

Full Evaluation and Ranking/Grading
Document of Three Top Candidates in
the 2010 British Election



Evaluation and Ranking/Grading Document
Completed by the Foundation for Democratic
Advancement (May, 2010)

Purpose: Determine a ranking and grades for three main candidates for the 2010 British election, in terms of the better representative of Britain as a whole.

This determination is an outside perspective to give the citizens of the Britain an informed different perspective of three candidates running for the 2010 British Prime Minister.

The views in this Evaluation/Ranking/Grading are the views of the FDA. Also, the Determination is an example of a way to inform voters in the selection of political candidates-- through evaluating, ranking and grading.

The Three Main Candidates for the 2010 British election:

Mr. Gordon Brown (Labour Party)
Mr. David Cameron (Conservative Party)
Mr. Nick Clegg (Liberal Democratic Party)

* Though there are other candidates and parties running in the election, the FDA due to lack of information on the other Candidates and time constraints limited its evaluation to three top candidates. However, the study should give an indication of the quality of the candidates running in the British election, and the legitimacy of the election.

The FDA and its members are in no way affiliated with any of the candidates in this study. The study represents an independent assessment of three top British candidates based on objectivity, transparency, and non-partisanship.

The FDA is confident that its evaluation results will give a reasonable picture of the quality (or lack of quality) of three top British candidates, and the legitimacy of the election.

Methodology for Evaluating, Ranking, and Grading of the British candidates:

Evaluate the candidates as representatives of Britain—
backgrounds and visions, and incumbency record.
Evaluate the policies of the respective candidates.

Key policy areas to be evaluated:

Economy: (sound, fiscal management of public revenue and expenditure, and fair distribution of government expenditure to all sectors of Britain)

Governance (accountable, honest political representation of the British people)

Social (sound social policy for Britain, which meets the needs of the British people and makes economic sense)

Health: (sound health care policy for Britain, which meets the needs of the British people and makes economic sense)

Education: (sound education policy for Britain, which meets the needs of the British people and makes economic sense)

Environment: (more responsible, sustainable management of the British environment)

Immigration: (sound immigration policy which reflects British values and the diversity of the country.)

National security/Foreign Affairs: (sound, responsible use of British resources and military personnel inside and outside of Britain, which reflects the better interests of the British people.)

Weighting:

The nine sections for evaluation, backgrounds, visions, incumbency record, and eight policy areas are given equal weight.

The rationale for this weighting is that each section has relevant importance to Britain.

Evaluation:

Evaluate each category based on what is in the better interests of the British people.

For each category evaluation, there will be a stated rationale for the scoring/ranking.

The FDA's evaluation methodology is objective and transparent. Though like any evaluation methodology there is an element of subjectivity.

The FDA minimizes this objectivity by being guided by the more sound reasons. Every score and grade will be justified based on reasons for and against, and ultimately the more sound reason in a particular context.

Chief Evaluator:

Stephen Garvey, Executive Director of the FDA

Principle information sources:

Media articles and analysis of candidates. Candidates statements, including policy promises. Speeches by the candidates.

Table of Contents:

Background of Candidates

Vision of Candidates

Incumbency record of Gordon Brown

Eight policy areas:

Economy

Governance

Social

Health

Education

Environment

Immigration

National Security/

Foreign Affairs

Overall Totals

Analysis

Conclusion

Background:

To what degree is the candidate's background in the best interests of the people of Britain? The stronger the candidate, the more the candidate will be in the interests of the people of Britain.

Brown

James Gordon Brown was born on 20 February 1951 in Glasgow, Scotland and was brought up in Kirkcaldy. He attended Kirkcaldy West Primary School before moving onto Kirkcaldy High School two years early because he participated in a "fast track" education programme. He became the British Prime Minister in June 2007.

At the age of just 16, Brown was accepted into the University of Edinburgh to study history and graduated with First Class honours in 1972. He stayed on to complete his PhD which is completed ten years later in 1982.

Gordon Brown Becomes a Member of Parliament

Brown was elected to parliament in 1983, following his second attempt to become the Member of Parliament (MP) for Dunfermline East and became the Labour spokesman for Trade and Industry in 1985. Between 1987 and 1989, he served as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He also held the position of Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. In 1992, he was appointed Shadow Chancellor.

With Labour being the main opposition party to the Conservative government in power at the time, the labour party appointed people to jobs within the party which copied the job titles of the party in power. These positions were called "Shadows".

Following the death of Labour party leader John Smith in May 1994, Brown was widely tipped to be the next party leader, but did not compete for leadership after Tony Blair became a favourite.

Brown's Time as Chancellor

When Labour came to power in 1997, Brown was made Chancellor and held this post for just over a decade. On the 10 Downing Street website, one of Brown's credits is that he presided over "the longest ever period of growth".

In October 2004, Tony Blair, the-then British Prime Minister announced that he would not lead the Labour Party for a fourth general election, although he would serve his full third term as Prime Minister. Blair, under pressure from both the media and his own party, announced he would step down within a year in September 2006.

Gordon Brown as Prime Minister

Brown had been the clear favourite to take up leadership of the party for several years before Blair left the party and he became Prime Minister on the 27 June 2007. He is the twelfth British Prime Minister to take office without winning a general election.

Brown has been committed to the Iraq War, but has also said that he would learn from the mistakes made by the UK in the war and has also said that he will hold an inquiry into the war. Brown has been involved in a number of controversial political decisions since he took office. These include the introduction of a 42-day detention period for terror suspects with no charges actually made against them.

Gordon Brown is married to his wife, Sarah and they have two children.

Cameron

Conservative Party leader, David Cameron was born on 9 October 1966 and was educated at Eton and Brasenose College, Oxford.

Cameron graduated from Oxford University in 1988 with a first class honours degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

David Cameron worked for the Conservative Party in their research department from 1988 to 1992 when he became a Special Advisor in the Treasury (1992-3), and then at the Home Office (1993-4).

Prior to becoming a Member of Parliament, David Cameron was Head of Corporate Affairs at Carlton Communications.

Cameron was elected Conservative MP for Witney, West Oxfordshire, in June 2001, and immediately became a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

From 2003-4 David Cameron was Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party.

David Cameron came to prominence in 2005 when as Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills, he delivered an impressive speech at the Conservative Party Conference that instantly converted him from an outsider to be favourite to take over from [Michael Howard](#) as Conservative Party leader.

On 6 December 2005 after a long campaign, Cameron became leader of the Conservative Party beating [David Davis](#) by 134,446 votes to 64,398 in a postal ballot of party members.

Cameron, who has been described as a 'reformist', a 'moderniser', and a leading member of the Notting Hill set, has called himself a 'compassionate Conservative'.

Cameron's brother, Alexander, married Sarah Fearnley-Whittingstall, whilst David Cameron himself married Samantha Sheffield in 1996.

Samantha Cameron went on to be creative director of luxury stationers Smythson.

On 25 February 2009, [David and Samantha Cameron's eldest son Ivan, who had cerebral palsy and epilepsy, died, aged 6](#). The Camerons have two younger children, Nancy and Arthur.

David Cameron told Sue Lawley on [Radio 4's Desert Island Discs](#) that he wanted to select Benny Hill's 1971 hit Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in the West), which was the only song he knows all the words to.

In March 2010 it was revealed that David and Samantha Cameron were expecting a child in September.

Clegg

It is generally accepted that [Liberal Democrat](#) leader [Nick Clegg](#) “won” the first ever televised election debate between party leaders. Such was his impact on proceedings that his party’s Treasury spokesman [Vince Cable](#) said that the most used phrase in the programme was “I agree with Nick”.

Clegg was largely unknown outside political circles until he took over from Menzies Campbell as party leader in 2007. He could now assume the role of “King Maker” if the election on May 6

results in a widely predicted balanced Parliament. So who is this man who only became an MP at the last General Election in 2005?

Educated at Westminster School and Cambridge

Nicholas William Peter Clegg, or “Nick” as he prefers to be known, was born in Buckinghamshire in 1967. His father is half Russian, half English and his mother is Dutch.

Educated at Westminster School London, Clegg went on to Robinson College Cambridge to study Archaeology and Anthropology. At Cambridge he captained the college tennis team and played an active role in student theatre. After graduating, Clegg won a scholarship to the University of Minnesota and worked briefly in New York before completing a Master’s degree at The College of Europe in Bruges. Here he met his Spanish wife Miriam, the mother of his three children.

Speech Writer for Leon Brittain

He stayed on in Belgium working in several roles at the headquarters of the European Union, including policy advisor and speech writer in the private office of Trade Commissioner Leon Brittain.

In 1999, he was the lead Liberal Democrat candidate for the East Midlands in the European Elections and was elected under proportional representation, serving one full term of office until 2004.

Elected to Parliament as MP for Sheffield Hallam

In 2005, he was selected to replace retiring MP Richard Allan as the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate for Sheffield Hallam. In the General Election that year he retained the seat, won by Allan from the Conservatives in 1997, with a majority in excess of 8,000 and over 50% of the popular vote.

His rapid rise through the Liberal Democrat hierarchy continued in Parliament. Charles Kennedy appointed him as Europe spokesman immediately on his election, but eight months later Kennedy resigned as party leader. Despite his youth and inexperience Clegg was considered a serious contender for the leadership; but chose not to stand and supported the eventual winner Menzies Campbell.

Clegg became the party's Home Affairs spokesman and when Campbell resigned, in December 2007, Environment spokesman Chris Huhne was beaten in a two horse race to become party leader.

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Education:	8/10	7/10	7.5/10
Political experience:	9/10	7/10	6/10
Professional experience:	3/10	6.5/10	5/10
Totals:	20/30	20.5/30	18.5/30
Converted Total:	6.7/10	6.8/10	6.2/10

Rationale: Brown has the most advanced education, holding a BA and PhD in History. Clegg holds a BA and MA, and Cameron hold a BA.

Brown has the most political experience being Prime Minister since 2007, and has held various political positions since 1983. Though Brown was never elected as Prime Minister, which accounts for his 9/10 score rather than 10/10. Cameron has various political experience since 2001, as documented below, and Clegg has the least political experience who began as an MP in 2005.

Cameron has the most professional experience from being Head of Corporate Affairs at Carlton Communications, followed by Clegg with experience as a policy advisor and speech writer. Brown's professional experience is practically non-existent, since he entered politics after completing his PhD. Brown's score of 3/10 accounts for any minimal professional experience Brown may have.

Vision:

What is the overall outlook/direction for the future of Britain, and to what degree does it represent the best interests of the people of Britain?

Brown: "Fighting for your future"

Our vision for a future fair for all

To deliver a future fair for all we need to:

- Rebuild our economy
- Reform and protect our public services
- Renew our politics

Cameron

Contract between the Conservative Party and the people The Conservative Manifesto 2010

A country is at its best when the bonds between people are strong and when the sense of national purpose is clear. Today the challenges facing Britain are immense. Our economy is overwhelmed by debt, our social fabric is frayed and our political system has betrayed the people. But these problems can be overcome if we pull together and work together. If we remember that we are all in this together.

Some politicians say: 'give us your vote and we will sort out all your problems'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are inspired and mobilised, when millions of us are fired up to play a part in the nation's future.

Yes this is ambitious. Yes it is optimistic. But in the end all the Acts of Parliament, all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, are just politicians' words without you and your involvement.

How will we deal with the debt crisis unless we understand that we are all in this together? How will we raise responsible children unless every adult plays their part? How will we revitalise communities unless people stop asking 'who will fix this?' and start asking 'what can I do?' Britain will change for the better when we all elect to take part, to take responsibility – if we all come together. Collective strength will overpower our problems.

Only together can we get rid of this government and, eventually, its debt. Only together can we get the economy moving. Only together can we protect the NHS. Improve our schools. Mend

our broken society. Together we can even make politics and politicians work better. And if we can do that, we can do anything. Yes, together we can do anything.

So my invitation today is this: join us, to form a new kind of government for Britain.

Clegg

Change that works for you

Building a fairer Britain

Fair Deal

Fair Taxes

Fair Future

Fair Chance

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Score	7/10	6/10	6.5/10

Rationale: Brown has the most comprehensive vision for Britain, because he defines a goal/direction and states how to attain it. Clegg's vision, though similar to Brown's, is somewhat incoherent in terms of attaining the vision. Cameron's vision lacks a motivating force to bring people together, thereby make the vision reality. Cameron's simply states that all British people are in it together; yet not everyone may feel united for example with Cameron's Conservatives.

Incumbency record of Brown:

How do the pledges and proposed policies stack up with the actual record?
To what degree has the incumbent represented the best interests of the British people?

Labour's Record

- VAT cut to stimulate demand and help businesses during the critical stage of the recession.
- 22 million people benefited from tax cuts that raised real incomes at a critical time and helped stimulate the economy.
- The Time To Pay scheme has allowed over 200,000 businesses, which collectively employ 1.4 million people, to delay more than £5 billion in business taxes on a timetable they can afford. This scheme will continue throughout the next Parliament.
- The car scrappage scheme, where owners scrapping an old car receive £2,000 off the price of a new car, has assisted with 380,000 orders being placed, keeping the automotive industry and its supply chain on its feet.
- Invested £5 billion to provide extra help for unemployed people, including the Future Jobs Fund, worth £1 billion in 2009/10, which will create 200,000 jobs.
- Preventing repossessions through supportive policies and using new laws to ensure that repossession must always be a last resort.
- The Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme has helped almost 9,000 businesses access loans totalling over £900 million.
- Supported manufacturing by doubling capital tax allowances meaning firms receive tax relief when they invest in plant and machinery.

Labour's record

- 89,000 more nurses and 44,000 more doctors in the NHS since 1997 have helped to drive up standards and drive down waits.
- Waiting lists have fallen by over 500,000 and waiting times are now at their lowest level since records began.
- In 1997 284 000 patients waited more than 6 months for an operation. The figure today is almost zero.
- 3 million more operations are carried out each year than in 1997.
- The premature mortality rate for cancer is the lowest ever recorded, saving nearly 9,000 lives in 2006 compared to 1996.
- Premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases has dropped by more than 40 per cent since 1996, saving nearly 34,000 lives a year.

- The NHS has delivered the largest hospital building programme in its history, with 118 new hospital schemes opened and a further 18 under construction.
- Created new services to provide patients with greater convenience including around 100 new walk-in centres and over 750 one-stop primary care centre.

