



Assembly Election



Manifesto 2017

DRAIN THE SWAMP

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Preface



The implosion of Stormont bears out everything TUV has said about the unworkability of this system of government. With Sinn Fein having no interest in making Northern Ireland work, any system crafted around retaining that destructive party at the heart of government will never work. Nor does it deserve to.

If Stormont can't be fixed, then we'd be better without it.

Brexit will give our nation a fresh start. If Stormont is to have a genuine fresh start, then it must shake off the shackles of enforced coalition, as TUV has long proclaimed.

In this manifesto we again set out our critique of the present failed structures, but set out a positive vision for a better and more democratic future.

William Ross
TUV President

Unionists have nothing left to give

Recent events, culminating in this election, will have been a rude awakening for those duped by fuzzy Belfast Agreement spin into fondly imagining Sinn Fein wanted to make Stormont work and would knuckle down to making a success of Northern Ireland.

How naive can some people be? As naive as those who were conned by the pretence of a “fresh start”.

As TUV has always argued would happen, it is now clear that this Stormont has served its purpose as far as IRA/Sinn Fein is concerned. It's time for the next phase of their insurrection politics, unless the DUP fills their boots with new concessions after the election. Then they might tarry a while to spend Stormont's remaining credit, before repeating the exercise.

Sinn Fein has never wanted or intended Northern Ireland to work. Now they are ready to use the leverage of pulling the house down to advance their insatiable republican agenda.

Unionists have nothing left to give. The DUP with its attachment to power – any power, needs to realise this. They have fallen for long enough for Sinn Fein's blandishments and bought into the narrative that Sinn Fein was committed to making Stormont work. Such misjudgement has inflicted much of the failure of the last 10 years.

There can be no tranche of concessions to Sinn Fein after the election. It will be a key part of TUV's function to guard against sell out. TUV is unionist voters' best insurance policy.

Scandal ridden Stormont - time to move on

This Stormont has never been held in high esteem by the general public. It has long been a byword for squander, deadlock and scandal: £5 land deals, Red Sky, NAMA, expenses scandals, Social Investment Fund slush fund and now Cash for Ash.

Cash for Ash is the biggest financial scandal ever to rock devolution but it is far from the first. TUV has been to the forefront in exposing waste and squander and has been the most forensic in examining the Cash for Ash scandal and its ramifications.

But TUV is mindful too of the many scandals which lie at the feet of Sinn Fein/IRA. TUV alone has never been behind the door in challenging Republicans about their bloody past when other Unionists told us that was simply living in the past.

Equally TUV was the one voice of clarity when it came to “get out of jail free” letters for On The Run IRA terrorists.

TUV alone argued that a party linked to a still armed IRA which had an Army Council and which had murdered, even since coming to power courtesy of the DUP, was unfit for government.

Let’s be clear. Both main parties in Stormont have been led by individuals who are accused of things which should see them investigated by Public Inquiries. The allegations against McGuinness are MUCH more serious. His alleged knowledge of and role in the multiple atrocities during the terrorist uprising should render him subject to such an inquiry. That is a key reason why TUV has always believed that Sinn Fein/IRA should not be in the government of our Province.

Anyone who defends Mrs Foster based not on objective facts about her own conduct as a Minister but by comparing her with those she chooses to share power with, needs to seriously question the political wisdom and the morality of her sharing power with those people in the first place. It’s time to move on and put the failures and deadlock of Belfast Agreement style devolution behind us.

In this manifesto we spell out not one but two positive alternatives to the failure of the past. All other parties are wedded to the fundamentals of the Belfast Agreement. TUV alone offers the radical change Northern Ireland is crying out for.

The Stormont swamp is irreformable. It’s time to drain it.



Cash for Ash

While the public may not have followed every twist and turn of other Stormont financial scandals, no one is any doubt about the interest and outrage when it comes to Cash for Ash.

Northern Ireland taxpayers are set to see hundreds of millions of their money literally go up in smoke. The delay in closing the scheme, including allegations that the flawed scheme was kept open in order for people to avail of it, has added to the public outrage.

While details of who got in on the scheme have remained hidden we do know that then DUP Special Adviser Stephen Brimstone was a beneficiary while the brother of another DUP SpAd also availed of RHI. When asked by a newspaper if their party's elected representatives had any connections to the RHI scheme only one party refused to answer - the DUP.

And whatever way you cut it Cash for Ash is not just a scandal made in Stormont but a scandal made by the DUP and specifically by their leader Arlene Foster. Yet before Sinn Fein - for its own political reasons - pulled the plug on Stormont there was no humility from the DUP and there has been little evidence of it since. Mrs Foster spent weeks trying to spread the blame to everyone but herself.

At the heart of the matter is the fact that Mrs Foster was the Minister who signed off this flawed scheme in which the tariff-tiering that was in the GB template was deliberately removed. She was the author of this squander made in Stormont.

She did not just fail there. In 2013, Cambridge Economic Policy Associates warned of the need to get tiered tariffs into the scheme. The Department, under Arlene Foster's watch, ignored it. In 2014, Ofgem again warned that tiered tariffs needed to be put into the scheme. On Mrs Foster's watch that was ignored. When the scheme was approved in 2012 by DFP's Supply Officer, the letter of approval said the scheme must be reapproved in March 2015. The responsibility for ensuring that that happened rested with DETI, but they failed to do so and the opportunity to correct it by introducing the tariff tiering was missed.

When DETI finally realised that the scheme needed to be reapproved, it was sent to DFP. In October 2015 the Minister heading the Finance Department that reapproved the scheme was Mrs Arlene Foster.

On 7th January 2013 Arlene Foster wrote to the banks actively promoting the scheme so that they would lend to those installing RHI boilers.

These letters stressed the long term security of the tariffs – guaranteeing the tariffs would be exempt from downward movement – and thereby further underscored ministerial knowledge and satisfaction with that situation – to the detriment of the taxpayer. With Mrs Foster boasting to the banks that RHI provided a good return on investment, it is clear she knew and endorsed the profit being made by RHI beneficiaries on taxpayers’ money.

Mrs Foster’s culpability is indisputable.

Establishing the full truth about RHI

TUV supports a full public inquiry under the Inquiries Act so that we can get to the heart of this matter and establish all the truth. TUV was the first Unionist party to call for this.

Latterly the DUP dishonestly claimed that they too wanted a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act. In fact, both the DUP and their partners Sinn Fein resisted calls for a Public Inquiry. Only in the face of an election did Mrs Foster perform a U-turn.

