



Unionist
Ulster Unionist Party

Doing what's right for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Assembly Manifesto 2016

#MakeItWork



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Change, or more of the same.

That is the choice facing you, the voter, on the 5th of May.

I will be voting for change, because I want us to take the next big steps towards a proper, normal democracy, a system where we vote a party into power, give them a mandate or two to deliver on their promises, then vote them into **Opposition**, so they can refresh and rebuild themselves for another go.

The same two parties have been at the heart of our devolved government, in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) for nine long years and two full mandates. Their record is of mutual veto, the occasional whiff of something less than wholesome and broken promises.

They continuously veto progress by the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly. Think Welfare Reform, the use of Petitions of Concern in ways never imagined in 1998, and the number of OFMdFM strategies yet to be published to support our minorities and vulnerable.

The biggest failure is undelivered promises:

- **They promised to spend £80million tackling poverty by March 2015, but did not;**
- **They promised to spend £12 million on affordable, accessible childcare, but did not;**
- **They promised 5,000 new jobs at the Maze, but did not deliver;**
- **They promised the best training facilities in the world for our brave emergency services, but that didn't happen either.**

The Ulster Unionist Party is refreshed. It has taken time but we have rebuilt ourselves, and even our biggest critics have acknowledged our electoral successes in 2014 and 2015. We are again a team, respecting our Party credo: **Country First; Party Second; Individual Third.**



We approach these Elections with a vision for Northern Ireland and a slate of policies that have seen us publish no fewer than eight papers over the last two months. All are available at www.uup.org and cover

- **Our Vision for you, the voter;**
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing;**
- **Cancer Care;**
- **The Knowledge Economy;**
- **Educational Underachievement;**
- **Our Armed Forces, Veterans and their families;**
- **The Arts;**
- **Animal Welfare.**

Our vision addresses the common complaint you make when we ask you what you want from Stormont. You say: "Make It Work!" Everyone knows Stormont isn't working properly, that what it delivers is far, far from as good as it gets, and you seek people and a party with the vision for better. Frustration runs deep. It is an age of uncertainty, of doubt and despair.

It is time for a **new era of Belief** – in Stormont, its politicians, and their motivation.

An era of political leaders who make good decisions in a timely manner. An era which unites our people.

I want to end the toxic fear that our great public services are not working for all our people:

- **Our health service cares for you when you are sick. It's our turn to care for the NHS;**
- **Our education system offers the best and worst of experiences, but it's not a lottery. We know who is likely to be failed. It is time to fix it;**



- **We pay lip service to mental health and wellbeing issues. We want to help those who crave a path to a more meaningful life.**

We propose to use wellbeing measures as a way to gauge the success of the next devolved government. While Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA) are important, the Ulster Unionist Party will also support wellbeing measures as favoured by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Carnegie Trust who have already been engaged in wellbeing measures in Northern Ireland. These include:

- **Life satisfaction;**
- **Self-reported health;**
- **Satisfaction with family life;**
- **Satisfaction with social life;**
- **Satisfaction with the devolved government.**

We want:

- **A Health Service that prevents sickness as well as curing it;**
- **An education system that doesn't leave any pupil behind;**
- **Houses that are attractive, and homes that are affordable for our people;**
- **An environment fit to be handed over to future generations.**

We seek:

- **Real peace, with an end to paramilitarism and associated criminality, and the removal of the threat of a return to violence;**
- **Stable government, encouraging community cohesion, promoting good relationships with our partners in the United Kingdom and our nearest neighbours in the Republic of Ireland;**

- **Prosperity, not only by creating an economy that gives people the space to create wealth, but physical and mental wellbeing, for all our people.**

Given the opportunity through your support on the 5th of May, we will enter the negotiations on the next Programme for Government, arguing for:

- **A commitment in the next Programme for Government that recognises and addresses Northern Ireland's appalling rates of poor mental health and wellbeing;**
- **The use of wellbeing measurements to allow you, the voter, to tell the Executive and Assembly how well they are delivering positive change for you;**
- **Proper joined-up government that cuts across departments to demand everyone, Ministers, MLAs, civil and public servants, work with our partners in the private and third sectors to deliver.**

You may well ask yourself this question: Why did devolution stop at Stormont? 18 years after the return of power, it is high time to pass power off the Stormont Hill through our local councils, into communities and as close to the family unit as possible. This is the correct direction of travel and is already accepted as such across the other administrations on the British and Irish islands.



In or Out of Government

We seek a mandate to enter the negotiations that will follow the 2016 Assembly Elections on the next Programme for Government (PfG). In our 2011 Manifesto, we proposed space be created between an Assembly election and the formation of the Executive, to allow the parties entitled to seats at the Executive table to discuss and agree a PfG. The wisdom and logic of our proposal has now been accepted. It opens the potential for properly joined up government. Parties will agree headline commitments before knowing what role they will have to play in delivering on those pledges. For example, if the PfG targets educational underachievement, the Ministers in charge of health and social housing will be committed to assisting the Minister for Education.

When the PfG is finalised, we will ask two key questions: Is it a progressive Programme for Government, of benefit to all the people; and have we sensed a collective political will around the table to deliver it?

If the answer to either question is "No", we will not re-join the Northern Ireland Executive, forming instead the first Official Opposition in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The continued existence of paramilitary groupings is addressed later, in the chapter headed "Justice".

Europe

The Ulster Unionist Party is unique among the main local parties in taking our time to reflect on the Prime Minister's negotiations on European Union reform before taking a position on the UK's future membership of the EU. We met Mr Cameron to discuss the factors detailed below. His responses helped inform our position.

Few of us are great fans of Brussels, but this decision is too important to be decided in a knee-jerk emotional reaction. We must use our heads, not our hearts. We view the structures as similar to Stormont.

They represent a bureaucracy, whereas what we need is a proper democracy. Reform is needed, and we do not believe David Cameron has pushed the reform agenda far enough.

While individual party members are free to vote as they choose in the Referendum on the 23rd of June, the Ulster Unionist Party believes that, on balance, Northern Ireland is better off remaining in the EU, while HM Government pushes for further reform, and a return to the founding principle of free trade and an end to the drive for further political union.

The deciding factors include:

- **Funding. While the UK as a whole is a net contributor, there can be no doubt Northern Ireland is a beneficiary of EU funds. The last PfG set a target for increasing our drawdown of competitive EU funds. The next PfG should be much more ambitious about using the EU as a source of funds. (We must fully utilise the Northern Ireland Task Force to maximise the drawdown of competitive funding and further improve how we engage more broadly at the EU level. The new Executive departments must make the most of this unique resource);**
- **Security. In an increasingly dangerous world, we must stand shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours and right-thinking countries in a united response to those of murderous intent who wish to attack our values;**
- **Immigration. It is clear this remains a fluid situation, impacting more on the south of England than on Northern Ireland. We wish to offer a humane, generous reaction to the crisis of asylum seekers and refugees, without disadvantage to our own;**
- **The land border with the Republic of Ireland. Bitter experience makes clear it is not possible to fully secure the border. There will be no Donald Trump style wall. But there will need to be a hard border. As it will not be on the actual border, it is likely to be at Great Britain's ports and airports – Cairnryan,**



Gatwick, Heathrow. This is not a welcome prospect;

- **The future of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Nationalist Party has made clear that if the UK votes for Brexit but Scotland votes to Remain, Nicola Sturgeon will push the button to trigger a second referendum on Scottish independence. The Ulster Unionist Party does not want its fingerprints on that button.**

Open & Transparent Government and the Laws of Defamation

Those in charge of the outgoing Executive have a poor record of open and transparent government. As Chair of the Committee of OFMdFM, charged with scrutinising the work of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, I was forced to issue a summons to the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service to appear before the Committee to address the issue of the continuous late delivery of information by the Department. We also had to threaten the Ministers with our power to force them to appear before us. Their record regarding Freedom of Information requests is equally poor and therefore in the next Assembly greater coordination and collaboration between government Departments in the delivery of Fol requests is essential.

There has been a dearth of fiscal transparency over the last 9 years with Departmental baselines, and tens of millions of pounds in the process, shifting over the space of one day ending and the following beginning with no reason given. Stormont already has little enough financial or budgetary credibility and the publication of minimalistic budget documents containing no detail at all for public scrutiny only further erodes this.

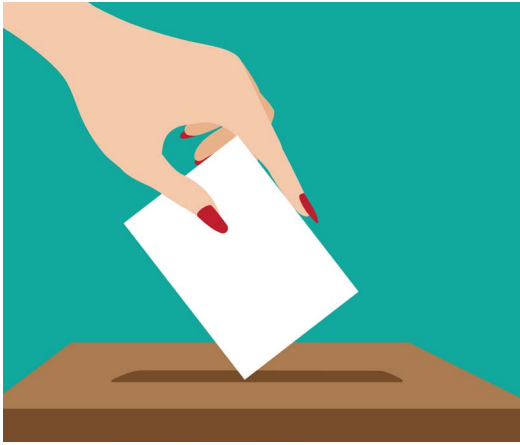
- **I will continue to campaign for more open, transparent government, including reform of the laws of defamation. The latter is important, for a number of reasons:**

- **We have no second, reviewing chamber of Stormont, like the Lords at Westminster;**
- **There is currently no Official Opposition in the Assembly;**
- **The media are hampered in their scrutiny role by antiquated libel laws that give insufficient protections to freedom of speech.**

Our current laws of defamation pre-date the Internet, an invention that allows all of us to comment in an immediate and largely un-moderated manner to a potentially worldwide audience. The right to freedom of speech is fundamental to our constitution. In April 2013, The UK Government passed The Defamation Act, with cross-party support at Westminster, to update our statutory rights to freedom of speech, balanced by the need to protect against unjustified attacks on an individual's or organisation's reputation. This Act passed into law following appropriate public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. By contrast, the deputy First Minister told the Northern Ireland Assembly that the idea of bringing the new law into force here was never even placed on the Executive's agenda; rather, the then Minister responsible, the DUP's Sammy Wilson, simply decided the defamation laws here did not need reviewed. What system of government would you prefer? Full consultation and scrutiny leading to consensual change, or the stroke of a pen by an individual politician?

