



Unionist
Ulster Unionist Party
Doing what's right for Northern Ireland



One Day One Vote
**ONE CHANCE
FOR CHANGE**

Westminster Manifesto | **2015**

**“Vote for what YOU
hope for”**



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We understand that if you have a problem, you expect us, the politicians, to find the solution, irrespective of which level of government has the power to make it happen.

That is why this 2015 Ulster Unionist Party Manifesto contains policy proposals across the full range of governmental bodies, from Europe, through Westminster, to the Northern Ireland Assembly and our new eleven Councils.

Introduction by **Mike Nesbitt MLA** Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party

After all we in Northern Ireland have been through, this cannot be as good as it gets.

You should demand better of your politicians.

I want our people to feel healthier, happier and more prosperous.

I want our politics to switch from a culture of Dependency on welfare and the Block Grant, to a mind-set where we are focused on generating serious wealth for all our people.

I want to tackle the toxic legacies of the Troubles: sectarianism, and poor mental health and wellbeing.

Here are some big ideas that could change Northern Ireland for the better:

- *Educate our children together from age 4 and you give them a virtual inoculation against sectarianism;*
- *Improve mental health and wellbeing and you get a Triple Win, addressing the legacy of the past, empowering people to move off benefits, and rebalancing the economy by making people economically active;*
- *Create tens of thousands of new jobs and you transform society as more and more people find their lives have proper meaning and purpose.*

Our politics never changes unless you make it happen. The 7th of May is your chance. Last year, your votes in the Local Government elections helped us turn a corner. Now we want to return the favour.

Together, we can force through a new relationship which better respects you, the people.

I want us to move away from the current position, where the parties at the heart of our politics operate a High Accountability, Low Trust regime. That's to say, they demand you account for your every action, yet they offer you very little trust in return, and seldom account for their own activities.

The 7th May represents an opportunity to stop voting out of fear, because people say bad things will happen to you if you do not support them.

The 7th of May is a chance to vote for Hope.

The 7th of May is One Day, where your One Vote, is a chance to vote for Change.

That is why on the 7th of May, I am asking YOU to Vote **Ulster Unionist.**



Mike Nesbitt MLA
Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party

PLAYING A POSITIVE ROLE WITHIN THE UNION

“Our values are not an auction item”

This is an uncertain time for the United Kingdom. Scottish Nationalism has not accepted the democratic outcome of the referendum on Independence. They may have lost that battle, but their war continues. In fact, they have done more to destabilise the Union than Irish Republicanism ever did, and the Scottish Nationalist Party did so without bombs or bullets.

Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond see themselves as Kingmakers on the 8th of May. Their SNP will not put the broader interests of the UK first and foremost. If their MPs are required to support a Government, then there is a very real prospect that it will further destabilise the Union, creating fear and uncertainty, not just among the citizens of the UK, but also with our global partners, economically and politically. We have spoken to the US Administration and they do not welcome an undermining of the “Special Relationship” between the UK and the United States of America.

A stable Union is the most important result a good unionist should hope for in this Election.

Ulster Unionist MPs will be responsible citizens of the United Kingdom, defending, promoting and advancing the Union at this time of immense uncertainty. While our MPs will seek to do the best they can for the people of Northern Ireland, we will also work in the best interests of the UK as a whole.

In the event that neither Labour nor the Conservative Party secure a majority of seats in the House of Commons, the Ulster Unionist Party will not be going to Downing Street holding out the begging bowl.

Neither the United Kingdom or Northern Ireland will profit from MPs intent only on short-term advantage, no matter what the longer-term damage that does to our place in the Union. The Ulster Unionist Party values are not an auction item, available to the highest bidder.

“The Union makes sense: politically, economically, socially and culturally.”

Instead we aspire to work with the UK Government to secure the tools and resources that will help us start moving away from our Dependency culture and start generating serious wealth for our people.

We believe the Union makes sense: politically, economically, socially and culturally. Economically, you need look no further than the global league table of prosperity. Who votes for relegation?

The World’s Most Prosperous Countries by Gross Domestic Product

1		United States	17,416,253
2		China	10,355,350
3		Japan	4,769,804
4		Germany	3,820,464
5		France	2,902,330
6		United Kingdom	2,847,604
<hr/>			
43		Pakistan	232,757
44		Ireland	232,150

(Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2014)

While the UK economy is one of the strongest in the world, there are key challenges to be faced, none bigger than our debt mountain. Currently, the UK Government spends more servicing debt than it does on Education. It is also more than is spent on public services in Northern Ireland and Wales combined. That is an inconvenient truth for those who oppose actions to address the issue. We do not wish to leave £1.4 Trillion of debt as a legacy for our children.

Rebalancing our economy should have three focal points for the public sector:

- **DEBT REDUCTION.** *At £1.4 Trillion, that equates to £54,353 per household;*
- **PRODUCTIVITY.** *Every one percent of public sector staff time saved through increased productivity is worth £1.6 Billion to the public purse, or £64 Million in Northern Ireland;*
- **TALENT MANAGEMENT.** *It is crucial that the current Voluntary Exit Scheme manages the radical change in public sector headcount, to ensure we retain the right people, with the right skills, in the right places.*

For our private sector, the challenge is simple: growth.

A HEALTHIER PEOPLE

“If we feel unwell, the National Health Service is there for us. Now the NHS itself is sick, we need to be there to make it better.”

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE

Over the last four years our National Health Service has been put under intolerable strains.

Health and Social Care Trusts being forced to make swingeing in year cuts to frontline services last year was an appalling demonstration of how badly the situation has deteriorated.

