



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

*Doing what's right for Northern Ireland*



# A manifesto for ***real partnership***

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A plan for a better Northern Ireland

**Manifesto 2017**

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# Time to vote for change



Too many of our people go away to study at university and never come back. I am in the minority, a student who did return. I have never regretted it. I love Northern Ireland. I love the island of Ireland. I love the place and its people.

We excel at so much: actors, artists, musicians; inventors, industrialists, sports men and women; the list of high achievers who have helped us “box above our weight” is endless. Yet the poisonous divide that runs through our community continues with disastrous implications for our communal wellbeing and international reputation.

Some parties will ask you to vote on 2nd March on those old ‘Orange and Green’ lines. I ask you to concentrate on whether we want to have proper democracy in Northern Ireland, because if you do, this is about what voters do at elections – they either reward the government for a job well done, or give the opposition their turn to try to do better.

If ever there was an election that cried out for a vote for change, this is it!

On the day you read this, £85,000 of your money has literally gone up in smoke thanks to the botched Renewable Heat Incentive; and it will be the same tomorrow and the day after and the day after that – money we need for our Health Service, our schools and universities and all our beleaguered public services.

A vote for the Ulster Unionist Party this time is a vote for change to proper partnership government, based on respect, building trust, and the shared objective of making Northern Ireland work.

On the 2nd of March, I ask you to vote Ulster Unionist.

On the following pages, I offer a more detailed vision of unionism for Northern Ireland’s second century – Partnership, not Domination.

*Mike Nesbitt*



# Partnership not Domination



As local politics stumbles incoherently towards Northern Ireland's centenary, it seems an appropriate time to define unionism for the second century.

A real fresh start, if you like, but unlike the false dawn of the previous DUP / Sinn Féin effort. In fact, the words of the original fresh start document, the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement of 1998, remain a guiding light to unionism for our second century. It is a matter of profound regret that the public discourse on that agreement has not focused on the underpinning values we and the SDLP sought to embed into our politics.

The key paragraph from the Agreement's opening Declaration of Support is worth revisiting:

'The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all.'

19 years on, I doubt many would conclude we have done well in advancing reconciliation, tolerance or building trust.

In the very last week of the failed 2016-2021 mandate, one of the younger DUP MLAs summed it up in the debating chamber in Parliament Buildings:

"This party, over the last 10 years, has made a huge effort to move Northern Ireland forward in the right direction, even though it is very difficult to do business with a party that we do not want to do business with and, as one of our party members quite rightly said, when sometimes we have to hold our noses to do that business."

Not only is there no sweet smell of cooperation, the tenth year of DUP / Sinn Féin control has seen the whiff of something unedifying. Incompetence, arrogance and allegations of corruption are not unionist values, nor should they be the values of anyone occupying Stormont Castle, the home of the Northern Ireland Executive.

Unionism must imagine better for Northern Ireland's second century: a coalition of the willing; parties seeking proper partnerships; leaders who want to share space, power and responsibility because they understand it is for the greater good, not simply because the law says sharing is compulsory.

Imagine a Northern Ireland where the Health Service actually works as intended, with an economy that generates serious wealth for our people, generating the taxes that fund public services that are the envy of others. There is nothing orange or green about making Northern Ireland work, an aspiration I hear articulated by Colum Eastwood as often as I say it myself. Of course, his motivation is different, focused on making us more attractive to a future united Ireland; but that is no inhibition to a collective effort to improve the lot of all our people.

Imagine a single education system, where children mix from age four, receiving a virtual inoculation jab against sectarianism, but which also protects a family's right to education within a religious context.



Imagine a country that actually heeded the warning of Edward Carson from a hundred years ago about the need for a shared future. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1920, as Northern Ireland was being established, his warning to the politicians who would eventually populate Stormont was clear:

“They must forget faction and section ..... If Ulster does what I ask her to do, and what I hope and believe she will do, in setting up an example and a precedent of good government, fair government, honest government, and a government not for sections or factions, but for all, her example may be followed ...”

That’s what we must commit to for Northern Ireland’s Second Century: a fair, honest government for all, blind to factions and sections, advancing diversity for what it is, something greater than the sum of the parts.”

In his classic novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain draws a striking metaphor from the dinner table:

“When you got to the table you couldn’t go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck her head down and grumble a little over the victuals, though there wasn’t really anything the matter with them. That is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.”

Twain was, of course, discussing America’s Deep South at a time when most black men and women were not free. You might think our challenges are minor by comparison but the principle remains. Do we truly value sharing? Is it understood that when things get mixed up, they go better?

It’s not about everyone jumping into a virtual blender and emerging the human form of beige. It’s about changing the signs in the pub window from “No sports tops” to “All sports tops welcome”, cherishing and celebrating difference.

It’s about transforming society so people feel prosperous, not only economically but in mind and body. I yearn for an Executive built on a proper partnership, based on trust, equality and mutual respect. I want to Clean Up Stormont, and have published a Five Point Plan, covering: greater accountability for Ministers and for their Special Advisers; electing a Speaker by secret ballot, as they do in London, Dublin, Cardiff and Edinburgh; giving statutory committees a legal duty to scrutinise the work of Executive departments, not just “assist and advise”; ending the abuse of Petitions of Concern, and; greater transparency in politics, including financial donors.

As a Victims Commissioner, it was immediately clear that while victims and survivors are not a homogeneous group, there were common themes, like the fact there was a reasonable expectation that in the wake of the terrible event that made them victims, the state and its services would form the wagons in a circle and protect them and their families, but too often, the opposite happened.

I sat in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in south Belfast on the 20th of January, as Sir Anthony Hart delivered his report into Historical Institutional Abuse. I was surrounded by victims, some of whom had waited decades for this moment. 41 times – forty-one – Sir Anthony used the word “systemic” or “systematic” in describing the abuse carried out in the institutions he reviewed. Is it any wonder the victims felt vindicated? But they were also left deeply frustrated, because Sir Anthony’s recommendations sit in a report delivered to the Executive Office in Stormont Castle, and that department is effectively closed to those victims. That is the ultimate obscenity of this political crisis – that

people whose early years were cruelly and brutally scarred by those in whom the state put its trust, find in their later years justice and redress is, Tantalus-like, just out of reach.

It's not an experience exclusive to victims. A quarter of a million of our people are on some form of NHS Waiting List; meanwhile, GPs threaten rebellion. In education, the same families see children under-achieve at school, generation after generation; meanwhile, issues like post-primary transfer arrangements remain unresolved. And our economy continues to suffer the imbalance of an under-developed private sector; meanwhile our people are less well off than our counterparts in Great Britain.

The Executive's own Budget document for 2016-2017 makes that clear, using Gross Value Added (GVA), recognised as "a broad measure of living standards", that if someone in GB has £1 in their back pocket, our people are lucky to have 80p.

Over the last two decades, Northern Ireland's GVA per head has remained consistently at around 75 to 80 percent of the UK average – peaking at 83.7 percent in 2007.

It is noteworthy that the gap was at its narrowest in 2007, the year the DUP and Sinn Féin took charge of the Executive.

It is time unionism received the leadership that accurately reflects its positive values; time for politics to catch up with the people; time to recognise identity is not binary. My parents were Belfast traders, of Ulster Scots and French Huguenot heritage – so were Henry Joy McCracken's!

As John Hewitt put it:

'Firstly, I am an Ulsterman steeped in the traditions of this place. Secondly, I am Irish, of this Ireland. Thirdly, I am British, and finally, in a more diffuse way, I am European. It may make it easier for you to understand if you remove one of those elements but if you do you are no longer describing who I am.'

For this modern world, I would add we should all have a sense of being global, not just European citizens.

Unionism for Northern Ireland's second century needs to offer better than has been demonstrated over the last decade at Stormont – something offering integrity, something honourable, delivered by people who will put the country's interests ahead of their party's, who understand there is such a thing as the common good and the greater good. We must try to inspire and excite, at the same time reassuring them that we care for our community above our own petty self-interest.

