

# BIG BROTHER WATCH

## General Election Briefing: 2024

### CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Our 5 key asks.....2

How the parties perform against our 5 key asks.....3

    Conservative Party.....3

    Green Party.....8

    Labour Party.....12

    Liberal Democrats.....17

    Plaid Cymru.....21

    Reform UK.....25

    SNP .....29

Our 5 key asks: in detail.....34

### Introduction

The General Election on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024 is a vital opportunity for the country to set the course for the country for the next 5 years.

Big Brother Watch is a strictly non-partisan organisation with a mission to protect civil liberties in the UK, no matter who is in government.

As you consider how to use your vote, we are providing information and analysis on what to expect from the major political parties on the 5 key privacy and free speech policy areas that we are campaigning on: namely, facial recognition surveillance, bank spying, censorship, IDs and broader privacy/rights rules and laws.

This is a living document – we will update it very regularly as we get new information. In particular, we will update it as the major parties release their manifestos, which we will analyse alongside our 5 key asks here.

Any questions? Get in touch: [info@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk](mailto:info@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk)

**Our 5 key asks:**

**1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance**

**1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces**

**1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition**

**2) No bank spying**

**2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes**

**2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs**

**3) No censorship**

**3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units**

**4) No 2 ID**

**4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID**

**5) Privacy for all**

**5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance**

**5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down**

**5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998**

You can write to your candidates, urging them to stand up for civil liberties on these 5 key issues if they are elected to Parliament, using our easy tool:

<https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/campaigns/election-watch-2024/>

# How the parties perform against our 5 key asks

X = poor, V = good, ? = unknown/mixed

## Conservative Party

Read the manifesto [here](#).

CONSERVATIVE PARTY	How they perform
1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	X
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	X
2) No bank spying	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	X
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
3) No censorship	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	X
4) No 2 ID	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	?
5) Privacy for all	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	X
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	X

## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces – X (poor)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – X (poor)

### Manifesto

The Conservative Party manifesto, published 11 June 2024, pledged to equip police with facial recognition technology ([p.44](#)):

“(…) giving officers new powers and tools to catch criminals, including technology like facial recognition”.

### Background

Successive Conservative governments since 2015 have overseen the emergence of live facial recognition surveillance in the UK, from policing to retail, including [Home Office](#) spending and support. They have ignored calls from parliamentary committees such as the Science and Technology Committee, as well as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, to suspend live facial recognition surveillance in the UK. They have also resisted calls to introduce legislation regulating either live or retrospective facial recognition. It remains that not a single Act of Parliament contains the words ‘facial recognition’, although the UK has a far greater use of the surveillance tech than any other country in the West.

They have also been responsible for the subversion of the country’s [passport](#) photos into a little-known giant facial recognition database, used for ‘retrospective’ facial recognition searches by authorities in absence of any explicit legal basis.

Current Policing Minister Chris Philp is a champion of live facial recognition surveillance and has [pledged](#) to expand its use in policing and in retail on the UK’s high streets.

Last year we [exposed](#) Philp’s relationship with facial recognition company Facewatch, and his office’s pressure on the Information Commissioner for a “favourable” outcome for the company when it was under investigation. The company was found to be in [breach](#) of data protection rules in 8 areas.

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – X  
(poor)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (mixed)

### Manifesto

The Conservative Party manifesto pledged to introduce a new Fraud Bill giving DWP powers akin to HMRC, which we understand would include the mass bank spying powers on the premise of dealing with welfare fraud that we defeated as parliament was prorogued in May 2024 ([p.23](#)):

“(…) the level of welfare fraud remains far too high, having more than doubled during the pandemic. To deliver further savings, we will maintain our zero-tolerance approach to fraud. This will include a new Fraud Bill to give DWP powers similar to that of HMRC, so we can treat benefit fraud like we do tax fraud with new powers to identify, investigate and pursue fraudsters.”

The manifesto does not contain any pledges or information relating to CBDCs.

### Background

Sunak’s government introduced last-minute amendments to a Data Bill late 2023 that effectively attempted to smuggle in unprecedented [mass financial surveillance](#) powers into law, on the premise of dealing with welfare fraud. Big Brother Watch joined with 40+ civil society groups and 270,000 petition signatories to fight the [financial snoopers’ charter](#) and won, when the powers were dropped after the Prime Minister called a General Election.

Sunak’s government also planned to pilot a ‘CBDC’ or ‘digital pound’ by 2025 – which risks being a ‘Spycoin’. We’ve been campaigning for protections against any privacy invasive, programmable or mandatory digital currency that could erode people’s rights or equality (see [NoSpycoin.com](#)) and we encouraged 50,000 people to respond to the government’s CBDC consultation.

In January 2024, the government [responded](#) to the consultation with promises that reflected many of our key asks: promising parliamentary involvement, legal privacy guarantees, ultimate user control and safeguarding cash availability.

So, we know a Conservative government would pilot a CBDC and we have some encouraging promises, but we have not seen enough detail to make a full assessment of the plans. There are no indications that the plans have been dropped – Big Brother Watch is in a Treasury working group discussing the policy issues. Given the current plans the Conservative government has to pilot a CBDC, it is worryingly opaque that this has not been discussed openly in the manifesto.

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – X (poor)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Conservative Party manifesto on its counter-disinformation plans.

