



Alliance Better Together.



Alliance Party
European Election
Manifesto 2019



Alliance's Commitment to Northern Ireland in Europe

Reinforcing Progressive Values

Alliance believes in strength through diversity, respecting people, enabling opportunities, protecting rights and inclusion. The European Union reflects and reinforces our values.

Supporting the work of the European Union

The European Union has transformed the European continent, breaking down barriers, creating new opportunities and addressing global challenges. Northern Ireland's participation in the EU gives us huge advantages.

Protecting Our Economy

The Customs Union and Single Market provide massive economic opportunities to our manufacturing, agri-food and service sectors. Free movement is vital for our economy and enriching our society.

Keeping Open Borders

Any form of Brexit risks new divisions and barriers. We must keep the open borders throughout these islands, and preserve everyone's freedom to trade and live their lives freely.

Securing a People's Vote

The delay to Brexit gives us the opportunity to reconsider Brexit. Alliance want to see a fresh referendum, with Remain on the ballot. While we do need to bank the backstop as an insurance, it is far better to stop Brexit entirely.

A Message from Naomi Long

Brexit hasn't happened yet, but has already brought increased chaos and division. It has paralysed our politics, placed jobs at risk and threatened the stability of our community.

It risks not only changing our place in Europe but also the wider world, and with it our ability to respond to global challenges such as climate change, peace and security, poverty and migration. We can't address those alone.

We work better together.

The European Union has broken down barriers and brought people together. It isn't perfect, but it works. That's why today, countries are still queuing up to join.

The EU has reinforced our peace process, and provided us with huge economic opportunities through the Customs Union and Single Market. It has helped protect rights and enhance opportunities.

But the EU is about something much more. It's about the kind of society - the kind of future - we want to build - one based on rights and freedoms, openness and inclusion, co-operation and interdependence. We are more vibrant, more dynamic and better together.

If Brexit happens, **the backstop is vital as our insurance policy** to protect the Good Friday Agreement, our economy and our open borders.

But Brexit can be stopped: we must grasp the opportunity. Democracy did not end in June 2016. We now know the referendum was tainted by lies and dark money and electoral law was broken - laws that ensure our democracy is fair and open.

Over one million young people, who have had no opportunity to have a say over their future and who reject the politics of populism and division, are now eligible to vote.

In a democracy, people have the right to change their mind. **To demand better.** The extension of the Brexit deadline gives Parliament a chance to listen to the people and provide the clearest, most democratic means to end this chaos and uncertainty. **This is your opportunity to send them a message.**





Alliance has led the call for a People's Vote – a vote with Remain on the ballot paper. Voting Alliance is the clearest way to demand it.

The third seat in Northern Ireland is within our grasp. In 2016, people right across our community voted Remain – we now need to come together again. Brexit is not an orange versus green issue and I am not an orange or green politician. I passionately believe our diversity is a strength – that we can achieve better together.

On Thursday 23rd May, you can Demand Better.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Naomi R Long". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Naomi Long MLA
Leader of the Alliance Party

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Overcoming Brexit

Alliance is a progressive, internationalist and pro-European party.

The European Union breaks down barriers between people and communities, states and regions. In this modern, globalised world with many transnational challenges from climate change to the regulation of the internet, we are stronger through co-operation and pooling our sovereignty.

Membership of the European Union is strongly in Northern Ireland's interests. And the people of this region voted to remain.

There is no such thing as a good or sensible Brexit. It is an act of huge self-harm.

Alliance is standing up for Northern Ireland and advocating for what is in the best interests of the people of this region, through supporting political stability, protecting the Good Friday Agreement, maintaining open borders throughout these islands, and protecting our economy and enabling future opportunities.

Northern Ireland only works based on sharing and interdependence, yet Brexit creates new divisions, barriers and friction. Brexit exposes contradictions and ambiguities that are otherwise being managed through the Good Friday Agreement.

All forms of Brexit pose significant problems for Northern Ireland. Our economy depends on sales and supply chains across these islands. Brexit undermines people's ability to enjoy current rights as EU citizens. Brexit brings problems for security and other forms of inter-governmental co-operation.

