

**THE POLITICS OF HOPE**

**The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland**  
**Alliance**



**EUROPEAN ELECTON  
MANIFESTO 2009**

## **IAN PARSLEY'S ACTION PLAN – SUMMARY**

I believe it is time to replace the politics of fear with the politics of hope. I am pledged to wipe the political slate clean, delivering a new approach to EU engagement, new answers on the economy, and a new attitude to the environment.

### **Engagement**

- I will run 'interagency meetings' at least once a year in each Council area to notify local community and voluntary groups of upcoming EU legislation, and listen to their concerns;
- I will advocate re-structuring future funding programmes to prioritise tackling division, re-balancing our economy, and delivering sustainable public services;
- I will advocate increasing the transparency of the other EU Institutions, including a "High Commissioner" with specific responsibility for international development;
- I will advocate reductions in MEPs' allowances, to allocate money to EU projects and will publish my voting record, attendance record, and audited expenses claims; and
- I will advocate entry into the Schengen Zone, so as to ensure greater cooperation between police and judicial services on assuring privacy, security and justice across the EU.

### **Economy**

- I will advocate, at EU level, funding designed specifically for not-for-profit manufacturing organisations recruiting from areas of high unemployment;
- I will work to enhance opportunities for people in work or training to participate in EU exchange programmes directly relevant to their chosen profession; and
- I will support a 'Rural White Paper' for the NI Assembly to stimulate an EU-wide conversation on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

### **Environment**

- I will call for the establishment of an EU Infrastructure Bank to be used specifically for cross-border sustainable transport and telecommunications, and an EU Knowledge Bank to be used specifically for information exchange on health, business and conservation;
- I will promote Northern Ireland as a centre for eco-tourism; and
- I will advocate the creation of an EU 'Green Economy Taskforce'; and further regulations to ensure appropriate labelling of products, including food and medicines.

It is time the new Northern Ireland was represented in the new Europe. Our credibility and potential influence have never been higher. That is why I commend to you this Action Plan.

## introduction to **A NEW TYPE OF POLITICS**

We are proud to call Northern Ireland our home, and we are deeply ambitious for it. That is why we have set out on a campaign where you can replace the politics of fear with the politics of hope.

So many of you are disillusioned with party politics. Yet never have you been so engaged by political issues – reforming post-primary education, strengthening our economy, and promoting a healthier environment.

This Action Plan is designed not as a boring policy document but as a clear outline of what you get by backing this campaign. Most of all, via our innovative *WikiFesto* system, it was not only written *for* you, it was written *by* you. That is just one example of how we offer an invitation to a new type of politics for a new generation – one which listens directly to you, and acts directly on your issues.

Across Europe, the Liberal campaign will focus on the ongoing democratisation of the EU and the defence of civil liberties; on the completion of the single market and the defence of small businesses; and on a more sustainable society and the defence of our environment. We want to play a role in an EU which takes the lead on global security issues, responding to the financial crisis, and finding eco-solutions. That means an EU modernised according to the values of liberal democracy and a market which is both free and fair. We are confident that these priorities will see Liberals across Europe retain their place as the fastest growing group in the European Parliament.

For us in Northern Ireland, this campaign is about improving our engagement with Europe, not by rolling over to every ‘directive’ making us work for Europe, but by directing Europe to work for us. It is about improving our economic prospects, not by going to Brussels with a begging bowl, but by ensuring any regulations on the economy defend our small businesses and local charities against the arrogance of the big banks. It is about improving our environmental future, not through fines and scare tactics, but through determined promotion of our local communities. We want Northern Ireland to stand proud in the world and to punch above its weight in global affairs – we must take full advantage of the opportunities the EU offers to achieve this.

At this election the future of the New Generation is at stake – not the future of the border, nor the future of the local institutions, nor orange and green. Our credibility in Europe as a region emerging from conflict has never been higher. Now is the time to vote to recognise that Europe is not the place to engage in the politics of fear. That is why this is a ‘unity’ campaign – and ‘unity’ has never been more important than right now.