We want to cure that, with:

- *Better use of funding and resources;*
- *Decisive political leadership;*
- *Strategic vision for health provision.*

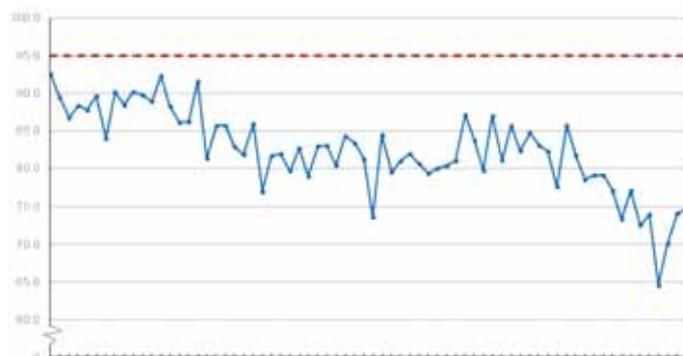
We need to get serious about prevention, ensure the NHS is fit for the future and more efficient in its use of staff, funding and resources.

We will benchmark the performance of the NHS in Northern Ireland against the best performing aspects of the NHS in Great Britain, measuring:

- *Safety, Quality of Care and Patient Experience;*
- *Investment in people, skills, facilities and resources;*
- *Waiting times.*

The UK expenditure on health has now fallen behind many of our major European neighbours such as France, Germany and Denmark. The trend within Northern Ireland over recent years is of ineffective investment whilst demand and cost pressures continue to grow exponentially.

Percentage of patients treated on time following an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer in each quarter since 2009 to 2014 measured against the official target



We will provide the political leadership that ensures there is a strategic vision for the future that takes account of changing demand, delivering the resources required to maintain a consistently safe and high quality NHS.

- *Waiting times for elective surgery are spiralling, with patients facing the trauma of late-notice postponement;*
- *Waiting times in Emergency Departments are unacceptably long with target times not just missed, but missed in ways that are unsafe to the point of posing increased risk to patients;*
- *Many cancer services are in crisis, with far too many patients waiting unjustifiable lengths of time for diagnosis and treatment.*

These factors impact hugely on staff morale, which is at an all-time low; the impact of underfunding and ineffective use of resources has only served to further undermine public and staff confidence in the health service.

We will:

- *Not compromise on the core principle of the NHS remaining free at the point of delivery, available to everyone based on need, not the ability to pay;*
- *Continue to oppose the introduction of charges on the sick. That includes falsehearted attempts to predetermine a specialised drugs fund on the reintroduction of prescriptions charges;*
- *Put patients back at the heart of all the NHS does and ask frontline staff to tell us how best to transform the NHS back to its best.*

Our commitments to our hospitals:

- *In light of the growing evidence that demonstrates higher death rates at weekends in our hospitals and in the knowledge that illness and injury does not discriminate in relation to time of day or day of the week, we will begin the process of ensuring acute services within the NHS are delivered 24 hours a day 7 days a week. We will extend evening and weekend consultant coverage and ensure staffing levels match patient flows;*
- *We will tackle the shortage of specialist staff working in Emergency Departments, ensuring senior doctors are present 24 hours a day, removing patients' fear of inappropriate or untimely treatment;*
- *We will introduce a new revised workforce planning structure to ensure every hospital maintains safe and sustainable staffing levels.*

“Hospitals are also not always a safe place if patients do not absolutely need to be there”

Our commitments to primary care:

- *We will reverse the trend of Northern Ireland having the lowest number of GPs per head in the United Kingdom;*
- *We will ensure GP hubs are equipped to provide extended opening hours to reduce the number of patients having to seek help inappropriately at hospital;*
- *We will place a greater emphasis on public health awareness campaigns and invest in early intervention efforts; we will focus on keeping our communities well and preventing illness.*

Our analysis of future needs:

- *Dementia is a growing epidemic. Every year across the UK, dementia is attributable to 60,000 deaths. By 2025, we will have 1,000,000 people in the UK suffering from dementia. We need to prepare the NHS now! We will make our health service dementia-proof, so that every health care professional is trained and aware, and every healthcare facility is dementia-friendly, tackling issues including light and sound, not least the sometimes chaotic and confusing environment of an Emergency Department. Family members who care for people with dementia save the UK 11 Billion pounds every year;*
- *Northern Ireland has one of the worst per capita rates of poor mental health and wellbeing in the world, directly linked to the Troubles. We will tackle that to unlock a Triple Win: tackling a toxic Troubles legacy, empowering people to come off Welfare, and rebalancing our economy by making more people economically active;*



- *Cancer diagnostic and treatment services require urgent investment. The cruelty of leaving patients and their loved ones waiting for months for a medical diagnosis must be ended.*

Balancing the NHS budget:

- *Frontline and administrative staff agree, there are huge efficiencies to be made to free up funds to make the NHS work for you;*
- *Following the significant reform of local health structures carried out by Michael McGimpsey, it is regrettable that only four years later a number of bodies set up to act in a more streamlined manner have actually been allowed to swell in size by over 40%. It is clear there are significant savings to be made once again in the administration of our local health service;*
- *We will review procurement in the Health Service;*
- *We will ensure that all revenue raised through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) goes towards ensuring our patients with rare diseases are no longer last to receive new revolutionary treatments;*
- *We will reduce costs by introducing a new alcohol and drug misuse framework.*

The NHS is the jewel in the United Kingdom's crown. We will protect it, revive it, restore it to good health. In return we will deliver healthier people, not least in the area of poor mental health and wellbeing. Too many of our people wake up every morning with no real sense of purpose in their lives and go to bed without a sense of having achieved anything worthwhile. Good health, mental and physical will transform our society; we will restore the NHS to its former glory.