#### Background

The Conservative government was responsible for the controversial activities of the Counter Disinformation Unit which we [exposed](#) in 2023. The CDU monitored opposition to government policies on social media - recording MPs, journalists, academics, and rights campaigners in secret "disinformation reports.

Rather than dissolve the Unit, the government rebranded it as the 'National Security Online Information Team' – and continued to refuse committees, such as the [Intelligence and Security Committee](#), oversight of the Unit's activities.

However, we do have evidence that their content flags have [reduced by 95%](#) since we published our investigation.

The government has not yet responded to our call, recently backed by the [Culture, Media and Sport Committee](#), for an inquiry into the Unit's "counter disinformation" activities.

### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ? (mixed)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Conservative Party manifesto on its ID plans.

#### Background

The Conservative Government was responsible for introducing the [Elections Act 2022](#), which created a legal requirement for voters to show a form of photo ID at polling stations. This [policy](#) has been widely criticised for its discriminatory impact on older, marginalised and vulnerable individuals or groups – including by former Conservative minister [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#) - as well as the effect upon civil liberties. As ID is required for more and more activities, we inch closer and closer towards becoming a "papers, please" country.

The Conservative Government has also been introducing a giant digital identity system for the public to access basic services, including tax and benefits. This

system could give the Government free rein to share the personal identity information of millions of people between government departments. Whilst this system is being rolled out, the Government is also cultivating a [digital identity market](#) of private companies that can perform identity checks online.

In 2023, Sir Tony Blair and Lord William Hague attempted to [resurrect plans for mandatory ID cards](#). However, Rishi Sunak's spokesperson responded that there "are no plans to introduce digital ID. Our position on physical ID cards remains unchanged."

## 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – X (poor)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – X (poor)

## Manifesto

There is nothing in the Conservative Party manifesto on worker surveillance or data protection.

The manifesto does leave open the possibility of repealing citizens' fundamental rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, which are incorporated into domestic law via the Human Rights Act 1998, stating ([p.36](#)):

"If we are forced to choose between our security and the jurisdiction of a foreign court, including the EctHR [European Court of Human Rights], we will always choose our security."

## Background

In 2023, the Government tried to overhaul UK data protection law by introducing the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill. The Bill threatened to weaken privacy and data protection rights for all, unleash automated decision-making capabilities, and permit mass financial surveillance. The Bill failed to make it through legislative wash-up once Parliament was prorogued, thanks to our campaigning and opposition from parliamentarians from across the House.

Factions within the Conservative Party have targeted the European Convention on Human Rights for over a [decade](#). In 2023, multiple Cabinet ministers, along with other senior Tories, called on the Prime Minister to [withdraw from ECHR membership](#) in relation to courts blocking the deportation of migrants from the UK to Rwanda. In 2022, Dominic Raab, the former Secretary of State for Justice,

spearheaded plans to [abolish the Human Rights Act](#), proposing to replace it with a considerably weaker 'Bill of Rights'.

## Green Party

Read the manifesto [here](#).

GREEN PARTY	How they perform
1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	✓
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	✓
2) No bank spying	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	✓
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
3) No censorship	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	✓
4) No 2 ID	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	?
5) Privacy for all	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	✓
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	✓



## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces –  
✓ (good)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

The Green Party Manifesto pledges “an end to (...) the use of facial recognition software” within the context of policing ([p.39](#)).

### Background

The Green Party’s commitment to end the use of facial recognition software appears to span both live and retrospective police use of the technology.

All Green parliamentarians in the previous Parliament signed a [letter](#) to the CEO of Fraser’s Group, calling on the private retail chain to end the use of live facial recognition in their stores.

Green peer, Baroness Jenny Jones, started a joint [legal challenge](#) with Big Brother Watch in 2018 in attempt to stop the Metropolitan Police using live facial recognition surveillance. Baroness Jones also instigated the [first ever parliamentary debate](#) on facial recognition, with a Question for Short Debate in the House of Lords in 2018.

Green London Assembly members including [Sian Berry](#) and [Zack Polanski](#) have consistently advocated against live facial recognition over the years, in the Assembly and the public forum, and have attended police deployments of the technology alongside Big Brother Watch to monitor and advocate against its use.

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ✓  
(good)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Green Party manifesto relating to either the mass bank spying powers or CBDCs.

### Background

Although there was no formal commitment in the manifesto to reject bank spying powers in the future, Professor Catherine Rowett, Spokesperson for Work, Employment and Social Security, previously joined parliamentarians in [calling upon the Government](#) to drop these powers. Baroness Jones also [spoke strongly](#) against the plans in the House of Lords.

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ✓ (good)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Green Party manifesto on its counter-disinformation plans.

#### Background

Despite no call for an inquiry or review of the government's counter disinformation units in the manifesto itself, Caroline Lucas MP previously led the [calls for an inquiry](#) after she was flagged by said units for criticising government ministers and policy during Covid. Lucas said on record "The CDU is clearly not fit for purpose, and a full investigation must be opened immediately."

### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ? (mixed)

#### Manifesto

There is no commitment to prevent mandatory ID or digital ID.

#### Background

The Green manifesto does not address mandatory digital ID.

However, the party has pledged to end mandatory voter-ID ([p.33](#)).

### 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ✓ (good)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – ✓ (good)

#### Manifesto

There are no commitments specifically on preventing excessive worker surveillance in the Green Party manifesto although the document states that:

“Every worker will have a right to access their data and to appeal management decisions. Gig employers that repeatedly breach data protection, employment or tax law will be denied licences to operate.”