Unionism means being united. Our second century must promote greater unity among our people than ever before; uniting education, business, industry, the public services, the Opposition at Stormont, and above all else, uniting the coalition government in united objectives, united principles, united beliefs – a government that is finally fit for purpose!

We will enter Northern Ireland's second century suffering 21st Century problems, not least our appalling rates of poor mental health and well-being. I have campaigned on this subject for over four years now, and while there is now a broad political consensus it is a massive issue, we have yet to take decisive action. If we do, we achieve a triple win: addressing one of the most toxic legacies of the conflict; helping those trapped unwillingly on benefits; and in helping people become economically active, we rebalance the economy. But above all that, we restore some dignity and purpose to the lives of so many who wake each morning denied a proper sense of purpose in their lives.

Mental health is something we could agree to action immediately, as a first step to dealing with the past. It is cruel to acknowledge the problem but leave it lingering because parties want a “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” approach. In all humanity, these people need help today.

We may not be able to solve all our great problems in a single act, or mandate, but as the great Russian writer, Ivan Turgenev puts it:

‘If we wait for the moment when everything, absolutely everything is ready, we shall never begin.’

This country needs a new beginning. The Assembly Election is that opportunity, but only if we stop voting Orange and Green and embrace democracy, where the parties of government are judged on performance and those in opposition are told if they are to be given the chance – to do better.





**Clean Up Stormont**

# 5 Point Plan



## Health

- Tackling the waiting lists crisis to prevent patients coming to any further harm
- Stabilising and reassuring our medical workforce
- Merging the five Health and Social Care Trusts into one
- Introducing a legal duty of candour and a Suicide Prevention Bill
- Placing much greater emphasis on prevention

## Education

- Plan for the future of a desegregated education system
- Deal with systemic issues like underachievement and post-primary transfer
- Delivering affordable childcare across Northern Ireland
- Develop proposals for Early Years provision for all children 0-5
- Prepare young people for life and the workplace

## Justice

- Increasing PSNI numbers to 7,500
- Supporting our Prison Service
- Tacking paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime
- Rebalancing the justice system
- Rebalancing legacy investigations

## Housing

- Building more social and affordable homes
- Tougher planning application targets
- Supporting private tenants
- Introducing a statutory duty to tackle homelessness
- Utilising the NIHE borrowing power



## **Infrastructure**

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- Prioritising the York Street Interchange
- Tackling traffic bottlenecks
- A sustainable roads maintenance budget
- A new agency for major public capital projects
- Promoting Sustainable Travel

## **Economy**

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- 2% growth, 20% of economy in manufacturing, £20bn in value of exports by NI's 2nd century
- A framework to control costs, reduce subsidy and keep the lights on
- We will deliver a simple plan which Unions and Employers want and need
- Invest in R&D, keeping higher education accessible
- Challenge Tourism Ireland to attract fair share of overseas market to NI

## **Environment**

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- Scoping study on benefits for Northern Ireland Climate Change Act
- A new enforcement model for environmental crime
- A new coastal erosion strategy
- A statutory duty on tackling invasive species
- Maintaining and expanding our woodland cover

## **Farmers**

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- Dealing with the implications of Brexit
- Championing local produce
- A fairer return for their produce
- Identifying new export markets
- Making agri-food an attractive career option

## **Supporting our communities**

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- Helping victims of the troubles
- Supporting people with disabilities, and those that care for them
- Tackling the blight of fuel poverty
- Standing up for our LGB&T community
- Looking after our older people with dignity

## **Brexit**

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- Honour the referendum decision to leave the European Union
- Guarantee that no group is worse off as a consequence of Brexit
- Lobby for unfettered access to the EU single market
- Invest in infrastructure to enable NI to become 'The Gateway to the EU'
- Ensure no hard border between NI and RoI, or between NI and GB



# Cleaning up Stormont

The last ten years of an Executive led by the DUP and Sinn Fein have been characterised by a **descending spiral of incompetence, arrogance and the whiff of cronyism and corruption.**

Peter Robinson famously boasted the greatest achievement of the 2007-2011 mandate was that it survived. They cannot even manage that anymore. We have taken bold steps to encourage the institutions to evolve and mature in line with society, not least in **creating an official opposition.** But the DUP/SF Executive has dragged the reputation of Stormont from the gutter into the sewers.

Nothing will change unless the public vote for it on the 2nd of March. We understand the public's disgust with parties who put their own self-interest over the greater good. It is time to change the record of protecting individual politicians, be they Ministers or Assembly Speakers, not to mention Special Advisers and **elect parties who will put the interests of the Country first.**

This must be a watershed moment for politics in Northern Ireland. Otherwise the cycle will begin all over again with the politics of fear and negativity.

The public have a very clear choice - they can vote for parties who want **a coalition of the willing, a partnership of parties offering mutual respect, building trust and sharing space, power and responsibility, because it's the right thing to do for all our people.**

It begins with **reform at Stormont.** We have identified five areas in need of immediate action in order to clean up Stormont and stop the race to the bottom.

## Executive Ministers & Special Advisers

Ministers must be accountable. There can be no more solo runs, incompetence or breaches of the Ministerial Code without consequence. Ministers alleged to have broken the Code must face investigation. We currently have the situation where an MLA can have their conduct investigated by the Assembly Commissioner for Standards, yet there is no such process for Ministers. It cannot continue to be the case that there is a greater level of accountability placed on MLAs, than on those being trusted with the public purse.

We would legislate to expand the Assembly Commissioner for Standards remit to allow alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code to be reported and investigated.

The role of a Special Adviser is to assist Ministers in running the country and protecting the public purse.

Yet on too many occasions Executive SPADs have become the headline. It is time that Special Advisers became subject to the Northern Ireland Civil Service disciplinary process to ensure public confidence in their accountability.

We must also end the situation where some Special Advisers are paid more than an Executive Minister. In the new mandate their salaries must be capped.

The past number of years have seen the Executive embroiled in many scandals, including Red Sky, NAMA and RHI. These have raised allegations around the actions of Ministers and their Special Advisers. If any of these allegations were to be substantiated it is vital that the PSNI has the will and required resource base to deal with any referrals.



### **Election of Speaker**

It is vital that the public and the Assembly can have confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker. In the last mandate this was brought into disrepute.

The election of the Speaker can no longer be subject to a carve-up between the two largest parties. We want to see future Speakers elected through a secret ballot of MLAs.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

Executive Ministers must be effectively scrutinised. That role should be performed by the Assembly's statutory committees, yet their legal duty is to "advise and assist" Ministers, not scrutinise them. We want to strengthen the role of Assembly Committees, making effective, detailed scrutiny a statutory duty.

### **Petitions of Concern**

We must put an end to the abuse of Petitions of Concern, which were designed specifically to protect minority interests, not political parties. No one envisaged the situation where one party had sufficient MLAs to bring forward a PoC on their own. This has corrupted the intent of the PoC, allowing one party to hold a veto over the Assembly. The Petition of Concern was designed to be a valuable mechanism to protect minorities from harmful law changes. Instead we have seen it deployed to protect Nelson McCausland, Sammy Wilson and most recently the Speaker Robin Newton from criticism.

The reduction in the number of MLAs sees the need for a review of the operation of the Petition of Concern mechanism. We would propose a requirement that the signatories must come from more than one party, this maintains the original intent of the petition while limiting opportunities for misuse.

