

For All of Us

Ulster Unionist Party Assembly Election Manifesto 2007

Message from Sir Reg Empey	2
A Northern Ireland For all of Us	3
The Future	
Normal Politics	
For all of us	
The Way Forward	
Quality Public Services	7
Health	
Education	
A Competitive Economy	13
Business	
Skills	
Infrastructure	
Agriculture & fisheries	
Economic Package	
Protecting our Environment	19
Cherishing Northern Ireland's natural environment	
The challenge of climate change	
Our environment, our responsibility	
Stronger, Safer, Fairer Communities	23
Families, children, older people, women	
Carers, people with disabilities	
Rural communities, Anti-Poverty Strategy, housing	
Rights for all, community safety	
Volunteering, conservation, arts, sports	
Standing up for Northern Ireland	31
Accountability	
Value for money	
A fair rates burden	
Standing up for Northern Ireland	

For All of Us

A message from Reg Empey

It's time for devolution.

In November of 2003 the people of Northern Ireland elected an Assembly to govern. Nothing happened. Republicans abused the political process – and the DUP disengaged, refusing to work for Northern Ireland.



Now we have an opportunity to make things different. Now we have an opportunity to build a future for Northern Ireland through devolved government – just like our fellow citizens in Scotland and Wales.

Northern Ireland faces many challenges. Building the competitiveness of our economy. Investing in a health service free for all and education that offers opportunity to all. Protecting our environment. Securing a fair and just society. With these challenges, however, comes opportunity – above all, the opportunity of moving Northern Ireland forward.

For this to happen we need devolved government – government accountable to the people of Northern Ireland.

We deserve better than unaccountable Direct Rule government through part-time Ministers not elected by the people of Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party is prepared for the challenges and ready to make the most of the opportunities for everyone in Northern Ireland. We are the only Party prepared to pledge to you, the voters, that we will take our seats in government and govern for the good of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

On 7th of March we all have an opportunity of moving beyond the stale, failed politics of the past – and forming a devolved government that will put Northern Ireland first.

Join with us in making Stormont work – for all of us.

[Reg's signature]

Reg Empey

Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party

A NORTHERN IRELAND FOR ALL OF US



A Northern Ireland For all of Us

The Future

This election is about choosing a government for Northern Ireland. The task of that government is to govern. The Ulster Unionist Party believes that, as a community, we are now ready for a regional government of our own.

You want a government that works.

You don't want another election to an Assembly that can't meet or an Executive that won't be formed in the near future.

The DUP and Sinn Fein are more interested in dividing power between themselves rather than sharing office for the benefit of Northern Ireland. The DUP and Sinn Fein are more interested in polarising our society rather than finding ways of uniting us.

Normal Politics

The Ulster Unionist Party believes in the need for normal politics in Northern Ireland. It's now time to concentrate on the everyday issues which affect all of us: health, schools, rates and water charges, our environment, jobs and investment, and every other issue that matters to you and your family.

Normal politics will be better than Direct Rule politics. It doesn't mean that the Assembly will resolve every problem, but it does ensure direct and local accountability if parties get it wrong.

Normal politics will be better than a constant them-and-us battle over ancient squabbles. Normal politics will be better than the experience we've endured here for decades.

Normal politics, in time, will allow parties to form genuine political coalitions and move away from the tribal, divisive politics of the past.

For all of us

The Ulster Unionist Party remains a strong voice at the centre of this process – committed to creating and supporting policies which are good for all of us rather than policies which promote the interests only of some.

The Ulster Unionist Party has helped to make Northern Ireland a better place for all of us. Unionism now stands on the ground that we staked out over the past 10 years. Nationalism and Republicanism have accepted that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland can only be changed by the will of the people, not by force or by external government action.

We believe that the people of Northern Ireland are ready to take control of their own affairs and make normal politics work.

The Way Forward

Given the progress that Northern Ireland has made in recent years, thanks in large measure to the sacrifice and service of the security forces, we must ensure that we seize the opportunities for progress that are opening up before us.

In these circumstances, would it be wise to renew the mandates of Sinn Fein and the DUP?

How could any administration survive if it was dominated by two parties who refuse to speak to each other or share common values?

Can you imagine Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley representing Northern Ireland on foreign trade missions? Would they travel in separate cars and communicate via intermediaries? And all this in front of potential investors.

As a party dedicated to promoting and strengthening the Union, we are satisfied that this cannot be done by remaining mere spectators in our own country.

Unionist policy must be determined by unionists and not driven by the actions of Sinn Fein. We must make up our own minds on what we believe to be in the best interests of Northern Ireland. That is why the Ulster Unionist Party will not agree to set a date for the devolution of policing and justice until such times as public confidence is established.

