

Preston Liberal Democrats

A Fair Deal for Preston

Your Guild City Manifesto





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A Fair Deal for Preston

Introduction

Everywhere I go in Preston I see people from all backgrounds and all walks of life, working hard, raising families, helping others and playing by the rules. But they have been let down and taken for granted for far too long by out-of-touch local and national government. Families and pensioners are struggling with sky-high energy bills, food prices and housing costs, and there has been too little investment in local services.

“ We are proud of Preston, but we need a change to make Preston a city that works for everyone. Preston Liberal Democrats are committed to that change. ”

I'm proud to lead a growing, diverse team who work for you all year round. Your Liberal Democrat Councillors are your strong **local champions** who will fight for a **Fair Deal for you** and your community. We believe in a **fair, free, and open society** where liberty, equality, and community are balanced, and individuals are empowered to pursue their dreams without being constrained by poverty, ignorance, or conformity. This is more important than ever in the face of populism and continued apathy by the two traditional main parties. We are proud to provide a **credible alternative** for people in Preston.

This Manifesto outlines our local strategy in **7** main policy areas with **75** policy actions. It shows what we want to do for all the people of Preston through **fair and inclusive** strategies with **specific plans** in each policy area. We are ready for the next challenge in our proud city as we plan for reorganisation in Lancashire and head towards the historic 2032 Guild.

We are established as the primary opposition and administration in waiting for Preston. The next step to enable us to make the changes we want to deliver is to win our local elections. Please support us as we work for you and join us as we work to build a **Fair Deal for everyone in our community in Preston.**



John Potter

Councillor John Potter
Leader,
Preston Liberal Democrats

Our Principles Define Us

We are proud to present this manifesto to you as our top priorities for Preston. However, one document cannot possibly say everything we would do in every situation. For every decision we make, we commit to act based on our principles:

Fair for you

A fair deal means we will **respect your rights, and act in your interests** against poverty, ignorance and conformity. Our main priority is to act decisively to guarantee access to public services wherever necessary, and to prevent authorities from needlessly standing in your way. Decisions we make will be based on whether they are **fair for you**.

Prosperity for Preston

A fairer Preston means eliminating extremes of inequality and **ensuring that everyone feels the benefits** of economic growth equitably. We will work to create an environment in our city where investment is encouraged and hard work is rewarded. The decisions we make will be based around **what makes our city better off** - for everyone living here.

Inclusive for all

The Preston we are working for **works for everyone equally**. We proudly champion the freedom, dignity and wellbeing of every individual. We do not seek to give unfair advantage to anyone. We will make our decisions based on what is **right and fair**, recognising that people from all communities come together to make our city great, and that all of those people and communities deserve **equal treatment and protection**.



Parks, Environment, and Rural Affairs



“ I have worked for the environment sector for 30 years. As a qualified Ecologist the environment is my passion. We must address the Climate Crisis and protect our environment for **future generations**. We must resist retrograde moves to continue our reliance on harmful and unsustainable practices and **build a green city**. Here are a few of the plans we have for a Fairer Deal on the environment:

- *Cllr Fiona Duke*

“We will make Preston a greener space to live in and enjoy. We need to plan and invest to acquire new open spaces to add to our already impressive parkland. We will plant more trees in our parks, streets, and urban areas.”

1. Parks: The incredible parks we have in Preston are amongst our best resources. Historic facilities such as **Avenham and Miller Parks, Haslam Park, and Ashton Park** provide free open spaces for everyone in our community. We would **protect our parks**, invest in more play equipment on major parks and small public spaces. We would invest in sports pitches to reduce cancelled football matches and **explore improvements** to local parks infrastructure that could generate revenue, such as splash parks or crazy golf. Spaces such as Fishwick Bottoms and Fishwick Golf Course could **create a green corridor** from central Preston to Brockholes Nature Reserve.

2. Trees: We are committed to planting **more trees** along highways and pavements to provide shade, improve air quality, and reduce water runoff. City centre revitalisation projects must include tree planting in public realm schemes. We are committed to more **nature walks** and wild meadow areas across all parts of the city.

“We recognise that the Climate Crisis is real. Preston can't change the world, but we must play our part. We will make the environment an opportunity for residents rather than a cost, making Preston a sustainable place to live and a centre for green industry.”

3. Responding to Climate Change: We will strengthen the city's position on climate change by creating a **Climate Action plan**, and work with the Preston Climate Jury to engage all parts of the community on environmental matters. We want to play our part in enhancing nature, doubling wildlife by 2030. Local environmental measures will aim to save residents money in the long term and encourage the **creation of 'Green' jobs in Preston**.

"To ensure development is sustainable, we will require all new homes to be zero-carbon and for every project to deliver a clear improvement for local nature and wildlife. We will improve home energy use and insulation and do much more with renewable energy."