### **Transparency in Political Donations**

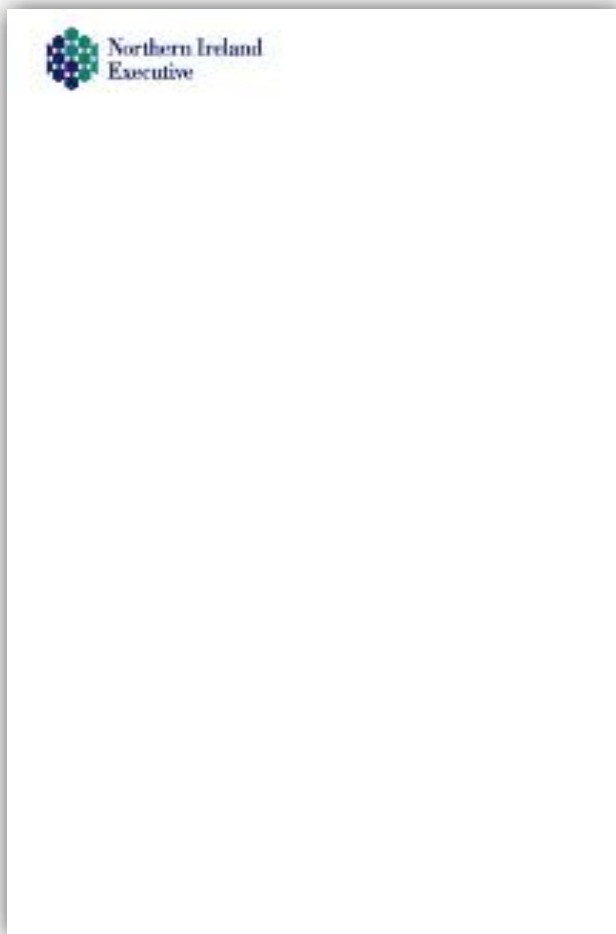
The time is right to introduce transparency in political donations. The public want openness at the heart of government, something the DUP and Sinn Fein Executive has a shabby record of.

We want the public to have confidence in the decision makers, and providing them with the information on who is making donations to political parties would be an important step in the right direction.

We have written to the Secretary of State proposing that records of donations to political parties are published from the start of the 2017/2018 financial year.



# A vision for Northern Ireland outside the European Union





It was a humiliation and absolute disgrace that during the discussions in Parliament on the triggering of Article 50, Northern Ireland was left floundering with no Assembly or functioning Executive.

During the EU referendum campaign, the Ulster Unionist Party recommended that, on balance, it was beneficial for Northern Ireland to remain within the European Union. However, the decision of the 23rd June 2016 was that, the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. **The days of being a 'Remainer' or a 'Brexit' are now over. The focus must now be on achieving the best deal for Northern Ireland.**

The Brexit vote has opened up **an era of uncertainty**. The Northern Ireland Executive has a duty to provide clarity, and has fundamentally failed to do so. As a house divided the DUP and Sinn Fein have had no leverage in Brexit discussions, in fact when the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis MP visited Northern Ireland in August he held separate meetings with Executive Ministers, who had no common position. It was an embarrassment.

While the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government have submitted substantive policy submissions to the Joint Ministerial Committee, the best the Northern Ireland Executive could manage was a 2 page letter, sent in August outlining concerns all of which were obvious before the referendum. With the DUP/Sinn Fein Executive crumbling after only 8 months, the Northern Ireland voice is now completely absent from the Brexit discussions. Northern Ireland will be the most impacted by Brexit and yet is the least prepared.

While others have sat by idly in the aftermath of **the Brexit vote the Ulster Unionist Party has been proactive, establishing an Advisory Panel** consisting of representatives from business, academia, the community & voluntary sector, unions, agri-food and farming, all sectors which could be heavily impacted by Brexit. As a result of discussions with the Advisory Panel, **in September we published our document 'A vision for Northern Ireland outside the EU'**, outlining our vision, a plan to achieve that vision and key asks which must be delivered.

Prior to Brexit Northern Ireland already has pre-existing economic difficulties. We rely on an annual subvention from Westminster of approximately £9 billion, physical and technological infrastructure is underdeveloped, and we lie twelfth out of 12 UK regions in terms of productivity and consequently have a living standards gap with the rest of the United Kingdom. The 2015/16 Budget Document stated that while the local economy was showing signs of growth, relative living standards - measured by GVA per capita - still remained stubbornly below the UK average (standing at around 76 per cent of the UK average). To put this in perspective, if someone in Leeds, Manchester or Aberdeen has £1 in their pocket, in Northern Ireland we have 76 pence.

Brexit brings with it additional difficulties. Northern Ireland is due to receive almost €3.4 billion over the current EU budget period 2014-2020, with additional funds expected from centrally managed EU programmes. While funding secured before the UK leaves the European Union has been guaranteed by the UK Government, uncertainty still exists regarding replacing this funding after 2020.

Some of the challenges include:

- **Farmers will receive close to €2.3 billion in direct payments over this EU budget period, with a further €228 million rural development funding going to rural communities. While this has been guaranteed until 2020 by the Treasury, no clarity exists for what will happen after this date;**
- **Access to the market for agricultural products post-Brexit is also a concern, with high tariff walls surrounding the Common Agricultural Policy. Agricultural goods are not included in either the Customs Union, or by membership of the European Free Trade Association;**



- **The potential loss of EU central funding programmes in the future, such as the Connecting Europe facility, used for key infrastructure projects of which the York Street Interchange is an example;**
- **The potential inability to access the €145 million of Horizon 2020 research funding targeted by the Executive, which is vital for our universities to make progress in key areas through collaborative projects and key for our local businesses to innovate through research & development and Innovation;**
- **The future of the border, given that a potential ‘hard border’ with the Republic of Ireland could adversely affect cross-border trade, which is vital for the Northern Ireland economy, or the implications of a hard border around Great Britain;**

In the Prime Minister’s recent keynote Brexit speech in Lancaster House, Theresa May outlined that the UK will be leaving the Single Market, and will not be seeking full membership of the Customs Union. It is therefore important that in negotiations with the EU that a deal is reached which delivers unfettered access to the single market, and tariff free trade, which is particularly crucial for the future of cross border trade. It was however encouraging that she noted it was a priority of the Government to maintain the Common Travel Area.

In the Ulster Unionist Party, we are very clear that, while there are challenges, we take a positive view of the opportunities that Brexit does present, and we have a vision to move Northern Ireland forward outside of the European Union.

Our vision for the future of Northern Ireland in the post-Brexit era, is as the ‘UK’s Gateway to Europe’. To make it happen, we have identified 10 key “Asks” for the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver, working as appropriate with HM Government:

### **1. Infrastructure investment to be trebled**

Investing in our hard infrastructure to make Northern Ireland Brexit ready. This will require making the case to HM Government to invest some of the funding currently being directed to Brussels.

### **2. A Northern Ireland wide Enterprise Zone**

Creating an attractive investment proposition based around rates relief, capital allowances, enhanced research & development, to make Northern Ireland a more attractive place to do business.

### **3. A step change in education and skills**

Maximise the potential of our people by making our education and training systems the best in the class.

To address the shortfalls and skills gaps student visas should become a devolved matter, to ensure the right skills are in the right places.

### **4. Financial guarantees for those losing EU funding**

There must be a guarantee that no group in Northern Ireland is financially worse off for a minimum of five years after we exit the EU. This includes our universities, our community & voluntary sector, and our farmers who Arlene Foster said would be resourced ‘as well, if not better’ after Brexit.

### **5. Enhanced investment in Research & Development and Innovation**

We must build on our Research & Development capacity, and encourage HM Government to enhance

investment, in Research & Development beyond the London-Oxford-Cambridge triangle. Such a move will boost our productivity and consequently improve living standards.

### **6. Safeguards for the Common Travel Area**

Ensure that people in Northern Ireland retain the right to unfettered access to all parts of the island of Ireland, while negotiating new international agreements with the Republic of Ireland to ensure that Northern Ireland does not become a backdoor for illegal immigration, and that the border does not become subject to increased illegal activity.

### **7. No “hard border” at Great Britain’s ports and airports**

Confirm that Northern Ireland’s citizens will not face a hard border at Great Britain’s ports and airports. Maintaining the Common Travel Area should not come at the expense of facing a hard border when people from Northern Ireland travel to other parts of the United Kingdom.

