



Unionist

Ulster Unionist Party



It's time to make **Stormont** work - *for you*

Manifesto | 2011

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LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Politics should be exciting! It has the power to transform people's lives by creating the environment in which they can find fulfilment.

The thought of being a politician excited me enough to stand for election because I thought it would be a great feeling to help people remove the obstacles in their day-to-day lives by advocating on their behalf. I was right!

I also thought devolved government would be the best way forward, giving local politicians control of the big departments of government – Finance, Health, Education, Enterprise, Trade & Investment, Agriculture. I still think that way, in principle, but in practice.

The last Assembly's greatest achievement was that it survived. Looking back from 2011, it is not enough. The world has moved on, with a global recession threatening jobs and services. What the next Assembly needs to achieve is a more outward looking perspective, delivering positive changes in the lives of our citizens. In short, it is Time to Get Stormont Working – for you!

Many people think we are over-governed, and we are; in terms of the number of people doing the governing. We have 3 MEPs, 18 MPs, 108 MLAs, 582 councillors, plus Commissioners, Quangos and consultants by the score. But that is only a measure of the inputs. If you look at the other side of the equation we are horrendously under-governed, because all those people actually achieve very little in measurable outcomes.

It is time to take the focus off the processes of government and concentrate on outcomes. What does success look like? It certainly does not look like the long running debacle surrounding the Presbyterian Mutual Society where thousands of savers have been left for far too long worrying about their savings. The Ulster Unionist Party is proud to have led the way in finding a fair solution to this matter.

I am offering you an Assembly team who are in this for public service, not personal gain. I have no feathered nest.



I invite you not just to read this Manifesto, studying our specific proposals and recommendations, but also to join me and my Assembly team in committing to making politics work. How will we know if we succeed? In some aspects of that work the results will be plain and measurable: more jobs with better terms and conditions; a school system that cherishes every child; health services with the funding that allows the professionals to do their jobs.

I am the newest and youngest leader of a local political party and bring a fresh approach. I have no awkward baggage and I am told that those who meet me recognise a man they can trust.

Confidence. Trust. Courage. It will take all three to Make Stormont Work *for you*.

On the 5th of May I ask you to vote Ulster Unionist, whether you do so with utter confidence or in trust, or whether it is with the courage to do the right thing in the face of the siren voices encouraging you to vote for four more years of missed opportunities and wasted millions.

Tom Elliott

Tom Elliott

THE GAME-CHANGER

How can we expect to have good government, well delivered, when ministers are often free to pursue their own political and ideological agenda? How can we build public confidence and political cooperation in our structures when government too often appears to be a mixture of mutual mistrust counterbalanced by mutual veto?

How can we create an overarching legislative and policy platform to address the socio-economic needs of Northern Ireland when there is no sense of collective responsibility, no common purpose and no individual accountability at the heart of the Executive?

The Programme for Government must be rooted in a commonly agreed agenda about what is good for Northern Ireland and good for the people of Northern Ireland. We must shift away from the pursuit of 'us-and-them' agendas and instead focus on building and promoting a post-conflict Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party proposes that in the period between the election results being declared and the new Executive being formed, that the political parties eligible for and willing to take their places in that Executive should meet and agree a Programme for Government (PfG). This is not as difficult as some parties would have you believe.

The key advisers from the political parties, along with senior Departmental Civil Servants, could meet and discuss the key points of agreement and common interest in the individual manifestoes. A document would then be drawn up, listing the areas and policies of agreement.

Later the parties would formally meet and, based on the earlier document, draw up a second document listing Executive and Departmental priorities. This would form the Programme for Government and would be signed-off by the party leaders. Agreement would then be reached on allocation of ministerial responsibility. At this point agreement on a standing sub-committee could be reached, allowing the parties to continue with ongoing discussions about policy areas which have not yet been collectively agreed.

Finally, the Assembly would be summoned to approve the membership of the Executive and endorse the Programme for Government.

We believe that all of this can be done quite quickly, allowing the Executive and the Assembly to have ownership of a collectively agreed Programme for Government, for which they would accept responsibility and accountability. It would also send a very clear message to the electorate that genuine cooperation was to be the hallmark of the next Assembly.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes in a form of devolution that can be seen to make a difference for the better: a form of government which both addresses problems and delivers solutions. A form of government which enjoys the confidence of the people.

But we also acknowledge that the best form of government is one which is held to account by a formal and officially recognised Opposition. More than that, we also believe that voters should have a real choice between a sitting government and a credible alternative to that government. When voters don't have a choice at elections they tend to disconnect from the political process and stay at home on polling day. That is bad for democracy and bad for government.

So that is what we mean by a **political game-changer**: Ensuring that the Programme for Government reflects the views of all of the parties in the Executive and binds us to joint delivery and collective responsibility. And along with that, building internal structures in which an Opposition can challenge, hold to account, offer alternatives and provide choice at elections.

ECONOMY

It is not the role of the politician to create jobs, any more than it is to sit in a classroom trying to educate our children. The politician's responsibility is to create the circumstances where business people can thrive, allowing them to offer the employment that generates the wealth which funds our public services.

Our economy is over-reliant on the public sector. That is a given. The answer is not to cut, slash and burn the public sector. The solution to rebalancing our economy lies in three actions: growing the private sector; enhancing the power of the social economy to liberate those currently shackled in the poverty trap; and ensuring each and every public service job has meaning and purpose for the post holder and the public alike.

Ask the private sector what they want and the answers are clear. It begins with devolving the power to vary Corporation Tax. Others hesitate at the thought of taking such responsibility; this is the story of devolved government in the last four years – missed opportunities, wasted money.