Reform is required, otherwise:

- **Media outlets will either have to consider publishing editions of their newspapers, programmes and websites that are sanitised to meet Northern Ireland's specific defamation laws, or not publish in NI at all;**
- **Our Universities will struggle to attract the best researchers, as scientists and academics will be put off by the fact that Northern Ireland does not offer the same protection for peer-reviewed analysis as is afforded by the 2013 Act;**



- **The Executive's drive to establish Northern Ireland as a global centre of excellence for the new Creative Industries will be damaged;**
- **There is a real possibility the rich and powerful will use Northern Ireland as the equivalent of a "Tax Haven", such individuals becoming what is commonly referred to as "libel tourists";**
- **As the Executive Editor of the Telegraph Newspaper Group, Lord Black of Brentwood, put it: "When politicians set their face against the future, investment and jobs suffer Over 4,000 people work in publishing in Northern Ireland and another 2,000 work in broadcasting."**



Change or More of the Same

More of the same is not inevitable. Others will try to tell you that if you do not vote for them, bad things will happen. It's Project Fear. There is nothing to fear but more of the same, another five long years of mutual veto, broken promises and disillusion with Stormont.

Change.

Change is possible, if you want it. The Ulster Unionist Party asks for the opportunity to do better.

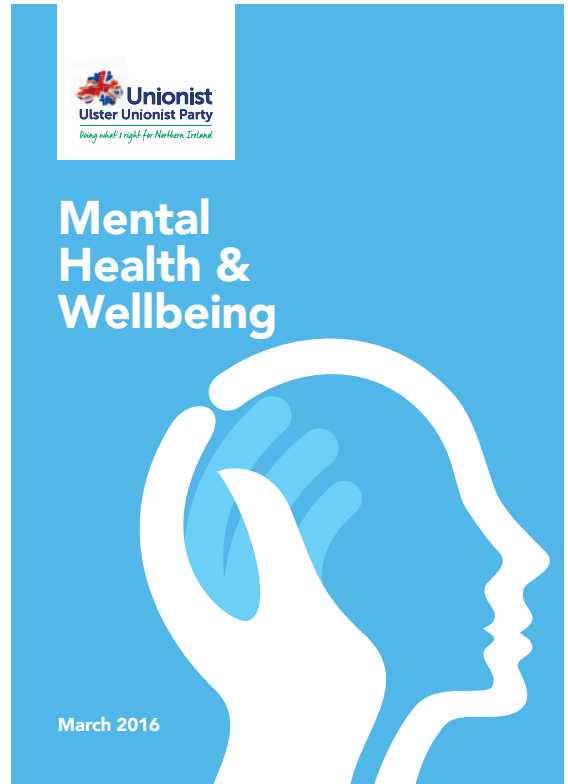
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Nesbitt".

Mike Nesbitt
Leader, Ulster Unionist Party





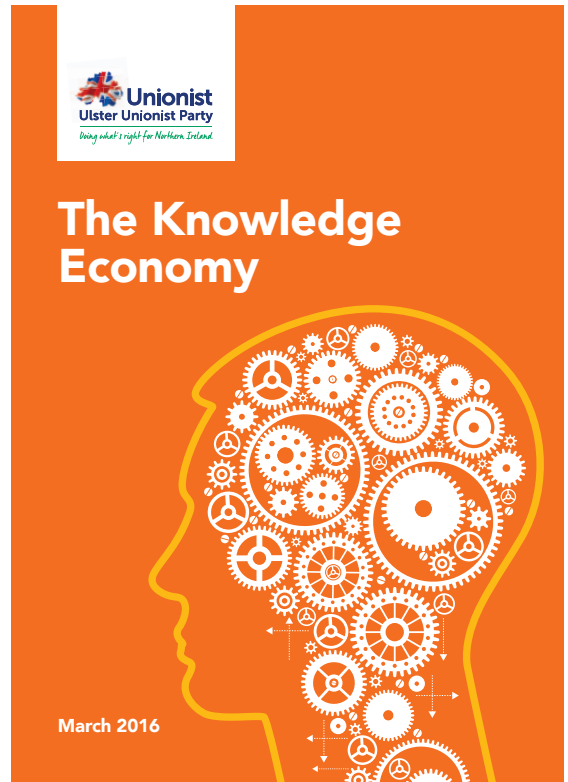
Vision – Our vision for a happier, healthier, more prosperous Northern Ireland



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

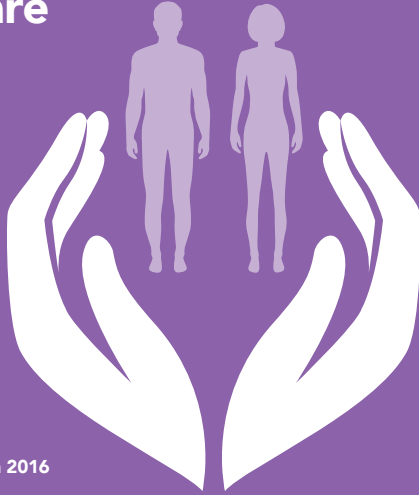


Armed Forces & Veterans – No disadvantage to those born or based in Northern Ireland



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

Cancer Care



March 2016

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

The Arts



March 2016

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



April 2016

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

Book Buddies



April 2016

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

You can read these papers in full at uup.org

Health



The Ulster Unionist Party has already published two discrete papers on health matters.

Our policy on mental health and wellbeing includes a 15 point Action Plan:

- **Appoint a Mental Health Champion;**
- **Instigate a single mental health board;**
- **Promote prevention and early intervention;**
- **Introduce a legislative duty to put mental health on a par with physical health;**
- **Adopt an improved funding structure;**
- **Tackle stigma and improve awareness in society;**
- **Develop a world class Trauma Care Network;**
- **Zero suicides;**
- **Address the prevalence of mental health issues in the criminal justice system;**
- **Value the role of carers and respite facilities;**
- **Enhanced support for those with eating disorders;**
- **Break the link between disadvantage and poor mental health;**
- **Promote societal interventions;**
- **Improve access to psychological therapies;**
- **Close the inequalities with long-term conditions.**

Our policy on addressing cancer care includes these calls to action:

- **Introduce a NI cancer care strategy;**
- **Detect and treat earlier;**

- **Plan for the implications of an older population;**
- **Better meet the needs of children;**
- **Demonstrate more ambition in tackling tobacco-related disease;**
- **Afford equal access to clinical nurse specialists;**
- **Adopt NICE approved drugs;**
- **Further support our local research base;**
- **Rotate awareness campaigns;**
- **Improve end of life care.**

The Ulster Unionist Party does not believe it is too much for people to demand a safe, sustainable and quality health service.

Yet the local National Health Service, one of our greatest national institutions and the envy of the world, is currently in the midst of its greatest ever crisis.

Its central objective should be to keep people as well as possible for as long as possible. But that is simply not happening with even senior health officials acknowledging that patients are coming to harm as they are forced to dwell on hospital waiting lists, often in pain and with debilitating conditions.

The scale of the challenge facing the health and social care system here is immense:

- **Almost 400,000 people, over one in five of the total population, are waiting for either a diagnostic test, a hospital appointment or a hospital procedure;**
- **Over 35,000 people are currently waiting to see a consultant for longer than a year;**



- **Absolutely critical targets, such as those for cancer diagnosis and treatment, are being widely and repeatedly missed;**
- **Our citizens suffer by far the worst performance in hospital emergency care anywhere in the United Kingdom;**
- **Morale across the entire local health and social care workforce is at an all-time low with our nurses and midwives being forced into making unprecedented threats of industrial action.**

Like many of the public services for which the Northern Ireland Executive is responsible, a policy vacuum and dearth of political leadership inevitably makes bad situations worse. The last five years have represented a profound deterioration in the local health service and unfortunately in this case the price has been the health and safety of local patients. In terms of sheer impact it is undoubtedly the biggest and most acutely felt failure of any Executive since the restoration of devolution.

The only consistency of the last five years has been failure: failure to respond to patient need and now failure to plan for future need. Responding in the final months of an Executive with a sweep of short-term funding announcements and the relatively insignificant abolition of the Health and Social Care Board fooled no one, in fact this attitude and contempt for the genuine wellbeing of patients summed up exactly what has been wrong since successive Executives ignored our warnings in the last mandate of the implications of underfunding.

Northern Ireland doesn't need any more reports, whether internationally or locally written; the shelf is full and most go unheeded anyway. Action, rather than deliberation, is urgently needed if people in Northern Ireland are to receive the standard of care that they deserve.

In order to resolve this crisis we would:

- **Make tackling the crippling hospital waits the number one priority for the next Executive;**
- **Break the postcode lottery of patients in the different Trust areas in Northern Ireland receiving different levels of care;**
- **Ensure breaches in performance for core treatments such as cancer become the exception, rather than the norm;**
- **Radically improve mental health services in order to support the one in four adults here who will suffer a mental health or wellbeing problem;**
- **Undertake a workforce review in order to identify, and then resolve, the full depth and breadth of dangerous staff shortages across the local health and social care system.**

Decisions about the future of the health service must be made on the sole consideration of what is best for patient outcomes and wellbeing, rather than focus inflexibly on buildings and organisational charts. Besides, too much time has been given to the flawed assumption that if hospital sites close it would free up endless resources to use elsewhere. It won't, the savings would be negligible given that the single biggest cost is staff salaries and everyone agrees we need more, not less of them. Rather we want to shift the focus to providing the best quality of care and we believe hospitals across the network are best placed to respond, such as through the regionalisation of services, whilst also being there to respond to the emergency needs of local people.

In addition we wish to explore the potential for radical and innovative reform of the management and oversight of the local NHS. The best people to advise what a new model here should look like are those who work and engage day and daily with it. We will listen to our health staff who tell us that they feel they have been ignored over recent years and we will learn from patients and service users about the model of care that they wish to see.



One such idea is the potential to learn from the relationship between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Policing Board of Northern Ireland. This would see our health services run by a Chief Executive and senior management team, overseen by a Board populated by politicians, medical experts and representatives of civic society. The board would hold the NHS management to account, but the Chief Executive would be operationally independent.

Whichever Party holds the Health portfolio after this election they will quickly realise that the way we provide care no longer meets the needs of the patients we are caring for, not least the growing number with multiple needs whose care is currently fragmented.

