

DUP Westminster Manifesto 2015



Including
The Northern Ireland Plan





Introduction: The Broader Context



This manifesto concentrates on the issues which are the responsibility of the United Kingdom Parliament. In this document we set out where the party stands across a range of important issues such as the national economy, defence and the UK constitution.



Self-evidently, the DUP will not be in a position to form the next UK Government. Indeed, we have already ruled out playing a part in any coalition. However, our votes could be vital in the formation of the next government. That is why it is important to set out where we stand on these matters.

This manifesto does not stand in isolation. It should be read in conjunction with the DUP's Northern Ireland Plan which details our agenda in the event of the negotiations which will likely follow the General Election.



It would be unrealistic for us to prepare a manifesto with a view to it being a detailed programme for government for the UK as a whole, but we will only be prepared to support a party whose proposals taken as a whole are in the best interests of Northern Ireland in particular and the UK in general.

The next Assembly election is scheduled for May 2016. At that time we will publish a comprehensive manifesto which addresses the wide range of issues which are devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We therefore do not seek to cover matters that are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly in any great detail as part of this manifesto.



We are conscious of the fact that DUP MPs will only make up a small percentage of all Members of Parliament. However, we expect the national parties to accept the mandate of the people of Northern Ireland.



Leader's Message Our Vision: Our Plan: Our Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland has a unique opportunity with the likelihood of a hung parliament and our MPs having an important role at Westminster.

We've been listening to people and communities across Northern Ireland. We share people's views about what is needed and what they want for Northern Ireland and for their future.

We believe our vision, our plan and our manifesto can deliver the best opportunities for Northern Ireland. Our five point plan seeks to:

- **Make Northern Ireland an economic powerhouse**
- **Deliver world class public services for our people**
- **Create a society based on fairness and opportunity for everyone**
- **Make politics and government work better in Parliament and Northern Ireland**
- **Strengthen the United Kingdom and protect and enhance our British identity**

For us to deliver our plan we need a strong team of DUP MPs returned to Westminster to negotiate the best deal for Northern Ireland and strengthen the United Kingdom.

We want to create a shared and united Northern Ireland that is economically prosperous and dynamic – a Northern Ireland that plays a full and active role as part of the United Kingdom.

We will fight for the interests of everyone in Northern Ireland.

This is the vision we have for Northern Ireland; the vision that drives us forward; the vision we work for every day; the vision that will transform Northern Ireland within the Union. It needs the strongest team in Councils, the Assembly, in Parliament and in Europe.

We will keep Northern Ireland moving forward.

The DUP team is committed and resolved to stand up for you, for Northern Ireland and for the United Kingdom.

A blue ink signature of Peter Robinson.

Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MLA
Leader, Democratic Unionist Party
First Minister of Northern Ireland

Deputy Leader / Parliamentary Party Leader's Message



Parliament is the institution that makes many of our laws. Its decisions help determine the shape of the national economy. Its decisions determine Northern Ireland's budget. Its decisions determine how much government takes out of, or puts into, your pocket. Its decisions determine when our Armed Forces are sent to war. Its decisions determine our relationship with the European Union and immigration policy.

Over the past five years the strong DUP team in Parliament has been working closely with our colleagues at Stormont and in Europe. This work was vital in Northern Ireland steering its way through the worldwide economic crisis.

In 2015, the DUP, as the party of Northern Ireland, has an unparalleled opportunity to shape those decisions. Every poll and every pundit is predicting a hung parliament and our votes will be vital. The more votes the DUP has, the more seats the DUP can have and the more influence Northern Ireland will have.

The DUP is not beholden to any national party.

We are the only party with a post-election plan to make the most of this opportunity for Northern Ireland. Only the DUP can deliver. Sinn Fein doesn't go to Parliament. Other parties and independents will be too small to count.

This is Northern Ireland's opportunity to contribute and shape British life like never before.

It is an opportunity for Northern Ireland's voice to be heard in London like never before.

This is our opportunity to stand up for Northern Ireland like never before.

The DUP will seize every opportunity for Northern Ireland.

A blue ink signature of Nigel Dodds.

Rt. Hon. Nigel Dodds OBE
Deputy Leader & Parliamentary Party Leader,
Democratic Unionist Party

1 Public Spending, the Deficit and the National Debt

The DUP has a sense of perspective on the role it may play on the issues of determining public expenditure, the deficit and the national debt. The responsibility for producing a detailed plan will fall to whichever national party becomes the government. The role of the DUP, as for other minor parties, will be to exert as much influence as possible on the government's programme in return for support. For our part we have already published **The Northern Ireland Plan** which details policies and proposals which would form our agenda for discussions with any prospective party of government.

With all the resources at their disposal, none of the national parties have yet produced a detailed, fully costed and independently verified plan on these three intertwined matters. The manifestos become an indicator or aspiration that will be subject to inter-party negotiations. Nonetheless it would be unrealistic to imagine that the direction set by one of the two main national parties will not form the substantial element of a programme for government.

Public spending, the deficit and the national debt will therefore be determined by two key factors: Firstly, the strength and sustainability of our economic recovery and secondly, the political arithmetic and realities of a post-election parliament.