4. Sustainable Building and Nature Integration: It is our policy to mandate that all new homes are **zero-carbon**. Promote **Zero Carbon Construction** with climate change mitigation measures on every new development. We want to ensure that all new developments achieve a **net gain in biodiversity**, up to 100% for major developments, with specific considerations for indigenous species, **bee corridors, living walls**, and hedgehog-friendly construction. We would require developers to **assign funds for tree planting** and maintenance in new developments. We will strive to maintain quality open/green spaces and increase overall biodiversity.

“ We recognise that the Climate Crisis is real and an existential threat. Preston can't change the world on our own but we can and should play our part. What we will do is make it an opportunity for local residents rather than a cost, making Preston a centre for green industry. This will bring in jobs and investment to our city. **”**

5. Home Energy and Insulation: We want to play a lead role in an **energy upgrade programme** to address both the cost-of-living crisis and the climate emergency by making homes warmer and cheaper to heat. We will launch a major **Home Energy Programme** to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, provide warmer homes and protect the environment. This will include an **Energy-Saving Homes** scheme including subsidies and grants where appropriate and advice on energy efficiency and insulation. We will support improved insulation, especially in low-income households. We will encourage installation of ground source heat pumps and/or solar power where appropriate and provide credits and financial support when necessary. We will work with Housing Associations to encourage insulation and efficient energy schemes, and we will introduce strict requirements for landlords including upgrading properties to EPC C by 2028.



6. Renewable Energy: We will investigate opportunities and funding for renewable energy schemes, and budget for future investment. We will create a **Renewable Energy Plan** and work on opportunities for **solar** installation on existing homes and larger scale commercial and public buildings. We will investigate funding opportunities for investment in **wind** turbines, for example on the docks.

"We will support our farming communities encouraging natural ecosystems and local purchasing while reducing the use of harmful chemicals. We will make local purchasing part of a sustainable food strategy and support local farmers."

7. Farming Policy: We will champion Environmental Land Management schemes to reward farmers for restoring ecosystems whilst upholding high environmental and **animal welfare** standards. We will support schemes that prioritise the use of local produce. We will minimise the use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides – especially glyphosate-based chemicals.

8. Sustainable Food Strategy: We will push for a comprehensive **National Food Strategy** to fix food security and improve nutrition. We will use public procurement policy and the buying power of councils (for example for schools and care homes) to **back local farms** and businesses. This will support the aim of the highest standards of **environmental responsibility** and social sustainability.

"We will work with partners to install clean energy creation in and around Preston where the public will have a stake in the generation - meaning that the public will also share in the benefits."

9. Recycling: We will properly assess current performance and methods for recycling against other local authorities and historic data. We will develop a clear plan considering the most effective and user-friendly methods and measure future performance improvements. We will make sure that plans for separate food waste are implemented in a practical and economical way.



10. Water: We would install water butts on new build developments and work with water companies to retrofit **water storage** on existing housing where practical. We will lobby for greater investment in flood defences especially along the Ribble. We will insist that surface water and flood risk are given serious consideration in **planning applications** rather than a minor detail left to be dealt with later, and prevent housing being built in areas of high flood risk.

Fiona Duke

Councillor Fiona Duke
Your Champion for the
Environment & Green Spaces

Economy, Business, and Skills



“ I care a great deal about how local business contributes to the **wellbeing of our community** by creating jobs, skills and a strong economy for everyone.

A **fair deal** on the local economy would empower our communities and support businesses to thrive, building greater prosperity for all.

- *Cllr Mark Jewell*

”

Local Economy & Government Finance

“At the heart of the Liberal Democrats agenda is responsible management of public finances. This involves working with the private sector to provide the confidence for investment in our communities, providing jobs and the skills we need for the future.”

1. Europe: Locally, we will work with our **twinned European partners** and agencies, Chambers of Commerce and businesses to rebuild trust and trade ties, bringing in **new jobs and opportunities**. These will be our first steps to repair our broken relationship with Europe that is holding back our economy and costs the UK investment, jobs and tax revenue. Nationally, we will aim to place the UK-EU relationship on a more formal and stable footing by seeking to **join the single market**, an essential step in our longer-term objective to **rejoin the EU**. Locally we will proactively support our local businesses in making connections in the cities we are connected to in France, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands to make Preston a hub for trade.



2. Community Wealth Building: We will review the public funding being spent on community wealth building initiatives based on tangible evidence rather than blind ideology. Where spending cannot be justified by results, the money will be redirected to better support people in Preston. **Wasteful donations to vanity projects** such as the Community Bank will be immediately cancelled. Instead, we will encourage **post offices** to become community banking and local government hubs.

- 3. Local Investment:** We will use **procurement and planning** controls to support local enterprises. We will use enhanced powers over community assets to protect **pubs, community farms** and other vital infrastructure.
- 4. Regional Partnerships:** We will promote **local and regional partnerships** including with regional Chambers of Commerce, to support the coordination of development projects and boost growth. We will support local **Enterprise Zones** to attract investment and create high-quality jobs.
- 5. Growth Hubs and utilities:** We will support **green growth hubs** to encourage investment in solar, wind and retrofit technologies aligned with Net Zero ambitions. We will support bespoke solutions for gigabit **broadband in rural** and remote communities.