The Green manifesto does pledge to build data protection standards in the UK ([p.38](#)):

“Elected Greens would push to establish the UK as a leading voice on standards for the rule of law and democracy in digital spaces with a Digital Bill of Rights [...] The Digital Bill of Rights will give the public greater control over their data, ensuring UK data protection is as strong as any other regulatory regime.”

The manifesto also pledges to “defend the Human Rights Act” ([p.34](#)).

### Background

The Green Party is explicit in its commitment to defending the Human Rights Act.

It also pledges to build up data protection rights rather than erode them.

Whilst there are no specific commitments related directly to workplace surveillance, the manifesto does refer to the introduction of a Charter of Workers’ Rights and data access rights which could address some of the concerns.

# Labour Party

Read the manifesto [here](#)

<b>LABOUR PARTY</b>	<b>How they perform</b>
<b>1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance</b>	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	?
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	?
<b>2) No bank spying</b>	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	?
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
<b>3) No censorship</b>	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	?
<b>4) No 2 ID</b>	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	?
<b>5) Privacy for all</b>	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	✓
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	?
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	✓

## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces – ? (unknown)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is no explicit mention of facial recognition surveillance in the Labour Party Manifesto. However, it does mention that ([p.69](#)):

“Police must change the way they operate [...] with technology and investigative techniques keeping pace with modern threats”.

### Background

Despite [previous commitments](#) towards banning facial recognition surveillance under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, Labour’s 2024 manifesto makes no such pledge. While many Labour MPs have [voiced concerns](#) over the use of facial recognition by police forces and in public spaces, this commitment has yet to be made by members of the current front bench, who have neither made statements against or in favour of the surveillance technology.

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ? (unknown)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Labour Party manifesto regarding rejecting bank spying.

There is no mention of CBDCs.

### Background

There is no formal commitment in the manifesto to reject bank spying powers in the future. However, several [Labour MPs](#), including Sir Chris Bryant, challenged the powers when the Data Bill was debated in the House of Commons. Many other Labour Party MPs signed an [EDM](#) calling for the powers to be scrapped.

During the Bill's passage through the House of Lords, Baroness Chakrabarti supported an amendment to completely remove the measures from the Bill. Other Labour Lords, including Lord Sikka, Baroness Lister, and Baroness Maggie Jones, spoke critically of the proposals. However, despite voicing serious concerns, no front bench Labour Peers had signed the stand part amendment before the government dropped the Bill.

The Labour Party supported the Conservative Government "exploring" a UK CBDC, whilst raising questions about privacy, trust and financial inclusion. Then Shadow Treasury Exchequer, [Abena Oppong-Asare](#), said in February 2023:

"Labour welcomes that the Bank of England will be exploring the potential benefits of a central bank digital currency, or CBDC. With the rise of digital payments, and with the European Union, the US and China all exploring the use of CBDCs, we recognise the growing case for a state-backed digital pound to protect the integrity and sovereignty of the Bank of England and the UK's financial and monetary system.

"We fully support the Bank of England's work on this area, but there are important questions that must be addressed before we decide whether the potential benefits of implementing a new payments infrastructure outweigh the risks."

She further added, "A digital pound must never replace physical money. "

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ? (unknown)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Labour Party manifesto on its counter-disinformation plans.

#### Background

The Labour Party has not established a strong position on the government's Counter Disinformation Unit (CDU). However, Shadow Minister Alex Davies-Jones MP has stated in January 2024, just one year after our investigation, that the CDU has "[sadly \[...\] been quite dormant](#)". She also said that "[the provisions in the \[Online Safety\] Act would not go far enough if we faced circumstances similar to the pandemic](#)".

More broadly, the Labour Party has repeatedly supported measures that would further restrict free speech in recent years. In November 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shadow Health and Culture secretaries joined to call for [emergency censorship laws](#) to create financial and even criminal penalties for social media firms that do not remove certain antivax content. We [responded](#) to the proposal at the time.

Labour came out strongly against removing the requirement for social media companies to censor so-called 'legal but harmful' content from the Online Safety Bill (now Online Safety Act)'s passage last year, with then [Shadow Culture Secretary Lucy Powell](#) denouncing its removal from the Bill as creating a 'licence to troll'.

Given the combination of these kinds of attitudes towards free speech, the manifesto pledge made regarding the Online Safety Act is rather concerning ([p.103](#)):

"Labour will build on the Online Safety Act, bringing forward provisions as quickly as possible, and explore further measures to keep everyone safe online, particularly when using social media."

#### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ? (unknown)

##### Manifesto

There is no commitment to prevent mandatory ID or digital ID.

##### Background

The previous Labour government wanted to [introduce ID cards](#). In recent times, the Labour Party has not yet followed in their footsteps.

#### 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ✓ (good)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ? (unknown)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – ✓ (good)

##### Manifesto

The Labour Party manifesto does not mention workplace surveillance.

The manifesto does not pledge to build data protection standards in the UK. Instead, it points towards increased data sharing through public services ([p.35](#)):

"we will create a National Data Library to bring together existing research programmes and help deliver data-driven public services"

and ([p.81](#)):

"Labour will improve data sharing across services, with a single unique identifier, to better support children and families".

The manifesto explicitly commits to protect the UK's human rights (p.118-119):

“We will use the UK's unique position in NATO, the UN, G7, G20 and the Commonwealth to address the threats we face, and to uphold human rights and international law. Labour values international law because of the security it brings. Britain will unequivocally remain a member of the European Convention on Human Rights.”