Should we decide to lower Corporation Tax we propose to do it incrementally over a period of up to ten years and in a manner which is flexible and sensitive to an ever-changing economic environment. The implications for a differentiated Corporation Tax rate for the Block Grant must be addressed, for example, with an imaginative review of non-domestic rates.

Corporation Tax alone will not solve our problems. It is the centrepiece in what must be a basket of initiatives, comprising the Economic Enterprise Zone envisioned in our 2010 Manifesto. We remain committed to making it happen.

The Ulster Unionist Party wishes to see action in the Assembly and, where appropriate, the UK Government and EU. Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- **Planning.** We understand the frustrations of the business community and are committed to a fast-track process that is consistent with the mantra that "Northern Ireland is Open for Business". Again, this requires a cross-cutting (Game Changing) approach from the Executive;
- **Research & Development and Innovation.** This area is critical to the private sector's future prospects. The Ulster Unionist Party will work to promote, advance and embed the culture of Research & Development and Innovative thinking by showcasing the successes of those already succeeding in this area, such as the roll-out companies created by our two universities;

- Advancing the links between our Further Education College network and business, ensuring that these Colleges are at the negotiating table when indigenous companies and Foreign Direct Investors identify the skills they require from future work forces (another cross-cutting proposal, requiring the Game Changing approach to the 2011 Assembly);
- A 5% VAT rate on the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RM&I) of domestic dwellings. This would form part of the Enterprise Zone and mirror the advantages of the existing rate applied on the Isle of Man, enabled by HM Treasury's successful lobbying of the EU for the derogation;
- Less red tape. It is our duty to free up entrepreneurs to do what they do best; generate the wealth that yields the taxes which fund public services.

Our private sector is founded on SMEs (Small & Medium sized Enterprises). To further promote their cause, we have identified three key action points:

- The immediate publication of PPS 5 to support town centres and smaller retailers;
- Developing incentives for businesses to invest in energy saving technologies and environmental improvement;

TOURISM

This is an area requiring not only cross-cutting inter-departmental co-operation; it requires cross-border liaison to ensure Northern Ireland maximises the potential mature tourism market in the Republic of Ireland.

- Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to; A joint review by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of the Republic of Ireland into the workings of Tourism Ireland to ensure that both jurisdictions are maximizing their tourist potential and that Northern Ireland is assured of the maximum benefits relative to its participation in tourism promotions;
- A joint cross Departmental Cultural Tourism Strategy to maximise the potential of cultural tourism in Northern Ireland;
- An increased Tourism Innovation Fund to develop products and services to ensure that the most is made out of Northern Ireland's attractions and recent capital investments in the tourism sector. As capital funding is likely to reduce over the next four years, emphasis on the quality of tourism products will be crucial to increasing tourist numbers and improving visitor spends;
- Securing the power to produce a Northern Ireland Aviation Strategy, devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly allowing a more strategic approach to international competition, integrated aviation infrastructure and co-ordinated approach to securing new air routes.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES & PUBLIC SAFETY

The Health Service and its staff care for you. The Ulster Unionist Party cares for the Health Service and its staff; we can put it no more simply than that. It follows, therefore, that we reject the First Minister's comment that it would be "obscene" to offer the NHS further funding. We will never waver or vary from our position of defending the Health Service against Sinn Fein / DUP cuts.

The Ulster Unionist Party will never change the concept that is the heartbeat of the National Health Service: healthcare is free at the point of use and available to everyone on the basis of need, not the ability to pay.

Over the last four years the Ulster Unionists have achieved much for your Health Service. Our Minister was the only one to complete his Review of Public Administration, reducing the number of Health & Social Care bodies from 38 to 17. We have also cut the number of senior managers by over 60%, cutting layers of administration and bringing those in charge of strategic planning closer to the end user. These reforms have given rise to £53 million a year being redirected from administration to frontline services.

We have done more:

- Free prescriptions introduced on 1st April 2010;
- A projected saving of £88 million by prescribing non-generic drug brands;
- 38 new health service dentists in access hotspots, providing services for 57,000 people across Northern Ireland.
- The long list of achievements continues.

In our rapidly changing world where more people live longer, the implications are felt acutely in health and social care provision. Technological advances open doors to previously unimagined solutions, but at a cost; with an ageing population there is a need to keep medical treatments continually under review. ; Training and qualifications that used to last a lifetime are obsolete within a few years. The gap between what we need to do and what we can afford to do will be increasingly challenging over the coming years. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to protecting health spending.

In the elongated debate over the Budget, Health became the beacon that shone a bright light on the dysfunctional of the current arrangements governing the Executive. That debate descended into a personal attack on the Health Minister. This is not only totally unacceptable;

it illustrates perfectly how the various departments of government function in isolation, without regard to the bigger picture of a coherent, cohesive approach to government. Only our Game-Changing proposal of agreeing the Programme for Government before allocating Ministries will allow for a better, functional future.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Ensure the continuing benefits of free prescriptions,; in doing all we can to ensure people access the medication they need to return to good health and well-being, and assist the economy by returning to work as quickly as possible;
- Refine the circumstances that allow the GP to act as the patient's guide and mentor as they take their journey through the Health Service;
- Facilitate meaningful dialogue between GPs and Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) to ensure doctors commission the services, treatments and therapies that are appropriate to their area;
- Drive up quality of provision, continue to tackle waiting lists and improve cleanliness and infection control;
- Continue to promote mental good health and well-being. It remains the case that one in four of the population is likely to suffer a mental health issue, with a cost to the UK economy estimated at some £77 billion per annum. Much work remains to be done, including the initial issue of the continuing and unjustified stigma many people still attach to mental health issues;
- Health inequalities caused by variations in the social determinants of health such as poverty, education, housing and environment continue to deprive many people of the health and well-being to which they are entitled. The Ulster Unionist Party remains committed to the health protection and health improvement role of the Public Health Agency and their work to address the causes of ill health;
- Continue to implement the Bamford Report in full; The Ulster Unionist Party will continue to promote cross-cutting initiatives that tackle social injustices, addressing lifestyle problems like obesity, smoking, substance and alcohol abuse.