“ If we are going to change Preston in a meaningful way, we need to support local businesses and bring investment into our city. We have the plan to get this right - and this is what will bring in the jobs and finance that will bring about the Preston we envisage for tomorrow. ”

Business Support & Innovation

“We aim to make Preston one of the most attractive places in the country for businesses to invest. Only through partnership with responsible sustainable businesses can we tackle the cost of living and climate crises and create the wealth to invest in infrastructure, education, and other essential services.”

- 6. Small Businesses:** We will support our SME and startups by promoting the small business **rate relief** where applicable. We will lobby government to replace business rates with a commercial landowner levy. We will provide meaningful support in the form of **grants, advice and resource** for start-up businesses and establish **Preston Start-Up Hubs**.

- 7. Business Strategy:** We will launch an ambitious **industrial strategy** together with stakeholders, to give businesses certainty and incentivise investment in new technologies to **create good jobs** and **tackle the climate crisis**. We will build relationships with key local employers to link their goals to **employment and training** for Preston people, and to retain high-skilled graduates.

- 8. Business Support and Resources:** we will consider a dedicated resource such as a **Retail Regeneration Officer** to revitalise local retail areas and attract investment into our city centre and other retail hubs across Preston. We would employ a **Nighttime Economy and Tourism Adviser** to develop a thriving post-6 pm environment, bringing us an evening and nighttime economy to be proud of.



9. Investment and Marketing: Work with 'Invest Preston' and other bodies to vigorously market our city, an economic hub for Lancashire with unrivalled connectivity, as an investment destination. This includes active participation in national and regional investment events like UKREiiF (UK Real Estate and Investment and Infrastructure Forum) and MIPIM (International Market for Real Estate Professionals).

10. Procurement: We will reassess our **preferred supplier frameworks** at least every five years to ensure value for money for taxpayers and robust governance. We will comply with the **prompt payment code** and require all contractors and companies we contract with as an authority to also sign up to this code. We will encourage procurement of local goods, services and food in a competitive environment.

Skills, Employment & Education

"Education and skills are at the centre of any sustainable growth strategy. We will fund more apprenticeships, sponsor education, and work with businesses and education providers to build the essential skills we need as a city and retain graduates."

11. Productivity and Digital Skills: We will work with employers, Chambers of Commerce, universities and colleges to support the co-ordination of **local skills provision**. We will promote the development of skills and technologies for **long-term productivity** across sectors, fostering stability for **investment in future industries**.

12. Apprenticeships and skills: We will expand the number of apprenticeships offered and sponsor degree level **essential skills** that we need as an authority. For example, social care, digital and AI skills. We will promote **zero percent illiteracy** by working with adult education providers and charities.



“ We believe in the people and businesses of Preston: that if given the opportunity to grow, they will take it and bring great improvements to our city. We will give them that opportunity and work alongside them to create the Preston we all want to see. ”

Mark Jewell

Councillor Mark Jewell
Your Champion for
Local Business & Skills

Education, Culture, Arts, and Sports



“ I am a very proud born and bred Prestonian with 35 years of teaching and publishing experience. I am passionate about the culture, arts and heritage our proud city has to offer. **Education at all levels** and in the broadest sense must be a priority, and involvement in sport, leisure and heritage are a **vital part of life**. These are some of the plans we have for a **Fair Deal** for culture and education for everyone in Preston: ”

- *Cllr George Kulbacki*

“To revitalise our city's culture and provide a new entertainments' hub in the heart of Preston we will push for a new Guild Hall, a multi-use venue to celebrate the 2032 Guild and be fit for the next century.”

1. Cultural Venues and Events: There is an urgent need for a **conference centre and a long-term replacement for the Guild Hall**. We will investigate the feasibility of saving the **Charter Theatre** and redeveloping it with suitable partners or commit to a Grand Hall replacement. We will make sure full funds are ring-fenced for the **2032 Guild**. We would explore the Fishergate Shopping Centre site as a viable location for a new **Conference & Exhibition Centre**.

2. Museum of Lancashire: We will advocate for reopening the museum and establish a charitable trust to fund and manage this valuable resource. We will accelerate the campaign to reopen it as a military museum to celebrate Preston's proud, historic links with the armed forces. We will back plans to establish a **military museum** when the barracks close and ensure that existing collections have a permanent home.



"As proud Prestonians, we need to build civic pride and greater awareness of our rich heritage. We will build Preston as a cultural hub, campaign to reopen the Museum of Lancashire, and promote cultural venues and events."