In these circumstances - and conscious of the legal requirement for all who wish to hold office to fully support the PSNI and the rule of law - we intend to take those seats in the Executive to which we are entitled.

On March 7th we are asking you to vote Ulster Unionist to support politics and policies that are good **for all of us**.



QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES



Quality Public Services

The National Health Service and our education system make a real difference to all our lives, contributing in vital ways to the quality of life we experience as individuals, in our families and in our communities. Ulster Unionists are committed to our public services. The investments we as society make in our health service and our schools must secure access to quality healthcare and advice, and quality education – for all of us.

Quality local health services and quality local schools should be the cornerstones of communities across Northern Ireland – improving health and well-being, and increasing educational opportunities. The local accountability, strategic direction and targeted investment that a Northern Ireland Executive can bring to our public services stands in stark contrast to their mismanagement under Direct Rule – in which remote government by press release has been the order of the day.

Ulster Unionists believe that accountability and real partnership between a devolved Executive, health and education professionals, patients, parents, and communities can renew Northern Ireland's public services.

Health

Building on the dedication and commitment of Northern Ireland health professionals, ill-health in Northern Ireland must be tackled at its source. Early intervention, local health care and advice, and a renewed commitment to health services free at the point of need are key to promoting well-being and healthy communities. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Moving during the course of this Assembly towards free prescriptions for all – modeled on the Welsh Assembly's policy, restoring a key principle of the NHS
- Free, comprehensive eye examinations ensuring appropriate, quality eye-care for all in a local setting – and, where needed further clinical investigation reducing referrals to the hospital sector.
- An investment package for dentistry - particularly ensuring that dental practices can invest in oral health promotion
- Extending NHS Direct to Northern Ireland – enabling patients to have access to NHS staff and advice 24hours a day
- Allowing pharmacists to prescribe and practice nurses to treat non-urgent conditions – reducing waiting times and lists for GPs
- Training the right number of nurses and supporting them during training, including support for childcare as is the case in rest of UK – protecting the public investment in the training of nurses
- Introducing one year's guaranteed employment for new nurses when their training is completed – improving retention rates during training

- Extending choice for pregnant women through midwifery-led maternity units – ensuring local, accessible maternity care
- Retaining a Chief Nursing Officer for Northern Ireland – ensuring access to independent nursing advice for local Ministers
- In light of medical evidence, supporting measures to reverse the decline in uptake of MMR – protecting children and future generations from the potentially deadly effects of measles
- Establishing ‘care management networks’, enabling health care professionals across practices and institutions to coordinate delivery of care to patients with chronic diseases – allowing patients to be supported in managing their conditions
- Targeted prevention programs for diabetes, strokes and cardiovascular illnesses – ensuring that early intervention and lifestyle advice reduces the extent and impact of these diseases
- A Mental Health Directorate in OFMDFM – ensuring that the promotion of good mental health is at the core of government
- Funding and rolling-out of Healthy Living Centres to a level equivalent to that in Great Britain – encouraging individuals, families and communities to take responsibility for healthier lifestyles
- The Executive and the Assembly Health Committee promptly considering the recommendations of the Appleby Report – particularly its proposals for more efficient use of resources and better performance management
- Implementing the Bamford Reports, modernising Northern Ireland’s mental health services – addressing historic under-investment, and securing mental health services that respect the dignity and rights of patients and their families
- Introducing a law to protect health staff from assault and abuse – enabling them to give quality service to patients and their families

Education

A local Assembly and Executive can work in partnership with parents and teachers to provide a quality educational experience for all our children – from pre-school years to post-16. Educational opportunities are fundamental to providing our children with the skills, experiences and imagination that will allow them in later years to have a stake in our economy and society. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A bursary scheme to support teachers’ continuing professional development – improving teaching practice and positively impacting on pupil achievement
- A guaranteed induction year for new teachers - ensuring that all new teachers have a solid grounding in teaching experience and allowing schools to benefit from their skills