In order to change the system we must first commit to supporting staff, patients and service users. We would:

- **Commit to implementing the recommendations of the independent NHS Pay Review Body on pay awards for nurses, health professionals and other NHS staff so that staff in Northern Ireland stop being treated less favourably than their counterparts in Great Britain;**
- **Continue to oppose the introduction of charges on the sick, including for medication or visits to GPs or hospitals;**
- **Offer people with illnesses or additional needs the choice to receive care, as well as continuing to live at home, for as long as is medically practicable;**
- **Introduce a dignity charter across each of the Health and Social Care Trusts so that patients are at the centre of their care and decision making process;**
- **Listen to the overwhelming public and expert demand to modernise our local organ donation system by moving to a soft opt-out model.**

Promoting primary care

The 'shift left' agenda – where more care was to be delivered in the community - was meant to be at the heart of Transforming Your Care. We agreed with that. Hospitals are not always a safe place if patients do not absolutely need to be there. Unfortunately as the crisis facing our local health service has deepened, compounded by an absence of political leadership at the top of the local Health Department, this shift has effectively stalled. We are determined to re-ignite the process so that patients have better services, closer to them, and which in turn reduces the need of costly hospital admissions. Primary care on all levels makes sense.

Specifically we would recognise general practice as the cornerstone of the health service, not least given that 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 despite the proven ability of general practice to deliver effective patient care, and the relative needs of patients here being higher than in Great Britain, Northern Ireland has the lowest investment per patient.

We would:

- **Increase the number of full-time equivalent GPs across Northern Ireland by 400 by 2021;**
- **By 2018 ensure all practices are covered by practice pharmacists and phlebotomy services;**
- **Facilitate federations in order to provide more services out of hospitals where appropriate;**
- **Improve the flow of patients between primary and secondary care by giving GPs the power to refer directly for key diagnostic tests.**

Greater emphasis on prevention

Northern Ireland is experiencing an obesity epidemic. Other lifestyle linked problems such as smoking and poor diets are contributing to the unprecedented demands on the health service. People living in Northern Ireland have much higher levels of fat intake, drink alcohol more excessively and undertake far less physical activity compared to the United Kingdom average.

We believe improving the wellbeing of people with the greatest risk or burden of ill health must be a priority, not only to tackle the appalling rates of health inequalities here, but also because of the clear cost benefit of doing so.

We would:

- **Launch a dedicated website to act as a comprehensive health information service, equivalent to NHS Choices in England, with a particular emphasis on helping people make the best choices about their health and lifestyle;**
- **Continue to support introducing a minimum price per unit of alcohol, and now also make it a requirement for the calorie content of alcoholic drinks to be printed on bottles and cans;**
- **Ensure that the NHS directly targets those people most at risk of a heart attack or stroke;**
- **Improve child health by supporting the introduction of a levy on sugar sweetened drinks and stopping the marketing of foods targeted at children high in sugar, salt and fat before the 9pm television watershed.**

Maximising innovation and technology

Northern Ireland is a global leader in medical research and local breakthroughs have undoubtedly saved millions of lives across the world, yet despite this we have been too slow to incorporate technology into the delivery of care here.

Whilst some new technologies and medical treatments are available, with the availability to the patient being neither automatic nor consistent, we are still trailing far behind some other nations in the adoption of new medical techniques.

Through maximising the technology that exists we believe we could better improve patient care

through more effective, targeted health interventions which in turn would lead to significantly fewer adverse health events.

We would:

- **Utilise technology such as new genomic tests, biomarkers, electronic sensing devices and smart technologies such as the d Nav insulin system for diabetes, to specifically identify people either with or at risk of disease and trigger preventive and supportive care;**
- **By 2021 ensure that every patient and service user has access to their individual electronic medical record;**
- **Develop a new system of comprehensive data collection and access for clinical purposes, including a national genomic database;**
- **Invest in a new integrated IT system which links staff between primary and secondary care and which reduces the administrative burden on them.**

Responding to future need

Northern Ireland has the youngest, yet most rapidly ageing population in the United Kingdom. Whilst it is hugely positive that people are living longer, Northern Ireland will ignore the challenge of an ageing population at its peril.

With a changing population, Northern Ireland's health system is going to need to change. As a society we need to start taking serious action now. The longer we leave it, the more difficult the process of adaptation will be and the greater the cost.

We would:

- **Deliver quality and timely diagnosis of dementia;**
- **Lift the ban on permanent admissions on many of the statutory residential care homes across Northern Ireland;**
- **Coordinate care around the full range of an individual's needs, rather than care based around single diseases.**

Education

The Ulster Unionist Party has published a paper on Educational Underachievement, as part of a suite of policy papers. It can be accessed at uup.org

If the circumstances arrive after this election, where we are in a position to join the next Northern Ireland Executive, Education would be the priority Department for the Ulster Unionist Party. It is essential that there is a major change of direction at the Department of Education. Its mission statement must be to create an administratively unified system of education in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist vision is for educating children together.

The Ulster Unionist Party has a long standing tradition of wanting children in Northern Ireland to be educated together, across the religious divide. From the first Ulster Unionist Education Minister, Lord Londonderry in 1921 to the last, Basil McIvor in 1974, we have tried to create a religiously integrated school system in Northern Ireland. These efforts have been frustrated but now, 18 years after the Belfast Agreement, with community buy-in to the consent principle and the legitimacy of the state, surely the time is right to make a quantum leap in breaking down the denominational divide in Northern Ireland.

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.

We would:

- **Ensure that the statutory duty to ensure value for taxpayers money is paramount in all major funding decisions on new or expanding schools;**



- **We will revisit the 2014 Ministerial Advisory Group recommendations on the Irish medium sector, particularly in relation to enrolment and sustainability at post primary level;**
- **Take decisions based on evidence, fairness, and not party political considerations.**

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 different sectors;**
- **Initiate a serious conversation about the wider issue of the ownership of the entire schools estate, along similar lines to the recent Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Republic of Ireland.**

A Vision for a Common School System in Northern Ireland

Remarkably, and shamefully, in 2016 it is still legal to discriminate in teacher appointments on the basis of religion. The Ulster Unionist Party pledges that we will immediately legislate to end religious discrimination in teaching:

- **Remove Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Equal Treatment Order 1998 as an essential first step in lowering the barriers between schools;**
- **We support a root and branch review of the**



ownership, financing and governance of the entire schools estate in Northern Ireland;

- **Re-examine the requirement for denominational RE certificates in the light of Human Rights obligations.**

Every child cherished

Children need to be provided with the type of education which best suits their needs and aptitudes. Official statistics point to Northern Ireland students achieving higher examination results at both GCSE and A Level in a UK context. For example, our children’s results in terms of the percentage of GCSE exam entrants gaining the valuable A* - C grades are well ahead of England and Wales. A similar pattern was seen in 2010 and 2015: Northern Ireland results are about ten percentage points better than England and Wales.

It is clear that year after year Northern Ireland schools and their pupils are gaining more and better GCSEs and A levels compared with their compatriots in the rest of the United Kingdom.

% GCSE exam entrants gaining results A - C*

	NI	Wales	England	UK
2010	76.3	66.4	69	69.1
2011	74.8	66.5	69.8	69.8
2012	75.6	65.4	69.5	69.4
2013	76.5	65.7	67.9	68.1
2014	78	66.6	68.6	68.8
2015	78.7	66.6	68.8	69

Source: *Joint Council for Qualifications*

However closer analysis of the figures has identified a particular problem of persistent underachievement within parts of Northern Ireland. Numerous reports have been published over the past 10-15 years identifying where this attainment gap exists. The research has clearly identified that in particular, boys from a working class Protestant background are

doing significantly worse than girls from a middle class Catholic background.

Over recent years, the policy of the Department of Education under Sinn Féin Ministers has been to push for an end to academic selection, the basis of Grammar Schools, in favour of all ability ‘comprehensive’ education.

There is no evidence that this would shorten the tail of underachievement without adversely affecting the enviable results we achieve at the higher end of the scale.

A better way is to target interventions where they are needed. In the 1980s there was a problem with underachievement in Maintained secondary schools. The solution was government intervention and investment in, for example, capital projects like new science blocks. The result was that the gap was reduced and eliminated. Now that the attainment gap can be found in some controlled secondary schools, similarly targeted interventions should be pursued.

Targeted initiatives like the Signature Projects in Numeracy and Literacy need to be given the chance to improve outcomes.

There was evidence that this initiative was starting to produce tangible results, but it was one of the first things to be cut by the Minister.

The Ulster Unionist Party will seek to mainstream

the hitherto successful but short term initiatives to improve numeracy and literacy introduced over the past 15 years, not least arguing the Signature Project is re-instated in the next Programme for Government.

If it works, use it. We also see a role for the voluntary sector in terms of providing extra help for children through 'book buddies' schemes. Drawing on successful examples in the USA we would aim, with the help of organisations like Volunteer Now, to recruit suitable volunteers such as teaching graduates and retired teachers to bring their expertise into schools to give extra help in one to one reading.

Two Privatised Transfer Tests cannot be as good as it gets

The old 11+ was flawed and too narrow in its focus. However under Sinn Féin, the transfer tests have been effectively privatised.

Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. A vacuum in terms of the process to transfer children from Primary schools to secondary schools was created when, following the last Official 11+ exam in 2008, nothing was put in its place. The vacuum which was left when the 11+ was scrapped has been filled with two non-state exam systems.

It was inevitable that in the absence of an ordered and properly thought out method of transferring pupils, tests unregulated by the Department of Education would be devised. Both the Association of Quality Education, (AQE) and the Post Primary Transfer Consortium (PPTC) deserve credit for the professional way in which they have gone about organising their entrance tests. However, it is regrettably typical that there are two rival testing regimes- one largely in the state controlled/ voluntary grammar sectors, and the other mostly based in the maintained grammar sector.

Whilst, the independent tests are a professionally

organised response to the parental demand for the continuance of academically selective grammar education, what we have now, is not what we should want for our children.

Today in 2016 a system much more akin to social selection is being entrenched whereby we have better off families paying for tuition and coaching for the AQE and or GL tests. A common complaint about the 11+ was that children with better off parents were coached for the test. If there was an element of truth in that 10 years ago, it is even more true today.

- **The Ulster Unionist Party wants a deadline of two years to devise a new method of transferring Year 7 pupils, based on continual assessment of pupils during the course of their primary education.**

We recognise that selection is a natural part of life. Universities select students on the basis of their A level exam results. 6th Form colleges select their A level students on the basis of their GCSE results, and most if not all secondary schools stream their pupils on the basis of objective academic criteria. It is entirely possible to be 100% against the old 11-Plus, but 100% for academic selection:

- **In reviewing the method of transferring pupils from primary to post primary, lessons can be learned from the Dickson Plan which delays transfer to Grammar Schools until age 14. At the very least this system should be retained in North Armagh, and the feasibility of its extension examined in the period set aside to devise a new transfer system with the widest possible popular consensus.**

Sustaining Higher and Further Education

Skills and employability are vitally important issues for the future of Northern Ireland. To grow our economy, particularly the private sector, we need a



steady supply of well qualified people entering the workforce.