We are proud to be Alliance, but also proud to reach out beyond it, to everyone who wants Northern Ireland at last to be presented as outward-looking, forward-thinking and self-confident. So if you are as ambitious for Northern Ireland as we are, and you want to pledge yourself to replacing the politics of fear with the politics of hope, come and join us.

## OPPORTUNITY through ENGAGEMENT

Never have we in Northern Ireland had a better opportunity to engage with the European institutions. A successful peace process and stable political institutions are seen as a success story not just in Belfast, but also in Brussels. Yet what have the institutions in Belfast or in Brussels really done for *you*?

As Chair of European Liberal Youth in Northern Ireland, I was at the forefront of trans-EU policy development for the European Liberals and Democrats, including on improving engagement between EU regions, enhancing trade for our businesses, and delivering sustainable development for our local communities. I have also served in UK and Irish delegations assisting conflict resolution and integration of minorities in regions such as South Tyrol, Estonia and Moldova – these areas remain essential examples of conflict resolution, both within and on the fringes of Europe.

I will proof all EU policy so it reflects the values of the whole of Northern Ireland, including to ensure:

- *all our people benefit from engagement with the EU designed to further peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and elsewhere;*
- *our voters see the European Parliament as a means to ensure their voice is heard directly at the centre of power;*  
*and*
- *people worldwide benefit from an EU committed to highest standards of civil liberties, global fair trade and international aid development.*

### Engagement

You need representatives who can engage effectively both with the European institutions who make so many of our laws, and with you directly to explain what they do for you. You need a candidate who understands Europe having lived elsewhere in the EU, who speaks a few European languages, and who is determined to engage on behalf of all of you, not just one section of the population.

- *I will set up surgeries in each new Council area so that you can engage directly with my office – both so I can inform you about what Europe is doing, and you can inform me about what you would like it to be doing;*
- *I will run ‘interagency meetings’ at least once a year in each Council area to notify local government bodies, voluntary sector organisations and community groups of upcoming EU legislation, and listen to local issues to ensure your concerns and ideas are heard directly when that legislation passes through the European Parliament;*  
*and*
- *I will ensure, through work with NGOs in other EU regions, that Northern Ireland becomes known as a European centre for promotion of conflict resolution and civic participation.*

You know the EU has played a prominent role in supporting peace in Northern Ireland, but you are wary that a lot of the funding it provided was wasted on ‘projects’ rather than being spent on housing, infrastructure and research which would have provided meaningful concrete outcomes for you.

- *I will advocate re-structuring future funding programmes so that they prioritise concrete outcomes in Northern Ireland based on tackling division in our society, re-balancing our economy, and delivering our sustainable public services;*

- *I will meet frequently with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and other senior officials to ensure implementation of EU Directives proceeds more sensibly and transparently;*
- *I will advocate, at EU level, funding designed specifically for not-for-profit manufacturing organisations recruiting from areas of high unemployment, using examples from NI to illustrate good practice in this area; and*
- *I will continue to make the case for improved community relations at home – we must not waste opportunities (such as the ‘Year of International Dialogue’ just passed) to overcome division, not just manage it.*

## **A Free and Fair Northern Ireland in a Free and Fair Europe**

It is easy to talk about ‘reforming the EU institutions’, but you deserve to know the detail of how this will be done by your MEP. I will support modification of the Lisbon Treaty to ensure the EU is capable of acting as a world leader on the three main challenges of our time – global security, the economic downturn, and climate change. Through work inside the European Parliament and engagement with NGOs across the continent (particularly those promoting civic engagement):

- *I will seek to enhance the power of the elected European Parliament in co-decision, particularly so it has a greater role in final amendments to EU legislation;*
- *I will advocate more power for the Council of the Regions (subject to reform of its administrative structure); and*
- *I will advocate increasing the transparency of the other EU Institutions, including a “High Commissioner” with specific responsibility for strengthening the EU’s role in international development, and the capacity of individual regions such as NI to influence this.*