Our experience suggests that – whether in the immediate aftermath of the election or when key votes take place in Parliament – the party of government will seek our support. In these circumstances the DUP has been open and transparent about what it wants. We have set out our five principles, published the Northern Ireland Plan and produced this manifesto. Inside or outside a formal arrangement we will seek to advance as much of this agenda as we can in our dealings with the national government. We will seek the best deal possible to strengthen Northern Ireland.

In broad terms, to secure strong and lasting growth in our economy we believe it best if government invests in the drivers for growth – enterprise, innovation, skills and infrastructure – to sustain and build the economic recovery. As a responsible party we want to see the budget deficit eliminated. However, we recognise that the rush to reduce and eliminate the deficit can have an impact on growth. After five years of sustained and deep cuts, the DUP believes that any further significant reductions to front-line services in areas that affect Barnett consequentials would be harmful.

Among the fundamental budget requirements for Northern Ireland that we will campaign for are:

- A budget settlement which will allow real term increases in health and education spending over the next five years without decimating other key public services.
- Capital investment to make our schools and hospitals fit for the twenty-first century.
- Assistance to continue the reform and transformation of our public services.



Welfare Reform and Pensions

The DUP, in the Executive, has brought forward proposals that protect people in Northern Ireland from the bedroom tax. We want the remainder of the United Kingdom to gain parity with Northern Ireland. The DUP, in Parliament, will therefore support the abolition of the spare room subsidy.

Universal Credit must be allowed to bed down, enabling a proper evaluation of its impact. The best mechanism to reduce welfare spending is economic growth – getting those who can work, into work.

Thus, the DUP will assess any welfare proposal on these three tests:

- Will it incentivise work?
- What protection does it provide for those most in need?
- What impact will it have upon the costs of administration?

Proposals such as taxing disability benefits would fail such tests.

The DUP supports the triple lock on the state pension and will oppose plans to means test present universal benefits for pensioners.



Tax evasion –

Aggressive recovery that is properly resourced

We support the introduction of a more aggressive and targeted recovery strategy that is properly resourced.

Value Added Tax and the Hospitality Sector

The DUP will oppose any increase to VAT rates or upward re-categorisation of goods. The UK currently applies one of the highest rates of VAT on hotel accommodation in Europe. It is hampering the development of this key sector. The hospitality sector should be re-categorised and benefit from a reduced rate. This will help the sector pay for capital improvement works providing a boost to the construction sector.

2 A fair share of the growing economy

The DUP is a low tax party. It has worked hard to help family incomes by blocking water charges, delivering the lowest household taxes in the United Kingdom and helping to create thousands of new jobs.

The Great Britain and Northern Ireland economies are growing again and growing quicker than most parts of Europe. Despite this progress, many hardworking families are still not feeling any real benefit flowing from the economic recovery. The DUP wants everyone to get their fair share of this growing economy.

Our national government must therefore use the tools at its disposal to ensure that those who suffered during the downturn enjoy real benefit from this new growth.

Increase the Minimum Wage

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) has stated that the value of the Minimum Wage grew between 1999 to 2009 but has fallen since. The next government must take advantage of low inflation and the growing economy to restore its value. It should work with the LPC on a five-year plan to restore the real value of the Minimum Wage. This plan would ensure the lowest paid receive above inflation rises over the next five years.

Increase the Personal Tax Allowance

The DUP will support proposals to raise the personal allowance to at least £12,500 by the end of the next parliamentary term. This measure benefits all taxpayers but takes the lowest paid out of the tax system entirely.

Freeze then cut or abolish the TV licence and reform the BBC

The licence fee is a highly regressive tax. It was a tax designed for a different era and world of communication and entertainment that no longer exists.

An independent Commission should be established to conduct a review of how the BBC is structured and the services it provides. The aim of the Commission should be to consider the role of the BBC as a public broadcaster, to examine alternative funding models, identify the opportunities for competitive tendering of key services and produce a plan that will either significantly reduce the licence fee or abolish it altogether. There may be consequential changes for the management of the new structure.

Abolishing Air Passenger Duty

Air Passenger Duty (APD) has a disproportionate impact on the regions farthest from the most prosperous South East. The duty therefore harms Northern Ireland's business and tourism sectors. It hurts family incomes and harms our economy. The exemption of children from the tax is a partial admission of the negative impact it places on passengers. As the duty is a disincentive to travel – it is bad policy.

Over the next parliamentary term Air Passenger Duty should be abolished.



More and better paid jobs

For those in poverty, a paid job delivers better economic, social and health outcomes. Northern Ireland has an unparalleled record of job creation. Equally important a high percentage of those jobs have been well-paid. Unemployment has now fallen in Northern Ireland for 27 consecutive months.

The DUP believes in social mobility and raising people out of poverty through work; the higher the salary the better – for the employee, our economy and Northern Ireland.

The DUP promoted policy of devolving corporation tax setting powers to the Northern Ireland Executive will help deliver tens of thousands of new jobs. This will enable Northern Ireland to become an economic powerhouse and a beacon of economic success within the United Kingdom.