- Schools of Achievement program for areas with educational under-achievement - offering additional support and coordinated services in order to transform educational opportunities
- Pre-school education as universal entitlement – 20 hours per week of pre-school education should be guaranteed for every child
- Progress towards a target of 70 Sure Start Children's Centres by 2012, a figure proportionately equivalent to those rolled-out in Great Britain – recognizing that investment in early years educational provision increases educational outcomes in later years
- A comprehensive and urgent review of literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools – addressing the unacceptable levels of poor literacy and numeracy which deprive too many children of opportunity and achievement
- Every child in primary school having access to quality tuition in the arts, music, sports and foreign languages – enriching primary education for every child
- A Northern Ireland Extended Schools Strategy, to ensure that we at least keep pace with progress in Great Britain – providing access to extended services and improving educational outcomes in communities throughout Northern Ireland
- An end to the negative debate over academic selection, allowing all schools to move forward – giving post-primary schools the freedom to use fair and consistent academic criteria if they are over-subscribed
- Post-primary schools receiving a robust pupil profile and providing parents with a statement of advice – helping parents make the choice of post-primary school for their child
- Moving towards every non-grammar post-primary school becoming a 'specialist school' – establishing their own distinctive identities and becoming centres of educational excellence in their chosen specialist field
- Securing the role of grammar schools as centres of academic excellence – and ensuring access to grammars on the basis of fair and consistent academic criteria
- Enhancing careers advice through a strategic partnership between schools, colleges and the Careers Service - to deliver impartial and specialist careers advice on educational, training and employment opportunities
- The Education and Skills Authority structured so as to give authentic representation to the controlled, maintained and other sectors – positively reflecting the pluralism of Northern Ireland's education system
- Flexible, local programs to facilitate shared educational initiatives between sectors – delivering increased efficiency and opportunity, and preparing our children for citizenship in a shared community

- Careful consideration of the Bain Report by the Northern Ireland Executive, rather than hasty implementation – and balanced with a review of the educational and social benefits of small schools
- Earmarking savings in administration costs for investment in education – because quality schools and quality education for all children are fundamental to our economic competitiveness and for a fair and just society



A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY



A competitive economy

Ulster Unionists have a vision of a flourishing regional economy in Northern Ireland, built on the strong foundations provided by the UK economy, access to the European single market and political stability in our community. For this vision to become reality, Northern Ireland needs policies capable of facing the challenges of a competitive global marketplace.

Opportunity, prosperity, and growth are the main concerns of Northern Ireland's businesses. Meeting these concerns requires a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy.

Ulster Unionists believe that devolved Government in Northern Ireland can act as a catalyst for economic renewal, with economic growth going hand in hand with social justice. Enabling all – not just some – to have the skills to contribute to the success of Northern Ireland PLC is necessary both for economic competitiveness and for a just society.

Ulster Unionists believe that by fostering a spirit of innovation and creating a culture of enterprise, we can build an economic future marked by opportunity, investment and growth.

Business

Ulster Unionists will work to make Northern Ireland the best place in the UK and British Isles to do business. We are committed to policies delivering a positive business environment through investments in competitiveness, enterprise and innovation. Building long-term economic success and creating economic opportunities for all of us in Northern Ireland needs vibrant businesses. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A manufacturing strategy for Northern Ireland – demonstrating commitment to the manufacturing sector as a powerhouse of a knowledge-driven regional economy
- Making the case for a competitive tax environment for businesses – allowing Northern Ireland companies to invest in growth, R&D and quality jobs
- Urging the Treasury to adopt a more innovative approach to a range of business taxes in Northern Ireland – including altering the level of fuel duty to reduce smuggling and simplifying the R&D tax credit to encourage take-up
- A small business rates relief scheme – reducing the tax burden on our SMEs and boosting their competitiveness
- A review of Northern Ireland's retail sector – providing strategic direction to government policies impacting on the sector
- Increasing the efficiency and transparency of the planning system – delivering speedy and consistent planning decisions
- A robust retail planning policy statement, with consistent application – securing the economic future of our town centres

- A Strategy for Innovation setting ambitious targets for lifting Northern Ireland's public and private R&D investment levels
- A Knowledge Bank bringing together businesses, researchers and investors – providing a tailored, focussed and unified support mechanism for businesses with the potential to be high growth
- Partnership with the private sector to create business technology centres – to be drivers of innovation and enterprise
- Local procurement policies for Government departments and agencies – maximizing the opportunities for and development of Northern Ireland businesses
- Review the workings of Invest NI – with a view to promoting an innovative, proactive and ambitious approach to business start-ups, exports and international investment
- Investment in the infrastructure and marketing of the 5 signature projects identified by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board – the unique selling points of Northern Ireland's tourism experience

Skills

In the 21st Century building a flourishing economy means equipping everyone with skills and training to face that challenge. The gap in basic skills stifles Northern Ireland's economic potential. A knowledge-based economy needs sustained investment in quality training and world-class research and development. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Funding the Union Learning Fund in Northern Ireland to GB levels, boosting workplace learning – giving assistance to the too many people in Northern Ireland have not been given the required skill levels in literacy and numeracy
- Working in partnership with key Northern Ireland business sectors, FE colleges and trades unions to promote industry-led apprenticeship schemes to provide businesses with skilled employees
- Reversing the funding cuts to Northern Ireland's FE colleges – ensuring investment to enable further education to deliver the 'FE Means Business' agenda
- Extending degree-awarding status to Northern Ireland's FE colleges, on a par with colleges in GB – increasing access to degree-level courses
- Improving co-operation and partnership between FE colleges, Invest NI's Knowledge Transfer Program and businesses – allowing the FE sector to further contribute to Northern Ireland's R&D capacity
- An independent review of how Northern Ireland finances its universities and students – bringing forward proposals on funding our world class HE institutions and securing equitable access to university for all
- Recognising that HE is key to a knowledge-based economy, removing the MaSN cap on student numbers in science, engineering and technology disciplines