Labour's record

- Spending per pupil in frontline schools spending has risen from an average of £2,970 in 1997/98 to £6,130 in 2009/10, more than doubling in real terms.
- There are 42,400 extra teachers and 212,000 more support staff - including an extra 123,100 teaching assistants - than in 1997.
- We have some of the best ever school results at every age;
- At primary school the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 (the expected level) or above in 2009 was in English 80 per cent compared with 63 per cent in 1997 in Maths 79 per cent compared with) and 62 per cent in 1997 and in Science 88 per cent compared with 69 per cent in 1997.
- Around 100,000 more children now leave primary school secure in the basics than in 1997.
- 64.8 per cent of pupils achieved 5 or more grades A*-C at GCSE or equivalent - an increase of 19.7 percentage points since 1997. Over 129,000 more pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent than did so in 1997.
- 47.6 per cent of pupils achieved 5 or more grades A*-C including English and mathematics at GCSE or equivalent - an increase of 1.3 per cent percentage points from 2006/07. This means just over 78,000 more pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths than in 1997.
- In 1997 half of all schools did not achieve 30 per cent of pupils leaving with five A*-Cs at GCSE, including English and maths now it is just 1 in 12. We are investing £400m in our National Challenge to ensure that every school will have at least 30 per cent by 2011.
- Record numbers of young people are achieving their goal of going to university, 392,000 more than in 1997 over 2 million
- Ten years ago there were no Sure Start centres at all. Now there are now 3,500 round the country, benefitting more than 2.8 million families. Nine out of ten parents using children's centres are happy with the services they receive.
- In 1997 there was no free childcare entitlement. Today all 3 and 4 year olds have at least 12.5 hours and all will have 15 from this September.

Brown

Score: 6/10

Rationale: Despite Brown's attempts to secure the British economic recovery and protect social programs, Britain's economy during Brown's tenure did the worst of all western economies. Moreover, Brown has continued to support British military involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, where in the former case it was illegal, and in the latter case, it was blind aggression by the Americans and now with no end in sight.

Eight policy areas:

Economy:

To what degree is the economic policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown:

Securing Economic Recovery

When Britain was hit by the global recession, we faced a choice – we could let the recession run its course, as the Tories had in the 1980s and 1990s, or we could actively intervene to support the economy, businesses and the family finances of the most hard-pressed. We decided, in line with the views of business leaders and economists, that we had to act to prevent the collapse of our banking system. We also decided that cutting public spending in a downturn was the wrong choice, and could have seen a repeat of the 1990s. Had that happened, four times as many jobs would have been lost. The country is moving back into growth, but we will continue to support the economy while the private sector is weak to secure the recovery. Delivering sustained growth is a key part of our strong, clear plan to reduce the deficit caused by the recession.

The decisions we took during the recession were designed to support the economy to prepare the country for the upturn. We chose to target as much support as possible where it was needed most – in particular, at families, pensioners and businesses. We helped families with children by bringing forward increases in Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits, meaning that families received increased payments for an extra four months. Pensioners benefited from the largest increase in the state pension since 2001, as well as from increased pension credit and winter fuel payments. A reduction in VAT during the toughest period of the world recession also helped family budgets.

We will continue to help people who have lost their jobs get back into work. The Future Jobs Fund, worth £1 billion in 2009/10, will create 200,000 jobs, of which at least 120,000 will be targeted at 18-24 year olds and 50,000 jobs will be targeted at unemployment hotspots. To date, the fund has created around 110,000 jobs. We are providing a guarantee of a job or training place for any 18-24 year old who has been unemployed for over six months, because we believe that no young person should be left behind.

Action like this to help the unemployed is making a difference – Labour’s action has helped to protect up to 500,000 jobs during this recession.

We believe that losing your job should not have to mean losing your home. So we will continue to help those who have lost a job or income stay in their homes, for example, helping them with interest payments or through the Homeowners Mortgage Support scheme, which helps them reduce and defer mortgage payments until their financial circumstances improve. Over 200,000 families are now getting help in this way – with another 88,000 expected to benefit over the next two years. And to help people get their foot on the ladder, we are introducing a two-year Stamp Duty holiday for first-time buyers on residential property transactions up to £250,000.

Supporting businesses so they come through the downturn stronger is integral to our future economic success. For example, we doubled the main capital tax allowance rate to 40 per cent for 2009/10, giving increased tax relief on business investment, allowing businesses to plan ahead and invest in their companies. The car scrappage and boiler scrappage schemes have supported industry at key moments, while the Time to Pay scheme, which allows struggling businesses to defer tax payments, has helped many small businesses stay afloat – over 200,000 businesses, which collectively employ 1.4 million people, have benefited to date. With Labour the Time to Pay scheme will be extended for the whole of the next Parliament.

Making sure that businesses are able to access the credit they need will be crucial to the recovery. The best way to ensure this is to boost competition between banks, which is why we have made sure that the restructuring of Lloyds and RBS, which will see 900 branches change hands, will bring new entrants into the market. At least five new banks have already either established themselves as business lenders or are in the final stages of setting up. To create even more competition, the Financial Services Authority will improve and speed up the licensing process for new banks.

To help new businesses starting out, as well as existing businesses, we will cut business rates for one year from October. This is a tax reduction for over half a million small businesses in England, 345,000 of which will pay no business rates at all. That includes over 60,000 offices, 90,000 industrial premises and almost 100,000 shops. We are also doubling the annual investment tax allowance to £100,000. As a result, 99 per cent of businesses will be able to deduct all investments in plant and machinery in the first year from their taxable profits.

Locking in the recovery requires an active strategy to invest in the UK's fundamental strengths. Labour believes there is a role for government to play in giving industrial sectors the necessary support to allow them to flourish. We will therefore invest in the industries of the future, such as low carbon, biotechnology, advanced bioscience and cutting edge advanced manufacturing. Labour's aim is to make the UK the best country in the G20 in which to set up and run a business, and become one of the most attractive places in the world to invest.

We will continue supporting the economy to strengthen the recovery and take the action necessary to promote growth and jobs. It would be a huge mistake to cut support while the economy is still recovering but we have been clear that, as the recovery strengthens, we will take action to reduce the deficit, more than halving it over four years. Reducing the deficit will come from a combination of tax, public spending cuts and economic growth. We will act fairly, so that those who are most able to bear the burden make the greatest contribution. That means tax increases for those who can afford them, with a new 50p top rate for those who earn over £150,000 (the top 1% of earners). For people with incomes over £100,000 a year (the top 2 per cent of earners), we will gradually remove their personal tax-free allowances. Tax relief on pensions will be restricted from next year, but again only for those with incomes above £130,000 a year. Looking across all the tax rises since the beginning of the global crisis, 60 per cent of them will be paid for by the top 5 per cent of earners. Spending will be tighter in the years ahead. We will protect schools, the NHS and the police at the frontline, but we will cut costs, inefficiencies, unnecessary programmes and lower priority budgets. At all times, we will be guided by our values: prioritising families and businesses in the mainstream middle, and the public services which they rely on.

Cameron

Economy

The re-election of a Labour government with more debt, waste and taxes will bring us a new recession. Labour will kill the recovery with their jobs tax – so we'll cut Labour's waste to stop it. And we'll cut Labour's debt to stop higher interest rates and your mortgage going up. We're all in this together, and we need new energy and fresh ideas to get Britain working for everyone.

Stop Labour's jobs tax. Labour plans to raise the Employees' National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for everyone earning over £20,000 by 1 per cent. We will stop this increase altogether for

everyone earning under £35,000. Compared with Labour's plans, everyone liable for Employees' NICs earning between £7,100 and £45,400 – which is seven out of ten working people – will be up to £150 better off a year under the Conservatives. Lower earners will get the greatest benefit as a percentage of their earnings. Nobody will be worse off as a result of these changes.

Ensuring macroeconomic stability

Cut waste. Labour's own plans have identified billions of pounds of waste. Instead of cutting this now, they would wait a year and then increase tax at the end of it. This is why they will kill the recovery. Two of Labour's own advisers – Sir Peter Gershon and Dr Martin Read – advise us that government can save £12 billion in 2010-11 without damaging frontline services. So we will cut the waste so we can stop Labour's jobs tax.

We will take immediate action to start cutting Government waste, with the plan to spend a net £6 billion less in 2010-11 than Labour would, less than £1 in every £100 the government spends. Gershon and Read have advised that it is possible to save £12 billion from departmental spending without affecting the quality of frontline services. Of this, around half will be found within the NHS, DfID and the MoD – these savings will remain within the departments. The other half will be used to reduce the deficit this year, and from next year will be used to stop Labour's jobs tax – the rise in NICs.

Reduce the deficit. Unlike Labour, we have set out a credible plan to eliminate the bulk of the current budget deficit over a Parliament. We will make real terms annual increases in health spending and meet our commitment to increase international development spending to 0.7 per cent of GNI, but cuts will be made in other areas of government spending. We will also:

- Introduce a one-year public sector pay freeze in 2011 (which will not include the one million lowest paid workers);
- Hold a review to bring forward the 2026 date at which the state pension age starts to rise to 66 – to no earlier than 2016 for men and 2020 for women. It is estimated that the increase in the age for both men and women will save £13 billion per year;
- Stop tax credits to families with incomes over £50,000;
- Cut spending on Child Trust Funds for all but the poorest third of families and families with disabled children;
- Cap the biggest public sector pensions above £50,000; and
- Introduce a 5 per cent pay cut for Ministers, followed by a 5-year freeze, and a 10 per cent reduction in the number of MPs.

Higher productivity. We will reform central government and public services to deliver higher productivity and better value for money for taxpayers. We will seek productivity improvements that match the best of the private sector.

Value for money. We will improve financial discipline by introducing a fiduciary obligation to taxpayers in civil service employment contracts, strengthening the role of finance directors within government and implementing clear financial performance targets for senior civil servants.

Create a more balanced economy

Restore a savings culture and encourage retirement savings. We will:

- Work with employers and industry to introduce auto-enrolment into pensions for those on middle and lower incomes;
- Reward those who have saved for their retirement by ending effective compulsory annuitisation at the age of 75;
- Take 9 out of 10 first-time buyers out of stamp duty permanently by raising the threshold for them to £250,000;
- Reverse over the longer term the effects on pension savers of the 1997 abolition of the dividend tax credit for pension funds; and
- Promote responsible consumer finance by creating a powerful Consumer Protection Agency; launch Britain's first free national financial advice service; cap excessive store card interest rates; and, ensure that consumers are given much clearer information on credit card bills.

Only millionaires will pay Inheritance Tax. Over 4 million households are in Gordon Brown's Inheritance Tax trap. We will raise the Inheritance Tax threshold to £1 million, taking the family home out of Inheritance Tax altogether for the vast majority of people. We will pay for this by a levy on non-doms.

Recognise marriage in the tax system. We want to make Britain the most family friendly country in Europe. Our policy will take the form of a partially transferable personal allowance for 4 million married couples and civil partnerships. One member of an eligible couple will be able to transfer £750 of their tax free personal allowance to their partner in order to reduce their partner's income tax bill. This will be limited to basic rate taxpayers and is therefore worth up to £150 a year per couple at the 20% rate of tax. This will be paid for using some of the revenues from a levy on banks that will raise more than £1 billion. The remaining revenues will be used to reduce the deficit. This is a progressive tax measure, with two thirds of the benefits going to

families in the lower half of the income distribution. The biggest gains as a percentage of income go to households in the third decile of the income distribution.

The 50p tax rate. We do not regard the new 50p tax rate as a permanent feature of the tax system, but we will not abolish it for the rich while at the same time asking many of our public sector workers to accept a pay freeze.

Stop Labour's jobs tax for employers. Labour plan to raise Employers' NICs by 1 per cent for every business paying anyone over £5,700. This is a tax on jobs that will undermine the recovery. We will raise the secondary threshold at which employers start paying NICs by £21 a week, saving employers up to £150 for every person they employ relative to Labour's plans. This will reduce the cost of Labour's tax rise on employers by more than half.

Reform of the banking system

Reform regulation of the system. We will create a strong and powerful Bank of England with authority to ensure financial stability. We will make the Bank of England responsible for macro-prudential regulation, judging and controlling risks to the financial system as a whole. We will create a powerful new Financial Policy Committee within the Bank, working alongside the Monetary Policy Committee, which will monitor systemic risks, operate new macro-prudential regulatory tools and execute the special resolution regime for failing banks. The failed Financial Services Authority will be abolished.

Ensuring depositors are properly protected from risky activities. We will empower the Bank of England to impose higher capital requirements on high risk activities, such as large-scale proprietary trading carried out by banks that also take retail deposits.

Crackdown on bank bonuses. The money that taxpayers have provided to support bank lending must not be diverted into significant cash bonuses. The cash that would have been paid out in bonuses should be put onto banks' balance sheets, explicitly to support new lending. This should be a condition of continuing to receive taxpayer guarantees and liquidity support.

Clegg

People today are struggling with spiralling debts, rising food and energy bills and unaffordable mortgages. A decade of complacency by Gordon Brown has meant that with plummeting house

prices, falling growth, rising inflation and rising unemployment, the outlook for the UK economy has not looked so bleak since the Tory recession of the 1990s.

We want to offer real help to the millions of families trying to make ends meet, so we will get wasteful government spending under control and give the economy a boost by cutting taxes for people from the bottom up. We will also crack down on big business and the super rich who exploit tax loopholes and do not pay their fair share. We will strengthen the economy by requiring the Bank of England to take house prices into account when setting interest rates and we will effectively regulate the banking system to prevent irresponsible lending and business practices.

Under this Government millions of people on low incomes are forced to pay hundreds of pounds in income tax every year, keeping pensioners on the breadline and meaning that for many people in low paid jobs work simply doesn't pay. Even a person working full-time earning minimum wage has nearly £1000 taken in income tax. At the same time we have a tax system that lets big business and the very rich treat tax as if it is optional.

Public Finances

The financial crisis has hurt Britain's finances badly. Not only has the taxpayer had to foot the bill for a massive bank bail out, but tax revenues from the City and inflated housing market have also fallen dramatically. There is a budget deficit of £167bn – of which almost £70bn is structural – meaning it will not be eliminated by future economic growth. Quite simply as a country we are spending more than we can afford. If we are to create a stable economy and ensure that we do not saddle future generations with debt we must balance the books. Liberal Democrats believe that politicians have got to be straight with people about the tough choices ahead. Not only must waste be eliminated but we must also be bold about finding big areas of spending that can be cut completely. That way we can control borrowing, protect services people rely on most and still use some savings to invest in building a fair future for everyone.

Tough Choices. We have made tough choices about what commitments are still affordable. Following the election of a Liberal Democrat Government we will establish a Council for Financial Stability; involving representatives of all parties, the Governor of the Bank of England and the head of the FSA. This group would agree the timeframe and scale of a deficit reduction plan and seek to promote it externally and domestically. Its remit will be limited to the economic issues: timing and scale of deficit reduction. It will not seek agreement on the political questions of the balance between spending and tax rises and what specific spending items or taxes should be increased or decreased.

Emergency budget for change. We will also hold an emergency budget and interim spending review by no later than the end of June 2010. This budget and spending review will put in place the necessary tax changes in order to raise the personal allowance to £10,000 for the start of financial year 2011-12. We will put in place cuts which could be realised within the financial year, such as scrapping the Child Trust Fund or restricting tax credits, to release money for our job and infrastructure package. Subject to the economy being strong enough, we will put into place the cuts for 2011-12 identified in our manifesto and confirm the departmental spending shifts necessary to deliver our core manifesto commitments.

A comprehensive spending review. Throughout the summer and early autumn a comprehensive spending review of all departments will be conducted with the objective of identifying the remaining cuts needed as set out by the Council for Financial Stability.

Preliminary results of the spending review will be widely consulted on with the public sector and general public during the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011. Based on this consultation a full spending review up to 2013-14 will be published in the 2011 budget.