Supporting you and your family

As in the rest of the UK, many families in Northern Ireland struggle with the cost of childcare with some paying up to one third of their family income every month creating financial pressures for working families. We support the introduction of a range of measures that would limit the cost of childcare to a maximum of 12% of family income. This will be achieved by supporting a Northern Ireland-wide roll out of affordable models of childcare, supporting childminders and private provision. However, to achieve a target of no more than 12% would also require enhancements and new proposals at a UK-wide level.

We support increasing the amount of help available under the new UK-wide tax free Childcare Scheme and identifying a range of other UK-wide measures including through the tax system to support families with high childcare costs.

3 Leading the Way on the Northern Ireland Economy

Rebuilding

In the past five years Northern Ireland has shown its capacity to attract investment across the globe. We have been steadily rebuilding our economy and repairing the damage of the global collapse. Despite often difficult circumstances, the DUP has delivered record levels of investment and for 27 consecutive months the unemployment claimant count has fallen.

- Over the last four years, the Northern Ireland Executive has helped to create over 22,000 new jobs.
- Support from the Northern Ireland Executive has resulted in over £3.4 billion investment.
- The number of people unemployed has fallen from 67,000 in December 2010 to 45,000 today.
- In the last year Northern Ireland has been the most successful location in the UK for attracting foreign direct investment per head of population.
- Northern Ireland has become a “go to” location for global companies, with more firms investing here than during any similar period in history.

Much has been done but there is much more to do. Northern Ireland was once an economic powerhouse with Belfast being one of the world’s leading industrial locations. We want to re-establish ourselves as world leaders in this new era.

Rebalancing

Sustained growth in the private sector – particularly export-led growth – will act as the main catalyst for rebalancing the local economy. This will be achieved through:

- Negotiating more satisfactory terms in relation to Corporation Tax.
- UK wide tax policy improvements to encourage economic growth in Northern Ireland.
- Assistance from the UK Government to attract FDI into Northern Ireland.
- Northern Ireland businesses getting a fair share of national government contracts.
- Increased infrastructure investment to assist in preparing Northern Ireland for the future.
- Help from the UK Government to market Northern Ireland internationally through its agencies and Embassies across the world.
- The UK Government encouraging international events to be staged in Northern Ireland.
- Northern Ireland being prominently incorporated into UK branding.
- Ensuring that Northern Ireland maintains its 100% regional aid status.
- Support to help reduce electricity costs for business customers.
- Innovate UK establishing a Northern Ireland presence.
- Ensuring that schemes developed by the British Business Bank are tailored to suit Northern Ireland.



- The fundamental reform of zero hours contracts including the removal of exclusivity.
- Ensuring energy security in terms of supply and cost to both consumers and businesses in Northern Ireland.

New Partnerships for World Class Services

The DUP has encouraged greater innovation in the public sector through the Public Sector Reform Initiative. The DUP supports:

- The opportunities of open data and new technology to change completely the way we deliver services.
- The public, private and social economy sectors working closely together to maximise economic growth.
- Expansion of the social economy as a valuable resource for improving the prosperity of our communities and lessen reliance on grant funding.

Connectivity

Northern Ireland’s transport connections and networks are vital for our growth.

The DUP supports:

- The expansion of airport capacity in Southern England. We believe that Heathrow is the best solution, but we will support the recommendations of the Airport Commission.
- Enhanced connectivity to Great Britain including guaranteeing direct access from Northern Ireland to London’s hub airports.
- An independent investigation into ferry price structures on North Channel and Irish Sea routes between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.
- A feasibility study into a tunnel or enclosed bridge across the North Channel from Larne to the Scottish coastline.

The DUP recognises the vital importance of ensuring Northern Ireland has world class digital connectivity across both our urban centres and rural communities. Without such connectivity investors will not invest in Northern Ireland and many of our local businesses will not be able to grow to their full potential. It is essential we maintain and develop the digital backbone within Northern Ireland and our digital links with Great Britain, Europe and the United States.

The DUP will continue to press the mobile telephony providers to invest in their networks ensuring 4G provision across Northern Ireland and also ensuring Northern Ireland is not left behind with further technological developments.

4 Traditions and identity

Marking the Decade of Centenaries

The DUP will seek to ensure Northern Ireland is a full participant in the Centenary Events Programme. The poppy installation at the Tower of London caught the public imagination and became a 21st century iconic image of Britishness.

The DUP proposes that this can be further marked by:

- Extending to Northern Ireland a scheme to support school visits to World War 1 battle sites and curriculum support similar to those which have been introduced in England.
- Bringing the arrangements of the Community Covenant Grant into line with every other region of the United Kingdom.
- A national commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.
- Celebrating the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 and the commissioning of an official history.

National Flag and Symbols

The most basic expression of our national identity is the display and use of symbols in the public realm.

The extent of flag flying has changed over the years with all-year displays becoming more common. The DUP proposes:

- The Union Flag should be displayed on an all-year basis from key public buildings throughout the United Kingdom.
- The Union Flag should be displayed on driving licences across the United Kingdom.
- The International 2 and 3 letter signifier for our country should drop GB and adopt UK.
- The British Olympic Association should change its name to Team UK or use its full name Team GBNI.

Parading

The DUP has worked closely with the Loyal Orders to deliver positive benefits. The DUP has already delivered the de-rating scheme for Orange Halls, changed the compensation scheme to help halls damaged in sectarian attacks and secured the grounds of Stormont for the Ulster Covenant Centenary parade.