### Background

Although there are no commitments specifically to prevent excessive worker surveillance in the Labour Party manifesto, the Party's May 2024 “[Plan to Make Work Pay](#)” (p.10-11) included a pledge to ensure that rights and protections in the workplace keep pace with technological change, specifically in the context of privacy-invasive surveillance technology, spyware and discriminatory algorithmic decision making.

The manifesto makes no pledges regarding upholding data protection standards in the UK. While Labour MPs did not take a strong position on many data protection issues during the course of the Conservative Government's Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, the trajectory towards increased data sharing for public services will likely raise privacy and data protection issues.



# Liberal Democrat Party

Read the manifesto [here](#).

<b>LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY</b>	<b>How they perform</b>
<b>1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance</b>	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	✓
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	✓
<b>2) No bank spying</b>	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	✓
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
<b>3) No censorship</b>	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	?
<b>4) No 2 ID</b>	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	✓
<b>5) Privacy for all</b>	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	✓
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	✓

## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces –  
✓ (good)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

The Liberal Democrats' manifesto, published 10 June 2024, pledges to roll back the use of live facial recognition technology (p.94):

“(…) immediately halt the use of live facial recognition surveillance by the police and private companies”.

and to introduce

“(…) a legally binding regulatory framework for all forms of biometric surveillance”.

### Background

The Liberal Democrats have [historically](#) positioned themselves against the use of facial recognition technology, with the commitment to stopping the police use of live facial recognition surveillance appearing in their election manifesto since [2019](#).

In [2023](#), almost all Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament signed Big Brother Watch's pledge to put an immediate top to the use of live facial recognition surveillance. Signatories included Sir Ed Davey, the Liberal Democrats' leader, and Lord Clement-Jones, Lords spokesperson for Science, Innovation, and Technology.

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ✓  
(good)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto relating to either the mass bank spying powers or CBDCs.

## Background

Although there is no pledge within the manifesto to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes, the Liberal Democrats opposed the Government's attempt to sneak in unprecedented mass financial surveillance powers into law at the end of 2023. Lord Clement-Jones co-sponsored amendments in the House of Lords which sought to remove the powers from the DPDI Bill and spoke strongly against the measures. Lord Clement-Jones also joined other parliamentarians, including Lord Palmer of Childs Hill, Wendy Chamberlain MP, and Wera Hobhouse MP in [writing to the government](#) to call for the powers to be dropped.

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ? (unknown)

## Manifesto

There is nothing in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto on its counter-disinformation plans.

## Background

At the time of writing, nothing has been said by the party on an inquiry or investigation into the CDU.

### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ✓ (good)

## Manifesto

The Liberal Democrat manifesto does not comment on mandatory ID or digital ID.

## Background

Although there is no pledge in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto regarding preventing mandatory implementation of IDs, the Liberal Democrats have previously attempted to legislate to ensure a legal right to alternatives to digital ID. Science and Innovation Spokesperson Lord Clement-Jones tabled an [amendment](#) to the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill in April 2024 to establish the right to non-digital ID, citing the importance of liberty and equality.

Separately, the Lib Dem manifesto also pledges to repeal the Conservatives' voter ID scheme ([p.76](#)) and, in doing so, would reduce the number of situations in which identity checks are mandatory.

## 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ✓ (good)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto on worker surveillance.

The manifesto contains multiple commitments to raise data protection standards across diverse areas, including a commitment to a Digital Bill of Rights (which we believe would contain improved data protections), regulation of biometric surveillance, "ending the bulk collection of communications data and internet connection records" ([p.94](#)), to "create a clear, workable and well-resourced cross-sectoral regulatory framework for artificial intelligence that (...) establishes transparency and accountability (...) and respects the privacy of innocent people" ([p.19](#)), to "[protect] patient data and patients' rights to opt out of data sharing" ([p.35](#)), and to "establish a firewall to prevent public agencies from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement and repeal the immigration exemption in the Data Protection Act" ([p.90](#)).

The manifesto explicitly pledges to protect the human rights framework in domestic law ([p.10](#)):

"Champion the Human Rights Act and resist any attempts to weaken or repeal it"

and via the ECHR ([p.94](#)):

"Upholding the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and resisting any attempts to withdraw from it."

### Background

The Liberal Democrats [opposed measures in the Data Bill](#) 2023 that sought to strip back data protection standards.

# Plaid Cymru

Read the manifesto [here](#).

PLAID CYMRU	How they perform
<b>1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance</b>	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	✓
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	✓
<b>2) No bank spying</b>	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	✓
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
<b>3) No censorship</b>	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	?
<b>4) No 2 ID</b>	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	?
<b>5) Privacy for all</b>	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	?
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	✓

## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces – ✓ (good)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

Plaid Cymru's manifesto, published 13 June 2024, does not mention facial recognition surveillance.

### Background

Although facial recognition surveillance does not appear in Plaid Cymru's General Election manifesto, Plaid Cymru's leadership has taken strong stances against live facial recognition.

In March [2022](#), then-leader of Plaid Cymru Adam Price MS called on the then First Minister of Wales to support a ban on live facial recognition surveillance from publicly-owned spaces in Wales and commented on its discriminatory impact.