After years of delay and disinvestment, the Executive in the next Assembly will have to take a decision on a new funding model for third level education.

A University education must be kept accessible for students from low income families. In whatever detailed model is designed by the next Executive, the Ulster Unionist Party will insist that sustainability is married to affordability for students, and that our young people are not saddled with crippling long term debt. In discussions over fees, part time learners and mature students must also be catered for.

To keep a FE College or University education accessible to students from low income families, the Ulster Unionist Party supports the retention of Education Maintenance Allowances and student maintenance grants.

We would:

- **Support a fair and sustainable model for funding for Third Level education;**
- **Ensure part time study for those in employment remains viable;**
- **Retain Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA);**
- **Protect student maintenance grants;**
- **Support the creation of an All Party Group on Students and Third level education at Stormont;**
- **Extend the provisions of the 1994 Education Act, which protect the independence and support for Student Unions in the rest of the UK, to Northern Ireland.**

It is time for a major change in direction at the Department of Education. At Stormont, there has been no consensus about where we should be going to in terms of a vision for our Education system. In particular, there has been no inclination to take on vested sectoral interests.

Attempting to reorganise a system where some sectors have their own sectoral bodies with their own agenda, and where some have been allowed to unilaterally rationalise their own schools estate, has led to a state of confusion.

Can the process of 'Area –Based Planning' be really described as such, when the maintained sector has already planned its own future, with little regard for shared education, and open hostility to integrated education? There is continuing uncertainty in many parts of our divided education system, and no political leadership has been shown:

- **The Ulster Unionist Party advocates change in the policy, legislation and practice relating to ownership of the schools estate, area-based planning, governance, and the training, recruitment and employment of teachers. The creation of an administratively unified system of education in Northern Ireland should be in the mission statement of the Department of Education**

This cannot be as good as it gets. Our children deserve better, and there must be real change. A vision for the future- a shared future.

The Economy



The Ulster Unionist Party has already published a policy paper on The Knowledge Economy, that should be read in conjunction with this manifesto. It can be accessed at uup.org

It is the job of politicians to create the conditions where the economy can thrive. It is easy for some parties to claim the credit for a number of jobs being 'created', when in reality it is jobs 'promoted' with Invest NI support. The real task is to listen to the voices of the wealth creators and seek to create a climate that embraces a new generation of entrepreneurs.

There was a time when we were net contributors to Her Majesty's Treasury, now Stormont is dependent on an annual £11 billion subvention from Westminster every year.

The Ulster Unionist Party is ambitious for Northern Ireland. We aspire to be much less dependent on the block grant. We want to turn our region into the most attractive place to do business in western Europe.

Finally, Stormont is about to get a Department for the Economy, a longstanding Ulster Unionist policy goal. It has a considerable task to undertake, because despite the cherry picking of the figures by the DETI Minister, the economic figures since the restoration of a DUP/Sinn Féin led Stormont make for deflating reading.

In May 2007, Northern Ireland had an unemployment rate of 3.7%, lower than both the then UK average of 5.4% and the Republic's 4.1%. In that month the Executive was re-established under DUP/Sinn Féin leadership. Today our unemployment rate is 6% whilst the UK average has returned to 5.1%, which is below the rate it was before the financial crash of 2008.

Despite recent improved figures, 26.4% of our population is economically inactive; it was 27% in 2007. The UK rate is 21.8%. Northern Ireland has the lowest employment rate of any UK region and has

had the highest or second highest unemployment rate since April 2010. This is all despite our relative insulation from the financial crisis because of our large public sector.

A number of factors contribute to Northern Ireland's levels of economic inactivity. One of the most significant barriers for many parents seeking employment is the lack of high quality, affordable childcare here. That is why we will give the issue the genuine and long overdue attention that it deserves by prioritising a new Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party is always keen to talk our economy up, but facts remain stubborn things. The Northern Ireland Executive is growing our economy at around 1% a year. The Republic of Ireland manages nearer 6%. There is clearly a problem at the heart of our government.

All the major business bodies in Northern Ireland, CBI, IoD, FSB and Manufacturing NI, agree that there is currently no joined up plan to grow the Northern Ireland economy.

That has to change. There has to be a simple and deliverable action plan to grow the Northern Ireland economy. And it has to be the centre piece of the next Programme for Government.

This is critical because our people continue to endure a prosperity gap that leaves us disadvantaged in comparison with our fellow citizens in Great Britain. The Northern Ireland Executive Budget document 2016/2017 addresses living standards at paragraph 2.9, making clear that our Gross Value Added sits at only 75.9% of the UK average, and the gap has widened not narrowed since the DUP and Sinn Féin took over OFMdfM in 2007.

We would:

- **Implement the economic inactivity strategy which has sat on the shelf at Stormont for a year;**



- **Prioritise defeating long-term and youth unemployment;**
- **Give local businesses the respect and support they deserve;**
- **Unleash the untapped potential of the social economy to transform communities;**
- **Learn the lessons from the rest of the United Kingdom, where legislation already exists, to support a Northern Ireland Social Value Act.**
- **Involve the Unions and business organisations including Manufacturing NI in drawing up and implementing a bespoke, long term manufacturing strategy;**
- **Set a target to match the EU target of having 20% of GDP related to manufacturing industry;**
- **Support a long term commitment to keep the 30% cap on industrial rates to recognise the vital importance of the sector.**

A Manufacturing Renaissance for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland was a pioneering region during the Industrial Revolution. Belfast was the original northern powerhouse. We led the way in making things: shipbuilding, rope works, linen, tractors, pneumatic tyres, aircraft production.

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises the continuing central importance of manufacturing for creating jobs and economic growth. We appreciate the fact that around 90% of manufacturing companies based in Northern Ireland are locally owned. Recent heavy job losses represent a major setback, and despite the Minister's claims to the contrary, many companies find themselves in a very difficult situation. Northern Ireland needs a Manufacturing Renaissance.

Manufacturing creates wealth, putting money in people's pockets. These are well paid jobs: on average around 20% higher than the service sector. There can be no real debate about the effect of the imminent introduction of the National Living Wage.

It is imperative that policies implemented by the new Department of the Economy protect the 85,000 plus existing jobs in manufacturing, which make a contribution of 14% to our Gross Domestic Product.

We would:

- **Address the competitive disadvantages of doing business in Northern Ireland;**

Energy: Keeping the lights on

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that high energy costs are one of the major burdens on businesses and domestic customers in Northern Ireland.

Our industrial users' energy costs rank amongst the highest in the European Union; this has a major impact on profit margins and has been cited as a key reason for some of the recent major job losses in manufacturing. In the Republic of Ireland, large users pay lower prices, giving them a significant advantage over their counterparts here in Northern Ireland.

According to the Energy and Manufacturing Advisory Group, large energy users face electricity prices almost 60% higher than the EU-15 median, while for medium and small/medium users, the price differential in Northern Ireland is over 40%. We in Northern Ireland suffer from our relative geographic isolation; we lack indigenous fossil fuels and are over dependent on imported oil. We depend on imported fossil fuels for 99% of our energy needs. However, wind is a resource we have in abundance.

The Strategic Energy Framework (2010) states that Northern Ireland is seeking to achieve 40% of its electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020. All parties on the Executive signed up to this ambitious target in the Programme for Government. We are on around 23.7% at present. This is not just about creating energy security and literally keeping the lights on. It is also about adapting to,



and mitigating against the harmful effects of climate change for future generations.

Our relative geographical isolation and lack of indigenous fossil fuels are unavoidable difficulties. Nevertheless, an updated strategy for energy, balanced between security of supply, price affordability and climate change obligations, must be at the core of a new Programme for Government.

More attention to affordability is required. The ETI committee in the last mandate produced 3 lengthy volumes of Reports on Energy, including a Report in February 2014 which had 15 recommendations addressing high electricity costs. The research has been done, and the challenges have been identified.

We would:

- **Implement the recommendations contained in the Committee report;**
- **Place an updated energy policy at the heart of a new Programme for Government;**
- **Set a short term target to reduce industrial and domestic energy prices to similar levels pertaining in the Irish Republic, in the context of the single energy market;**
- **Set a longer term target to reduce electricity prices in NI to a European average in the context of preparation for a single EU energy market.**

In terms of energy policy, recent decisions from the DETI Minister have smacked of short termism and inconsistency. Support schemes for the renewable energy sector, the NI Renewable Obligation and the Renewable Heating Initiative, have been dropped with no indication of what, if anything will replace them.

We would:

- **Introduce certainty into the market, and avoid unnecessary cost burdens on local electricity consumers by following Westminster policy in the short to medium term;**

- **Consult with the industry and the general public on devising a bespoke Northern Ireland renewables policy in the medium to long term;**
- **Review the Northern Ireland target of 40% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020, in terms of achievability and affordability;**
- **Be flexible in incentivising new and emerging green energy technologies such as smart and micro grids, battery energy storage and Energy from Waste;**
- **Update the Strategic Energy framework with a focus on a strategy on security of supply, generation and distribution.**

Lower Corporation Tax

As far back as February 2015, all major parties in this Assembly committed themselves to going for the lowest rate and the earliest implementation of a lower rate of Corporation Tax, namely, 12.5% to take effect from 1st April 2017.

Unfortunately because of the decision making paralysis at the heart of the DUP/Sinn Féin led Executive, that target has been set back a year. The UK Government appears determined to promote the new Northern Powerhouse in Greater Manchester. Potential overseas investors will not wait

We would:

- **Re-commit to a lowering of Corporation Tax of 12.5% at the earliest possible start date, which is now April 2018.**

Tourism

Tourism remains a major economic growth area for Northern Ireland, but our hospitality sector must be allowed to compete on a level playing field with the Irish Republic.

Tourism Ireland is spending Northern Ireland taxpayers' money on marketing in various countries and destinations across the world, but most of this is attracting tourists who have no direct access to Northern Ireland. At the present time, with the tax incentives in place in the Republic, we in Northern Ireland are clearly not competing on a level playing field with Dublin airport as an entry point to the island.

In the last few years, Northern Ireland passengers using Dublin Airport have increased exponentially due to aggressive marketing. The Republic abolished air passenger duty, giving them a significant competitive advantage. We must respond with innovative policies to attract more air routes and carriers to Northern Ireland's airports. The re-establishment of a new Air Route Development Fund is a positive move, but the Ulster Unionist Party is also persuaded by the evidence which suggests that abolishing air passenger duty for all flights out of Northern Ireland would be even more effective.