The legal responsibility for parades lies with the UK Parliament. With the present system so intrinsically biased against the Loyal Orders there is a disincentive for republicans to negotiate either at a senior political level or in localised areas. This imbalance needs to be addressed.

The DUP wants:

- A new start on parades including the abolition of the Parades Commission. We will work alongside the Loyal Orders to achieve this.

Deepening the bonds

A new charitable body should be established and resourced by the UK Government to promote linkages between the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom, based on the model of Co-operation Ireland. This organisation would be charged with:

- Promoting exchanges and linkages between schools, youth organisations and civic groups.
- Promoting a national historical narrative for the United Kingdom and its global impact including the contribution of its four constituent parts.
- Supporting school visits to the national parliament, devolved bodies and major public buildings and institutions (Buckingham Palace, National Arboretum, Whitehall Cenotaph, Imperial War Museum, National Portrait Gallery).

Service Together

The National Citizenship Service should be further developed and remodelled. It should include a year-long youth development programme working in the four capital cities of the UK.

By the end of the parliamentary term, there should be a plan to expand this into a national nine month programme with a place for every young person between 16 and 24. This should include the options of spending that time in the Armed Forces or travelling to another part of the UK to participate in programmes.



5 Strengthening Inter-Governmental Relationships across the United Kingdom

We have built strong and solid relationships with the major Westminster parties to allow us to maximise our influence. We want to strengthen the United Kingdom as a whole. The DUP calls for:

- The principle of devolution to be respected by Westminster.
- A guaranteed seat at the Cabinet for a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- An agreed guaranteed minimum level of representation for Northern Ireland in the House of Commons.
- A fair deal for all four parts of the United Kingdom to strengthen the Union.
- National UK departments to carry out administrative operations in Northern Ireland.
- A new relationship between the regional administrations and the National Government.
- Arrangements to ensure Northern Ireland's perspective is taken into account across Government and direct access to decision makers.
- Northern Ireland's priorities promoted in Europe.



6 Make politics and Government work better in Northern Ireland

For us to deliver the kind of changes and improvements that we want to see, we will need the support of Westminster to make sure that politics operates better in Northern Ireland. The DUP wants:

- Support to strengthen the political process in Northern Ireland.
- Westminster support for continued constitutional stability in Northern Ireland.
- Legislation to reform the structure of government in Northern Ireland.
- Allowances removed from parties who refuse to attend the House of Commons.
- A level playing field by banning all political donations from outside the UK.



7 Defence and Veterans

We believe that the most important duty of a government is to protect its citizens and the nation. A strong defence policy and well-resourced and properly equipped Armed Forces are essential to ensure the safety of our country.

The DUP is proud of the contribution that our Armed Forces make to the security of our nation and the world and recognises that Northern Ireland punches well above its weight when it comes to the brave men and women who serve in the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces serve us with distinction in conflict zones across the world, providing both military and humanitarian support. We recall the sacrifice of those who have fallen in the service of our country and pledge to ensure that they and their loved ones are not forgotten.

The massive shifts in international relations, forms of warfare and rapid development and spread of new threats in the world require an adaptable and flexible strategy. It remains our view that in order to defend our national interests and our people, we need to keep our Armed Forces strong.



In the next Parliament, the DUP believes that there are four key issues that must be addressed:

Defence Spending

The DUP believes that UK Defence spending should not fall below 2% of GDP.

Defence Review

The next Strategic Defence and Security Review must ensure that our Armed Forces are capable of tackling multiple deployments, including as part of a multi-national force or on our own.

Defence Policy

The United Kingdom must retain its own strong, independent defence policy with sufficient resources dedicated to each of the Services and the retention of an independent nuclear deterrent. The appropriate institution for international military co-operation is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation not the European Union.

Military Covenant

The Military Covenant should be implemented fully and in an equivalent manner in all parts of the UK. There should be a national entitlement for present and former members of the Armed Forces.

In addition, we believe that the National Armed Forces Day celebrations should rotate around all the constituent parts of the UK.

8 European Union

The DUP believes that the people of the United Kingdom should have a say on future UK membership of the European Union. At Westminster our MPs have been at the forefront of the campaign for a referendum on the European Union.

We support the current UK Government pledge to renegotiate elements of our relationship with the European Union.



9 Immigration and integration

The UK needs to build a national consensus on the issue of immigration. This must reflect the value of immigrants to the UK and also their impact on indigenous communities. By limiting the number and nature of those who can come from abroad we can help reduce tensions which have damaged community relations in recent times. As part of this consensus there should be:

- Stronger border controls.
- A recognition of the contribution of immigrants.
- Support for local communities to help integrate those from abroad.
- A requirement that people must contribute to our country before they can access benefits and services.
- A joined up immigration and Integration service.



10 Foreign Affairs

Maintaining a diplomatic presence across the world

The UK's influence on the world stage and ability to be an effective player is dependent on a strong global presence and a Foreign and Commonwealth Office with first class people and skills. The next government must ensure that such work is properly funded, especially during a time of such global uncertainty.