We will sustain it and make it a service that everyone can be proud of and others envy. The NHS is the bedrock of our society. You can only build a strong, healthy and sustainable forward-thinking population on the basis of good physical and mental health, with a focus on prevention as well as treating illness.

A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

It is our responsibility to create a clean and healthy environment to pass on to future generations. Yet, the challenge of tackling climate change is no less formidable now than it was five years ago.

We will:

- *In the absence of Northern Ireland specific legislation, reduce our carbon emissions in line with the United Kingdom's commitments;*
- *Require all public bodies, including our eleven local councils, to set carbon reduction strategies with accompanying targets to measure progress;*
- *Improve outdoor air quality, by continuing to reduce traffic emissions by further promoting public transport. We'll also continue our cycling revolution to allow more people to avail of this healthy and sustainable mode of travel.*

A SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY OF ENERGY

Northern Ireland is facing an energy crisis. We remain far too dependent on the import of fossil fuels as our capacity to generate power through traditional means is being much reduced.

A new approach is needed.

We will:

- *Work closely with partners across the UK and Ireland to achieve a coordinated supply of energy, and to promote the longer term integration of the electricity market;*
- *Maximise Northern Ireland's sustainable energy resources by supporting further renewable advances in solar, biomass and hydro technologies;*
- *Oppose applications to frack unless they have been independently supported by means of positive Environmental Impact Assessments, Health Impact Assessments, Economic Business Plans and any other process necessary to form an evidence based judgement;*
- *Seek support to ensure the electricity grid can facilitate a greater range of decarbonised energy sources;*
- *Increase storage capacity to safeguard our energy security from global events;*
- *Secure a final resolution to the application for the North South Interconnector by using both overhead and underground cabling.*



TACKLING THE BLIGHT OF FUEL POVERTY

Northern Ireland continues to suffer from the worst rates of fuel poverty in the United Kingdom. Far too many households, over 43% at last count, have to spend more than a tenth of their income on heating their home.

Advances in tackling fuel poverty have been minimal with progress far too slow. It's clear a new approach is needed.

We will:

- *Introduce an extensive area based approach to identify households in acute poverty;*
- *Rectify the flaws with the current Affordable Warmth scheme, including the problems with self-referrals;*
- *Support local councils to provide innovative retro-fit schemes with a particular focus on cavity wall insulation;*
- *By 2020, ensure that Northern Ireland implements a full rollout of gas and electricity Smart Meters;*
- *Make it a requirement for social housing to meet a minimum level of efficiency;*
- *Make it a requirement for private rental properties to meet a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating.*

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PLANNING SYSTEM

The importance of planning cannot be over-estimated. It impacts everything from economic development (*airport runways, new retail outlets, factory expansions*) to daily lives (*neighbours building extensions to their homes, replacement dwellings*). In short, it is key to our quality of life.

We believe planning should achieve sustainable development, whilst promoting economic and societal improvement.

With the transfer of planning powers to our eleven new Councils, local people now have a greater opportunity than ever before to shape the look and functionality of their communities.

We will:

- *Ensure a balance between sustainability and economic considerations in planning decisions;*
- *Encourage greater use of land that has been previously developed;*
- *Ensure that our Councils use their new planning powers to deliver more energy efficient buildings.*



CONSERVING OUR NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND NATIVE SPECIES

Northern Ireland's countryside is coveted internationally and cherished locally. That requires that a balance must be reached to maximise the dual responsibilities of maximising the economic and tourism potential, and our duty to preserve the countryside for future generations to enjoy.

We wish to reverse the unfortunate trend of recent years that has seen statutory bodies acting reactively. They must be proactive.

Instead of schemes such as ASSIs (*Areas of Special Scientific Interest*) being allocated only to meet targets, we will ensure that communities are given the real opportunity to feed into the discussions on how best to protect their local landscapes.

In addition, real focus is needed on preserving our historic built environment. Buildings can be restored but if lost they can never truly be replaced.

We will:

- *Tackle robustly the threat posed to our local biodiversity by invasive species;*
- *Work effectively with the European Union on policies such as the European Birds and Habitats Directive in order to ensure that breaches, such as those on Strangford Lough, are avoided;*
- *Give local communities and land owners greater say in the designation of lands.*



ENHANCING OUR ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

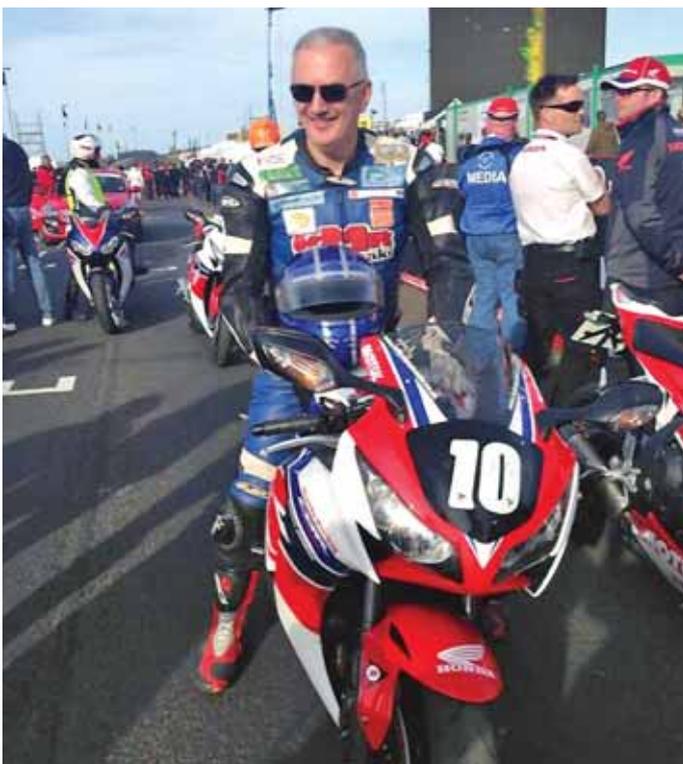
Too often, animals in Northern Ireland are subjected to cruel and unnecessary suffering. Despite repeated media exposés of abuse of sickening proportions, animal welfare remains a major issue here.