We would:

- Review the cost effectiveness of Tourism Ireland in promoting Northern Ireland as a tourist destination overseas;
- Improve accessibility for tourists by creating a level playing field between NI airports and Dublin by pushing for the extension of the devolution of Air Passenger Duty and the lowering of its rate, with a view to abolition;
- Set a target of realising a yearly dividend of £50M through golf tourism by the time of the Open returning to Royal Portrush in 2019;
- Allocate financial transaction capital funding towards major strategic tourism projects identified in an updated Tourism Strategy.



Environment



The environment directly impacts on every aspect of our lives; it gives us the food, water, air and resources we all need to live and prosper. The Ulster Unionist Party cares passionately about protecting our environment and taking steps to proactively tackle the threats it faces.

We believe this generation has a moral obligation to protect the environment in order to safely pass it on to the next; future generations will rightly judge us by how we respond to issues such as global warming and unfortunately the performance of Northern Ireland has been feeble. Despite this, we are nowhere near on target to reduce emissions by 35% on 1990 levels by 2025. Indeed in recent years we have even begun to go backwards. If we are going to be serious about protecting the environment around us we must make meaningful and bold commitments to doing so.

Tackling climate change is not only the right thing to do ethically, but it also makes absolute economic sense.

To tackle climate change, we would:

- **Reduce our carbon emissions in line with strict domestic and international obligations**
- **Decarbonise the power sector by reducing fossil fuel consumption and increasing the use of renewables**
- **Transform local residential insulation and renewable heat**

We also commit to support those dedicated to a new, modern strategy on coastal management to replace the Bateman Formula of the 1960s.

Protection of our natural habitats and species

For our relatively small size, Northern Ireland is one of the most geologically distinct places in the world. There are some 20,000 different species of living things here, however because for so long society

took our natural environment for granted we have already lost a wide variety of life. The rate at which local species and habitats are continuing to decline is frightening, but it's not inevitable and in some cases can be reversible.

We 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;**
- **Safeguard the EU Birds and Habitats Directives;**
- **Support the introduction of a coastal strategy to protect our marine life and promote the sustainable use of our shoreline;**
- **Place a duty on all public bodies to treat and remove invasive plants, such as Japanese knotweed, growing on their own property.**

Maximising the economic potential of our environment

A sustainable natural environment underpins our economic and social well-being. Indeed our local environment provides us with the raw materials we need for food production and all means of construction. Yet despite the opportunities it presents, so much potential of the local environment remains untapped.

We would:

- **Fully develop the potential of new forms of renewable energy in order to further build on the thousands of green new jobs;**
- **Strike a balance between the preservation of the historic built environment and the heritage tourism economy;**
- **Continue to oppose applications to frack unless they have been independently supported by means of positive**

Environmental Impact Assessments, Health Impact Assessments, Economic Business Plans and any other process necessary to form an evidence based judgement;

Protecting and growing our local woodland cover

Despite the obvious benefits of a healthy tree population and our relatively low population density, Northern Ireland is still the second least wooded area in Europe. We are committed to increasing Northern Ireland's woodland cover and protecting our existing ancient trees.

We would:

- **Increase woodland cover by 2,000 hectares by 2021;**
- **Create a national register of Trees of Special Interest, to include local icons such as the Dark Hedges and the Crom Yews;**
- **Promote urban forestry and better utilise the 75,000 hectares of publically owned forest land across Northern Ireland;**
- **Prioritise plant health and continue to highlight to the public the importance of good bio-security in reducing the risk of accidentally spreading tree and plant diseases.**

Realising the benefits of our environment to public health

Access to quality green space greatly improves physical and mental health.

We would:

- **Ensure public buildings and residential developments include high quality natural greenspace to better connect people and nature;**
- **Introduce exercise prescription schemes in general practice to encourage and incorporate physical activity in green spaces;**
- **Embed outdoor learning in the natural environment into the Northern Ireland School Curriculum, to improve a greater connection to nature for our children;**
- **Introduce a Northern Ireland Walking Strategy.**



Infrastructure



As we approach Northern Ireland's Centenary, we have a vision with two milestones. We want to design delivery plans to ensure that:

- **By 2021, we have achieved the cultural change in our soft infrastructure that unites all our citizens in common purpose and humanity, meaning;**
- **By 2050, we have created the hard infrastructure that helps make us the best we can be, one of the most attractive small countries in the world, a more valued member of the United Kingdom, continuing to maximise co-operation with our friends and neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.**

By 2050, Northern Ireland will be very different: our population could rise to 2.5 million; our people will live longer, be healthier, and we will be a much more diverse society. Our climate will change, becoming warmer and wetter, meaning in some senses we will be able to significantly expand our agricultural sector. In what is likely to be an increasingly unstable 21st century, our secure and peaceful environment will make us a highly attractive place to invest, research and live.

By 2050, our hard infrastructure will need replaced, renewed or upgraded. If we start making the right, strategic decisions now, we can ensure the massive changes that lie ahead are opportunities, not challenges or threats.

We want to consult on our 2050 vision: what sort of Northern Ireland do people want? Take a blank map and fill it in with the roads, schools, universities, health service and the other resources and facilities our people will need.

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, but many of these are already reaching the ends of their 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.

With the right decisions made in a timely fashion, we can transform our country to one that supports our vision of Northern Ireland as a peaceful, prosperous, innovative, welcoming, stable and secure region; the leading place in the United Kingdom to do research, build that business, raise that family, at ease within itself and with its neighbours, working cooperatively, integrating when it is appropriate, always looking after its own best interests.

We would:

- **Bring forward key major capital projects including the York Street Interchange, the A6 and the Belfast Rapid Transit system;**
- **Agree the multi-year road maintenance budget in the departmental baseline, rather than unsustainably rely on the monitoring round process;**
- **Seek the restructuring of the aggregates levy to remove the damaging impact it is having on our quarry and construction material suppliers;**
- **Explore the creation of a new public sector procurement and delivery agency for major capital projects.**

More sustainable travel

Increasing active travel will play an important role in making our vision of a healthier, happier society a reality.

We are convinced of the benefits and committed to promoting cycling as a feasible mode of transport for everyday journeys. But we acknowledge that to do this effectively we need to create the conditions that make this viable and safe.



During our time in the Department of Regional Development, our Party kick started the beginning of the process, setting out an ambitious vision for the future. The next Executive must continue to develop the infrastructure that will nurture a culture of cycling.

We would:

- **Realise the vision set out in the 25-year bicycle strategy;**
- **Support the development and implementation of a network of traffic-free cycling infrastructure;**
- **Support accommodation of active travel being a consideration in planning new developments.**

Housing



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

The Northern Ireland Housing Strategy recognises the need for decent homes and the role that housing can play in helping to support and sustain economic recovery, create employment and help to regenerate some of our most deprived and neglected communities.

The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to not only building enough homes, but building homes and communities that people want to live in. This will include affordable housing to attract a mix of new property owners.

In order to deliver these new homes Northern Ireland must have a planning system that is fit for purpose and which can respond quickly and fairly. Finding the right balance between the interests of communities and developers does not always have to be difficult, particularly if we are to attract the investment and jobs that we need.

Whilst there has been some positive progress over recent years, problems still remain. Housing and sustainable development continues to generally be seen as desirable, but needs to be given more practical support by planning authorities. That is why we will introduce greater targets on turn-around times for planning applications such as those considered to be economically significant.

Responding to housing demand

The level of homes being built here still falls well below the level required. For 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. All parts of society will be affected – from those wishing to buy their first home to those seeking homes for social rent.

Not only are major problems being unnecessarily created for the future, but Northern Ireland is also missing out on the fact that construction is one of the best ways of stimulating economic activity – with each £1 spent generating a total of £2.84 in economic activity. Our local homebuilding industry is best placed to stem the tide of local construction workers travelling to Great Britain every week for work.

We would:

- **Make it a priority for councils currently developing their own local development plans to review current and projected housing demand in their areas;**
- **Reduce the cost, complexity and ambiguity of central and local government regulation that is preventing the building of more homes;**
- **Consider the introduction of a government backed deposit savings scheme for first-time buyers offering tax bonuses.**

Social housing

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. As the problem was left unaddressed, and because there is a major shortage of social housing, many more people on low incomes, including families with children, have been forced to turn to the private rental sector where they are required to claim for even greater amounts of housing benefit.

We would:

- **Build 10,000 new social and affordable homes by 2021;**
- **Support the transfer of properties from the NIHE to Housing Associations;**
- **Commit to end the scenes of people sleeping rough on the streets of Northern Ireland**

and placing a duty to prevent homelessness on statutory services such as the NHS and prisons;

- **Allow the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to borrow against its assets of 88,000 homes and annual rental income stream of £280m in order to access private finance.**

Tackling fuel poverty

With 42% of local households affected, Northern Ireland has by far the highest prevalence of fuel poverty in the UK and one of the highest in the European Union.

We would:

- **Support the creation of a cross-departmental taskforce which is target driven and Ministerial led;**
- **Assist all Local Councils to develop a Province-wide oil voucher scheme;**
- **Oppose efforts by the Republic of Ireland to introduce an all island ban on burning solid fuels such as coal;**
- **Bring forward an Energy Brokering scheme.**

Increasing importance of the private rental sector

We recognise that for a growing number of people owning their home is not a priority at present, either through positive tenure choice or circumstance. This has contributed to the sector becoming the second largest housing tenure, after owner-occupied, in Northern Ireland.

The private rented sector has an important role to play in assisting Northern Ireland meet its housing need. Raising awareness of the positive aspects of living in the private rented sector and promoting the positive image of the sector as a tenure of choice is therefore essential.

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;**
- **Introduce a licensing regime of private letting agents.**



Supporting our Agri-food Industry

Tapping into the potential

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that agri-food is one of our most important and innovative industries. The Northern Ireland agri-food industry is diverse, providing employment in a broad range of roles. Farming, fisheries, forestry, food and drinks processing and related sectors not only underpin our rural and coastal communities but they also make a huge contribution to the Northern Ireland economy as a whole.

In addition to producing food to some of the highest welfare, environmental and traceability standards in the world, our primary producers also play a crucial and often overlooked role in managing one of our greatest assets - the Northern Ireland countryside.

