

Alliance Works



The Alternative

An Agenda for a United Community

MANIFESTO

Assembly Elections

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Alliance

7th MARCH 2007

Contents

Key Commitments

Alliance Working for You
making the difference

Introduction by the Party Leader

- 1. Partnership Works**
deadlock costs
- 2. Sharing Works**
segregation costs
- 3. Justice Works**
gangsterism costs
- 4. Fair Taxation Works**
stealth tax costs
- 5. Education Works**
ignorance costs
- 6. Well-being Works**
illness costs
- 7. Sustainability Works**
pollution costs
- 8. Enterprise Works**
stagnation costs
- 9. Social Inclusion Works**
social exclusion costs
- 10. Achievement Works**
negativity costs
- 11. Internationalism Works:**
isolationism costs

Key Commitments

Alliance proposes that the Executive should be formed by negotiation among parties endorsed by a weighted majority vote in the Assembly to ensure a cross-community composition.

Alliance proposes the introduction of an Assembly voting system for cross-community matters based on a weighted majority, free from communal or sectarian designations.

Alliance would continue to oppose plans for seven super-councils that do not reflect any sense of community identity, and will instead favour 11 to 15 councils.

Alliance would ensure the implementation of the shared future strategy for Northern Ireland, and the triennial Shared Future action plan.

Alliance would ensure the development and passage of a Single Equality Act to standardise equality protections.

Alliance would seek to ensure that all migrant workers and immigrants have full access to public services, and employment rights.

Alliance would support the creation of a Comprehensive Languages Act, based around public bodies producing language schemes to address the needs of those individuals with whom they deal.

Alliance believes that the timing for the devolution of policing and justice should be primarily determined by the correct conditions being in place, including the executive operating in a collective and responsible manner.

Alliance will continue to apply pressure for those 'exiled' by paramilitaries inside or out of Northern Ireland to be able to return to their homes in safety.

Alliance proposes that the British and Irish Governments should appoint an independent commission, composed of domestic and international experts to consult, deliberate and make a series of recommendations which would address how to approach outstanding issues relating to the past and its legacy.

Alliance would reinvest the costs of segregation in providing quality services for the whole community.

Alliance would ensure that adequate resources are made available within the current Comprehensive Spending Review to promote sharing, cohesion and integration.

Alliance believes that the regional rate should be reduced by the amount to be raised for water charges.

Alliance replace water charges based on property, and

instead have a system linked to ability to pay and usage.

Alliance would abolish the regional rate, and replace it with a regional income tax. Alliance would introduce tax-varying powers to Northern Ireland.

Alliance will endorse an area rather than sectoral approach to planning for the school estate.

Alliance would defer the age of electing a particular educational route to age 14, with all children progressing to study a common, middle-school curriculum.

Alliance would implement a minimum target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010, and guarantee the right of any parent to send their child to an integrated school.

Alliance would abolish tuition fees being charged by all Northern Ireland universities.

Alliance would introduce free personal care for those living in residential and nursing homes.

Alliance supports the implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford Review on mental health issues and learning disabilities.

Alliance would establish an independent Environmental Protection Agency. This body will have the power to enforce environmental legislation.

Alliance would protect our coastline and the countryside from inappropriate and over-development.

Alliance would increase the funding directed to public transport. At present, the Northern Ireland Regional Transportation Strategy devotes 65% of funding to roads, and only 35% to public transport. This ratio is the opposite in Great Britain.

Alliance would promote policies to facilitate a significant increase in economic growth, increased inward investment, and a greater level of exports.

Alliance would increase investment in research and development, which is currently well below the UK-average.

Alliance would promote the development of an all-island electricity market.

Alliance will address the underfunding in support for children's and young persons' services.

Alliance will support the reform of Adoption Legislation as set out in 'Adopting the Future'.

Alliance Working for You

making the difference

Alliance Working for You

making the difference

Alliance is at the centre of the political process in Northern Ireland. Despite the obstacles of Direct Rule, Alliance has been able to make many positive contributions to address the needs of the people of Northern Ireland. Many of the ideas put forward by Alliance have been taken up by Government, reflecting the high calibre of Alliance representatives.

1. Alliance successfully pushed government to commit to building a shared future, and the creation of a more integrated society. A shared future must now be considered in drawing up all new policies.
2. Alliance has identified that £1 billion is wasted every year in dealing with a divided society. This is now accepted by government, which is following up with its own research. Rather than funding a separate and parallel set of services, this money would be better spent on providing quality, shared facilities and avoiding punitive taxes. Only Alliance has put forward any meaningful ideas as to how public expenditure in Northern Ireland can be redirected.
3. Alliance is widely respected for the constructive approach it takes to political talks, and the ideas that it puts on the table. Alliance drafted the proposals that led to the Independent Monitoring Commission, which is playing a crucial role in clearing the path for political process.
4. Alliance was the only party to vote for free personal care for the elderly when the Assembly had the power to

deliver. Scotland has shown what was possible.

5. Alliance was also the only party that opposed the measures that led to massive hikes in the regional rate, and the controversial water charges.
6. Alliance has successfully pushed for more effective enforcement of the terrorist laws against paramilitary flags. It is now a criminal offence to display them in public.
7. Alliance has secured for Northern Ireland the most comprehensive set of 'Hate Crime' laws in the UK, creating stiffer sentences for racial, sectarian and homophobic attacks.
8. Alliance has led the way in producing radical ideas. We have been to the forefront in arguing for tax-varying powers for the Assembly, in particular the ability to lower corporation tax in order to attract investment.
9. Alliance has protected the local environment. We have been the most vocal party in standing up for the protection of our countryside and coastline from inappropriate development. We successfully proposed the laws protecting the Irish Hare, and prepared comprehensive marine conservation legislation.
10. Alliance first set a target of 10% of children in integrated schools by 2010, a target that is now widely accepted. We were the only party to engage with the Bain Review, pushing for sustainable, shared local schools.

Introduction by the Party Leader

This election is your opportunity to determine the future of Northern Ireland. Alliance offers a real alternative.

Like me, you probably share the frustration over the deadlock of recent years. Both unionist and both nationalist parties have squandered so many opportunities, and neglected so many problems.

Even today, it is far from clear that the political hardliners are prepared to do what is necessary. They simply cannot be trusted with your future.

We stand for stable government and genuine fairness. You should know that power is being shared for your benefit, not carved up on behalf of someone else.

We stand for the rule of law without conditions, and have never been associated with any paramilitary organisation.

Only Alliance stands for a proper shared future, where people can live and learn, work and play together in safety.

The absence of devolution means that decisions are taken exclusively by remote-control Direct Rule ministers, who are not in tune with the real needs of the people of Northern Ireland. Critical issues that must be addressed by locally accountable elected representatives are stacking up.

Our public finances are in crisis. People are being punished through hikes in the regional rate, and steep water charges because local politicians have not been able or prepared to take the necessary decisions.

Alliance has identified a billion pounds of public expenditure in Northern Ireland that is wasted every year: the costs of managing a divided society. At the same time, Northern Ireland suffers the longest hospital waiting lists in the UK, and has a crumbling infrastructure. Just think what we could do with that £1 billion if it was spent on providing quality services to all the community.

While other parties make empty promises, without any idea how they would pay for them, Alliance has identified the hidden costs from which we are suffering. Alliance is committed to using that money for the benefit of all our citizens: to improve education and the health service, to renew our public transport and roads, to avoid punitive water charges.

With pressures on the education budget, the attraction of shared and integrated schools becomes even more obvious.

Our investment in health services remains low by wider standards. Waiting lists and a shortage of bed places must be addressed. The priority must be to focus on preventive and public health.

While our economy has certainly improved over the past decade, it is still performing well below its potential. Our private sector needs to grow significantly over the next few years. We must help businesses to develop, by cutting away needless bureaucracy, ensuring our education system trains workers in the skills required by employers, and developing the industries of the future, in areas such as information technology and the green economy.

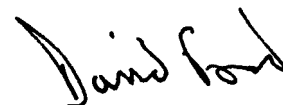
A good quality environment can be one of Northern Ireland's greatest assets. But we must protect our countryside and our coastline, and the character of our towns and villages. It is bizarre that Northern Ireland remains the only part of these islands without an independent Environmental Protection Agency.

However, a Northern Ireland Executive must do more than generally improving public services. Specifically, Alliance will make improving community relations and working for a shared future our main priority. We do not want a Northern Ireland version of Apartheid.

We will treat every person as an individual citizen, valuing their contribution to society, and recognising their choice over identity.

Let's make politics work. The election is your chance to put people at the heart of government who will serve the best interests of the whole community, not pander to division.

Alliance provides the alternative to the failed politics of unionism and nationalism. We have a clear vision, a clear set of values, and a clear purpose. We seek to build a united community.



David Ford
Party Leader

1. Partnership Works

deadlock costs



Partnership Works deadlock costs

The Alliance Party will do everything possible to promote and deliver genuine, stable and sustainable power-sharing, support and respect for the rule of law, and the creation of a shared future in Northern Ireland.

The St. Andrews Agreement has the potential to bind other parties into power-sharing and support for the rule of law. However, it is far from clear if they are prepared to rise to this challenge.

Alliance does not yet see a process where mutual commitments are clear, ambiguities have been removed, and shared understandings exist. The danger is that a fragile process could easily break when difficulties are inevitably encountered.

The St. Andrews Agreement only addresses the issues and priorities placed on the table by the DUP and Sinn Féin. The wider range of changes to the institutions, public policy priorities, and measures required to build a shared future has not been addressed. Alliance is concerned at a process that is aimed solely at producing a quick-fix, doing no more than what is perceived as necessary to achieve the restoration of the suspended institutions, without addressing the deeper and wider problems that have been identified within the Agreement or neglected over the past eight years.

Power-sharing was already weak under the Good Friday Agreement. This was evidenced by the poor relationship between the UUP and SDLP. While some minor improvements

have been made, these are not sufficient to take into account the increased political polarisation, and the ascendancy of the DUP and Sinn Féin.

