our immigration system.

- Liberal Democrats would scrap mandatory life sentences for murder and for a second serious sexual or violent crime ⁷
- Liberal Democrats' local income tax would mean that the typical working family would pay an extra £630 a year
- Liberal Democrats think that Europe should run Britain's immigration policy and that there 'should be no upper limit on the numbers of refugees accepted by EU countries' ⁸
- Liberal Democrats have supported every single major proposal to give Europe more power over Britain. They would join the euro and adopt the European Constitution ⁹
- Liberal Democrats want to abolish faith schools, grammar schools and specialist schools ¹⁰

- Liberal Democrats want compulsory sex education for seven year-olds and support giving contraceptives to children as young as 11 ¹¹
- Liberal Democrats want a new regional income tax and would give regional assemblies the power to increase National Insurance Contributions ¹²
- Liberal Democrats believe that Britain's Armed Forces should be part of a European defence force ¹³
- Liberal Democrats oppose council and housing association tenants having the Right to Buy their homes ¹⁴
- Liberal Democrats want wind farms in every town and village ¹⁵

⁷ Liberal Democrat Policy Paper 51, Justice in the Community, June 2002, p.42

⁸ Liberal Democrat Policy Development Paper, Safe Havens, September 2004, p.9

⁹ Liberal Democrat Policy Briefing 34, Policies on Membership of the Single Currency, May 2004

¹⁰ Phil Willis, Liberal Democrat Education Spokesman, speech to Liberal Democrat Spring Conference, 9 March 2002

¹¹ Liberal Democrats, Policy Motion passed at Party Conference 2003, 24 September 2003

¹² Liberal Democrats, Policy Motion passed at Spring Conference 2002, 11 March 2002

¹³ Liberal Democrat Policy Paper 47, Defending Democracy, 2002, p.16

¹⁴ Liberal Democrat Internal Briefing Document, Housing Full Portfolio Briefing, August 2002, p.13

¹⁵ Liberal Democrat Policy Paper 52, Rural Futures, January 2004, p.43

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