You cannot with any credibility oppose a public inquiry – going so far as to positively rule one out – and then, when you realise the depth of public anger, turn round and claim you want one.

**RHI
Cash
for Ash**

Recovering your money squandered on Cash for Ash

Though for the election the DUP has promised to retrospectively cap their Cash for Ash scheme, this will not be easily achieved because of the contractual commitments entered into. Even the one year, face-saving reduction in tariffs is likely to meet stiff legal challenge. At least significant compensation is likely to have to be offered if long term changes are to be made, which would never have arisen if the GB scheme had not been altered by Arlene Foster's department.

While mindful of the interests and rights of bona fide RHI users, TUV will support all reasonable and lawful efforts to curb the losses resulting from the scheme and will encourage prosecution of all fraudulently abusing the scheme.



TUV - your best insurance policy against a concession fest for Sinn Fein

TUV has a record which proves that we will not roll over to Sinn Fein and will confront them without being concerned about a desire to take power or positions.

Sinn Fein exploitation of this DUP manufactured mess

TUV is under no illusions as to why Sinn Fein chose to collapse Stormont and force this election.

Sinn Fein has no interest in good government for Northern Ireland. It only sees Stormont as a means to an end. It operates as long as they believe it serves their purposes and no longer. This is a fundamental flaw in the architecture of the Belfast Agreement.

It is clear that they see this as an opportunity to further their Republican agenda. Having made it clear that Stormont will not return unless the DUP fills their boots with concessions, the danger for Unionism is that DUP will oblige – as they did when forced by Sinn Fein to climb down over the Liofa funding.

The DUP is in concession mode and this £50,000, which Mr Givan defended withdrawing on the basis that Irish already receives vastly more money than Ulster Scots just 24 hours earlier, is just the start. Sinn Fein demanded that the money be found and the DUP duly delivered. Sinn Fein has already made it clear that there will be no return to Stormont after this election unless it is on their terms. They have already spelt out their wish list and every Unionist should be rightly concerned.

Many who trusted the DUP with their first, second and third preference votes just a few months ago are now fed up by what has emerged in relation to the Cash for Ash scandal. They have watched with not a little disgust as Republicans run rings round them in the media and even more bizarrely seek to portray themselves as the people concerned about the public purse.

A party so badly compromised in the face of a Sinn Fein onslaught is in no position to represent the Unionist people. What else will they roll over on after an election to get their jobs back? An Irish Language Act? The Maze? Allowing Sinn Fein to rewrite the past? On all these issues, you can be clear about the TUV position before you vote.

The Irish language

It is an undeniable fact that the Irish language already receives preferential treatment in Northern Ireland. Look at what happened when it came to local schools. Enniskillen Collegiate, one of the most prestigious schools in Northern Ireland, was closed while an Irish language school with just 14 pupils was approved in Dungiven.

Similarly, while Lisnaskea High School was closed for having “only” 140 pupils, an Irish language school has been approved on the site of the old High School with only 38 pupils.

The use of Irish by Sinn Fein controlled councils has already left Unionists ratepayers feeling second class.

An Irish Language Act isn’t about concern for people interested in the language but is rather about eroding the Britishness of Northern Ireland and alienating the Unionist community.

As one member of Sinn Fein put it in 1982:

“I don’t think we can exist as a separate people without our language. Now every phrase you learn is a bullet in the freedom struggle.”

TUV is resolutely opposed to an Irish Language Act. It would be hugely divisive and detrimental to community relations and would also result in totally unacceptable cost to the public purse.

Even before the election was called the Sinn Fein Finance Minister gave a foretaste of the rampant Irish language agenda with his decision to use public money and resources to challenge the ban on the use of Irish in the courts. Consider the practical ramifications of removing the statutory ban: the Northern Ireland Courts Service would have huge additional expenditure on translation services.

However, an even more profound issue is the fact that the administration of justice will be hindered by court hearings being multi-lingual. Often evidence is judged not just by what is said but how it is said. How much of that will be lost when a translator comes between a witness and those hearing their evidence?

There are sound reasons for insisting that only English is used in our courts and removing that requirement will be a retrograde step in terms of the delivery of justice as well as having obvious cost implication.

Victims and the Troubles

In Stormont TUV has greatly raised the profile of innocent victims. Ann's Law was a stunning success for this sector, giving them, for the first time, an enhanced say in legislation over who could serve as a Special Adviser. It was Jim Allister who introduced to Stormont the marking of European Day for the Innocent Victims of Terrorism, something which is now cherished by all who attend. In the first week after the election TUV again will host this event, giving a voice to innocent victims right at the outset of the new Assembly term.

The scandal surrounding letters given to Republican OTRs exposed how innocent victims have been forgotten by successive Westminster governments. TUV wants to change the perverse definition of victim – which equates the terrorist with innocent victims. Those who accepted devolution before this issue was resolved must bear responsibility for the current situation.

TUV supports the creation of a pension for those seriously injured as a result of terrorist actions in Northern Ireland. We are robustly opposed to any suggestion that those injured while engaged in terrorism or members of illegal organisations should be eligible for such payments.

TUV was the first party to give its backing to **A Covenant for and with Innocent Victims of Terrorism**. The principles of that Covenant will continue to inform our policy when it comes to victims.

It is clear that the architecture of the Stormont House Agreement is forming the basis of discussions about dealing with victims' issues. Critically there is no suggestion of a departure from the obscene definition of 'victim'. In consequence, the entire proposals on the past are tainted.

Sinn Fein succeeded in its demand that 'legacy inquests' should continue separately from the new and inferior Historical Investigations Unit (HIU). It is deeply concerning that the DUP has failed to be clear on this issue. These inquests – which examine deaths at the hands of the RUC and Army – are part of Sinn Fein's attempt to rewrite the past and legitimise the IRA campaign of terror. They could see retired soldiers and police officers in the dock while IRA terrorists get off scot-free.

The Stormont Castle Agreement agreed £19 million in funds for legacy inquests – a figure which dwarfed the £6.5 million for the Historical Investigations Union for overhanging Historical Enquires Team cases. To allow those organisations which were responsible for the vast majority of deaths during the Troubles to portray themselves as victims would be the ultimate insult.