In [2019](#), group leader of Plaid Cymru in Westminster Liz Saville-Roberts and the (then) three other Plaid MPs tabled an Early Day Motion stating it "urges the Government to ban facial recognition technology to protect and withhold a free democratic society."

Plaid Cymru's Police and Crime Commissioner Manifesto (2024) refers to "appropriate governance" of facial recognition – likely reflecting the fact that policing is not devolved to the Senedd (a PCC could not ban police using facial recognition, for instance):

"We want to see appropriate governance on the use of facial recognition technology, and are concerned that the use of AI techniques may exacerbate existing inequalities in policing by targeting particular groups who may become suspects without any additional intelligence identifying their involvement in crime." ([p.9](#))

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ✓ (good)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Plaid Cymru manifesto relating to either mass bank spying powers or CBDCs.

## Background

Although there is no manifesto commitment regarding the mass bank spying powers, the three MPs from Plaid Cymru (Ben Lake MP, Hywel Williams MP, and the party's ex-Westminster leader Liz Saville Roberts MP) signed an [EDM](#) calling for the powers to be removed.

Ben Lake MP has previously submitted [written questions](#) to the Treasury regarding inclusion and protection of cash infrastructure in a potential digital pound.

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ? (unknown)

## Manifesto

There is nothing in the Plaid Cymru manifesto on counter-disinformation.

## Background

Plaid Cymru has not been outspoken on the government's counter disinformation units. However, the manifesto makes free speech commitments with regards to physical protests, pledging to repeal the relevant parts of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023, stating that ([p.28](#)):

“We support the right of an individual to freedom of expression and assembly.”

### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ? (unknown)

## Manifesto

Plaid Cymru's manifesto does not commit to reject mandatory ID or digital ID.

## Background

There is no specific pledge on ID cards, digital or otherwise, but Plaid Cymru has been vocally opposed to them in the past. When talking about ID cards, previous parliamentary leader Elfyn Llwyd [said](#) in 2005 that they “represent an erosion of civil liberties and a significant shift away from the rights of the individual in favour of the rights of the state [...] They are an expensive and ineffective way of targeting identity crime, benefit fraud and terrorism”.

## 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ? (unknown)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Plaid Cymru manifesto on worker surveillance.

There is nothing in the manifesto on improving data protection standards.

The manifesto does commit to uphold human rights law ([p.56](#)):

“Plaid Cymru supports the UK remaining a member of the European Court of Human Rights and we support maintaining the human rights which we, collectively, hold.”

and ([p.52](#)):

“Plaid Cymru supports upholding of international law and organisations that maintain international law such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Governments and countries cannot pick and choose which international rules to follow based on their own self-interest.”

### Background

Although there are no specific pledges regarding workplace surveillance, the manifesto commits to legislating to improve employment rights, including the right to ‘disconnect’ (a right not to be routinely contacted about work outside normal working hours - [p.11](#)).

In addition to the commitments to international law, including the UK remaining a member of the ECtHR, Liz Saville-Roberts MP, previously Plaid Cymru’s Westminster leader, vocally criticised the Government’s plans to abolish the Human Rights Act and in 2022 called for a Welsh Human Rights Act to “[counter Westminster attacks](#)”.



# Reform UK

Read the manifesto [here](#).

REFORM	How they perform
1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	?
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	?
2) No bank spying	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	✓
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	✓
3) No censorship	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units	✓/?
4) No 2 ID	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	✓
5) Privacy for all	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?
5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down	?
5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998	X

## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

- 1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces – ? (unknown)
- 1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

The Reform manifesto, published 17 June 2024, does not mention facial recognition surveillance.

### Background

Reform have not yet made their position on facial recognition technology clear. However, Nigel Farage, leader of the party, [criticised](#) China's use of facial recognition technology and called for international regulation on surveillance technology in 2023, noting the implications for state surveillance, human rights and security.

## 2) No bank spying

- 2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ✓ (good)
- 2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ✓ (good)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Reform manifesto regarding mass bank spying powers.

The manifesto outlines Reform's opposition to a UK CBDC ([p.22](#)):

“Reform UK also opposes the Creation of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). We will legislate if necessary to stop Britain becoming a cashless society.”

### Background

The manifesto does not mention mass bank spying powers. Nigel Farage criticised the Conservative Government's mass bank spying proposals as “worrying” in [April](#) 2024 noting that the powers would impact everyone's bank accounts and change the relationship between financial institutions and the government.

However, he also said that “having powers [the DWP] having powers to check into people's bank accounts and assets [...] on the face of it is a good thing”. Given he subsequent criticism, it is unclear whether he was referring to targeted/suspicion-led powers or not.

The commitment to oppose CBDCs follows positions previously taken by the party. Richard Tice, previous party leader and current Chairman, [spoke](#) in 2023 to the risks CBDCs could raise, including the possibility for abuse. Nigel Farage has also been [vocal](#) in his [criticism](#) of [CBDCs](#), noting the privacy risks and possible sinister applications.

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ✓ /? (good/unclear)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Reform manifesto on the counter-disinformation units.

#### Background

Party Chairman Richard Tice [called](#) for the government to give an "urgent statement" on the "appalling surveillance" carried out by the Counter Disinformation Unit that Big Brother Watch revealed in January 2023, and [said](#) "quick report needed" in June 2023, seemingly referring to a review of the CDU's work, but this is unclear. In 2020, commenting on the Government's former counter-disinformation unit, the 'Rapid Response Unit', Mr Tice [said](#) "it is appalling and terrifying, what you expect in North Korea not Whitehall."