- Increasing by 200 p.a. the number of postgraduate students in science, engineering and technology subjects graduating from our universities – contributing to Northern Ireland’s cutting-edge skills and research base
- Establishing business-led technology-hubs – enabling businesses to access world class, job-creating research in Northern Ireland universities

Agriculture and fisheries

Ulster Unionists believe in a quality future for Northern Ireland’s rural communities. Quality jobs. Quality lives. A quality environment. And quality products. Agricultural policy must coherently address the economic, social and environmental needs of rural communities. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Introducing a public procurement strategy – empowering government departments and agencies to source a high proportion of food from local, Northern Ireland producers
- Pressing for sufficient funding to be put in place for the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme
- Calling for the introduction of clearer food labelling – produce should be grown, born, reared, slaughtered and processed locally to qualify for bearing the Northern Ireland label
- Key stakeholders working together to establish Northern Ireland beef in the markets lost during the beef ban – with a focussed marketing strategy to increase awareness of our beef across the EU
- An independent review of the cost, volume and nature of the regulations imposed on farm businesses – identifying how the burden of red-tape can be reduced
- Creating a regulatory framework that promotes a fair relationship between producers, processors and the multiples – addressing unfair and restrictive practices and helping to secure a sustainable future for Northern Ireland farm businesses
- Continuation of funding for the New Entrants Scheme – providing start-up support for those who want to make a career of farming
- Maintaining modern educational facilities at CAFRE – to secure future skilled workers in the agri-food and equine industries
- Supporting rates relief for equestrian businesses – recognising their existing and potential contribution to Northern Ireland’s rural economy
- A radical review of DARD’s use of the Independent Appeals Panels
- Reintroduction of export restitution funds for our dairy sector – and an adequate restructuring package for the industry
- Opposing the UK Government’s unfair proposal on voluntary modulation, removing 20% of farmers Single Farm Payment

- Working through the Assembly and Executive at national and European level to ensure that the high standards which farmers in Northern Ireland and across the EU have to meet in terms of animal welfare, environmental protection and traceability apply to the imported produce
- The creation of a Northern Ireland Fisheries Authority – providing a new partnership between the Executive, fish producers, fishing communities and environmental organisations
- A tie up aid package related to the cod recovery scheme – supporting Northern Ireland’s fishing industry and securing its future

Infrastructure

Ulster Unionists believe that a competitive, dynamic economy requires an efficient, accessible and modern transport and digital infrastructure. This means having a public transport network fit for purpose in the 21st Century, a road network which can support the needs of businesses and communities, and maximising the opportunities provided by broadband and other digital technologies. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Addressing the infrastructure deficit across Northern Ireland – in the east and west
- A minerals planning policy statement – securing sustainable access to the essential raw materials for Northern Ireland’s economic future
- A strategic integrated transport system – that gets goods to market quickly and efficiently, and people to work safely and on time
- Investing in Northern Ireland’s rail and bus networks – upgrading services in key network routes, ensuring that the region possesses a public transport network contributing towards sustainable economic growth
- A road network which serves the economic and social needs of all of Northern Ireland – urban and rural, east and west
- A new air route development fund, strengthening existing and developing new routes – developed in an environmentally sustainable manner
- Addressing the east/west digital divide – guaranteeing a modern, efficient and accessible telecommunications and broadband service capable of supporting urban and rural businesses

An Economic Package for the Northern Ireland Executive

After decades of civil unrest, economic uncertainty, and historic levels of underinvestment in our infrastructure, Northern Ireland needs and deserves an economic package from the Treasury that will enable a new Executive to invest in growth, innovation and enterprise. The package offered by the Treasury falls far short of what is required. A generous, effective economic package is a pre-requisite for a new Executive having the capacity to deliver economic and social progress. Ulster Unionists are committed to working for an economic package which:

- Invests in an ambitious infrastructure programme – addressing the long-standing

infrastructure deficit that holds back our regional economy

- Invests in skills and innovation – providing the foundations for a step-change in Northern Ireland’s economic performance
- Provides a competitive fiscal and taxation environment – allowing Northern Ireland to attract inward investment and quality jobs

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT



Protecting our environment

The people of Northern Ireland deserve a clean and healthy environment – an environment in which the quality of our air, land and water are safeguarded, an environment in which we all can take pride. Ulster Unionists want to secure clean air, clean water, clean land and clean energy for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland's diverse and beautiful natural environment is one of our most precious assets. It should be preserved and passed on to future generations.