Moreover, the proposed Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR) can conceal any information it wishes because it will be immune from FOI requirements. Under the operation of the ICIR, terrorists supplying information will have immunity in that nothing they tell can ever be used against them. Indeed, whether they even tell the truth seems impossible of verification.

Of course, there is no compulsion on any terrorist group to cooperate with the ICIR. As the Stormont House proposals demonstrate, with the victim – makers in government, their victims are set for a raw deal. After this election Republicans will make a determined effort to re-write the history of the Troubles.

You need TUV to hold the line so that the honourable name of our security forces is preserved, the innocent victims of the IRA are not airbrushed from history and the terrorists are not permitted to portray themselves as victims. TUV doesn't see these issues as matters for negotiation with the representatives of the IRA.

The Maze Shrine

Since our inception as a party TUV has constantly warned of the danger of a shrine at the Maze. We made it a major plank in our first electoral test - the Dromore by-election - and Jim Allister's 2009 European election campaign.

In partnership with victims' organisations and the Orange Order, we forced the DUP into a U-turn on the issue in 2013.

Now Republicans have forced it back on to the agenda. McGuinness showed that Sinn Fein always intended to return to the issue when he stopped the Ulster Aviation Show taking place at the site.

TUV has long argued that the ugly building which housed terrorist prisoners and saw the death of the Hunger Strikers should have been delisted and demolished. Successive DUP DOE Ministers - including Mrs Foster - refused to act.

In this election, every vote for a TUV candidate is a vote against the Maze shrine. If Northern Ireland is ever to have a so-called Conflict Transformation Centre, the very last place it should be built is on the Maze site.

Equality or Trojan horse?

The mask slipped when Gerry Adams described equality as “the Trojan horse of the entire Republican strategy”. Equality has become a code word for attacks on the Britishness of Northern Ireland.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary was disbanded in the name of equality. Orange marches are stopped in the name of equality. The Union Flag was removed from Belfast City Hall in the name of equality.

Even democracy – which means that we have the right to vote a party out of government and the right to an Opposition – has been dispensed with in Northern Ireland in the name of equality. Understandably this one-way process has built resentment within the Unionist community as they see symbols of Northern Ireland’s place in the United Kingdom pushed to the margins or consigned to the history books.

TUV will continue to lead the opposition to this agenda. Even a Christian bakery is being persecuted for refusing to promote same sex marriage. We are opposed to YOUR money being used to persecute people with genuinely held beliefs.

TUV proposed a vote on slashing the budget of the Equality Commission which has brought the case against Ashers Bakery. Shamefully all other parties in the Assembly – including the DUP – voted against the TUV proposal. The case against Ashers was funded by the Equality Commission. Remember the Equality Commission is funded by your taxes through the Executive Office. It is irrational to say that you oppose the needless action of the Equality Commission and yet oppose reducing their budget.

The inadequacy of the Equality Commission is illustrated by its conduct in relation to Raymond McCreesh Park in Newry. Despite several years of correspondence with the local council, the Commission equivocated over the decision to name a child’s play park after an IRA gunman. Clearly a Christian bakery is an easier target than a Republican council.

Parading

TUV wants to see the Parades Commission abolished but that should not be seen as an end in itself. Replacing the Parades Commission with another quango which makes the same decisions leaves us no further forward.

TUV believes that the starting point of any legislation ought to be a statutory affirmation and protection that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is paramount. This would give primacy to this fundamental human right in any balancing exercise necessary in determining between competing rights, with the resulting onus on those wishing to displace the fundamental right.

Legislation ought to specifically declare that where a parading route is traditional such will be a strong material consideration in reaching any determination. Likewise, in pursuit of the concept of shared space, the legislation should specify that arterial routes, which are substantially non-residential, should carry a statutory presumption in favour of parading.



Same Sex Marriage

TUV will oppose any redefinition of marriage and defend traditional family values as outlined in the founding principles of the party, believing that that is the bedrock for the success of society. Sinn Fein want to force movement on this issue. TUV will not bend on the matter.

It is noteworthy that when the issue of pardons for obsolete homosexual offences came before the Assembly in November 2016 TUV leader Jim Allister was the only MLA to oppose the measure. ALL other parties were happy to see the law changed.

Abortion Law

TUV does not believe that the unborn child should be denied his or her fundamental human rights.

Though there is a superficial plausibility within the promotion of abortion in cases of potentially fatal abnormalities, the experience of the 1967 Act in Great Britain is a salutary warning against such glib assurance. Although the 1967 Act appears to permit abortion only in restricted circumstances, in reality it swung open the door to abortion on demand. Who on reading the supposed restraints of Section 1 of the 1967 Act could imagine that under it over 8,000,000 babies would have been terminated!

It is also important to stress that the current law of Northern Ireland is not an absolute bar to abortion in, for example, a case of severe anencephaly. As the Bourne test makes clear, and as amplified by Girvan LJ in the 2009 Judicial Review, lawful termination is possible where there is a real and serious risk to a woman's physical or mental health, which is either long term or permanent. Thus, the mother whose mental health is so damaged by carrying a child with fatal foetal abnormality can at present avail of lawful termination within Northern Ireland.

In our view this is sufficient.

Getting devolution that works: a real Fresh Start

TUV has long argued that the present structures at Stormont are incapable of working and only operate at all so long as Sinn Fein want them to. The fact that we are having this election illustrates that we were right all along.

TUV were branded wreckers for pointing out the flaws in the Belfast Agreement but now they have come home to roost and are no longer deniable.

TUV has published a plan which spells the radical changes we would introduce to deliver for you entitled A Path to Making Stormont Work.

PLAN A

TUV has a clear vision of what will work and provide good and durable government. It is voluntary coalition with an Opposition. This does not deny cross-community government. Indeed, the strategic use of weighted majority voting would guarantee this.

With no party big enough to govern on its own, coalition is inevitable. As elsewhere, for it to work, it must be a coalition of the willing. Those, after an election, who can agree a programme for government on the key economic and social issues and who together can command the requisite majority in the Assembly, form the government - whoever they are.

Those who can't agree - whoever they are - form the Opposition, challenging and presenting an alternative at the next election.

To ensure cross-community involvement, TUV would accept a weighted majority of 60% in an Assembly vote to approve the new government and its programme. As politics further normalise it should be possible to reduce the threshold to 50 % over succeeding elections. The much abused Petition of Concern procedure should be banished, along with designations which entrench the divisive basis of the present system.