The removal of the need for any vote for either the joint election of First Minister and Deputy First Minister or for the Executive as a whole is a major flaw. The need for government parties to formally recognise each other's mandates, and legitimacy of having a share of power and responsibility has been undermined.

There are elements of this Agreement that are tantamount to the division of power rather than the sharing of power.

A short-term fix to restore devolution may be superficially attractive to the governments, but would not provide long-term peace and stability, never mind the strong and effective government that Northern Ireland needs.

Attention seems to have been directed on the issue of getting the DUP and Sinn Féin to agree to the restoration of the institutions, but very little attention has been given to how the DUP and Sinn Féin could govern effectively together.

At present, the DUP and Sinn Féin are not talking to one another. It is a big leap to see them effectively running a regional government in partnership.

It may be possible for parties to co-exist within the same government without actually having to deal directly with each other. Rather than Ministers working together, Northern Ireland could end up with 'government by memorandum', with civil servants acting as messengers between various ministers who are not prepared to talk to one another, and who are not required to do so by the system. There is a danger that the only way the DUP and Sinn Féin could operate or co-exist within the same government is through creating more and more separation.

1. Partnership Works

deadlock costs

The strongest possible Alliance voice in the new Assembly will be the best counterweight to the forces of extremism and the best guarantee of a shared future.

Crucially, it has now been established that the institutions of the Agreement can be modified, consistent with the Agreement's underlying fundamental principles.

Some of the institutional changes made to the Good Friday Agreement through the St. Andrews Agreement are positive, but much wider changes to the institutions are required.

More general flaws with the Good Friday Agreement as it was established and operated include:

- ⌘ Institutionalised sectarianism
- ⌘ Politics of 'them' versus 'us' over control of territory and resources rather than any consideration of a shared vision for Northern Ireland or common goals
- ⌘ Co-operation, moderation and accommodation are not incentivised
- ⌘ Entrenched intra-ethnic competition that rewards ethnic out-bidders

Alliance has a clear plan to reform the Agreement, to restore devolution, and to create an effective form of power-sharing government, without giving anyone a veto over progress.

In almost every democracy, like-minded parties, or those at least prepared to co-operate together, form a voluntary coalition that has either simple or weighted majority support within the legislature, and operates on the basis of collective responsibility. Involuntary coalitions in which parties are allocated portfolios on the basis of their comparative strength in the Assembly, irrespective of their compatibility, simply do not work.

An Executive should be formed through a *voluntary* power-sharing coalition. It is

possible for parties to negotiate a balanced executive, with an agreed programme for government, based on collective responsibility. This would be required to achieve a cross-community weighted-majority vote in the Assembly in order to come into effect. No party would have an automatic right to be in the Executive.

The creation of a voluntary coalition would allow those parties that wish to move forward to do so. The process could no longer be held hostage, either by political intransigence or a failure by some to give up continued paramilitary activity.

This approach to Executive formation will provide more efficient, effective and cohesive government. It will encourage greater co-operation among parties, and better promote the concept of a single Northern Ireland polity.

- ⌘ **Alliance proposes that the Executive should be formed by negotiation among parties** endorsed by a weighted majority vote in the Assembly to ensure a cross-community composition.
- ⌘ **Alliance proposes a reduction in the size of the Assembly, to about 80 MLAs**, to come into effect at the next scheduled election of the Assembly. This would better reflect the population of Northern Ireland, and provide more efficient and cost-effective Government.
- ⌘ **Alliance proposes the introduction of an Assembly voting system for cross-community matters based on a weighted majority**, free from communal or sectarian designations. Alliance has had concerns with the designations and voting system for the Assembly since Good Friday 1998.

There are four particular problems with the current system:

1. Partnership Works

deadlock costs

- €# the institutionalisation of sectarian division
- €# a lack of equality of votes between MLAs
- €# an inability to adjust to changing demographic and political circumstances
- €# the ability of minorities effectively to hold the process to ransom

There was a certain inevitability that a crisis would happen, considering all of the above faults.

- €# **Alliance proposes that the number of Executive Departments be reviewed**, in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. This should have been part of the Review of Public Administration.

The Agreement only specifies that there shall be up to ten Departments; it does not specify that there must be ten Departments. There is a growing consensus that 10 Government Departments, plus the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, is excessive. The division of functions among the various Departments is not logical in every instance.

First Minister. The role of OFMDFM could be changed and functions transferred to other relevant Departments.

- €# **Alliance proposes a Single Transferable Vote election among Assembly Members as the fairest system of allocating chairs and vice chairs.** Under this system, a succession of counts of an STV ballot would be conducted among MLAs to work out a rank order of party choices of posts.

The current d'Hondt mechanism for the allocation of places in the Executive and Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs is unfair; d'Hondt is flawed as a proportional system. The greater the number of parties involved, the more likely it is that distortions will occur. It also significantly favours the larger

parties. These reforms should apply wherever the d'Hondt system is presently used.

- €# **Alliance proposes that the Assembly be granted tax-varying powers.**

It is important to ensure that any legislature is held accountable for its spending decisions and ambitions. If the Assembly had tax-varying powers, it would have the ability to set and realise its own fiscal priorities and to promote economic growth, taking into account the differences between Northern Ireland and other UK regions and the significance of cross-border issues such as differential rates of taxation and grants.

- €# **Alliance proposes that the Assembly and Oireachtas be required to establish a North-South Parliamentary Tier**, which would be open to all parties, and to which each jurisdiction would send equal numbers of participants.
- €# **Alliance proposes increasing the scope of North-South co-operation**, on the basis of practical benefits. The number of North-South Implementation Bodies was arbitrarily set at six in the Agreement. The NSMC was invited to choose these from a suggested list of 12. There is a case for creating new implementation bodies, by mutual agreement, where a sound case is put forward, based on practical benefit.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that progress on a north-south basis often quietly occurs between agencies in an informal manner. The package of proposals published by the British and Irish Governments in December carries many shortcomings.

Alliance supports the **Review of Public Administration**. Public administration suffers from over-government in that there are too many bodies and layers of government, often with overlapping or confusing jurisdictions, and from a

1. Partnership Works

deadlock costs

democratic deficit as there is little local control over decision-making.

Structures should be based around the efficient and effective delivery of services, in a responsive manner to local demand.

The reform of public bodies should take on board the need to promote integration and better community relations.

- ⚡ **Alliance supports the rationalisation of the health boards.**
- ⚡ **Alliance supports the creation of a Single Education Authority.**
- ⚡ **Alliance supports the review on the number and roles of Quangos and non-departmental public bodies.**

Alliance recognises that the current number of District Councils is too large for a region the size of Northern Ireland. There is an inherent trade-off between the numbers of Councils and the powers and responsibilities that they can exercise. Alliance believes that there should be a unitary tier of local government. It must be borne in mind that in the context of a functioning Assembly, many responsibilities are best delivered on a Northern Ireland basis.

- ⚡ **Alliance supports the transfer of local planning, parking, street lighting, and minor road powers, and urban generation powers to councils.**
- ⚡ **Alliance will develop councils as the focal point for community planning.**
- ⚡ **Alliance will continue to oppose plans for seven super-councils that do not reflect any sense of community identity, and will instead favour 11 to 15 councils.** This would represent a better balance between economies of scale and local identity/community responsiveness.

Alliance believes that new governance arrangements must be introduced for Northern Ireland Councils. Common standards should be sufficiently flexible to reflect different situations, and avoid institutionalising sectarianism.

- ⚡ **Alliance will support the sharing of civic offices and chairs between parties.** Our preference is that this be brokered through negotiation between parties rather than the use of a rigid formula.
- ⚡ **Alliance will introduce the use of weighted-majority voting for key decisions in local government.**
- ⚡ **Alliance will ensure that council decisions are placed within a policy framework that respects a shared future, equality and human rights.**
- ⚡ **Alliance will create a new local government watchdog to mediate and arbitrate where agreement cannot be reached, and to investigate breaches of governance at a council level.**

2. Sharing Works

segregation costs



Sharing Works segregation costs

Until very recently, the divisions in Northern Ireland have not been addressed in any serious manner. They were at best marginal within the Agreement. Nor were they a major feature in subsequent initiatives to revitalize the peace process. It was a damning indictment of the last devolved Executive that it failed to issue a revised policy on community relations, and progress has only occurred under Direct Rule Ministers. Arguably, this failure has allowed divisions to become further entrenched and to frustrate political progress. It is critical that the elected representatives of Northern Ireland take direct ownership of building a shared future.

Despite, or perhaps in some respects because of, the agreement, Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society. Strong sectarian and racist attitudes remain prevalent, and there is a deeply ingrained pattern of segregation. Often territory and public space are marked out through the use of exclusive communal symbols. While separation is generally not the formal policy of the state, there is substantial duplication in the provision of goods, facilities, and services by both the public and private sectors. In the field of education, 95 percent of Northern Ireland's schoolchildren attend what is in effect a segregated school system. More and more "peace walls," built to keep people apart, have been erected since the 1994 cease-fires than before.

However, there are also many positive trends. Significant elements of civil society are organised on a cross-community basis.

The workplace, largely through top-down regulation, is integrated. There is evidence of substantial public support for shared education, housing, and leisure pursuits. But this aspiration for shared provision is often frustrated, sometimes owing to lack of facilities, but mainly owing to fears over security, both physical and cultural. In terms of identity, more and more people are casting off traditional labels and challenging the notions that Protestant = British = unionist or Catholic = Irish = nationalist. A growing number of new immigrants are coming to Northern Ireland to work—an encouraging sign of a globalising economy. Their presence poses a further challenge to traditional conceptions of identity.

It is increasingly recognized that the economic, financial, and personal costs of managing a divided society are unsustainable. The "them" versus "us" competition for control over resources and territory is a continued source of communal tensions that can sometimes flare into violence or mass public disorder.

Alliance firmly rejects the notion of a parallel society of separate but equal. An Apartheid Northern Ireland cannot work and must be resisted.

The alternative to a divided society is a shared society. Alliance has been instrumental in pushing government to embrace the vision of a shared future where people can live and learn, work and play together in safety.

Alliance welcomes the publication, *A Shared Future — Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*, by the Government in March 2005, and the first of the triennial Shared Future Action Plans in April 2006. Unlike other parties, we play a central role in developing these policies. However, they only represent a beginning — much more needs to be done.