Currently, the issue of expenses is bringing politics in its entirety into disrepute. Nowhere are expenses more outrageous than in the European Parliament, where daily allowances simply for turning up to work are too high, and office expenses are not accountable. Our existing MEPs have done nothing to stop this bandwagon. To ensure more of your money is used to support you, not your public representatives:

- *I will advocate reductions in MEPs’ allowances, with the money allocated towards other EU projects such as improved links to regional legislatures, a new cross-border infrastructure fund, and a Commission for innovation in new industries such as the green economy;*
- *I will publish, online and elsewhere, my voting record, my attendance record, and fully audited expenses claims so you can judge for yourself the value for money I provide; and*
- *I will advocate much stronger coordination between the European Parliament, the NI Bureau in Brussels, the Committee of the Regions, NI-based NGOs, NI-based trades unions and NI-based business organisations so we speak with one voice for the whole of NI – together, we can punch well above our weight.*

## **Expenses**

The Galvin Report in 2008 was a damning indictment of the MEPs’ expenses system, demonstrating that MEPs could easily get away without any accountability on their expenses – one case had an MEP claiming €40,000 for a non-existent office; another had an MEP claiming €182,000 for staffing costs which were all paid to the same person (thought to be a family member). Small wonder the sitting MEPs wanted such a report to remain confidential!

**Shockingly, two of our three sitting MEPs have never published expenses at all!** Europe literally cannot afford such unwillingness to be transparent with public money, particularly at a time of economic hardship.

My expenses as a Councillor are a matter of public record – the same must absolutely apply to MEPs (and MPs).

The crashing down of the Berlin Wall and the expansion of the EU eastwards is perhaps the foremost post-war political achievement anywhere, and has offered an example to us in Northern Ireland of what can be achieved with determination and leadership. You know the EU's foremost achievement is free movement, both of goods and people, right across the continent. This necessitates, for example, common labour regulations for people working and studying away from home. However, this must not come at the cost of defending basic rights and freedoms – too often, new member states have been taken in without securing this.

- *I will support expansion of the EU to include new member states, including Turkey, when the accession criteria, particularly with relation to democratic standards and minority rights, are clearly met;*
- *I will seek to close loopholes in EU employment regulations; and*
- *I will advocate extension of common EU anti-discrimination laws to include goods and services, not just employment.*

## International Development

One of the modifications I would propose to the Lisbon Treaty would be to the role of the 'EU High Commissioner', who would take the lead role in international aid and development. This role would include:

- *securing improvements to the EU's own (currently inadequate) auditing processes – there is no point lecturing others, if we do not put our own house in order first;*
- *ensuring a consistent EU approach to all countries and regions deliberately defying international humanitarian and human rights standards; and*
- *clearly accounting for aid, and providing impartial analysis of its value.*

## A Stable Society

You want to know that your representatives will uphold your fundamental freedoms as a citizen, regardless of where you go in Europe. You rightly demand freedom of speech, of thought, of association, of religion and of the press.

- *I will advocate the entry of the UK and Ireland as full members of the Schengen Zone, so as to ensure greater cooperation between police and judicial services on assuring privacy, security and justice across the EU and more effective combating of cross-border terrorism, crime and corruption;*
- *I will advocate the establishment of an EU Assets Recovery Agency, using the Belfast-based UK model, so as to assure borders cannot be abused to hide the proceeds of crime;*
- *I will use the EU as a platform to raise awareness of the need for a multi-national approach to tackling issues such as human trafficking and child pornography; and*
- *I will advocate a guaranteed right to paternity leave right across the EU.*

You are also aware that the EU itself was founded as a legacy of conflict, and many EU regions face similar issues to our own concerning social divisions, economic reconstruction, and sustainable development.