Public Safety is a critical element of this Departmental brief. During the term of the last Assembly, we invested £26 million in new fire appliances, fire fighting equipment, updated IT systems and a programme to modernise or replace fire stations. 14 new appliances were purchased in 2009/2010 at a cost of £2.7 million.

EDUCATION

The last four years are too horrific to detail here. Change is required, and quickly. Of all the parties who could take the Education Ministry in May, only the Ulster Unionists have the track record of selfless public service to manage that reform. Our mantra is “Country first, Party second, Individual third.”

We seek to replace the current policy of “Every School a Good School” with a policy that determines that “Every Child a Cherished Child”.

It is acknowledged that disadvantage and deprivation are linked to patterns of educational underachievement and cycles of deprivation. Resigning people to a lifetime on benefits or accepting that many people, who are at risk, will enter into the Criminal Justice System or live harmful lifestyles, not only gives rise to unfulfilled lives; it also creates significant costs to the Education, Justice and Health Systems in Northern Ireland. The conclusion is that we cannot get to where we need to be by relying solely on our schools and teachers; as ever, positive change requires a Game-Changing cross-cutting approach.

Early Years

The Ulster Unionist Party wants the next Programme for Government to prioritise Early Intervention as a main policy pillar for fighting educational underachievement, poverty and cycles of deprivation.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Pre-school education as a universal entitlement;
- In line with our Game-Changing call to produce a Programme for Government before the appointment of Ministers, we would introduce a cross-cutting Early Years Strategy for all children 0-6, offering integrated support for children, families and communities on issues relating to parenting skills, education, health and justice;
- A cross-Departmental Early Years Fund to help finance the Early Years Strategy;
- Equitable provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Education System

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that there are four interrelated and essential challenges facing the education system in Northern Ireland: educational underachievement; stalled administrative reform; fiscal constraint and the need to utilize the school estate.

The unnecessarily unresolved debate over post-primary transfer arrangements has taken a focus off the critical issue of underachievement in our schools. We have pupils leaving schools with the best results in the UK, but we have many leaving school with nothing. This clearly defines where resources are required.

The Minister, in focusing on removing grammar schools from Northern Ireland, ignored schools struggling with underachievement and refused to provide a vision for the future or implement meaningful change. Similarly the much needed reform and streamlining of our administration arrangements has become stuck in a quagmire of unnecessary political dispute. Due to the failure to agree the remit of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), our administration system is in a mess with staff morale across the education sector at an all time low. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to bringing stability back to education in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party is therefore committed to addressing educational underachievement through:

Empowering Schools

- Devolving more power and flexibility to Head Teachers to apply local knowledge to designing strategies to achieve curriculum objectives;
- Move from the current “high assessment, low trust” culture to one which puts greater trust in Head Teachers and their staff;
- Build on best practice in information-sharing across the sector;
- Advancing the status of teaching as a desirable profession, with a Teach First programme modelled on internationally successful precedents;
- Offering incentives to make working in schools with acknowledged levels of underachievement attractive to our best and most gifted teachers;
- Introducing a dedicated ‘Pupil Addition’ to ensure that extra funding to tackle underachievement is dedicated to the needs of individual children. “Every Child a Cherished Child”;

- Building on Area Learning Models to ensure schools defined by their differences liaise more closely. We learn more from those with whom we have distinct experiences;
- Learning the lessons of cohesion within our Special Schools sector, where there is an exclusive focus on the individual needs of every child with SEN;
- Replacing Free School Meals as a social index, with a more robust and fairer way of establishing need.

Let Teachers Teach

Teachers will tell you they have been fed a continuous diet of curriculum change. We have listened, and enough is enough. We seek a quiet period of certainty in which teachers can get on with what they are qualified to do: teach.

We propose no statutory changes for a period of two academic years, to provide the stable environment in which teachers can plan with confidence their day-to-day activity.

Post Primary Transfer

The public were clear when asked in the Department of Education's Household Survey in 2003: they did not like the 11-Plus examination, but did favour academic selection. Our policy is to retain academic selection but the current situation, where there are two unregulated tests in play, is not acceptable. In effect, it reflects the fact that the state has lost control of state education. We will move to seek the introduction of a single test for the period of two years, giving the space to agree a new assessment process as a final replacement for the 11-Plus.

Beyond the Classroom

Improving educational attainment cannot be achieved solely in the classroom or by teacher and pupil alone. A Game-Changing, cross-cutting strategy is required to promote a greater understanding of the value of education among families and communities. The Extended School programme is one such strategy to be promoted.

Utilizing the School Estate

It does the child no service to offer an education on a school campus which has dropped below the critical mass required for the full educational experience, academic, vocational, sporting and artistic.

Our policy will be to put the pupil first: 'Every Child a Cherished Child'

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- School and community led Area Based Planning and Area Learning Communities, delivering organic collaboration, sharing of facilities and/or the merging of schools into Community Schools;
- Developing opportunities for shared campuses to best utilise resources, provide more choice and build relations between schools, whilst maintaining plurality, school ethos and choice of provision;
- Promoting shared education as a contributing factor to a shared future;
- Introducing a Community Use of Schools Strategy;
- Recognising the unique role rural schools can play in maintaining the viability of rural communities.

Reforming Education Administration

The current economic climate brings a focus to the need to cut waste, and there is no doubt that the multiple layers of administration in our varied education system should be a target for such rationalisation.

