



***Unionist***  
**Ulster Unionist Party**



**FOR A STRONGER, BETTER UNION**

General Election Manifesto | **2017**

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## Foreword by Robin Swann MLA

### Ulster Unionist Party Leader

I am delighted to present our manifesto for the Westminster election on June 8.

When I became Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party I spoke of the need for unionism to become more confident, more outward looking and more embracing.

There is no doubt whatsoever - not only in my mind but that of nearly all rational observers - that Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales are far stronger together than we would ever be apart. The Ulster Unionist Party is best placed to promote the message that a strong, confident and prosperous United Kingdom, of which Northern Ireland is an integral part, is the best outcome for us all.

**I am asking for your vote to help build a stronger, better Union for everyone.**

I am incredibly proud of the record of the Ulster Unionist MPs in the House of Commons over the last two years. Working closely with their colleagues in the House of Lords they have far exceeded the impact of other Northern Ireland MPs.

It is my hope and expectation that both Tom Elliott and Danny Kinahan will be returned with others in order to allow them to continue with their work.

The Prime Minister has described this election as one of the most important in her lifetime. I agree. The 18 men and women elected to the House of Commons will be representing Northern Ireland at an incredibly important period of our history.

The decision made by the United Kingdom on the 23 June 2016 was momentous. Whether you voted remain or leave, the reality now is that we will be exiting the European Union. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to ensuring the UK, and Northern Ireland in particular, gets the best possible deal.

It is essential therefore, that in an absence of an Executive, Northern Ireland sends MPs to Parliament who will ensure our priorities remain to the fore.

The Ulster Unionist Party is best placed to represent the interests of Northern Ireland at Parliament.

The false cries of Sinn Fein, who remained virtually silent throughout the entire referendum campaign but who now claim to be the most opposed to the result, are undermined by their refusal to take seats at Westminster.

An abstentionist MP is no MP at all. For every seat not taken, that is one less voice speaking up for NI.

As the UK faces up to all the challenges that Brexit will bring it is essential that all the constituent regions of our country remain strong and united. Yet there remain those who constantly try to chip away at the Union.

Of course I realise that for many people the unprecedented waiting times crisis in our health service, the continuing injustice for the victims of a brutal 30 year terrorist campaign, the shortfall in frontline PSNI numbers, or the major uncertainty surrounding school budgets may well be the most pressing issue for you and your family right now. You can find recent and detailed policies on each of these issues, as well as many others, in our Assembly manifesto from only three months ago at [www.uup.org](http://www.uup.org). All Ulster Unionist MPs elected will champion these policies for you at Westminster.

#### **Our top 5 key issues for Northern Ireland are:**

1. **Strengthening Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom and ensuring we secure the best deal possible as we prepare to exit the European Union.** Despite having potentially the most to lose from a bungled Brexit deal, Northern Ireland remains by far the least prepared of any UK region. This issue is so important to all our futures that we need the best deal, not just any deal, or worse, no deal at all.
2. **Addressing the legacy of the past in a proportionate manner, whilst also meeting the immediate needs of victims and survivors.** We will vehemently oppose efforts to rewrite the reality of the past and tackle unfair aspersions cast against legitimate actions of our security forces.

3. **Fixing Stormont and restoring public confidence in the local institutions.** The immense problems across our public services are being exacerbated by the stalemate at Stormont. A local Assembly, with local Ministers, is the best place to make decisions on behalf of all our people.
4. **A healthcare system that looks to the future and provides quality care to people at the time they need it.** The current system is broken and is in urgent need of reform. We would start at the very top and merge the five existing Trusts and put in place an operationally independent Chief Executive of the NHS in Northern Ireland.
5. **A world-class education system that allows our young people to reach their full potential.** In order to provide them with the best opportunities, we will put in place the building blocks of educating future generations of children together in a single education system.

These are the issues which local politicians should be focussing most on, yet in the event of an Executive not being formed and direct rule returning, local MPs at Westminster will have an even more essential and influential role. They will be our only counterweight to Direct Rule Ministers who will be detached and unfamiliar with the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.

I am asking you to vote Ulster Unionist on 8 June. This election has been called as a result of Brexit, but it is about much more than that. On any one of the issues that Parliament will be called upon to decide over the next five years, Ulster Unionist MPs can and will be the best advocates for Northern Ireland.