Identified savings. Through taking tough choices as well as introducing efficiency changes and reducing bureaucracy across government, we have identified savings. We will set a £400 pay rise cap for all public sector workers, initially for two years, ensuring the lowest paid are eligible for the biggest percentage rise. We will end government payments into Child Trust Funds. A banking levy will be introduced so banks pay for the financial support they have received, until they can be split up to insulate retail banking from investment risks. We will scrap ID cards and the next generation of biometric passports and cancel Eurofighter Tranche 3b. There will be a scale back of the HomeBuy This briefing has been produced by the Liberal Democrats. Please check (<http://www.libdems.org.uk>) for the latest developments.

schemes, with reforms of prisons and cut backs on the burdensome regulation of local authorities creating real savings.

Long-term vision. In the longer term, as part of a comprehensive spending review involving wide consultation, we will identify additional savings which can be used to further pay down the deficit. There will be no like-for-like replacement of Trident nuclear missiles, which could cost £100bn, and we will hold a full defence review to establish the best alternative for Britain's security. We will reform Public Sector Pensions with an independent review to agree a settlement that is fair for all taxpayers as well as for public servants. Better government IT procurement, investigating the potential of different approaches such as cloud computing and open source software, will bring long-term savings. We will conduct a wholesale review of value for money in the public sector based on the findings of the National Audit Office and Parliament's Public Accounts Committee.

Business

We are in the teeth of the longest recession on record. It happened because Labour, and the Conservatives before them, built a precarious economy that was too dependent on the City of London, soaring house prices and rocketing personal debt. Small businesses had to play second fiddle to the money men who had far too much influence in Westminster. It was never going to last. Liberal Democrats want to rebuild the UK economy very differently to create growth that lasts. Our vision is to create a thriving, fair and balanced economy with jobs that last in every part of the country, and in every sector, and where the environment is protected. Never again should we be so dependent on financial wizardry. First and foremost we will get the banks lending again so businesses can grow and avoid job cuts. We will set up Local Enterprise Funds and Regional Stock Exchanges to help businesses grow outside London. We will stop burdening businesses with unnecessary regulations. And we will sort out Royal Mail and the Post Office once and for all.

Get the banks lending responsibly again. Thousands of businesses can't get credit on fair terms, so they're having to cut investment and jobs. That's hugely unfair when we own some of the banks and are propping up the rest of them. There are taxpayers' representatives on the boards of the banks we own or part-own. They should insist banks lend to viable businesses again immediately.

Local Enterprise Funds and Regional Stock Exchanges to help businesses grow.

Labour and the Conservatives have always been too focused on London, finance and the

City. We will change this, so every industry and every part of the country gets a fair chance at economic development. Local Enterprise Funds will help local people invest in growing businesses in every area of the country. And Regional Stock Exchanges will be a route for smaller businesses to access equity without the huge risks and costs of a London listing.

Cut regulation and create a fair playing field for business. We will properly assess the cost and effectiveness of regulations before and after they are introduced, reforming Impact Assessments. We will operate a 'one in one out' system so that for every rule introduced, another one is scrapped. And we will change the culture of regulators to help, not hinder, business.

Give the Post Office and Royal Mail long term futures. We will separate the Post Office from Royal Mail, retaining the Post Office in public ownership. To secure the future of the Post Office we will focus on developing new sources of revenue including a Post Bank. We will divide ownership of Royal Mail between a John Lewis style employee trust, incentivising staff as part owners of the business, and the government with the remaining 49% minority sold to create funds for investment.

Jobs

Millions of people are unemployed and millions more are worrying about their jobs. The recession is really hurting people, from young people who've just left college or university and can't find work, to people who've been made redundant in their 50s and don't think they'll ever find another job. It's so unfair. We have to get help to people by rebuilding the economy and creating jobs that last. Liberal Democrats are different from the other parties: only we will create thousands of jobs by investing in new green technology and infrastructure. We want a different kind of economy that is environmentally friendly and isn't dependent on financial wizardry. That way jobs will last like they should. We have identified £3.3bn of public spending that can be stopped and the money used to create jobs and protect the environment. We will invest in wind energy, the energy efficiency of public buildings and homes, and bring empty homes back into use through renovation. And we will give extra support to young people, so their future is protected, with 800,000 internship and work placements to help build their experience.

We will help young people now. We will invest almost £900million in creating opportunities to help young people who are unemployed gain the skills and experience to move back in to work. We will make a promise to young people that they will not spend more than 90 days on Jobseekers' Allowance before they get more training, education, an internship or a place on a work programme. We will do this by increasing the number of further education places, giving students financial support to return to college and creating a paid internship scheme.

Eco Cashback for families who install green technology. We will set up an 'Eco Cash Back' scheme, for one year only, which will give you £400 if you make eco-friendly improvements to your home. You will be able to get grants to help with the costs of replacing old windows with double glazing, upgrade your boiler, fit solar panels or install a micro-wind turbine. This will create jobs and cut carbon emissions.

Insulate public buildings. We will give grants to schools who want to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings by, for example, replacing windows or improving insulation. . This will ensure that schools are not forced to spend the budget they should be using on teaching pupils to make these improvement and meet government targets. This will create jobs as energy auditors, insulation installers and in manufacturing.

Invest in ports so the wind energy industry can grow. We need to use wind to generate electricity, especially off shore. But there's a problem: there is hardly anywhere in Britain suitable to build the giant turbines needed. We will renovate and adapt the facilities in key North Sea ports so they can be used, including old ship yards in areas that have suffered from the decline of manufacturing.

Bring 250,000 empty homes back into use. Empty properties are not only a wasted resource but a blight on the local community, attracting crime and antisocial behaviour. People who own these homes will get a grant or a cheap loan to renovate them so they can be used: grants if the home is for social housing, loans for private use.

This briefing has been produced by the Liberal Democrats. Please check (<http://www.libdems.org.uk>) for the latest developments.

Bus scrappage scheme. We will invest in a bus scrappage scheme that helps bus companies to replace old polluting buses with new low carbon ones and creates jobs.

We will launch a green, £3.3bn economic stimulus package that will create 100,000 jobs. We will support young people while they get valuable work experience by paying anyone undertaking an internship a 'training allowance' of £55 a week (£5 more than JSA). This will help employers who want to offer young people work experience but cannot afford to pay them. Young people will be able to take part for up to 3 months and receipt will be dependent on attendance. We will work with employers in the private and public sectors to ensure that there are a wide range of opportunities available.

Your money

Millions of people are worried about their jobs and how they will pay their bills. It can be a struggle to make ends meet, and no wonder when we have one of the most unfair tax systems in the developed world. Big business and the super-rich get special loopholes and the rest of us end up paying more. Labour has failed to make our tax system fair, while the Conservatives' top priority is tax cuts for millionaires. Liberal Democrats want to make our tax and benefits system fairer, so that everyone whether young or old can afford to get by. We have plans for the most radical, far-reaching tax reforms in a generation. We will cut taxes for millions of working people and pensioners, paid for by making sure polluters and the very wealthy pay their fair share. We will boost the state pension by restoring the link with earnings growth, and we will crack down on unfair bills.

Cutting taxes for people on low and middle incomes. There will be no income tax on the first £10,000 you earn – meaning 3.6 million working people and low income pensioners will no longer have to pay any income tax at all, while millions more will have an income tax cut of £700. Pensioners will get up to £100 extra. The change will be paid for by introducing a mansion tax, closing loopholes that benefit the wealthy and making sure airlines pay for the pollution they cause.

Restore the earnings link. It is deeply unfair that as each year goes by pensioners slip further and further behind because the state pension is only increased by inflation and not in line with average earnings. It is only fair that, if the country is getting richer, retired people share the benefit. We will restore the link between pensions and earnings immediately so pensioners' living standards finally start to improve with the rest of the country. The state pension will be increased in line with earnings, prices or by 2.5% whichever is the higher.

No to unfair bills. We will stop banks and energy companies raiding your pocket with

unfair bills and charges. We will put a stop to unfair bank charges and make sure energy companies charge you fairly so people who use the least pay the least.

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Score:	6.5/10	7/10	7.5/10

Rationale: Brown's economic policy lacks the comprehensiveness of the other candidates. Cameron and Clegg have similar overall economic policies, with minor differences in emphasis. Clegg demonstrates the best understanding of the economic situation facing Britain—can't make ends meet (i.e. more going out than coming in).

Governance

To what degree is the governance policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown
Modernising Democracy

Since 1997 Labour has transformed the UK's constitutional arrangements in order to break up longstanding concentrations of power, improve transparency, make government more accountable to the people and strengthen the hand of citizens against the state. Through measures such as devolution, the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation, the Human Rights Act, and reform of both Houses of Parliament, Labour has brought about a "constitutional revolution".

But the process is far from over. It is clear that people want to change the way politics is done in this country. Labour will renew our politics with a radical, modern, open and democratic process of reform to change the way our nation governs itself.

The expenses scandal scarred our democracy. It was a problem. We acted to fix it. Now we need to implement the reforms and rebuild trust in politics. We are determined to do all that is necessary to restore trust and to ensure that all politicians - as the vast majority do already - concentrate on serving the public and not themselves. That is why we have set out a radical programme of constitutional and parliamentary reform.

At the heart of our agenda for a new politics are commitments to a referendum early in the next parliament on whether to move to the Alternative Vote system for elections to the House of Commons; the completion of reform of the House of Lords; and the full implementation of a new system of independent regulation of MPs pay, pensions and allowances.

For Labour, democratic renewal is intended to forge a new relationship between government and citizen, so that Britain is better equipped to respond to the challenges that lie ahead. We want to create a society where power is held accountable and where individuals are able to maximise control over their own lives. That core objective is what has guided the substantial programme of constitutional change which we have undertaken since 1997 and will be entrenched in the

vigorous reforms we are undertaking to rebuild public trust and people's faith in politics for the future.

The challenge is to reconnect people and politics in an age where citizens want to have their say and get involved. We know that too often the political system deters participation, and is increasingly a minority interest. We believe that widening access to power is as important as widening access to wealth and opportunity. Labour believes in encouraging greater participation. We want to encourage citizens to become more actively involved in civil society while simultaneously taking measures to remove the barriers to involvement in politics.

The public want to be able to have full confidence in the Parliamentary system. Labour's objective is to ensure that those who hold positions of power are open and accountable and that representative institutions like Parliament are transparent, reflexive and responsive to the public they serve. We are working to increase the legitimacy of the political process, rebuild trust and encourage greater political participation in order to further strengthen our British democratic system.

Labour's central political objective is enshrined in clause IV of the party's constitution: to place power, wealth and opportunity in the hands of the many and not the few. Our country's constitutional arrangements reflect - and determine - the location of power in Britain. Labour's agenda for constitutional reform is therefore aimed at dispersing power so that every citizen is able to have their say. That means increasing opportunities for the public to get involved in the decision making process at all levels. We operate a representative democracy, and so the Westminster Parliament, must remain at the heart of this country's governance. It remains the best way to deliver fair and effective government. It gives government the ability to tackle complex issues as they arise and space for deliberation to refine and improve policy - so decisions aren't taken in haste and repented at leisure.

But more people are becoming disengaged from the democratic process, partly out of frustration at their distance from power. They want more say between, as well as at, elections.

We recognise the increasingly important role played by the third sector - that array of voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutual organisations that are working to make Britain better. Our approach to the third sector will be based on a combination of investment, support and recognition of the valuable role the sector plays.

We are making use of the digital revolution to support the modernisation of government and the delivery of public services. Almost half the UK population use the internet of access information about government or local council services, or to complete a government transaction online – such as a Vehicle Excise Disc application. The move to universal broadband by 2012 as a baseline service standard for all the UK will allow us to make more public services available online to more people

Cameron

Cleaning Up Politics

Britain's political system is in crisis. The expenses scandal and Labour's reliance on spin have left the public feeling deeply disillusioned about the way the country is run. An overwhelming majority of the public feel they have little or no influence over the way the country is run.

Conservatives took the lead on sorting out the mess of MPs' expenses by pushing for maximum transparency. Now we need a deep clean of the political system in Westminster to root out sleaze and dispel suspicion.

We have insisted that MPs' expenses are published online, and support the implementation of the independent proposals to clean up the House of Commons. We will:

- **Strengthen Parliament** so that it acts as a proper check on the power of ministers;
- **Reduce the number of MPs by 10 per cent** as part of a wider series of reforms to cut the cost of politics;
- **Ensure each vote has equal value** by reducing the wide discrepancies between constituency electorate sizes;
- **Restore the integrity of the ballot** and give voters **the right to kick out MPs** guilty of wrongdoing;
- Introduce **new rules on lobbying** and **tougher restrictions on ex-Ministers**;
- Seek an agreed **long-term settlement on Party funding**, including an across-the-board cap on donations as part of a comprehensive package of reform. This will mark the end of the big donor era and the sleaze it has sometimes entailed;
- Work to secure a consensus for a **substantially elected House of Lords**; and
- **Address the West Lothian Question** by ensuring that legislation on devolved issues that only affects England, or England and Wales, can only be passed with the consent of MPs from England, and where applicable Wales.

Real change cannot just alter the balance of power between political elites. Even more radical reform is needed to enable people to participate meaningfully in the political process.

So we will enable members of the public to **veto excessive council tax rises**, demand **local referendums** in their communities and debates in Parliament, and **allow citizens to table legislation** in the House of Commons.

Clegg

Political Reform

The expenses scandal has destroyed public confidence in politicians. But it was the symptom of a wider problem: our political system is rotten. Labour was elected as the Government even though only 22% of people voted for them. Hundreds of MPs have safe seats where they can ignore their constituents. There's too much big money and too many dodgy donors. The Liberal Democrats are the only party that will radically shake up politics to make it fair, and put power in the hands of citizens, rather than politicians. We will give people a real say in who governs the country by introducing fair votes. We will stop big donations, give people the power to sack corrupt MPs and make sure every single MP and Lord pays full British taxes.

Make votes fair. The way this country is run means that the Government does not have to listen to the people. Labour is the Government even though only 22% of people voted for them. The Liberal Democrats will change politics forever and end safe seats by introducing a fair, more proportional voting system for MPs, and for the House of Lords. By giving voters the choice between people as well as parties, it means they can stick with a party but punish a bad MP by voting for someone else.

Give you the right to sack MPs who have broken the rules. People have rightly been furious about the expenses claims of some MPs but there is absolutely nothing they can do about it. If an MP has acted egregiously and breaks the rules, there should be a mechanism by which they can be sacked. The Liberal Democrats would introduce a 'recall' system in which a small percentage of constituents could force a by-election for any MP suspended for wrongdoing. Power should be in the hands of voters at all times, not just on Election Day.

Get big money out of politics. Politics should be a battle of ideas, not marketing budgets. No-one should be able to buy influence or buy an election. We will take big money out of politics by capping donations and spending throughout the electoral cycle.

Make all MPs and Lords pay full British taxes. Top Conservative donor Lord Ashcroft gets to vote on the laws of Britain, but he doesn't even pay tax in this country. We believe everyone who decides laws in Parliament should pay full British taxes. We will pass a law to ensure they do.