But there remains considerable uncertainty

2. Sharing Works

segregation costs

whether any new devolved administration, in particular one dominated by the DUP and Sinn Féin, would be willing and able to take this agenda forward. The strongest possible Alliance voice in the Assembly is necessary to guarantee a shared future.

Alliance priorities are to—

- ⌘ **Ensure the implementation of the shared future strategy for Northern Ireland, and the triennial Shared Future action plan.** This should challenge how we live and learn, work and play together as a community.
- ⌘ **Actively encourage de-segregation and communal integration,** through appropriate policies and by placing a duty upon all government departments and public sector agencies. This includes areas such as planning. It is important that new thinking is mainstreamed and permeates all sectors of government.
- ⌘ **Introduce a new form of policy proofing,** called Policy Appraisal for Sharing over Separation (PASS). This would ensure that the impact of any new policy upon community divisions would be assessed and taken into account.
- ⌘ **Provide support for the work of a revamped Community Relations Council,** and significantly increase its budget, in order to expand its scope. Alliance would increasingly concentrate community investment funds on projects with a strong cross-community element. It is important that this body has an important challenge function with respect to both central and local government.
- ⌘ **Promote greater sharing with education, and achieve a target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.** We set out how we will accomplish this in the Education section of this manifesto.
- ⌘ **Make the promotion and maintenance of mixed housing an explicit objective** of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. We would also build upon existing mixed housing pilot projects. People should have a real choice over where to live, irrespective of their religious, political or racial background.
- ⌘ **Ensure the creation of shared space is actively promoted.** Alliance will strive to see ‘peace’ walls removed. Segregation is a barrier to economic and social opportunities.
- ⌘ **Urge the police and criminal justice agencies** to adopt a more pro-active policy of protecting and serving those individuals who choose to mix with others, in the name of preserving a common civic space.
- ⌘ **Implement and develop the inter-agency protocol for dealing with illegal and illegally erected paramilitary and sectarian flags and symbols,** and enforce the civil duties on public agencies, such as the Road Service and the Housing Executive, to ensure that their property is free from paramilitary, sectarian or racist flags, murals and graffiti.
- ⌘ **Follow through on the implications of the independent research commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to quantify financial costs of segregation,** and make the necessary changes to provide the delivery of goods, facilities and services on a shared basis for everyone.
- ⌘ **Ensure that public sector agencies build new leisure, educational, health, social and community facilities** with an

2. Sharing Works

segregation costs

explicit objective to encourage mixing. Best practice should also be developed, regarding the design of the urban environment, in order to maximise cross-community integration.

- ⌘ **Promote Northern Ireland as a distinct region** within a decentralising British Isles and an emerging Europe of the Regions.

Ultimately, building good relations in this society cannot just be a matter for government, it is a responsibility for civil society and indeed every person in society.

Equality

Alliance will promote equality of opportunity, equality of treatment, equality of access, and equality under the law for all people, irrespective of:

- ⌘ Gender
- ⌘ Age
- ⌘ Marital or family status
- ⌘ Religious belief
- ⌘ Disability
- ⌘ Perceived race or ethnic origin
- ⌘ Nationality
- ⌘ Genetic Predisposition
- ⌘ Sexual orientation

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. To this end, Alliance priorities are to—

- ⌘ **Ensure the development and passage of a Single Equality Act.** This will provide a holistic and harmonised approach to combat discrimination and other forms of unfair treatment across all of the grounds.
- ⌘ **Amend Fair Employment Monitoring Regulations**, to stop people being assigned as either 'Protestant' or 'Catholic' against their will. Similarly, Alliance will prevent the next census from pigeon-holing

those who do not declare a religious belief to a 'religious community' against their will. Alliance stresses that people should be able to hold open, mixed and multiple identities.

- ⌘ **Propose that the list of organisations exempt from Fair Employment Regulations be revised.** In particular, the ability of schools to hire teachers and other staff from one or the other 'community background' should be reviewed.
- ⌘ **Support the implementation of the regulations barring discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services on grounds of sexual orientation.**
- ⌘ **Develop an inclusive interdepartmental strategy on gender equality.**
- ⌘ **Encourage full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.**
- ⌘ **Celebrate the economic and cultural benefits that come to Northern Ireland from a more diverse population.**
- ⌘ **Place emphasis on the needs of speakers of ethnic minority languages within language policy** as such persons who are at greatest disadvantage in accessing crucial services.
- ⌘ **Work with the police to ensure that new 'Hate Crime' laws are enforced effectively.**
- ⌘ **Support measures to eradicate age discrimination.** This includes the voluntary extension of work, and the provision of health and social services.

A More Diverse Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has become a much more diverse society in recent years. Building upon an existing ethnic minority population, more

2. Sharing Works

segregation costs

people have come to work and live in Northern Ireland. Alliance welcomes this development. It is a sign of our potential. Some of the most successful societies in the world, open to new people and new ideas are the most diverse.

Alliance believes that the needs of a more diverse population must be taken into account within future planning and policies, consistent with equality, human rights, and the creation of a shared future.

- ⚡ **Alliance supports the full implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy.**
- ⚡ **Alliance would reform demographic monitoring to reflect a more diverse population and multiple identities.** It is crucial that policies are based upon reliable data.
- ⚡ **Alliance will support measures to support the integration of immigrants into Northern Ireland society,** including resources for English language skills.
- ⚡ **Alliance would seek to ensure that all migrant workers and immigrants have full access to public services, and employment rights.**
- ⚡ **Alliance would support the creation of a Comprehensive Languages Act, based around public bodies producing language schemes to address the needs to those individuals with whom they deal.** Alliance will place a different emphasis on languages than the proposed rights based approach with respect to the Irish Language which is essentially about turning cultural issues into rights, and ignoring the genuine problems experienced by people with problems

with English.

Human Rights

As a longstanding supporter of human rights, Alliance believes that Northern Ireland should have the best set of human rights protections possible. These could, in turn, be a model for other parts of these islands and Europe. Alliance welcomes the passage of the Human Rights Act, and supports the creation of a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.

Alliance priorities are to—:

- ⚡ **Argue that any Bill of Rights should be based on international conventions such as the European Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities,** and properly reflect pluralism and diversity within its work. Such a Bill should respect individual rights of people rather than entrenching 'group rights'. Alliance will oppose the Bill of Rights become a series of sectarian trade-offs.
- ⚡ **Lobby the NIHRC to draw up a Charter of Freedom from Sectarianism.** This will emphasise the rights of people to live in mixed areas, to attend mixed schools, and to be supported in these choices by the state.

3. Justice Works

gangsterism costs



Justice Works gangsterism costs

Alliance is fully committed to the highest standards of justice and the rule of law. We believe that there is a fundamental relationship between democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Our vision of policing in Northern Ireland is of a single, integrated, professional police service that is representative of, responsive to, and carrying the confidence of the entire community. Alliance gives its full support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland in upholding the rule of law.

Alliance believes that action is required at a number of levels:

- ⌘ The creation and maintenance of the required structures, and the provision of necessary resources
- ⌘ The proper enforcement of existing laws, and the application of new legislation
- ⌘ The creation and the maintenance of a culture of lawfulness

Structures and Resources

Alliance looks forward to the eventual devolution of policing and criminal justice to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Such local ownership of this machinery would go a long way to enhancing popular confidence in them. However, a security dimension has been a central feature of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

- ⌘ **Alliance believes that the timing for the devolution should be primarily determined by the correct conditions being in**

place, including the executive operating in a collective and responsible manner. Realistically, this could be established after a period of 18 months, including two marching seasons.

It is important that these powers are delivered in an appropriate context and the necessary structures for accountability are in place.

Alliance does not believe that any of the structures offered in the Joint Declaration provides an ideal way forward, especially in the absence of collective responsibility.

- ⌘ **Alliance proposes that criminal justice and policing functions, when devolved, are placed within a single dedicated Department as part of an Executive working to collective responsibility.**

Alliance's other priorities are:

- ⌘ **Demand that the Government abolish the use of 50:50 recruitment quotas.** We would replace this with a fairer form of affirmative action. Alliance supports the objectives of greater representation in the police from all under-represented sections of society. Alliance supports target and affirmative action for Catholic and female recruitment, and proactive steps to attract persons from ethnic minorities, as well as gays and lesbians, into the police service.
- ⌘ **The redeployment of police officers into front-line duties, dealing with the public and responding to situations.**
- ⌘ **Propose that the Government should reassess its strategy and resources for the protection of witnesses.**

3. Justice Works

gangsterism costs

- ⊘ **Ensure that restorative justice schemes are properly regulated**, and deal only with low-level crime and anti-social behaviour. Any community-based schemes should only accept referrals from the police, criminal justice or other statutory agencies.
- ⊘ **Encourage the British and Irish Governments to develop a 'hot pursuit' protocol.** This would enable the PSNI and Garda to cross over into each other's jurisdictions when in pursuit of suspects. Such an instrument could be based on the terms of the EU's Schengen Agreement, and would be an important tool in the fight against terrorism.
- ⊘ **Push for the seizure of criminal assets.** We will preserve a dedicated programme aimed at addressing criminal assets. These measures will seriously frustrate the operation of all organised crime and paramilitaries.

Enforcement and Revision of the Criminal Law

- ⊘ **Lobby for a review into the procedures regarding decisions on prosecutions and the length of sentences for offences**, such as public order and violence towards the emergency services.
- ⊘ **Support the implementation of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in Northern Ireland**, in order to give the police and public authorities the powers to obtain court orders restricting the behaviour or movements of those that engage in persistent and serious loutish behaviour.
- ⊘ **Urge the Government to consider creating specific offences of engaging in paramilitary-style attacks.** This would equate to an extension of the

existing offence of Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH).