Previous attempts to tackle the problem have clearly not been enough. Further action is needed.

The Ulster Unionist Party strongly believes in the principle that securing animal welfare and respecting the rights of those who engage in country sports, such as shooting, are values that should be mutually dependent - not exclusive.

We will:

- *Overhaul the Welfare of Animals Act to deliver greater numbers of successful prosecutions;*
- *Seek to regulate the sale of live poultry and domestic pets in open and indoor markets;*
- *Review the online sale and distribution of cats and dogs;*
- *Ensure all animals are stunned pre-slaughter with strict enforcement by DARD.*



A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a dark suit and a blue patterned tie, looking forward with a serious expression. He is surrounded by other people in a crowd, some of whom are blurred in the background. The lighting is soft, and the overall tone is professional.

“Whilst our local businesses are world leaders at providing the labour and materials for renewable energy generation, we are yet to fully harness the opportunity for ourselves”

A PROSPEROUS PEOPLE

"If you want Northern Ireland to be less dependent on the Block Grant from London, join us in generating serious wealth for our people."

AN ECONOMY EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE

Our ambition for the people of Northern Ireland is simply put. The Ulster Unionist Party wants Northern Ireland to be the most attractive region in Europe in which to do business.

Why?

Because to succeed will make our people more prosperous and we believe that will be transformational for our society.

There was a time when this corner of the United Kingdom was a major economic powerhouse. It led the world in ship building; we had the globe's largest rope works; our textile industry was vibrant; we produced brilliant engineers and agriculture was a staple industry.

"We paid our way"

The Ulster Unionist Party wants Northern Ireland to once again establish itself as a major economic powerhouse. We may always require a Block Grant from Westminster, but we should aspire to be less dependent, generating our own wealth, and with it, restoring pride and a sense of purpose to our people.

When we talk about the economy, it boils down to how much money our people have in their back pockets. In simple terms, there is a huge prosperity gap between ourselves in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. If people in Great Britain have £1 in their pockets, our citizens have only 77 pence.

To close that gap, we need to start generating serious wealth.

"We want a shift from dependency to wealth generation."

CORPORATION TAX

Giving Stormont the power to vary the rate of Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland was an Ulster Unionist idea. We regret it was not resolved sooner, because it could and should have been, but that is in the past and the challenge now is to move swiftly to agree the Rate and Date.

We support:

- A rate of 12.5%. This matches the current rate in the Republic of Ireland and represents a 75% positive differential with GB, now that the UK-wide rate has dropped to 20%;

- Introducing the rate at the earliest possible date, which is 1st April 2017;
- Encouraging Invest NI, supported by Leaders of all the Executive Parties and Northern Ireland's business spokespersons, to start immediately marketing Northern Ireland to Foreign Direct Investors, not least in the USA, where the Corporation Tax rate is 35%.

BEYOND CORPORATION TAX

The Ulster Unionist Party never considered a lower rate of Corporation Tax as a silver bullet for our economy. Rather, it is the centre piece in a basket of measures, including:

- An appropriately skilled workforce;
- Sufficient A grade office accommodation to meet demand;
- Fast track planning for major economic initiatives.

In order for Northern Ireland to meet its potential to make its people more prosperous, we need a new economic model; a model that is not so overly-dependent on the public sector, or which stifles private sector growth, or ignores the massive potential of social enterprises, which make up the Third Sector, the so-called "not for profit" businesses that plough profit back into the organisation and the communities they serve.



Within that paradigm, the foundation of this new economy is our micro and small and medium sized enterprise (*micro and SMEs*). Let us liberate their insatiable entrepreneurial spirit.

In order to grow the economy in Northern Ireland we will:

- *Seek to deliver the latent ambition among our business community for a Northern Ireland-owned bank, focused on promoting and advancing the rebalancing of our economy;*
- *Support long-term business investment by opening up access to finance. We will also seek a formal review of the market restrictions for new non-bank sources of finance;*
- *Reform procurement to further open up the £3 Billion annual procurement budget in Northern Ireland to make it more accessible to our micro and SME companies;*
- *Reduce unnecessary business costs, especially for start-ups;*
- *Focus government on properly supporting, empowering and resourcing social economies;*
- *Demand reform to EU regulations that disproportionately impact small and medium sized businesses;*
- *Ensure our councils adopt a town centre first approach, with out-of-town planning applications going through rigorous tests to check their potential impact on existing businesses;*
- *Identify and remove gaps in our broadband and mobile network service provision;*
- *Foster and develop the untapped potential of the third sector, including Northern Ireland's 3,300 community and voluntary organisations. This will include improving the relationship, communication and structures between Government and these organisations. This is especially relevant for organisations that rely on funding from sources such as the European Social Fund;*
- *Keep the interests of businesses and employers at the heart of the decision making process.*



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE - EDUCATION

The Ulster Unionist Party believes now is the time to start commencing the transition to a single education system where children of all faiths and none learn together. There would be no more sectors, no more enforced social segregation.