- *I will join my Liberal colleagues in supporting the strengthening of the EU's civilian crisis management capabilities and use experience of these to guarantee stability, the rule of law and the principles of good governance in Northern Ireland and in other countries that are facing or have known recent civil conflict;*
- *I will join my Liberal colleagues in advocating further use of the EU's considerable post-conflict institution-building experiences in order to be better prepared to deal with situations of regional instability, terrorist threats emanating from failed states, and humanitarian emergencies;*
- *I will promote ways to structure international aid to the developing world so that regions such as Northern Ireland, which have direct experience of peace and reconciliation, have a prominent role in international development elsewhere.*

### **Delivery for Northern Ireland**

You may know of trans-EU exchange programmes, such as ERASMUS, where students, apprentices and workers can visit other EU regions to improve their skills in the workplace.

- *I will work to greatly enhance opportunities for everyone in work or training to participate in exchange programmes directly relevant to their chosen profession – we need that skills base if we are to compete seriously as a ‘knowledge economy’ in the global marketplace.*

**The politics of fear is about dividing up Northern Ireland – not just between ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’, but also between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’, ‘upper-class’ and ‘lower-class’, even ‘male’ and ‘female’. The politics of hope is about recognising these divisions have no real meaning, and about delivering for a generation prepared to move on from a fearful past towards a future full of hope for a country and a continent we all call home.**

## PROSPERITY through ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY

We in Northern Ireland now live in one of the EU's most prosperous regions. Up until last year, our unemployment was among the lowest, our economic growth among the fastest, and our productivity among the highest in the EU. However, recent global events have brought about a downturn which has had a particularly severe impact on regions which are primarily reliant on small businesses such as ours. This does, however, present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tackle our underlying economic problems, such as high economic inactivity and dependence on public sector employment.

I come from small business myself, having worked for and run a business in the services industry for the past decade. When I talk about the restrictions imposed on businesses by social division here, I can point to how. When I talk about unnecessary red tape, I can give specific examples. When I talk about the opportunities open to us through new services and the green economy, I do so with practical experience. I know how difficult it is to employ people, to deal with cashflow issues and to operate sustainably, while trying to respond promptly to customers.

I will proof all EU policy to ensure:

- *our voluntary sector organisations have access to knowledge and goods to enable them to play a role in growing the economy responsibly;*
- *our small businesses are better able to compete in the global economy, assured of fair access to finance, services and skills from both inside and outside Northern Ireland; and*
- *our manufacturers and retailers are better able to access skilled recruits, share information across borders, and get products and services to get to new and existing markets more efficiently.*

### Economy

You watched in bewilderment as a global economic crisis was met by your money being used to bail out the big banks whose very irresponsibility had caused the problem in the first place. You have seen small businesses, who were trying to do the right thing, having to lay off workers while big businesses receive state funding. You have seen charities and voluntary sector bodies lose out on funding worth thousands, while banks are bailed out with funding worth billions. You have watched politicians promote households getting into more and more debt as a means to save the economy, and then do nothing to help those caught up in it.

- *I will oppose any regulations which inhibit economic competitiveness – cross-border competition and knowledge sharing, and free trade in goods and services, are essential for increasing Northern Ireland's competitiveness within the EU, and the EU's competitiveness internationally;*
- *I will join my Liberal colleagues in pushing for the EU to ensure it meets its target of reducing regulation by 25%, prioritising for removal those regulations which impact negatively on business without providing any benefit to employees; and*
- *I will advocate regulations abolishing fees for transferring money between sterling and the euro and, on the assumption that the UK will not join the euro for the foreseeable future, support any moves making it easier for Northern Ireland-based small businesses to trade with the euro-zone.*



## Fair Trade and Free Trade

There can be no Fair Trade without Free Trade. A protectionist Europe, even if acting as a whole, would be a Europe in which certain products were favoured not because of their quality, but because of their place of origin. That is neither free nor fair. It is nonsense to suggest fair trade requires restrictions to free trade – quite the contrary is the case.