### **8. Unfettered access to the EU’s Single Market**

Ensure our consumers and businesses have continued access to the European Single Market on terms no less favourable than currently enjoyed. With the Prime

Minister ruling out full membership of the Single Market, it is crucial that the deal reached with the EU obtains the maximum possible access to enable the continuance of free trade across Europe.

### **9. Define the devolved policies to apply in the post-Brexit era**

While Brexit will give us the opportunity to adjust, reform or reject obligations, it is essential that this does not lead to an unregulated scenario where there no longer stringent obligations regarding protecting our natural environment or employment rights.

### **10. A re-imagined Peace Centre**

Finally, rather than allowing the continued stalemate to continue around the previous proposal to build a so-called Peace Building and Conflict Reconciliation Centre at the Maze, the Executive should engage the EU in funding a peace centre at an alternative venue, at a location which is without controversy and can enjoy the support of the whole community.



# Supporting the NHS at this time of crisis and promoting public health

Our health service is in crisis. Never before have so many people been waiting so long for key diagnoses or treatment. Health officials and our medical staff in hospitals across Northern Ireland have been repeatedly warning of the danger of making seriously ill or infirm people wait for treatment. They haven't been listened to. In a previously leaked document the Health and Social Care Board bluntly warned that 'increased waiting times for assessment may result in delayed diagnosis of a serious or life-threatening condition with reduced likelihood of a successful outcome.' Yet, from the time of that comment two years ago the environment is now unrecognisable given the sheer numbers of people involved.

Few aspects of the National Health Service are unaffected. Through in-depth questioning by Ulster Unionist MLAs it has been possible to draw a picture of the overall severity of the crisis;

- **The number of outpatients forced to wait longer than 52 weeks for their first appointment with a consultant jumped from 20,000 to over 40,000 in the last year alone. As an illustration - over half (54%) of all spinal patients have been waiting longer than a year;**
- **Almost 20,000 operations were cancelled over the last four years for no clinical reason, often at the last minute and often because a surgeon or theatre was not available;**
- **The number of children currently waiting for key autism spectrum assessments has increased by 280% over the last five years;**
- **Worrying trends of sickness absence, particularly for stress related conditions, have been developing amongst key medical staff groups;**
- **The costs paid to locum staff have increased by almost 100%, with a record £230m being paid to agency staff over the last five years;**
- **999 emergency ambulance calls are taking longer to be picked up and responded to;**
- **Fewer Fire and Rescue Service vehicles are arriving on the scenes where there is a significant risk to life within their recommended 6-minute target.**

Last October, in a statement to the Assembly, the Sinn Fein Health Minister said that our health system was at breaking point. We agree. She proposed that whole-system transformation across primary, secondary and community care, and a change to the way in which services are accessed are all required. We also agree with that.

Yet the Department's response to the Bengoa Report was uninspiring. It was bereft of substance, detail, or even the most basic of targets. Now it risks being left on a shelf, already bulging with other unimplemented reports.

The next five years will be a defining period for our health service. Standing still simply is not an option. The gap between capacity and demand is widening at a frightening rate. Unless changes are made the current situation will continue to deteriorate and tragically more and more patients will come to harm as a result. So we accept the need for reform. The Ulster Unionist Party is up for taking part in those difficult decisions.

Recent detailed Ulster Unionist policy papers on supporting people with **poor mental health and wellbeing and cancer care** are available at [www.uup.org](http://www.uup.org)



### **Tackling the waiting lists crisis**

We firmly believe the first issue that any new Executive must face and tackle is the shameful length of time that increasing numbers of patients are being forced to wait. We recognise that in order to reduce the lists in the short-term, it will be necessary to radically increase capacity and that it will require a funding allocation. Given both the DUP and Sinn Fein pledged an extra £200m a year for the health service we believe this money is available. In the longer term we will allow GPs to make direct referrals for key diagnostic tests, therefore eliminating a middle tier of outpatient waits, as well as transforming the provision of community and social care places so that we avoid the 68,000 'bed-blocked' days Northern Ireland's Hospitals experienced last year.

### **Stabilising the workforce**

Claims by others of increasing frontline staff don't stand up when the number of vacant posts are investigated. For instance, at the end of 2016 there were 920 vacant nursing posts alone. A long-term empty post is as much benefit as no post at all. Serious gaps across the medical workforce are also one of the key contributing factors to our spiralling locum costs. We would commission a full medical workforce plan identifying the areas of unmet need, breaking the current silo approach, and doing so every three years.

### **A single Health and Social Care Trust**

The Ulster Unionist Party implemented the last major reforms of administration of the Northern Ireland Health Service. It's now time for a second tranche. We would amalgamate the existing five Trusts into one, putting it under the stewardship of one accountable Chief Executive. We would learn from the model of the Policing Board, with day to day health services preferably run by the Chief Executive and their senior management team, overseen by a Board populated by medical experts, representatives of civic society and politicians. The Board would hold the NHS management to account, but the Chief Executive would be operationally independent. We believe the immediate objective of this new single Trust must be tackling the unacceptable variance in treatment times faced by patients as a result of simply where they live.

### **Protecting primary care**

General practice is the cornerstone of the local health service - 90% of all contacts with the NHS take place at that level. It is the most cost-effective means of delivering high quality care, while also the most valued by the patient, yet it is in a state of crisis across Northern Ireland. We would invest the resources needed and urgently implement the recommendations of the GP-led Working Group Report in order to avoid any further deterioration in service.

### **Introducing a Suicide Prevention Bill**

One in four adults here will suffer a mental health or wellbeing problem. Northern Ireland urgently needs to improve the mental health services available, especially as there is sadly an established link between mental ill health and suicide. Yet suicide is preventable. In order to drive towards our ambition of zero suicides we will introduce a Suicide Prevention Bill. This legislation would formally replace the current pessimism for the preventability of suicide, with the international 2014 World Health Organisation declaration that suicide is a preventable harm. This would change the culture from blame to learning.

### **Introduce a statutory duty of candour**

Every day our health staff are faced with making decisions so precarious that most others would simply balk at the proposition. Accidents can and sadly do happen, it's the nature and reality of delivering healthcare on the scale that we do. It is essential however when mistakes do happen that patients and families have the right to know what happened and that lessons will be learned. A statutory duty of candour would deliver this.

### **A much greater emphasis on prevention**

Prevention is always better than care. Yet avoidable illness is the biggest burden of illness in Northern Ireland. Obesity, smoking and excessive alcohol usage costs the local health service hundreds of millions of pounds a year. So as well as the physical and social benefits of early intervention, there are sound economic reasons for preventing poor outcomes in later life.

# Giving our children every chance of success

The Ulster Unionist Party has a long standing tradition of wanting children in Northern Ireland to be educated together, across the religious divide. In mixing children together from the age of 4, you give them a virtual inoculation jab against sectarianism. This would fulfil the vision of the first and last Ulster Unionist Education Ministers - Lord Londonderry in 1921 and Basil McIvor in 1974. We respect the historic fact that most schools were originally established by one or other of the churches. But now the situation is that all, bar a handful of independent Christian schools, are fully funded by the state, in both capital and resource budgets. It therefore follows that, whilst of course there are rights for those who want a faith based education, these must be balanced with the need for fairness and equality.

In the context of overcapacity and budgetary constraints, simply expanding the Integrated 'sector', which more often than not comes at the expense of the state controlled sector, is too simplistic an answer. The Ulster Unionist Party believes in 'integrating' education in its wider sense, conscious that many state controlled and some maintained schools are naturally mixed, and 'integrated' in all but name. A fully integrated system is not achievable overnight. We would advocate policies which will lower and remove barriers to greater mixing within and between different schools and sectors.

At the Ulster Unionist Party, we want to ensure that your education and the education of your children is not used as a political tool. Instead we want to ensure that children and young people have all the support they need to have a fulfilled and prosperous life and career. We firmly believe that inside every child is a spark of ability, creativity and talent – it is up to us find out what that spark is and then work on it.