In the wake of the failure of mandatory coalition, some may refuse to contemplate anything but more of the same failure, but we need to move on. Until enough are ready to embrace essential change and permit government which can work, an approach which concentrates their thinking and maximises local control within Northern Ireland could be beneficial.

The collapse of mandatory coalition need not mean the end of devolution. Far from it. Indeed, it can be the catalyst to project Northern Ireland forward into governmental arrangements that work and end the cycle of failure.

PLAN B

The key to preventing the collapse of the present failed Stormont ending devolution is to salvage that which has worked and jettison that which has failed.

By its nature devolution embraces two distinct aspects:

- legislative devolution (exercised by the Assembly) and
- executive devolution (exercised by ministers).

Analysis of the failure of the present Stormont throws up the obvious conclusion that it is the dimension of executive devolution which has failed.

Legislative devolution has been reasonably successful, both in processing such Bills as have been presented, including Private Member's Bills, and in performing the scrutiny function through its committees.

Thus, in moving forward, there may be merit in building on what has succeeded, by preserving legislative devolution, while giving time for executive devolution to evolve into something workable.

The practical outworking of such an approach would be that the elected Assembly would be preserved as the legislature for transferred Northern Ireland matters, along with its important scrutiny function, but without a local executive. Executive functions would be exercised by British ministers, but with the vital distinction from the Direct Rule of the past, that they would be accountable to the Assembly and their legislative programme would pass, not through Westminster, but through the Stormont Assembly.

Such a form of power sharing is not untried. Though the EU has little to recommend it, for decades the European Parliament has exercised a shared legislative function with the Council of Ministers (now, formal co decision on many matters). Indeed, there a further complicating dimension is that it is the European Commission which initiates legislation, but it processes through the Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

In practice this means that the British ministers would introduce their legislation to the Assembly, it would pass through the normal processes of second stage, committee stage, consideration stage and final stage, before being signed off by the Secretary of State and given Royal Assent by Her Majesty.

To cope with policy conflicts between the Assembly and Westminster and incompatible expenditure demands, there would have to be a procedure of conciliation between the Assembly and the British ministers. Again, such has existed for years in the EU between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Here the Chair of the relevant committee could act as rapporteur for the Assembly in any negotiations with the minister, with both sides statutorily bound to make determined efforts to reach consensus.

Individual MLAs would still have the opportunity to introduce Private Member's Bills.

As for the British ministers' exercise of executive functions, these would be subject to all the scrutiny powers of the Assembly and its statutory committees, with their powers to command witnesses and papers.

By this approach those elements which have been working could be retained and, in time, as alliances evolve, the return to the exercise of executive power could occur through coalition of the willing and a counter-balancing Opposition. Moreover, if any coalition collapsed, the default position of Stormont retaining the legislative role would sustain devolution.

Clinging endlessly to the failure of mandatory coalition is not serving Northern Ireland well. The perpetual cycle of crisis and sticking plaster talks, before lurching to crisis again is destroying the body politic and public confidence in it. It is time for fresh thinking, such as these proposals contain.

The truth about the Joint First Minister

TUV has long pointed out that the First and deputy First Ministers are co-equals. One cannot do anything without the other.

Having been complicit in the St Andrews changes in the law whereby the First Minister came from the biggest party instead of the biggest tradition, thus facilitating the possibility of a Sinn Fein First Minister, the DUP has cynically used that threat in successive elections as a bogeyman to scare Unionists into voting for them.

Hence we had the "Keep Arlene First Minister" campaign just a few months ago, with the pretence she would have superior powers to the deputy First Minister.

Of one thing there can no longer be any doubt: the First Minister only holds office as long as the deputy First Minister allows him or her to. Once Martin McGuinness resigned Arlene Foster lost office too.

Brexit

TUV is, and always has been, a party which believed the UK would be better off outside the EU. The 23rd June 2016 was a great day in the history of our nation. The public defied the establishment and had the self-confidence to vote for the liberation of our nation.

The UK as a nation voted decisively to leave and, despite all the propaganda, the leave vote in Northern Ireland was much higher than many predicted.

The referendum was not whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the EU. The question on the ballot paper was - should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? It was a national, not a regional decision. Thus, having joined as one nation, we leave as one nation.

All attempts at watering down our leaving must be resisted. TUV stands for a complete Brexit, which must be just as clear and complete as in the rest of the UK. Sinn Fein cannot be permitted to undermine the UK's democratic decision.



The Economy

Brexit - vital to Northern Ireland prosperity

I TUV believes Brexit is vital to the prosperity of Northern Ireland.

Many of those who seek to argue that Northern Ireland should have some sort of “special status” in relation to the EU do so, not because of any genuine concern for the economy but because they see Brexit as a threat to their all-Ireland agenda.

It is striking that Stormont has no plan to take advantage of Brexit. Of course that is a feature of the unworkable government with which we are burdened.

After Brexit, the £20 billion per annum, which presently goes into the bottomless pit of Brussels, should be available for the UK to spend on its own people. Northern Ireland must get its fair share.

Additionally, as a major world economy, the UK will be able to make our own trade agreements across the world. This must be fully exploited with Northern Ireland helping to shape the new trade opportunities in collaboration with the Department of Trade in London. Likewise, freeing our businesses and farmers from the shackles of Brussels bureaucracy will present exciting opportunities for growth. In addition, there is great potential for our fishing industry, which Brussels regulations have destroyed, outside the EU.

Any Stormont Programme for Government must prepare to exploit these opportunities.

New thinking will be required outside the suffocating restraints of the EU. Escape from the EU’s state aid rules will give London and Stormont the chance to shape and aid our growth to suit our needs.

Then a local investment strategy and a matching funding infrastructure will have the chance to succeed and attract FDI in a more business friendly setting.

Turning the economy around

The previous two Executives claimed that the economy was their top priority. They pledged to rebuild and rebalance the Northern Ireland economy.

They failed to deliver. Now we are heading to the polls again because of gross financial incompetence and Sinn Fein exploitation of the same. At a time when we should be investing in jobs and skills, we have discovered that the government is sending your money up in smoke.

The December 2016 Northern Ireland Labour Market Report revealed that our unemployment rate (5.7%) was well above the UK average (4.8%). Northern Ireland's economic inactivity rate is 26.2%: across the UK it is 21.7%. Our economic inactivity rate is the highest of the twelve UK regions. Only by investing in infrastructure and skills can we address those issues.