If we offer inoculation jabs against MMR (*Measles, Mumps and Rubella*) why not give a virtual inoculation against sectarianism? If children share space and experience from age 4, you transform our future, by eliminating the ignorance of "the other" and truly embracing the strength of diversity.

The Ulster Unionist Party has a vision of education where every child is valued equally for their individual, innate ability, creativity and talent, irrespective of whether it is academic, technical, vocational, sporting, artistic, or any unique combination of all.

That means every child is cherished, not just the academic boys and girls.

When Martin McGuinness became the first Minister of Education post the 1998 Agreement, he listened when you told him you did not like the 11-Plus Examination, but he closed his ears when you also said you wanted selection, because life involves selection; for jobs, sports teams, performing arts - name it, you will face selection!

Our discussions and broader research with business leaders leaves us in no doubt: if we are serious about closing the prosperity gap, we need to align our education system to three key questions:

- *What ability, creativity and talent lies within the individual child;*
- *How does that fit within making our people more prosperous:*
- *What do we need to change to make it happen?*

To improve the prospects of our young people, we will:

- *Match Scotland's record where 80% of day to day expenditure is managed by School Principals supporting children, by cutting administrative costs and putting more of the budget into frontline, classroom teaching;*
- *Resolve the post primary transfer stalemate. The current commercialised nature of the test means the State has lost control of State schools;*
- *Recognise your child's education is about more than their transfer to post-primary education and bring forward a holistic package of teaching, learning and support.*



Our commitments:

- *We will target schools in deprived communities and introduce a pupil premium. It is abhorrent that successive Sinn Fein Education Ministers have failed to break the cycle of educational underachievement in these areas;*
- *We will push hard to develop a skills-based agenda based around the STEM subjects - Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths;*
- *We will acknowledge and fix the problem of Careers Guidance. We should, could, and with your support, will do better for our children, by making careers' guidance a core part of the Northern Ireland schools' curriculum from the age of 15;*
- *We support the retention of the Dickson Plan;*
- *We will amend the Fair Employment and Treatment Order to repeal the exemption for teachers and end the requirement for primary school teachers in the Maintained sector to hold a Catholic Certificate in religious education;*
- *We will end the postcode lottery for pre-school places. Currently, that allows the Government to boast huge success rates in placement offers, with no acknowledgement of the impracticality of families availing of same and the consequent lowering of the percentage of placements accepted.*

STEPS TOWARDS RECOVERY - FOR BOTH PEOPLE AND BUSINESS

FAIRER WAGES AND TAXATION

The introduction of the National Minimum Wage in 1998 increased low-end wages for several million workers effectively overnight. However, as a result of only modest increases up until 2014, the value of the minimum wage has fallen significantly in real terms since 2008.

We support the principle of the Living Wage, but given the Northern Ireland economy is constituted almost exclusively by micro and SMEs, for whom the Living Wage would represent an existential threat, the practical step for Northern Ireland at this stage is to restore the Minimum Wage to the position originally intended.

We will:

- *Increase the national minimum wage over the next 3 years to rebalance the shortfalls from previous years;*
- *Expect any company benefitting from the 12.5% rate of Corporation Tax to pay the Living Wage from April 2017;*
- *Close taxation loopholes with zero tolerance on tax evasion;*
- *Seek to gradually rebalance the relationship between the Regional and Domestic Rates, to ensure a greater share of a household's annual rates bill is collected for the benefit of their local council;*
- *Commission an expert panel to review business rates, listening closely to the often devastating impact rates have on our private sector;*
- *Support measures to increase the personal allowance to £12,500 by 2020;*
- *Introduce a simpler PAYE payroll process for small businesses;*
- *Review the current pension tax relief rates so that greater support goes to savings from the lowest incomes, rather than at present disproportionality benefitting the wealthiest savers;*
- *Oppose reintroducing the 50% top rate of income tax for people earning over £150,000 as previous experience shows an increased rate could actually lead to a reduced total tax take.*

REFORMING VAT

The current 20% value added tax rate is crippling two of our key industrial sectors: Construction and Tourism.

The Ulster Unionist Party has repeatedly argued the need for concessionary VAT rates for these sectors, to help rebalance our economy and grow our private sector.

We believe Northern Ireland should learn from the experience of the Isle of Man, where a 5% VAT rate has applied since 1995 to hospitality, and from 1999 to aspects of construction, both with identifiable benefits to their economy.

The Tynwald government, aided by HM Treasury, successfully lobbied the EU for a concessionary VAT rate for the Repair Maintenance and Improvement (*RM&I*) of existing dwellings. *RM&I* covers all activities to existing dwellings, from relatively minor works such as painting and decorating, to the more major, including extensions and conversions.

In 1999, under Council Directive 1999/85/EC, the Isle of Man applied a concessionary 5% VAT rate to *RM&I*, with the Isle of Man Government assessing the initiative being responsible for:

- *Stimulating the construction industry;*
- *Retaining skills;*
- *Creating new, permanent jobs, including apprenticeships;*
- *Offering citizens an affordable way to improve their dwelling;*
- *Regenerating the existing housing stock;*
- *Helping Government achieve its target of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050;*
- *Reducing the viability of the black / shadow / informal economy;*
- *Generating a perception of positive momentum and hope.*

While there is no reliable, discrete data for Northern Ireland, a forecast by Experian (*global information forecasters*) predicted that had a UK-wide 5% VAT rate for *RM&I* applied in 2010, this would have seen estimated revenue loss to the HM Treasury of between £102 and £508 million, but a stimulus effect of £1.4 billion, to include the multiplier effect.