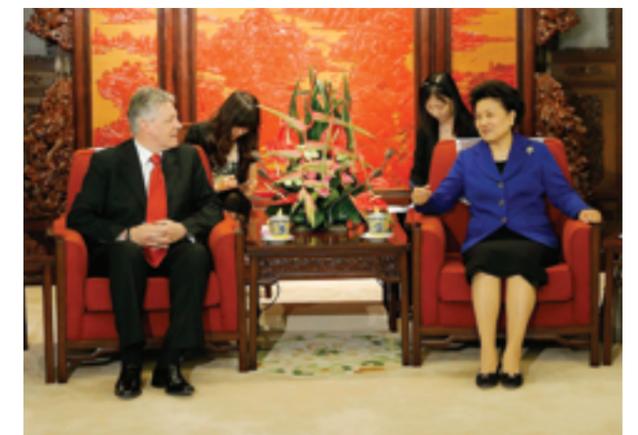
Defending British Sovereignty

The DUP supports the people of the Falklands and Gibraltar. Their expressed desire to remain linked to the United Kingdom is admirable and must be respected and if necessary defended.



Supporting Persecuted Minorities

In the last Parliament, the DUP urged the government to take seriously international human rights abuses against Christians and other faith groups. We continue to be concerned about the persecution of religious minorities. We will continue to use our influence to ensure that this issue is taken seriously and that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office actively engage with the leadership of the countries in which these human rights violations occur.



11 Law and Order

National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency (NCA) is an essential tool in tackling serious organised crime in the United Kingdom whether it is drug dealing, racketeering, smuggling or the activity of child pornography and exploitation. Northern Ireland is cursed with widespread fuel laundering which denies the Exchequer much needed revenue and causes significant environmental damage.

Now that our law enforcement agencies have this essential resource it must be put to full use.

New Psychoactive Substances

The DUP has been active in seeking a UK-wide ban on new psychoactive substances (frequently referred to as 'legal highs'). We will encourage the new Government to introduce, as one of the first pieces of legislation, a Bill to tackle the scourge of new psychoactive substances.

The subject matter of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is a reserved matter, and through a new Bill the DUP wishes to:

- Create a new UK-wide offence to deal with so-called 'head shops' by prohibiting distribution of these substances for human consumption.
- Classify synthetic cannabinoids based on their effects on the brain rather than their chemical composition.

These were two of the key recommendations from the Home Office Expert Panel Review instigated following correspondence from the DUP Health Minister in Northern Ireland back in 2013. The DUP supports the ongoing close engagement between DHSSPS in Northern Ireland and the Home Office on this matter.

Terrorism

Parliament remains responsible for anti-terrorism legislation. Locally, nationally and internationally terrorism continues to be a significant problem. In Northern Ireland, the dissident republican threat, despite the many successes of the police and intelligence services, still causes disruption and a real risk to our community. There is a growing threat from extremist groups many with international connections. These groups continue to evolve.

A review of the present terrorism legislation

The DUP believes that considering the multi-faceted evolving and insidious nature of the terrorist threat it would be appropriate to review whether present arrangements need to be updated or upgraded.

This review should include:

- Implementation of the Intelligence and Security Committee recommendations for a new single act to govern communications monitoring by intelligence agencies.
- A UK wide definition of a victim which excludes perpetrators.
- Changes to the glorification of terrorism offences with an examination of the 20 year time limit.
- Consideration of whether representation on the Intelligence and Security Committee should include representation from the regions of the UK.

The Northern Ireland Plan

Our priorities

We have a positive plan for Northern Ireland

- 1 **Make Northern Ireland an economic powerhouse**
- 2 **Deliver world class public services for our people**
- 3 **Create a society based on fairness and opportunity for everyone**
- 4 **Make politics and Government work better in Northern Ireland**
- 5 **Strengthen the United Kingdom and protect and enhance our British identity**

To deliver our plan we need a strong team of DUP MPs returned to Westminster to negotiate a good deal for Northern Ireland in the event of a hung parliament.

Only a vote for the DUP will deliver our clear plan for a better Northern Ireland and a stronger United Kingdom.

We want to create a shared and united Northern Ireland that is economically prosperous and plays a full and active role as part of the United Kingdom.

We will use our position at Westminster to strengthen the UK and to seek the best deal for Northern Ireland.

We will fight for the interests of everyone in Northern Ireland.

Since devolution was restored to Northern Ireland in 2007 real progress has been made across a range of areas. Despite all of the political ups and downs, Northern Ireland is slowly but surely moving in the right direction again.

Over these last eight years we have been working to secure Northern Ireland's position within the UK, to help grow our economy, to offer opportunity to all and to build reconciliation and address the legacy of the past.

This challenge has been made all the more difficult by virtue of the global economic downturn, the reduction in public expenditure available to the Northern Ireland Executive and the system of government we operate.

In spite of this, things are changing for the better. The transformation is visible wherever you look. Northern Ireland is now a venue not just for international investment, but for events that would not have considered coming here just a few years ago.

We have a plan for where we want Northern Ireland to be in 2021, the hundredth anniversary of Northern Ireland's creation. We have been working to deliver it.