Ulster Unionists know that looking after our environment requires robust initiatives and policies. Good stewardship of the natural environment needs a partnership between the Executive, Assembly, local government, local communities and the business and agricultural sectors – a partnership in which commitment to a clean and healthy environment contributes to our quality of life.

Northern Ireland also has a responsibility to work with the rest of the United Kingdom to address the environmental challenges facing our generation. The pressing and urgent challenge of climate change does, of course, require international initiatives – but it also needs local action.

Stewardship of Northern Ireland's environment is a responsibility for all of us. And protecting our environment will secure opportunity and well-being for all of us.

Cherishing Northern Ireland's natural environment

Northern Ireland has stunning landscape and coastlines, and a rich diversity of wildlife. All this contributes to our quality of life and our tourism potential. Protecting and conserving our natural environment is in the interests of all of us. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- The creation of an independent, integrated Environmental Protection Agency – working with communities, businesses and farmers to preserve Northern Ireland's environment holding polluters to account
- A Northern Ireland Marine Act – to protect and preserve our seas, coastal areas and maritime environment
- Declaring all nationally important wildlife sites in Northern Ireland Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) by 2015
- Securing favourable conditions in all Northern Ireland ASSIs by 2015 – redressing the ongoing failure to reach UK standards in Northern Ireland's ASSI programme
- Working with the farming community to ensure high take-up of agri-environment schemes and funding – supporting farmers in their role as custodians of the rural environment
- Reforming the 1953 Forestry Act – recognising the environmental and social benefits of trees and woodland, not just commercial benefits
- As in the rest of the UK, ensure that a licence is required for tree felling – protecting

our local environment and natural heritage

- A Woodland Preservation Order to protect woodland and trees from reckless development

- A Statutory duty for the Executive and Assembly to promote sustainable development – ensuring that all aspects of government work to protect Northern Ireland's environment

The challenge of climate change

Climate change holds potentially devastating consequences for our planet. Our children and grandchildren deserve more from us than inaction. Northern Ireland has a role to play in rising to the challenge. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- The Executive and Assembly working in partnership with the Scottish and Welsh Administrations to secure a Climate Change Bill for the UK with clear targets for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions

- Publication of a scoping study on the likely impact of climate change on Northern Ireland's natural environment, communities and economy

- In partnership with the other devolved regions, working to deliver the UK's targets for the reduction of carbon emissions

- An energy conservation strategy for Northern Ireland's economy – reducing Northern Ireland's carbon footprint and potentially saving businesses £15m p.a. in energy costs

- Northern Ireland adopting the GB 2015 target for low-carbon homes

- As in the rest of the UK, a Code for Sustainable Homes – giving developers clear targets for best practice environmental standards

- Using domestic rates to provide incentives for key energy efficiency measures

- A Northern Ireland Renewable Energy Plan – increasing existing commitments and stimulating Northern Ireland's renewable technologies potential

- A new planning statement requiring that 10% of the energy needs of new developments are from on-site renewables – promoting Northern Ireland's commitment to renewable energy

Our environment, our responsibility

All of us have a responsibility to be good stewards of our environment. Government should empower us to make positive, environmentally responsible choices. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Implementation in Northern Ireland of the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto – giving our children the first-hand experiences of nature that will prepare them to be good stewards of the environment

- Introducing incentives through domestic rates for energy efficiency measures –

encouraging households to reduce their carbon footprint

- Continuation until 2020 of the Energy Efficiency Levy – fairly sharing the burden of reducing domestic energy inefficiency
- Funding the Energy Saving Trust’s transport advice services, as in the rest of the UK – helping businesses manage their transport needs in an environmentally responsible way

STRONGER, SAFER, FAIRER COMMUNITIES



Stronger, safer, fairer communities

Ulster Unionists are committed to building stronger, safer, fairer communities where all children can flourish, families prosper and the elderly live in dignity and security, free from fear. We believe that by building stronger communities we can make society a better place for all of us.

Ulster Unionists want all to live in communities they are proud to call home, whether in rural Northern Ireland or in one of our many towns and cities. We cannot stand by and watch any of our communities or neighbourhoods be abandoned to despair, environmental decay or anti-social behaviour.

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. Ulster Unionists believe in quality of life and social justice built upon the firm foundations of opportunity, security, fairness and responsibility.