The Isle of Man has also operated a concessionary VAT rate on hotel accommodation, which has been judged to be a direct stimulus to that sector. Given Northern Ireland's tourism competes with the Republic of Ireland, which enjoys a 9% VAT rate for this type of purchase, the 11% differential is clearly off-putting for potential visitors to Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation, representing 85% of the hotel sector in Northern Ireland, report in their Tourism 2020 analysis, that the UK has the third highest VAT rate in Europe and is only one of four EU states that does not have a concessionary VAT rate for hotel accommodation. The potential benefits for Northern Ireland are measured in significant boosts to GDP, job creation, and additional tax take.

We will:

- *Seek a concessionary 5% VAT rate being applied to the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement of existing dwellings in Northern Ireland;*
- *Seek a concessionary 9% VAT rate being applied to the hospitality sector, to negate the marketing disadvantage with the Republic of Ireland.*

A KNOWLEDGE BASED ECONOMY

If Northern Ireland is to fully reach its potential, it must continue to invest in its biggest asset: its people.

We need to transform how we equip our people with the skills without which we will fail to deliver the bedrock of a new economy.



We will:

- Ensure that every school leaver has three essential options: third level education, training for a skill, or an apprenticeship;
- Demand greater liaison between business, second and third level education, focused on marrying the individual young person and the needs of rebalancing our economy;
- Support our micro and SMEs in the delivery of more apprenticeships;
- Ensure public bodies with over 50 employees, and private companies delivering major public contracts, are required to offer additional apprenticeships;
- Increase the delivery of IT training and programming skills in schools;
- Continue to invest in research, development and innovation.

INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

In order for Northern Ireland to become a world class economy, it needs world class infrastructure.

We will:

- Develop a 25 year vision for world class infrastructure, listening carefully to the needs of those who will drive the rebalancing of our economy;
- Build on our increasingly successful drawdown of competitive EU funding by DRD Minister Danny Kennedy, over £30m since 2013, to make infrastructure projects deliverable;
- Fill the gap in A-Grade office space in Belfast and beyond, an essential requirement of global service sector firms considering investing in Northern Ireland;
- Fast track regionally important planning decisions;
- Develop a robust and stable electricity transmission system.



MAKING THE MOST OF OUR ECONOMIC ASSETS

For a small country Northern Ireland continues to be a world leader in a range of areas.

We have sectors such as the creative industries that are the envy of our much larger competitors.

We also have a tourism brand worth marketing globally.

While Northern Ireland 2012 enjoyed a degree of success with the emphasis on OurTime Our Place, the Ulster Unionist Party regrets the failure to add our call for Our People to be the essential third element.

With the World's Number One golfer in Rory McIlroy, supported by the immensely popular Darren Clarke and Graeme McDowell, we have three citizens who open an unique marketing opportunity.

Matched by the fact we have some of the best golf courses in the world (*Royal County Down* always in any sensible list of the world's top 10; *Royal Portrush* again on the rota to host the Open), golf should be our greatest single driver of tourism. The target of £50m per annum by the time the Open Championship returns to Northern Ireland, possibly in 2019, should be more ambitious.

We will:

- Redirect £40m Financial Transaction Capital funding towards major projects that would support our tourism industry;
- Promote apprenticeships using the 'Unlocking creativity' programme as a model to release individual creativity and ensure young people are prepared for careers in creative industries.



AGRI-FOOD

The agri-food sector is Northern Ireland's largest indigenous employer, with 47,000 people working in farming and a further 27,000 working in food and drinks processing. It is now worth well over £1 Billion a year.

However despite the proven potential the Northern Ireland Executive has only recently started to commence its much lauded 'Going for Growth Strategy'. This malaise inevitably limited the growth of the sector in recent years.

We will:

- *Seek to build a single, sustainable supply chain where the provenance and reputation of our produce is not compromised;*
- *Promote agriculture as a sustainable career for young people;*
- *Open up new export markets for our food and drink, particularly in China and the Middle East;*
- *Cut the bombardment of unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape on our farmers;*
- *Campaign for a review of the decision to relocate DARD headquarters to Ballykelly, taking into account the now vacant DVA premises in Coleraine.*

THE RIGHT TO AN AFFORDABLE HOME

Northern Ireland is heading for a housing crisis. Whilst prices have only just started to recover, we are still not building anywhere near enough homes.

Over the next ten years, Northern Ireland needs 12,500 new homes per annum just to keep up with demand, yet we're not building even two thirds of that.

We will:

- *Make it a priority for councils to review housing demand in their areas and to identify a supply of specific, developable sites;*
- *Accelerate the transfer of properties from the NIHE to Housing Associations;*
- *Put an end to publicly owned homes remaining endlessly boarded up;*
- *Give Councils the ability to give preference to planning applications that target first time buyers or owner occupiers. This would protect against housing speculators;*
- *Increase the development of greater mixed tenure housing - a mix of owner occupied, privately rented and social rented properties.*

A HAPPY PEOPLE

We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness.

These are wise words from the United States of America's Declaration of Independence. The pursuit of happiness has a lot going for it. If our people were happier, society would be transformed.

We believe the actions and commitments listed to date in our 2015 Manifesto will go a long way to making our people happier: a vibrant economy putting more money in your pocket; a Health Service that prevents you becoming sick and cures you if you do; housing to be proud of; an environment to cherish and share equally with all.

But in the world of the 21st Century, we must be alive to the threats that surround us.