At the last election TUV warned about the level of debt. Just before the Executive took office in 2011, our National Loans Fund borrowing was £36.9 million. In the 2016/17 Budget, it is projected to be £357 million — an almost tenfold multiplication. Borrowing by this small country is to be £2.1 billion, giving us the highest level of borrowing per head of the population in all the devolved regions. That is on top of our part of the national borrowing. That £2.1 billion is up from £1.9 billion last year, and we are paying interest.

It is a burden for this and future generations that has been imposed by the failing Executive. Now we go into an election without the Executive even having agreed a budget.

Those who liked to portray themselves as champions of prudent financial management have been exposed as being responsible for the greatest financial scandal in the history of Northern Ireland – all this at a time when we have seen catastrophic job losses at JTI, Michelin and Bombardier. As with Michelin, failure to adequately address energy costs is losing us vital jobs.

We need to move away from a system which shackles us to the Republic of Ireland and build our links with the rest of the UK where economic growth is much stronger and our future is secure. Exit from the EU will liberate us all, across the UK, from the bureaucracy and shackles of Brussels and empower the UK to trade freely across the world.

Defending the UK's unified tax system

TUV went into the last election arguing against the devolution of corporation tax. We argued that any cut to the level of corporation tax in Northern Ireland will see a corresponding cut in the block grant of hundreds of millions per annum. This could be of the order of £250-£350 million per annum.

A cut to corporation tax will therefore result in a drastic reduction to the money Northern Ireland receives from Westminster which in turn will have serious consequences for public services in our Province. When added to the money being taken out of the block grant to mitigate welfare reform, the consequences for spending on vital services could be catastrophic.

Bankrupting Northern Ireland will not concern Sinn Fein, but it should concern unionists.

The Silk Commission considered the question of devolving corporation tax to Wales - another region dependent on its block grant - but readily recognised that "the costs would outweigh the benefits". The Welsh government shared this analysis telling the Commission that while the "devolution of corporation tax could offer the Welsh Government a powerful tool to promote economic development, this is a volatile tax which is strongly linked to the economic cycle. There would therefore be significant budgetary risks to Wales."

Stormont, which cannot handle the powers it has, ignored all these warnings and rushed headlong into the vanity project of attaining Corporation Tax powers. In the aftermath of Cash for Ash it is hard to see how anyone could argue for taxation power for Stormont.

Town centre regeneration

The decline in town centres across Northern Ireland deeply concerns TUV. Once bustling high streets and their remaining businesses are now struggling to survive. Crippling rates have been a major contributor to decline. Aesthetically pleasing artwork on empty shop fronts may bring cosmetic change, but are no substitute for kick-starting economic revival in our town centres.

In Great Britain the level of business rates is being addressed, but not in Northern Ireland. Indeed, reducing rates would probably do more for business than reducing corporation tax.

As things stand, businesses are being penalised if they choose town centre premises because of higher rates. TUV believes that they should be rewarded for doing so. This will help fill the empty units and entice more consumers back into our town centres.

Another drain on our town centres are excessive car park charges. Many people question why they should pay to shop in town centres while at out of town developments they can park for free. A more sensible approach to parking charges – and more free parking – would help regenerate our town centres and encourage vital trade back.



Energy and environment

TUV believes it is important that we act as responsible custodians of our environment so we can ensure future generations can enjoy the rich diversity of our planet. However, we reject punitive green taxes and limitations on individual liberty based on dubious science. TUV recognises there are many drivers of changing climate, including uncontrollable natural forces, and encourages honest scientific enquiry into these matters.

In our last manifesto we outlined our opposition to unrealistic and expensive green energy targets. The whole RHI mess shows the folly of rushing to embrace any policy which gives the impression of being “green”.

Likewise, we are not impressed by the large scale wind farm craze. Wind energy is an expensive form of energy. Further, there has been wholly inadequate preparation of the electricity grid to even accommodate all the wind turbines that have been encouraged.

Stormont’s pre-occupation with the all-Ireland single electricity market has served us ill. Aligning Northern Ireland to the ROI monopolistic and more expensive southern market, instead of the bigger opportunities of the UK market and networks, has been a mistake, producing prices higher than they need be.

TUV rejects an ideological position on such new opportunities as fracking, but, instead is prepared to sensibly balance the opportunities against the environmental impacts.

Absurd proposals such as monthly bin collections are totally rejected by TUV.

Transport

The priority must be towards building roads because of their economic, rather than political, justification. The prioritising of the A5 as a joint venture with the Dublin Government is a political case in point, whereas, getting an upgrade to the vital A75 Stranraer to Carlisle link, in co-operation with Scotland, has been largely ignored.

Choking Belfast City centre with bus lanes is not in the commercial interests of the City.

The development of the International airport and adequate public transport links, including a rail link should be prioritised, especially now that Dublin, which already steals so much of our air traffic, is considering a direct rail link from Belfast. There is something radically wrong with the approach of government if it allows a situation to evolve whereby Northern Ireland passengers could connect directly by rail to Dublin airport, but not to our own international airport.

Tourism

Northern Ireland has many unique selling points when it comes to tourism. The Giant's Causeway, superb golf courses which have helped foster the talent of world class golfers, unique cultural attractions such as the Twelfth and Scarva as well as our great industrial heritage which is at long last being celebrated at the Titanic Centre.

However, Northern Ireland is being held back and prevented from making the most of these selling points. On the international market Ireland is being marketed as a single destination by the cross border body Tourism Ireland. This has hampered the development of tourism in Northern Ireland.

The former head of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board Alan Clarke summed up the problem: "We (Northern Ireland) are putting a third of the money in (to Tourism Ireland) and we get around 10 to 11 per cent of the holidaymakers coming to the island so Northern Ireland is paying beyond its share".

TUV believes that we need to break free from the shackles of Tourism Ireland and promote Northern Ireland as destination in its own right. A large number of Northern Ireland visitors come from mainland UK. TUV is committed to maintaining our port and airport links to ensure that this increases.



Agriculture and fishing

Farming

Farming and the agri-food sector are key to the Northern Ireland economy, being the biggest contributor to sales, exports and employment within the manufacturing sector.

In TUV farmers have a friend, ever willing to fight their corner. The roller coaster impact of global pressures makes for an industry where stability in price is elusive, yet overheads constantly rise. In consequence farm incomes have tumbled, making growth a difficult aspiration and the targets of 'Going for Growth' increasingly ambitious. But they also make a food export marketing body a greater need than ever.