3. Creating a Regional Cultural Hub: We will work with cultural and artistic groups from across Preston to produce diverse events and promote **visual arts and theatre**. We will promote venues such as **Preston Playhouse** to support the regrowth of Preston as a **regional cultural hub**. We will explore opportunities for other venues such as the **Harris School of Art** to become satellite exhibition centres for the Harris Museum's extensive collection.

4. Creating a Heritage Museum: A **new heritage museum** would link up with local interest groups to showcase contributions from the many historically important people who have **shaped Preston's history**. Such a centre or museum could include exhibitions centred on the Suffragettes, trade unions, and many religious, cultural and ethnic groups which have helped to create the rich, colourful, and diverse tapestry of our city.

"Tourism is a great opportunity to attract visitors that boost the local economy and helps to support investment in our fantastic local amenities."

5. Tourism and Visitor Economy: We must make greater efforts to **market Preston as a visitor destination**. We will ensure accessible visitor information is available at key arrival points like Preston Railway Station and Bus Station.

6. The Guild Trail: As a permanent legacy for the **2032 Guild**, we would set up a walking trail around Preston covering historic locations, notable landmarks, and our wonderful parks. This will be clearly signposted from key arrival points in the city.

"We must have new schools in north west Preston to provide for the families that have moved to the new estates there. We believe in education for every part of our community."

7. Education: One of our priorities is to ensure that **planned new schools in the north and west of the city**, which have land reserved following our pressure, are finally built. We would push to overturn past decisions to postpone and **build the new schools** we need at the earliest opportunity in the right places for the community. We will also advocate for a **new special school for disabled and vulnerable children** in one of these new schools.

8. Higher Education: We will endeavour to forge closer links between our Council and regionally significant educational institutions such as the **University of Lancashire** and Cardinal Newman College to further utilise their expertise, knowledge and cultural resources for the benefit of all our city's inhabitants.

9. Sport and Leisure: We would boost participation in sports and physical activity by encouraging investment in **leisure centres, swimming pools, and other grassroots facilities** through partnerships, and supporting **community sports clubs**. We will improve park infrastructure that could generate revenue, such as splash parks or crazy golf. We will work with local sporting organisations and clubs, such as Preston North End and Preston Grasshoppers, to improve public access to sporting facilities and venues, thereby improving community participation and enjoyment.

10. Café's and city-owned facilities: We must continually review the operation of facilities such as **Avenham and Miller Parks'** pavilion café and other resources owned by the City. We would commission suitable third sector or private sector partners where appropriate to operate facilities, so that they contribute towards the City's finances rather than costing money. We will continue to support facilities created through the council's investment in refurbishing the **Harris Museum** and building **Animate**, but we will scrutinise decisions about services being run in-house or with partners.



"Local libraries should be at the heart of our communities, and we will do everything we can to protect them."

11. Safeguarding Libraries: We need to safeguard our threatened **local libraries** to improve literacy and encourage a love of reading for all sectors of society. Keeping our libraries open with an array of resources and well-trained staff would ensure the **digitally disadvantaged** can be fully involved in our fast-changing world. Libraries are a vital means for **community groups**, residents and public organisations to meet, interact and disseminate information. We will actively work to support our libraries through membership of friends groups such as FOIL (Friends of Ingol Library).

12. Faith Groups: Deep in Liberal Democracy philosophy is our commitment to protect the right of every person to **practice their faith safely** whatever their belief. Preston has deep roots in several faiths, and we will always help to preserve that right against prejudice. We will make sure that planning for new faith and community facilities gives weight to the **vital role in our community**.

George Kulbacki

Councillor George Kulbacki
Your Champion for Culture,
Education, Arts, and Sports

Roads and Public Transport



“ I have lived and travelled around Preston for most of my working life, and I have seen growing challenges with our transport network. We need a new long-term strategy for Preston's transport system, moving from an outdated car-dominated network to a **multi-modal, inclusive, and environmentally healthy system** that works for everyone in our community. Here are some of the changes we will fight for to create a Fair transport system for Preston: ”

- *Jack Singh*

“We must move away from simply building more roads and car parks and instead design a transport system that is designed for healthy, happy communities with access to an integrated public transport network for all.”

- 1. "Vision-led" Transport Planning:** Move away from outdated "predict and provide" transport modelling which often leads to car-dependent sprawl and congestion. Instead, adopt a "vision-led" approach that focuses on desired outcomes for places and prioritises sustainable transport solutions, leading to healthier, happier, more productive and sustainable communities. This involves integrating spatial planning with transport planning at the local level and advocating for national policy changes to mandate this approach.
- 2. Rail Infrastructure:** We advocate for the speedy construction of the new **Cottam Parkway Railway Station**. Push for the reinstatement of the **Burscough Curves** to enable direct Preston-Southport railway services. Support reinstating track at **Ormskirk station** to allow through Preston-Liverpool services, potentially utilising new battery-powered Merseyrail trains. Campaign to reopen the **Colne-Skipton railway** to enhance connectivity between Yorkshire and Lancashire, with Preston as a major interchange. The manifesto would also aim to significantly extend the **electrification of Britain's rail network**, improve stations, and enhance disabled access.
- 3. Trams:** Nationally it is a Liberal Democrat policy to build tram and light rail systems in cities wherever it is feasible. We will investigate the potential for **Preston Trampower** and support investment in the proposed **Guild Line** as part of a long-term plan to improve sustainable public transport.