## A Prosperous Northern Ireland in a Prosperous Europe

You will rightly want to defend our new prosperity, but also tackle the underlying economic problems which face us. A local representative at the heart of Europe is perfectly placed to achieve this.

- *I will not shirk from advocating new business regulations, provided it is designed to give a fair playing field to small businesses seeking to trade and export;*
- *in the context of a newly regulation financial industry, I will promote NI as a global centre for consultancy firms offering advice on financial compliance, legal finance issues, and financial insurance – making use of the skills of our current supply of graduates;*
- *I will support a ‘Rural White Paper’ for the Northern Ireland Assembly as a means to stimulate an EU-wide conversation on the necessary reforms to both the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), including with reference to linking public payments to the delivery of public goods), as these policies currently inhibit our own farmers’ and fishermen’s ability to modernise effectively and to compete on an even playing field;*
- *I will advocate a European Commissioner with specific responsibility exclusively for small and medium-sized businesses; and*
- *I will join my Liberal colleagues in supporting a “blue card” system (similar to the US “green card”), ensuring measured economic migration into the EU for the benefit of EU citizens, as well as an assurance of a common EU policy on asylum in line with highest international human rights standards.*

## A Successful Society

You are proud of Northern Ireland, so why should ambitious people feel the need to head elsewhere for a successful career? We wish to promote an innovative, wealth-creating and sustainable economy right here at home.

- *I will join Liberal colleagues in supporting a single EU market for intellectual property, designed to enable greater mobility for students, academics and researchers between member states so as to encourage inventions and discoveries – I would further advocate Belfast be the location for administering such an idea, given our public-sector expertise;*
- *I will present a report, in the first year of the Parliament, outlining how trans-EU ‘Collective Measures’ could be placed within a new ‘EU Knowledge Bank’ be used to provide a pool of expertise which businesses, health services and not-for-profit organisations could use to exchange expertise and information designed to promote more effective R+D.*

A successful economy also requires a successful infrastructure in every sense (not just roads, but also communications), so that goods and services can be freely accessed by the entire population, not just those who can afford it. This requires new ideas to be brought to the EU institutions.

- *I will put down a written declaration (motion), in the first year of the Parliament, calling for the establishment of an EU Infrastructure Bank to be used specifically for cross-border sustainable transport and new media projects (e.g. Belfast-Dublin railway, cross-border fast-broadband roll-out, etc) in the event of national funding becoming unavailable due to economic recession;*
- *I will join my Liberal colleagues in advocating enhancing the Single Market to include energy (where we already have positive experience of a competitive cross-border market on the island of Ireland), postal services, financial services, railways and health care – this includes mutual recognition of qualifications; and*
- *I will be an advocate for social inclusion – Europe cannot become the most prosperous and competitive economy in the world without ensuring all its citizens participate in EU decision-making and have adequate access to training and health services (this will enhance the skills base available to our businesses to enable them to recruit the best talent to grow and compete).*

## Combating Poverty

2010 is the 'EU Year for Combating Poverty', and I would seek to be active on this issue. At home, I would promote shared neighbourhoods, free debt advice and greater investment in programmes which provide demonstrable skills for future employment. In the EU, I would support modification of the Lisbon Treaty to ensure social rights promoting economic responsibility are enshrined within the EU's free market model, including strengthening of anti-discrimination legislation. This does not mean opposing liberalisation of services, however – liberalisation has, for example, greatly reduced mobile roaming charges, which has had a direct and positive impact on border communities across the continent. The issue is not liberalisation, but ensuring liberalisation is properly proofed to ensure it is fair.

## Responsibility for Northern Ireland

'Justice' is a word you often hear linked to the legal system, but you also know that 'justice' has not been served to those trying to act responsibly. These include businesses in key future industries (e.g. biotechnology, agri-food processing, new media), farmers, charities (particularly those promoting Fair Trade and sustainable development) and, most forgotten of all, individual savers (with savings accounts within the EU). Justice requires that those who have acted responsibly are rewarded, and those who have acted irresponsibly are punished.