With best regards,



**Robin Swann MLA**  
Ulster Unionist Party Leader

# A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

In 2015 the Ulster Unionist Party presence returned to the House of Commons. Fermanagh and South Tyrone had its voice back after 14 years of silence and South Antrim now had a local MP in touch with its constituents.

Both Tom Elliott and Danny Kinahan have proved to be highly effective MPs. Over the last two years they have developed a wealth of contacts across all political parties, and have been strong advocates for everyone in Northern Ireland.

**Whilst their work has been extensive, some of their most notable achievements include:**

- > Leading from the front in **campaigning for justice for victims of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland**. This included establishing a landmark cross-party group to campaign for compensation for victims of Libyan sponsored IRA terrorism. Tom secured debates on the issue, and along with Danny has worked with Lord Empey to seek to use frozen Libyan assets to fund compensation which managed to pass through the House of Lords.
- > Our MPs were instrumental in obtaining support of MPs and Peers to exert pressure on Her Majesty's Government to **stand by our brave men and women in the Armed Forces and Police**. Before the General Election announcement Danny had secured a vital debate on the matter.
- > Danny's work on the **Northern Ireland Affairs Committee** has proven invaluable in raising issues on the fragility of the NI electricity market, getting ready for Brexit and support for victims. He has developed a wealth of knowledge and experience in scrutinising the work of the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Executive on a range of topics, including victims, energy, tourism, and Brexit.
- > Having listened to the views of the British people our MPs have been committed to **getting the best deal for the UK as we leave Europe**. Respecting the democratic wishes expressed in the EU referendum they have voted in favour of triggering Article 50 at every stage. They have consistently met with Ministers and officials in the Northern Ireland Office and Brexit Department to ensure Northern Ireland's interests are represented and presented our document 'A Vision for Northern Ireland outside the EU' directly to the Prime Minister, when we met her in November 2016.
- > Helping to force the Government into a **U-turn on proposed major cuts to tax credits** which, had they succeeded, would have potentially forced many in low paid jobs out of work, especially those who are battling with increasing child care costs.
- > Single-handedly brought forward and created the **All Party Parliamentary Group on the Union**. The APPG invites MPs and Peers from all the parties at Westminster to work together on a strategy that will map out the actions required to maintain a Union that helps its citizens thrive economically, socially, culturally and politically.
- > Continued to press the Government to ensure that the **Military Covenant is fully implemented in Northern Ireland**, and that service personnel and veterans in Northern Ireland are as respected as their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom. We have hosted several Ministerial and MP visits to Northern Ireland to meet soldiers, veterans and military charities.
- > Speaking up for the thousands of women who have been unfairly treated by changes to the State Pension - better known as **the WASPI campaign**. In their campaign for fair treatment, Tom and Danny have presented petitions to Parliament and lobbied the Work and Pensions Secretary to introduce fair transitional arrangements for those affected.
- > Tom campaigned and secured major commitments from the Government in relation to the recurrent problem in Northern Ireland of poor **rural broadband**. Tom has been vociferous in representing Fermanagh and South Tyrone on this issue in the Commons Chamber, Westminster Hall, Ministerial meetings and all the other parliamentary mechanisms available to him.
- > Danny, as Chair of the major **All Party Parliamentary Group on Education** at Westminster, has been instrumental in the development of new education policy at a UK level, as well as ensuring good practice is shared with Northern Ireland.

# STRENGTHENING THE UNION

**The United Kingdom is one of the most successful political Unions ever** - we are a nation that has a proud history and a great future - a future that Northern Ireland is integral to. Many commentators, particularly from the Republican perspective try to belittle our country, and constantly refer to Northern Ireland as some form of failed 'statelet'.

In fact, the United Kingdom is one of the **largest and most successful economies in the world**, with a GDP of nearly \$3 Trillion (source: World Bank); we are a permanent member of the UN Security Council; we are one of the largest foreign aid donors; we have more Universities in the global top 10 than any other nation outside the United States. Culturally we are seen as the second most influential 'soft power'. Globally, we have helped preserve international peace and security and our armed forces are among the best in the world.

Our nation is one of the few in Europe that is continuing to grow; our population is rising; and growth in our economy is strong - in short, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is one of the best places to live, raise your family and have opportunity for good jobs, health care and education - all of which are underpinned by centuries of democracy and the parliamentary system.