- ⊘ **Lobby public agencies to adopt a more pro-active policy of intervening** when paramilitary flags and other emblems are being erected, and the police to take prosecutions under the Terrorism Act (2000).
- ⊘ **Advocate the creation of specific offences concerning the erection of flags or other emblems**, and the painting of murals associated with proscribed organisations. The current terrorist-based legislation is time-specific.
- ⊘ **Challenge public agencies to end those practices and policies that can directly or indirectly entrench the power of paramilitaries.**

A Culture of Lawfulness

- ⊘ **Lead a culture of lawfulness.** We must have a zero-tolerance of paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland. Alliance wants schools and civic organisations to work together to promote a culture of lawfulness. Curricula can be developed to focus on teaching the value of the rule of law, and resulting consequences for individuals and wider society. Everyone, in particular young people, should be shown that gangsterism brings heavy costs for those directly involved, to local communities and to society as a whole.

Victims

Alliance will work to help our society move beyond a 'hierarchy of victims', in order to ensure that those who have suffered throughout the community are supported in an inclusive way. We recognise the tensions in acknowledging all victims in our society,

3. Justice Works

gangsterism costs

thus commit ourselves to strategies that strive to unite our community.

Alliance would:

- ⌘ **Support both statutory and community projects** that help victims build a shared sense of healing and recovery. We aim to remove communal bias in any such work.
- ⌘ **Support the creation of a public forum for victims in line with the report of the interim victims' commissioner.**
- ⌘ **Ensure that adequate funding is put in place for victims' organisations.**
- ⌘ **Continue to apply pressure for those 'exiled' by paramilitaries inside or out of Northern Ireland to be able to return to their homes in safety.**

The Past and its Legacy

One of the missing ingredients from the Northern Ireland Peace Process has been any comprehensive process for dealing with the past and its legacy. This is a common aspect to most processes internationally.

- ⌘ **Alliance proposes that the British and Irish Governments should appoint an independent commission, composed of domestic and international experts to consult, deliberate and make a series of recommendations which would address how to approach outstanding issues relating to the past and its legacy, and their linkage to the promotion of reconciliation.**

Some may argue that focusing in on the past is counterproductive, keeps wounds open, and that society should move on. We disagree with this view. We believe that

addressing the past and its legacy is fundamental to the process of reconciliation and building a shared future. The failure to do this in a comprehensive and holistic manner is a barrier to political progress.

To date, efforts to deal with the past and its legacy have been handled on a very piecemeal basis. These matters have been allowed to create further division. Alliance firmly believes that only through the creation of a comprehensive approach can this tendency be countered.

There have been significant efforts to improve services to victims of 'the Troubles'. Also, civic society has been to the forefront in identifying and advocating different mechanisms for dealing with the past. However, it is time to bring these efforts together.

A number of particular areas relating to the victims should be considered including memorials, a possible day of reflection and remembrance, a forum of testimonials, and most crucially a mechanism to address truth recovery. All elements of society, including the state and the paramilitaries need to confront the legacy of past actions.

4. Fair Taxation Works

stealth tax costs



Fair Taxation Works stealth tax costs

The public finances in Northern Ireland are in crisis. People are being asked to pay more and more money without any noticeable improvement in public services. Most people realise that Westminster will not be funding Northern Ireland as much as before, but they have every right to be angry about the introduction of punitive water charges and the abuse of the regional rate. These are backdoor stealth taxes that are not fair and impose huge burdens on both households and businesses alike. At the same time, people are paying an estimated £1 billion per year towards the management of a divided society. The way forward should be obvious.

There has been a drop in support for devolution in recent years, in large part, due to the political uncertainty. It is important the restored political institutions are placed on a sustainable basis, and have the opportunity to gain public confidence through being able to make a real difference to people's lives.

Alliance appreciates the opportunity that is being given to Northern Ireland to make the case for a financial package.

Alliance does recognise the fiscal constraints that the Treasury is working under, and also that simply throwing cash at problems in Northern Ireland is not necessarily a solution.

Any financial package would need to be accompanied by domestic reforms. It would give Northern Ireland the breathing space and opportunity to introduce changes within Northern Ireland to place local finances and economy on a more sustainable basis.

It is clear that significant sums are also required for investment in the physical infrastructure, as well as social capital, to support these reforms.

The best economic advice is that a reduction in corporation tax to a rate comparable with the Republic of Ireland would make the greatest difference to promoting economic growth, and therefore addressing unemployment, poverty, and inequality within Northern Ireland. However, Alliance appreciates that Northern Ireland can't simply look to repeat the approach used in Republic of Ireland. Any relaxation of corporation tax that the Assembly could take forward, would need to be accompanied by a range of micro-economic reforms to the local economy, regarding training, education system, size of public sector.

Costs of Segregation

Segregation carries huge human and financial costs. At the human level, it denies people opportunities, ruins lives, and deprives society of the full benefit of their talents.

Alliance has identified that approximately £1 billion of public expenditure in Northern Ireland is wasted in dealing with the direct and indirect costs of managing a divided society. At the same time, Northern Ireland suffers the longest hospital waiting lists in the UK, has a crumbling infrastructure, and is facing punitive water charges.

The costs of a divided society are apparent in three respects.

First, there are the direct costs of policing riots, other civil disturbances and parades, the distortions to policing that arise from the security threat, and the costs to a wide range of agencies in repairing damaged buildings and facilities.

Second, there are the indirect costs of providing duplicate goods, facilities and services for separate sections of the community, either implicitly or explicitly.

4. Fair Taxation Works

stealth tax costs

This includes: schools, GP surgeries, job centres, community centres, leisure centres, and even bus stops. These costs are borne not just by the public sector, but by the private sector too.

Third, there are the opportunity costs of lost inward investment and tourism. While the Northern Ireland economy has performed better in recent years, it is still performing well below its potential capacity.

- €# **Alliance is prepared to act on the conclusions of a research exercise being conducted by Deloitte on behalf of the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister into the costs of division.**
- €# **Alliance will reinvest the costs of segregation** in providing quality services for the whole community. Our ideas are set out below.
- €# **Alliance will ensure that adequate resources are made available within the current Comprehensive Spending Review to promote sharing, cohesion and integration.** Sharing should be financially incentivised.

Water Charges

Water reform has been mishandled and misrepresented by both the Northern Ireland Executive and direct rule ministers. The proposed 'tap tax' is unfair and will lead to some of the most vulnerable being unable to afford a basic human necessity.

The Government has made a false comparison between what households in Northern Ireland and Great Britain pay.

The SDLP, UUP, Sinn Fein and the DUP were all part of the Northern Ireland Executive that severed the link between our regional rate and water payments.

Future consumers should not be required to pay for making good the water and sewerage infrastructure.

The European Union is likely to require a separate charge for water that does take into account consumption and encourage conservation.

- €# **Alliance believes that the regional rate should be reduced by the amount to be raised for water charges.** It is wrong for people to be asked to pay twice for water.
- €# **Alliance does not believe that water and sewage services should be self-financing and is opposed to privatisation.**
- €# **Alliance maintains that the infrastructure problems should be funded from general revenue.**
- €# **Alliance will abolish water charges based on property, and instead have a system linked to ability to pay and usage.**

Regional Rate

For 2007/08, the Northern Ireland Administration has set a regional rate increase of 6%. This is already well ahead of the current rate of inflation. It is likely that any future devolved Executive will seek to abuse the regional rate to raise additional sums of money, without facing up to the need for reform.

The regional rate based on property value does not take into account ability to pay. There are often people on fixed incomes, in particular pensioners, who have difficulty in meeting rising demands. This has been exacerbated by the shift to capital values.

- €# **Alliance would abolish the regional rate.** This rate has been abused by the Northern Ireland Executive and successive Direct Rule ministers. We would replace the regional rate with a regional income tax.

4. Fair Taxation Works

stealth tax costs

Regional Income Tax

Direct rule ministers like to repeatedly accuse us in Northern Ireland that we don't pay our fair share of rates and taxes. They repeatedly ignore the facts that:

- ⌘ Average Northern Ireland household income is 19% below the UK average
- ⌘ More NI households (21%) rely on benefits, than in the UK overall (12%)
- ⌘ NI households pay 26% more for fuel, light and power than in the rest of the UK

Alliance would use a fair method to pay our fair share of taxes, one that is based on our ability to pay.

- ⌘ **Alliance would implement a regional income tax**, which would replace the regional rate. The principle of progressive taxation is well established — the higher your income, the more you're expected to contribute to societal needs.

Where the regional rate remains, Alliance is opposed to setting a cap. A cap will serve to redistribute the tax burden from the rich to poor, contravening the progressive values of society. Rates relief should instead be considered for particular categories, including pensioners, students, and single householders.

Tax-Varying Powers

Alliance accepts that the Executive has only limited financial resources at its disposal. In the long term, the Barnett Formula erodes the advantages in public expenditure of the Northern Ireland Administration. Therefore, there is a responsibility upon the Executive to spend resources wisely, to invest in the future, and to prioritise addressing the causes (rather than the immediate symptoms) of problems.

- ⌘ **Alliance would introduce tax-varying powers to Northern Ireland.** This will give the Assembly a greater ability to reflect the democratic wishes of local people and to have the

capability to offer tax incentives to stimulate local economic growth. For example, Alliance would support reductions in the level of corporation tax, and a switch to 'green' taxes.

5. Education Works

ignorance costs



Education Works ignorance costs

Access to education is vital to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to realise his or her full potential. Alliance supports a universal education system, free at the point of access. Government should adequately cater for the demands of nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary places.

Furthermore, Alliance believes in lifelong learning and training. Educational opportunities must be available to all at every stage of life. The system needs to be sufficiently flexible to cater for a range of demands and abilities. The current education system serves well those most academically able, but does not adequately address the needs of pupils across the full spectrum of ability.

The system is fundamentally flawed by the segregated and fragmented nature of provision.

Structures and Funding

Alliance welcomes the broad thrust of the report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education (Bain Report).

Alliance is very conscious of the problems within the school estate. There have always been problems due to duplication in the administration and provision of education within Northern Ireland. These have been exacerbated through the recent demographic downturn. The existence of over 50,000 empty places within Northern Ireland's schools out of an overall capacity of around

300,000 is not sustainable. This is especially the case given the anticipated 80,000 space places by 2012.