- *I will oppose regulation imposing more red tape on business, but will support any regulation designed to defend small businesses, farmers, charities or individual savers from sudden changes to credit terms by buyers or suppliers (including banks) within the EU; and*
- *I will advocate flexible implementation of the Working Time Directive.*

**The politics of fear says we cannot do these things; it dictates to us that we are poor and peripheral. The politics of hope is about challenging that, to produce not just successful people from Northern Ireland, but a Northern Ireland which successful people make their home.**

## SUSTAINABILITY through POSITIVE ATTITUDES

'Sustainability' is an over-used word but, used correctly, perhaps the most important one in our vocabulary. When we use it, we mean delivering a new type of politics in which social policy is delivered for the long term, economic policy is designed to reward innovation and responsibility, and environmental policy is put forward positively. Climate change offers us the opportunity to promote cleaner energy, the green economy and sustainable development not just because these are good for the environment around us, but because they serve to tackle the key problems which face us – household debt, job creation, public health and others.

As Chair of European Liberal Youth in Northern Ireland, perhaps my most prominent achievement was placing clean energy, the green economy and sustainable development at the centre of Liberal politics across the continent for the new generation. Promoting sustainability is achieved not by threatening people with fines and taxes, but by putting forward its benefits to our quality of life positively.

I will proof all EU policy to ensure:

- *our innovators in the 'Green Economy' are not stifled by bureaucracy, but rather assisted to become world leaders in research and development in the field;*
- *our people benefit from improved air and water standards, by tailoring implementation of EU directives to meet local needs, with the health benefits enhanced by appropriate cross-border health cooperation; and*
- *our consumers benefit from clearer product labelling, in particular on environmental impact.*

### Environment

Most people are still inclined to agree with a Minister who casts doubt on humankind's contribution to climate change. Without broad popular support, 'Green' politics can achieve nothing. That is why we need to take a whole new attitude to the environment, and cast the benefits of eco-friendliness in a new, more positive way. We cannot seriously expect people to use less energy; we can, however, change the sources of that energy, while enhancing biodiversity generally to improve our quality of life.

- *I will work to overturn NI's 'pariah status' on environmental issues, as this hinders investment in green jobs right here at home;*
- *I will provide the link between the EU institutions and local businesses, particularly in the field of energy and construction, to make Northern Ireland the EU centre for research into new, renewable energy sources, and to this end I will advocate the creation of an EU 'Green Economy Taskforce';*
- *I will proof any EU policy for its impact on biodiversity, seeking to halt the loss of biodiversity and build on the 'Birds and Habitats' Directives; and*
- *I will promote Northern Ireland as a centre for eco-tourism.*

## Emissions Targets

The issue here is not so much the targets themselves, but how they are implemented. Currently, it takes too long for targets to be adopted by regional legislatures such as the Northern Ireland Assembly, because they have to pass through national governments and their departments first. This makes it hard to agree implementation, and also means many targets are set without communities really feeling ownership of them. My advocacy of improved performance on emissions would, therefore, be focused closer to home – Northern Ireland should take the lead, not wait to follow; and it should do so confident that cleaner emissions will provide welcome improvements to air quality and, with them, to business attractiveness and public health standards. Ultimately, however, we should replace debate about the targets themselves with debate about how to achieve them; and ensure we set targets which are demonstrably attainable.