#### Free speech more broadly in the manifesto

The manifesto makes several pledges regarding what it describes as free speech. Whilst the right to free speech in human rights law is neutral on the political leaning of the content of speech, Reform's approach appears politically loaded.

Reform commits to a review of the Online Safety Bill, stating ([p.16](#)):

"Social media giants that push baseless transgender ideology and divisive Critical Race theory should have no role in regulating free speech."

Reform also proposes a "Comprehensive Free Speech Bill" ([p.22](#)):

"legislate to stop left-wing bias and 'woke' ideology. No more de-banking, cancel culture, left wing hate mobs or political bias in public institutions. Stop Sharia law being used in the UK."

Coupled with Reform's commitment to repeal the public's human rights protections (where the right to freedom of speech is enshrined), proposals to legislate to "stop" an ideology or "mob", left or right, suggest some interference with the right to free speech, absent more detailed information.

The manifesto pledges to “ban transgender ideology” in schools, under which it states “no gender questioning”. It is unclear what is meant exactly by this. Whilst the Department for Education has a legitimate role in determining the national curriculum, if the government were to legislate to ban a child “questioning” anything that would interfere with their right to free speech.

#### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ✓ (good)

##### Manifesto

The manifesto makes no commitments relating to mandatory ID or digital ID.

##### Background

Although identity cards are not mentioned, digital or otherwise, Nigel Farage has traditionally been strongly opposed to them. Following Sir Tony Blair and Lord Hague’s revival of the mandatory ID card debate, Farage [spoke strongly](#) against the proposals.

#### 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ? (unclear)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – X (bad)

##### Manifesto

There is nothing in the Reform manifesto on worker surveillance.

The Reform manifesto makes a vague commitment to protecting data and privacy and limiting surveillance, but no information is given as to how or what the policy is ([p.21](#)):

“Our data and privacy must be protected. Surveillance of the public must be limited and those monitoring us held to account.”

Reform would leave the European Convention on Human Rights and “reform” the the Human Rights Act, replacing it with a “British Bill of Rights” in the first 100 days of office ([p.21](#)):

“Leave the European Convention on Human Rights. Commence reform of the Human Rights Act so that it puts the rights of law-abiding people first.”

and ([p.22](#)):

“Replace the 2010 Equalities Act” [sic].

### Background

The notion of a “British Bill of Rights” was [proposed](#) by the Conservative Government in 2022, and was roundly [criticised](#) by human rights groups including [Big Brother Watch](#).

## Scottish National Party

Read the manifesto [here](#).

<b>SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY</b>	<b>How they perform</b>
<b>1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance</b>	
1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces	?
1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition	?
<b>2) No bank spying</b>	
2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes	✓
2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs	?
<b>3) No censorship</b>	
3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government’s counter disinformation units	?
<b>4) No 2 ID</b>	
4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID	?
<b>5) Privacy for all</b>	
5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance	?

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down



5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998



## 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces – ? (unknown)

1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition – ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

The Scottish National Party (SNP) manifesto, published 19 June 2024, does not mention facial recognition surveillance.

### Background

Facial recognition surveillance does not appear in the SNP's General Election manifesto, but MPs have previously taken strong positions against its use. For instance, Tommy Sheppard MP, former shadow SNP spokesperson (Scotland), and Joanna Cherry MP, Chair of the Human Rights (Joint Committee), both signed Big Brother Watch's [pledge](#) to put an immediate stop to live facial recognition surveillance.

However, Keith Brown MSP, Secretary for Justice, previously responded to [calls](#) to expand the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner's remit to cover biometric data, which would facial recognition technology. Brown said that there were no plans for any expansion to take place, leaving facial recognition technology without any formal oversight. This change in itself would not have constituted a 'strict' regulation, as the Commissioner's role is to "[support and promote](#)" best practices, rather than create legally binding regulation.

## 2) No bank spying

2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes – ✓ (good)

2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs - ? (unknown)

### Manifesto

There is nothing in the SNP manifesto regarding mass bank spying powers or CBDCs.

### Background

Despite the bank spying powers not making an appearance in the SNP manifesto, several key members were vocal in their opposition to the UK Government's proposals. During Report stage of the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, Patrick Grady MP challenged the Government's proposals that would allow DWP to "[go snooping around in people's bank accounts](#)", a concern shared by Carol Monaghan MP. Marion Fellows MP, former SNP spokesperson for disabilities, said that the powers would "[decimate civil liberties](#)". MPs including Chris Law, Steven Bonnar, Dr Philippa Whitford, Alison Thewliss, Hannah Bardell, and Martyn Day signed an [EDM](#) calling for the powers to be removed from the Bill. Marion Fellows also attended Big Brother Watch and 38 Degrees' [petition](#) hand-in at Number 10 Downing Street. The petition was signed by over 170,000 people and called on the Government to scrap the powers. This sentiment is underpinned in a manifesto commitment to "scrap proposed punitive welfare reforms" (p24) which could include the proposed financial surveillance measures.

The SNP have yet to take a public position on CBDCs. However, Martyn Day MP, Patricia Gibson MP, and Drew Hendry MP expressed concerns over the privacy and equality impacts of a cashless society during a 2023 Westminster Hall debate on [access to cash](#).

### 3) No censorship

3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units – ? (unknown)

#### Manifesto

There is nothing in the SNP manifesto on the counter-disinformation units.