It is a matter of regret that debate over the introduction of an Education and Skills Authority have been stalled because some see its introduction as an engine of social engineering and ideological control, whereas its purpose should be to facilitate efficiencies, redirecting funding from administration to frontline teaching services. The Ulster Unionist Party remains committed to a single Education and Skills Authority which can deliver these efficiencies. The Ulster Unionist Party is also committed to ensuring that the positions of Transferor's representatives are protected in any new authority.

Other parties will use education as a political football in this campaign. We will not. If anyone wants a genuine debate on creating a single schools' system, that debate belongs in the Assembly; not in the chamber of a newly created Commission. We stand for cutting bureaucracy and for politicians making the decisions they are elected and paid to make.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

It would be wrong to think of the Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) as a purely functional, inward-focused and benign unit, overseeing the processes of government. It sits at the heart of government, part of the solution, but also part of the problem.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Advance its ability to be an agent for positive change, particularly in the field of Innovation, where it has some track record of success, e.g. in the field of Digital Inclusion;
- Make it easier for our indigenous SMEs to break into government procurement, both here and in Great Britain. UK-wide, this is a £2 billion a year market, with immense potential for wealth creation in Northern Ireland. It is important that where possible, social contracts should be included within procurement arrangements.
- End the wasteful overlap, particularly within the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) and stop slowing procurement and sign-off processes to the point they kill off viable proposals. A case in point was the failure to process the business case for the proposed radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin hospital in time for approval before the 2007 Assembly was dissolved.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

No one will forget last Christmas, when this Department presided over the water crisis which saw homes cut off from their supply for over a week; and the fiasco of ungritted roads and pavements as those elected to serve the public argued among themselves over who had responsibility for latter.

That said, if the measure of success of devolved government is seeing positive changes in peoples day-to-day lives, then the queues at the water bowsers is a strikingly visible sign of failure by DRD.

As with all devolved government departments DRD cannot function successfully in its silo. As the Assembly dissolved for this election, the Department announced its plan to charge for on-street parking in thirty towns across Northern Ireland. The projected revenue is miniscule compared to the costs that will have to be borne should our High Street traders collapse under the relentless pressure of competition from the multinational retailers, and is inconsistent with creating the environment in which business people can flourish. The UUP would not implement this Sinn Fein proposal.

DRD, like other departments regarded as the “engines” of government, has the power to liberate, energise and empower our society; yet all we remember to date is its ability to create chaos.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Celebrate Project Kelvin as an example of how we can create world-class infrastructure and give us an international advantage in attracting financial and digital businesses to Northern Ireland;
- An urgent review of the decision to commit over 50% of DRD’s next budget to a road from Donegal to Dublin. We advocate a refocusing on the need to commission the A2 project at Greenisland, rather than the A5 Western Transport Corridor;
- A sensible debate on our water and sewerage infrastructure but, as always, we point out this cannot be achieved without a commitment to a Game-Changing cross-cutting strategy. It is important to remember that we already pay for our water and sewerage through the domestic regional rate each year; this accounts for approximately £160 per household. Before any future decision is taken on water charging, the Ulster Unionist Party believes that there should be a full and detailed breakdown of how the existing revenue, generated by the regional rate, is spent. We are also extremely concerned that, according

to the Utility Regulator, the 2011 Budget has left Northern Ireland Water facing a shortfall of £48million by 2013.

- A Regional Aviation strategy;
- Rebalancing Air Passenger Duty (APD), to remove the existing monetary incentive to fly from Dublin rather than Belfast. The cross-cutting departments in this case are OFMdFM and DE-TI.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Northern Ireland is a beautiful place to live and work, however change by both man and nature is putting that at risk. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to introducing sustainable development as a key pillar in Governmental policy; for without it the future looks uncertain.

We cannot ignore the role that Northern Ireland has to play in tackling the growing crisis of climate change; it is a global phenomenon of which we are a significant contributor but we have yet to genuinely tackle the issue. The Ulster Unionist Party strongly believes that we all have a responsibility to create a clean and healthy environment to pass onto our next generation.

The Ulster Unionist Party wants to see a more energy efficient society with a greater public understanding of environmental issues, leading to a consequential reduction in carbon emissions.

Northern Ireland has the ability to be a market leader in green goods and services. Our geographical location, an abundance of natural resources and a skilled workforce means we have all the components required to become a world leader in green technology. Not only would this almost instantly help us to meet our targets on renewable energy but it also has the potential to create tens of thousands of new jobs. Green New Deal

Northern Ireland is far too dependent upon imported fossil fuels leaving us dangerously exposed in terms of energy security. Energy users in the domestic, commercial, industrial, transport and public sectors spend a total of £2.3 billion a year on energy here; 99% of this comes from imported fossil fuels. This is unsustainable. Northern Ireland needs an energy policy that is clear, consistent and unambiguous – the current Strategic Energy Framework, whilst a step in the right direction, is still not binding enough.

Our planning system needs reformed so that intended renewable energy projects no longer face unacceptable delays and bureaucratic hurdles. We should be promoting wind, solar, waste, biomass and tidal energy rather than delaying it. We also need to ensure that waste products from existing power stations are fully utilized rather than being dumped as is currently happening.