Obtaining greater stability in farm gate prices is key to success, with processors, banks and government all having to play their part. Hence, radical thinking should not be eschewed, though current EU competition laws probably prohibit statutory minimum pricing. Now that we are exiting the EU this issue could be looked at again.

The false portrayal of Northern Ireland agriculture as being wholly dependent on EU membership is frequently most notable for its failure to mention any of the following hard facts:

- Every penny we get from Brussels is some of our own money being recycled back to us and is but a mere fraction of the £20,000,000,000.00 the UK pays in every year;
- The EU itself has attacked local agriculture with crippling fines of €80 million; more often than not when our industry is in crisis Brussels sits on its hands, as with its refusal to bring in intervention to deal with the catastrophic fall in the milk price;
- EU restrictions prohibit the UK government and Stormont from granting meaningful aid to farming because of EU "state aid" rules;
- Brussels strangles farming with hideous bureaucracy, cross-compliance nonsense and needless red tape;
- It is the EU which impedes several agricultural practices and imposes hugely expensive restraints, be it the Nitrates Directive, slurry spreading rules (imposing massive capital costs for storage facilities) or a myriad of other regulations imposed for regulation sake;
- EU agricultural spending is on a downward trajectory over coming years, coupled with an increasing bias towards Eastern and Southern Europe

All the above are part of the price our local industry pays at the hands of oppressive Brussels Diktats and will disappear with Brexit.

Brexit will restore the destiny of our country to our own hands; making our own laws and keeping and spending our own money.

Post-referendum we need to prepare for a national agricultural support scheme at Westminster. Such would be in the interest of farmers and the consumer alike, because such support underwrites cheaper and safe food. Thus consumers and producers would require action when appropriate from government.

Brexit should also mean that for the first time in over 40 years the UK will be free to make our own trade deals with whichever countries served our interests. Presently only Brussels can make such deals. But with Brexit the UK government will resume control, making trade arrangements in support of our agricultural and other sectors as best suited to our needs and opening up markets far and wide.

As for the suggestion that we would be shut out from trading with Europe, including the Republic of Ireland, this has to be one of the biggest scare stories of the frightened Remoaners. Put very simply, because we buy more from the other EU countries than we sell them (the trade deficit was £59 billion in 2014 - some £169 million per day), EU countries will still desperately want to trade with the UK. They will need us more than we need them in trading terms. Thus, an advantageous trade agreement for the UK is inevitable.

Likewise, our trade with the Republic would continue under such a deal. In 2014 Northern Ireland sold £8.3 billion worth of goods to GB and £2.3 billion to the Republic and £2.4 billion elsewhere (only £1.3 billion to other EU countries).



Fishing - Brexit offering a real fresh start

Our fishing industry, once so prosperous, is in the doldrums. Why are our once great ports of Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie now mere shadows of their former selves? Simply because the EU's Common Fisheries Policy has destroyed our fishing industry through its absurd rules and authorised piracy of our waters.

Brexit gives us the opportunity to take back control of our waters. British waters for British fishermen will be a basic test for any Brexit deal. TUV will strongly oppose wind turbine farms in our productive fishing grounds.

For both fishing and farming, escape from the dead hand of Brussels would be liberating not devastating.



Education

There must be no funding hierarchy whereby secondary schools are disadvantaged. Northern Ireland must value all its children, but to do so we must equally facilitate the academic potential of some – rather than thwart it - and the different talents of others. Choice, not prescription, is our guide.

While there has been a disproportionate focus on teaching Irish, modern languages, which are essential in today's economy, have been neglected. If Northern Ireland is to compete on the international business scene there must be a focus on foreign languages both at primary and secondary level. TUV wants to make it compulsory for GCSE pupils to take at least one modern language. We also believe that modern languages should be a compulsory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum in primary schools.

A report by the Equality Commission published in October 2014 (Key Inequalities in Education) found "Protestants persistently have lower levels of attainment than Catholics at GCSE and A 'level". This fact cannot go ignored any longer. There is a need for focused action to address it.

TUV is committed to:

- Fighting for a fair deal for the controlled sector;
- Opposing preferential treatment for the Irish medium sector;
- Ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, receives an education however local children should not be disadvantaged in situations where there are non-English speaking pupils in the class;
- Seeking to address educational underachievement, particularly when it comes to Protestant boys;
- Increasing the focus on the basic skills needed to prepare people for the world of work. There should be a greater focus on literacy and numeracy;
- Getting rid of the exemption for teaching from fair employment legislation. Everyone should have an equal chance to avail of employment opportunities.



Nursery provision

Many hard-working parents face huge expense when they find a private facility to take their child. In some cases, the expense of nursery provision makes it unviable for them to work.

TUV believes there should be a right to a place for every child. Places that are available need to be provided where they are needed. There is a need for more forward planning so as to address problems such as under provision in one area and a surplus of places in another.

Further and higher education

TUV is alarmed by the lack of focus which there has been on this sector in recent years. While there has been much grand talk about the need to build the economy, the budget for higher and further education has been repeatedly cut.

Northern Ireland will not attract high quality jobs unless we invest in further and higher education. The skills of the local workforce consistently rank much higher than the rate of corporation tax when it comes to the factors which foreign investors consider when making a decision as to where to invest.

It is vital that “chill factors” when it comes to attracting people from the Protestant community to our universities are addressed. In the 2014/15 academic year just 29.5% of those who enrolled at Queen’s were Protestant while 45.3% were Roman Catholic. That compares with a 48.5% / 43.3% breakdown of Roman Catholics to Protestants in the general population of 18, 19 and 20 year olds. This imbalance must be rectified.

TUV strongly supports the retention of Stranmillis Teacher Training College.

Libraries

TUV recognises the important contribution which libraries make to communities. We want to see well-resourced library provision. It is important that everyone – particularly children and the elderly – have access to the print and electronic resources which libraries offer. It is important that local libraries are protected from closure.



Health

The NHS is precious; it is free at the point of use and everybody should have reasonable access to it. TUV believes in universal healthcare and that healthcare has to provide for those who need it.

The frontline, not management empires, is our interest. It is the doctors, nurses and support staff who deliver the service. Cutting the number of beds has increased the waiting times. So, addressing these basic issues is key to reversing the decline. It's not more reviews and fewer hospitals we need, but more beds and staff freed up from bureaucracy.