Our position is that Brexit should be reconsidered. But if Brexit is to proceed, we want to minimise the harm.

Our priorities and preferences are in descending order:

- 1 A People's Vote to reconsider Brexit, with the option to remain in the EU.**
- 2 The whole of the UK remaining in the Single Market and Customs Union.**
- 3 A Special Deal that helps the Northern Ireland economy and defends the Good Friday Agreement.**

We also support the backstop. The backstop is only an insurance policy, a safety-net. It is not an option in itself. However, it is consistent with both scenarios two and especially number three. In particular, we need to bank the backstop, while looking for better solutions that may build upon that platform.





Our Campaign for a People's Vote

The most coherent, feasible and democratic way forward on Brexit is a People's Vote.

While the bottom line for Northern Ireland must be to bank the backstop, there is no such thing as a good Brexit. Any opportunity to reconsider Brexit itself should be taken.

The 2016 Referendum may have been the largest UK vote to date. But it was a stark choice between a clearly defined Remain and an undefined Leave option, which could be interpreted as a broad range of scenarios. It was a snapshot in time based on limited information.

Questions persist regarding the fairness and transparency of the process. Many false and unobtainable promises were made, including the health funding pledge on the side of a bus.

Furthermore, the complexities, risks and impacts of Brexit upon so many areas of life are now more apparent, as are the impracticalities of some of the mooted possible courses and the wider political impasse.

Democracy is an ongoing and active process. It cannot be a betrayal of the people who voted in 2016 to now check in again with the people given what has happened. We must also consider that well over one million young people have now joined the electorate. There is consistent evidence to suggest that there may now be a majority across the UK for Remain.

Indeed, it would be a tragedy if the UK ultimately left the EU, and in particular went over the cliff-edge in a no-deal context, if a majority of people don't want that to happen.

The UK Parliament would need to legislate for a People's Vote or a confirmatory vote. The Electoral Commission would also advise on the intelligibility of the question.

The optimal approach would be a multi-preference vote between: Remain, the proposed deal, and no deal. Remain must be a choice. It is unlikely that any referendum would be viewed as legitimate and conclusive without a No Deal option.

A referendum could be triggered in a range of circumstances, including an amendment to any future Meaningful Vote on the Withdrawal Agreement placed before Parliament, as part of the legislation that follows a Meaningful Vote, or as a free standing decision of the Cabinet and Parliament to refer Brexit back to the people.



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Banking the Backstop

Any negotiated version of Brexit requires a Withdrawal Agreement, and there will be no prospect of a Withdrawal Agreement without a backstop.

The backstop was envisaged as the minimum protections necessary to avoid a hard border and to protect the Good Friday Agreement, including north-south co-operation and rights. It was scoped out first in the December 2017 Joint Report and intended to be an insurance policy or safety net to provide protection until or unless a longer term solution was found.

The backstop provides a foundation regarding what is possible in terms of the future relationship. The presence of the backstop essentially ensures that the future relationship will see a situation in which either the UK as a whole or Northern Ireland specifically needs to stay sufficiently aligned with the EU to meet the minimum terms to avoid a hard border.

The backstop would keep the UK, and in future potentially Northern Ireland alone, aligned with aspects (i.e. goods) of the EU's trade framework and the common commercial policy.

Northern Ireland will have unfettered access to the EU market for goods and also the UK market in all respects. There would be a minimum of new checks on goods moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but only some of these would need to be conducted in transit. Local products can be marketed separately as UK(NI). Certification of compliance with EU rules can be conducted by one or other of UK or EU authorities.

The backstop could allow Northern Ireland to have a competitive advantage, and be a focal point for investment, through the balance of access to both the wider UK and EU markets.



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The backstop is consistent with our own proposals in Bridges not Borders. However, Bridges not Borders went further and covered the entire single market, including all of the fundamental freedoms, not goods, i.e. services, capital and movement of labour.