We would:

- **Equip the agri-food industry to grow and develop further through the provision of skills, education and training that address long term industry needs;**
- **Promote the varied career opportunities within the agri-food industry;**
- **Ensure that the Department for the Economy fully recognises the importance of the agri-food industry and our rural areas to the local economy, by for example incorporating food tourism and aspects of Northern Ireland's unique natural heritage, such as the Ulster Way, as key parts of our tourism offering;**
- **Support research and development to help drive further innovation, build upon the excellent work of local researchers to strengthen collaborative networks and seek to continually improve the transfer of research and knowledge to farms and businesses;**
- **Identify new approaches for financing investment in the agri-food industry, for example we must fully investigate the**

potential benefits of developing initiatives in conjunction with the European Investment Bank.

Tackling price volatility

In recent months a range of factors have combined to ensure that producers in all sectors have been under intense and sustained financial pressure. These factors include; the slowdown in the Chinese economy, the on-going Russian trade embargo, the weak euro plus imbalances in global demand and supply which has in particular hit the dairy sector.

Farmers and growers have had to respond to the implementation of the reformed CAP whilst our fishermen have also had to deal with a reformed CFP. More recently many farmers have also been hit by flooding which has further compounded the difficulties facing the industry. In spite of these significant challenges the top priority of the Agriculture Minister in recent years appears to have been to relocate her department's headquarters to Ballykelly – the Ulster Unionist Party has consistently voiced concerns about this proposed move given the continuing absence of a valid business case and the underhanded manner in which the decision was taken.

We would:

- **Promote greater cooperation and transparency within the food supply chain to improve how the market functions and ensure it delivers fair and sustainable prices for primary producers;**
- **Explore new legislative options to ensure farmers receive a fair price for their produce;**
- **Be proactive in promoting Northern Ireland food and drink and securing new export markets to help grow this important industry;**
- **Identify appropriate financial tools to help ensure that the agri-food industry is better equipped to manage extreme price volatility.**



Slashing farm bureaucracy

In 2007 there was an official government target set to cut the administrative burden in the agri-food sector by 25% by 2013. Unfortunately, successive Agriculture Ministers simply refused to make progress on it. By 2013, only a 10% reduction had been achieved and there has been little meaningful progress in the intervening years. In fact, new administrative burdens have since come into play.

We would:

- **Reduce the level of complex and unnecessary bureaucracy and take full advantage of the European Commission's on-going simplification initiative;**
- **Work to further streamline inspections plus ensure more proportionate penalties at every opportunity.**

Relationship with central Government

The restructuring of Stormont's Departments poses challenges but it also represents a potential opportunity to deliver better government. The new Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) will bring together a number of key and interrelated policy areas under one roof which should in theory improve levels of coordination and collaboration in terms of policy development and delivery.

The sustainable growth of the agri-food industry requires joined-up, strategic thinking and the restructuring must reduce barriers between functions and emphasise partnership wherever possible. For example a greater recognition that environmental policies must be workable at farm level for benefits to be realised would be positive for farmers, the environment and the Department alike.

It is vital that the departmental restructuring does not detract from the new Department delivering its broad range of functions, the transition must be managed in such a way as to be as smooth as possible. This is however also an important opportunity to introduce improvements that could be welcomed by all stakeholders, including the public servants who will play a key role in the restructuring process.

We would:

- **Work to ensure that DAERA effectively delivers its wide range of functions as restructuring is implemented whilst also improving the level of cooperation between its various internal divisions and developing and introducing new and innovative ways of working;**
- **Build upon recent efforts to improve the level of cooperation between the NIEA and the agri-food industry;**
- **Seek to ensure that DAERA works proactively at the European level to influence policy to reflect local needs and concerns;**
- **Maximise the long term benefits of the new Rural Development Programme by ensuring it supports schemes that better equip agriculture to respond to future opportunities and challenges;**
- **Support the fisheries industry as it continues to adapt to the significant practical challenges posed by the roll out of the reformed CFP;**
- **Tackle the blight of bovine TB by addressing the reservoir of the disease in wildlife.**

The Arts

Again, we direct you to uup.org to view our latest detailed policy on the Arts.

The Ulster Unionist Party think the Arts matter. We cannot think of a civilisation in the history of mankind that has flourished without cherishing artistic endeavour. We do not wish to live in a society that is purely functional. We understand how art and creativity enhances lives. We want our artistic superstars recognised on a par with their sporting equals.

We understand and support the drive by our universities to promote links with the business sector. The success of spin-off companies is a cause for celebration and a core driver of economic growth. But we also want our seats of learning to be concerned that the search for the next Frank Pantridge is matched by an equally enthusiastic pursuit for the next Seamus Heaney, the next Allen McClay paired with the next F E McWilliam, the next Harry Ferguson with the next Brian Friel. Artistic excellence must be a goal in its own right if we are to do justice to our esteemed international reputation.

Of course, art for art's sake has the added bonus of adding value to the economy and generating social capital. Our commitment to the arts is to ensure our artistic practitioners of international renown and our

grass roots movement who simply enjoy participation are cherished, celebrated and supported.

We would

- **Lobby for the inclusion the arts in the next Programme for Government, outlining the Executive's acknowledgment of the importance of the arts and demonstrating a commitment to them;**
- **Establish a working group between the Departments of Communities, Education, Health and the Economy to develop and agree cross-cutting priorities for the arts for the next 10 years;**
- **Work with our eleven Local Government administrations to ensure cohesion in planning targets and outcomes;**
- **Empower our teachers to recognise and nurture the creative potential of our children;**
- **Develop a 10-year strategy for excellence, challenging the arts sector, creative industries, our universities, FE colleges and business to co-design a strategy to future-proof our place as competitors on the world stage.**



Justice

It is now 18 years since the signing of the Belfast Agreement, an open invitation to all who wished to shape our future to forsake violence and join in an inclusive political process. The murders during the last two Assembly mandates of public servants including Sappers Patrick Azimkar and Mark Quinsey, police officers Ronan Kerr and Stephen Carroll, and prison officers David Black and Adrian Ismay, prove there are those who have rejected that opportunity.

It is time for all terrorist organisations to leave the stage, ending their toxic influence:

- **They exert unwanted community control;**
- **They line their own pockets through criminality;**
- **They engage in organised crime.**

The Ulster Unionist Party worked positively in all three sets of political talks in the last mandate. The latest negotiations were derailed by a return to murder on the streets of Belfast. While other political parties engaged in a bizarre game of “hokey cokey” in-out ministerial appointments, we forced terrorism to the top of the agenda. Our success is there to see, in the outcomes. The UK Government considered the Assembly’s finances to be the top talks priority. We changed that. The so-called “Fresh Start” agreement, and the enabling Westminster legislation, both elevated measures to tackle terrorism and associated criminality to chapter one.

We have engaged positively with the group we insisted be established to recommend ways to end paramilitary groups. We would have preferred a report before the Assembly elections, so you could decide if you like what you hear. But what we need to hear is that people with a past who want a positive future, working for the benefit of their community will be supported, but, for the first time, those who wish to remain selfish, negative and destructive, will be treated as criminals and face appropriate and proportionate sanctions.

Policing

Throughout its existence the Ulster Unionist Party has been the party of Law and Order and has stood four square in support of the Police. We did not:

- **Wear red berets;**
- **March people up mountain tops to wave their gun licences;**
- **Fail to condemn attacks on the homes of police officers in the wake of the hated Anglo-Irish Agreement.**

We would:

- **Continue to argue PSNI numbers are increased to the levels envisaged in the Patten Report;**
- **Deliver certainty with regard to the PSNI budget to empower the Chief Constable to deliver proper planning;**
- **Work proactively with the PSNI to help build community confidence in areas where it is low;**
- **Prioritise the tackling of crime against older people.**

Criminal Justice System

A properly functioning criminal justice system is a key component of any democratic society.

We would:

- **Be tireless in demanding Northern Ireland is served by a criminal justice system that is fair, which delivers sentences that act both as punishment and deterrent and that offers prisoners the chance to reform and emerge**



from prison to change their behaviour and build worthwhile lives;

- **Advance reforms that achieve greater value for money and streamline the judicial process;**
- **Support efficiency savings and appropriate Monitoring Round redistributions to fund the Criminal Justice System;**
- **Campaign to ensure the Prison Service is given the resources that represent a fitting legacy to the memory of people like David Black and Adrian Ismay, i.e. a modern service, in funding, human resource and attitude;**
- **Work to restore confidence in the justice system.**

Standing up for Victims of crime

The Ulster Unionist Party supports the rule of law and is on the side of the citizen against the criminal. People who obey the law and fulfil their duties to society are entitled to expect that the law will protect them. They also have the right to live in communities free from crime and anti-social behaviour. We often hear that the fear of crime is much greater than the actual incidence of crime, but this is of cold comfort to victims and their families. Ultimately we need to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities.

The State must be seen to be clearly on the side of victims of crime and to fulfil its duty of protecting its citizens. The Police need the resources to pursue so-called 'minor crimes' and the courts need to hand down sentences that instil public confidence in the judicial system.

We would

- **Advance a Victims centred approach within the criminal justice system;**
- **Encourage the Courts to hand out tougher sentences and to ensure that the punishment fits the crime;**
- **Ensure that victims receive support from police and other agencies once they have become a victim of crime and that they are not simply forgotten about;**
- **Take a zero tolerance approach to organised crime.**

Historical Institutional Abuse

We support the work of Sir Anthony Hart and his HIA Inquiry. However, there are issues that require need by the next Executive, some obvious from the establishment of the HIA, others emerging from its out workings:

- **The HIA terms of reference exclude victims, who were children abused in a non-institutional setting. This is inequitable and those victims deserve better than to be directed to the PSNI and/or the Social Services;**
- **Sir Anthony Hart has indicated he will recommend some form of redress. Many victims define this as financial compensation. The next Executive must plan for all eventualities, including creating a budget line for compensation;**
- **The Kincora victims deserved to be included in the UK investigation into child abuse, rather than rely on the HIA Enquiry which**

does not have the same powers to compel papers and witnesses, most importantly from MI5 and the security services. We will closely monitor and scrutinise how the HIA deals with Kincora.

Troubles victims

Thirty years of terrorism devastated Northern Ireland and left a legacy that will be acutely felt for many years to come. Of all the groups and individuals who should have been taken care of once devolution was restored, those who suffered most in the Troubles should have been at the head of the queue. Instead they have all too often been left feeling abandoned and let down, particularly in terms of how funding arrangements for victims groups have been handled. Outrages such as the On the Runs scandal have served to inflict further pain and trauma on those who suffered the most.

