

Our Plan for Northern Ireland

The DUP Manifesto
for the 2017 Northern Ireland
Assembly Election



Just 9 months ago we fought the Assembly election on a detailed manifesto.

We won a five year mandate for that manifesto and reaffirm it as the basis for the election on 2 March.

Today we also set out this paper as an addendum to reflect developments since last May and our stance in the negotiations after the election.

Our vision, our plan and our goals – A restatement

The DUP seeks power in Northern Ireland to bring positive change for the people of Northern Ireland and to help them achieve their dreams and ambitions. We know the people’s desire to see Northern Ireland keep moving forward and it needs a focused and active Assembly to fulfil it.

The long-term and ambitious programme the DUP presented to the voters in May 2016 remains as relevant now as it was a mere 9 months ago. We need to:

- **Prioritise spending on our Health Service**
- **Create more jobs and increase incomes**
- **Protect family budgets**
- **Raise standards in education for everyone**
- **Invest in Infrastructure**

These were the fundamental issues that would make a difference to people’s lives in May 2016 and after. These are fundamental issues that will make a difference to people’s lives in March 2017 and after. What we need is an Assembly back and working to deliver on this five point plan, to deliver the better future for Northern Ireland people want.

The DUP five point plan can be advanced through ten elements, each with a broad range of policy targets and ideas:

- 1. More jobs and rising incomes**
- 2. A world class health service**
- 3. Education – every child the opportunity to succeed**
- 4. Rebuilding Northern Ireland**
- 5. Rewarding hard work**
- 6. Safer streets and smarter justice**
- 7. Creating stronger communities**
- 8. A friend of the farmer and our natural heritage**
- 9. Changing politics and government in Northern Ireland**
- 10. Taking pride in Northern Ireland**

With our strong team of DUP ministers and through the programme for government, we had begun the work to advance this positive agenda. It is work that should not have been interrupted and we are keen to return to it as soon as possible.

Leaving the European Union

The Democratic Unionist Party was always a Euro-sceptic party. We opposed the United Kingdom joining the European Economic Community but respected the national referendum result in 1975. In the intervening years, we consistently highlighted the encroachment of the European Union into our national life, contrary to the promises made when we joined. We fully supported the question of our EU membership being put once again to all of the British people.

In 2016, while the Ulster Unionist Party and Sinn Fein did a volte face, we remained true to our beliefs. We assessed the Cameron re-negotiation as an utter failure in achieving deep and meaningful reform to the European Union. Thus we endorsed and helped campaign for a successful Leave vote across the United Kingdom. The DUP is proud to have stood against the Remain campaign of ‘Project Fear’, both nationally and locally.

The DUP believes that this decision must be upheld and our MPs fought against those who sought to overturn the people’s decision, block Article 50 and tie the government’s negotiation stance.

The direct responsibility of the negotiation to leave the EU and our new relationship with it lies with the national government. They have rightly committed to working in partnership with the devolved administrations and that important work had begun. In this the DUP had shown its willingness to listen to the concerns of those who had voted remain. Sinn Fein’s decision to bring down the Assembly helped no one, leave or remain. In the absence of the Assembly, the DUP will fully utilise its representation in Parliament and in Brussels to represent the case of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. However, an Assembly back up and running is the best way to get the best deal for Northern Ireland in the new arrangements.

While the United Kingdom has decided that it no longer wants to be part of the EU political project, we still desire a positive relationship, mutual access to our markets to pursue common interests. The type of relationship we desire is expressed by the EU in Article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty.

“The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.”

This is especially true of our relationship with our neighbour, the Republic of Ireland, and to achieve common aims such as a seamless, frictionless border and maintenance of the common travel area.

The DUP sees no value in the attempts by some to keep re-running the referendum. Instead, we want to get on with the work to make it a success; to write our own laws; to deliver on the vision of a Global UK with new free trade deals; to control immigration; to deliver policies for farming and fishing shaped to our needs; to lift the burden of unnecessary regulation.

Leaving the European Union is not an event. The day after we leave we will have the same laws as we had before but what we will have is the democratic freedom to take our decisions of what we do then. Such freedom was worth voting for and worth using for the benefit of us all.

Achievements in Government

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

- 1. Unemployment is now at its lowest levels since 2008.
- 2. The economic inactivity level in Northern Ireland is now at its lowest in our history.
- 3. Northern Ireland is the best performing UK region for exports, our companies exports have increased more than any other part of the UK.
- 4. Nearly 5,000 jobs promoted this year.
- 5. Research and Development expenditure is at an all time high with £750 million spent and manufacturing jobs are on the increase with a 4.1% rise.