Key Points on the Backstop

- Only arises because the UK is leaving the EU and there is a need to avoid a hard border between NI/Ireland and to protect the Good Friday Agreement.
- An insurance policy – only coming into play if no solution is provided to keeping the border open.
- Ensures that the border is kept open through NI remaining within the EU Customs Union and the Single Market for goods, but not services, people or capital.
- Is not a constitutional issue – NI remains part of the UK, and that can only be changed through the Principle of Consent.
- Consistent with devolution – NI already does things differently, including in economic terms – such as the Single Electricity Market and the successful campaign for the ability to lower Corporation Tax and potentially harmonise on the island.
- Builds on existing precedents around checks down the Irish Sea.
- Does not cut off NI from the GB market, rather it allows us to more easily be part of both the UK and EU economies.
- Only there “unless or until” a better solution is found which in practice should be at least as good and build on principles of the backstop.
- Isn't perfect – it isn't meant to be – and any form of Brexit is going to deliver a degree of friction, with this approach bringing the least amount of additional friction.
- It's a foundation from which to build a future relationship with the EU.

Trading Through the European Union

An independent trade policy is a grand delusion.

We can maximise trade through the rest of world, benefitting from existing EU trade deals and negotiate new trade opportunities from a position of strength. Membership of the EU does not prevent the UK trading with any part of the world. By contrast, an independent trade policy would see the UK chasing trade deals from a position of weakness, and could see compromises around labour, environment, food safety and human rights, and undermine key aspects of the NI economy such as agri-food.

While the EU may have fallen a little as a proportion of UK trade, it remains by far the most important market and represents the deepest level of economic integration in the world. This is what the UK would turn its back on in a no deal scenario.

A Special Deal for Northern Ireland

If Brexit does occur, and a softer version of Brexit is ruled out UK-wide, then Alliance will support a special set of arrangements to reflect the special and particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. This would build on the foundations of the Executive. Alliance will seek to see Northern Ireland to remain as part of a Customs Union with the European Union and the entire Single Market, including all four fundamental freedoms, i.e. the free movement of goods, services, capital and people. We set out our proposals in this regard in our paper Bridges not Borders (November 2017).

Other aspects of special arrangements for Northern Ireland should include:

- Protection of the rights of EU Nationals in Northern Ireland.
- Recognition of all people from Northern Ireland as EU Citizens.
- Maintenance of the all-island energy market.
- Renegotiated access to EU Structural Funds.
- Continued access to competitive EU funds, such as Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe and Erasmus+.
- Participation in and access to the key policing, security and judicial mechanisms of the EU, such as the European Arrest Warrant and the Schengen Information System 2.

In the event that Northern Ireland was outside the European Union, there would be an expectation that the UK Government would ensure that any funding gaps to Northern Ireland are backfilled. This must not revert to the Barnett Formula as the existing approach to EU funding reflects the higher relative need of Northern Ireland. This applies in particular to any successor to the Common Agricultural Policy and the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund which may replace the Structural Funds.



The Protection of Rights

At present, all the people of Northern Ireland have rights as EU Citizens. Rights and equality are central to the cohesion of our society and to the wider European project.

We are opposed to any regression or diminution of the existing rights that the people of Northern Ireland currently have through the European Union.

While those people from Northern Ireland who are Irish citizens have automatic entitlement to be EU citizens, the application of many of these rights may only be operational within the territory of the EU. This risks loss of existing rights to access health care and educational opportunities. By contrast, future recognition of rights only to those who are Irish citizens risks breaching the Good Friday Agreement as those people in Northern Ireland who are solely British citizens would no longer enjoy parity.

There is a joint challenge for the UK Government, the Irish Government and the European Union to ensure continuity and further application of additional rights that become recognised. This should apply to all those who reside within Northern Ireland. Furthermore these rights should remain fully enforceable through the judicial mechanisms of the EU.

Alliance wants also to ensure that Northern Ireland remains welcoming to all those from elsewhere in the European Union and the rest of the world who have made this region their home, helping to build our economy and enriching our society. In the event of Brexit, some limited immigration powers should be given to the Northern Ireland Assembly in order to have a system that better reflects the particular circumstances of the economy.