Your Freedom

Labour has made Britain less fair by taking away our hard-won rights and freedoms, often supported by the Conservatives. They have made thousands of new things illegal, intruded into your privacy, and overthrown some of the basic principles of British justice such as the right to jury trial. They have turned Britain into a surveillance state. And they haven't even bothered to keep our information safe – every week we hear stories of lost data and laptops. The Liberal Democrats are the only party that believes in a fairer, freer Britain, where everyone gets fair treatment and everyone's privacy is respected. We will introduce a Freedom Bill to restore and protect your freedom. We'll stop treating innocent people as if they were criminals. We'll stop councils from snooping into your private affairs – and your bins. We'll scrap ID cards, and restore your rights to protest and freedom of speech. And we'll stop Government monitoring your emails and internet use.

Introduce a Freedom Bill to restore and protect our civil liberties. The Liberal Democrats have put together all the freedoms that have been undermined by Labour and the Tories in the last twenty years to restore them in a single Act of Parliament. We will scrap ID cards; get innocent people off the DNA database; regulate CCTV; allow people to protest at Parliament; stop councils from spying on people; and stop unfair extradition to the US.

Scrap intrusive Identity Cards and unnecessary Biometric Passports: more police instead. We are all going to pay through the nose for the Government to store our private information – which everyone knows they're bound to lose on a train some day. ID cards won't help in the fight against crime or terrorism. Getting rid of this illiberal, expensive and ineffective scheme, will free up money for thousands more police on our streets.

End plans to spy on your email and internet use. Labour want companies to store information about your email and internet use – even storing data about what you do on social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. This is a huge waste of money and time, which we will scrap. We will ensure your private data is kept safe.

Get innocent people off the DNA database to focus it on criminals. Your DNA contains some of the most private, personal information about you. It can identify who's in your family, and even what illnesses you might get. And yet as many as a million innocent people have their DNA stored on a criminal database. Labour has created the biggest DNA database in the world, but it isn't focused on storing information about criminals, as it should be. We will clean the database up. We will remove innocent people from the database and stop storing DNA from innocent people and children in the future, too.

Brown Cameron Clegg

Score: 6/10 7/10 6/10

Rationale: Cameron's governance policy is the most comprehensive, and Brown's and Clegg's policies are on par with each other—too general, lack specifics, but identify the need to reform the political system.

Social

To what degree is the social policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown:
Equalities

Labour believes that discrimination and inequality on the basis of race, gender, sexuality age, disability, religion or belief or social class has no place in the 21st century. A Labour government will always be a champion for those whose rights need to be protected.

We introduced the Racial and Religious Hatred Act which made it illegal to threaten people because of their religion or to stir up hatred against a person because of their faith and we passed key measures to make society fairer for gay and lesbian people, like repealing Clause 28, lifting the ban on gay membership of the armed forces or equalising the age of consent and offering lesbian couples IVF.

We have also passed a range of laws which have supported women to better balance their work and family life and to tackle low pay. Women in particular have benefitted from the minimum wage, and we have legislated for the right to request flexible working for parents with children aged 16 and under and with disabled children under 18. We have extended paid maternity leave to 9 months and maternity leave to 12 months and given fathers the right to two weeks paid paternity leave helping families in this way helps mothers to balance work and family life helping to end the cycle of women being left behind in the workplace.

The Equality Bill will simplify the law which, over the last four decades, has become complex and difficult to navigate. Nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 statutory instruments will be replaced by a single Act written in plain English to make it easier for individuals and employers to understand their legal rights and obligations.

The Bill will significantly strengthen Britain's anti-discrimination legislation. It will put a new duty on public bodies, government and local councils to consider how to reduce socio-economic inequalities. It will also require businesses to report their gender pay gap. We will outlaw unfair age discrimination in the provision of goods and services so that older people are not

discriminated against. Employers will be allowed to diversify their team where there are equally qualified or suitable candidates.

Labour has led the way when it comes to women's representation, today we have more women MPs than three times the figure for the Tories and Lib Dems combined. Currently thirteen of Parliament's fifteen black, Asian or minority ethnic MPs are Labour MPs. The Tories have two and the Lib Dems have none. With nearly 100 Labour women MPs, women make up some 27 per cent of Labour MPs, compared to only 9 per cent of Tory MPs, 17 per cent of Lib Dem MPs. We legislated to increase the number of women in public life and, unlike the Tories; we are acting on that legislation to get more Labour women into Parliament.

The Equality Bill will allow political parties to make use of all women short lists until 2030 if they chose to. The Bill will also allow parties to use positive action measures to support candidates from often underrepresented groups.

Cameron

Community Relations

Building stronger, more integrated communities is central to our vision for Britain.

Under Labour, state-driven multiculturalism, uncontrolled immigration and the threat of extremism have led to an increase in distrust and segregation, and left us with divided communities.

A Conservative Government would:

- **Introduce a clear strategy for national integration** to build a stronger and more united society;
- **Make English a priority for all communities** by redirecting some of the money the Government currently spends on translation into additional English classes;
- **Teach history in our schools** to promote our shared values and history, ensuring children are taught a proper narrative of British history;
- **Support faith, voluntary and charitable groups** based on their effectiveness in countering poverty and deprivation rather than on the basis of ethnicity or faith;

- **Introduce a National Citizen Service** for 16 year olds to give them a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, to mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities;
- **Support Combined Cadet Forces** as they teach young people the values of discipline, respect, and loyalty. They also provide a taste of military life. We will make it easier for local authorities to use money set aside for community projects to extend the cadet scheme into more state schools;
- **Give greater recognition to St George's day.** To create a coherent national identity we must show respect for Englishness just as we do for Scottishness, Welshness and Irishness. Local authorities should take a lead, as Boris Johnson has done in London.
- **Tackle unacceptable cultural practices** by classifying Khat, closing Polygamy loopholes, tackling forced marriages, and ensuring religious courts act in accordance with the Arbitration Act; and
- **Tackle all extremism which promotes violence or hatred** and challenge racism and bigotry in all its manifestations.

We believe that the State is no substitute for community. So a Conservative government will help promote integration, but recognise that it is about much more than government and politics – it is, above all, a social responsibility.

And that means that everyone must do all they can to make this a fairer and more just society – helping others, creating opportunity, and ensuring that no-one is excluded and left behind.

Women

We want to give women real choice over their own lives - something that remains elusive for too many women in 21st Century Britain.

We will focus on five main areas:

- Women in the workplace;
- Vulnerable women;
- Women in their communities;
- Women and ethnicity; and
- Women in international development.

We have already announced a number of policies, including:

- **Measures to tackle the gender pay gap**, including stronger legislation to prevent employers discriminating and better careers guidance for young women;
- **Extending the right to request flexible working** to every parent with a child under the age of eighteen, and ensure that the government leads from the front by extending the

right to request **flexible working to all those in the public sector**, recognising that this may need to be done in stages;

- The introduction of a **new system of flexible parental leave**, so parents can decide how to divide maternity leave between them and are able to make use of it simultaneously;
- A new strategy to **tackle violence against women**, including a greater focus on preventative work in schools, better training for police and front-line professionals and new rape crisis centres; and
- A Conservative government will follow a **joined-up, common sense approach** to women's issues and make our society fairer for everybody.

Equalities

Too many British people face discrimination because of their race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, belief or background and Conservatives want action to bring that to an end.

We support civil partnerships and will recognise civil partnerships in the tax system. Our plans to end the couple penalty in the tax credits system and to introduce a new system of flexible parental leave will apply to all couples, regardless of whether they are heterosexual or same sex couples.

We supported legislation to **outlaw the offence of inciting homophobic hatred** and pushed the Government to introduce it.

We will change the rules so that historical convictions for **consensual gay sex will be removed from a person's criminal record** and we will take action to tackle homophobic bullying in schools.

We have always supported, and always will support, legislation to **empower the police and courts to combat racism**. Too many ethnic minority groups suffer from higher levels of poverty and lower employment levels than the rest of the population.

We will **give disabled people more support to live independent lives**. We will extend the use of individual budgets and direct payments to give disabled people greater control over their care and the funding spent on it. Conservatives have pledged to preserve Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance as cash benefits

We will **give disabled people more help to get back into work** through our new Work Programme which will extend personalised support to people on Incapacity Benefits who are assessed as able to prepare for work, while ensuring that people who cannot work because of a

disability or illness continue to receive unconditional support through the benefits system, and will never be forced to work.

To support disabled children and their families we will:

- **Increase the number of health visitors** and make it easier for parents to access respite care;
- **Simplify the assessment process** for accessing services;
- **Preserve Child Trust Funds** for disabled children; and
- **Stop the ideologically-driven closure of special needs schools** to make sure disabled children and their parents have a choice over their education.

We will address the stigma and prejudice that still persists amongst some in our society towards disabled people by ensuring that existing disability discrimination law is more widely understood and better implemented. We will take action to remove mental health discrimination in Parliament and **open up our political system to disabled people** by setting up an Access to Public Life Fund.

We support the removal of the default retirement age in principle. We have long believed that **retirement should be a process and not an event**. However, there are a number of practical issues that arise and which need to be properly considered. These include implications for pensions, ensuring that employees cannot be compelled to work for longer than they wish and that businesses are able to manage staff turnover effectively.

Under Labour income inequality has hit a record high. We have a comprehensive strategy to **tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality** including plans to improve schools, support families and radically reform welfare.

Pensions and Older People

We need to reinvigorate a culture of savings in Britain. **We will raise the basic state pension in line with earnings** to help stop the spread of the means test.

At the same time, we will **reinvigorate occupational pensions** - working with employers and industry to support auto-enrolment into pensions and look at how we can simplify the rules and regulations round pensions.

We will:

- Give people **more control over their retirement income** by ending the effective obligation to buy an annuity at 75.
- Take the tough decisions needed to **ensure all pensioners receive a decent state pension**.
- Hold a review to **bring forward the date at which the state pension age starts to rise to 66**, although it will not be sooner than 2016 for men and 2020 for women.

We want to make sure public sector pensions are fair and affordable. An incoming Conservative government would work with the trade unions, businesses and others to **address the growing disparity between public sector pensions and private sector pensions**, while protecting accrued rights. A Conservative government would place **a cap on the biggest government pensions**, including those for senior civil servants, local council executives and quango managers.

When resources allow, our ambition is to **start to reverse the effects of the abolition of the dividend tax credit** for pension funds.

Supporting older people

As well as recognising the contributions older people make to society, we also need to help those elderly people who are amongst the most vulnerable in our society.

So a Conservative government will look at ways of creating more personalisation in health and social care, and more patient power.

We will introduce a **new ‘home protection scheme’** that will end the desperate situation whereby tens of thousands of older people are being forced to sell their homes each year to pay for residential care at the end of their lives.

In addition, we want to see much **greater use of direct payments and individual budgets**, which give people real control over their care.

We want to ensure a fairer deal for grandparents, and are looking at ways in which a Conservative government could make it **easier for grandparents to receive tax credits and allowances** when looking after their grandchildren.

Tackling the Cost of Living

Under Labour, the cost of living for pensioners has soared. We will help to tackle this by working with local councils to introduce a **two year Council Tax freeze**.

We strongly value the role older people play in families and in society, and will not let them suffer because of the economic mistakes of others. That is why we have made **a pledge to pensioners to protect:**

- the winter fuel payment;
- free bus passes;
- free TV licences;
- disability living allowance and attendance allowance; and,
- the pension credit.

Clegg

Equality

At the core of Liberal Democrats philosophy is a belief in equality of opportunity. Fighting discrimination in all its forms underpins our policies.

Britain today is a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, diverse society. It is a richer society as a result - culturally, socially and economically. Liberal Democrats embrace and celebrate a diverse Britain.

We will ensure that our laws reflect that diversity, protecting all from violence, discrimination and harassment and allowing everyone the freedom to live their lives.

We also recognise that though they are not a minority, women continue to receive a raw deal, whether its by being paid less than their male colleagues at work or suffering poverty when they retire because of career breaks to raise children or care for relatives.

Women

Women do not get a fair deal in Britain today. They still get paid less than men and are far more likely to have to take responsibility for childcare and looking after elderly relatives. Rape and domestic violence are still too widespread. And there are huge pressures in everyday life, compounded by media portrayals of how women are supposed to look and behave. Liberal Democrats want to build a society where women are paid fairly, feel safe, are able to share the responsibilities of family life if they choose to, and are no longer bombarded by images of “the perfect woman”. We will crack down on sex discrimination at work with name-blind job application forms. We will make parental leave interchangeable between mothers and fathers. We will stop advertisers secretly airbrushing pictures to imply their product can work miracles. And we will introduce common sense changes to help protect women from violence, like making sure night buses let you off between stops if it’s closer to home.

Fair pay checks for every company. It’s not fair that men get paid 12% more than women. To stamp out discrimination, every company that employs more than 100 people should have its pay arrangements examined with an Equal Pay Audit. Unequal salaries can then be identified and changed to give everyone a fair deal.

Name-blind job application forms to end sex discrimination. It’s too easy for women –

as well as men, or people from ethnic minorities – to be cut out of the job application process right at the start because their gender or background is clear from the name on their CV or application form. Names should be blanked out so this discrimination can't happen.

Shared parental leave. When a baby is born, the mother gets a year's leave and the father gets just two weeks. That means the mother has to take the lion's share of responsibility, even if she and her partner would rather share things equally. We will allow parents to share 12 months of leave between them in whatever way suits them best.

Flexible working. As we move away from the nine-to-five routine, many employers believe that flexible working makes good business sense. That is why the Liberal Democrats will give all employees the right to request flexible working. Like now, employers' rights to turn down a request will remain unchanged if the nature of the work or the needs of the business do not make flexible working possible.

Honesty in advertising: regulation of airbrushing. Some adverts are ridiculous. The models have been airbrushed so much it gives a completely unfair representation of what the product can do. And by creating an unrealistic ideal of beauty it can lead to body image problems especially for young girls. Advertisers should have to state clearly whether they've used airbrushing, and it should be banned completely for adverts aimed at children and young teens.

Stop-on-request for night buses. Walking home late at night can be intimidating and dangerous. But with bus stops often very far apart, that long walk home gets even longer. At night, you should be able to ask the driver to let you off between stops, so you're as close to home as possible. It's a small change but it could make a real difference.

Liberal Democrat Policy Briefing

Race Equality and Opportunity for All

Britain can be incredibly unfair. People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are more likely to be poor, out of work, and live in deprived areas of the country. Mismanagement of the immigration system has stoked up fear and persecution. Young black and Asian men in particular are far more likely to be stopped by the police, even when they have done nothing wrong. Liberal Democrats will build a fair, united society which has opportunities for everyone, no matter their background, faith or race. At a time when the fastest growing minority group is mixed race, the time has come to move beyond tick-boxes and embrace Britain's strength as a diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-faith society. We will never pander to anti-immigrant sentiment. We have taken on the BNP and won in towns and cities across Britain. We will ensure that everyone is protected from violence, discrimination and harassment, and that people from all races get fairly treated by the police. We'll make the immigration system firm and fair to restore confidence without pandering to hatred. We'll fight terrorism by prosecuting terrorists not persecuting innocent people or communities.