The NHS is the property of all of us. It is unacceptable to be able to see a consultant privately within days, but only within months in the NHS - sometimes the same consultant! NHS work must come first. The pressures at present are created by lack of investment, under staffing and bureaucracy.

Waiting times are shocking. Consider cancer waiting times in Northern Ireland during July - September 2016. Although a ministerial target was set that "At least 95% of patients should begin their first treatment for cancer within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer", in July 2016 the actual figure was 70.4%, 67.2% in August and 63.6% in September.

A further ministerial target stated: "At least 98% of patients diagnosed with cancer should receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat." In July, August and September this target was missed too (93.3%, 94.4% and 93.7% respectively).

The final ministerial target - "All urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days" - suffered a similar failure with the actual figures 84.6% in July, 79.8% in August and 95.8% in September.



To make health better, front line services must be protected by ring-fenced funding thereby ensuring that:

- Hospital outpatient and inpatient waiting lists are efficiently dealt with.
- Hospitals are clean and safe.
- Front line services are staffed effectively and efficiently to ensure that we all get the quality of care that the 21st century health service demands.
- Adequate protection of children who suffer from abuse and neglect.
- The disabled are allowed to live quality lives and not excluded from ordinary life, but allowed to achieve their full potential.
- Older people cared for in a dignified way.
- Those with special needs are not forgotten but given what they need to live quality lives.
- All communities have adequate and safe emergency cover at all times.
- TUV supports campaigns to highlight the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. We believe that schools have a key role to play when it comes to promoting the benefits of avoiding smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol.
- Longer term financial planning within health trusts, including the option to carry money forward into the next financial year.

Care for cancer patients

Every day 30 people in Northern Ireland receive the devastating news that they have cancer and each year 4,000 people die as a result of the disease. This equates to 1 in 4 of all deaths in Northern Ireland.

TUV believes that everyone newly diagnosed with cancer should have access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). Currently breast cancer and most lung cancer patients have access but there is considerable variation across Trusts and 1 in 4 patients miss out. A workforce census in 2014 revealed that Northern Ireland had the lowest provision in the UK. We believe that this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

TUV supports Cancer Focus Northern Ireland's call for guaranteed adequate funding to provide universal access to NICE approved drugs and full compliance with Ministerial targets for cancer.



Mental health

A major failure of the Northern Ireland Executive has been the failure to adequately resource mental health.

Largely as a result of the Troubles, Northern Ireland has a 25% higher mental health need than England yet the Northern Ireland Executive provides approximately 26% less funding than England. This funding has continued to reduce every year since 2007/8.

In addition to resource failures the Northern Ireland Executive has thus far failed to enact new mental health legislation a decade after the need for legislation was identified by the Bamford Review. The delay in enacting new legislation demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the Northern Ireland Executive and an inability to prioritise legislation that can make a significant difference to the lives of many.

TUV firmly believes that the mental health crisis in Northern Ireland is a damning indictment of the Northern Ireland Executive and we therefore pledge to campaign for:

- Increased funding for Community Mental Health services to support people experiencing mental ill-health in their recovery and to further support early intervention strategies which will help prevent the need for hospital admissions
- Adequate acute psychiatric beds so that anyone who requires an acute hospital bed should be able to access it within their Trust area. No patient should be forced to travel outside their Trust area where they are less likely to benefit from the support of family and friends – something which is vital when it comes to mental wellbeing.
- An education programme to enable schools to better support children experiencing mental ill-health or those children who are living with a family member experiencing mental ill-health
- Development of specialised services for autism and availability of training and support for carers
- Development of specialised services developed for people with a personality disorder as envisaged by the Northern Ireland Strategy for Personality Disorder
- Improved access to psychology services to be accessible by victims of the Troubles who continue to experience trauma.

Disability

TUV revealed the fact that there are 3,273 pupils in primary schools and 5,770 pupils in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland who have been diagnosed with dyslexia. Government does not collect data on people in third level education who are dyslexic.

TUV believes that early diagnosis of dyslexia and other learning difficulties is important so that proper support mechanisms can be put in place to enable young people to achieve their full potential.

TUV believes that data on the number of people in third level education with dyslexia ought to be collected centrally so that government can address any shortcoming in relation to support for such students.

The hearing impaired deserve greater focus on the development of sign language services. In Northern Ireland while Irish medium education is prioritised, sign language provision has stalled.

In Scotland the British Sign Language Bill requires Ministers to develop a national plan for BSL and places an obligation on public-sector bodies to prepare and publish their own plans with the aim of increasing awareness of BSL (British Sign Language) and its use in the delivery of services.

TUV believes that some of the money currently squandered on Irish should be invested in investigating the need for such legislation in Northern Ireland and the feasibility of implementing it. It is a poor reflection on Northern Irish political discourse that we have lengthy debates about an Irish Language Act but nothing is done to provide for the deaf in a similar way to what has been done in Scotland.

Suicide awareness

In 2015 the Office of National Statistics revealed that the suicide rate in Northern Ireland had reached a record high. It showed that Northern Ireland had the highest suicide rate in the UK at 19.3 deaths per 100,000 population

TUV believes that more needs to be done to tackle this problem. The work of charities and the community is key in this regard.

There is also an urgent need to address the stigma surrounding mental health so that people can seek help more easily.

A Northern Ireland Helicopter Emergency Medical Service

TUV has led the way in the campaign for a Northern Ireland HEMS. The tragic death of Dr John Hinds robbed Northern Ireland not only of a skilled medical professional but someone who was deeply passionate about improving health care provision in our Province. Shortly before his death, TUV leader Jim Allister arranged a meeting between Dr Hinds and the Health Minister to press the need for an air ambulance.

TUV's involvement in the campaign did not end with the meeting last June. In September 2015 Jim Allister handed over a petition containing over 80,000 signatures calling for the establishment of the service. On 12th October 2015 TUV hosted an event at Stormont which was introduced by the late Dr Hinds' partner, Dr Janet Acheson, and which was addressed by Dr Brian Burns from Sydney, Australia, a world expert in HEMS provision.

It was striking that Dr Burns as part of his presentation showed a slide displaying air ambulance provision across the British Isles. Northern Ireland was the only black spot, with no provision. The sum of money required to fund such a service is a mere pittance when compared to the savings which would result from better outcomes for patients.

The cost of operating such a service is estimated by DHSSPS at just £1.8 million. £1.8m is not a significant sum when people's lives are at stake, particularly given the sums which are found to squander on other less worthy causes.