4. Bus Services: We would commit to **public ownership or subsidy for public transport** in Preston to ensure regular, quality bus services are available in all areas. We will boost bus services by giving local authorities more powers to franchise services and simplifying funding, especially for rural routes. We will explore the feasibility of a **Preston or Lancashire bus network** modelled on Manchester's Bee Network.

"Our plan is to create a comprehensive and safe active travel network by building new walking and cycling routes, protecting the Guild Wheel, and adding key facilities like secure bicycle storage and safer school zones."



5. Active Travel: We propose the creation of **new cycling and walking routes** into the city, require new developments to incorporate dedicated routes as a condition of planning approval. Advocate for a **nationwide active travel strategy**. Establish strategic, **car-free routes** like those along the Ribble estuary to Freckleton and the former railway line to Longridge. Ensure **free and secure bike storage** is available at Preston railway station. Implement **no stopping/parking zones around schools** to ease congestion, increase walking/cycling, and improve air quality. Support and Protect the **Guild Wheel** as a vital part of our local active transport network.

"We will demand a fair share of the Highway Maintenance budget for Preston and implement better systems for reporting potholes and prioritising repairs."

6. Highway Maintenance: Make sure that a **fair proportion** of the highways authority budgets are allocated to Preston, representing the regional importance of the city as a transport hub and the contributions made by residents to the budget. We would improve the system for reporting potholes and other highways faults (which our Councillors frequently use to report faults in their wards), and install a better system for prioritising road repairs.

7. Bus gates: We will review the current and planned bus gates including Corporation Street and Newhall Lane and **remove them** where they are having a detrimental effect on overall traffic flow, harming local businesses or failing to facilitate public transport and/or active transport choices.

8. Motorways: Negotiate with Highways

England, police and other motoring authorities and organisations to address chaos caused by frequent M6 closures, especially around Junction 32. These closures and delays result in gridlock across Preston, impacting the lives of our residents, costing local businesses money, and undermining efforts to attract investment in the city.

9. Parking: We must change the current reliance

on private parking. It is necessary to develop better **Park and Ride** facilities. We will protect people from punitive parking fines and charges and aggressive collection by private businesses by introducing better regulation and control. We would investigate the introduction of **“Free After 3”** in publicly owned car parks to help city centre businesses and the evening economy.



“We need to fundamentally change transport in our city if we are going to improve the lives of people in Preston. Our plan will make a real difference to everyone.”

“We are committed to better environmental solutions for travel, so we will make owning an electric vehicle easier by increasing availability of charging points at home and on-street.”

10. Electric Vehicles: Increase **electric vehicle charging points** in residential areas,

especially for homes without driveways, and install **pavement ducts** for safe on-street charging. Require electric vehicle **charging points in all new houses**.

11. Taxis: We will address increasing concerns about unregulated taxi services and bolster licencing resources to **enforce regulation** of taxis and protect user-safety locally. We will investigate the high numbers of taxis licenced outside Preston and alternatives such as Uber and move for legislation to improve regulation.

Jack Singh

Jack Singh
Your Champion for Local Roads
and Public Transport



Community, Health, and Social Care



“ As a registered nurse working in Preston I have dedicated my life to the health and wellbeing of the whole community. A priority for all the people of Preston must be to provide social care, health facilities and mental health support for all parts of our community. Here are some of the things I would like to do to create a **Fair Deal** for the health of all Preston people: ”

- *Cllr Julie van Mierlo*

“Access to health facilities is one of the most vital needs, and the people of Preston have not been supported enough. We will stand up and protect hospital services in Preston including Royal Preston Hospital. Everyone should be able to see a doctor when they need to, and we will work to increase the numbers of doctors and nurses. We also want everyone to be able to see an NHS dentist quickly when they need urgent care.”

- 1. Healthcare Access:** We will campaign to **retain essential hospital services in Preston** amidst potential closures decided by central government without considering the needs of the people of Preston. We will stand up for the health care of local people by demanding that the planned new regional **hospital stays in Preston** for the long-term. We will also push for speedy resolution of plans so that the wait for a new hospital isn't delayed by more years.
- 2. Access to a Doctor:** We will advocate for a new right for everyone to **see a doctor within 7 days or 24 hours for urgent cases** by advocating for 8,000 more GPs. We will work to have new surgeries in areas of the city currently underserved such as across North West Preston where the number of new homes has grossly out-paced the provision of services, putting strain on existing practices. We will push for a universal **24/7 GP booking system** and a Strategic Small Surgeries Fund.
- 3. Oral Health:** We will work to guarantee access to an **NHS dentist** for urgent and emergency care. Too many people in Preston must choose between unacceptable waiting times or expensive private dentists when suffering from a dental problem. We will **encourage new practices** in areas where there is inadequate resource such as North West Preston.