Families

Ulster Unionists believe in supporting all families as the bedrock of a strong society. We believe in family-friendly policies promoting opportunity, security and allowing families to balance work commitments with quality of life. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Enhanced ante-natal care to include parenting skills, financial literacy and relationships support – providing strong support to all parents from the start
- Resources for local parenting support initiatives – increasing family stability and reducing the need for later, more costly interventions
- Implementation of the Northern Ireland Child Minders' Strategy – giving parents real choice in childcare
- A home reading grant scheme – supporting schools, community groups and voluntary organizations to set up reading projects encouraging parents and carers to read with children from an early age
- Action to increase take-up of the Child Trust Fund – so that every child is given an investment for the future
- The Children and Young People's Unit in OFMDFM becoming the Families and Children Unit – providing a champion for families at the heart of government

Children

Ulster Unionists value and respect the potential of every child and young person. We believe in creating the right environment and real opportunities that will allow them to become confident young adults. There is no limit to what Northern Ireland can achieve if every child gets the best possible start in life. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Achieving the UK's 2020 target to eradicate child poverty – focusing on lifting children out of severe poverty

- Examining proposals for free nutritious school meals for every primary school child – as a means of improving our children’s health and overcoming social exclusion
- Introducing surfing proficiency skills during the later years of primary school – teaching children safe and responsible use of the internet
- Urgent action to implement the Bamford proposals on mental health services for children and young people – securing the rights and dignity of children and young people
- Action to radically improve outcomes for children and young people in care – securing better educational and employment opportunities for looked-after children

Older People

Ulster Unionists are committed to providing security, dignity and welfare for older people. We believe that these values should shape our society’s approach to valuing and protecting the elderly as vital members of our community. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- An independent commissioner for older people – promoting their rights, interests and positive role in our society
- Introducing free personal care – ensuring welfare, security and dignity for older citizens
- Home alarm scheme for vulnerable older people – increasing independence and security in their own homes
- Free installation of central heating for every older person without it – addressing fuel poverty amongst older people
- Increased awareness within statutory agencies of elder abuse – and the introduction of register of those who cannot work with older people because of the threat they pose

Women

Ulster Unionists want to create opportunities for women of all ages, providing them with genuine choices, and equipping each to reach their potential. We recognize that women have specific concerns, particularly in areas such as health and well being, maintaining work life balance, and economic sustainability. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Securing resources for the Tackling Violence at Home and Sexual Violence strategies – freeing women from the fear of violence and supporting victims
- Addressing the gender pay gap – securing workplace equality for women
- Working with the community and voluntary sector to ensure women have access to lifelong learning opportunities – increasing women’s employment opportunities
- Extending the Workplace Nurseries Initiative and the Transformation Fund for the childcare workforce to Northern Ireland – increasing employment choices for women

Carers

Ulster Unionists believe that government for too long has undervalued the vital role played by carers. We will seek to redress this by recognising the importance of carers and putting in place a set of policies to reflect the immense contribution they make to our social fabric. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A yearly free health check for all carers
- Increasing recognition amongst health professionals and carers of the importance of Carers' Assessments as a gateway to support for carers
- Social Security Agency to devise and implement a strategy to increase entitlement take-up amongst carers (it is estimated that carers lose £4m p.a. in entitlements)

People with disabilities

Ulster Unionists have a vision of a society where the full potential of people with disabilities is recognised in every community and every workplace. We are committed to creating the circumstances where disabled people are valued and able to contribute to their maximum capacity. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Promoting compliance with all aspects of the Disability Discrimination Act – securing fairness and rights for people with disabilities
- Properly resourced community care services – ensuring personal assistance for people with disabilities, promoting independent living
- Implementation of the Bamford Review's proposals for a comprehensive strategy for services for people with learning disabilities
- Introducing a Northern Ireland Autism Act – guaranteeing the security and rights of those on the Autistic spectrum

Rural Communities

Ulster Unionists believe in creating sustainable rural communities capable of facing social, economic and environmental challenges. We recognise that rural communities are an integral part of Northern Ireland's social and economic fabric. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A Sustainable Rural Communities White Paper – developing an agenda for the Executive to support the rural way of life
- Effective rural proofing criteria for all Government policies – ensuring that the views, needs and aspirations of rural communities are reflected in policy decisions
- A balanced rural planning policy – protecting the countryside from random development while allowing for sustainable development of rural communities

Anti-Poverty Strategy

Social exclusion dramatically affects quality of life for individuals, families and communities. It stifles ambition, destroys hope and damages individual lives. Ulster Unionists are determined to close the gap between those with the most and those with

the least, building an opportunity society and grow social enterprises for all of us. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- An implementation plan and resources for the Anti-Poverty Strategy – making the aspirations in Lifetime Opportunities real
- Focusing Life Time Opportunities’ anti-poverty initiatives on the 35,000 Northern Ireland children experiencing severe poverty
- Action by the Social Security Agency to aggressively promote benefit take-up by older people
- Extending the commitment in Lifetime Opportunities to secure a decent, safe and warm home for children, young people and older people to all