Alliance accepts that there is a need for a rationalisation of the school estate. The current arrangement entails that education budgets are heavily skewed towards the maintenance and running costs of buildings. We believe that it is more important to invest in the needs of pupils, including in particular special needs provision.

However, Alliance wants to ensure that any rationalisation is carried out on the most effective and sustainable basis. We are very concerned that rationalisation is currently being carried out on a piecemeal basis within sectors rather than on a cross-sectoral basis, missing opportunities for more sustainable reform.

Alliance also acknowledges the desire of many parents to have a local school. It is worth stressing the benefits from this. The rationalisation of schools on an integrated or another shared basis will create more opportunities for pupils to attend local schools.

It is also important to stress that segregation in schools in Northern Ireland is not simply a matter of religion or communal background. There are divisions based on class, perceived ability and gender. All of these create inefficiencies and problems in themselves.

Alliance believes that a number of key principles are important in managing the school estate.

- # It is important that decisions regarding the rationalisation of the school estate are placed within an overall policy framework.
- # The interests of pupils should always be at the heart of any education system. There are problems potentially created for the education

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

of children both from being placed in schools that are too large and also those that are too small.

- €# There should be a preference for local schools catering to local communities. This approach helps to copper-fasten a sense of community, and to reduce transport costs.
- €# Insofar as is possible, parents should have a choice of school, in terms of issues such as ethos, and also particular specialities - academic, vocational, and sporting.
- €# All opportunities to encourage sharing, and the encouragement of good relations, within the education system should be encouraged. In a divided society, the exposure to pupils to peers from a diverse religious and cultural background will bring significant personal and societal benefits.

Arising out of these principles, Alliance:

- €# **endorses an area rather than sectoral approach to planning.**
- €# **supports the emphasis upon shared schools being the most socially, educationally and economically viable.**

Alliance other priorities are to—

- €# **Alliance would support the establishment of a single education authority**, to replace the five existing Education and Library Boards and some operational functions of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.
- €# **Ensure a proper system of civic education at secondary school level**, as proposed by the Council for the Curriculum, Examination and

Assessment (CCEA). The benefit will be new generations of young people taking on their responsibilities of citizenship.

- €# **Guarantee a nursery school place** for every child who wishes to have one. There are 35 nursery places per 1,000 here, versus a UK average of 71.
- €# **All children with a disability or learning difficulties should have the right to access mainstream education**, including the provision of large-text books to those with partial-sight.
- €# **Guarantee statementing where required within three months**
- €# **Devote additional resources to the education of children with learning difficulties**, including additional numbers of teachers and classroom assistants. Alliance supports the right of choice for children with disabilities to go to the schools most appropriate for them, whether mainstream or special needs.

Post-primary education

Alliance would:

- €# **Implement the use of a Pupil Profile**, which will provide a holistic assessment of pupils' skills, abilities and interests throughout their entire educational career. This should be used as a guide for election of educational choices. The pupil profile should not be a tool for academic selection. Alliance is opposed to a postcode lottery.
- €# **Defer the age of electing a particular educational route to age 14**. We do not believe that 11 is the appropriate age to make educational decisions that will restrict later choices.

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

- €# **Ensure that all children would progress to study a common, middle-school curriculum**, for the first three years of post-primary education. Importantly, any existing school could provide this middle-school education.
- €# **Provide adequate provision for distinct technical, vocational and academic educational choices.** Pupils will be free to 'mix and match' vocational and academic subjects. Grammar schools will be a valued sector of a greater partnership with other education providers, including the Further & Higher Education sector.
- €# **Bring business enterprise and business entrepreneurship into the curriculum of Northern Ireland schools.** This will require collaboration with the business sector, to ensure efficient delivery of this aspect of the curriculum.

Integrated education

The Alliance Party has a long-standing commitment to the support and expansion of integrated education, based on two party principles: pluralism in a united community and the provision of parental choice in education. Integrated education is an excellent example of actual reconciliation, benefiting children and adults alike. Integrated education has also made a significant contribution to social cohesion in Northern Ireland. The Bain Review has recognised the crucial role that integrated education can play as the optimal approach to sharing in schools.

Alliance will implement the following 10-point plan to expand the provision of integrated education in Northern Ireland, in line with demand.

- €# **Government should set a minimum target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.** It is important that the duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education is turned into practical targets. This target would involve adding another 1% per annum to the levels of children in integrated schools per year. This 10% target should be subsequently revised upwards.
- €# **The duty on the Department of Education to encourage, not merely to facilitate, the development of integrated education should be extended to Education and Library Boards, and the new single Education Authority established under the Review of Public Administration.**
- €# **Both the Department and other Education authorities should have a duty to strategically plan for the future provision of integrated education, including identifying where additional provision needs to be situated.** Currently, the development of integrated education is ad hoc. It is in the hands of parents to create new schools, or for individual existing schools to hold ballots on transformation. The development of integrated education is not managed. Consequently, there may be a serious under-provision of the choice of integrated schools in some areas, and potentially an over-provision in others. Community audits should be used to facilitate this.
- €# **Where new schools are being built in Northern Ireland, for example to service new housing developments, there should be a presumption that they shall be integrated.** Given the current financial pressures experienced from running a segregated school system, there are powerful fiscal arguments for creating new schools on an integrated or otherwise shared basis.

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

⌘ **Government should encourage the transformation of existing schools to integrated status and review the current procedures to make this easier.** It is unrealistic to expect the necessary growth in the provision of integrated education to come entirely from new build schools. The development of integrated education must take into the account the existing schools estate.

⌘ **Government should reform and relax the criteria for the creation and maintenance of integrated schools, giving recognition to those children of mixed, other or no religious background.** One immediate solution, rather than trying to prevent the smaller communal/religious background falling below a certain level, would be to impose a percentage threshold over which those from the larger communal/religious background could not pass. This would give space to people to define themselves as they wish without jeopardising the viability of the school.

⌘ **Government should give formal recognition to the contribution being made to the process of reconciliation by 'mixed' schools, those with a mixed enrolment but no formal integrated status.** There are a number of voluntary grammar, state-controlled, and Catholic maintained schools that do have to varying degrees mixed enrolments, and significant numbers of children from different backgrounds to the traditional ethos of the school. While these schools maintain particular ethos and are not formally integrated, they are playing an important role in breaking down barriers and exposing children from different backgrounds to others.

⌘ **Government should encourage existing schools to share**

facilities and ultimately campuses. There is much that can be done to encourage sharing in education, short of the creation of formal integrated schools. Integrated and single-identity schools should not be regarded as separate poles, but rather places on a continuum with a range of other policy options in-between. In some circumstances, there may be powerful financial and economic reasons for existing schools in pooling their physical and other resources, including shared campuses and co-management. In doing so, maximum opportunities should be provided for children to mix and interact with one another, in particular within extracurricular activities.

⌘ **Government should oppose any creation of any perceived 'right' to a guarantee of public funding for segregated schools, as this could forever entrench segregated schools and frustrate the process of integration.** It should be up to the democratically-elected legislators to determine the nature of the education system in Northern Ireland.

⌘ **Government should advocate the de-segregation of teacher training courses and facilities, and the familiarisation of integrated education policies and practices in such institutions.** Education is the only field in Northern Ireland where professionals are trained separately from one another. Even where teachers work in a segregated school system, there is no underlying rationale as to why they should be trained separately.

Employment and Learning

The Northern Ireland economy depends on people with good skills and education. To

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

move to a knowledge-based economy, access to learning must be encouraged for all. Academic, vocational and occupational pathways need to be given equal respect and appropriately resourced. Our education and training system must support lifelong learning.

sector employment in the Republic of Ireland.

Alliance's priorities are to—

- ⌘ **Abolish tuition fees and top-up fees being charged by all Northern Ireland universities.** Cost should not prevent able students from entering a third-level education. We support a Scottish-style endowment fund, which graduates would contribute to only after earning £17,000.
- ⌘ **Enable students to repay current student loans over a longer period of time and contingent on income.** Only those earning over £23,000 would have to make repayments.
- ⌘ **Encourage initiatives that increase attainment** in areas of high deprivation and draw students from across the community.
- ⌘ **Increase funding for university research projects.** Such research brings about the innovation vital to the regeneration of Northern Ireland.
- ⌘ **Remove the pay differential between teachers at the secondary level and within the Further and Higher Education Sector.**
- ⌘ **Introduce an entitlement to student loans for lifelong learners over 54,** and reinstate funding for LearnDirect courses for the over 60s.
- ⌘ **Develop the cross-border, mutual recognition of qualifications.** We welcome the removal of the Irish language qualification as compulsory in public

6. Well-being Works

illness costs



Well-being Works illness costs

A healthy population is a happier and more prosperous society. Investment in improved primary, community and acute health and social services is a critical one that affects every individual and family.

Alliance is committed to a National Health Service free at the point of delivery and to the continued development of integrated Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland.

Alliance supports the development of primary and community care on a truly multi-disciplinary basis. Alliance believes that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety must work closely with the other Departments responsible for housing, education, policing and the economy, in order to promote health and well-being.

With changing demographics, the financial commitments necessary for the health sector will need to increase as an overall share of public expenditure. An increased emphasis on preventive and public health issues is important not only for well-being but for financial reasons.

Regional specialties, such as cancer treatment, need to be centralised, in order to provide the best treatment and achieve economies of scale. There is, however, a serious lack of capacity in acute hospital provision. This can be alleviated by innovative models of hospital and community provision, including the use of local hospitals in ways that address local circumstances and needs. There should be no standard model. Rather, each hospital should reflect local needs and strengths.

Alliance believes that the health sector is one where significant benefits can come from cross-border co-operation, through the mutual provision of hospital services (particularly emergency services), the sharing of specialised equipment, and the employment of an air ambulance, amongst others.

Alliance believes that a smaller number of strengthened Health and Social Services organisations would make better use of managerial experience and resources. It is important that professionals and local communities are fully involved in shaping future developments.