"There is a mental health crisis in the UK, and many vulnerable people don't feel they can easily or safely get help. We will improve resources in schools and work across our communities to give advice, help and intervention to those who need it most, and protect everyone's human rights."

4. Mental Health and Vulnerable Groups: Improve early access to mental health services, including establishing **walk-in hubs for children and young people** in every community and offering regular mental health check-ups. We will ensure access to a qualified **mental health professional in every school** and extend young people's mental health services to age 25.

“ We all deserve to live as healthy a life as possible - and to have access to local healthcare when we need it. This is why we make it one of our priorities to push for everyone in Preston to be able to access a GP locally. **”**

5. Supporting Vulnerable People: We will Implement "joined up thinking" to support **homeless** individuals, looked-after **children**, and **victims of domestic violence**.

6. Community Support: Ensure that developers of large planning applications contribute to enhancing existing **community hubs** and creating new ones, working with charities to support vulnerable and elderly residents. Make Preston a more welcoming city with **more central disabled parking** and places to experience education and culture for everyone.

7. Asylum: We support Preston as a **safe and welcoming haven** for refugees and asylum seekers from around the world with access to education, employment, and community involvement. We will defend the right of every person to live **free from fear and prejudice**. We recognise the social and economic benefits of people bringing their skills to Preston where they can work alongside other residents of the city and contribute to and enrich our shared society.





"To empower young people, we will continue to support the development of the Youth Zone and other facilities, fund bus travel, and create a Youth Council."

- 8. Youth Services:** We will work with partners and operators to ensure that the Vault Youth Zone is meeting the needs of our young people and listen to its users. We are actively pressing for more similar facilities across the city. We will help to connect youth groups, facilities and services creating a **city-wide network**. We will seek affordable bus travel for users to make facilities easily accessible to everyone.
- 9. Youth Council:** We will create a **formal Youth Council** and provide a **budget** for it so that young people have a real say in our city by having an opportunity to become actively involved in the democratic process.

“Everyone should feel safe in their own home and in their own neighbourhood. That is why having well supported PACT meetings is important - they are a tried and tested means of making communities safer.”

- 10. Crime and Policing:** We will always **support PACT** (Police and Communities Together) meetings in all our communities around Preston, and we have played a lead role in setting up, chairing and attending monthly meetings. This means everyone has a consistent, reliable point of contact to report and be informed about local issues. We will continue to press for more Police Officers and PCSOs on the beat to make sure that people feel safe.



Julie van Mierlo

Councillor Julie van Mierlo
Your Champion for the
Community, Health & Social Care

Housing, Planning, and Our Heritage



“ I've lived in Cottam for over 20 years, watching it grow into an urban sprawl. While thousands of new homes have been built, infrastructure and services haven't kept pace. Our community **deserves better**. We need a housing policy that puts people first; one that prioritises sustainability, green spaces, and safe play areas for our children. We must deliver affordable homes for our community. That means planning that supports wellbeing, not profit. It's time for a **Fair Deal** for Preston: building communities, not just houses. ”

- *Cllr Ben Ward*

“We will champion fair planning policies and high-quality design to create attractive walkable communities. This will allow us to meet our housing needs while protecting our rural villages from overdevelopment. We will favour brownfield sites to revitalise urban areas and insist on local amenities and schools with new developments.”

- 1. Quality design and “Gentle Density”:** Stronger design principles will be applied to new developments focussing on character and aesthetics. We will advocate for **“Gentle Density”** masterplans which allow for the same number of homes on less land fostering walkable, well-connected communities with clean air and reduced congestion. Separate cycling and walking routes will be a planning requirement.
- 2. Protecting Rural Areas:** We are committed to **protecting our rural villages** from overdevelopment including **Lea Town, Grimsargh and Goosnargh**. We will balance the need for more housing in central Lancashire with the need to protect small village communities and their distinct identities.
- 3. Urban Regeneration and Brownfield First:** We will lobby for greater government powers and resources to tackle long-term **empty properties** and accelerate **brownfield redevelopment**. **Brownfield sites** will take priority for development. Green Belt designations around north Preston will be investigated to reduce sprawl especially in north Preston. We will prioritise disused land and buildings for development, creating vibrant, resident-led communities. That includes encouraging more city centre homes and pushing regeneration schemes like the **Stoneygate Masterplan**.



4. Planning Balance: We will support planning officers in objective assessment of applications while making sure that local environment, school places and transport have been fully considered and that affordable housing is included in every large housing application. We will promote the creation of **local centres** in new build communities including shops, doctors, vets and dentists, and most critically **schools**. This especially applies in north west Preston where thousands of new homes have been built without schools and infrastructure.