However, the election on 7 May will give Northern Ireland the opportunity of a lifetime to transform our Province for generations. It is highly likely that after that election no single party will have enough seats to command a majority in the House of Commons. That means that the votes of our MPs could be crucial.

Political commentators have consistently stated that the DUP could be crucial in what looks likely to be a hung Parliament. The DUP will use such a position to negotiate on behalf of Northern Ireland.

This document sets out some of our key priorities for discussion with the parties which could form the next government. It also sets out what we will do to create the kind of Northern Ireland we all wish to see.

Make Northern Ireland an economic powerhouse

WHERE WE ARE

A century ago Ulster was an economic powerhouse within the British Isles: today with the right investment, policies and dedication we have the potential to create the conditions where we can be so once again. To do so we need help from Westminster and we need to take bold steps at home as well. The influence that we may have after this election gives us the once in a lifetime opportunity to transform our economic fortunes for generations to come.

In doing so we are building on firm foundations that have been laid over the last few years. In 2007 we made growing our economy the Executive's number one priority. The restoration of devolution to Northern Ireland has created the peace and political stability to encourage foreign direct investment at record levels. In fact despite the worldwide economic downturn more jobs have been created in Northern Ireland over the last four years than at any time in recorded history. Global businesses establishing in Northern Ireland are now the norm rather than the exception.

Our claimant count has been falling for over 25 months and our headline rate of unemployment is broadly in line with the UK average. For the first time in many years Northern Ireland is emerging from an economic downturn alongside, rather than after the rest of the UK.

After years of campaigning we managed to persuade the UK Government to allow the Assembly to set a Northern Ireland Corporation Tax Rate and previously had secured the devolution of Air Passenger Duty for long-haul flights.

We have attracted international events to Northern Ireland from the Giro d'Italia to the Irish Open Golf and from the European MTV Awards to the World Police and Fire Games. We have invested in our tourism infrastructure with signature projects such as Titanic Belfast and the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre and of course Northern Ireland is now known worldwide as the home of the hit HBO television series, 'Game of Thrones'.

With the right support we can build upon the important work that has been done in recent years to make sure that Northern Ireland once again plays its part as an economic driver within the United Kingdom.

FROM WESTMINSTER, WE WANT:

- More satisfactory terms in relation to Corporation Tax;
- The national debt and deficit addressed in a way which secures economic growth and long-term prosperity while protecting essential public services;
- UK wide tax policy improvements to encourage economic growth in Northern Ireland;
- Assistance from the UK Government to attract FDI into Northern Ireland;
- Northern Ireland businesses to be in a position to get a fair share of national government contracts;
- Increased infrastructure investment to assist us in preparing Northern Ireland for the future;
- Enhanced connectivity to Great Britain including guaranteeing direct access from Northern Ireland to London's hub airports;
- Help from the UK Government to market Northern Ireland internationally through its agencies and Embassies across the world;
- The UK Government to encourage international events to Northern Ireland;
- Northern Ireland prominently incorporated into UK branding;
- Ensure that Northern Ireland maintains its 100% regional aid status;
- Support to help reduce electricity costs for business customers;
- Innovate UK to establish a Northern Ireland presence;
- Ensure that schemes developed by the British Business Bank are tailored to suit Northern Ireland.

LOCALLY, WE WILL:

- Make Northern Ireland the most attractive region in the whole of western Europe to invest in;
- Set a low rate of Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland for the long-term from 2017;
- Freeze the non-domestic Regional Rate in real terms to help local businesses;
- Promote 25,000 new jobs by 2020;
- Balance our budget each and every year;
- Continue to make growing our economy the number one priority;
- Create the environment in Northern Ireland where local business can prosper;
- Provide a well educated and skilled workforce;
- Take the decisions to make sure our people can take advantage of new economic opportunities;
- Remove the barriers to economic growth;
- Reform our planning system;
- Build more economic and transport infrastructure for the future;
- Continue to invest in our tourism infrastructure;
- Bring international events to Northern Ireland;
- Put Northern Ireland on the map internationally and attract visitors from abroad.

Deliver world class public services for our people

WHERE WE ARE

One of the most important duties of any government is to deliver high quality public services. This task is challenging given the increasing expectations and increased demand and the reduction in public expenditure available to Northern Ireland. However, despite the difficulties we have sought to meet the needs of our people by prioritising our key public services, saving money by cutting waste and by reforming the services that we deliver.

With the reduction in public expenditure over recent years we have had to prioritise what we need most and focus on what matters most to our people.

In spite of the £1.5 billion reduction, in real terms, in the funding we receive in Northern Ireland, over the last eight years we have made health and education our top two priorities in terms of public expenditure. As a result we have increases in spending on health by 33% and education by 23% since 2007. That has allowed us to make sure we spend the money available to us on the areas that matter most to the general public.

As part of this process we have set ambitious targets in terms of achieving savings across government departments. As a result in the last two Assembly terms savings of over £4 billion have been achieved to free up money from important front-line services. Those savings have been critical to ensuring we continue to deliver the best quality public services.

Since the restoration of devolution we have also invested more in capital spending in areas such as schools, hospitals and roads than at any point in our history. That has meant more new schools, hospitals and roads and other key capital infrastructure.