Alliance priorities are to—

- €# **Distribute resources in favour of Health and Social Services.**
Alliance would make a commitment to raise the share of GDP spent on the NHS to the average EU level within five years.
- €# **Introduce free personal care** for those living in residential and nursing homes. Only Alliance MLAs voted to introduce such a provision in the Northern Ireland Assembly. We would also remove the age restrictions on the receipt of disability benefits.
- €# **Support the continuing provision of clinically effective drugs to all people with early-middle stage dementia, who can benefit from their use.**
- €# **Encourage and invest in 'healthy living' schemes,** including the promotion of healthy eating, walking buses, sport and other physical exercise.
- €# **Prioritise cardiovascular disease prevention** in public health strategy. Coronary heart disease in Northern Ireland is one of the highest in Europe.

6. Well-being Works

illness costs

- ⌘ **Increase the minimum age for the purchase of tobacco products from 16 to 18**
- ⌘ **Reduce the maximum alcohol level for drivers to be reduced from 80mgs to that of 50mgs.**
- ⌘ **Review the appropriateness of advertisements for alcohol.**
- ⌘ **Develop radiotherapy and chemotherapy services** within an acute hospital setting. These services play a central role in the curative and palliative treatment of cancer.
- ⌘ **Develop and implement a multi-disciplinary health promotion strategy.** This should utilise the previous experience of the involvement of District Councils, and work in conjunction with schools, youth services, and the voluntary and community sectors. This strategy will be an important means of reducing teenage pregnancy and promoting the welfare of young people, including addressing teenage suicide.
- ⌘ **Abolish eye and dental check-up charges**, and secure access to NHS dental care for everyone.
- ⌘ **Adopt a two-year training course for ambulance paramedics.** An improved ambulance service is an integral part of the emergency service.
- ⌘ **Amend regulations to extend the scope of nurse prescribing.** Nurses must be resourced to lead and deliver the fundamentals of care such as nutrition, hygiene and respect for patient dignity.
- ⌘ **Prioritise addressing the workforce crisis in Health and Social Services.** Emphasis should be placed on long-term workforce planning, staff development, and active measures that will support and retain staff (including flexible working arrangements). An over-reliance on costly agency staff should be addressed.
- ⌘ **Increase the provision of acute and non-acute beds**, to address immediate need. Furthermore, we will apply waiting times as a form of service measurement, in preference to waiting lists.
- ⌘ **Ensure adequate staffing of professions** such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy, to prevent a forecasted significant shortfall. Proper staffing of physiotherapists will enable patients to get rapid access to vital rehabilitation and recovery, which will help produce shorter stays in hospital, reduce waiting lists and provide more community-based support.
- ⌘ **Develop rehabilitation services.** This includes the need to increase the number of occupational therapists, to further reduce an unacceptable backlog, as well as to allow people to regain best possible quality of life and live longer in their own homes.
- ⌘ **Support the implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford Review into mental health issues and learning disability, including the provision of sufficient resources.**
- ⌘ **Give greater attention to mental health issues and learning difficulties**, including those afflicted with Alzheimers, Autism, Attention Deficit and Hyper-Activity Disorder.
- ⌘ **Develop community services for people with learning difficulties.** We are particularly concerned at the shortfalls in day and respite care as well as in employment opportunities.
- ⌘ **Provide necessary community support services to enable the smooth transition from hospital care to the community for those**

6. Well-being Works

illness costs

with physical needs and learning difficulties.

- €# **Develop primary and community care-based mental health services**, including out-of-hours services. This can ensure early, skilled intervention, as well as to prevent admissions to hospital.
- €# **Increase the provision for services to support families**, to protect children from abuse and to assist children in need with disabilities. Spending in Northern Ireland is two-thirds of that in England. This poor performance by our local administration cannot be allowed to continue.
- €# **Ensure access to information and advice on health and fertility issues.**

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs



Sustainability Works pollution costs

Alliance believes that a quality local and global environment is integral to a good quality of life. Alliance supports regional, national, European and international efforts to protect the environment. Alliance supports the implementation of the Rio and Kyoto Treaties. Climate change is a global issue, but one where all individuals, communities and regions have responsibilities.

There is much that can be done in Northern Ireland to protect our local environment, and to contribute to wider efforts to protect the environment generally. All sections of society, including the public and private sector, civic society and local communities, producers and consumers, have important roles to play.

Alliance priorities are to—

- €# **Establish an independent Environmental Protection Agency.** This body will have the power to enforce environmental legislation.
- €# **Create a Green Economy Task Force.** This body would make local businesses aware of the true economic and environmental costs of their actions, to illustrate the potential savings from the more efficient use of resources and the minimisation of waste, and to show the potential of new markets for environmentally friendly products.

Planning

Alliance favours balanced development that creates new investment, prosperity and

homes, while respecting both the environment and our built heritage. Alliance is concerned at the lack of proper planning frameworks in most parts of Northern Ireland, and the particular absence of current Area Plans. Alliance is also deeply concerned at the destruction of many buildings of historic importance or architectural merit, and incursions into the Greenbelt.

Alliance would:

- €# **Give District Councils the ability to initiate third-party appeals.** While it may not be practical to give this power to individual residents, Alliance believes that it should be vested in local representatives through a weighted-majority vote on the relevant District Council.
- €# **Initiate a general review of Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).** We will ensure that planning policies are consistent with both the economic and social needs of Northern Ireland, and the concerns of local communities.
- €# **Protect our coastline and the countryside from inappropriate and over-development.** The proposed Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 14 does address a serious problem of over-development in rural areas, though it fails to take account of the need for a sustainable rural society.
- €# **Set targets for 'brownfield development' as part of Area Plans.**
- €# **Lobby for the abolition of VAT on all renovations and repairs to existing buildings.** This will protect our cultural heritage for future generations, with the judicious use of existing buildings.
- €# **Support the creation of additional 'Conservation Areas',** to protect the built environment in key

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

areas of historical or architectural interest.

- €# **Ensure necessary infrastructure is put in place before new major housing developments commence.** For example, sufficient consideration must be given to potential new residents' access to public transport.
- €# **Ensure that out-of-town retail developments are only permitted as part of an approved strategic plan.**
- €# **Amend planning regulations and procedures** so that planning applications with clear economic development potential can have accelerated consideration. This will not be carried out at the expense of standards.
- €# **Develop best practice regarding design of the urban environment** to maximise integration.

Sustainable Development

Protecting the environment and developing our economy are not mutually exclusive but interdependent. Sustainable development reflects this reality.

Alliance would:

- €# **Acknowledge the role that Northern Ireland must play as part of wider UK and European efforts to address carbon reduction.** Alliance believes that the following targeted reductions should be established 20% by 2010, with a further 3% annually, leading to a 60% decrease by 2050.
- €# **Make sustainable development an overarching theme** in central, regional and local government. Furthermore, Alliance will introduce an ecological footprint indicator as a means of measuring the progress of sustainable development. We believe

this is the best way of assessing Northern Ireland's impact on the world's natural resources.

- €# **Develop new local government community planning to encourage the reduction of carbon emissions,** including through planning, building control, energy conservation and investment in renewable energy.
- €# **Integrate sustainable development into the Northern Ireland education curriculum.**
- €# **Endorse the 'polluter pays' principle.** This means that those who pollute more should pay more, and provides a financial incentive to pollute less.
- €# **Support a shift in taxation towards pollution and resource depletion.** Consistent with the 'polluter pays' principle, the use of market forces can contribute to the protection of the environment.
- €# **Provide grants for SMEs to develop alternative energy uses,** and ensure the extension of the grant programme for consumers.

Conservation

Alliance would:

- €# **Implement the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.** This strategy contains 76 recommendations for conserving and enhancing our local biodiversity—the intricate and interdependent relationships between species and their habitats—essential to the health of the whole planet.
- €# **Introduce legislation to ensure Marine Wildlife Conservation.** This will identify, designate and protect Marine Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Alliance is committed to the implementation of

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

the Habitats and Birds Directives and the OSPAR Convention.

- €# **Fully implement the Water Framework Directive**, to ensure the maximum opportunities to protect and restore our wetlands. These deserve sustainable management, because wetlands protect us from floods, filter out pollutants, provide homes for wildlife, are a source of recreation and beauty, and attract thousands of visitors.
- €# **Ban hunting of mammals with dogs**. Hunting foxes and deer, as well as hare coursing, is incompatible with animal welfare.

Waste Management/Recycling

Alliance is concerned at the amount of waste that is both produced and dumped in landfill within Northern Ireland. This is not only bad for the environment, but puts additional costs onto the District Rate. The Landfill Tax has already produced financial incentives to minimise landfill dumping. There are now European Union targets for waste minimisation and recycling, and a Northern Ireland waste management strategy is in place. Northern Ireland is considerably behind both the rest of the United Kingdom and most of our partners in Europe in the amount of waste that is recycled.

Alliance favours a broad-based approach to waste management that stresses waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. Waste disposal in landfill should only be an option for what cannot be recycled. It is important that all producers of waste are made aware of the true cost.

Alliance would:

- €# **Introduce Public Sector Purchasing Policies that will favour recycled products**. This will give a substantial boost to the creation and maintenance of markets for such products.

- €# **Actively promote recycling**. This can be done through influencing public attitudes, the creation of financial incentives, lobbying Councils to introduce separate kerbside collection streams for recyclables, increasing the number of, and accessibility to, recycling facilities, and helping to consolidate markets through public purchasing policies.
- €# **Accelerate the implementation of the Waste Management Strategy**, and the various Waste Management Plans.
- €# **Introduce a levy on plastic bags**. A similar scheme has been launched successfully in the Republic of Ireland. We will also investigate extending such a levy to unnecessary packaging.

Transport

Safe, effective, and efficient transport is essential to the success of the economy, the protection of the local and global environment, and the quality of life of the people in Northern Ireland. Traffic levels are growing at an exponential and unsustainable rate, with increased gridlock on important roads. Investment in public transport is well behind European and even British levels. The building of more roads cannot solve our problems alone. Public transport must be developed on priority routes and in urban areas, and be safe, reliable and affordable. The creation of such a network will require a significant injection of public funds. However, we must also recognise that Northern Ireland has a large rural population that is dependent upon private transport.

Alliance would:

- €# **Increase the funding directed to public transport**. At present, the Northern Ireland Regional Transportation Strategy devotes 65% of funding to roads, and only 35% to

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

public transport. This ratio is the opposite in Great Britain.