The ultimate objective here is to decrease our reliance on unstable areas of the world, such as Russia and the Middle East, for our energy. For as long as we continue to import over 97% of our energy into NI, we are dependent on these regions. We must, therefore, ensure EU foreign policy is focused on:

- *recognising Russia as a European society and an economic partner, not an economic threat, including by securing the rights of national minorities, including Russians or state-less citizens of Russian origin, in EU member states;*
- *playing a prominent role in resolving, diplomatically, conflict in the Middle East, including through the promise of free and fair trade and international aid designed to empower local communities to become sustainable in their own right; and*
- *reducing our dependency on foreign oil by investing in research for renewable energy sources, and regulating to ensure planning policies may not restrict the development and use of new energy sources such as wind and hydro-power.*

## A Progressive Northern Ireland in a Progressive Europe

Sustainability means we cannot afford to be held back by short-term thinking or by national borders in the development of EU benchmarks on EU air and water standards, and in the broad provision of public services. Current EU policy does not maximise the potential of cooperation to deliver far higher public health standards on the back of improved environmental collaboration.

- *I will oppose further regulations on air and water standards unless they are specifically tailored to meet local needs – EU benchmarks which serve genuinely to improve air and water quality should have priority over EU regulations which serve only to interfere in local service delivery.*

Sustainable policy development recognises, for example, that a region the size of Northern Ireland cannot hope to provide every type of health service on its own (certain specific operations or specific research need to take place elsewhere, even if they affect people who live here), but it can use its expertise to take a leading role in health provision for people right across the EU.

- *I will work to promote NI as an EU centre for cardiac research, and as the leading location for provision of micro-surgery to EU citizens, while seeking to amend the Patients' Rights Directive to secure highest regulatory standards for doctors in all EU member states and ensure basic health services are accessible to all EU citizens within a reasonable timeframe;*
- *I will advocate a European Commissioner with specific responsibility exclusively for mental health and learning disability;*

- *I will use the EU as a platform for raising health promotion issues of multi-national concern, such as growing rates of child obesity and the impact of pollution on public health; and*
- *I will not forget animal welfare too, and will seek EU benchmarks to ensure every member state meets highest international standards in preventing cruelty against animals, including withdrawal of any EU subsidies from animals being reared solely for cruel sports such as bullfighting.*

## Volunteering

Civic participation is essential to genuine sustainable communities. I will use the *European Year of Volunteering* in 2011 to promote best practice in the area within Northern Ireland, specifically including:

- *support for 'Community Watch' festivals and weeks highlighting the excellent work of volunteer carers (as well as the emergency services);*
- *assistance for 'Youth Enterprise' through enhanced EU-wide exchange programmes, and ensuring the social economy is highlighted; and*
- *promotion of volunteering on conservation projects – these can have a hugely positive impact on quality of life in communities.*

## A Sustainable Society

One of the foremost challenges to our sustainability is waste – not just for environmental reasons, but because we need to find room for it. Our new type of politics reflects the reality that the idea of us as Europeans transferring our waste to developing countries was never truly sustainable. This is the most obviously pan-European issue of them all – we all face the same challenge, and it makes sense for us to research and deliver the same solution.

- *I will challenge the EU to strengthen its commitment to meeting the requirements of the Kyoto Treaty through actions, not just words;*
- *I will support regulations which ensure European waste has a common definition across the EU and is dealt effectively within the boundaries of Europe; will support funds for research and delivery of more effective waste management within the boundaries of the EU; and will support NI playing its full role, including through incineration if appropriately located; and*
- *I will advocate further regulations to ensure appropriate labelling of products (most obviously food, but also medicines), to enable consumers more clearly to assess their likely environmental and health impact.*

## Consumer Advertising

Free movement means that you are entitled to the same environmental and health provisions wherever they travel within the EU. However, this must not come at the expense of unnecessary bureaucracy for local authorities or the Health Service; nor must it come at the expense of an advertising free-for-all. I will support improved environmental and health information to citizens (including 'telemedicine'), but will oppose direct advertising of prescription drugs – direct health advice must only come from those qualified to provide it, not television/internet advertising.

## Sustainability for Northern Ireland

INTERREG and PEACE funding was a welcome boost to our political process, but sadly much of it was wasted, often purely because of the complexities of administration.

