

**NI CONSERVATIVES**

**Working hard for  
you in your  
local area.**

**NI Conservatives:  
A plan for local  
government**



## **NI Conservatives – influence from the council chamber to the cabinet table**

The NI Conservatives are a fresh, pro-Union, centre-right party, which is proudly and distinctively Northern Irish, but remains a full part of the UK Conservative Party. We have autonomy on devolved and local government matters and bring a new, common-sense perspective to issues.

Northern Ireland has changed beyond recognition in recent years, but our party political system has not caught up with developments in the wider community. The constitutional question is settled for the foreseeable future and there is an appetite to move beyond the politics of carve-up, to address day to day issues which make a real difference to people's lives and build a shared society for all. Things like creating jobs, rewarding hard work, protecting the vulnerable, encouraging strong families and building strong, harmonious communities. The NI Conservatives are committed passionately to these aims and they inform our policies.

We believe that enterprise and entrepreneurship through the private sector are the key to creating jobs and building prosperity. Local government should help, rather than hinder, local businesses, which create jobs for local people. We'll always oppose waste and demand that rates payers get the best possible value for money services. Local government ought to take a commercial approach to driving down costs and improving performance, rather than using consultations to avoid decision making.

Councils should always focus on the needs, priorities and ambitions of individual communities. This year the people of Northern Ireland will have a chance to elect local councillors to new 'super councils' with enhanced powers. It is an opportunity for a new, professional approach to local politics.

A vote for the NI Conservatives will be a vote to strengthen local democracy, empower your community and change your area for the better.



Working hard in your community.



David Cameron at Park Avenue Hotel.

## **A champion for jobs and local businesses**

We are committed to listening to local businesses and helping them to get on with creating jobs and building the local economy. Too often councils in Northern Ireland have been a source of red tape and bureaucracy which has hindered companies rather than encouraging them to grow.

Whether it's keeping the costs of local parking low, applying a presumption in favour of business when the new councils' draw up their development plans for planning or striking a low business rate, we'll be constantly talking to local business owners and championing their cause.

Local government should be working for companies rather than against them. Every local council should have the health of local businesses at the heart of its plans for the next five years. NI Conservatives will:

- Fight to make sure there is sufficient low cost off street parking for the needs of local businesses.

- Put job creation at the heart of councils' development and economic plans.

- Prioritise attracting tourists to communities in Northern Ireland and regenerating run-down areas of towns and cities.

## **Nourishing local communities and protecting the environment**

The beauty of Northern Ireland's landscape is one of our most important assets. As councils acquire new planning powers, NI Conservatives want to see natural riches protected and the most made of our natural resources, for tourists and locals.

We believe local government has an important role to play in bringing life and vibrancy back into our town centres, encouraging a healthy sense of community and keeping our environment clean.

NI Conservatives will:

- Ensure that new council planning powers are applied fairly and that development plans strike a balance between development, protecting the appearance of communities & providing the correct mix of housing for residents.

- Encourage councils to explore providing free wi-fi in the centre of cities and towns, as technology drops in price.

- Combat vacant shop fronts, by insisting that councils develop 'vacancy strategies' as an urgent priority, to be tested against results every 6 months.

## **Valuing culture, sport and tourism**

Local communities need help from local government to flourish and councils have a key role to play in ensuring every community has the facilities it needs, for locals and tourists alike. NI Conservatives believe that councils need to be imaginative in order to get the best out of rate payers' money, through the mixed economy.

That means looking at opportunities to bring in investment from the private sector, or to form companies which cross public sector boundaries. The emphasis should always be on how to get the best sports facilities, the best tourist attractions and the best cultural amenities for every local community. NI Conservatives will:

- Support greater use of public / private sector partnerships to provide the best management and investment for council leisure and tourist facilities.**
- Prioritise provision of excellent sports facilities, encouraging greater public use of school facilities so that people of all ages can enjoy the benefits of sport.**
- Campaign for laws requiring councils to keep a register of assets of community value, nominated by the local community, with a right for community groups to raise funds and develop bids, if these were to come up for sale.**

## **Ensuring new councils mean better local government**

NI Conservatives believe that the revamp of local councils provides a perfect opportunity to deliver better local government for the people of Northern Ireland. That means a completely professional approach, which always looks to ensure that councillors do their jobs properly and rate payers get the best value for money.

The new councils will have significant new powers and the new councillors will receive more remuneration for their efforts. Voters have a right to expect higher standards & NI Conservatives will work tirelessly to ensure that they are delivered. NI Conservatives will:

- Ask that all councils act to include minimum attendance requirements, better training and the signing of a 'service level agreement' in new councillors' codes of conduct.**
- Insist that all council meetings are open and transparent to the general public, so that elected representatives can be held properly to account.**
- Demand that all councils audit their working practises and share services where possible, to eliminate waste and deliver better value for money for rates payers.**