Regarding free speech more broadly, it pledges to (p28):

"Strengthen Scotland's security by pushing the UK to focus on countering disinformation and misinformation."

No further details are provided as to how this would be achieved.

More broadly on policy issues relating to free speech, the SNP commits to (p25):

"ensuring the Online Safety Act comes into force on time. SNP MPs will press the UK Government to ensure tech firms cannot escape their responsibilities for the content on their platforms through full enforcement of the Act and prompt strengthening of these laws when required."

#### Background

The SNP have not taken a position on the CDU.

On issues relating to free speech, during the course of the Online Safety Bill (now Act) in 2023, then-first Minister, Humza Yousaf MP, [wrote to the UK Government](#)

to “restate the Scottish Government’s position that the scope of the bill should include regulation of ‘legal but harmful’ content for adults”.

In [April 2024](#), Scotland saw its new hate crime act come into force. The Act was controversial, causing critics to express concerns that the new measures, which consolidate and expand existing hate crime offences, could be used maliciously against certain groups for expressing their opinion. Humza Yousaf MP defended the new measures, saying there was “a lot of disinformation” about the reach of the act.

#### 4) No 2 ID

4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID - ? (unknown)

#### Manifesto

The manifesto makes no commitments relating to mandatory ID or digital ID.

#### Background

The SNP has not made a public position on mandatory IDs clear in recent times. In the past, they joined other parties in campaigning against [proposed ID cards legislation](#) (the Identity Cards Act 2006). The party [came under criticism](#) in 2015 for consulting on plans to link the National Health Service Central Register to ‘entitlement cards’, combining people’s personal data with the services they used. When questioned about the proposals, John Swinney MSP, then-Deputy First Minister and current First Minister and leader of the Party, [said that](#) (p6) “the Government opposes identity cards and does not propose to introduce any new national database”. The proposals were not brought forward.

The SNP manifesto also pledges to call on the Government to scrap voter ID legislation (p26). Although this would reduce the number of situations in which identity checks are mandatory, the reasoning provided for this is to rebuild trust and prevent barriers to democratic participation rather than privacy concerns.

#### 5) Privacy for all

5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance - ? (unknown)

5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down – ✓ (good)

5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 – ✓ (good)

#### Manifesto



The manifesto does not make any pledges regarding employer surveillance or data protection standards.

The manifesto commits to call on the UK Government to protect the Human Rights Act and adherence to the ECHR (p26):

“Respect international law and protect rights. Rather than rolling back on rights, we should be seeking to strengthen human rights protections for all. We will call on the UK Government to respect international law and strongly oppose any attempts by the UK government to withdraw the UK from the ECHR or change the Human Rights Act which is integral to the devolution settlement for the Scottish Parliament.”

### Background

Although there are no specific pledges regarding workplace surveillance, the manifesto commits to legislating to improve employment rights and put an end to “exploitative” work practices (p23).

The manifesto does not mention data protection standards. However, members of the SNP, including Patrick Grady MP and Carol Monaghan MP, opposed many aspects of the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill throughout its passage through the House of Commons in 2023. Patrick Grady’s stated the SNP’s [intention to oppose the Bill](#) during Report stage, noting that it “represents a further power grab by the Executive”.

The SNP has been outspoken on the need to protect international and human rights law. In 2022, the SNP expressed “[grave concerns](#)” over plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a weaker UK Bill of Rights. In 2023, Alyn Smith MP, the party’s then-Europe spokesperson, said that SNP MPs would [oppose any attempts](#) by the UK Government to remove the country from the ECHR.

# BIG BROTHER WATCH

## Our 5 key asks: in detail

### 1) Protect rights from facial recognition surveillance

#### 1.1) Ban live facial recognition for generalised surveillance of public spaces

#### 1.2) Strictly regulate retrospective facial recognition

1.1) Live facial recognition (LFR) cameras biometrically scan the faces of every person that walks within the view of the camera – turning our streets into police line-ups. Police have increased their use of LFR by 1,000% in London, and high street retailers have started rolling out LFR with secret, non-police blacklists resulting in intrusion, discrimination and serious injustice.

A black community worker was recently misidentified by LFR and wrongly interrogated by the Met Police, whilst a teenager of Bangladeshi heritage was wrongly searched, publicly accused of being a thief and thrown out of a Home Bargains store after a LFR error. Both victims are now pursuing legal action.<sup>1</sup>

LFR is seriously ineffective and dangerously inaccurate, with particular issues identifying women and people of colour. 77% of all police LFR flags in the UK have been inaccurate<sup>2</sup> and only 0.03% scans resulted in an arrest. The £55m<sup>3</sup> of taxpayers' money planned for LFR would be better spent on traditional, targeted policing and crime prevention.

Whilst the EU AI Act significantly restricts uses of LFR to serious and targeted cases and requires primary legislation, judicial authorisation and oversight, the words “facial recognition” are not in a single Act of Parliament in the UK. The Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>4</sup> and 130 rights groups<sup>5</sup>, including Amnesty and Human Rights Watch, have called for a stop to LFR in the UK.