Our Province is extremely fortunate to have such a diverse natural environment, however without constant care and attention it could very quickly become at risk. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to conserving Northern Ireland's natural wildlife. Northern Ireland urgently

needs to make the transition from a carbon dependent state to a low carbon economy, not only to protect Northern Ireland's energy security but to also conserve our environment for future generations.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- A representative advisory board for the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency;
- Placing a statutory duty upon the Executive, Assembly and local Councils to promote sustainable development and planning;
- In partnership with the other devolved regions, working to deliver the UK's targets for the reduction of carbon emissions;
- Placing renewed focus on identifying and exploiting sources of renewable energy including fully utilizing the public sector estate in Northern Ireland to generate electricity;
- Introducing a Marine Act, which will include the creation of a marine management body to protect our seas, coastal areas and maritime environments;
- Supporting the streamlining of local Government and the reduction of the number of Local Authorities from 26 to 15;
- Campaigning for the reintroduction of the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme in Northern Ireland;
- Improving facilities and public access to publicly owned woodland;
- A flexible planning system that recognises the opportunities for development in some areas and restrictions required in other areas. This is very relevant in tourism and business developments.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Ulster Unionists care passionately about Northern Ireland's countryside and our rich rural heritage, about farming and our rural communities. They are an essential part of Northern Ireland's social and economic fabric. We have a vision of vibrant rural communities, together with a thriving agri-food sector taking their place at the heart of a modern, confident and outward looking Northern Ireland.

We want to create the conditions where one of our traditionally strong industries is transformed into a key driver of economic growth in the 21st century. We understand the strategic importance of agriculture to the wider economy and the essential role the agri-food sector has to play in building a stronger, more vibrant and dynamic economy.

It is estimated by the industry that agrifood supports one in five of all private sector jobs and that despite the challenging economic circumstances the industry's turnover increased by almost £429 million from 2007 – 2009. However, we still have some distance to travel if we are to maximise the agri-food sector's contribution to rebuilding the Northern Ireland economy.

Growing the agri-food sector will not happen without the raw materials supplied by our farmers and fishermen. Farmers in Northern Ireland produce a quality product to the highest standard of environmental protection, animal welfare and traceability.

Ulster Unionists are rightly proud of the rich and historic tradition of quality farming and fishing practices that exist in Northern Ireland. But in the years ahead farming and commercial fishing in Northern Ireland face many challenges such as the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policies threats from international trade negotiations; a lack of business credit available from banks; market volatility; rising input costs for the 3 F's – fuel, fertiliser and feed. There is also a need to focus on reducing red tape within the industry. We will continue to encourage farm diversification and ensuring the next generation of farmers enter the industry.

Northern Ireland agriculture faces no bigger challenge at the present moment than the CAP reform process. The challenge for the future is to provide stability for farmers while helping them become more market orientated, more responsive to environmental needs and to ensure they have a level playing field upon which to compete.

Ulster Unionists will work at a local, National and European level to deliver a strong, well-funded and fair Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for both farmers and consumers which reflects

the central importance of farming to the economy, to society and to the environment whilst acknowledging consumer concerns about food quality and food security.

We support the retention of the two Pillar structure of the CAP, the continuation of direct payments to farmers from Pillar 1, the opposition to the further greening of Pillar 1, the retention of LFA payments in Pillar 2 and a fairer deal for the UK in the next round of rural development funding. Reforms to the CAP must be introduced gradually over a period of time and at a pace that allows farmers to adapt to change.

Ulster Unionists believe that Northern Ireland needs strong, vibrant and sustainable rural communities. We have a vision of rural development policy coherently addressing the ever changing economic, social and environmental needs of rural communities. No longer is it just rural communities who have an intimate connection with the farming industry. Because of the rising cost of food growing numbers of consumers are now increasingly interested in where their food is from and how it is produced. Therefore it is our duty and obligation as a society to do more to protect the character and integrity of rural communities across Northern Ireland.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Supporting the creation of a Northern Ireland food and drink taskforce by the Northern Ireland Executive to devise a focused, integrated strategy for growing the agric – food sector;
- Promoting in a more robust and strategic way food tourism in Northern Ireland from the producer right through to chefs, cookery schools and restaurants. A food tourism strategy devised by DARD, DETI and NITB would take advantage of our natural abilities in this area and also maximise existing opportunities through the 'Taste of Ulster' brand;
- The introduction of a public procurement strategy to empower government departments and agencies to source a high proportion of food from local, Northern Ireland producers;
- The proper implementation of Dad's Agric-Food Better Regulation Review Taskforce because Ulster Unionists understand that farmers are all too often crippled by red tape and bureaucracy;
- Supporting the continued funding for the New Entrants Scheme to ensure that young people can still choose a career in agriculture and the maintenance of modern educational facilities at CAFRE which is essential to both the agric-food and equine industries.
- Implementing a more robust, coordinated and focused animal disease strategy which prioritises the eradication of both bovine TB and Brucellosis to deal with the problem once and for all;

- Abolish the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB). It is an unnecessary quango that needlessly costs the tax payer thousands each year. Its utility is even more questionable given the existence of the minimum wage;
- Supporting measures that encourage farm diversification, particularly in the area of renewable energy. Ulster Unionists believe that the farming community have an important contribution to make in the fight to reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change. Reducing the barriers to and encouraging the production of renewable energy sources on agricultural land is central to this challenge and could become new income sources for farm enterprises, helping to increase and diversify income.
- The prompt implementation of the UK Government's proposals of a Grocery Code Adjudicator (GCA) to oversee the UK wide Grocery Supply Code of Practice. If sufficiently robust and independent this ombudsman can help restore farmers' and consumers' confidence in the fairness, transparency and openness of the supply chain

CULTURE, ARTS & LEISURE

In the current economic circumstances, the Ulster Unionist Party recognises that other spending priorities must take precedence over the arts, and we wish to see the great majority of public funds devoted to areas with an evidence base of delivering benefit to society: community arts which empower, liberate and create increased cohesion on the ground; the performing arts which can leverage several pounds of spending in the local economy for every public pound invested; and the emerging industries, such as the successful development of the Paint Shop in the Titanic Quarter as a hub for film and television production.

What the Ulster Unionist Party will **not** do is impose our party political ideology on the arts or any artistic organisation. History is not kind to those parties who walk that road. We remain committed to supporting local talent; therefore we will continue to promote investment into events such as the Belfast Festival at Queen's to enable our artists to showcase their talents.