Building a fairer Britain. Our core policies to make Britain fair will make a huge difference to improving lives for people from ethnic communities. We will cut taxes and make work pay by ensuring no-one pays income tax on the first £10,000 they earn. We will cut class sizes and give every child a fair start in life by introducing a pupil premium. This will provide an extra £2.5 billion to our schools, allocated according to the number of disadvantaged pupils on their rolls. We will renovate empty homes that so often blight inner city communities. We will put thousands more police on the streets to keep people

safe. In addition to our commitment to fairness for all we make the following commitments to deal with specific issues that primarily or disproportionately affect BAME communities.

Get innocent people off the DNA database. Britain has the largest DNA database in the world, with details of a million innocent people's genetic profile. Black people are hugely over-represented because they're so much more likely to be stopped by the police. We will remove all the innocent DNA from the database, and only store DNA from people who've actually committed a crime.

Create a fair but firm immigration system to restore confidence. We will create a fair immigration system that works and promotes integration. We'll make sure visa applications, especially for relatives, are dealt with fairly and continue Britain's proud tradition of granting safe refuge to people fleeing oppression. We will allow people who have been in Britain without the correct papers for 10 years, but speak English, have a clean record and want to live here long-term to earn their citizenship so we can target deportation efforts on criminals and people-traffickers.

Anonymous job application forms to end race discrimination. It's too easy for people from ethnic minorities to be cut out of the job application process right at the start because their background is clear from the name on their CV or application form. Names should be blanked out so this discrimination can't happen.

Scrap Control Orders. It's vital to convict terrorists rather than putting entire communities under suspicion. We will scrap Control Orders and replace them with

This briefing has been produced by the Liberal Democrats. Please check (<http://www.libdems.org.uk>) for the latest developments.

measures designed to secure convictions of terror suspects. We also support efforts to make it easier to charge suspects genuinely suspected of terrorism through a temporary lowering of the 'threshold test', the use of the post-charge questioning and intercept evidence.

Lifting the Barriers: Disability in Britain

People with disabilities do not get a fair deal: the opportunities they want are not equally available and the very way our public services and benefits systems function works against them. Liberal Democrats will build a fair society where opportunities don't depend on luck, health or money, but are available for everyone. We will help people with disabilities to live independently wherever possible by providing more flexible access to the job market and greater control over their own health care. We will make sure disabled people can afford to heat their homes.

Winter Fuel Payments for disabled people. Over-60s get a Winter Fuel Payment of at least £200, no matter their income or health, while disabled people who may be stuck at home all day, get nothing to help them keep warm. We will reform this system and help up to 1 million people with severe disabilities, including the families of almost 21,000 young disabled children, with £200 help towards their fuel bills each year.

Practical help to get to work. People with disabilities or mental health problems often need detailed advice and support to find and sustain a job. We will use voluntary and private sector providers, as well as public sector advisers, to do just that. We will improve access to counselling for people with mental health problems. We will promote and reform the Access to Work scheme, allowing disabled jobseekers to apply for the grant while they are looking for work and making smaller business aware of the scheme. We will also champion employment

support programmes that work in partnership with employers and ensure that government departments lead by example and have strategies to increase the number of disabled people they employ.

Better education for children with disabilities. We will invest an extra £2.5bn in schools to cut class sizes and provide one-to-one tuition which will make it far easier for teachers to support children with disabilities. Our plans to massively scale back the bureaucracy imposed on teachers will free them up to spend more time with all their pupils, rather than filling in the latest form from the Government. The Liberal Democrats will also reform teacher training so that all new teachers get better quality training in identifying and responding to children with special educational needs.

Older People

Life isn't fair for older people in Britain. 2.5m pensioners are living below the bread line.

Because

the link with earnings was broken back in the 1980s, the basic pension isn't enough to live on, but to get more money pensioners have to fill out complex, demeaning forms. Millions struggle to pay their fuel bills, and tens of thousands have to sell their home to pay for care every year. Liberal Democrats will change things for older people. We believe everyone deserves a pension that's enough to live on and fair treatment from government, public services and business alike. We believe older people should not be forced out of work by an arbitrary deadline, but should choose when they want to retire. We will restore the earnings link for pensions; stop unfair energy bills for older people; cut taxes, with up to £100 extra for all pensioners; and keep open the Post Offices retired people so often depend on.

Restore the earnings link immediately. It is unfair that as each year goes by, pensioners slip further behind. It is only fair that, at times when the country is getting richer, retired people share the benefit. We will restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings. We will use increases in average earnings, prices or 2.5%, whichever is higher, to determine the increase in the state pension so pensioners' living standards finally improve.

Fair energy prices. Nearly 37,000 people died from the cold last winter, most of them elderly. Energy bills are too expensive for too many people, especially pensioners who often spend all day at home. We will force energy companies to introduce "social tariffs", lower than their other prices, for everyone struggling to make ends meet.

Scrap the default retirement age. It is unfair to assume that just because someone has reached a particular age, they are not fit to do a particular job. People should be judged on their ability to do their work not their age. We would remove compulsory retirement ages.

No-one to pay tax on the first £10,000 they earn. We will make sure no-one pays tax on the first £10,000 of their income. Pensioners will get up to £100 extra in their pockets. The change will be paid for by a new mansion tax, closing loopholes that benefit the wealthy and ensuring polluters pay for the damage they cause.

Keep Post Offices open. Pensioners and older people often rely on the Post Office, but Labour and the Conservatives before them have closed down more than 10,000. It simply isn't fair. We will stop Labour's closure programme and create new sources of revenue for Post Offices like a Post Bank so we can afford to keep them open for good.

A review of social care. The long-term funding system for adult social care in England is not fit for purpose and funding for services is likely to become more difficult in to the

future. We want a cross-party commission set up to reach a consensus on social care and sort this problem out once for all. Our preference is for a partnership model, where the state and the individual both contribute, with a guaranteed contribution to the costs of care. Liberal Democrats will also cancel Labour's plans for "free care at home" as they are so badly funded they will lead to cuts in social care support for many vulnerable people or an increase in council tax. We will instead spend the money instead providing a weeks respite to 1 million carers who work more than 50 hours a week.

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Score:	6.5/10	6.5/10	8/10

Rationale: Clegg's policy is the most comprehensive and embraces the diversity of Britain. Cameron's policy though good in areas of equality for women and older people, is too controlling of community development and resistant to the ethnic diversity of Britain. Brown's policy is similar to Clegg's, but lacks the precision and depth of Clegg's policy.

Health

To what degree is the health policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown

The National Health Service is the Labour Party's greatest achievement. We created it, we saved it, we value it and we will always support it. The NHS remains Britain's most cherished public service and the fairest system of healthcare in the world. Under Labour, the NHS is in good hands, well placed to meet the new demands and challenges which will be placed upon it in the future.

But the NHS must continue to change and improve, responding to the combined pressures of an ageing population, rising patient expectations and medical advances. We will ensure that the NHS is always clinically driven, patient centred and responsive to local communities, and based on need not ability to pay. We will give hospitals incentives to focus on quality as well as quantity through the introduction of powerful financial incentives which will link payment to quality, including patient satisfaction.. The new NHS Constitution sets out for the first time to patients, staff and the public what they can expect from the NHS and what, in return, is expected from them.

Now that our investment and reform have brought waiting lists down, we are turning waiting time targets into legally enforceable guarantees for all patients: a maximum two-week guarantee on cancer referrals, and a maximum 18-week guarantee for hospital treatment, as well as rights to free health checks and to evening and weekend access to GPs. And over the next five years, starting in 2011 with three of the biggest killers – lung, colorectal and ovarian cancers – we will deliver our commitment to a cancer diagnosis within one week, giving GPs direct access to ultrasound and MRI scans, with a new target of one-week access to diagnostic tests for cancer, with results – saving up to 10,000 lives a year.

Diagnosing people early – or even preventing them developing illnesses – is not just better for patients: it means the NHS can do more with the resources it has. In addition to an extension in the ages at which adults are screened for cancer, Labour will give everyone aged between 40 and 74 the right to a free health check, to prevent at least 9,500 heart attacks and strokes every year

and save 2,000 lives. Since 2008 , teenage girls have been offered a new vaccine against cervical cancer, which will save hundreds of women's lives each year.

And to help meet the challenge of tackling obesity, the NHS is working with voluntary groups and private organisations through the popular *Change4Life* programme to prevent people from becoming overweight by encouraging them to eat better and stay active.

True to our values of fairness, Labour will focus particular priority in the years ahead on tackling health inequalities, so that as the health of the whole population rises, nobody is left behind. This must involve improving public health and preventative services as well as primary and acute care – supporting people to make healthy choices for themselves and their families, and spotting the most dangerous conditions at an early stage when they can be dealt with most easily. We will focus the NHS locally on improving life expectancy and reducing infant mortality. The approach will include targeted investment and action for high risk groups such as smoking cessation programmes, ensuring high quality screening services and introducing health checks for everybody aged 40-74.

And as demand for social care increases, and older and disabled people rightly demand and expect more power and control over the care services they receive, Labour will transform the way social care is funded and delivered to create a new National Care Service, ending the postcode lottery for care and ensuring that users and carers have fair access to the support they need and the dignity they deserve. As a starting-point, we will offer free personal care at home for those with the highest needs.

Cameron

Health

Over three years ago David Cameron spelled out his priorities in three letters – NHS. As the party of the NHS, we will never change the idea at the heart of our NHS – that **healthcare in this country is free at the point of use and available to everyone based on need**, not ability to pay.

Labour promised to save the NHS. But today, despite the massive increase in spending, **the gap in health outcomes between the UK and the rest of Europe has actually widened**. A decade of top-down, bureaucratic mismanagement has consistently undermined the professionalism and

motivation of NHS staff and skewed NHS priorities away from patient care, creating a culture where ticking boxes is more important than giving patients the treatment they need. We can't go on with an NHS that puts targets before patients.

We will make the performance of the NHS totally transparent by publishing information about the kind of results that healthcare providers are achieving, so there is no hiding place for failure. We will **increase access to vital drugs and services**, and create a **greater focus on preventing people getting ill** in the first place. This is how we will achieve our ambition for the NHS to deliver some of the best healthcare in the world.

We are the party of the NHS today because we not only back the values of the NHS, we back its funding and have a vision for its future.

Specifically, we will:

- **Increase spending** on the NHS every year;
- **Give patients the right to choose** your GP, hospital and even the consultant responsible for your care;
- Make sure the NHS **focuses on the things that matter to patients** – such as whether you survive killers like cancer – rather than box-ticking and process targets;
- **Cut the cost of NHS bureaucracy** by a third;
- Make sure patients can get all **the best new drugs they need for free** on the NHS;
- Make sure you have **access to a GP in your area from 8am to 8pm** seven days a week;
- Fight hospital infections and mixed-sex wards by **providing more single rooms in the NHS**;
- Provide **an NHS dentist for a million more people and free dental checks for all five year-olds**; and
- **Introduce a voluntary insurance scheme** so that people are no longer forced to sell their homes if they need residential care.

Clegg

The NHS represents values which unite us as a nation - a comprehensive health service, which treats all people equally, and is free when we need it.

We've all experienced moments in hospitals that change the course of our lives. Liberal Democrats know how important the NHS is and that's why we will ensure that the NHS provides high quality care and the best possible service long into the future.

A lot of money has been invested in health in recent years but too much of that has been wasted on bureaucracy rather than investing in frontline services. Doctors and nurses are forced to spend too much time trying to meet government targets rather than caring for patients. And government ministers make decisions about closing local services from the comfort of their offices rather than facing the people it affects.

Liberal Democrats believe that patients must come first and that services would improve if local people had a say in how the NHS is run.

We believe in fairness with entitlements to healthcare guaranteed. We believe access to personal care should be based on need not the ability to pay. And we believe that patients should always come first.

We will scrap central targets and guarantee that you get your treatment on time. We will give people the power to stop hospital closures in their area through elected local health boards. And we will put doctors and nurses back in charge of their hospitals and wards.

Liberal Democrats want a people-centred NHS, fit for the 21st century.

The NHS is a source of pride because it's built on the basic British principle of fairness. We're right to be proud of the NHS but the truth is that it still isn't as good as it should be. It's often too big and complex for patients to handle, too much money is being wasted on bureaucracy and doctors and nurses spend too much time trying to meet government targets instead of caring for patients. Liberal Democrats believe we have to change the NHS so patients come first. And that care would improve if local people had a say in how their health services were run. Our first priority is to protect front line services by making the NHS work better with the money it has and investing the money we save back into frontline services. We will save money in the long term by investing in public health.

Protecting NHS frontline services. The NHS is facing increasing pressure on vital services: more and more people suffer from dementia, there are ever more expensive cancer drugs available, and increasing obesity is leading to more heart patients. To ensure these services aren't cut even though budgets are tight, we will cut waste and re-invest every penny in frontline services, such as cancer treatment, mental health services, maternity services and dementia care, which could face cuts.

Putting local people in charge. It's wrong that local hospitals can be closed without the communities affected having any real say. We will give people the power to take control over their local NHS through elected health boards. This also means local people will be

able to hold their NHS to account if the quality of care isn't up to scratch.

Patient contract. It's not fair that patients who don't get the treatment they need from the NHS within target times are often then left on long waiting lists. We believe that everyone should be seen within the agreed timeframe. So we'll improve the quality of care people get from the health service by paying for people to go private if the NHS can't treat you on time.

Improving GP services. Many of us lead hectic lives and the NHS should be there to help. That's why we'll make sure everyone has the right to register with the GP that's most convenient to them. There still aren't enough GPs in deprived areas where they are needed most. So we'll pay GPs a bit more to provide healthcare to patients in deprived areas with the worst health, paid for by rebalancing the pay system across the board.

Patient safety. Patients' lives are at risk because foreign doctors are allowed to work in the NHS without proper tests of competence and language. We'll introduce a national test to make sure everyone who works in the NHS can speak English and is up to scratch. We'll stop hospitals from getting paid for mistakes and put in place a legal duty for them to tell patients if something has gone wrong.

A review of social care. The long-term funding system for adult social care in England is not fit for purpose and funding for services is likely to become more difficult in the future. We want a cross-party commission set up to reach a consensus on social care and sort this problem out once for all. Our preference is for a partnership model, where the state and the individual both contribute, with a guaranteed contribution to the costs of care.

This briefing has been produced by the Liberal Democrats. Please check (<http://www.libdems.org.uk>) for the latest developments.

Respite Care Guarantee. There are close to five million unpaid carers in England, with a million providing more than 50 hours care each week. In most jobs you get paid holidays but for a huge number of carers that simply isn't an option. We believe that respite care is a lifeline – not just for carers but for whole families. That's why we will provide a week's break from caring every year to the 1 million unpaid carers who provide more than 50

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
--	-------	---------	-------

Score:	7/10	7/10	8/10
--------	------	------	------

Rationale: Brown's policy does not acknowledge the NHS bureaucracy problem, though he acknowledges the need to improve the NHS. Cameron's policy has the right focus on improving the NHS, but lacks the comprehensiveness of Clegg's health policy.