As part of the Official Opposition we have worked tirelessly to hold the government to account on matters of education. We have:

- **Called for the removal of Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Equal Treatment Order; 1998 which exempts teachers in schools from protections against discrimination on the basis of religion;**
- **Called for the introduction of a Statutory Presumption against rural school closures to protect rural schools from unnecessary and harmful closures;**
- **Strongly opposed the current proposals for Area Planning;**
- **Fought to secure the continued funding of Outdoor Education Centres;**
- **Worked to promote online safety and raise awareness of online bullying.**

The DUP and Sinn Fein, as holders of the Education Ministry since 1999 have failed at a systemic level to deal with the problems at the heart of our education system such as tackling underachievement, addressing the segregation of our children, resolving the problem of post-primary transfer, and developing a funding structure that maximises our resources. They have also failed to deal with short-term issues as they have arisen.

We would immediately take action to:

- **Reverse any decision to close Outdoor Education Centres;**
- **Develop proposals to ensure that what remains of the £500 million allocated to shared and integrated education projects under the Fresh Start Agreement is not returned to the Treasury and is fully spent;**
- **Work with teachers and employers to finally resolve the dispute over teachers' pay.**



### **A new Strategic Plan**

Our school system urgently needs overall direction and strategy. While many have recognised that the system is deeply flawed, no one has followed through with changing it. We cannot have a truly shared future unless our children start life together in the same classroom. Crucially, any strategic plan must have the appropriate level of funding attached to it.

### **Reform of Area Planning**

To date the area based planning process has been haphazard and its rollout greatly undermined. We believe that area planning should come from the bottom up, not the top down. Parents, pupils and representatives from across the local community must be empowered to make their own decisions about the shape of schools in their local area.

### **Challenging the systemic problems**

We believe that every child in Northern Ireland has the potential to succeed and flourish if we could only provide them with the environment to do so. We must finally tackle educational underachievement and help families support their children through their education. We must take action to ensure that children with special educational needs have early assessments so that help and support can be set up at the earliest possible stage. The post-primary transfer system must be reformed so that instead of asking how intelligent a child is we must ask in what ways a child is intelligent. Finally, we would ensure that the statutory duty to ensure value for taxpayer's money is paramount in all major funding decisions on new or expanding schools.

### **Empowering Schools**

Schools are struggling to live within their budgets and are being penalised under the area plan for wider budgetary problems that are out of their control. We believe that if schools were given more autonomy

over their own budgets they have the knowledge and expertise to use it to best meet the needs of pupils.

### **Providing affordable childcare**

The DUP have failed to deliver on a Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland despite promises in the last election. We commit to develop and implement a Childcare Strategy that meets the wide variety of parental needs in Northern Ireland. Without an adequate Childcare Strategy, we will never have a rich and diverse economy, we will continue to see families crippled by childcare costs, we will have some parents who simply cannot afford to work and an economy which struggles to meet the needs of women returning to work. Our proposal is a system of affordable childcare delivered across Northern Ireland, with care and attention given to children who have specific needs.

### **Prioritising the early years**

It is now well established that early intervention in a child's life leads to better educational outcomes. We believe that an Early Years Strategy for age 0-5 is vital to help children reach their potential and prepare children for school life. This Strategy would work alongside health professionals to identify any special educational needs.

### **Recognising our future economic success depends on our educational success**

In the lead up to an exit from the European Union, now more than ever we must lay the ground work to maximise every opportunity to grow and develop our economy. We must identify the current and future needs of our economy and ensure that young people have the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace, as entrepreneurs and as innovators. We would work with employers in the private and public sector including arts and community groups to ensure that we have a rich future here in Northern Ireland.

# Working together, growing together

Working in partnership with others who want to make Northern Ireland work, the Ulster Unionist Party will set a new agenda to end the decade long institutional corruption of the DUP/Sinn Fein Spadocracy.

We are making a clear commitment to the long-term economic viability of Northern Ireland within the UK and setting out a hopeful vision of a shared future for all our people. Growing the Northern Ireland economy must be the main outcome of any Programme for Government.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that a Programme for Government should be supported by a manufacturing strategy, a new energy policy, with a refocus on Research and Development to broaden our skills base and empower the next generation with the know how to succeed in a rapidly changing employment market.

It should be a simple, well understood message with clear and easily measured deliverables; deliverables which Ministers, senior civil servants and departments will be accountable and responsible for and which should be linked to their promotion, salary and retention.

## **2/20: 20/2**

In the simplest terms it should be the task of the Executive to set the conditions to achieve:

- **Annual 2% growth in our GDP**
- **20% of our economy from manufacturing**
- **£20 Billion worth of Exports (making NI approach self-sufficiency), rather than the relatively limited £6.5 Billion we have now**
- **all helping make a successful and vibrant place to live heading into our 2nd Century**

We need to change Northern Ireland's business culture, invest in success, take risks and build for the next century. The Ulster Unionist Party advocates establishing an independent NI Strategy Board tasked with delivering advice on achieving 2/20:20/2. This will report directly to the Executive and will publish annual reports that will act as an independent assessment on how we are doing.

All promotion and performance related pay of all senior civil servants and quangos will be linked to how Northern Ireland performs. Our 'Manufacturing Strategy' needs to be a key deliverable of this cultural shift, and linked to it will be addressing skills shortages and investing in new skills, a proper energy policy and framework, all set around our vision for a shared future. Working together, growing together.



### Filling the energy vacuum

This policy area is so important that we are producing a stand-alone policy paper which will complement this manifesto and set out policy proposals to ensure our energy security and literally keep the lights on. Suffice to say, in the wake of the Renewable Heat debacle and the unfolding mismatch between wind energy subsidies and connection to the electricity grid, Northern Ireland has an energy policy vacuum. As our system operator, SONI, has warned - unless action is taken they are not confident that Northern Ireland will be able to keep the lights on in 2021

### A Manufacturing Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Ulster Unionist Party's efforts to persuade the Executive to devise a bespoke manufacturing strategy was supported by all parties in the Assembly - bar the DUP and Sinn Fein coalition. The loss of quality jobs must be addressed by an Executive with a plan. Northern Ireland PLC cannot afford to see its manufacturing base further reduced. Our plan, building on the work already done by both Unions and employer organisations would address the competitive disadvantages of doing business in Northern Ireland and set a goal of matching the European median target of having 20% of GDP related to the manufacturing industry. We continue to support a long term commitment to keep the 30% cap on industrial rates as recognition of the vital importance of the sector.

### Moving from dependency to self sufficiency

To drive a transformation of the economy, we must move away from dependency on the block grant from Westminster to self-sufficiency based around growing manufacturing and exports. Delays in reducing Corporation Tax, and the general risk averse approach to business and the economy, has stifled initiative. It was the Ulster Unionists who first proposed a reduction of Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland to encourage inward investment. Whilst it remains our policy, any potential benefits are rapidly ebbing away. Delay and

lack of political will, combined by the obvious lack of financial acumen at the Executive table has blunted what could have been a transformative fiscal lever.

### Investing in future skills

As we head towards Brexit, increased investment in R&D is happening everywhere in the UK except Northern Ireland. Here, the Executive has been actively disinvesting in our Universities. The last Executive failed to produce a new financing model for 3rd level education. As it stands there is a £55m black hole, which if left unaddressed will lead to a further reduction of subject options and student numbers with our Universities falling down the performance league tables. In the absence of details on a budget for 2017/18, and continuing uncertainties about the full financial liabilities of the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal, a short term reprioritisation of resources within the Department of the Economy will have to be made. The Ulster Unionist Party believes that Invest NI may have to suffer a cut in order to find the money to protect higher and further education budgets, pending the implementation of a new sustainable funding model, which protects the enviable record of Northern Ireland in keeping higher education accessible to students from lower socio economic backgrounds.

### Tourism

For Northern Ireland to achieve the target of being a £1 billion industry by 2020 we need to make sure that we attract a fair share of the overseas market being targeted by Tourism Ireland. That means creating a more level playing field for our airports regarding air passenger duty and removing the barriers tourists face including arcane entertainment licencing laws. Above all, to create a positive image of a welcoming region looking forward with all our people feeling at ease with our place in the world, we need a change of government at Stormont. The Ulster Unionist Party is ready to lead that change.