With a series of centenary celebrations in the pipeline, the Ulster Unionist Party believes this is the time to advance international understanding and appreciation of the contribution of those of Ulster Scots (or Scotch-Irish) origin; not just US Presidents, but economists, philosophers, space adventurers, the people who have brought non-conformist, transformational thinking to the free world.

The Ulster Unionist Party acknowledges the significant role that cultural organisations play within the Northern Ireland community and we respect the right of all to celebrate their culture and heritage in a lawful, respectful, non-threatening manner. The Ulster Unionist Party remains opposed to an Irish Language Act. We regard such an act as unwarranted, costly and overtly divisive.

The current Budget has allocated £138 million to the development of facilities for a selected number of sports. The Ulster Unionist Party accepts the need is pressing, particularly for the national football stadium, but also recognises two other factors: the significant compelling requirements of other services, not least Health; and the five sports proposals previously promised funding, but since denied.

Northern Ireland could have had a new national stadium in time for our children to feel part of next summer's London Olympics. The failure is a reminder of missed opportunities.

We wish to see our national teams succeed in well-equipped, modern facilities. But success is most likely to result from long-term strategic thinking. The Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure must refocus on grassroots participation. Just as educational reform requires the input of families and communities, sporting success at the high end of international performance begins with participation by all.

POLICING & JUSTICE

The Ulster Unionist Party has always been the party of Law and Order. Across the decades many of our members, officers and elected representatives have served with the RUC, RUC Reserve, UDR, RIR and PSNI. They were and are proud to serve for Northern Ireland and determined to protect the lives, property and human rights of everyone who lives here.

We fully support the work of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and our Justice System. We are committed to a policing service that is fit for purpose, supported by a Justice system that protects the innocent, supports the victim and punishes the guilty, firmly and appropriately.

While it is wrong to overestimate the threat from and potential of dissident and other terrorist groups, it is similarly wrong to underestimate the threat they pose either now or in the future.

Condemnation of their activities is well deserved and we welcome the fact that the condemnation embraces all of the parties within the Assembly, as well an overwhelming number of people and organisations. But condemnation is not, in itself, enough.

It is vital therefore that the PSNI has all of the resources it needs in terms of funding, manpower and support from other security forces to tackle the threat of terrorism. Others who are former colleagues of the current dissident republicans could provide valuable information to the security services to greatly assist in the removal of the current terrorist actions and threat.

But we also recognise that many people, particularly the more vulnerable members of society, want visible, regular, normal policing in their communities. This visibility is important for public confidence and in reducing both crime and the fear of crime.

People have a right to feel safe in their homes, on the street, on public transport and in their wider community. They have a right to around-the-clock support from the forces of law and order. They have a right to a safe society.

Justice

The Ulster Unionist Party remains concerned about the unfinished business and uncertainty within the Justice Ministry, particularly in relation to the sunset clause that was included in the Hillsborough Agreement. This concession to Sinn Fein, made during the negotiating process, has created a very real danger that in 2012 they could take up the Justice Ministry.

Domestic Violence

There is a growing recognition of the need to understand the issues around domestic violence and to strengthen the way in which domestic violence and abuse cases are handled by the criminal justice system. Ulster Unionists are committed to building upon the recent Northern Ireland roll-out of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) by promoting the introduction of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors.

We are committed to helping and supporting the voluntary and community sector that provide a wide range of services to those affected by domestic violence. There is a growing recognition of the need to understand the issues around domestic violence and to strengthen the way in which domestic violence and abuse cases are handled by the criminal justice system.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Building upon the recent Northern Ireland roll-out of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) by promoting the introduction of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors;
- Raising awareness of the prevalence of human trafficking in Northern Ireland and acting to ensure that Northern Ireland is a hostile place for traffickers.

Combating Anti-Social Behaviour

Combating anti-social behaviour can quite clearly be helped through the use of **early intervention**. This of course requires a cross-departmental approach in which the Department of Justice would undoubtedly play a role.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

An overhaul of the Prison Service in Northern Ireland is needed. The current Justice Minister has overseen a number of catastrophes such as the mistaken release of prisoners, deaths in custody and the problems created by dissidents in Roe House in Maghaberry. The Ulster Unionist Party is mindful of the need for change and awaits the findings of the Prison Review Team who are currently undertaking an investigation into the Service as a whole.

The Ulster Unionist Party also believes that punishment for crime should never be about short-term options. The primary purpose of punishment must be to prevent offenders from returning to crime and discouraging potential offenders from getting involved in the first place. That clearly won't work with a system which seems to favour short sentences, suspended sentences, community orders or 'letting-off-with-a-warning'.

EMPLOYMENT & LEARNING

With Queen's University, the University of Ulster, St Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, Belfast Metropolitan College and five regional colleges, Northern Ireland offers some of the UK's best opportunities for further and higher education.

Queen's University is a member of the elite Russell Group of universities and attracts outstanding students and academics from across the world.

In what will continue to be a difficult economic climate it is vital that Northern Ireland has an educated, trained and enthusiastic pool of talent to draw on if we are to compete in the local, national and international markets.

At the beginning of March Danny Kennedy announced a consultation aimed at developing a strategy for continuing to widen participation in higher education. It is about ensuring that those who are most able but least likely to participate in higher education will be given every encouragement and support to do so.

But it is also vital that young people, parents and teachers all recognise that university is not the only educational and career pathway available. Northern Ireland's Further Education Colleges offer local, career-focused courses which give the skills that allow young people to flourish. Whether it is through higher or further education, we all have an interest in ensuring that our young people take decisions which equip them to start off a career that is right for them and Northern Ireland plc.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports the development and encouragement of apprenticeships across a range of businesses and industries. They are important for both the business and the apprentice and it is similarly important that incentives are provided for both.