- €# **Provide for residents-only parking schemes.** Too many residents, in and around busy city and town centres, have difficulty accessing their own properties due to all-day parkers.
- €# **Improve road safety,** through better education and more traffic calming measures. We will also improve street lighting and favourably amend the pedestrian crossings formula.
- €# **Secure and expand the railway system in Northern Ireland.** Particular consideration will be given to the creation of a rapid transit system in the Belfast Metropolitan Region.
- €# **Protect the current road infrastructure and ensure that the necessary funding is provided to carry out essential and ongoing maintenance.**
- €# **Improve public transport,** through the increase in park and ride schemes, more dedicated bus lanes, cross-city bus routes, better integrated timetables, and more efficient fare collection systems.
- €# **Extend the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to a range of community groups with Small Bus Permits,** in line with England, Scotland and Wales.
- €# **Extend free travel to people with disabilities.** Mobility must be assured for all sections of the community. Public transport is a necessity for many people with disabilities and should be free and disability-friendly.
- €# **Improve the co-ordination of road works,** and boost the repair and maintenance of roads. Northern

Ireland has a very extensive road network of almost 25,000 kilometres. We must not neglect our roads but ensure they are maintained to a high standard. Utilities and communication companies who dig up our roads must repair them to a satisfactory level.

- €# **Reward those drivers who use low emission vehicles.**
- €# **Encourage a wider debate on 'congestion charges'** and other forms of road pricing. Such initiatives would be consistent with the 'polluter pays' principle. However, motorists should not be so penalised until a proper public transport infrastructure has been put in place.

8. Enterprise Works

stagnation costs



Enterprise Works stagnation costs

Alliance favours a mixed economy, in which a primacy of market solutions is balanced by a government and public concern for social justice. The role of government, especially with the onset of a knowledge-driven economy, should be to create the right framework conditions for a dynamic and high-growth economy.

A successful economy and prosperity are essential to creating the favourable conditions for the development of a shared, non-sectarian society, and giving people a stake in the consolidation of peace.

Despite the peace dividend, the increased level of investment and growing prosperity for some, the Northern Ireland economy remains sluggish. Rates of growth remain low compared to our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland, and parts of Great Britain. This comes on top of the legacy of missed opportunities during 'the Troubles'.

Any new Assembly will have to confront a number of major economic challenges. The most critical problem is the size of the private sector. It is not that the public sector is too large, rather that the private sector is too small after years of stagnation. There is clear scope for growth of the tourist sector.

Northern Ireland must come to terms with globalisation, technological change, environmental pressures and changing demographics.

Other problems that need to be addressed include facilitating much greater investment in research and developments, ensuring that

education and training produce the new skills needed by employers, encouraging some of the economically inactive back into the job market, and ensuring that the public sector becomes more responsive to and provides solutions to businesses.

A growing economy is critical to creating further wealth, to creating the opportunity to build a fairer society, and reducing dependency on the Treasury.

Alliance priorities are to—

- # **Promote policies to facilitate a significant increase in economic growth, increased inward investment, and a greater level of exports**
- # **Integrate economic and education policy.** The needs of business can be compatible with educational provision. For example, collaborative clusters of schools, businesses and colleges should be established. Lifelong learning can maximise an individual's employability.
- # **Increase the number of university places in Northern Ireland,** and encourage more students to specialise in science, engineering and business studies.
- # **Develop Information Technology in Northern Ireland.** We will lead a drive to improve the understanding of this sector and support from leading businesses, banks and government departments. We will provide assistance, where necessary, in order to encourage IT to grow. Access to broadband is now a fundamental prerequisite for competitiveness.
- # **Increase investment in research and development,** as this is currently well below the UK average.
- # **Create a 'green-economy' taskforce,** to help develop what

8. Enterprise Works

stagnation costs

could become a major niche area for Northern Ireland

- €# **Reduce needless regulations and bureaucracy for small businesses.** Such obstacles to growth must be minimised.
- €# **Introduce age-positive hiring programmes.** Forcing older people to prematurely leave their employment robs the economy of decades of knowledge and expertise. We recommend re-training of the older workforce, and we will provide positive solutions to employers, to employ older workforces.
- €# **Extend the minimum wage to be extended to those aged 16+.** Young employees should not be paid less for the same work, simply because of their age.
- €# **Change re-employment schemes.** New Deal has been too cumbersome. We need better and more efficient schemes to recruit women, mature trainees and the long-term unemployed.
- €# **Introduce parental leave schemes,** so that fathers as well as mothers can address the competing demands of work and family life.
- €# **Give priority to the Belfast–Dublin, and other key cross-border transport corridors.** We will also work to establish a central UK-wide plan to develop strategic routes and linkages on the west coast of Great Britain.
- €# **Increase funding for tourism product marketing activities,** to revise the overall image and profile of Northern Ireland overseas. Furthermore, Alliance believes a public-private sector partnership is central to the success of tourism. We support efforts to involve the private sector more in the growth of the tourism industry. Given its

environmental assets, the tourism sector is ripe for considerable economic growth.

- €# **Lead the way in engaging more actively in European, UK and Republic of Ireland initiatives,** especially in areas of technology, competitiveness, IT, and education and training. This will build a wider perspective and international outlook.

Energy

A sustainable energy policy is needed for Northern Ireland, one that aims to maximise energy efficiency and minimise consumption of non-renewable resources. Consumers of energy should become more aware of the true economic and environmental costs of their consumption. Tax and subsidy regimes should be altered accordingly to better reflect the 'polluter pays' principle.

Alliance would:

- €# **Promote energy efficiency and conservation.** Unacceptable amounts of energy are wasted through inefficiencies. Alliance would consider the introduction of energy rating for private dwellings and encouragement for householders to effect energy conservation.
- €# **Develop renewable forms of energy, including solar, wind, and tidal.**
- €# **Increase access of renewable energy sources to the general public.** With the development of a strategic approach, Northern Ireland is well placed to take advantage of the potential of both wind and wave energy. In a region rich in renewable resources, government policy must emphasise and encourage new, imaginative sources of energy. Energy technology should be supported by government funding as well as by the private sector.

8. Enterprise Works

stagnation costs

- €# **Promote the development of an all-island electricity market.**

Agriculture and Rural Development

Northern Ireland contains many rural communities that are reliant on the agri-food industry, providing employment and a valuable contribution to our Gross Domestic Product.

Like any other sector, the forces of modernisation and globalisation cannot be ignored or wished away. Alliance will provide the leadership to face these challenges and more, to ensure the vitality and success of our food and drink industries.

Alliance would:

- €# **Bring about greater co-ordination** between the Department for Agriculture & Rural Development and the Department of the Environment over agri-environment and planning policies. Northern Ireland needs the highest environmental standards, but farmers need to receive a better appreciation of the difficulties they experience.
- €# **Support those living in rural areas, in particular those suffering from social exclusion.** Alliance is particularly conscious of problems relating to public transport and community infrastructure.
- €# **Earmark 10% of production subsidies for environmental schemes**, as recommended in the report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food in England.
- €# **Ensure that money directed towards agri-environmental schemes directly benefit farmers.** Modulated funds should not be used for other aspects of departmental expenditure. Alliance will explore ways in which farmers can produce environmental benefits while increasing farm income.

- €# **Give farmers the option of receiving their direct support payments in euros.**
- €# **Initiate a re-examination of the Rural Planning strategy**, to promote balanced development, including farm diversification, in rural areas of Northern Ireland.
- €# **Promote the highest standards of agriculture.** We need to move away from commodity production, and develop niche markets, including organic foods, building on our existing green image. Alliance opposes the introduction of genetically-modified crops.
- €# **Improve the relationship between suppliers and retailers in Northern Ireland.** We will highly encourage suppliers, retailers and food service companies to sign up voluntarily to the 'Code of Practice on Supermarkets' Dealings with Suppliers'.
- €# **Devise and implement a comprehensive animal health strategy.** Informed consumers will need to support highest welfare standards with their purchasing decisions.
- €# **Develop a strategy for organic food production.** This will cover research, development, standards and marketing, and address all parts of the food chain. We will seek practical ways to promote the production of more locally produced organic food.
- €# **Extend compulsory country of origin labelling.** We endorse the efforts of the Food Standards Agency to improve food labelling policy.

9. Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs



Social Inclusion Works social exclusion costs

Alliance recognises that a shared and integrated society requires economic and social equalities to be addressed, and barriers to an inclusive society such as poverty, deprivation and lack of opportunity to be addressed.

Alliance will fully implement integrated policies that target social exclusion. Such policies need to be based on improving income, employment, health, education and public transport. Our policies on these have already been set out.

Benefits

Alliance would:

- ⌘ **Clarify and simplify benefit applications and procedures**, which will particularly improve the situation of our elderly population. Alliance will make the benefit system more transparent and accessible.
- ⌘ **Ensure adequate funding and training for Citizens Advice Bureaux and other independent advice centres.** This is essential to help people disadvantaged by inadequate advice on social security, debt.

Women

Alliance would:

- ⌘ **Address the pay gap, and ensure that women receive the same level of pay as men for the same work**

- ⌘ **Provide support to the network of crisis centres for women.**

Men

Alliance would:

- ⌘ **Develop a Men's Health Strategy for Northern Ireland**
- ⌘ **Ensure that there are adequately funded and resourced services to deal with health and emotional problems experienced by men.**
- ⌘ **Enable men to play a fuller role in family life, including through flexible working and paternity leave**

Children

Alliance endorses the establishment of the Children and Young People's Unit, the Children's Commissioner, and the consultation for a Children's Strategy. We are committed to safeguarding and improving children's lives.

Alliance would:

- ⌘ **Address the underfunding in support for children's and young persons' services relative to the rest of the UK.** This includes support for the voluntary and community sector, and implementation of programmes such as Sure-Start.
- ⌘ **Provide adequately resourced childcare provision.** There are successful childcare voucher and employer/employee tax incentive schemes that we will promote and implement with sufficient financing.
- ⌘ **Support initiatives designated to combat bullying.**
- ⌘ **Ensure that children's rights are secured in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland,** entrenched as a named group. Of all in society,

9. Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs

children's welfare must be the best protected.