Housing

Ulster Unionists are committed to ensuring that all of us have the chance to own or rent a decent home. Decent homes give individuals and families stability, security and a platform from which to achieve their full potential. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Implementation of the recommendations of the Review into Affordable Housing
- A planning policy statement providing, where required, for 25% of new builds to be affordable housing
- A NIHE target of 2000 social housing new builds each year
- Increasing Co-ownership up-take by abolishing the housing value limits
- Selective de-zoning to prevent land-banking and speculation

A Shared Community

Ulster Unionists are proud of Northern Ireland’s place in the diverse, pluralist, modern United Kingdom. We believe in a culturally diverse Northern Ireland in which the rights of all are secured within the Union. At the core of Ulster Unionist values is the conviction that all in Northern Ireland, irrespective of class, gender, religious belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, colour or race should share in the cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, incorporating the ECHR and providing supplementary rights reflecting the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland – securing the fundamental rights and liberties of all citizens
- Effective implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Moving beyond the existing failed parading framework and finding a resolution to the controversy around parades – respecting both the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to peaceful protest
- A new focus to the work of the Equality Commission, moving beyond

out-dated arguments – and particularly addressing gender issues, securing the diverse, representative workforce required by a 21st economy

- Recognising the diverse cultural and linguistic heritage of Northern Ireland – and opposing the divisive Irish Language Act proposals
- Implementation of the Report of the Interim Victim's Commissioner, ensuring that the needs of victims are met and their voices heard

Community Safety

While policing and justice powers should only be devolved when community confidence exists, the Executive and Policing Board can work in partnership with statutory agencies and voluntary groups to promote communities free from crime and the fear of crime. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Maintaining the PSNI's existing personnel levels, rejecting any reductions in police numbers – ensuring sufficient police numbers to protect our communities from crime
- Supporting restorative justice schemes, such as Alternatives, that work fully with the PSNI in addressing anti-social behaviour – and withholding support and funding from any schemes which refuse to co-operate with the PSNI
- Working to ensure the Republic of Ireland signs up to the UK's Violent Offender and Sex Offender Register database (ViSOR) – protecting children and communities on both sides of the border
- Introducing electronic tagging and polygraph testing of high-risk sex offenders – building public confidence in the management of such offenders by the responsible agencies
- Support for robust rehabilitation programs which effectively address re-offending rates – providing greater protection to our communities
- Introducing a 20mph limit around schools – protecting our children before and after school
- Implementing the Pass Plus voluntary training scheme for new drivers, as in the rest of the UK – giving new drivers access to advanced road training

Volunteering, charities and the voluntary sector

Voluntary work is often the glue that holds many urban and rural communities together, improving the quality of life for many. Ulster Unionists cherish the rich tapestry of voluntary networks that exist and believe that their commitment and support for others should be recognised. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- A partnership between the Executive and the Volunteer Development Agency to promote volunteering – based on the innovative partnership between the Scottish Executive and the Scottish VDA
- Implementation in Northern Ireland of the Russell Commission recommendations to promote volunteering amongst young people

- Ensuring that 'Positive Steps' is fully implemented in practice – building an authentic partnership between charities, the community and voluntary sector, and the Executive

Conservation, field sports, angling and animal welfare

Securing animal welfare, conserving wildlife and habitats, and respecting the rights of those who engage in shooting sports and angling are values that should be mutually dependent. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Supporting ongoing efforts to ensure that animal welfare legislation in Northern Ireland reflects policy in the rest of the United Kingdom
- Addressing the decline of the Irish Hare population – including prohibiting hare coursing
- Recognising the contribution shooting sports make to the Northern Ireland economy – and not legislating to restrict lawful forms of sporting shooting
- Ensuring that an independent, integrated Environmental Protection Agency robustly protects our angling rivers and lakes – conserving Northern Ireland's fresh water fish stocks

Arts and culture

Ulster Unionists believe that Northern Ireland's culture, from world-class events, to community arts, to the cultural riches available in our libraries and museums, enrich our common life as a society. Investment in arts and culture is an investment in our quality of life. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Action to raise Northern Ireland's per capita investment in the arts to the UK average
- Investing in major arts and cultural events as a priority – acknowledging their role as key drivers in Northern Ireland's creative economy
- Supporting implementation of 'Developing Tomorrow's Libraries' – giving communities across Northern Ireland centres of learning, knowledge and inspiration

Sports and leisure

Sport is an essential part of Northern Ireland's shared national story, from the triumphs of years gone by to more recent sporting achievements. Our sporting heritage provides us with a sound foundation on which to look to the future. Sport is important for our individual wellbeing and that of our communities. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Fully supporting the Northern Ireland 2012 London Olympics Strategy and the work of the Taskforce, with particular emphasis on building a sporting legacy – and preparing for a British city potentially hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014
- A Strategy for the Development of Sport in Northern Ireland with ambitious goals and targets both for sporting participation and for sporting excellence – and reflecting investment levels in sport in the rest of the United Kingdom



STANDING UP FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



Standing up for Northern Ireland

Ulster Unionists believe that standing up for Northern Ireland means securing devolved government for this part of the United Kingdom – and that devolution will secure Northern Ireland's place within a modern United Kingdom.