As a Party we believe that the best option for all of our people, of whichever religion, race or social background, is to remain part of the United Kingdom, now and into the future.

Despite the many societal and economic benefits of the Union, there are those who remain determined to undermine it at almost every opportunity. In Scotland for instance the SNP lost the independence referendum yet they are now arrogantly demanding a second.

Here, despite increasing numbers of people from all faiths and none becoming content in a Northern Ireland at peace with itself, there are those who continue to make opportunistic calls for a border poll despite there being no evidence whatsoever that it is what the people want.

At this time of great uncertainty, it is essential that Northern Ireland **returns the maximum number of pro-Union MPs** who recognise that a stable Union across all of the UK is one of the most important things for Northern Ireland's continued prosperity.

**Ulster Unionist MPs will be champions for the Union.**

They will ensure Northern Ireland's voice is heard loudly within the chamber in the House of Commons. They will work even-handedly for all their constituents, and yet they will also remain mindful and respectful towards those who do not share their beliefs.

Northern Ireland's place in the Union risks being most undermined, not by Westminster, but by the words and actions of local representatives. We recognise that there are many different opinions on our constitutional future, yet we will remain respectful and dignified in our efforts to be persuaders for the Union. Denigrating or acting sneeringly towards other people's culture or language is not the sort of Unionism that the Ulster Unionist Party embraces.

**Unionism in the 21st century must become more confident and embracing.** We want Northern Ireland to remain a welcoming society. We want to ensure differing viewpoints are welcomed and accommodated.

Our membership of the United Kingdom means that Northern Ireland is protected by some of the best intelligence services on the globe. In the era of modern-day terrorism, we need agencies that have the powers, capabilities and resources needed to tackle the threat. Terrorism did not win in Northern Ireland, nor will it win now across the United Kingdom.

Ulster Unionist MPs will work to strengthen the United Kingdom's response to the threat of international and domestic terrorism. This includes protection of the counter-terrorism policing budget, and the National Crime Agency with the PSNI being given the resources they need to robustly tackle organised paramilitary activity.

The benefits of the Union are plentiful; it is now up to broad Unionism to go out and promote them. No longer can we take for granted that people are aware of all the opportunities that our deep-rooted connection with Great Britain delivers. We all have a collective duty to once again go out and positively sell the benefit of the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Ulster Unionist MPs, our MEP, MLAs, Councillors and Peers are best placed to do this.**

## The **Union** between Great Britain and Northern Ireland means...

- 1.** Better opportunities for our citizens to work, to live and to learn anywhere in the United Kingdom.
- 2.** All the associated benefits of belonging to the world's sixth largest economy.
- 3.** An economic and fiscal union keeping our currency and interest rates lower.
- 4.** Better healthcare, free at the point of delivery - the NHS.
- 5.** A more stable local economy and safety for your money.
- 6.** More money to fund public services.
- 7.** All the protections associated with the welfare state, not least pensions and income support.
- 8.** Stronger security and defence - both at home and abroad.
- 9.** Together we are part of a more powerful political Union - the most successful democracy in the world.
- 10.** A nation of tolerance and respect with a shared set of values of democracy, the rule of law, freedom and equality.



# MAKING BREXIT WORK

This election is not a re-run of last year's referendum on membership of the EU - the decision has been made, we are leaving the European Union. Instead the focus must now be on coming together to get the best deal possible for Northern Ireland as part of the Brexit negotiations and resist those who are attempting to use Brexit as an excuse to unpick the Union.

The political vacuum created by the absence of an Executive puts Northern Ireland at a disadvantage as formal Brexit negotiations are about to begin between the United Kingdom and the European Union. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to securing the best deal for Northern Ireland, not just any deal.

Whilst some Parties believe hastily calling for 'special status' is the perfect all-encompassing response to the challenges of Brexit, the reality is it would be a major retrograde step for Northern Ireland. Our influence will only be secured by ensuring the UK speaks with one voice, and equally on behalf of all its constituent regions. All any perception of special status would secure would be to simply put Northern Ireland on the fringes of the Union. What is currently being proposed as special status in reality risks establishing immigration controls between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and would hinder trade with our largest trading partner, Great Britain.