# Keeping our people safe

The Ulster Unionist Party supports the rule of law and will always remain on the side of the citizen against the criminal.

The outgoing Executive oversaw crisis after crisis in the Northern Ireland justice system. Public confidence in the Courts and judicial system has been badly shaken.

Policing numbers continue to lag at least 700 behind the 7,500 recommended by the Patten Report, meaning that an even greater burden is placed on those tasked with protecting and serving the community. This has had an obvious impact on morale within the PSNI and is a major cause of unacceptably high stress levels.

Staffing levels are also a concern in the Northern Ireland Prison Service, as is the security and safety of staff, both on and off duty. Morale has also been affected by pay claims that have not been honoured and the ongoing difficulties caused by the continued separated regime at Maghaberry is an area which must be resolved.

More also must be done to meet the needs of prisoners, not least with regard to mental health and well-being. There has also been significant public concern regarding what are perceived to be overly lenient sentences in a number of cases ranging from murder, drink driving to animal cruelty, and also the need for changes in bail policy, especially with regard to terrorist cases.

Furthermore, public confidence has been shaken by the sight of former soldiers being brought before the courts whilst terrorist suspects have been handed 'letters of comfort' and Royal Pardons. This is clearly a grave inequity and the system must reflect the fact that 90 per cent of deaths during the Troubles were down to terrorist action. Terrorist acts such as no warning bomb explosions caused thousands of serious physical and psychological injuries.

We welcome the fact that the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry led by Sir Anthony Hart has now reported, but we deplore the fact that the collapse of the Executive has caused so much uncertainty as to when recompense will be made available to the victims. It was just yet another example of how the last Executive failed to deliver for some of the most vulnerable in society.





### **Increasing our policing numbers**

Action is needed urgently to increase recruitment and ensure that the PSNI has sufficient manpower to carry out its duties, protect the public and fulfil its duty of care to its officers. We need a police force with resilience and an increase in neighbourhood policing to instil confidence in our communities. The Ulster Unionist Party would honour the Patten recommendation of 7,500 full-time police officers.

### **Supporting our Prison Service**

We would address the crisis in morale amongst Prison Service staff by ensuring that previously pledged pay commitments are honoured and staffing levels increased to reduce the pressure on existing staff. Dissident Republicans who are opposed to the peace in Northern Ireland should not get special treatment or privileges but should be treated as all criminals are treated. We would also move to a more normalised prison service which would see by 2021 no new admissions to separate paramilitary wings and by 2026 a fully integrated prison regime.

### **Tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime**

Almost 23 years after the first paramilitary ceasefires and almost 19 years after the Belfast Agreement it is surely wrong that tackling paramilitary activity, criminality and organised crime remains the challenge that it is. The public want to see paramilitary and criminal godfathers taken off the streets and given meaningful sentences that act as a deterrent to others. There must be the political will to do so, the

Police must be given all the resources necessary and the courts must impose the maximum sentences available. We will continue to argue that if society is going to move forward then our prisons must do similarly.

### **A rebalancing of the Justice system**

A complete overhaul of the justice system is needed to review the fundamentals. Prison is meant to punish, deter and provide the chance for rehabilitation. Many people look at the type of sentences being handed out in high profile cases and see an absence of both punishment and meaningful deterrent. Public confidence must be restored as a matter of urgency. Courts must be prepared to use the full tariffs available to them and criminals must know they will not be allowed to defy the system. The justice system must be rebalanced in favour of victims.

### **Rebalancing legacy investigations**

The perception of imbalance in investigations into Troubles related crime, with a disproportionate focus on State forces rather than terrorists, has helped fuel the perception of a system that is unfair. We must find a way to protect those who protected us during the worst days of the troubles. The forces of law and order should not be viewed in the same way as paramilitaries and terrorists and it is unfair that they should face the full weight of the law in respect of legacy issues when others do not.

# Ensuring adequate housing for all

Good housing is hugely important. It is good for social wellbeing and is paramount for economic growth. Communities can thrive or decline on the quality of the homes available.

Northern Ireland is facing a housing crisis because as a society we simply do not build enough houses to satisfy demand. The problem is particularly acute for social and affordable homes. Every year that we continue to fall so far below the target suggested in the Regional Development Strategy, the more deeply felt our housing shortage will be.

The number of people on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive waiting list is now over 40,000 and of these, 22,000 are in housing stress. We currently do not have enough units for those individuals and families affected by the bedroom tax to be able to downsize from properties.

## **Building more homes**

We would commit to build a minimum of 10,000 new social and affordable homes by 2021. It is clear that we are in the midst of a housing crisis and this can only be effectively addressed by building more homes. The Ulster Unionist Party believes future Social Housing Development Programmes must reflect the reality for tenants and respond more quickly to changes within the welfare system.

## **Reviewing our planning system**

Housing and sustainable development needs to be given more practical support by planning authorities. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party will introduce greater targets on turn-around times for planning applications, specifically those considered to be economically significant.

## **Reducing the practice of land banking**

Land speculation is nothing new. It's a high risk strategy, but for those purchasing land in or close to our main towns and cities they can be confident that their asset will continue to attract an interest. Unfortunately, this practice of sitting on land until such time as it can be built on more profitably, sold on at a much inflated price or just retained as an asset perpetually, is making the under provision of local homes more acute. Northern Ireland's Councils should not put up with applicants who secure planning permission but don't use it.

## **Supporting private tenants**

We recognise the important role the private rented sector plays in meeting local housing demand. This sector is the second largest after owner occupier and it is important that the rights of tenants are protected. For instance, we would make it a requirement from 2018 for all private rented houses to obtain a grade E or above on an Energy Performance Certificate.

## **Tackling homelessness**

Homelessness exists for a variety of reasons, but there is no justification for a modern society tolerating the sight of people sleeping in the streets. The Ulster Unionist Party will commit to placing a cross-departmental duty to prevent homelessness on statutory services such as the NHS and prisons.

## **Utilising the NIHE borrowing power**

We will allow the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to borrow against its assets - 88,000 homes and rental income of £280M in order to maintain its current stock.

## **Deposit Scheme**

We will consider the introduction of a Government backed deposit savings scheme for first-time buyers offering tax bonuses.



# Building our infrastructure network

As we approach Northern Ireland's Centenary, we face major challenges with regard to our infrastructure. By 2050, much of our hard infrastructure will need replaced, renewed or upgraded. We must start making the right, strategic decisions now. Without investment in infrastructure, we will not be able to maximise our advantages. Roads, rail, airports, power stations and grids all have 30+ years life spans. However, many of these are already reaching the ends of their safe lives.

We need to invest, province wide, in cost effective energy smart grids, latest generation information networks, an integrated road/rail transport system, cycling networks, airlinks, affordable logistics systems, that support our economy and, where it makes sense, fully integrating our communication systems across all these Islands. Action is needed now so that we can plan for the future. With the right decisions made in a timely fashion, we can transform our country.

## **Prioritising the York Street Interchange**

The Ulster Unionist Party will prioritise the York Street Interchange project. 100,000 vehicles use the York Street Interchange each day and it has been labelled as the single biggest blockage in Northern Ireland's transport system. Any future Minister needs to make this their number one infrastructure priority coming into the next Executive.

## **Tackling traffic bottlenecks**

We would seek innovative solutions to alleviate other traffic bottlenecks on the approach roads to Belfast, such as that experienced daily at Sprucefield.

## **A sustainable roads maintenance budget**

For too long this has been something of a Cinderella aspect of the Departmental budget. We would agree the multi-year road maintenance budget in the departmental baseline, rather than unsustainably rely on the monitoring round process.