Under the guidance of Sir Reg Empey and then Danny Kennedy, participation rates in higher education are at record levels. In particular Northern Ireland outperforms England, Scotland and Wales in terms of the percentage of pupils from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds going on to university.

Also, the Department provided emergency support to businesses to keep up training and employment during downturn.

There have been significant new builds across the colleges of Further Education.

A large number of adult literacy programmes have been completed.

An adult careers strategy has been developed and fore-fronted.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- The nurturing of links between our universities and colleges and our local businesses; Supporting the ongoing funding of world class research and development projects at our universities; Supporting the building of a one-stop shop for training for industry, including inward investment;
- It is also important to reduce the numbers of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training. And tied in with this aim is the need to promote adequate literacy provision at both primary and adult levels.

Many people who find it difficult to get employment have problems that can be sourced to upbringing, social background, a poor primary education and a consequent lack of personal confidence at secondary level. It is essential therefore that there be put in place an overarching strategy for ensuring that no one is left behind at any level of the educational system. The Departments of Education, Employment and Learning and Social Development must work together in order to catch the likely underachievers before they fall too far.

This strategy should be one of the priorities of the new Programme for Government: and the newly appointed ministers should jointly commit themselves to it at the time of their nominations.

A rounded education is one of the most important things that a government can provide a child; and it is best provided under the framework of a costed, joined-up strategy covering the years from nursery to first employment.

OFFICES OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

The arrangements of the past four years have meant that the Department represented a carve-up between the DUP and Sinn Fein, rather than a cooperative team jointly directing a Programme for Government.

Putting it bluntly, how can you expect the Executive to function effectively when the DUP and Sinn Fein find it so difficult (and in a number of cases have found it impossible) to reach agreement on core issues? How can they talk about Northern Ireland 'moving on' when they themselves, are so often stuck in a rut, guided by signposts which point to the past rather than the future?

Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness have talked about their common desire to build a shared future. Yet their Cohesion and Social Integration Strategy (CSI) doesn't even agree on the definition of a shared future and, consequently, the CSI document has been rejected by the very community groups which were expected to endorse it!

They have failed to reach agreement on the future of the Maze and on most aspects of the Reform of Public Administration. Instead of grasping nettles and reaching decisions they put almost everything out for public consultation.

The real problem is that the DUP and Sinn Fein are seeking to govern in their own political and electoral interests rather than in the long-term interests of Northern Ireland as a whole. The Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy provided the Executive with a genuine opportunity to address societal divisions throughout Northern Ireland, but as was so clearly shown by its unanimous rejection; they failed to grasp the opportunity.

In the next four years, OFMdfM will have responsibility for key groups in our society. A Commissioner for Older People will be appointed, and that process must not replicate the delay and shambles that characterised the creation of the Commission for Victims and Survivors. Victims themselves have suffered repeated delays in the introduction of the new Service, and in 2011 OFMdfM must reinvent itself as a Department that delivers.

We consider the failure of OFMdfM to find a long term resolution on the issue of disputed parades in Northern Ireland as extremely unfortunate. The Ulster Unionist Party want to see the end of the Parades Commission – however, we are not in favour of replacing it with a more complex and potentially divisive system as was proposed within the Public Assemblies , Parades and Protests Bill.

As part of our proposed political Game-Changer we want OFMdfM to take responsibility for the Programme for Government as agreed by all of the parties; ensure that all Ministers do what is required of them by the Programme for Government; and jointly chair an all-party committee to discuss other outstanding issues.

Good government, properly and efficiently delivered, requires trust and cooperation between all of the parties and not just some of them.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Political parties and community groups like to talk about the 'peace dividend' and 'benefits of the peace process'; yet for many people, particularly the elderly, vulnerable and socially disadvantaged, it's still more about talk than actual benefit.

More worryingly, election statistics suggest that it's these vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups who feel most disconnected from the political process and institutions and who are choosing not to vote for any party.

Restoring devolution wasn't just about putting all of the parties in one place and telling each other that 'everything is better than it used to be.' The real purpose of devolution is the provision of good, accountable government: government that makes a difference for the better for everyone.

The Ulster Unionist Party is determined to make government work for everyone in Northern Ireland. And in the formation of the Programme for Government we will be asking the other parties to work with us to prioritise the needs and concerns of those communities and social groups who believe that they have been left behind.

At the core of our approach must be an overarching strategy for urban regeneration, community and voluntary sector development and a raft of social legislation to address endemic and ongoing problems. In Particular we remain committed to the Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme, in which we would specifically target small pockets of deprivation.

If we are to build and nurture a new-era Northern Ireland society underpinned by a genuinely shared future together, then we have to begin by making sure that everyone is included in that vision.

There are still too many families living in poor housing, too many people trapped in poverty, their ambitions frustrated, their aspirations low. There are still too many children who are the victims of poverty or neglect. The Ulster Unionist Party believes in quality of life and social justice built upon the firm foundations of opportunity, security, fairness and responsibility.

We believe in building stronger, safer, fairer communities where all children can flourish, families prosper and the elderly live in dignity and security. We believe that by building stronger communities we can make society a better place for all of us. We will not stand by and watch any of our communities or neighbourhoods abandoned to despair, environmental decay, anti-social behaviour or government neglect.

Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of persons who suffer from a registered disability in Europe. We must ensure that every citizen is afforded the widest possible levels of choice and opportunity. Discrimination because of disability can never be tolerated.

Learning disability is a growing issue in Northern Ireland; often those with learning disabilities are excluded from mainstream activities. The Ulster Unionist Party calls on the Executive to agree a programme that enables every person with a learning disability the opportunity, in their local community, to participate in high quality sport and development activities that bring life-changing experiences of increased skills and self-confidence.