The Northern Ireland Executive has also undertaken a significant programme of public sector reform with major changes in education administration, the health service and in local government. These decisions will allow more resources to be targeted on front line services and less on administration in future years.

We have played our part in making the best use of the resources that are available to us but it is always the dedication and commitment of those who work in the public sector that ensures world class public services can be delivered.

The challenges of delivering world class public services will only increase in the years to come but with support from Westminster and the right decisions taken at home we can not only meet but exceed expectations of our people.

FROM WESTMINSTER, WE WANT:

- A budget settlement which will allow real term increases in health and education spending over the next five years without decimating other key public services;
- Capital investment to make our schools and hospitals fit for the twenty first century;
- Assistance to reform and transform our public services.

LOCALLY, WE WILL:

- Prioritise spending on health, education and growing the economy;
- Set ambitious targets to cut wasteful spending;
- Reform the delivery of public services to ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of the public;
- Advance an ambitious e-government agenda, seeking to deliver an increasing number of public services via digital and online channels, making services more accessible to citizens;
- Implement new and innovative sources of financing for infrastructure projects and the third sector;
- Expand the scope and scale of Northern Ireland's government shared services system;
- Develop a comprehensive Civil Service Reform Plan with the aim of achieving a public sector fit for the challenges of the 21st Century;
- Continue to construct a public sector reform architecture that enables the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt innovative solutions to public service challenges.

Create a society based on fairness and opportunity for everyone

WHERE WE ARE

One of our key goals has been to ensure that everyone can benefit from the new era that Northern Ireland has now entered and no one is left behind. That means there must be the opportunity for everyone to succeed and a fair and level playing field for all. This approach will not only create a society based on fairness but it will maximise the interests of Northern Ireland as a whole.

We have been working to achieve the twin goals of fairness and opportunity for all in recent years through a range of measures.

Through the Stormont House Agreement we sought to deliver affordable changes to the welfare system that would protect the most vulnerable but would also encourage people back to work. That includes ensuring that the bedroom tax is not in operation in Northern Ireland.

In dealing with the issue of welfare reform it is vital that we keep the proper balance between enhancing the GB welfare system and the protection of front-line public services.

We have sought to keep higher education open to all by keeping student fees much lower than in England.

Through the Social Investment Fund we have worked with communities to deliver programmes tailored to meet their specific needs. Through Delivering Social Change we have invested in measures such as additional support for children to deliver good GCSE results. We are working on a revolutionary new Childcare system that could help transform the sector. We have extended support for older people including through the free transport scheme.

To encourage opportunity for all, in education we have also retained selection based on academic ability and not the ability to pay.

In the departments for which we have responsibility we are doing everything within the law to ensure that our Armed Forces, veterans and dependants have every possible support.

We have also ensured that local household taxes in Northern Ireland are significantly lower than anywhere else in the UK and have resisted the introduction of Water Charges.

While we have achieved much in this area we will need the help and support of Westminster to deliver on some of our key outstanding objectives.

FROM WESTMINSTER, WE WANT:

- Welfare Reform to incentivise work but also protect those most in need;
- The removal of the bedroom tax at a national level;
- A national entitlement to enhanced support for members of the Armed Forces across the United Kingdom;
- Victims and Members of the Armed Forces, serving and retired to be given protected status, akin to the protection for groups under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act;
- A UK wide definition of a victim which excludes perpetrators;
- To ensure economic migrants must have contributed to the UK before they are entitled to claim benefits;
- Proper border controls and a tougher immigration policy;
- A UK wide charter for animal protection.

LOCALLY, WE WILL:

- Give additional support to those individuals and communities that need help;
- Ensure we protect those most in genuine need through our welfare system;
- Work to expand affordable childcare for working families;
- Create an education system that guarantees a fair start and opportunity for every child;
- Make Higher Education affordable for all;
- Prioritise the needs of our older people through anti discrimination legislation;
- Protect existing benefits for older people such as free bus passes;
- Help families by keeping household taxes the lowest in the United Kingdom;
- Be tough on crime;
- Support tougher sentences for those who attack older people and vulnerable people.

Make politics and Government work better in Northern Ireland

WHERE WE ARE

For the first time in generations, despite all of the challenges and difficulties, Northern Ireland has had almost eight years of uninterrupted devolution. Given the history of the last fifty years this is in itself a remarkable achievement.

During this time we have overcome many problems and have put in place arrangements that have been robust and stable. We do not seek to do anything which will threaten the long term stability of the political institutions however, we must now make sure that it works better in delivering for the people we represent.

In seeking to create a better system of government we should remember the progress that we have made. The St Andrews Agreement corrected some of the key flaws of the Belfast Agreement but we continue to work towards more normal politics in Northern Ireland.

As a result of these changes important decisions require Executive approval and we have a veto over all big issues.

After years of debate and dispute we negotiated appropriate arrangements which allowed Policing and Justice powers to be passed to the Assembly in 2010 on a basis which requires the Justice Minister to be able to command a cross community majority and have operated well since.

For many years we have campaigned for changes to how devolution operates. Some of these objectives were delivered as part of the talks process which concluded last Christmas.

The Stormont House Agreement made provision for a reduction in the number of MLAs which will take effect no later than 2021. It also agreed to create arrangements for an official opposition at Stormont and better processes for the Executive.

