

Key Commitments from the Liberal Democrats – Election 2010

Research Base

[Commitments in the Liberal Democrat response to the CaSE election letter:](#)

- Committed to not cutting science spending in the first year of the new Parliament
- Committed to not allowing the science budget to be raided once it is fixed (respecting the so-called intra-departmental 'ring-fence') for the given Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period
- Would clearly define what the science budget can be used for at the beginning of a spending period, so that the ring-fence is not 'inversely' breached by introducing new cost pressures from other budget headings
- Support the Haldane Principle. Recognise that decisions on how the science budget should be spent are best made by those in the science community itself, and would not attempt to micro-manage research planning
- Recognise the need for government to identify broad strategic priorities in a transparent manner
- Opposed to the use of non-evidence based impact predictions when deciding resource allocations, whether that be in grant awards or through the Research Excellence Framework
- Ensure that all state-funded research, including clinical trials, is publicly accessible and that the results are published and subject to peer review

Commitments in the [Liberal Democrat Manifesto](#):

- Reform science funding to ensure that genuinely innovative scientific research is identified and supported, instead of basing funding decisions on narrow impact factors
- Prioritise dementia research within the health research and development budget

Commitments Elsewhere:

- Will not guarantee spending commitments to individual Whitehall departments until they are clearer about the scale of the reductions needed to address the deficit
(Source: [RSC Policy Debate](#))
- Support R&D funding at 2.5% of GDP to boost international competitiveness
(Source: [Nick Clegg Royal Society Speech – January 2010](#))
- Cut much of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) budget
(Source: [Vince Cable speech – January 2010](#))

Education & Skills

[Commitments in the Liberal Democrat response to the CaSE election letter:](#)

- Seek to ensure that science at Key Stage 4 and above is taught by appropriately qualified teachers

- Make sure that head teachers have the appropriate resources to make this happen, including via more flexible teacher training budgets
- Divert the money currently used for starting bonuses into subsidising the repayment of student loans over a number of years.
- Abolish tuition fees over six years, making teaching a more attractive proposition to graduates currently deterred by a high debt burden
- Seek to ensure that every single child has the opportunity to study Physics, Chemistry and Biology GCSEs as separate subjects
- Audit the quality of Careers Advice available to young people to identify the worst performing schools, and give them support from role models and advocates from industry, charity, and the public research sector
- Tackle the gender gap at all levels of scientific study. Introduce exit interviews for everyone leaving publicly-funded research posts so that we would have clear data on reasons for departure. Work with funders and institutions to examine ways in which the impact of the 'publication gap' for women and men who take career breaks to raise a family can be minimised
- Encourage universities to fill their places in shortage subjects such as STEM and modern languages before they expand other subjects
- Look at expanding the number of postdoctoral places, as well as making PhDs more industry-friendly, funded by reducing the surplus of under-utilised PhD places

Commitments in the [Liberal Democrat Manifesto](#):

- Give 14–19 year-olds the right to take up a course at college, rather than at school, if it suits them better. This will enable all children to choose to study, for example, separate sciences or modern languages at GCSE, or a vocational subject
- Reform current bursary schemes to create a National Bursary Scheme for students, so that each university gets a bursary budget suited to the needs of its students. These bursaries would be awarded both on the basis of studying strategic subjects (such as sciences and mathematics) and financial hardship.

Innovation and Industry

[Commitments in the Liberal Democrat response to the CaSE election letter](#):

- Conduct a wide-ranging review of ways to encourage more non-Government investment in R&D. This might include reforming R&D tax credits, looking at how seed funding be more focused, or assisting venture capitalists in identifying promising technologies

Commitments Elsewhere:

- Creating a National Infrastructure Bank to bring together public and private investment (Source: [Vince Cable speech – January 2010](#))

Science & Engineering in Government & Society

[Commitments in the Liberal Democrat response to the CaSE election letter](#):

- Would bring in a Libel Reform Bill as a matter of urgency in order to protect peer reviewed research from libel suits
- Wholeheartedly endorse the original Principles for the Treatment of Independent Scientific Advice, which was drawn up by the scientific community and underlined the independence and freedom of advisors to the Government
- Would consider and consult on plans to move the Government Office for Science to the Cabinet Office, away from its current location in BIS
- would institute a CSA at the Treasury as part of a drive to maintain the highest standards of evidence-based policy across Government
- Reinforce the powers of the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA). Would require the GCSA to report to Parliament any cases of poor handling of evidence or science advice that s/he encounters, or has been reported by departmental CSAs or Select Committees
- Strengthen the role of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) within parliament.
- Would like to see regular use of Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) in testing new social policy initiatives

Commitments in the [Liberal Democrat Manifesto](#):

- Always base drugs policy on independent scientific advice, including making the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs completely independent of government