1.2) Retrospective Facial Recognition [RFR] biometrically compares still images or video recordings taken in the past. Police have created a giant, national facial recognition database by the backdoor, turning the population's passport photos

1 <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/press-releases/landmark-legal-challenges-launched-against-facial-recognition-after-police-and-retailer-misidentifications/>

2 See Metropolitan Police and South Wales Police live facial recognition deployment statistics.

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/apr/10/shoplifting-crackdown-to-include-55m-for-facial-recognition-tools-in-england-and-wales>

4 <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2021/civil-and-political-rights-in-great-britain-march-2020.pdf>, p.89

5 <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/press-releases/180-tech-experts-call-for-global-stop-to-facial-recognition-surveillance/>

into mugshots for biometric searches<sup>6</sup> – although, unlike DNA, fingerprints and other biometrics, there is no parliamentary or specific legal authority. If police make the case that RFR is a necessary forensic tool, parliament must legislate to limit searches to those strictly necessary where less intrusive methods fail and limit databases to serious crime and national security as per DNA.

## 2) No bank spying

### 2.1) Commit to reject mass bank spying for welfare or other purposes

### 2.2) Prevent mandatory invasive CBDCs

2.1) The Government attempted but failed to introduce powers to snoop on the nation's bank accounts, without suspicion, under the premise of tackling fraud and error in the welfare system in the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill. The measures were a monumental threat to financial privacy, reversed the presumption of innocence, and put vulnerable people at risk. The plans met strong cross-party opposition including from the Information Commissioner, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and UK Finance, over 40 privacy, equality, disability rights groups, and 270,000 petition signers who called on the Government to drop the powers<sup>7</sup>. The next government must reject bank spying.

2.2) Another threat to financial privacy is the development of a UK Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), which the Sunak government planned to pilot by 2025. CBDCs, which are typically linked to digital identities, can be incredibly invasive and exploited for intrusive surveillance by the state and Big Tech. CBDCs could also be 'programmable' meaning the potential for direct state control over the public's spending. Parliament's Economic Affairs Committee called the plan "a solution in search of a problem" and warned that digitising such national critical infrastructure would introduce serious security risks. 50,000 members of the public responded to the Government's consultation, raising privacy and inequality concerns.<sup>8</sup> If a UK digital pound is introduced it must not be mandatory and must be at least as privacy-preserving as cash.

## 3) No censorship

### 3.1) Commission an independent inquiry into the government's counter disinformation units

6 <https://libertyinvestigates.org.uk/articles/police-secretly-conducting-facial-recognition-searches-of-passport-database/>

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/04/ministers-urged-to-scrap-plans-for-surveillance-of-benefit-claimants-bank-accounts>

8 <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/press-coverage/the-telegraph-50000-people-respond-to-the-government-consultation-on-a-uk-cbdc/>

Disinformation is a problem - but it's also a term at risk of political exploitation. Big Brother Watch revealed that the UK government's secretive Counter "Disinformation" Unit (CDU) monitored opposition to government policies on social media - recording MPs, journalists, academics, and rights campaigners in secret "disinformation reports"<sup>9</sup>. The Unit flagged lawful speech to social media companies to be suppressed or censored. The government has been forced to apologise for some of its unlawful activity which it admitted was "not impartial".

Despite the Intelligence and Security Committee complaining of an "erosion of oversight"<sup>10</sup> over this and the Culture, Media and Sport Committee urging an independent review of the unit In April 2024,<sup>11</sup> the unit, now rebranded as the 'National Security and Online Information Team', is monitoring and flagging speech in the 2024 general election. Given the Unit has previously included MPs from all parties in its so-called 'disinformation reports', the ongoing lack of oversight into the work of this government body raises serious concerns.

#### 4) No 2 ID

##### 4.1) Commit to never propose mandatory ID or digital ID

Mandatory ID systems raise significant privacy and civil liberties concerns such as increased surveillance and tracking of individuals, abuse of people's private information, and restrictions on individual freedoms. Such systems could disproportionately affect marginalised communities, exacerbating inequalities. In light of the increasing emphasis upon digital ID and proving identity online, it is essential that individuals are not coerced into relying on digital ID and are able to access offline alternatives. In situations where proving identity is truly necessary, people must always have the choice of how they do so. The next Government must never propose mandatory ID cards, digital or otherwise.

---

9 <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Ministry-of-Truth-Big-Brother-Watch-290123.pdf>

10 <https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ISC-Annual-Report-2022-2023-Press-Release.pdf>

11 Trusted voices, House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sixth Report of Session 2023–24, 26 March 2024, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44146/documents/219482/default/>

## **5) Privacy for all**

**5.1) Protect workers from excessive employer surveillance**

**5.2) Build up data protection standards, not water down**

**5.3) Protect the Human Rights Act 1998**

**5.1) The TUC has warned of a huge lack of transparency over the use of AI at work, whilst automated decision making is increasingly being used in shift allocation, recruitment, line management, performance ratings, and deciding who is disciplined or made redundant. The majority of workers (60%) believe they have been subject to surveillance at their most recent job (Britain Thinks), and over half reported stress, anxiety and considered having to resign as a result (UNISON Scotland). The Post Office scandal shows that worker monitoring tech must be approached critically and with strong safeguards, to prevent intrusion and injustice. Unions and privacy groups agree that safeguards are missing – the next government must protect workers from excessive employer surveillance.**

**5.2) At a time when concern is rising about the threats of AI our data protection laws are more important than ever - but the last Parliament also saw these protections come under attack. The next Government must build our data protection standards up not water them down.**

**5.3) The last Parliament saw legal protections for our rights come under attack. The Human Rights Act formally enshrined the rights to free speech and privacy in UK law. Any attempt to tear up the HRA would undermine human rights in the UK.**