"To make housing more secure and affordable, at least 35% of all new developments must be genuinely affordable homes. We will bring empty properties back into use, scrap unfair leaseholds, and try to end rough sleeping."

5. Housing Provision and Affordability: We will commit that all new developments will have at least **35% affordable homes**. We support the national target of building **380,000 new homes** a year across the UK, including **150,000 social homes** through community-led development of the city. We will work closely with neighbouring authorities to deliver a joined-up Local Plan that matches housing need to demand. Where greenfield development is unavoidable, it will only take place in the most suitable locations, creating communities where families, pensioners, and first-time buyers can thrive.

6. Empty Homes Strategy: We will include the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) to bring vacant houses back into use, empowering planning officers and working in partnership with housing associations to deliver secure, affordable homes.

“ It's not glamorous - but Planning is one of the most powerful tools we have locally to make sure that the Preston of tomorrow is the community we want to see. **”**

7. Residential Leaseholds: We would abolish leaseholds on residential properties and make sure that tenants' rights are protected against unfair conditions or unreasonable rent.

8. Tackling Rough Sleeping: We will work to end rough sleeping by expanding emergency accommodation, funding support services, and prioritising rapid rehousing schemes. We will partner with charities and health providers to deliver mental health, addiction, and employment support. We'll also invest in prevention, identifying those at risk early and intervening before homelessness begins.

"We will insist that more is done to protect our historic buildings increasing resource and budget to safeguard our heritage."

9. Protecting Preston's Heritage: Our historic buildings are more than bricks and mortar; they're part of Preston's identity. They connect generations, anchor communities, and tell the story of who we are. That's why protecting our heritage assets must be a priority. We will employ a **Heritage Building Officer** and work with specialist experts to assess the condition of Preston's historic buildings to safeguard them properly. We will create clear, funded plans to bring neglected heritage sites back into use, turning eyesores into assets.

10. We will adopt a **proactive approach to heritage and historic buildings**, using existing enforcement powers to compel owners to redevelop vacant structures. We'll also enforce stronger protections, requiring property owners to provide adequate security against vandalism, arson, and decay. These buildings belong to all of us; they deserve to be preserved, celebrated, and restored for future generations. Creating a Stoneygate and Church Street conservation area and making new owners of listed properties liable for their upkeep via a Heritage Building Charter, could curtail more heritage properties being destroyed through neglect.

"We will work sensitively on homes for children and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) balancing the needs of children and vulnerable adults alongside a sustainable housing strategy."

11. Children's Homes: Putting Children First. Every child deserves a safe, stable, and nurturing environment, not just a placement. We will create a fairer, more compassionate system for providing homes to **vulnerable children**, one that puts their needs above profit. We will prioritise **local needs**, ensuring new children's homes are distributed in ways that support hosting communities, offer the best opportunities for children, and guarantee access to school places, healthcare, and emotional support. Oversight of private sector providers will be strengthened ensuring quality care, **transparency, and accountability**.

12. HMOs: Houses of Multiple Occupancy, when developed in the right locations, can revitalise properties and bring residents who contribute positively to the community. However, **excessive concentration** of HMOs risks undermining neighbourhood character and amenity, so numbers must be carefully monitored and managed. To protect standards, we will **enforce stronger controls** to ensure landlords and residents maintain properties responsibly.

Ben Ward

Councillor Ben Ward
Your Champion for
Housing, Planning & Heritage

Better Local Democracy and Engagement



“ All my life I have been interested in democracy and government. As a proud northerner having lived and worked in different parts of the UK and Europe, I am committed to strengthening our local democracy and ensuring effective governance. These are some of the ways we will work for a Fair Deal for democracy for everyone in Preston:

- *Cllr Tony Raisbeck*

“To ensure local people have control over the issues that affect their lives, we will campaign to move decision-making powers from Westminster to our local communities.”

1. Decentralisation: We will advocate for the **transfer of greater powers from Westminster and Whitehall** to enable local decisions to be made by and for the people and communities they effect. We will actively work for the remaining life of Preston City Council and play a lead role in its successor to make sure that the principles of a Liberal Democracy are sustained.

2. Electoral Reform: For over 100 years Liberals and Liberal Democrats have fought for a change to our out-dated electoral system. We have always believed that a system of **Proportional Representation** is the only fair way to elect a government that truly represents the people. We will continue to advocate for that reform for Parliament and for local elections here in Preston, along with replacing the out-dated House of Lords with a meaningful second house.

3. Integrated Planning and Funding: We will emphasise the need for greater integration between **spatial planning and transport planning** at the local level to create a clear plan for achieving Preston's placemaking and sustainability vision. This includes planning and transport departments collaborating on site selection and connectivity. We must work to **tackle the funding crisis** facing local authorities, including seeking multi-year settlements and increased funding for local needs.