Ulster Unionists are determined to make Northern Ireland a society where everyone, regardless of gender, race or creed has equality of opportunity. We want to create opportunities for women of all ages, providing them with genuine choices, empowering each to reach their full potential and to further maximise their contribution to society.

Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to;

- Ensuring the implementation of a Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland – making the workplace more accessible;
- Supporting strategies which promote enrolment in STEM subjects;
- Tackling the gender pay gap in Northern Ireland – securing equality in the workplace;
- Ensuring that preventative work which educates our children and young people about safe and healthy relationships is promoted and properly resourced;
- Working to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive the necessary support throughout the criminal justice system to enable them to proceed with prosecutions.

The growing ethnic and cultural diversity that Northern Ireland has experienced in recent years is a sign of a maturing and welcoming country and should be supported by all.

There is currently greater protection from unlawful racial discrimination in Great Britain than in Northern Ireland. We call for the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 to be amended as a matter of urgency.

The Ulster Unionist Party understands the unequalled contribution that our older population have already made to our society. As a party we have already placed a large emphasis on making sure that those older people who wish to remain in their own homes are given every support to do so, making a clear shift from institutional care to care at home.

We also call for spending on the Warm Homes Scheme to be maintained at £20million and for boiler replacements to be reintroduced to the scheme. Given the growing levels of pensioner poverty we are also calling for the continuation of benefit uptake programmes and that automatic payment of benefits are seriously considered.

EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Ulster Unionists understand that we live in an interconnected and interdependent world. We also recognise that globalisation has brought with it tremendous new opportunities but also new challenges which we must address at all levels of government and society.

It is estimated that around 65 – 70% of all legislation dealt with and considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly originates in the European Union. Despite this fact the devolved institutions remain puzzled, confused and inconsistent in their relationship with the European institutions. In the next Assembly there is a greater need to monitor and assess the impact of EU legislation and to promote and protect Northern Ireland's interests in the European legislative process.

Ulster Unionists recognise that Northern Ireland has benefited greatly from the goodwill and direct financial support of the international community. With devolution now settled and as our political infrastructure in Northern Ireland matures, this next Assembly is the time to take more seriously Northern Ireland's role in the wider world and to consider ways in which our relationships on these Islands, with Europe and elsewhere, can be strengthened and renewed for our mutual benefit, both in social and economic terms.

The Ulster Unionist Party is also committed to a Northern Ireland Executive International Development Policy contained within an International Relations Strategy which endorses the recent report published by the All-Party Group on International Development.

CONCLUSION

The theme of this manifesto is: Making Stormont Work—*for you*. Making it work better than it has been working.

Yes, there have been successes and achievements and we do not wish to diminish or ignore them. But they tend to be exceptions rather than the rule.

As you will see we have policies, proposals, ideas and strategies. We have policies to address a range of socioeconomic needs; proposals to ensure better delivery of policy; ideas to encourage new thinking at every level and in every area. We are calling for a strategy for inter-linking it all so that devolution really does make a difference for the better.

Now we know that we don't have all of the answers: and we know that other parties entering the Executive will have their own ideas and priorities. So in order to stop the sort of clashes that result in mistrust, silo mentality, fudge, stasis and growing disengagement with all of our voters, we have suggested a few modest changes: what we have called the Game-Changer.

We have addressed the difficulties posed by the lack of common ownership of the Programme for Government and the lack of genuine, credible cooperation at the heart of the Executive.

We have made some thoughtful, reasonable proposals about agreeing the contents of the Programme for Government and tying all of the parties into it. We have suggested setting up an all-party, ongoing committee to discuss and get agreement further down the line on some of the more difficult issues.

We have set out a simple and short timetable under which agreement can be reached.

We have made the case for an officially recognised Opposition, which will increase accountability, offer alternative opinions and allow real choice at elections.

None of these changes represent any personal advantage or gain for the Ulster Unionist Party. Rather, they are our proposals for helping all of the parties to govern better, by governing together.

The nature of coalition government here means that no single party can form a government and pursue its own agenda at the expense of others. But it must also mean that some parties can't gang up on others, or go out of their way to hinder and veto each other. That, as we can all see, results in bad government, slow response and public disillusion.

Government works best when it is based on common ownership of the Programme for Government; collective responsibility, individual accountability and a shared platform.

The Ulster Unionist Party has a vision of the parties working together and governing together to create a vibrant, confident, enthusiastic and proud post-conflict Northern Ireland. A Northern Ireland of equals and not a Northern Ireland of separated parts.

At this point no party can be sure how many Ministries it will be entitled to, let alone what Departments it will be running. But whichever Departments the Ulster Unionist Party ends up with, we will come to them with a very clear idea of what is needed for Northern Ireland and what is required of us as a party. And it will be our hope that we go to those Departments with an agreed Programme for Government and the collective determination of our Executive colleagues to govern Northern Ireland in the best interests of all.

For whether some people like it or not, we are in this together, so we either swim together or sink together. There is no point in complaining about certain elements wanting to drag us back to the past if we are constantly proving that we can't work together on the way to the future.

As leader of the Ulster Unionist Party I want an Assembly and an Executive in which everyone can have **confidence**.

The Ulster Unionist Party has never lacked the **courage** to champion and pursue what we believe is best for Northern Ireland. Under my leadership we will continue to do so.

On May 5, I'm asking you to vote for the Ulster Unionist Party, maybe for the first time, maybe you're a lifelong voter, or maybe you're returning to us. But whichever it is, I'm asking you to vote for the Ulster Unionist Party and **trust** us to represent your best interests and the best interests of Northern Ireland.

