



ELECTION '07

**'A NEW
DAWN'**

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**Progressive Unionist Party
Assembly Election Policy 2007**

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The Union

The Progressive Unionist Party is committed to maintaining and strengthening the present constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. To achieve this aim we will reach out to the rest of the United Kingdom with a positive message based on our vision of renewed relationships and mutual respect. We recognise the importance of North/South cooperation to develop our economy, attract investment and develop relations on issues of mutual benefit.

Devolved Government

It is the view of the Progressive Unionist Party that the time has come for accountable democracy, for too long our elected representatives have lagged behind the people in this regard. We need a fully functioning local assembly, where we can stand toe to toe with our political opponents.

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that power-sharing in a devolved government is the best solution to Northern Ireland's difficult past. Thus we have promoted the concept of 'Sharing Responsibility' since 1979.

In the longer term we will endeavour to ensure that devolved government produces a new style of politics that replaces the senseless tribalism that dominates our past.

To ensure the best start for a new executive, Government must enhance the financial package for Northern Ireland.

Water Charges

Water charges are unfair and should be scrapped. The current plans for water charging do not take into account that Northern Irish rate payers already pay for their water. We should not be expected to pay twice for our water.

The PUP has consistently opposed the implementation of water charges. All parties in Northern Ireland have opposed them but how many have given a commitment to end water charges when they are in power?

Water charges should be incorporated in the domestic rating system and based on an ability to pay. This would free up resources to improve our water and sewerage system.

Review of Domestic Rates

A fair domestic rates system should be based on income and not property value. This would ensure that those in low-income households do not pay what they cannot afford. Domestic rates should not be capped.

The current system being imposed by government is a stealth tax on the poor and will adversely affect the large percentage of our population who are asset rich and income poor.



Conflict Transformation

The Progressive Unionist Party is committed to a comprehensive programme of conflict transformation. If we are to achieve a fully devolved democracy all parties will have to embrace the process of transformation. We advocate transformation rather than resolution, as unionism and nationalism are diametrically opposed political philosophies. The manner of how these competing political ideals engage can be transformed to a non violent one.

The Progressive Unionist Party has advocated and supported a two-stranded approach to conflict transformation within progressive loyalist communities.

1. Each armed group within those communities has a duty to develop their own internal conflict transformation process.
2. Political and community activists within these communities have a duty to help empower local people to take ownership of their communities and develop a new progressive brand of Loyalism.

Underpinning this transformation process is an equal partnership developed between and within three interlinking strands:- political, paramilitary and community. Additionally support has been identified with a range of external 'Critical Friends' drawn from the Faith Community, Academia and the Media. It is their job to keep a watching brief on the principles and practice being developed during the process.

It is now in the public domain that progressive loyalist paramilitary groups have been engaged in their own internal consultation process for some time now. At the strategic level the PUP approach is designed to complement the internal conflict transformation process currently being undertaken within progressive loyalism. At the local level the PUP has empowered its members to support local transformation groups developed within a range of local communities across the Province

Education

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that education is a key element in conflict transformation process. To rebuild society everyone must have access to quality education. At present this is not the case. Thus we support:

- Increased pre school provision with an emphasis on disadvantaged areas.
- Reform of post primary education leading to a system of modern schools including an end to academic selection.
- A radical reform of the school curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all children in a modern society.
- Reintroduction of student grants.
- The provision of childcare for nursing students and the removal of means testing for dependents grants.
- Increased outreach by Universities to disadvantaged areas
- Increased choice for parents including more integrated education both within and without the integrated sector.
- A radical reform of administrative structures within the education system.
- Improved support for adult education and those returning to education.



Community Politics

The Progressive Unionist Party is committed to participative community action. Our members will continue to work at local level for the development of the community through education and training programmes, particularly the adult education sector. We will continue to campaign for increased levels of core funding for community based projects that enable capacity building and the promotion of 'good relations'.

Racism

Racism is a growing problem that our country is facing. The natural evolution of Europe and the modern world means that we are now seeing a more racially diverse Northern Ireland. This change within many areas of Northern Ireland has been exploited by those willing to scare monger and cause racial tensions.

The Progressive Unionist Party position is clear: Racism is unacceptable in all its shapes and forms, we along with all reasonable people will combat it at all levels. It is our view that it is not enough simply to be anti racist, it is up to all of us to speak up against racism and make sure those who hold racist beliefs know that it has no place in a modern world.

Education is the key to tackling racism and we support community initiatives that foster good relations.

Economy

The Progressive Unionist Party advocates a multi-strategy approach to economic development. This would include both medium and long term goals across the following sectors:

- Selective Intervention to retain and expand the local economic base.
- Target setting for inward investment in disadvantaged areas.
- Establishment of local capital finance funds to support entrepreneurs and business start ups.
- Increased financial support for local research and development projects.