## **Long haul travel**

The loss of the only direct air-link to North America in the form of United Airlines' Newark flight, was a major blow to both business and tourism. The amateurish way in which the Executive sought to provide funding to United Airlines and the unseemly public dispute which ensued with the European Commission over whether or not the plan was legally sound, did

Northern Ireland PLC no favours. We would work to restore a direct air-link with North America and other long haul destinations to promote business and leisure opportunities.

## **A new agency for major public capital projects**

Given the concerns relating to how the public sector does business, in terms of tendering and procurement processes, we will explore the creation of a new public sector procurement and delivery agency for major capital projects. This will restore confidence in the process, streamline efficiency and improve delivery of key projects.

## **Promoting Sustainable Travel**

Given the obvious benefits to public health, and the environment, we will promote more sustainable travel and realise the vision set out in the 25-year bicycle strategy. We will also support the development and implementation of a network of traffic-free cycling infrastructure. We will support active travel as a consideration in planning new developments. We will also ensure that Translink continues with its efforts of increasing passenger journeys in order to further reduce congestion.

# Protecting nature and tackling environmental threats

The Ulster Unionist Party believes passionately in protecting the environment. It is our most important natural asset, giving us the materials and resources that so many of us now take for granted. Yet never before has our environment faced so many threats, and sadly most of them are the result of mankind's actions. In order to ensure our children can continue to breathe the clean air and enjoy the natural and built heritage that we all do, it's essential that we take decisions now.

## Scoping study on benefits for Northern Ireland Climate Change Act

In the absence of Northern Ireland specific legislation, we remain committed to reducing our carbon emissions in line with the United Kingdom's legal commitments. We are aware however of some aspiration locally for a Northern Ireland specific Climate Change Act. We therefore would commission a scoping study on the potential benefits of a dedicated NI Act, investigating also all potential disadvantages such as whether a Bill would cause any unnecessary duplication.

## A new enforcement model for environmental crime

Environmental crime impacts on us all. Serious and organised waste crime wreaks havoc on our local environment. Northern Ireland has got a particular problem of gangs dumping domestic and laundered fuel materials throughout the countryside. Whilst the Environmental Crime Unit within the NIEA is responsible for tackling this, we believe their efforts have been ineffectual. This can be demonstrated by the fact that only 29% (262 suspects out of 900) have been successfully prosecuted over the last 10 years. We therefore believe crime investigations relating to suspected fuel laundering or relating to other serious organised criminal gangs should be transferred to the PSNI and the National Crime Agency when appropriate.

## Reform of the Northern Ireland waste sector

The waste management structure in Northern Ireland is ripe for reform. With fewer councils, who are now continually dealing with greater volumes of waste in more innovative means, the time is right to move to a single waste disposal authority for Northern Ireland. In addition, there is an urgent need to conduct an assessment of the scale of illegality in the regulated and non-regulated waste sectors.

## A new coastal erosion strategy

Northern Ireland is fortunate to have a highly diverse coastline. It provides a habitat for countless species and its recreational value is unlimited. Yet its value is not always appreciated by Executive Departments or statutory bodies. We will introduce a new, modern strategy on coastal management. This will compliment the work already being carried out by organisations such as the Ards Peninsula Coastal Erosion Group.

## A statutory duty on tackling invasive species

The rate at which local species and habitats are declining is frightening. The Ulster Unionist Party would adopt a target to halt biodiversity loss by the end of 2021 and place a duty on all Executive Departments to meet measurable biodiversity targets. In addition, we would introduce a duty on all public bodies to treat and remove invasive plants, such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed, growing on their own property.

## Maintaining and expanding our woodland cover

Despite the visualisations of lush green fields dotted with woodland often associated with Northern Ireland, it remains a matter of huge regret that we are the second least wooded area in Europe. The Ulster Unionist Party commits to increasing Northern Ireland's woodland cover through a Programme for Government target to increase it by 2,000 hectares by 2021. We would create a national register of Trees of Special Interest, to include local icons such as the Dark Hedges and the Crom Yews. What better time to begin this work than as part of our Centenary celebrations where we propose two initiatives – the Northern Ireland People's Park and six permanent, sustainable developments, one for each of Northern Ireland's counties.

# Sustaining rural communities and our agri-food industry

The Ulster Unionist Party will continue to recognise the importance of the local agri-food sector, as well as the communities that make it the success that it is. The food and drink processing sectors in Northern Ireland have a combined annual turnover of over £4.5 billion, and whilst the contribution of agri-food to Northern Ireland's GVA is 40 per cent higher than that achieved across the UK overall, it would be reckless not to also recognise this as a potential vulnerability. It underlines the absolute necessity for Northern Ireland to have a strong and united voice in the upcoming Brexit negotiations.

## Dealing with the implications of Brexit

Northern Ireland's farmers often had an uneasy relationship with the European Union. Whilst they obviously benefited from the financial assistance membership delivered, they also were at the brunt of regulations and a juggernaut seemingly unwilling to listen to even reasoned debate. With payments only guaranteed until 2020 our farmers now face a precarious period of uncertainty. This is a vacuum which HMG and the local Executive must move quickly to fill. The Ulster Unionist Party believes a model of land based payments should continue. We also strongly believe that following the negotiation period the UK government must introduce import tariffs that are commensurate with the additional costs incurred by the agri-businesses on our own doorstep.

## Championing local produce

In an era of increasing awareness of food security, Northern Ireland's produce is world renowned. Its reputation for quality, taste and traceability will become one of its strongest unique selling points over the coming years. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party would accelerate the establishment of the strategic marketing organisation in order to maximise the capital on this provenance. We will also make sure that Northern Ireland produce is backed locally by ensuring that every public body only purchases food to local standards of production.

## A fairer return for their produce

We will continue our efforts towards establishing a system in which farmers are paid a fair return for their produce. This would not mean an increase in price for

consumers, rather it would mean a fairer rebalancing of profits between the producer, processor and supermarket. The Office of Fair Trading and the Groceries Code Adjudicator would both be involved.

## Identifying new export markets

The future of our agri-food sector is largely dependent on its ability to locate and secure new export markets. New outlets for our beef, for instance, would allow our processors to obtain a more realistic carcass balance. Whilst China has already been identified as a key market for pork by-products, securing final agreement has been slow. We would establish a new dedicated unit within DAERA that would work closely with the Veterinary Service on advocacy and securing new export markets.

## Rural broadband

The provision of broadband in Northern Ireland lags far behind the UK as a whole. There is firm evidence of a further divide within Northern Ireland between urban and rural areas. In recognising the importance of businesses to be connected in the increasingly digitised marketplace, we would promote alternative technologies in the delivery of broadband services.

## Making it an attractive career option

We recognise that nothing is more critical to our agri-food sectors success than ensuring that those who work in it are driven, ambitious and properly skilled. We therefore, in collaboration with CAFRE, will increase the number of local apprenticeships in farming, food and agri-tech.

# Supporting all people across our community

The Ulster Unionist Party believes in a society where people have the means to get by, the opportunity to get on, and the expectation to be treated fairly regardless of their gender, age, religion, political beliefs or nationality.

## Helping victims of the Troubles

Politicians tend to define dealing with the past in the narrow sense of truth and justice. While that is incredibly important to some victims, we recognise the needs of victims and survivors are multiple and complex. For instance in 2011 the CVSNI identified the prevalence of PTSD in Northern Ireland as the highest of all countries that have produced comparable estimates including the USA, other Western European countries and countries that have experienced civil conflict in their recent history. The ongoing inability and reluctance to address the past is crippling our society moving forwards towards a shared future. Sinn Fein are being entirely insincere in their proxy calls for truth when they, and former associates of theirs, are the most reluctant to be honest about their own past. We currently are, and will remain, steadfastly opposed to any notion of an amnesty. Atrocious crimes were committed and many victims rightly and understandably take comfort knowing that one day the rule of law may prevail. The Ulster Unionist Party will not shy away from tackling the toxic legacy of the past, but we will not tolerate the rewriting of history. We will continue to campaign against any twisted shrine at the Maze site and we will continue to campaign to end the equivalence of perpetrators and genuine victims.