DEFENDING OUR ARMED FORCES, OUR SECURITY AND OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS

It is not just here in Northern Ireland that sovereignty and identity clash violently. There are citizens of the Ukraine who offer loyalty to Russia; Islamic State (*IS* or *ISIS*) refuse to give allegiance to the countries of their birth, fighting instead for a Caliphate.

We acknowledge that many residents of Northern Ireland do not consider themselves to be British; we respect their right to a separate identity, be it Irish or other. By the same token, we reaffirm that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, as endorsed by the people of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, voting in the 1998 Referendum. That means the only sovereign flag that represents our constitutional position is the Union Flag. We ask no more than this fact be given reasonable and respectful expression. Equally, we wish to promote zero tolerance for the disrespectful use of the Union Flag.

The United Kingdom must continue to stand up and speak out in defence of freedom and democracy in the world. The Ulster Unionist Party will ensure Northern Ireland continues to make an important contribution to make to this.



For over 300 years Irishmen have served in the British Armed Forces. They have served with distinction at Waterloo, The Somme, Imjin River in Korea, the D-Day landings and the Falklands War. On the way they have been awarded over 190 Victoria Crosses (*VCs*). For their sacrifice and dedication in Northern Ireland on Operation Banner they were awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (*CGC*).

Our servicemen and women also served with distinction in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. In Afghanistan 10 made the ultimate sacrifice with many more wounded mentally and physically.

Yet service personnel, both those from Northern Ireland and others living or stationed here, do not have full access to the benefits of the Military Covenant. This leaves many veterans feeling like second class citizens in their own country, the country they served, often at a terrible personal cost.

As the UK Government has it:

The armed forces covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the government and the armed forces. It recognises that the whole nation, has a moral obligation to members of the armed forces and their families, and it establishes how they should expect to be treated.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes we should honour the sacrifice and commitment of our Armed Forces and Armed Forces community in Northern Ireland, not to advantage but to ensure they are not disadvantaged by their service. That is why every Ulster Unionist candidate standing in this election has signed a pledge to do all they can for our armed forces, our veterans and their families.

We will:

- *Work to secure the full implementation of the Military Covenant in Northern Ireland. Veterans have waited for too long for the Covenant to be given meaning in Northern Ireland. Our candidates have pledged to change that;*
- *Support the growth of Northern Ireland's reserve and cadet forces;*
- *Vote to ensure UK Defence Spending meets the NATO Target of 2% of national GDP;*
- *Support the renewal of Trident in order to maintain our independent nuclear deterrent;*
- *Resist any formation of an EU Army;*
- *Resist any reduction in UK Armed Forces regular manning levels.*

SENSIBLE POLICIES ON EUROPE AND IMMIGRATION

The Europe of today is very different from 40 years ago. The founding model of concentrating on a common market has been exchanged for a political institution that now interferes too much in our day to day lives. Change is required. Change is inevitable.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes there could be a beneficial future for Great Britain and Northern Ireland within the European Union. However this is entirely dependent on what we call the 'three Rs': a **Review** of how the EU impacts on the everyday lives of our citizens; a **Renegotiation** of the UK's relationship with the EU; a **Referendum** allowing you, the people, to decide if you approve of the proposed new relationship.

A review of every aspect of our relationship is needed, not least how much it costs us and what we get back in return. But this must be balanced by consideration of the cost of the UK's potential withdrawal from membership of the EU, not least the economic cost, given continuing trade with EU member states is essential for our economy. It must also take account of the non-financial benefits of a strong, united Europe, not least in standing up to terrorism and belligerent nations outwith the EU.

Like all good things, immigration should be practiced with a degree of moderation. The Ulster Unionist Party welcomes immigrants who have something to offer our society; who wish to assimilate and absorb our values of tolerance, hard work and civic responsibility; who add value to who we are.



We also recognise we operate with finite resources and will seek the power to stop those who see our way of life as nothing more than a meal ticket, or a means to access already stretched public services. We seek an immigration policy that is open, transparent and fair.

We will:

- *Have a zero tolerance policy on illegal immigration, while being responsive to genuine asylum seekers;*
- *Place the EU free movement rules at the heart of renegotiations to ensure that our hands aren't tied to tackle illegal immigration;*
- *Seek to withdraw from agreements where decisions are better made at the member state rather than at the European Level;*
- *Have a zero tolerance approach to racist attacks;*
- *Remove any unfair impediment in the way of immigrants and their families who wish to help Northern Ireland grow into the most successful region in Western Europe;*
- *Seek a memorial to those Polish service personnel who served in the Royal Air Force and paid the ultimate sacrifice during the Second World War and were based here in Northern Ireland;*
- *Support the exclusion of the NHS from the scope of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States of America.*



OUR ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Ulster Unionist Party is moving away from the old binary approach to life in Northern Ireland, where each individual is labelled as Orange or Green. We embrace the richness of our new, diverse society, as evidenced by multi-coloured and multi-cultural events like the annual Mela celebration in Belfast, which packs 25,000 people into the Botanic Gardens in a single day, to experience cultural diversity in song, dance and food.



For some, it is an inconvenient truth that without immigrants, parts of our private and public sectors would struggle to operate.

We have successful businesses that thrive only because members of our ethnic minorities are prepared to do jobs that others would rather avoid. Our Health Service relies heavily on highly skilled immigrants, without them it would almost certainly collapse. Some highly intensive manual jobs, not least in the agri-food sector are also deeply dependent on workers from our ethnic groups.