Education

To what degree is the education policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown

Education

If Britain is to thrive in the modern globalised high skill economy we cannot afford to take our foot off the pedal of driving standards in schools, on opening out opportunities for young people to study, to train or to do an apprenticeship. We have driven huge improvements in the number of young people training, and in the standards of education across the board.

We have more than doubled spending per pupil in frontline schools spending – and there are 42,000 more teachers than in 1997. And we are committed to protecting frontline school spending, as well as frontline spending on Sure Start and 16-19 education as we take tough decisions to cut the deficit. We have seen some of the best ever exam results at every age. But Labour believes there is a choice. We believe that government needs to go even further to support teachers, pupils and parents to improve our schools even more. We should be proud of the achievements of teachers and pupils, but we cannot be satisfied because we still believe that too many children are not achieving the results they could – and too many schools have discipline that falls short of excellent.

That is why our guarantees of one to one tuition and catch support including small group work for children who are falling behind their potential is designed to build on the improvements of the last decade by making education personal to all – helping them improve when they are falling behind their best and stretching them when they can excel. At the heart of our new guarantees is a 3Rs guarantee for primary school pupils . This provides:

- Catch-up and one-to-one tuition for pupils who start primary school behind
- One-to-one tuition for any pupil still not making progress at age seven
- And catch-up help including one-to-one tuition provision for any pupil starting secondary school having not mastered the basics in primary.

This is all to back up world class all class teaching.

In primary schools we are also making the curriculum more engaging for pupils – for example through the introduction of specialist language teachers and also specialist maths teachers. Extended schools allow kids to access a wide range of after school activities and clubs.

Whilst thousands of schools have improved across the board we want to build on that by ensuring that good behaviour and decent minimum GCSE results are achieved in every school. All schools who currently fall below our minimum benchmark of 30 per cent of children receiving 5 grades A*-C at GCSE including English and Maths are being given extra funding and support but are being asked to exceed this benchmark by 2011 or face intervention which could include being converted to an academy. Already the number of schools falling below this benchmark has gone from more than half in 1997 to less than one in thirteen schools.

These days very few schools at all fall below “satisfactory” standards of behaviour when they are inspected by the schools inspectorate, Ofsted. But we think satisfactory is not good enough. We are challenging schools who are not achieving discipline rated “good” or “excellent” at minimum by inspectors. Schools which in the coming years are falling below this level or are not making good progress towards it will face intervention – we know what works on behaviour: clear rules, swift enforcement including the removal of disruptive pupils and things like uniforms. There is no excuse for schools having poor behaviour.

We believe that support is vital for parents in the crucial early years of a child’s life. We are offering parenting support and childcare which enables parents to work and train, advice and healthcare in a flexible and all-round setting. In order to deliver this, since the late 1990s we have been rolling out Sure Start Children’s Centres, and since 2005 we have been working to open a Children’s Centre in each community – a target we hit in March 2010.

The competitive global economy of the future will see countries compete in high skill, high technology markets. We cannot afford to waste the talents of any of our young people. Despite other parties arguing that it is wrong to set ambitious targets for bringing young people into Higher Education. Labour will continue to aim to see half of all young people getting into university and we want 75 per cent of all young people by 30 years old to have achieved an advanced apprenticeship, equivalent qualification, or have attended university. Labour will provide 20,000 extra undergraduate places on courses starting in 2010-11.

And, despite opposition from opposition parties we remain committed to ensuring that by 2015 we have raised the age at which young people will leave compulsory training or education to 18. Today we are guaranteeing every young person who wants it the right to an offer of a training place, an apprenticeship or a place in education until they are 18 – and for everybody under 25 we will guarantee funding until they have achieved a level 3, or A level equivalent qualification.

Cameron

Schools

"Education, Education, Education" was Labour's "number one priority". They promised that standards would rise in every school; that teachers would be given the support they needed to maintain discipline; and that every child would be given the tools to succeed. Over the last 13 years, those promises have been broken.

The gap between rich and poor pupils is widening; standards are falling; violence and disruption in schools are rife; and we are sliding down the international league tables for education. To make matters worse, parents are rendered powerless to choose a better option for their children; under Labour, school choice is a myth. We can't go on like this.

So the Conservatives will:

- **Restore discipline and order to the classroom** . We will give teachers the tools and powers they need to keep order in the classroom. We will abolish the legal requirement of 24 hours' notice for detentions; reform the exclusion process; and give headteachers the power to ban, search for, and confiscate any items they think may cause violence or disruption.
- **Raise the status of the teaching profession**. Move to a high quality system of teacher recruitment and training by raising entry requirements, expanding Teach First and incentivising top maths and science graduates.
- **Raise standards**. We will take urgent action to reverse the decline in standards. We will reform the National Curriculum, remove political interference from GCSEs and A-levels, and allow state schools to do the same high quality exams as private schools. We will replace Key Stage 1 Sats with a simple reading test, reform Key Stage 2 Sats, and make Ofsted report on schools' setting policies and reading schemes.
- **Create a new generation of independently run state schools**. We will make it much easier for educational charities, groups of parents and teachers, cooperatives and others to start new Academies (independent, non-selective state schools). We will move to a national per pupil funding system, so that new schools get paid if they attract pupils, with extra funding for the poorest pupils (a pupil premium).

A Conservative government will give every child the kind of education that is currently available only to the well-off: safe classrooms, talented and specialist teachers, access to the best curriculum and exams, and smaller schools with smaller classes and teachers who know the children's names.

Clegg

Too many children are still leaving school without the knowledge and skills to be successful. Finding a good school is a struggle, lessons don't always stretch the brightest or support those who need more help, and classes are often too big for teachers to control.

Every child is different, so schools need to be free to teach children in different ways and get the very best from them. Liberal Democrats want every child to get an excellent education because it is the best way to get on in life, get a good job, and learn about the world.

We will cut class sizes, set teachers free to spend more time in the classroom and raise standards in every school with more money for things like one to one tuition and classes in the evenings.

For those youngsters leaving school, university is getting more and more expensive. To get a degree, young people are saddled with thousands of pounds of debt when it is tough enough to get a job, get on the housing ladder and make ends meet.

Liberal Democrats are the only party which believes university education should be free and everyone who has the ability should be able to go to university and not be put off by the cost.

Our 6 point timetable for scrapping tuition fees:

Year	Action
1	Scrap fees for final year full-time students
2	Begin regulating part-time fees
3	Part time fees become regulated and fee loans become available to part time students
4	Expand free tuition to all full-time students apart from first year undergraduates
5	Expand free tuition to all part-time students apart from first year undergraduates
6	Scrap tuition fees for all first degree students

Best Start for Every Child

Too many children are still leaving school without the knowledge and skills to be successful. Finding a good school is still a struggle, lessons don't stretch the brightest and classes are too big for teachers to control or give extra help to the children who need it. And your family background still has a huge effect on how you do: even a bright but poor child will fall behind a richer classmate by the age of 7 and never catch up. Liberal Democrats want every child to get an excellent education because it is the best way to get on in life, get a good job, and learn about the world. Only when all children get a good start, no matter where they live or what their parents do, will we have a fair society. We will provide a fair start for all children by giving schools the money they need to cut class sizes and set teachers free to spend more time teaching in the classroom. And we will scrap unfair university tuition fees so everyone has the chance to get a degree, regardless of how rich their parents are.

Ensure children get the individual attention they need by cutting class sizes (Pupil Premium). To give every child a fair start in life, the Liberal Democrats will spend an extra £2.5bn on schools, guaranteeing them the money they need to support children who are struggling. It will be targeted at schools taking on children who need more help and can be used to cut class sizes and make sure they get the individual support they need. An average primary school could cut classes to 20, with a typical secondary school able to cut classes to just 16 or start a programme of catch-up classes for 160 pupils.

Scrap unfair University Tuition Fees. To get a degree, young people are saddled with thousands of pounds of debt when it is tough enough to get a job, get on the housing ladder and make ends meet. The Liberal Democrats are the only party which believes university education should be free and admissions based on ability not bank balance. We will scrap unfair tuition fees for all students taking their first degrees saving them nearly £10,000 each. We have a financially responsible plan to phase fees out over six years, so that the change is affordable in these difficult economic times. In our first year, we will scrap fees for final year students, so future graduates have their debt slashed by over £3,000.

Education Freedom Act. Teachers want to get the best from children but they are held back because of constant government interference which stops them from spending time with their pupils. The Liberal Democrats believe that all schools should be free from meddling politicians to work in creative and interesting ways to make sure every child gets a fair start in life. We will slim down the curriculum and pass an Education Freedom Act banning politicians from getting involved in the day to day running of schools.

	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Score:	6.5/10	7.5/10	6/10

Rationale: Cameron's policy is most comprehensive and most likely to improve the British educational system. Brown's policy is less comprehensive, but it does tackle some issues which Clegg does not address. Clegg's policy is progressive in terms of eliminating university tuition fees, but the benefit is questionable. Also,

Clegg's policy lacks comprehensiveness and an understanding of the key educational issues.

Environment

To what degree is the environment policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown

The Environment, Climate Change and Energy

We believe that the green agenda is fundamentally rooted in Labour's environment, energy and climate change policies are about securing fairness, creating jobs and building strong communities as well as tackling carbon emissions and improving the quality of life. By taking the action we need to tackle climate change and reduce waste we can drive economic growth, make Britain more energy independent, and make it easier for people to live in greener ways.

Labour came to power at a time when climate change was emerging as an important political issue. Six months after we took office, the Labour Government played a key role in securing a new international agreement at Kyoto. This signalled the beginning of a period in which Britain has become a world leader on tackling climate change globally and at home. Our 2008 Climate Change Act makes the UK the first country in the world to put its carbon targets into law – cutting emissions by a third (34 per cent) by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050 on 1990 levels. Our UK Low Carbon Transition Plan sets out a comprehensive strategy for reducing emissions right across the economy, with every government department given its own 'carbon budget'.

With Labour our green policies have become a motor of economic prosperity. As firms invest in insulating people's homes, renewable energy and nuclear power, and in new technologies such as electric vehicles, we will create around 400,000 new green jobs by 2015 – making 1.2 million British jobs in the environmental and low carbon sectors in all. The Government's Low Carbon Industrial Strategy has set a framework for active industrial policy, with new firms such as wind turbine manufacturers now investing in Britain.

We continue to push for international agreement on action to tackle climate change; we are determined that the progress made at Copenhagen in December 2009 will ultimately result in the ambitious, effective and fair legally binding agreement on which we have led. We are spending £1.5 billion on climate assistance to developing countries between 2010 and 2012 and are committed to ensuring that from 2013 part of our climate assistance is additional to our pledge to

provide 0.7 per cent of national income in aid, with no more than 10 per cent of our Official Development Assistance counted towards climate finance.

Labour believes that the beauty and biodiversity of Britain's countryside and green spaces enrich the quality of our lives. Over the last thirteen years we have worked not only to protect our natural environment for future generations but to open up access for all. Through our two landmark Acts – the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and the Marine and Coastal Access Act – and the creation of two new National Parks in the New Forest and South Downs we have enabled millions of people to enjoy our countryside and coastal areas. We have supported rural business, and seen a steady improvement in rural public services; rural unemployment is below the national average. We are committed to spending £3.9 billion in the next Rural Development Programme in England, the major part of which will be devoted to agri-environment Environmental Stewardship schemes, improving the quality of our countryside for people and wildlife. By setting and exceeding our target for 60 per cent of new developments to be on brownfield land and by extending the area of Green Belt we have contributed both to the renaissance of our urban areas and to the protection of the countryside.

Rural communities are home to one million businesses, employing more than 5.5 million people with a combined turnover of more than £300 billion a year. Average incomes in rural areas are higher, and rural unemployment is lower. So are rural crime rates, while school results are better. But we need to make sure rural areas remain strong. That's why we are making sure that high speed broadband will reach all of rural Britain, why we are building affordable homes and why we have supported post offices which are often the hub of the local community.

Labour remains committed to defending the welfare of animals, whether wild, domestic or on farms. We have legislated to ban cruel 'sports' such as fox hunting and hare coursing, toughened the sanctions against people who mistreat animals, and banned animal testing of cosmetics and barren cages for chickens, among other items. We will ensure that these measures are rigorously enforced, and extend and enhance them where necessary.

Cameron

Environment

A Conservative Government will make Britain greener by tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing our environment.

Quality of life and environmental issues must be at the heart of politics – which is why we have pledged to improve Britain's environment by working towards zero waste, providing incentives to recycle, encouraging sustainable water management, and taking action to help our wildlife at home and internationally.

Britain is struggling to cope with mountains of waste. We will introduce a new approach, one which minimises waste and promotes recycling. A Conservative government will:

- **Introduce a Responsibility Deal on waste** – a voluntary arrangement among producers to cut back on the production of waste and improve its disposal; and
- **Put a floor under landfill tax until 2020** to give businesses long term certainty to invest in new forms of waste disposal and we will encourage councils to adopt a scheme which gives incentives to families that recycle.

Our water supply faces pressures from reduced river flows, pollution and growing demand.

We will:

- **Reform the water industry**, and bring in new measures to encourage businesses and households to value this precious resource more highly, and protect poorer households from excessive rises in water bills; and
- **Take forward the findings of the Pitt Review** on the summer 2007 floods to improve our flood defences, prevent unnecessary building in areas of high flood risk, and ensure the country is better equipped when flooding does take place.

As well as targeted help for protected habitats and species we will take a broader ecosystem approach which improves the landscape as a whole. A Conservative government will:

- **Produce a White Paper on protecting the natural environment**, including a focus on restoring habitat;
- **Pioneer a new system of conservation credits** to protect habitats and create incentives to invest in wildlife;
- **Maintain national Green Belt protection, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest** and other environmental designations which protect the character of our country's landscape;
- **Work to reduce litter**, which spoils too much of our countryside and urban environment;
- **Launch a national tree planting campaign** to green our towns and cities by planting up to one million new trees in the next Parliament; and
- **Tackle illegal logging** by pressing for international action to halt deforestation and introducing a new criminal offence under UK law for the import and possession of illegal timber.

There is an urgent need to improve the protection of our marine environment, as many of our fish stocks have been over-exploited. **We will fight for wholesale reform of the Common Fisheries Policy** to encourage sustainable practices, give communities a greater say over the future of their fishing industries, and bring an end to the scandal of fish discards.

Having called for the Marine Act, we will ensure that its conservation measures are implemented effectively, including **the creation of Marine Conservation Zones**.

Climate Change and Energy

With urgent action needed to combat climate change, and with our energy supplies increasingly insecure and dependent on imports, it's time to rethink the way we supply and consume energy in Britain.

A Conservative government will take immediate action to give Britain leadership in a low carbon world. We will cut carbon emissions and promote low carbon energy production. We will safeguard our energy security and make it easier for families to go green.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world, but it provides us with opportunities too. To cut emissions and encourage new low carbon energy production, we will:

- **Introduce an Emissions Performance Standard** to set a legal limit on the emissions from power stations;
- Deliver a 10 per cent cut in **central government carbon emissions** within 12 months of coming to office;
- Create four **carbon capture and storage** equipped power plants;
- Deliver an **offshore electricity grid** and establish at least two **Marine Energy Parks**;
- Allow communities that host renewable energy projects like wind farms to **keep the additional business rates** they generate for six years; and,
- Provide incentives for **smaller-scale energy generation**.