## Supporting people with disabilities, and those that care for them

Whilst many people with disabilities overcome their challenges it is a matter of huge regret that they are up to twice as likely to live in poverty. People who can work should be assisted in doing so, helped by statutory bodies and charities providing greater levels of advice to employers on issues as fundamental as accessibility and workplace adaptation. Equally important is the support available for those who cannot work, and those tens of thousands of people who care for them. The Ulster Unionist Party therefore will continue to seek to develop a social security system which supports rather than prevents carers working or studying alongside caring. It's about time that the value of carers is recognised.

## Tackling the blight of fuel poverty

Northern Ireland remains one of the fuel poverty capitals of Europe. Whilst the botched RHI scheme may have helped a small proportion of businesses switch heat source, the reality for many people is a future with no option but to rely on expensive home heating oil. The Affordable Warmth Scheme was an opportunity to deliver meaningful benefits but to date its implementation has been flawed. We would overhaul the current scheme, cutting the layers of unnecessary bureaucracy, reducing the unacceptable costs of administration and most importantly make it even more targeted for those that really would benefit most from its measures.

## Standing up for our LGB&T community

The next Executive must lead by example – there can be no more excuses, delays or stalling exercises; the sexual orientation strategy must be delivered. Prejudice and experiences of it can start at an early age. We want to empower our young people through age-appropriate sex and relationships education and support schools and teachers by equipping them

Table 3.5: Summary Needs Identified as per Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Area of Need as per the CNA	Percentage of VSS Clients with identified needs in this area
Physical Needs	58%
Mental Health Needs	68%
Support and Advocacy Needs	19%
Financial Needs	69%
Welfare Support Needs	14%
Personal and Professional Development Needs	31%
Housing Needs	17%
Truth Justice and Acknowledgement Needs	19%
Trans-generational Needs	23%

As this sample is representative of clients accessing VSS services over the period 1st April 2012 to 30th June 2014, and in the absence of more robust data, this profile information provides a useful basis to assess the needs of the entire population of victims and survivors.

with the knowledge of how to recognise instances of homophobic and transphobic bullying so it can be tackled at the first signs.

### **Looking after our older people with dignity**

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our older generation. They provided for us when times were hard and it is thanks to the bravery of many that today we can live the free and open lives that we do. We

therefore have an absolute obligation to ensure that they live comfortably and have their needs met. We would commission an equivalent investigation to the Dilnot Report in England in order to identify a credible pathway to capping the cost of social care. We also agree with all of the asks of the Pensioners Parliament. For instance, the Ulster Unionist Party will continue to firmly fight any proposals to reduce the Smartpass or reintroduce prescription charges.





## Our Vision for You — The Voter.



**Vision** – Our vision for a happier, healthier, more prosperous Northern Ireland



## Mental Health & Wellbeing



March 2016

**Mental Health & Wellbeing** – We will create a mental health champion



## Armed Forces & Veterans



March 2016

**Armed Forces & Veterans** – No disadvantage to those born or based in Northern Ireland



## The Knowledge Economy

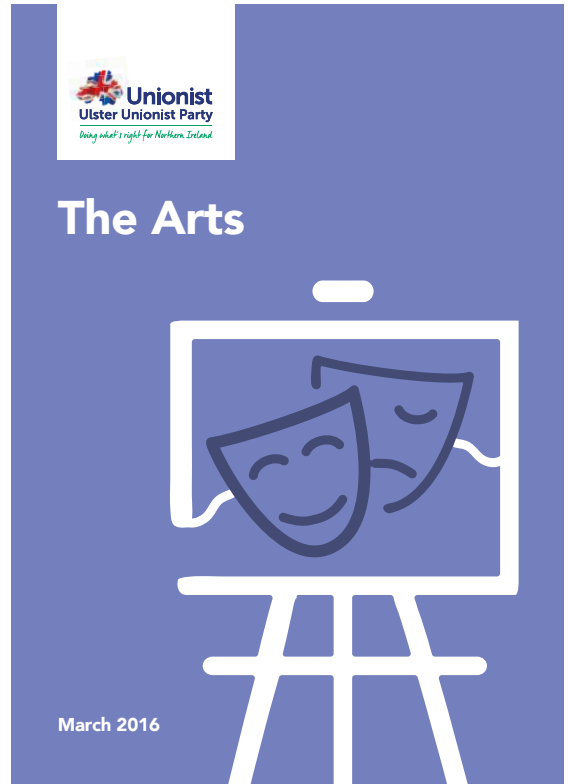


March 2016

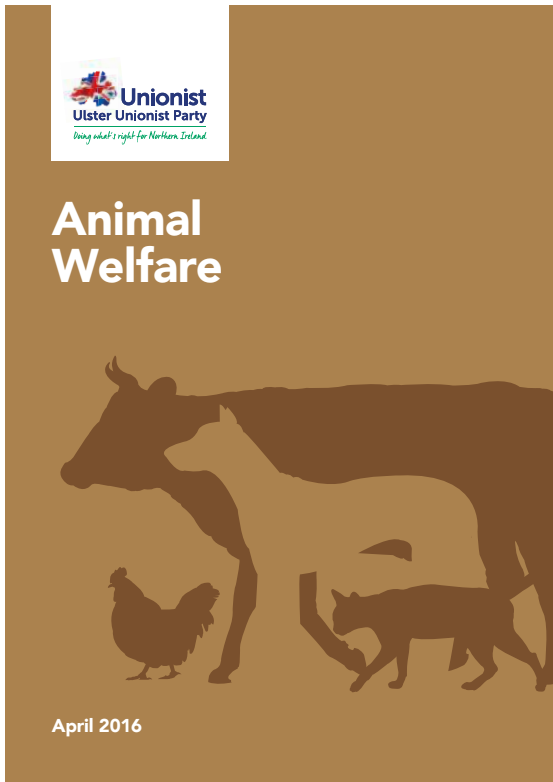
**The Knowledge Economy** – We will ensure that children are directed towards the areas they excel in, starting careers pathways pre-GCSE



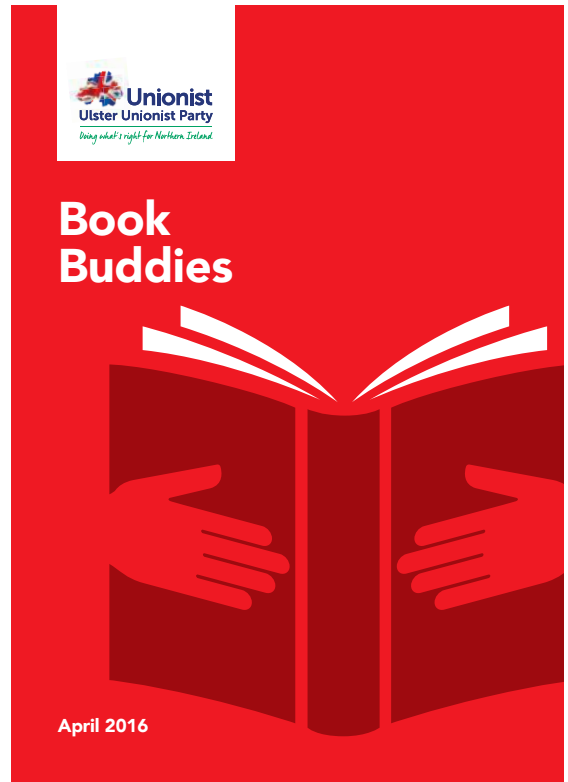
**Cancer Care** - Introduce a dignity charter so cancer patients are at the centre of their care and decision making process



**The Arts** - Challenge the arts sector, creative industries, our universities, FE colleges, and business to co-design a 10-year strategy for excellence to future-proof our place as competitors on the world stage



**Animal Welfare** – Strengthen punishments of those convicted of mistreating or abusing animals.



**Book Buddies** – We will support targeted interventions to address poor levels of numeracy and literacy



**Unionist**  
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*Doing what's right for Northern Ireland*

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