- €# **Support the reform of Adoption Legislation as set out in 'Adopting the Future'**. Adoption is not about providing an individual or family with a child. It is about finding the best placement for a child. What matters significantly is the stability of the environment in which the child is being raised. This can be achieved in a number of settings.

Older People

Like other regions, Northern Ireland has a growing population of older people. It is important that they are able to continued to make a full and valuable contribution to society. Some older people face problems of poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

Alliance would:

- €# **Introduce free personal care for those in residential and nursing homes**
- €# **Support the creation of an Older Person's Commissioner to act as an advocate for the needs of older persons.**
- €# **Better ensure that older persons are receiving the benefits to which they are entitled.**

Carers

Almost 200,000 people act as carers in Northern Ireland looking after sick, disabled and dependent relatives.

- €# **Carers need to be better resourced, and eligibility criteria for financial support lowered. They should receive at least the equivalent of the minimum wage.** Support should be harmonised with other benefit entitlements.

- €# **Carers should have access to the appropriate support facilities, and be entitled to flexible working hours.**

Disability

Alliance believes that people with disabilities should have equal rights and opportunities within an inclusive society. They must be able to access mainstream services in all areas.

Alliance would:

- €# **Improve the efficiency for Disability Living Allowance applications and appeals.**
- €# **Improve access to public facilities** for all disabled people. This will be achieved through comprehensive access policies.
- €# **Ensure the choice of mainstream education** is available for people with disabilities.

9. Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs

Housing

Everyone should have access to adequate housing. Northern Ireland has a growing problem with homelessness. There are problems in accessing sufficient social housing. There are also major problems regarding the affordability of housing, especially for first-time buyers.

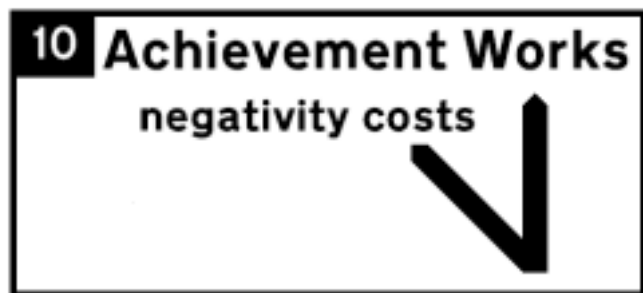
Alliance would:

- €# **Ensure that adequate development land is released, with an emphasis on brownfield sites, to meet growing demand for housing**
- €# **Break the cycle of homelessness,** by creating linkages between employment, health and social services.
- €# **Compel the Housing Executive to tackle the problem of unruly and disruptive tenants.** Alliance would also tackle the segregation that has resulted in housing.
- €# **Promote and support mixed housing, so that everyone can have choice over where they live.** Alliance will provide the leadership necessary for the Housing Executive to tackle the blight of paramilitary graffiti and flags, which contribute to hostile living environments for so many in Northern Ireland.
- €# **Earmark resources for the Housing Executive to improve specialist accommodation** for older people and people with disabilities, single homeless persons and those with specialist needs.
- €# **Ensure adequate public funds to pay for housing arrears or repairs.** Alliance would not increase rents of those living in Housing Executive properties above the rate of inflation.

€# **Better protect those living within private housing,** including public inspection of private rental dwellings.

10. Achievement Works

negativity costs



Achievement Works negativity costs

Alliance believes the promotion of culture, arts and leisure are integral to the quality of life of every citizen, the building of community self-esteem, economic regeneration, and the projection of a positive image of Northern Ireland. Nurturing and harnessing creativity throughout the region is central to this process.

Alliance supports the appreciation and expression of our rich and varied cultural identities. We believe that cultural participation and self-expression should be developed in the context of respect and understanding of our own and others' heritage.

Alliance's priorities are to—

- €# **Increase the level of appreciation** of, and participation in, arts, culture and leisure activities through making them accessible and affordable to all.
- €# **Establish an integrated strategy for cultural tourism** — a full appreciation of the unique cultural heritage products we have to offer, how these can be developed, managed and projected to a wider audience. This can enhance Northern Ireland's image as a quality venue and destination.
- €# **Ensure that creative education** is part of the schools curriculum, as well as in all professional, vocational and academic courses.
- €# **Increase investment in the creative industries.** In conjunction with the Creative Enterprise Research Programme, we are committed to a co-ordinated approach, encouraging innovation and enterprise. The share of GDP spent on the arts in Northern Ireland should be brought up to at least the average level for the other regions within the British Isles.
- €# **Support the appreciation and promotion of both indigenous and ethnic minority languages.** Alliance recognises the linguistic diversity within our community, and believes that all ethnic minority languages practiced in Northern Ireland deserve as much protection as local languages. Alliance believes that this is best carried out through public bodies producing language schemes than a rights-based approach.
- €# **Provide easier and more affordable access to museums.**
- €# **Enhance the Library Service.** We would adequately resource and support initiatives such as mobile libraries, which will particularly benefit older people and those living in rural areas.
- €# **Extend the Football Offences Act (1991) and other relevant legislation** to Northern Ireland, to deal with sectarian and racist chanting at local sports grounds.
- €# **Support a regional stadium for Northern Ireland.**
- €# **Encourage bids for training facilities for the 2012 London Olympics, and to leave a legacy for local citizens.**
- €# **Invest in talented young people with artistic or sporting ability.**

11. Internationalism Works

isolationism costs



Internationalism Works isolationism costs

Alliance is a pro-European and internationalist party. We are proud members of ELDR (the European Liberal Democratic and Reform party), and of Liberal International, in association with the European and international liberal families.

It is important that Northern Ireland looks beyond its own problems and engages with the wider world. Northern Ireland has much to gain economically and culturally from engagement with others, and can learn many important lessons, just as Northern Ireland has much to give to the world.

Europe

Alliance prides itself on its firm commitment to Europe. European membership has been of enormous benefit to both the United Kingdom, and in particular to Northern Ireland, through promoting economic growth and prosperity, protecting the environment, and supporting agriculture. The EU has helped to promote human rights multiculturalism. We strongly believe that the best future for Northern Ireland is as an integrated region within a deepening and widening European Union. But equally, there is a duty upon the European Union to become much more open and transparent, and meaningful to the citizens of Europe that it serves.

- ⌘ **Alliance supports the United Kingdom's entry into the Euro at the earliest appropriate opportunity governed by economic convergence criteria.** Membership of the Euro will bring net benefits to local businesses through

greater economic certainty and confidence, lower interest rates, lower inflation, a more favourable climate for investment, greater price transparency, competition and efficiency, more efficient use of resources, reduced transaction costs, and the elimination of risk associated with unstable and fluctuating exchange rates.

In conjunction with our partners in ELDR, Alliance's priorities are to:

- ⌘ **Reform of the EU's institutions** to make them more open, democratic and efficient. Alliance supports the creation of a European Constitution.
- ⌘ **Empowering the European Citizen.** Institutions should become more accountable and transparent. People should be made more aware of their rights as European citizens.
- ⌘ **Developing and Reinforcing the Single Market.** All member states should be encouraged to comply with their requirements under this development.
- ⌘ **Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.**
- ⌘ **Fighting European organised crime.** Alliance will advocate that the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland work more closely with our European partners.

Global Affairs

As a liberal internationalist party, Alliance supports an international system based on human rights, justice, equality of opportunity, stability, the rule of law and peaceful change.

The international system is undergoing significant change, through growing interdependence of states, the emergence of greater transnationalism, and continued development of globalisation. Human rights abuses, poverty and environmental degradation are becoming world-wide

11. Internationalism Works

isolationism costs

concerns. The continuing technological, communications and scientific revolutions are turning the world into a Global Village.

We recognise that these changes can bring great advantages, but they also create new threats and dangers, not least that of global terrorism.

Above all, Alliance is concerned that the positive benefits are not equitably distributed across the globe. Far too many people continue to live in abject poverty. This situation is made even worse through famine, war and conflict, international crime and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

In conjunction with our partners within Liberal International, Alliance priorities are to—

- €# **Support the work of global institutions** in promoting global objectives, and, in particular, recognises the central role of the United Nations in maintaining global peace and security. Alliance looks forward to a world based upon the rule of law.
- €# **Favour the progressive strengthening of global institutions** backing the Reform of the United Nations System.
- €# **Urge the UK Government to support the creation of a Standing Rapid Reaction Force for the United Nations.**
- €# **Call for greater clarity on and consolidation of the grounds for international humanitarian intervention**, to address mass abuse of human rights and the consequences of natural disasters on a more consistent basis.
- €# **Support the work of the United Nations and NGOs** in promoting democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, and good governance. British Foreign Policy should respect these values.
- €# **Favour an open and fair international trading system.** We would call in particular on the industrialised world, including the EU and USA, to lower trade barriers to goods from the developing world. Alliance will also continue to oppose tying aid to trade
- €# **Support for fair-trade initiatives**, to promote the welfare of workers in the developing world
- €# **Endorses the realisation of the UN's Millennium Development Goals**
- €# **Call upon the UK Government and other Governments to meet the UN target of 0.7% of GDP for Overseas.** We further encourage the use of the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index to measure the quality of life in countries.
- €# **Call for the complete 100% cancellation of debt from the most highly indebted countries**, as burdensome debt repayments prevent scarce resources being invested into development. Despite the progress over the past year, this has still to be achieved.
- €# **Urge a stronger approach to the fight against HIV/AIDS.** We must increase education and preventive programmes
- €# **Alliance will continue to support the fight against slave labour, and advocate the end of UK subsidies to arm sales.**
- €# **Work to see the implementation of the Rio and Kyoto Treaties.** We further support the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- €# **Support the International Criminal Court**, and wider efforts to establish global rule of law.

Sharing Works
segregation costs

Respect Works
bigotry costs

Partnership Works
deadlock costs

Fairness Works
stealth tax costs

Alliance Works
tribal politics costs

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Alliance

88 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE

Tel: 028 9032 4274

Fax: 028 9033 3147

e-mail: alliance@allianceparty.org

www.allianceworks.org