4. Accountability and Transparency: We will support the Ministerial Code to promote **higher standards of behaviour** from government ministers. We will always follow the Councillor's Code of Conduct and cooperate with our colleagues from across the political divide to see this replicated by all local representatives.

5. Collaboration: This manifesto spans a period of local authority restructuring, so a collaborative approach is ever more vital. We will foster **cross-council cooperation** with our neighbouring authorities to achieve regional goals, acknowledging that Preston has lagged due to a lack of municipal coordination and partnership.

“ People want to see real, meaningful change in how things are run. We believe that that change starts locally so that everyone can see what is happening and get involved in making our future better than our today. Preston has historically been at the forefront of social change - we can make that happen again today. **”**

6. Community Engagement: We will establish a **Citizens' Assembly** to ensure public involvement in addressing key challenges like the Climate Crisis and the cost-of-living crisis. This will enable people to get involved in big issues that are important to them and keep them at arm's length from political bodies, whilst providing an additional means for the Council to **listen to people's ideas**. By creating a safe space for people to work together, removing the politics and focusing on positive rather than negative solutions, we hope to encourage a greater community atmosphere in the city and foster an increased sense of **ownership of Preston's future**.

7. Youth Council: Having advocated for votes for 16- and 17-year-olds, we will also establish a Youth Council so that the **voices of young adults can be heard**.

8. Parish Councils and PACT meetings: We will support for local communities to set up and sustain parish or neighbourhood councils across the whole city following the model of Ingol and Tanterton. This brings decision making right into our communities and gives people the opportunity to **bring about the improvements they want** through Parish Councils **in their neighbourhoods**. We will continue to regularly attend, support (and sometimes chair) our local PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings across the city.

9. Europe: Liberal Democrats have always been the main voice in favour of reestablishing links with Europe following Brexit and growing evidence of the increasing social and economic harm that it is causing. Our plans to **rebuild links with Europe** are included in the Business Section. At a time when the majority of British people are now in favour of moving back towards connections with Europe, we will take a lead role in advocating that we first **rejoin the Customs Union** to reclaim some of the **6-8% of GDP** lost by leaving to boost our economy and allow our residents to enjoy the benefits of a stronger economy. This will see more and better paid jobs, as well as better funded local services in Preston.



"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."

10. ECHR: We are proud of Britain's role in creating the **European Convention on Human Rights** which was established after World War 2 to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms including the right to **liberty, freedom from discrimination**, and the **right to free elections**. At a time where extremist politics and the risk of the return of fascism are polluting our politics, we are proud to stand up and strongly support those basic rights and freedoms which are essential for a Liberal Democracy.

11. Preston Model: We acknowledge the concept of the Preston Model as a tool for **generating investment**, but we would make it a vehicle for all the people of Preston rather than a slogan for one political party. We would **promote local businesses** based in and around Preston both locally and nationally to help drive spending which will fund expansion and **new jobs** for people in our city.

12. Regional Mayor and Mayor of Preston: We will support the creation of a new regional Mayor for Lancashire as part of devolving powers from Westminster, and we will put forward a credible local candidate. We also will advocate that following local authority reorganisation we retain the position of the Mayor of Preston as part of our **proud cultural heritage** stretching back over 800 years, and a means of connecting all the people of Preston to local democracy.



Tony Raisbeck

Councillor Tony Raisbeck
Your Champion for Local
Democracy and Engagement

Join The Team Make A Difference

We have grown from seven Preston Councillors to fourteen since May 2024 but we need a few more Councillors so we can really **deliver the ambition in this manifesto**. Some of our plans require national policy changes. The Liberal Democrats have 72 MPs. We need to make sure we are in the best possible position to influence in 2028 and beyond.

“

No-one ever made a change on their own. By working together on a shared vision of the Preston we want to see for the 2032 Guild, we can make it happen.

Together.

”

If you want to help **make a difference in Preston**, join us as we work for a liberal democracy and a better Preston as we look ahead to the 2032 Guild. You might become a Councillor yourself and play a role as we work towards **a fair deal for Preston** and the country. Or perhaps you prefer helping in less high-profile ways. There are plenty of ways that everyone can contribute towards the team if they want to help out!

Find Out More

Liberal Democrats UK:

libdems.org.uk



Preston Lib Dems:

prestonlibdems.com

07854 221145



Join Us Today

libdems.org.uk/joining-us



Contact Us

For Information or Help

We have built a large group of Councillors and a robust support network. Any of the team will **try hard to help whatever your issue**, but we suggest that you contact your own ward Councillor or the relevant policy lead first. We support local PACT and neighbourhood and parish Councils, and we will be calling door to door during the year to **visit as many people as we can** and work on local casework issues raised with us.



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“ As a proud Lancastrian, I am delighted to see such a dynamic programme for Preston’s future. This is what we want to deliver as Liberal Democrats. ”

Tim Farron MP,
Former Lib Dem Leader,
Born in Preston



Read our manifesto
online here

Join us today and
make a difference