And

- Creation of secure social economy employment. This should include poverty support teams, environmental task forces and sports development.

This party continues to hold at its core the belief that all economic strategies need to include an element that seeks to alleviate poverty. We therefore propose an increase in the minimum wage for 16-18 years olds and employment rights for migrant workers.



The Environment

The Progressive Unionist Party believes in environmentalism, which is based on a fundamental understanding of the interaction between human beings and the world they live in. The issue is about more than conserving resources: it also involves enhancing the world around us.

We are calling for:

- Environmental issues to be incorporated into all economic planning and policy making.
- Promotion of environmental schemes in disadvantaged areas.
- Legislation to take control of all dumping and pollution issues including excess packaging.
- Well financed schemes to maximise the use of inner city areas. These programmes should seek to ensure that present brown field provision is fully utilised.
- Investment in public transport, light rail systems and the promotion and expansion of park and ride schemes.
- Public transport must be accessible to the most disadvantaged.
- Support for all international deals on the environment.

Culture, arts and the community

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that community development must go hand in hand with cultural expression. We believe that community based arts projects strengthen the confidence of a neighbourhood. Thus we support increased funding for locally based arts and cultural projects.

In Northern Ireland, support for the arts can provide a dynamic for increased respect and understanding, thus we support the development of single and multi identity projects.

Housing

The Progressive Unionist Party believes that housing policy is integral to successfully tackling poverty and environmental issues. We also recognise that the soaring price of housing in Northern Ireland is making it increasingly difficult for first time buyers to access the market. Thus we call for:

- A fund to rehabilitate uninhabitable rural housing.
- An interface rehabilitation fund.
- An end to green field development when much of the inner city lies derelict.
- An end to the capping of tenant discount.
- Investment to improve the social housing stock.
- All future housing developments to include 'First time buyer' units.



Human rights and Equality

The Progressive Unionist Party will continue to support the work of both the Northern Ireland Human Rights and Equality Commissions. We recognise that in post conflict Northern Ireland their work is essential to building a fully functional society. We fully support the introduction of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which includes social and economic rights for all our citizens.

We especially advocate the development of proactive initiatives that lead to more representative participation of women and ethnic minorities in public and private institutions.

Health and Social Services

The Progressive Unionist Party fully supports the Investing for Health Strategy.

It is committed to addressing the socio-economic factors that influence health. In particular it is committed to working to combat ill-health associated with multiple deprivations.

As a Party we will:

- Work to support communities in identifying and addressing their own health concerns
- Promote community based health initiatives
- Support the continued development of Primary Health Care and the movement of chronic disease management from secondary to community based primary care
- Promote the extension of 'return to work', rehabilitation and retraining schemes which support those with a history of ill-health, and in particular mental ill-health, return to appropriate employment.

The PUP considers the continued development of private medicine to be detrimental to the provision of adequate secondary care for all the population and opposes the values and ethos of the new right who seek to privatise the welfare state. We oppose PPP/PFIs as offering short term solutions with unacceptable long term consequences.

Further we call for:

- Local community social work teams and Family Centres as the main base for social welfare activity
- Social policies that are geared towards equipping families and individuals with the resources and information to enable them to take control of their lives
- An end to managerial social work and the overthrow of the contract culture
- An increase in the benefits for lone parents and pensioners.
- Accessible quality childcare for all those who need it.



Policing

The Progressive Unionist Party acknowledges the need for an effective and representative police service to uphold law, defend peace and protect the innocent. To achieve this goal a police service needs to have respect for the community it serves. This respect must be two way and can only be built through partnership. In the absence of armed conflict the police service must be given time to adjust to the new environment. Thus the party supports the process of change and will seek to help and facilitate as we can.

Policing with the community is the way forward for Northern Ireland. Disadvantaged and marginalised communities produce the greater number of victims and the largest volume of crime. Police resources are not finite and should be focused effectively and efficiently. We support the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO).

The party supports the increasing use of restorative justice principles in the PSNI. We would like to see these used more widely within the Criminal Justice System. We support Community Based Restorative Justice schemes (CBRJ) which work in partnership with PSNI and other statutory agencies.

Increasing fear of crime and anti social behaviour is having a detrimental effect on our quality of life. Noise nuisance, vandalism, graffiti, abusive behaviour and bullying creates an unsafe community where the vulnerable are afraid to go out and where the environment is as unwelcoming to residents as it is to visitors. We want to work in partnership with police and local communities to create safer neighbourhoods. Exclusion is not the answer, empowerment and education is how we address this. We need to examine the causes and generate new ideas to enable people to enjoy their home and environment in peace, reduce anti social behaviour and prevent crime.



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