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

- 1. The DUP secured the best welfare package in the whole of the United Kingdom and delivered mitigation measures to combat the introduction of the Bedroom Tax.
- 2. Invested more in the Co-Ownership scheme and supported a Rent-To-Own scheme.
- 3. We are transforming our town and city centres right across Northern Ireland with projects from Belfast to Enniskillen.
- 4. Redeveloped Ravenhill and Windsor Park and we have ensured disability sport gets a better share of Government funding.
- 5. Introduced a range of initiatives focused on those most in need. An additional £ 4.5 million to Fuel Poverty Schemes, an additional £3 million to the Supporting People Scheme and the introduction of a homelessness strategy.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

- 1. Removed the long term ban on primary schools preparing their pupils for transfer.
- 2. Reallocated £14 million to school budgets in October.
- 3. Launched a ‘No Child Left Behind’ Strategy.
- 4. Ensured funding is in place for SureStart Programmes and increased Nurture Unit provision.
- 5. Granted schools greater flexibility with their budgets and subject choices.

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- 1. Almost £9m has been allocated to childcare initiatives.
- 2. Maintained the highest ever opening budget for the Victims and Survivors Service of £13.2m.
- 3. Supported early intervention support to over 18,600 children at the most critical stages of their education.
- 4. Over 6,700 families have been assisted through Family Support Hubs, Parenting Support and Community Family Support programmes.
- 5. Creation of Urban Villages Programme with £45 million capital budget.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1. First region of the UK to pay advance CAP payments to farmers.
- 2. Introduced an agri-environment scheme.
- 3. Introduced a scheme that pays for the removal of BVD infected calves.
- 4. New capital grants for farmers to help grow their business.
- 5. Delivered the long-awaited EMFF programme to the fishing industry.

DUP - Our 10 commitments in negotiations

By calling an unnecessary election and refusing to operate the system of government that has been in place for the last 10 years Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein have plunged Northern Ireland into a political crisis, risk a return to Direct Rule from Westminster and have put their own internal party management ahead of the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

All of this means there will be new negotiations immediately after this election. It will be for the people of Northern Ireland to decide who they want to represent them at those negotiations.

The DUP will place the interests of the people of Northern Ireland first in negotiations

The DUP did not seek new negotiations at this time and will not put any roadblocks in the way of seeing an Executive formed after this election.

In our negotiations we will be governed by the following ten principles:-

1. **We will work to avoid Direct Rule and get local government back at Stormont as quickly as possible.**
2. **Our demands in negotiations will be proportionate to those of Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein.**
3. **As has been the case since 2007, we remain committed to working constructively and in partnership with all those who are in an Executive after an election.**
4. **We will respond positively to any proposals to increase transparency, accountability and will help the institutions function more effectively.**
5. **We will not compromise on fundamental unionist principles in order to retain power.**
6. **We will not permit the rewriting of the past or the persecution of the security forces.**
7. **We will oppose any Border Poll outside the terms of the Belfast Agreement.**
8. **We will stand over those proposals for reform as set out in our 'Making Stormont Work Better' document which have not yet been delivered.**
9. **We will work to ensure the full implementation of the Military Covenant in Northern Ireland.**
10. **We will honour all previous commitments we have made on the basis that republicans will honour theirs as well.**

The DUP have the strongest unionist team for negotiations

It is critical that Unionism enters these negotiations from a position of strength. While we will not be prepared to give in to radical republican demands there is a danger that the government in the face of an election victory by Sinn Fein would be prepared to make compromises on the basis of the mandate they have won. This must not be allowed to happen.

The DUP has a wealth of experience in negotiations both from within those members who are likely to be returned to the Assembly as well as our MPs and MEP. The Party leader Arlene Foster, in conjunction with her Deputy Leader Nigel Dodds, will lead the negotiations after the election along with a strong team of MPs and MLAs. No other unionist party has a fraction of the strength in depth of the DUP when it comes to negotiations.

The DUP have the best record of achievement in negotiations

For many years unionists came off second best in negotiations and Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein were able to advance their radical republican agenda. That all stopped when the DUP became the leading unionist party in 2003. Since then the DUP have gradually but steadily regained ground lost when the UUP were negotiating for Unionism. This culminated in the Stormont House Agreement and the Fresh Start Agreement which represented another significant step forward for Unionism.

The reality is that it is because of Sinn Fein's inability to deal with the DUP in negotiations that they have precipitated a crisis in which they will wish to deal directly with the UK government. That is why it is so important that the DUP win a strong mandate to ensure that the government do not give in to Sinn Fein's demands.



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