We have agreed a reduction in the number of government departments from twelve to nine and a reordering of functions to improve the delivery of public services. This will also mean a fundamental change and to OFMDFM and a more strategic focus with a new name, 'The Executive Office.'

For us to deliver the kind of changes and improvements we want to see we will need the support of Westminster to make sure that politics operates better in Northern Ireland.

FROM WESTMINSTER, WE WANT:

- Support to strengthen the political process in Northern Ireland;
- Constitutional stability for Northern Ireland;
- Legislation to reform the structure of government in Northern Ireland;
- The principle of devolution to be respected by Westminster;
- A guaranteed seat at the Cabinet for a Secretary of State for Northern Ireland;
- An agreed guaranteed minimum level of representation for Northern Ireland in the House of Commons;
- Allowances removed from parties who refuse to attend the House of Commons;
- No side deals with Republicans;
- A level playing field by banning all political donations from outside the UK.

LOCALLY, WE WILL:

- Deliver strong and stable government;
- Secure the improved level of peace and political progress that has been made;
- Make politics work for the benefit of the people;
- Implement the changes to government set out in the Stormont House Agreement;
- Work to provide for an Official Opposition at Stormont;
- Work with other parties to agree further improvements to government in Northern Ireland;
- Advocate an end to the present divisive community designation arrangements in the Assembly;
- Seek to persuade others to end mandatory coalition government in Northern Ireland;
- Campaign to cut the cost of government and reduce its size;
- Work to maximise public confidence in the political institutions in Northern Ireland.

Strengthen the United Kingdom and protect and enhance our British identity

WHERE WE ARE

Support for Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom has never been higher. The number of people who want to see a united Ireland in either the short or the medium term is at an all time low. The constitutional future of Northern Ireland has been settled for generations to come.

This has been achieved by agreeing political structures in Northern Ireland that can command cross-community support and by ensuring everyone can play a full part in our society and community.

While we should never be complacent about what has been achieved, the focus must now move to strengthen the United Kingdom as a whole and to enhance our British identity in Northern Ireland.

Our place as a key and integral part of the United Kingdom has been highlighted in recent years by the decision to host the G8 at Lough Erne, the visit of Her Majesty to Stormont in 2012 and the enormous role our people continue to play in the Armed Services.

Northern Ireland plays its full part alongside Scotland and Wales in intergovernmental relations within the United Kingdom and every aspect of our government remains linked to Westminster. Despite the opposition of Sinn Fein the work of the National Crime Agency is also being extended to Northern Ireland.

At Westminster our MPs have been at the forefront of the campaign for a referendum on the European Union and in defence of our Armed Forces. They continue to play a key and critical role in the decisions, which affect our nation as a whole.

We have built strong and solid relationships with both major Westminster parties to allow us to maximise our influence whatever the outcome of the general election.

In Northern Ireland we are working with other unionist parties to maximise unionist representation at Westminster and to deliver on the many areas of policy where we can find agreement.

While there is much we can do in Northern Ireland, some of these issues can only be delivered with the help of Westminster.

FROM WESTMINSTER, WE WANT:

- A fair deal for all four parts of the United Kingdom to strengthen the Union;
- Protection in law for the official display of the Union Flag and the symbols of our nation;
- National events to celebrate the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 and to commemorate the Battle of the Somme;
- National UK departments to carry out administrative operations in Northern Ireland;
- A new relationship between the regional administrations and the National Government;
- Arrangements to ensure Northern Ireland's perspective is taken into account across Government and direct access to decision makers;
- Northern Ireland's priorities promoted in Europe;
- A renegotiation of the UK's role in Europe and an early referendum on the European Union;
- Commit to the NATO target of spending 2% of GDP on defence;
- No partisan political deals which would weaken the United Kingdom;
- Legislation for a new way forward on parading which respects the fundamental rights of assembly.

LOCALLY, WE WILL:

- Play our full part in the National Parliament at Westminster;
- Play a constructive role in UK-wide intergovernmental relations;
- Make sure Northern Ireland continues to contribute to the life of the nation;
- Sell the benefits of the United Kingdom to the widest possible audience in Northern Ireland;
- Display the flag and symbols of our nation appropriately and with respect;
- Support the roll out of national programmes in Northern Ireland;
- Work with other unionists to maximise our power and influence at home and abroad;
- Work to reduce Northern Ireland's economic dependence on Westminster;
- Act responsibly and in the interest of the country as a whole when taking decisions which would have an impact nationally;
- Work to ensure disputes around parades and protests are resolved;
- At every level of government in Northern Ireland defend our British cultural heritage;
- Campaign to highlight the benefits of the Union to Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland to the Union.

During the course of the General Election campaign the DUP has published a series of policy papers as well as our Northern Ireland Plan. This manifesto should be read in conjunction with those documents.

There are a range of powers devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and our last Assembly manifesto detailed our policy positions and commitments in those devolved areas.

Our Westminster Parliamentary team will assist where appropriate in the implementation of the proposals as set out in our Assembly Manifesto as well as furthering the aims of party policy as detailed in our other DUP publications.

Our policy documents and publications can be found at www.mydup.com

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