We will:

- *Support a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland;*
- *Focus on the inclusion and integration of young people from minority backgrounds;*
- *Open all public spaces to becoming welcoming of people from ethnic minority backgrounds;*
- *Monitor funding of minority ethnic and religious groups to ensure government support is fair, transparent and proportionate;*
- *Commit to ensuring people from minority ethnic backgrounds feel safe;*
- *Support people from minority ethnic backgrounds who fully contribute to our society, through education, the economy, health services, community activities, sports and the arts.*

LOOKING OUT FOR ALL IN SOCIETY

KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE

Throughout its existence the Ulster Unionist Party has been the Party of law and order. The fundamental right of people to feel safe in their own home is as valid now as ever before. Unfortunately, not only is crime still prevalent in many areas, but so too is the fear of crime. We must help the PSNI address this.

For decades, our police force tackled terrorist groupings from within our society. Now the focus has broadened to international organised crime gangs. The eventual roll out of the National Crime Agency will assist their efforts, but Northern Ireland's politicians collectively must adopt a zero tolerance approach to organised crime.

We will:

- *Campaign to include Kincora in the terms of reference for the national inquiry into historical child abuse;*
- *Ensure the focus remains on police officers carrying out frontline services rather than administration;*
- *Monitor the PSNI's efforts in tackling the threats posed by serious crime;*
- *Prioritise the tackling of crime against our older people;*
- *Set up a taskforce to tackle fuel laundering in border areas;*
- *End unnecessary delays in the criminal justice system.*

STANDING UP FOR RIGHTS OF VICTIMS

Thirty years of terrorism devastated Northern Ireland and left a legacy that will be acutely felt for many years to come. Outrages such as the On The Runs scandal serve to inflict further pain and trauma on those who suffered the most.

We will:

- *Introduce legislation at Parliament to ensure that the OTR letters have no legal effect and which also enable prosecutions to take place, where possible;*
- *Take measures to end the trauma suffered by victims and survivors who do not know whether the person who hurt them or their loved one is in receipt of an On The Run letter;*
- *Provide victims and survivors groups with the resources they need to operate effectively;*
- *Continue to campaign to end the equivalence of perpetrators and genuine victims;*
- *Continue to ensure the former Maze Prison site does not become a shrine to terrorist violence;*
- *Continue to work with the new UK Government to secure settlements from foreign countries that assisted terrorist groupings.*

SUPPORTING YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE

No matter a person's age they all deserve to be supported adequately by their Government.

Old age should be a joy, not a journey of fear, uncertainty and abandonment.

Growing up should be full of the excitement of the voyage of discovery.

Our younger people and our elderly face particular challenges and the Ulster Unionist Party is determined to support you.

Of particular concern to us is the unnecessary and extremely unsympathetic treatment by some health trusts of elderly citizens in care homes. To reduce octogenarians to tears because they have been told to find a new place to live is simply unacceptable in our vision of Northern Ireland.

We will:

- *Ensure adequate provision of domiciliary care to allow older people to remain in their own homes;*
- *Protect universal benefits such as the winter fuel payment, concessionary fares and the TV licence for the elderly;*
- *Introduce adult safeguarding legislation that specifically tackles abuse of the elderly;*
- *Support lowering the voting age to 16;*

- *Expand internet safety measures to protect children in Northern Ireland;*
- *Retain the Educational Maintenance Allowance to allow young people to remain in education.*

ASSISTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In the 21st Century everyone deserves to be treated equally. That includes those who face the challenges of a learning or physical disability.

The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to removing economic, social and cultural barriers for people with a disability.

We will:

- *Ensure that young people with a disability have a statutory right to learn in all appropriate educational settings;*
- *Introduce legislation that provides a legal right to independent living;*
- *Require public sector bodies to offer and facilitate work placements for people with a disability;*
- *Guarantee the appropriate construction and provision of housing for people with additional need.*



RESPECTING ALL CULTURES, FAITHS AND SEXUALITIES

Northern Ireland's unique mix of fascinating heritage and its rich culture makes it a fascinating place to live and work.

The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to building a society that welcomes diversity.

We will:

- *Safeguard the rights of those who wish to express their culture. That includes respecting the rights of bands and the Loyal Orders;*
- *Ensure young people leave education with a better understanding of sexual and cultural diversity through age-appropriate teaching.*



MEETING THE NEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

Many people in Northern Ireland are fortunate enough to live in our rural areas. However, it does present particular challenges.

We will:

- *Ensure appropriate access to health, education and public transport services;*
- *Place a statutory obligation to 'rural proof' changes to services in rural areas;*
- *Deliver a planning system that allows rural communities to become more sustainable with new housing;*
- *Promote the diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses to grow the rural economy;*
- *Support sustainable rural tourism.*



TACKLING DISADVANTAGE

Despite all our economic advances and innovations, the proportion of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased greatly over recent decades. Entire communities are now blighted with poverty.

In addition, our experience of violence in the past has also greatly increased deprivation and disadvantage in the present.

We will:

- *Ensure work pays in order to break the cycle of welfare dependency;*
- *Introduce a statutory duty on Departments to work towards eliminating child poverty;*
- *Close the 23% prosperity gap that has developed between citizens here and the rest of the UK.*





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Ulster Unionist Party **WESTMINSTER CANDIDATES**



Jo-Anne Dobson
Upper Bann



Tom Elliott
Fermanagh & South Tyrone



Danny Kennedy
Newry & Armagh



Danny Kinahan
South Antrim



Rodney McCune
South Belfast



Robin Swann
North Antrim



Julia Kee
Foyle



Ross Hussey
West Tyrone



Bill Manwaring
West Belfast



William McCandless
East Londonderry



Roy Beggs
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Harold McKee
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