- *I will present a report, in the first two years of the Parliament, on more effective use of EU funds to be administered with the clear aim of delivering tangible benefits consistent with the goals of sustainable development; and I will promote the work of home-grown organisations, in the public, private and voluntary sectors, to advise on how such funds can be best used elsewhere;*
- *I will push for a longer time period for delivery of the PEACE III programme, to enable the effects of previous programmes to stabilise and become more apparent;*
- *I will advocate a sustainable minority languages policy based on existing EU standards, prioritising publishing and broadcasting and using Irish in Belfast as an example of best practice and supporting EU funding for this; and*
- *I will use the EU as a platform for promoting conservation, not just of wildlife but also of heritage, as a progressive means of planning for the future.*

**The politics of fear is about turning the environment into a threat – a threat of a poorer future, a threat of EU fines, a threat of worldwide chaos. The politics of hope is about turning the environment into an opportunity – an opportunity for cheaper household bills, an opportunity to create jobs, an opportunity for a healthier society.**

## replace the politics of **FEAR** with the politics of **HOPE**

In 1979, the first direct elections to the European Parliament took place. It is an astonishing feat of democracy, then bringing together nine countries, many of which had been, until recently, military, economic and political rivals. For us in Northern Ireland, that achievement remains a defining example of reconciliation.

A decade later, the fall of the Berlin Wall changed global politics forever, as the Cold War ended and the expansion of the European Community to become the world's largest trading bloc became possible. We in Northern Ireland have made great progress since, but the walls have still to come down.

A decade after that, the *Lisbon Agenda* was agreed as a means to make the whole of Europe competitive by prioritising innovation, learning and sustainability. This Action Plan is deliberately set out along similar lines, focusing on European engagement, the economy, and the environment.

- *I remain convinced that the Lisbon Agenda forms the basis of a Europe in which our interests and quality of life would be greatly enhanced. Coming out of conflict as a region with more credibility than ever internationally, Northern Ireland should be at the forefront of promoting and delivering this Agenda.*

However, no one could have foreseen the scale of the challenge. Just as we in Northern Ireland became more secure, more prosperous and more sustainable, we found that internationally the challenges of global security, economic recovery and tackling climate change became greater than ever.

As an EU region which has faced the same common challenges, we in Northern Ireland must use the EU as an opportunity not just to gain funding, but to gain influence. Just as we must promote a shared future at home, we must use the EU as an opportunity to promote reconciliation globally. Just as we must promote economic recovery at home, we have a responsibility to our private and voluntary sector to use the EU for broader knowledge exchange and trade. Just as we must promote sustainable local communities at home, we must use the EU to promote sustainable energy production and conservation.

- *I believe we cannot maximise our influence, and therefore our quality of life, by electing single-issue candidates who thrive off the politics of fear – fear of each other, fear of the past, fear of real politics. I believe we need an MEP who is an ambassador for the whole of Northern Ireland on the full range of issues, bringing a new type of politics. It is time for the politics of hope – hope for each other, hope for the future, hope for a type of politics founded on basic honesty.*

I was at school in Germany, at university in Spain – but always at home in Northern Ireland. I am familiar with the rest of Europe, and with its variety of cultures, languages and social models – but always fiercely proud of the courage of the people of Northern Ireland emerging from conflict. I believe fundamentally in the European Union – but always in a way that requires Northern Ireland's full participation to reach its full potential.

- *I believe it is time we moved on from division and segregation to promote the common interests of the New Generation in Northern Ireland. I believe it is time we moved from thinking only what we can get out of Europe, towards thinking also what we can put back into it. Most of all, I believe it is time we replaced the politics of fear with the politics of hope.*

**It is time the new Northern Ireland was represented in Europe. That is why I commend to you this Action Plan.**

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on request to 028 9032 4274 or [alliance@allianceparty.org](mailto:alliance@allianceparty.org)

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland  
**Alliance**

88 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE  
Tel: 028 9032 4274 Fax: 028 9033 3147 Email: [alliance@allianceparty.org](mailto:alliance@allianceparty.org)

**[www.allianceparty.org](http://www.allianceparty.org)**