Britain needs a clear, consistent and stable energy policy that safeguards our energy security. We will take immediate action to secure the UK's energy supplies, including:

- Putting in place **supply guarantees in the gas and electricity markets** – ensuring that sufficient electricity generating capacity is maintained and setting an obligation on gas suppliers to ensure that supplies are in place throughout the year;
- **Reforming the Climate Change Levy** to provide a floor price for carbon, delivering the right climate for investment;
- Transforming electricity networks with '**smart grid**' and '**smart meter**' technology; and,

- Clearing the way for **new nuclear power stations** – provided they receive no public subsidy.

A Conservative government will make it easier for families to go green, whilst taking action to reduce energy bills. We will:

- Create a ‘Green Deal’, **giving every home up to £6,500 worth of energy improvement measures** – paid for out of the savings made on fuel bills;
- Ensure that **every energy bill** provides information on how to move to the cheapest tariff offered by their supplier and how their energy usage compares to similar households; and,
- **Reform the Post Office Card Account** to give up to 4 million people access to lower tariffs.

Clegg

"The Liberal Democrats have received three green lights by offering the strongest set of policies on climate change, green taxation and green living." - How green are our parties, report by the Green Alliance 2007

All our policies have a green thread running through them. We believe achieving sustainability cannot be done by one government department alone. Damage to our environment damages personal health, impoverishes economies and weakens communities.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party with the vision, commitment and political drive to deliver positive change which will in turn safe guard the future of the environment and our rural affairs.

Climate change is getting worse and could destroy our way of life. Our children will suffer most if we don't act now.

Liberal Democrats believe that there is a huge opportunity to get out of this recession by going green, strengthening the economy, creating new jobs and improving the quality of people's lives.

Many people still struggle to pay their fuel bills. Liberal Democrats will require energy companies to simplify the complicated tangle of different tariffs, requiring them to charge families less for a basic amount of energy used, to encourage responsible use. We will also introduce a fair social tariff system for disadvantaged families. We will roll out smart meters to all households within five years and insulate all of Britain's homes to a decent standard within 10 years. We will immediately raise the requirements of Building Regulations to ensure that all new homes are energy efficient and use 'Green Loans' to encourage people to invest in home energy efficiency and micro-renewables.

Both Labour and Conservatives support the construction of new nuclear power stations. More nuclear power will soak up subsidy, centralise energy production and hinder development of Britain's vast renewable resources. Nuclear has a dirty legacy and increases global security risks. We oppose construction of further nuclear power stations.

Liberal Democrats will drive a massive programme of investment in renewable energy sources such as wind, wave and solar. We will also transform the National Grid into a smart decentralised grid which will respond dynamically to the changing patterns of energy demand. Smart metering and guaranteed prices will unlock the potential of local and community energy generation, giving people control over the energy they use.

We will invest now in the green technologies of the future delivering hundreds of thousands of new and better jobs in the years to come. A zero-carbon Britain will also be energy secure, with action at the EU level, to deliver an energy independent Europe breaking our current dependence on fossil fuels.

We will prioritise achieving a global agreement providing leadership for an international framework that will enable each country to manage a transition to a low-carbon economy. We will help developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

As a nation we live beyond our environmental means: if everyone in the world consumed as much as we do in the UK we would need three planets to live on.

Liberal Democrats want to enhance Britain's Natural Environment to see clean water, healthy soils and sustainable food. Britain's countryside is breathtaking, and we are a nation rich in plants and wildlife and beautiful open spaces.

We believe that the countryside is a valuable resource which must be protected both for the benefit of those who live there and of the nation as a whole, who should be able to enjoy what it has to offer. We therefore believe in a universal right to responsible, managed access.

We will promote schemes to enhance wildlife, such as a 'Green National Grid' which link up habitats of rare species. At sea we have plans for strengthened regulation to protect the marine environment including our overseas territories. We also want to promote policies that reconnect people with the natural environment through education, access to allotments and support for reserves and conservation projects.

Helping farmers to help the environment – Much of our countryside is looked after by farmers, yet many earn less than the minimum wage and so can no longer afford to steward the land. We will reward and support the production of food with environmental good practice. We will encourage sustainable bio-energy.

We will instil new urgency into the drive to adapt to the consequences of climate change, in particular by improving management of water resources and by enhancing flood defences through investment in infrastructure and better co-ordination of the responsible agencies. We will work with water companies to deliver long-term solutions to reduce impact and deliver sustainable secure supplies. We are also committed to supporting developing nations through an international leap-frog fund to dump dirty high carbon development by transferring renewable and low carbon technology to those countries which need it most.

There are serious problems for people who live in the countryside. Local schools, hospitals and shops are under pressure and many face closure, houses are too expensive, there are hardly any buses to get around and farmers are getting a raw deal from the big supermarkets.

Liberal Democrats stand up for local people. No matter where you live, local services should be affordable and accessible. We want rural Britain to be vibrant, alive and open to all. We want living communities with affordable homes and successful economies - we understand rural Britain like no other party. We have a higher proportion of our MPs representing rural seats than

any other mainstream party, and we represent all sections of our rural communities, not just the wealthy. We are proud of rural Britain and we are passionate about giving it new life.

Affordable housing in rural areas – There is a severe lack of affordable homes in many rural areas, meaning young people often have no choice but to move away far from their families and communities. We will provide more homes for local people by increasing councils’ powers over second homes and promoting schemes for affordable homes.

Liberal Democrats want first class services in rural areas, and we understand that the Post Office and village pubs are a vital lynchpin of many communities. We will deliver broadband coverage and quality in rural areas, give councils’ greater powers to regulate bus services according to rural community needs, and reduce fuel duty in remote areas.

Our farmers are some of the most entrepreneurial in the world, producing food of outstanding quality to the highest environmental and animal welfare standards. Farmers don’t want to be given subsidies, but they do want to receive a fair payment for their hard work.

We will ensure farmers and consumers both get a fair price for food by creating a legally binding supermarket code, enforced by an independent Food Market Regulator. We will ensure prompt farm payments by cutting red tape; we will reform farming apprenticeships to ensure there is a new generation of British farmers.

Brown Cameron Clegg

Scores: 7.5/10 7.5/10 6.5/10

Rationale: Brown’s and Cameron’s policies have similar comprehensiveness, though differ in emphasis—Brown’s policy is more international, whereas Cameron’s is more local. Both are valid.

Clegg’s policy emphasizes renewable energies but is weak in other areas, and lacks an overall comprehensive and committed approach as compared to the other candidates.

Immigration

To what degree is the immigration policy of the candidate in the better interest of the people of Britain?

Brown

Controlled migration brings undoubted benefits to our country but we also recognise people's legitimate concerns about the impact it can have on communities. Net inward migration to Britain as measured by the Office for National Statistics has fallen for the last three years. We are delivering the biggest changes to our immigration, citizenship and border security systems for decades – we are bringing in a new Australian-style points-based immigration system which allows us to be more selective so that only those with the skills that we need to build a stronger economy can come here, and to ensure that as growth returns, we will see rising levels of employment, skills and wages not more immigration. We have brought in 100 per cent biometric visas, are rolling out ID cards for foreign nationals with 170,000 already issued, and electronic border controls will count people in and out of the country by the end of 2010. To build on this we will introduce a points-based system for permanent residence and citizenship clearly spelling out the rights and obligations of legal migrants to Britain, as well as the requirements for earning British citizenship. These requirements will include learning English, paying tax and obeying the law – because we believe those who look to build a new life here should earn the right to do so. Our Earned Citizenship plans for newcomers, together with the points-based immigration system will reduce overall numbers of economic migrants coming to Britain and the numbers awarded permanent settlement. We recognise that the impact of migration is felt differently by different communities; and how rapid change can place pressures on local public services – the Migration Impact Fund, paid for by contributions from migrants has over the last two years has contributed £70 million to services in local areas experiencing rapid population change. We have reformed housing allocation policy, empowering local authorities to give greater priority to local people, and to those who have spent a long time on the waiting list

Cameron

Immigration

Britain can benefit from immigration, but not uncontrolled immigration. Look at any aspect of life today and you will see the contribution that migrants have brought, and not just to the economy. We want to continue to attract the brightest and the best people to the UK, but with control on the overall numbers coming here.

A Conservative government will reduce net immigration to the levels of the 1990s – tens of thousands a year, instead of the hundreds of thousands a year under Labour.

Our immigration policy is based on four strands:

- We will introduce an **annual limit on the numbers of non-EU economic migrants** allowed to work here, taking into consideration the effects a rising population has on our public services and local communities. The limit would change each year to take into account the wider effects of immigration on society;
- We will work to prevent illegal migration with a **dedicated Border Police Force to crack down on illegal immigration and people trafficking**;
- We will introduce important new rules to **tighten up the student visa system**, which at the moment is the biggest hole in our border controls; and
- We will promote integration into British society. There will be an **English language test for anyone coming here from outside the EU to get married**.

A Conservative government would also apply transitional controls as a matter of course for all future EU entrants.

Clegg

Immigration

The immigration system is in chaos after years of incompetent management. The Government has failed to plan properly for new migrants, making it harder for people to integrate. We have no idea how many people are here illegally, and we don't even have exit checks at our airports to ensure people here on temporary visas go home on time. Liberal Democrats believe it would be wrong to try and "pull up the drawbridge". Britain has always been an open, welcoming country, and thousands of businesses, schools and hospitals rely on people who've come to live here from overseas. But we also understand you have to manage migration so it benefits Britain and is fair for everyone.

Immediately reintroduce exit checks – count people out as well as in. Over the years, the Conservatives and then Labour made a huge mistake: they abolished exit checks for people leaving the country, so we have no idea who is here and who isn't. We will reintroduce exit checks immediately.

Focus deportation efforts on criminals – let law-abiding families earn citizenship. It would take years and cost us £8bn to deport all those who are living in Britain illegally. Some of them are criminals and people-traffickers. Others are families who have been here for years, and just want to work and pay their taxes. Immigration officers are focusing on families because they're easy targets, letting criminals off the hook. We would allow people who have been in Britain for 10 years, speak English, have a clean record and want to live here long-term to earn citizenship. That way, immigration officers can spend all their time deporting dangerous people and checking up on employers to stop illegal working.

A regional points-based system to ensure migrants go where they are needed. Some parts of Britain, like Scotland, need and want more people to help the economy. Others, like the South East, are struggling to find enough water and homes for everyone. We'll change the rules so it's easier to get a work permit if you go and live in a part of the country that is short of workers, to encourage newcomers to live where they are needed.

UK Border Force. For too long, Britain's borders have been a soft touch. The steady flow of undocumented migrants into this country has undermined our historic liberal attitude towards

immigration. The Government's stop-start, piecemeal approach has failed to get a grip on the problem, and their Border Agency lacks the powers necessary to do its job properly. Liberal Democrats would establish a strong, unified, co-ordinated National Border Force with police powers to protect our borders effectively.

Brown Cameron Clegg

Score: 5.5/10 5.5/10 6.5/10

Rationale: Brown and Cameron's policies have a xenophobic edge to them, whereby too much emphasis is on protecting the white culture, and using immigrants for the skills they have at present. Clegg's policy is more embracing of the ethnic diversity of Britain, and focuses on strengthening the system of immigration and routing out criminals. Though Clegg's policy is incoherent regarding the types and skill sets of immigrants which will be allowed in Britain.

National Security/Foreign Affairs

To what degree is the national security policy of the candidate in the better interests of the people of Britain?

Brown

Britain in the World

Labour's international policy is driven both by Britain's national interest and our long-standing belief in international social justice, liberty, fairness and responsibility. Labour knows that our country is best served by the strength of our permanent values and interests - and by our strong alliances around the world.

Whilst we live in an age of unprecedented progress with more people living in peace than ever before, in the years ahead we will face many global challenges which will demand a new era of global cooperation. Labour will make sure we continue to occupy a leading role in that process.

Since 1997, Britain's role and voice on the international stage has strengthened. Our influence which comes from being right at the heart of great international institutions and alliances - the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the G8 and G20 - means we have a great responsibility and the ability to help shape a safer and more secure world. Labour has used our unique position to lead efforts to combat global poverty and climate change, to promote peace and security and to tackle the global financial crisis. We will continue to remain outward looking to ensure continued progress.

The greatest immediate threat to our national security is international terrorism, that's why we will never compromise when it comes to the safety and security of the British people. With Labour, Britain will continue working with our international allies in Afghanistan to tackle terrorism at its roots and protect the security of the UK. In recognition of the immense sacrifices of our Armed Forces and their families we will introduce greater measures of support and will continue to ensure our Armed Forces receive all the equipment they need.

Labour is committed to building a safer world, in order to do so we will continue to lead the renewal of a grand global bargain between nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states to set us on a path towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The global financial crisis has demonstrated more clearly than ever the interconnected nature of the world we live in and the need for international unity to tackle problems which affect us all. As we face new challenges – from nuclear proliferation and international terrorism to climate change – Labour believes it is more essential than ever to build a truly global society where we come together to find international solutions for those issues which do not respect national borders. We will develop a shared vision and create new and effective global institutions with the mandate and the authority to make that vision real.

In an increasingly interdependent world, tackling global poverty and injustice is both morally right and in our common interest. Labour will therefore not turn our backs on global injustice and poverty but will continue working, for example, to meet the Millennium Development Goals and for fairer trade rules which do not penalise poorer countries. We will also continue pushing for greater action to tackle climate change, building on the Copenhagen accord to go much further and demand greater ambition to fight climate change and tackle its impacts on the world's most vulnerable people before it is too late.

In recognition of the benefits our membership of the European Union brings to British citizens, Labour will ensure that Britain remains at the heart of the European Union. We will use our strong voice to secure greater measures to fight back against the global recession, to secure the recovery and promote prosperity, protect against international crime, and tackle global challenges like poverty and climate change.

Labour's vision in the years ahead is for a bold, foreign policy based on strong international links which exploit Britain's unique strengths, defend our national interest and pursue a more just and fair world. By ensuring Britain retains its leading place on the world stage Labour believes we really can help shape a truly global society, and help build a future fair for all.

For a safer Britain we need a safer Afghanistan. 8 years ago Britain acted with America and other allies to remove the Taliban in Afghanistan – a regime that sheltered Al Qaeda and could do so again.

Three quarters of the most serious terrorist plots against Britain have had their roots in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We cannot allow Afghanistan to once again be a safe haven for Al Qaeda to plan and execute terrorist attacks against Britain or the rest of the world. Our strategy is to ensure that al-Qaeda can never regain free rein in Afghanistan. To achieve that, we

must weaken the Taliban and strengthen Afghanistan, stage by stage, district by district and province by province, putting the Afghans in control of their own security.

We have a clear, realistic and achievable strategy and a properly resourced campaign for our work in Afghanistan. Labour has announced £5 billion for Afghanistan next year and also made clear that not a penny will be cut from the Defence Budget in 2010/11.