Alliance wants to see the 1981 UK Nationality Act amended to reflect the identity and citizenship terms of the Good Friday Agreement, and we want to see the Common Travel Area placed on a formal legal basis.

We are opposed to any regression or diminution of the existing rights that the people of Northern Ireland currently have through the European Union.



Making the EU Work for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland massively benefits from the UK's membership of the European Union.

The EU has done much to break down barriers across Europe and to bring people together. It consolidated peace and co-operation on the European continent in the aftermath of the Second World War and helped to integrate post-communities states from the 1990s onwards.

And, it has helped to build peace and co-operation in Northern Ireland through both example and specific financial programmes.

In turn, Northern Ireland and its citizens have a responsibility to provide assistance and support where possible to the EU's wider peace and democratisation efforts elsewhere in Europe and further afield.

Northern Ireland is also a net recipient of EU resources. These resources support a wide range of aspects of economic, social and civic life. The scale of this financial investment is greater than the level of resources that would come to Northern Ireland from the Treasury under the Barnett Formula if the UK was outside the EU and didn't pay its contribution.

What the EU does for us:

- Reinforcement of the peace process.
- Rights and opportunities as EU Citizens.
- Enhanced economic and trading opportunities.
- Free movement of people.
- Investment in our science and research infrastructure.
- Financial support for farmers, apprentices and the community and voluntary sector.
- Enhancement of workers' rights.
- Protection of our environment.
- Cohesion funding to help economic productivity and better inclusion of marginalised sections of the community.





The benefits to Northern Ireland are much greater than the net financial benefit. There are much wider economic benefits from the single market, and other societal benefits from EU programmes and mechanisms and the co-operative approach to common European and global challenges.

Any Northern Ireland MEP has a duty to maximise the benefits of the EU to this region, and in particular to facilitate knowledge, awareness, opportunity and engagement with the wide range of EU programmes and competitive funds. An example of how this can be taken forward includes the Northern Ireland Contact Point network in relation to Horizon 2020.

An Alliance MEP would work with the European Commission and relevant Departments in Northern Ireland that are managing authorities to simplify the bureaucracy and application process for funds.

Alliance also wants to see more rigorous assessment of the impact of EU funding in terms of achieving transformational results.

In particular, we want to ensure that future Peace funding is effective in breaking down divisions, promoting reconciliation and achieving integration.

An Alliance MEP would work with the European Commission and relevant Departments in Northern Ireland that are managing authorities to simplify the bureaucracy and application process for funds.



Playing Our Part in the European Union and the Wider World

Our vision is one built around a free, democratic, sustainable, prosperous, and united Europe open to the world. This is a Europe anchored in the four freedoms of movement of people, goods, services and capital. And this is a Europe where human rights, the rule of law, and democracy apply equally to all.

We are working to promote sustainable development, to protect our environment and fight climate change. We must invest in research, security, the environment, and tackling youth unemployment. We are working for a safe and just society, ensuring a more peaceful and stable world.

We must create a European Union that can adapt to current and future challenges in an ever-more globalised World. We will always remain outspoken in defence of trade that is open, free and rule-based. To make sure that all Europeans can reap the benefits of globalisation, Member States must build sustainable welfare systems and inclusive societies, supporting technological progress and dismantling barriers to enter the labour market.

We want to boost the infrastructure, invest in education, and establish the legal framework for a digital Europe that ultimately makes life better for all Europeans. This includes a fully-integrated market for digital services, increasing opportunities for everyone in Europe to participate in strong, thriving and innovative economies.

These tasks are all the more important today as the European Union is being challenged by authoritarian, nationalist and populist movements.





A Carbon-Neutral Europe

To sustain our way of living and leave a healthy planet for our future generations, the EU must be a leading force in the world in addressing climate change, ocean health, and sustainable growth. The transition to a resource-efficient circular economy has a huge potential to foster jobs, growth, and competitiveness.

We believe that increased international climate and environmental cooperation is crucial to meet the Paris Agreement targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. The EU must take global leadership in setting global ambitious targets. To reach these targets, we must foster research and development in low emission technologies, infrastructure, clean energy production, energy efficiency, and a reduction of industry and transport emissions including aviation and shipping. The EU should reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030.