Through the accountability and transparency brought by devolved government, Ulster Unionists will work to deliver value for money and a fair rates burden – for all of us. The new-found confidence, strength and direction that devolution has brought to our fellow-citizens in Scotland and Wales highlights the opportunities that a working Assembly and Executive hold for Northern Ireland.

Devolution will empower Northern Ireland to move forward and widen access to power, which can be just as important as access to wealth and opportunity. Through accountable, devolved government, Ulster Unionists will bridge the gap between government and the people of Northern Ireland.

Accountability

For over 3 decades the people of Northern Ireland have been governed through Direct Rule Minister – unaccountable to us, routinely ignoring our wishes, and remote from our hopes and aspirations. Through devolution locally elected representatives will exercise responsibility with accountability. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Transparent, accountable devolved government at Stormont – replacing remote, unaccountable Direct Rule
- A Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive accountable to all the people of Northern Ireland – and serving all of Northern Ireland, east and west, urban and rural
- Effective Assembly Committees, holding public servants and public bodies to account – ensuring transparency and accountability in public administration
- Working in real partnership within the Northern Ireland Executive, delivering for and promoting the interests of Northern Ireland – not building party or personal fiefdoms
- Local government accountable to local communities – which is why we support 15 local authorities for Northern Ireland, not the artificial 7 authorities proposed under Direct Rule
- A strong voice for elected representatives in the various bodies proposed by the RPA – securing accountability throughout Northern Ireland's public administration

Value for money

Hard-working families across Northern Ireland, and our businesses competing in a rigorous economic environment, have a right to expect government to spend our hard-earned money properly and wisely. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Northern Ireland, like every other part of the United Kingdom, contributing to and benefiting from UK public expenditure – and living within our fair share of UK resources
- Ensuring that Northern Ireland Departments deliver the £800 million they have

identified in efficiency savings

- An effective, robust Public Accounts Committee – holding Departments and public bodies to account for their use of public money
- A review of the implementation of reports issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office during the suspension of devolution – ensuring that the absence of PAC scrutiny during suspension does not continue to cost the Northern Ireland public

A fair rates burden

Through rates, the people and businesses of Northern Ireland contribute to the public services and infrastructure that benefit our entire community. But the rates burden must be fair. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Capping industrial rates for the manufacturing sector at 25% - allowing businesses to grow and invest, while also sharing in the rates burden
- A Non-Domestic Rate Payers Forum – ensuring that the voice of business is heard in the Executive’s deliberations over rating policy
- Rates bills which clearly and transparently distinguish between local and regional rates – increasing accountability and transparency
- A fair cap on domestic rates – bringing Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the United Kingdom
- Extending rates relief for people with disabilities – redressing the economic disadvantages disability can bring
- Universal, non-means-tested rates relief for all pensioner-households – giving dignity and security to those who have worked hard and saved throughout their lives
- Working with the other Executive parties to implement the Programme for Government Committee’s agreed proposals to delay the Direct Rule Administration’s water charges – allowing the Assembly and Executive to consider a fairer, more sustainable approach
- Capping the Direct Rule Administration’s introduction of water charges at a maximum of £100 – prohibiting any rises while the Assembly and Executive devise a fairer, more sustainable alternative

Northern Ireland’s voice

Under Direct Rule, we have been deprived of government that stands up for the interests of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, the British Isles, the European Union and the wider world. Ulster Unionists are committed to:

- Developing a partnership between the devolved Administrations in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh – promoting our common interests within the United Kingdom
- Advocating a Royal Commission to strengthen the Union – and build the partnership between Westminster and the devolved Administrations

- Constructive, accountable co-operation with the Republic of Ireland – for our mutual benefit
- Creation of an Assembly Committee on European Affairs – providing focus to Northern Ireland’s relationship with the European Union
- A strategy for strengthening Northern Ireland’s engagement with the United States – building on economic, cultural, educational, tourism, and civil society links
- A Northern Ireland Executive International Development Policy – building on the commitment in our society to work in partnership with the two-thirds world
- Creating a Northern Ireland International Forum to promote Northern Ireland overseas – as a place to live and work, a place to visit, and a place to invest

Notes



Notes