Failure to agree on how to deal with the past in successive talks processes, has meant that victims and survivors have been left in limbo, often listening to rumours of the possibility of real progress in service provision, but unaware of the prospects for actual delivery, not least in the key area of mental health and well-being.

The perennial struggle by the Victims and Survivors Service to secure guaranteed funding has impacted so negatively on many victims groups that some have been forced to close their doors. The treatment of Troubles victims has been little short of shameful and this has to change.

We would:

- **Provide victims and survivors groups with the resources and security of funding they need to operate effectively;**
- **Work to achieve agreement on how we as a society deal with the past and treat victims with the dignity and respect which they deserve;**
- **Work to ensure the mental health and well-being needs of victims are met, including making the case for the establishment of a world class mental health and trauma centre in Northern Ireland;**
- **Continue to campaign to end the equivalence of perpetrators and genuine victims;**
- **Continue to ensure the Maze Prison site does not become a shrine to terrorist violence;**
- **Continue to press the UK Government to secure settlements from foreign countries that assisted terrorist groupings.**



Supporting Communities

Minority rights

The Northern Ireland of today is different. No ethnic group commands a majority, including those who self-describe as British. The future will be even more diverse. We embrace the challenge of building a society that welcomes, respects and thrives on that multi-dimensional diversity.

Our two traditional identities have a history of emigration, stretching back to the 1600s. The Ulster Scots, known as the Scotch-Irish in the USA, followed by the Irish Americans, have built a base of over 40million USA citizens who trace their roots back to the island of Ireland. Our ancestors have given birth to the greatest democracy on earth, yielding Presidents, generals, bankers, industrialists, scientists and explorers who have shaped the ideals and values of the USA.

With that tradition, how can we turn our backs on immigrants in 2016?

Immigrants continue to make a massive contribution to life in Northern Ireland, creating much needed jobs and businesses. Our Health Service relies heavily on highly skilled immigrants. Many others are employed in intensive manual jobs, not least in our vital agri-food sector, which is deeply dependent on workers who have made Northern Ireland their home. We also recognise that China and India are the second and third largest investors in the UK. India is now the second largest investor in Northern Ireland and China is also engaged. Hate crime, discrimination and exclusion whilst not only wrong in themselves, will also damage Northern Ireland's economy, discouraging both vital migrant workers and significant foreign investment.

We would:

- **Support a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland;**
- **Work to eradicate prejudice, racial and religious discrimination and racist and**

religious hate crime and hate speech, moving towards human rights protection and equality for all;

- **Focus on the inclusion and integration of young people from minority backgrounds;**
- **Monitor funding of minority ethnic and religious groups to ensure government support is fair, transparent and proportionate;**
- **Support efforts by organisations like the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) and the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS) to engage local BME and migrant communities in the political process and encourage politicians to understand the issues facing local BME and migrant communities;**
- **Have a zero tolerance approach to racist attacks;**
- **Work to build a more tolerant, open and inclusive society.**

LGB&T

We want to build a Northern Ireland that is inclusive and safe for all our people, and that includes the LGB&T community. Our society should have no cold spots for anyone because of their sexual or gender identity.

In the next mandate we want to see zero tolerance of hate-crime, tackle the high levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal feelings and self-harm and stamp out homophobic and transphobic bullying in the classroom.

We would:

- **Bring forward the long awaited Sexual Orientation Strategy;**
- **Equip our teachers to effectively deal with homophobic and transphobic bullying in our schools;**



- **Support the toughening of sentences for aggravated crime;**
- **Support the introduction of a Gender Neutral HPV vaccine;**
- **Work with local agencies to tackle poor levels of mental health and wellbeing in the LGB&T community;**
- **Bring restrictions on the donation of MSM blood in line with the rest of the United Kingdom;**
- **Support age-appropriate sex and relationship education.**

Age discrimination

Recent OFMdFM proposals to extend the law to protect against age discrimination in the provision of goods facilities and services, recommended that provisions should only apply to those aged 16 and over.

Embarrassingly, OFMdFM ignored advice from one of their own 'arm's length bodies', the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) who warned OFMdFM they were ignoring their own equality scheme in excluding under-16s. This has resulted in the unprecedented step of NICCY issuing a pre-action legal letter to the Equality Commission.

This highlights the crippling inability of the DUP and Sinn Féin to agree. One side wanted to include Under 16s in the scope of the proposed legislation, the other did not. The failure to agree a common position has yet again slowed the processes of government to the point where a Programme for Government commitment was not delivered on time.

We would:

- **Listen to the relevant stakeholders in meaningful consultation processes, rather than perfunctory box-ticking exercises;**

- **Continue to place equality considerations at the heart of the decision making process, as we did in 1998, with the Section 75 protections of the Northern Ireland Act;**
- **Seek fairness as a desired outcome of any legislation.**

Older people

Life expectancy has been growing steadily for over half a century. People are living longer and 23% of the UK will be aged 65 and over by 2035.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that old age should be a joy, not a journey of fear, uncertainty and abandonment. As a bare minimum, our senior citizens are entitled to respect and dignity.

Too many of our citizens have their lives blighted by having to live in areas where crime and the fear of crime is prevalent. We will support the Police in their efforts to reduce crime levels, especially against the elderly.

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament has developed a manifesto based on the views and experiences of older people, made known through surveys and events which they organised.

We would support the Pensioners Parliament Manifesto which contains the following six key points;

- **Protect the Smartpass and free prescriptions**
- **Substantially reduce operation waiting times, and ensure care packages are based on need;**
- **Drastically improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes;**
- **Ensure the most vulnerable older people are assisted with their energy bills;**
- **Improve conviction rates and enable more severe sentencing for crimes against older people;**



- **Ensure legislation effectively tackles age discrimination in goods, facilities and services;**
- **Ensure older people's voices are listened to in the formulation of public policy;**
- **In an increasingly digital world, we will support efforts to encourage older people to get online and improve their access to information and services;**
- **Ensure adequate provision of domiciliary care to allow older people to remain in their own homes;**
- **Protect the State Pension and adequately inform people of the changes, particularly the 80% of those reaching state pensionable age in 2016-17, who will not have a better outcome compared to the previous system.**

Younger people

Our young people represent the future of our country and society, yet all too often they are viewed with suspicion and obstacles are placed in their path to future success. If we are serious about creating a society which strives for fairness, then we must show them that we will support them and help them to fulfil their potential.

In particular, too many young people who come into contact with the criminal justice system end up embarking on the wrong path. More needs to be done to prevent this happening and ensure that only the most serious cases result in court appearances and custodial sentences.

We support the work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), whose role is to safeguard and promote the rights of children and young people. The Commissioner's role is to advise, monitor and hold government to account and ensure that Government and relevant authorities who provide services for young people such as health, education and justice,

do so in a way that is in the best interests of children and young people.

Among the key issues that NICCY focus on are, Education, Mental Health and well-being, reducing child poverty, negative stereotyping, and equality in the provision of goods facilities and services and child sexual exploitation.

We would:

- **Work to ensure the educational system no longer fails any of our young people, who leave school without the qualifications or skills they require to enter the modern labour market and build successful lives;**
- **Support lowering the voting age to 16;**
- **Expand internet safety measures to protect children in Northern Ireland;**
- **Increase efforts to educate our young people about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse;**
- **Encourage the Police to work with younger people to build relationships of benefit to the whole of society;**
- **Support measures to keep young people out of the criminal justice system for all but the most serious offences and challenge behaviour so as to reduce reoffending;**
- **Promote equality for young people in the provision of goods, facilities and services;**
- **Support NICCY in its efforts to safeguard the rights of children and young people.**

Legacy Issues

The Ulster Unionist Party has already published policy papers regarding Dealing with the Past and legacy issues, including Flags and Parades & Protests. These are available at uup.org

Dealing with the Past

The failure to address the past is often cited as the Achilles Heel of devolution; some argue we cannot achieve a better, cohesive, shared future without first dealing with our past. The failure to agree is a dark stain on the talks processes of the last mandate. The Ulster Unionist Party believes success cannot be achieved without collective agreement on the answer to three key questions:

- **What do we mean by Dealing with the Past?**
- **For whose benefit do we wish to take action?**
- **What are those actions?**

Normally, the phrase “Dealing with the Past” is interpreted in the narrow sense of truth and justice for those impacted by the Troubles. For those who seek truth and/or justice, this is a consuming passion for which they require and deserve help and support, but it is also true that not all victims and survivors consider truth and justice to be their biggest issues; rather, they may prefer additional help in achieving physical pain relief, better mental health and wellbeing, an end to social isolation, or a whole raft of other problems (The Commission for Victims and Survivors has published a Needs Assessment including a league table of categorised need).

In so far as Dealing with the Past is about truth and justice, the Ulster Unionist Party has a bottom line: until those who call loudest for the truth of others’ actions are prepared to be honest about their own past, there can be no meaningful movement. We also adhere to the rule of law as the foundation for any new agreement, i.e. there can be no amnesty. Dealing with the Past in a manner that is victims’ centred is not necessarily seen as the same as taking actions that permit society to move on and build the future; witness the many who react to the continuous focus on the past by calling for society to “draw a line” under the past.

As to actions connected to truth, justice and

acknowledgement, the Consultative Group on the Past (Eames Bradley) established a framework in their report in 2009 that included:

- **A new, investigative body with police powers;**
- **An information recovery process for those who seek knowledge from, but not prosecutions of perpetrators;**
- **A body tasked with oversight and the promotion of reconciliation;**
- **Other measures, including story telling.**

This framework has changed little in the talks that began with Haass O’Sullivan and ended with Stormont House II.

Recent and current investigative mechanisms have included (i) Public Inquiries, (ii) the Historical Enquiries Team, a unit of the PSNI, (iii) the Office of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland, and (iv) Inquests under a Coroner’s Court. It is important to bear in mind that none of the above is an end in itself, but merely a means to the end. If we take it the end is the establishment of “the truth”, then to be effective, the truth has to be revealed in a manner that not only establishes the facts, but also articulates a narrative that gives society confidence that it is hearing the truth. (As an example, Martin McGuinness’s unsuccessful bid to become President of the Republic of Ireland was dogged by disbelief at his claim to have left the PIRA in the early 1970s, a claim since at odds with evidence presented to the Smithwick Tribunal into the murders of RUC officers, Chief Superintendent Harry Breen and Superintendent Bob Buchanan). Regarding the mechanisms listed above:

- **Public Inquiries and the OPONI deal exclusively in the actions of the State and its agents;**
- **The HET reviewed files, but only State files, not those of terrorist organisations;**



- **Coroners Courts have a backlog of cases that hold the potential to become mini Public Inquiries into actions by state agents, and can compel evidence from state officials (RUC, Army) but not unidentified terrorists.**

Yet, in broad terms, 60% of Troubles-related deaths were due to Republican terrorism, 30% by Loyalists, and 10% by state forces.