We welcome the recent intervention by world experts in the provision of a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service. The gravity of the concerns about this issue is reflected in the fact that leaders in their field from Australia, Norway, England, Scotland, Slovenia, France, Wales, Austria, Hungary and the USA have spoken out.

Following a question from Jim Allister to the Health Minister asking if the service in Northern Ireland would be doctor led and staffed, Dr Burns and other international experts expressed concerns that the staffing model may be paramedic rather than doctor led. Their letter highlights that this would leave Northern Ireland in a uniquely short-changed position in a UK context as all other UK air ambulances are physician-staffed or moving towards that model.

It is particularly noteworthy that they said:

“We fear the Service will not be capable of providing the best life-saving care possible to the people of Northern Ireland from the outset if a doctor is not on board the helicopter. Placing a combative, agitated, head injured or bleeding patient in a helicopter without a general anesthetic is unsafe, both to the patient and the crew. The ‘Golden Hour’ is then lost as these patients will have to be transported on sometimes lengthy journeys by road to the trauma centre. Sedating head injured patients without a general anesthetic is a ‘solution’ from the 1970s and has been shown to cause harm. This is what would happen without a doctor on board.”

TUV strongly believes that the people of Northern Ireland should not have a second class service.



Protection for the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

TUV believes that the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service should be considered a frontline service and therefore should have its budget protected.

Stormont's decision to slash its budget from £81.6m to £69.7m during the tenure of the 2011-16 Assembly is totally unacceptable. Yet rather than addressing this funding crisis the latest budget would see yet further biting cuts into this vital service.

Older People

TUV recognises the invaluable contribution which our senior citizens have made and continue to make to Northern Ireland. TUV is committed to the retention of free public transport for pensioners.

Many older people are concerned about the future of statutory residential care homes. TUV has always maintained that the key issue is the lifting of the ban on new admissions. This cynical policy is designed to run the homes down over time so that it can be claimed that they are no longer safe to run. The argument that this is up to the Trusts is completely spurious. The ban could and should be lifted by the Minister.

We note that while there is increasing talk in political circles about care in the community for older people in practice the support services are often sadly lacking. There are countless cases across Northern Ireland of family members caring for loved ones. We believe that that love and dedication to family and loved ones should be recognised. It should be much easier for people who care for an elderly person to organise cover on those occasions when they need respite.



Housing

Social housing is vital in any society and demands adequate investment. A safe and warm home has huge benefits, not least when it comes to health.

The future of public housing is in a state of flux, with DUP ministers contemplating dismantling the Housing Executive. Wholesale transfer of public housing stock to Housing Associations, which habitually charge higher rents, is not advisable, particularly if it involves overriding the views and wishes of tenants.

With the growth of Housing Associations there is an urgent need for an independent Housing Regulator. This is necessary to build confidence among both tenants and investors in the sector. Rent levels should, therefore, be controlled by the regulator.

NIHE has many faults but jumping into the unknown is not desirable. Political meddling in housing, such as seen with the brazen attempt to coerce the NIHE Board over the Red Sky scandal, is not healthy.

Nor were the exaggerated and unjustified claims by the minister of £18m of overcharging by four contractors an edifying episode. Such politicking needs to be kept out of housing.

An adequate supply of social housing is essential and tenants need and deserve reliable maintenance and repairs. TUV supports legislation to help landlords deal with anti-social tenants.

TUV supports measures to encourage and facilitate shared ownership where that is the means appropriate to ensure owner occupation. The financial institutions must play their part with responsibility.



Justice: Crime and Punishment

The case of Damien McLaughlin – the man accused of the brutal murder of David Black – underscores the need for a radical overhaul of bail.

We cannot continue to have a situation where criminals who wouldn't receive bail at all in the rest of the UK, can go missing for months in Northern Ireland. TUV believes that the courts should take a robust but fair approach to dealing with criminals.

Public confidence in the rule of law in Northern Ireland has been badly shaken. The perverse political arrangements which have seen criminals elevated to the heart of government have played a part in this.

The whole OTR scandal and the disproportionate reaction to the flag protests has added to the lack of confidence in the criminal justice system.



However, it reached a new low when people saw Pastor McConnell – a man in his eighth decade with a clean record – dragged before the courts for comments made in his own pulpit about Islam and a family run business brought to court because of their refusal to ice a message on a cake.

TUV believes that the courts should be used to bring criminals to justice and keep the public safe.

TUV supports the introduction of legislation to strengthen the law against the glorification of terrorism so that events such as the IRA parade in Castlederg or the naming of a play park after a notorious Republican terrorist cannot be repeated.

Flags

TUV strongly believes that the Union Flag should fly from Parliament Buildings all year round. This is in line with the advice issued following the publication of the green paper, *The Governance of Britain*, in July 2007 after which Government Departments were encouraged to fly the Union Flag all year round and not just on designated days.

The current designated days policy adopted by Stormont is inadequate. TUV believes that, in common with the practice at the Welsh Assembly and the Houses of Parliament, the Union Flag should fly from Parliament Buildings 365 days a year.

Sport

The success of our football team and our golfers has demonstrated that sports men and women from Northern Ireland can compete with the best on the international stage.

Sadly, however, all is not positive when it comes to sport in Northern Ireland. As any football fan knows, the Belfast Agreement has led to a situation where the Republic of Ireland have been able to poach many of our most promising footballers. However, when it comes to other sports young men and women do not have the right to choose which national flag they compete under.

TUV will fight for the right of athletes from Northern Ireland in all sports to compete on the international stage for the United Kingdom.

TUV is opposed to the creation of an all-Ireland football team.

In November 2012 TUV ensured that the issue of sectarianism in boxing reached the floor of the Northern Ireland Assembly when Jim Allister proposed an amendment to a motion about Belfast City Council's Boxing Strategy.

A report which followed from the Sandy Row case highlighted the fact that boxers from Northern Ireland cannot compete under the Union Flag at the Olympics. They agreed that **“the nationality issue in the Olympics is a nettle that needs to be grasped”**, not just when it comes to boxing but also in relation to other sports.

TUV will fight to ensure that sports men and women from Northern Ireland have the right to represent the UK on the world’s biggest stage and to represent Northern Ireland at all levels of international competition.

TUV will continue to highlight inequality in funding for sporting organisations. We oppose preferential treatment to the GAA while other sporting bodies are left comparatively with a pittance.



Your TUV Candidates





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