Our military strategy will create the space for an effective political and stabilisation strategy to work and is focused on three main areas; Afghan Security Forces capable of keeping the Taliban from regaining control; credible government at national and local level to give the Afghan people confidence in their democratically elected government and economic development that gives Afghans a stake in their own future.

Already more than 90 per cent of the international coalition's operations are conducted with the Afghan National Army, which is 100,000 strong. We will accelerate our training and partnering of Afghan soldiers – increased to 4,000 per month from the current rate of 2,000. This will bring the Afghan Army up to full strength by November 2011. We are also working to improve the Afghan police. By working to ensure the Afghan security forces are strong enough to maintain stability and prevent the Taliban and Al Qaida from returning, we can make sure British troops come home as soon as possible.

As part of the international community we will also work to help the government of Afghanistan tackle corruption through building effective local government and legal structures that offer the people the basic services they need. That's why there will be a key focus on the selecting, training, empowering, equipping and mentoring the 34 provincial governors and over 350 district governors, in the same way as international forces mentor the Afghan National Army and police.

Stabilisation and Development

Our primary reason for being in Afghanistan is to protect Britain's safety, and we will never lose sight of our main focus – protecting Britain's security. At the same time, Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries – and whilst tackling this is right in of itself – it is also complementary to our military and political actions. The UK is the second largest bilateral donor in Afghanistan, providing £127.5m each year up to 2013. Our development programme in

Pakistan will increase to £665 million over 2009-13, making the UK the second largest bilateral donor to Pakistan as well.

To create the conditions and security for development to take place and enable Afghans to rebuild the systems, schools and hospitals that are needed in a stable and secure country, our troops will assist in providing security until the Afghan Forces are able to do so themselves.

Progress is being made in a range of areas – including roads, basic justice, governance, and agriculture. To ensure this continued progress, in 2009 we announced an extra £20 million for stabilisation in Helmand – money that is already being spent to help increase the number of Afghan national police in Helmand; to build a new police training academy; and to build new facilities for district governors.

Our civilian stabilisation advisers are working increasingly closely with the military, using their skills to deliver real development effect in a non-secure environment. The close co-operation between our deployed civilian experts and military personnel which is already happening on the ground in Afghanistan is the right answer - not putting the aid budget under military control. We doubled the number of civilian experts in 2008 and we were the first country to set up a joint military-civilian HQ in Afghanistan.

Cameron

National Security

National security is about keeping us safe.

Labour have **failed to tackle the extremism which drives terrorism**. The terrorist threat remains serious in scale and duration, and continues to be both home grown and international in scope.

At the same time, **the threat posed by States hostile to our values and interests remains**. States not only use armed force to challenge us. They play politics with the resources on which we depend, such as gas and oil; they launch electronic attacks against the systems that underpin our daily lives; they sponsor organised criminals and terrorists; and they threaten regional stability through nuclear proliferation.

Natural hazards, such as flooding and disease, are also increasing in frequency, scale and severity.

In the coming years, there is a risk that all these different challenges will converge. So a **strategic approach to securing the UK's national interests** is needed, as well as an emphasis on preventative activity.

This requires **concerted international co-operation and responses that cut across many policy areas** - not only the traditional domains of foreign policy, defence, development and internal security, but energy, education, community cohesion, health, technology and the environment. But Government cannot provide security without the trust and support of its citizens.

To restore trust and improve the working of Government we will:

- **Introduce a National Security Council** to bring together the work of different Government Departments;
- **Review and consolidate the reams of counter-terrorism and security laws** introduced by Labour;
- **Conduct a review of the Government's Preventing Violent Extremism Strategy**, which is supposed to stop vulnerable people from becoming terrorists but which has been accused of spying on innocent Muslims.

Foreign Affairs

A Conservative Government will champion a distinctive British foreign policy, based on the renewing and reinforcing of our engagement with the rest of the world, the promotion of free trade, the tackling of climate change and poverty and the upholding of our values.

Our approach to foreign affairs is based on a belief in freedom, human rights and democracy. We are sceptical about grand utopian schemes to remake the world. We will work patiently with the grain of other societies, but we will always support liberal values and human rights because they provide the foundations for stability and prosperity.

In order to achieve those goals we have adopted five major themes to guide our approach to foreign affairs. These are:

- **The creation of a National Security Council** to integrate at the highest levels of government the work of our foreign, defence, energy, home and international development departments;
- **A commitment to the transatlantic alliance**, which is as necessary in 2010 as ever in order to make progress in Afghanistan, bring success in May at the review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to deter and dissuade Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons;
- **The deepening of alliances beyond Europe and North America**, including a strong and effective relationship with China. We also want to build a ‘new special relationship’ with India, to provide support for Pakistan, and to strengthen our ties with nations in the Gulf, North Africa and Latin America;
- **The reform of older international institutions such as the United Nations** and the effective use of new ones such as the G20; and
- **A determination to uphold our own values abroad**, not by imposing them on others but by being an inspiring example of them ourselves. We know that Britain is safer and stronger when our values are strongly upheld and widely respected in the world. That is why we must strive to act with moral authority in our foreign policy.

Clegg

British people used to be proud of what our country stood for. But Britain’s reputation has been damaged by dodgy arms deals with dictators, allegations of involvement in torture, and of course the disastrous and illegal invasion of Iraq.

Liberal Democrats will put British values of decency and the rule of law back at the heart of our foreign policy. We will always put the country’s security first. But the national interest demands that we work with allies, stand up for human rights, and help people in the poorest parts of the world.

The Conservatives cannot offer real change. They are mistrustful of international cooperation with an out-dated world view. They do not understand the need for close cooperation with allies in a globalised world. They want to pull up the drawbridge, leaving British foreign policy isolated and impotent.

Liberal Democrats believe that by working closely with our allies, Britain will have more influence on tackling international problems like poverty, climate change and terrorism. We want to see rules upheld and international law observed. To meet the challenges of economic globalisation, international terrorism and climate change, we must work effectively with our partners in the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and the WTO.

Time is running out for the mission in Afghanistan. Unless we change direction, failure is inevitable. We should be encouraging a regional peace process working towards a ceasefire and ultimately a political and constitutional settlement within Afghanistan. A strategy of political reconciliation is now necessary. A “political surge” which engages with moderates and wins them over must now be implemented. While there can be no purely military solution, our troops must be given everything they need to do their job effectively.

We will establish a full and independent public inquiry into allegations of British government involvement in torture. We will make tough rules on corruption and arms sales. We want the inquiry into the Iraq war to be open, with all meetings held in public except for reasons of national security. We also want a full judicial inquiry into British collusion in torture and “extraordinary rendition”.

We ask a huge amount of our brave servicemen and women. But they have never been properly rewarded with the pay and conditions they deserve. They are sent into conflict without proper equipment, have to put up with sub-standard housing and have been stretched to the limit by two wars. Too much MoD money is frittered away through poor decisions and waste.

Liberal Democrats would make the welfare of the men and women of our armed forces a priority. We would speed up forces’ family housing renovation and ensure that no serviceman or woman was sent into harm’s way on less basic pay than the starting salaries of emergency services personnel. We would spend taxpayers’ money more effectively on equipping our armed forces properly for the military tasks of today and tomorrow.

Labour has let down our Armed Forces. The quality of family housing is disgraceful. They have been stretched to breaking point through two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and suffer from a lack of equipment. The Conservatives attack Labour, but many problems stem from their time in Government.

According to the Government’s own report, the Ministry of Defence is £36bn in the red. Yet Labour and the Conservatives are in denial about the long-term impact of this problem. The Strategic Defence Review now underway must take a long hard look at Britain’s defence and security priorities.

Britain needs to move away from a Cold War-style posture towards a more relevant armed forces structure. If we are to continue to have the capability to be a force for good in the world we need far greater cooperation with our NATO and EU partners.

Liberal Democrats do not believe that the UK can afford the billions of pounds the Government wants to spend on a like-for-like replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system. Full-scale Trident is a cold war system that we no longer need nor can afford. We believe that less expensive alternatives should be considered.

Defence

We ask so much of our Armed Forces. But they have never been rewarded with the fair pay and conditions they deserve. They are sent into conflict without proper equipment, have to put up with sub-standard housing and have been stretched to the limit by two wars. Too much money is wasted through poor decisions and waste. The brave men and women of our armed forces are the most precious military asset we have. They must be treated fairly, with pay and conditions that reflect their amazing commitment to this country. They must get the right equipment to do their jobs properly and as securely as possible. Liberal Democrats would put the welfare of our forces first. We would ensure that no serviceman or women was sent into harm’s way on less basic pay than the starting salary of a police constable. We would spend taxpayers’ money more effectively on equipping our forces for the tasks of the future, not old Cold War threats.

A pay raise for the lower ranks. Our brave troops put their lives on the line for this country. But too many of them are paid a pittance in reward. Liberal Democrats will give

lower ranks a pay rise, so that their pay is brought into line with the starting salary of police constables. We will also reduce the number of civil servants in the Ministry of Defence and senior officer in the Armed Forces.

Homes for heroes. Too many armed forces' families live in shoddy housing. The least our heroes and their families deserve is a decent home. We would double the rate of modernisation of forces' family homes.

No to like-for-like Trident. Full-scale Trident is a Cold War system intended for a by-gone age. It is unnecessary and, at £100bn over a lifetime, it is unaffordable. We will hold a full defence review to establish the best alternative for Britain's future security.

Europe

Globalisation has an increasing impact on our lives. Much of it is positive, but there are also big challenges in this rapidly changing world. Criminal gangs are taking advantage of new technology and freedom of movement, our natural environment is in danger and failed states threaten stability across the globe. Only close international co-operation can hope to deal with these threats. Liberal Democrats believe European cooperation is the best way for Britain to be strong and safe in this changing world. But we need to change the way we do it: putting Britain front and centre in the European Union will get us more influence than if we remain lukewarm, like we have been, or withdraw to the fringes as the Conservatives want. Liberal Democrats will stand up for the crime-fighting measures that keep Britain safe and ensure Europe works together on defence and security matters. But we will also keep up pressure on the EU to improve – reforming wasteful agricultural subsidies and scrapping the expensive second Parliament in Strasbourg.

Keep Britain safe – keep Britain part of international crime-fighting. The rise of crossborder crime means we need to work with our partners to tackle fraud, drugs and paedophile networks. We must not expose Britain to attack from criminal gangs. Liberal Democrats will keep Britain at the heart of international crime-fighting measures such as the European Arrest Warrant and the European Police Office (Europol) that the Conservatives want us to pull out of.

Share the security burden - more defence co-operation with allies. European countries need to work together more effectively on defence and security. There are huge savings to be made by buying in bulk and sharing military assets. With the defence budget under terrible strain, it would be irresponsible not to pursue this.

Keep the pressure on for CAP reform and to close wasteful Strasbourg Parliament. Europe is vital to Britain's interests, but that doesn't make it perfect. We will continue to fight for reform of agricultural subsidies so farmers get a fair deal. And we will fight to stop MEPs having to travel to Strasbourg every month, wasting €200m a year.

Britain in the World

British people used to be proud of what our country stood for. But our reputation has been damaged by dodgy arms deals with dictators, allegations of involvement in torture, and of course the disastrous and illegal invasion of Iraq. Liberal Democrats will put British values of fairness and the rule of law back at the heart of our foreign policy. We will always put the country's security first. But the national interest demands that we work with allies, stand up for human rights, and help people in the poorest parts of the world. We will not repeat the errors of Iraq. We will establish a full, independent public inquiry into allegations of British government

involvement in torture. We will make tough rules on corruption and arms sales. By working closely with our allies, Britain will have more influence in tackling international problems like poverty climate change and terrorism.

A full inquiry into allegations of British complicity in torture and state kidnapping.

Liberal Democrats are completely opposed to the use of torture and state-kidnapping known as extraordinary rendition. The Government has consistently failed to tell the truth about the extent of its involvement in these practices by foreign intelligence agencies, including the CIA. Only a full inquiry will get to the bottom of the issue and restore Britain's reputation for decency and fairness.

Critical supporters of the Afghanistan mission. We support the mission in Afghanistan.

Failure would have devastating consequences for Afghanistan, the region, for NATO and for Britain's security. But we owe it to our troops to ask tough questions about how success can be achieved. We will continue to demand that the strategy in Afghanistan pushes for a more legitimate government, tackles corruption and involves others players in the region. There must be a political surge alongside the planned military surge to bring over moderate Taliban.

Brown Cameron Clegg

Score: 5/10 5/10 6.5/10

Rationale: Brown's and Cameron's policies represent the status quo, whereas, Clegg's policy is more progressive and asks tough, honest questions.

Brown's policy fails to accept the reality of the Afghanistan war, and the fact that after nine years in Afghanistan, America and its allies have failed including the Karzai government which is riddled with corruption and represents only 10% of the Afghan population (based on the 2009 Afghanistan Presidential election results).

Clegg offers the most honest approach to British foreign policy.

Overall Results

Scores:	Brown	Cameron	Clegg
Candidates:			
Background	6.7/10	6.8/10	6.2/10
Vision	7/10	6/10	6.5/10
Incumbency	6/10		
Totals for Candidates:	19.7/30 (66%)	12.8/20 (64%)	12.7/20 (64%)
Policies:			
Economic	6.5/10	7/10	7.5/10
Governance	6/10	7/10	6/10
Social	6.5/10	6.5/10	8/10
Health	7/10	7/10	8/10
Education	6.5/10	7.5/10	6/10
Environment	7.5/10	7.5/10	6.5/10
Immigration	5.5/10	5.5/10	6.5/10
National Security/ Foreign Affairs	5/10	5/10	6.5/10
Totals for Policies:	50.5/80 (63%)	53/80 (66%)	55/80 (69%)
Overall Total Scores:			
Candidates	19.7/30	12.8/20	12.7/20
Policies	50.5/80	53/80	55/80
Totals:	69.7/110	65.8/100	67.8/100

Overall Ranking:

1. Nick Clegg, Liberal Democrat (67.8% grade—C+ grade)
2. David Cameron, Conservative (65.8% grade—C+ grade)
3. Gordon Brown, Labour (63.4% grade—C grade)

C+ grade refers to a slightly more than satisfactory candidate in terms of representing the relevant population group. The candidate does not stand out as a political representative. He or she is mediocre.

C grade refers to a satisfactory candidate in terms of representing the relevant population group. The candidate does not stand out as a political representative. He or she is mediocre.

The lower the grade, the less satisfactory the candidate is. The higher the grade, the more satisfactory the candidate is.

Analysis

3.4% separates all three candidates.

2% separates the two highest ranked candidates.

Clegg had the highest individual category score with 80% for social and health policies.

Brown and Cameron had the lowest individual category score with 50% for National Security/Foreign Affairs.

The scores for the two main categories candidates and policies were consistent fairly for all three candidates—in the C and C+ range.

Overall, all three candidates had mediocre scores with highest grade of C+. The highest score attainable is A+ (95% to 100%).

Conclusion

There is little to choose from between the three candidates, Brown, Cameron, and Clegg as indicated by only 3.4% separating them. Also, the candidates overall scores of 63.4%, 65.8%, and 67.8% are mediocre, which means that the candidates and their parties, Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats are unworthy of a majority government.

A hung parliament would be a consistent election result with this study.