While individual inquiries, reviews and reports have merit in their own right, they no longer sit in isolation, but are developing into a body of evidence that is serving to rewrite history, depicting the State and its agents as the villains. Since the previous Coalition Government took power at Westminster in May 2010, we have witnessed, among other events:

- **An apology from the Prime Minister for Bloody Sunday;**
- **An apology from the Secretary of State for the handling of part of the aftermath of the Claudy bombing;**
- **Repeated controversy over the work of the OPONI, e.g. the report into McGurk's bar, or the suggestion police failed to act upon prior knowledge of the Shankill bombing.**

At the same time, Gerry Adams continues to claim he was never a member of the PIRA, despite being flown to secret talks between the PIRA and Government in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea in 1972, when Adams attended along with Sean Mac Stiofain, the then IRA chief of staff, Daithi O Conaill, Martin McGuinness, Seamus Twomey and Ivor Bell. The outcome is that we have a set of mechanisms that are imperfect, incomplete and imbalanced. The manner in which they are operated, in isolation of a parallel focus on the activities of terrorist groups, and any reciprocal apologies / acknowledgements by others, serves to re-write history, exposing shortcomings, bad decisions and perceived illegality by the state and its agents, without due emphasis on context. A resolution to this situation can be

achieved only by addressing three key issues:

- **How do you persuade those who hold the truth to divulge what they know;**
- **What mechanism would facilitate this;**
- **How do you ensure society can have confidence that what is happening truly represents a "truth process".**

Regarding the first point, the attitude of republicans and loyalists alike gives little hope, e.g. the remains of many of the so-called "Disappeared" have yet to be located, while Martin McGuinness told the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday he could not answer certain questions because "...there is a Republican code of honour For me to identify who these people are would be a betrayal, in my view ... I have a duty, in my view, stretching back 30 years, to those people and I am not prepared to break my word to them under any circumstances." There is little hope that loyalists would be any more forthcoming. No international model has been identified as a suitable import for the Northern Ireland context. Regarding the last point, advocates engaged with families seeking truth and/or justice privately admit to occasions when they have agreed with a HET review that concludes there was no wrongdoing by the state or its agents, but the family who lost a loved one will not accept such a finding, as it does not fit their world view.

The toxic legacy of the past is measured in many ways beyond truth, justice and acknowledgement:

- **Befriending;**
- **Counselling;**
- **Therapies;**
- **Social Networks of Support;**
- **Personal Finances;**
- **Social Inclusion;**



- **Education and Training;**
- **Employment;**
- **Health;**
- **Gender Specific Issues;**
- **Security Service Personnel and their families;**
- **Trans and Inter-Generational Needs;**
- **Ex-prisoners and their families.**

The Ulster Unionist Party favours taking actions that are practical, have clear positive impacts, generate confidence in politicians' ability to deal with the past and injects momentum to address successfully the more difficult areas of truth, justice and acknowledgement. We also wish to explicitly accept that for many victims and survivors, their poor mental health and wellbeing is rooted in the failure to resolve issues such as the definition of a victim.

Flags

While the 1998 Agreement enshrined the right of all our citizens to self-define as British, Irish or other, with no hierarchy, the same Agreement, endorsed by Nationalists and Republicans, also affirmed Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom. That means there is only one national flag that reflects our constitutional status: the Union Flag. To suggest flying the Irish Tricolour in any official circumstances, other than a Presidential State Visit to the UK, is a perversion of the 1998 Agreement.

The unofficial flying of national flags is traditional in Northern Ireland, but should be done with universal respect. Allowing a Union Jack or Tricolour to disintegrate on a street light is not acceptable and the Ulster Unionist Party applauds the work of groups such as Regenerate in Portadown who have successfully engaged the community in a new protocol:

<http://www.portadowntimes.co.uk/news/local-news/flags-taken-down-in-unique-agreement-1-6697923>

We have appointed Captain Doug Beattie MC to represent the Party on the Commission on Flags, Parades and Culture, as proposed in the Stormont House Agreement. He will bring a focused sense of the values of the Union Flag, patriotism and respect to the work of that body.

Parades

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that our streets belong to the people, who should be free to assemble as they wish, in a lawful and respectful manner.

Who wants a Northern Ireland where you cannot assemble in public, be it to parade, protest, or promote an interest about which you feel passionately?

The right to assemble is enshrined in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.

In short, there should be a presumption in favour of public assembly.

However, as Article 11 makes clear, the right to assembly, which includes parading and protesting, is not absolute, but qualified by concerns including the prevention of disorder.

One of the problems with the current regime governing parades is illustrated by what happened at Ardoyne in Belfast in 2012 on the 12th of July:

- **A parade was subjected to restrictions that made it physically impossible for those involved to participate fully in the events of the day, including a religious service;**
- **Those protesting against the parade engaged in rioting, including a gun attack.**

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/twelfth/belfast-riots-20-psni-officers-injured-as-violenceerupts-in-ardoyne-after-orange-parade-28770526.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-18928571>

Yet, the following year, the Parades Commission punished the parading community, by banning their return parade! This is a perversion of Article 11, which clearly directs the 2013 protest should have been banned, not the parade.

We accept the need for a regulatory regime. This must include:

- **An Administrative Body that deals with the huge majority of parades and other assemblies that cannot, reasonably, be deemed in any way contentious. This body should operate in a manner that is focused on making the process as easy as possible for our citizens;**
- **A new Adjudication Body, operating in a fully transparent and accountable manner, including the application of set criteria in reaching determinations;**
- **An Appeals process, independent of the Adjudication Body; Voluntary Codes of**

Conduct for those engaged in parades and protests.

Culture & Identity

Identity is much more complex than a binary carve-up. Some, of course, see themselves as pure of stock. We are not so sure that is always honest, or helpful. One example: Henry Joy McCracken that leading figure in the 1798 Rebellion was a United Irishman with one Ulster Scots parent and one French Huguenot – same combination as our current Leader!

The Ulster Unionist Party wishes to accept the challenges of complexity. This Party must be the defender of our minority communities and supports zero tolerance for hate crime and total commitment to educating our children about tolerance and diversity.

We want unionism to find a way to work with Nationalism and are disappointed when we hear people say they think unionists do not really want to share power. That may be true of some unionists, but not the Ulster Unionist Party. People forget the first power sharing success was Dungannon Council in the 1980s and that was a voluntary offer to share responsibility by the Ulster Unionist Party – never mind what we achieved in 1998.

We do not have to “hold our noses” to work with nationalists. We do not endorse the idea of “rogue” and “renegade” Nationalist Ministers. We cannot build a better future on those sorts of sentiments. Our children and our grandchildren do not want that as their inheritance.

Northern Ireland's Centenary

With five years to go, we can confidently plan to celebrate Northern Ireland's centenary and do so within the context of its continuing membership of the United Kingdom. We should aspire to those celebrations reflecting that success, but also recognising that we wish to continue to build better political, economic, social and cultural relations with our friends and neighbours in the Republic of Ireland.

To mark this milestone, we propose two initiatives:

- **The Northern Ireland People Park;**
- **Six permanent, sustainable developments, one for each of Northern Ireland's counties.**

In 2012, the then Executive endorsed the "Our Time, Our Place" campaign. The time has come to add a celebration of "Our People".

The territory that is Northern Ireland is no more than a postage stamp on the world map, yet we have consistently boxed well above our weight, producing world leaders in every nook and cranny of life: sports people; inventors; artists; musicians; generals. The list is nearly endless, and continues to grow.

We propose "The People Park", a tribute to those many famous people born here, or who chose to settle here. Linked to an interactive website, the People Park will be a learning tool for future

generations of our people and an asset for tourists wishing to learn more about our country and its contribution to the world.

The People Park would be situated at an appropriate venue, after consultation. We suggest Titanic Quarter as a thought. The costs to the public purse should be minimal, given its obvious attraction to commercial and philanthropic funders.

At the People Park, visitors can learn about the lives and impacts of our most famous sons and daughters, and plan tourist trails to visit the places of particular significance to those people they wish to celebrate: the Cregagh Estate home of George Best; the Jackson Homestead at Boneybefore; Queen's University, base for Frank Pantridge, inventor of the portable defibrillator.

The county-based developments should be shaped via consultation with our children. We propose asking children in our primary schools what they want in their county as a celebration of the Centenary: tree planting; a park; a community resource. We will not be prescriptive, beyond seeking initiatives that are both sustainable and of benefit to the whole community.





Andy Allen
Belfast East

Chris McGimpsey
Belfast East

Lesley Carroll
Belfast North

Rodney McCune
Belfast South

Gareth Martin
Belfast West

Roy Beggs
East Antrim



Maureen Morrow
East Antrim



John Stewart
East Antrim



Aaron Callan
East Londonderry



William McCandless
East Londonderry



Rosemary Barton
Fermanagh & South Tyrone



Alastair Patterson
Fermanagh & South Tyrone



Julia Kee
Foyle



Robbie Butler
Lagan Valley



Jenny Palmer
Lagan Valley



Sandra Overend
Mid Ulster



Danny Kennedy
Newry & Armagh



Sam Nicholson
Newry & Armagh



Robin Swann
North Antrim



Andrew Wright
North Antrim



Alan Chambers
North Down



Chris Eisenstadt
North Down



Carl McClean
North Down



Steve Aiken
South Antrim



Adrian Cochrane-Watson
South Antrim



Paul Michael
South Antrim



Harold McKee
South Down



Mike Nesbitt
Strangford



Philip Smith
Strangford



Doug Beattie MC
Upper Bann



Jo-Anne Dobson
Upper Bann



Kyle Savage
Upper Bann



Ross Hussey
West Tyrone

Department better economy needs
 Stormont most Party health make now
 across Ulster environment including
 first potential some build past society years children
 best Republic homes crime own housing
 local two energy care service about policy
 victims time end only Government long
 Executive major over public place vision issues one
 economic Continue more justice UK truth other target
 ensure world many communities any recent need
 last work want change future mental social
 new sector schools right between here United
 state community improve system process all young
 Education strategy services Assembly further support
 next wellbeing industry

Northern Ireland people





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