A Europe of Opportunities and Innovation

The EU's cohesion policy can be an important tool for stimulating sustainable economic growth, reducing regional disparities and bringing the EU closer to the citizens. We stand for a result-oriented, efficient, thematically focused cohesion policy that follows on the real needs of citizens and that stimulates sustainable economic growth and innovation-driven economy in all the EU regions.

In an era when people increasingly change jobs and careers, we need to strengthen our knowledge economy by investing in research and innovation, and equipping our workforce with the right set of skills for the 21st century, while bridging the generational digital skills gap. We want to promote education that focuses on critical thinking, entrepreneurial and soft skills and flexibility which matches the real needs of the labour market. We believe education is a life-long learning process starting at early childhood education, so we want more investment in educational and vocational training, more apprenticeships, and broader participation in the Erasmus projects, as well as strategically investing more in digital infrastructure and programmes to produce a smart workforce for the future.

A Digital Europe

To harness the full potential of innovative technologies and make the EU the most attractive place for companies in the digital economy, the EU must build a fully-functioning Digital Single Market.

In the age of digitalisation, access to the Internet is crucial for equal opportunities. We welcome the abolition of phone roaming charges and will work to see this arrangement continued. Data protection policies need to be harmonised and balanced in order to ensure the EU's future as a place of innovation.

We believe the EU should be the first to create a solid legal framework for new technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and others to be used in the economy and public life. There can be no digital society without addressing the issues of cyber security, data protection, and privacy.

A Europe Open to Trade

The European Union needs to continue setting global standards in international trade and promote free and rule-based trade, especially in the face of increased protectionism, threats and multilateralism. We support the efforts of the European Commission to negotiate further trade deals.

The EU has the influence and power to insist on high environmental and labour standards in trade deals and should do so. Global trade from a European perspective must also be fair and sustainable, preserving human dignity, fair working conditions, sustainability and anti-corruption in future agreements.

Communications on free trade agreements need to be improved, to allow stronger transparency throughout the stages of the negotiation process. The content is to be explained in a clear language to the public.





We believe the EU must continue to play its leading role in development cooperation to ensure sustainable development and promote democracy, human rights, peace and security in the world.

A Responsible Europe

In a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, the EU should play a more important global role, further developing and deploying the EU's immense economic and rule-setting power.

We believe the EU must continue to play its leading role in development cooperation to ensure sustainable development and promote democracy, human rights, peace and security in the world.

We will work to ensure that all those that are fleeing the horrors of war or the pain of political repression will find protection. We underline our commitment to the Geneva Refugee Convention and the right to find asylum.

We want to see a humane and effective Common European Asylum System with decent reception, responsibility sharing, and efficient procedures in line with EU fundamental rights standards.



A Democratic, Accountable and Efficient Europe

We want to see a more democratic, accountable and efficient Europe, taking decisions only on those matters which require European solutions. We are in favour of establishing a new mechanism that monitors violations of fundamental rights, civil liberties and the rule of law in EU Member States.

We are committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, and to work for the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, regardless of gender. Gender-based violence and sexual harassment is still a huge problem throughout Europe. Combatting violence against women is a priority for us and we call for all EU Member States to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

We must ensure that European money is spent as efficiently as possible. Every Euro that comes from the EU budget should be treated with care and responsibility by the EU institutions and government of the Member State.

A Transparent Europe

We will support steps to bring more transparency and more efficiency to the EU institutions. We believe the European Parliament should only have one seat in Brussels, and that more work needs to be done to reinforce the democratic nature of the European Union. We want to see greater involvement of the European Parliament in decision-making by giving it the right to initiate legislation, and a greater degree of transparency in negotiations and voting within the European Council, and the Council of the EU.





Alliance

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allianceparty.org

Party Headquarters

88 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HE

☎ 028 9032 4274

✉ alliance@allianceparty.org

🐦 [@allianceparty](https://twitter.com/allianceparty)

📘 [/alliancepartyni](https://www.facebook.com/alliancepartyni)