Some key local sectors will inevitably be hit harder by Brexit than others. We know what they are, and yet for instance there remains great uncertainty regarding what support for agriculture will look like post 2022. Whilst the Ulster Unionist Party is clear that land based payments must continue, in order to design a fit-for-purpose scheme, it is imperative that preparations must start now.



In addition, PEACE and Interreg funds from Europe are simply too important to be taken for granted, especially for our victims' organisations and the border communities. The impact of Brexit on our all-island Single Electricity Market, which is vital for energy sustainability going forward, has still to be determined so it is another potential vulnerability.

In the absence of any action from the Northern Ireland Executive, the Ulster Unionist Party has been proactive, establishing an Advisory Panel consisting of representatives from business, universities, the community and voluntary sector, agri-food and farming, all sectors which could be most impacted by Brexit.

A copy of our vision for Northern Ireland outside the EU can be read in full at [www.uup.org](http://www.uup.org).

## Our five key Brexit priorities are:

1. No hard border, or internal borders within the United Kingdom.
2. Future-proofing our economy by investing in skills and our infrastructure network.
3. Providing assurance for those currently in receipt of EU funds.
4. Maintenance of the Common Travel Area.
5. Establishing a dedicated Executive Unit to act as a coherent voice for Northern Ireland.





# FIXING STORMONT

Northern Ireland deserves better. There has been too much heartache over the last four to five decades for us to allow devolution at Stormont to fail.

Northern Ireland needs an Assembly and an Executive. We need locally elected representatives to be making decisions for the benefit of local people. The problems in many of our key public services will not be properly addressed until reforms are allowed to happen, and we will be in an incredibly weak position to respond to the many challenges of Brexit if we have no collective voice at the Assembly.

Scotland, Wales, London, and now increasing numbers of councils in England all demonstrate that devolution can work. There is no reason why it should not work here in Northern Ireland also.

Having witnessed one scandal after another - whether it be RHI, NAMA, Red Sky or the Social Investment Fund - we understand that public confidence in the local institutions has been deeply damaged.

Yet with a collective will and effort we believe the Assembly could and should be re-established. However, in order to restore much needed confidence, fundamental institutional reforms are required. Another temporary dressing, even those given ambitious names such as Fresh Start, will simply not do. Experience over the last 3 years has shown us that political carve ups to suit only the largest two parties inevitably fail, and unavoidably cause public confidence to wane even further.

We need genuine reform. The Ulster Unionist Party has engaged extensively with all other Parties in the months from the March election in the hope that there would be a collective maturity and realisation that all our citizens will be impacted negatively in the absence of a local Executive or Assembly.

**We have suggested a number of fundamental, yet achievable, reforms which we believe are absolutely essential in order to fix the Stormont institutions. These include:**

1. **Better regulation of how the Executive operates internally and outwardly**, including a rigid set of standards on its engagement with the Assembly.
2. **Reforming the budgetary process** to improve transparency and a statutory obligation to produce a full draft in time to allow full Assembly and public scrutiny.
3. **Making Ministers more accountable** and subject to sanction if found to be in breach of the Ministerial Code. The free-reign of Special Advisers must also be brought to an end.
4. **Strengthening the role of the Assembly's statutory committees** so that in addition to simply advising and assisting, they will have a new duty to scrutinise the work and expenditure of Ministers, their policies and legislative proposals.
5. **Fundamental reform of the Petition of Concern mechanism**, including limiting it only to legislation, with arbitration to determine whether use is consistent with intent of the mechanism.



# NOTES

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# YOUR ULSTER UNIONIST CANDIDATES

## Westminster 2017



**Hazel Legge**  
Belfast East



**Michael Henderson**  
Belfast South



**John Stewart**  
East Antrim



**Richard Holmes**  
East Londonderry



**Tom Elliott**  
Fermanagh & South Tyrone



**Robbie Butler**  
Lagan Valley



**Mark Glasgow**  
Mid Ulster



**Sam Nicholson**  
Newry & Armagh



**Jackson Minford**  
North Antrim



**Danny Kinahan**  
South Antrim



**Harold McKee**  
South Down



**Mike Nesbitt**  
Strangford



**Doug Beattie**  
Upper Bann



**Alicia Clarke**  
West Tyrone

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