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2019  
GENERAL ELECTION  
MANIFESTO



Ulster  
Unionist  
Party  
For the Union

# 2019

GENERAL ELECTION  
MANIFESTO



**Ulster  
Unionist  
Party**

**For the Union**

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## **Foreword by Steve Aiken MLA Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party**

I am honoured to present the Ulster Unionist Party's election manifesto for the 2019 General Election.

This is the most important vote facing the United Kingdom in generations. The MPs elected on December 12th will have a pivotal role in shaping the UK's future international and domestic course for many decades to come.

It has been a long and often frustrating three years from the European Referendum. It was no surprise that Brexit has been, and will continue to be, the defining political issue of the period.

As a direct result of the actions and wrangling since 2016, our place within the Union is now at stake more than it has ever been in the 98 years of the existence of Northern Ireland.

Even before their disastrous role in the Brexit negotiations, through incompetence, greed and corruption the DUP had besmirched the good name of unionism and Northern Ireland.

Whilst Arlene Foster and her MPs previously claimed that they would never countenance Northern Ireland's place within the Union being weakened, they did exactly that when they went on to endorse the placing of a regulatory border down the Irish Sea as a 'serious and sensible' way forward on 2 October 2019.

That moment of unprecedented political weakness was seized upon by the Republic of Ireland, by the rest of the EU and by MPs across the House of Commons. The instant the DUP surrendered on the fundamental issue of no longer maintaining borderless trade between Northern Ireland

and the rest of the UK, Boris Johnson had all the political cover he needed. That lapse in judgement has now presented the most existential threat to the Union that Northern Ireland has ever faced.

The deal subsequently presented as Boris Johnson's deal is not only a bad deal – it's a disastrous deal. If it is allowed to pass it will put a border in the Irish Sea and would tear Northern Ireland away from its most important economic market – the market of Great Britain.

We must never forget that with the exception of the Northern Ireland market, sales to Great Britain consistently represent the single most valuable sales market for our goods and services.

The deal is also an existential threat to the Union. I am an unapologetic unionist. I believe Northern Ireland's place – both economically and societally – is far better off remaining as part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales are also far stronger together than we would ever be apart.

No matter how people voted in the 2016 EU Referendum, for the vast majority of Unionists the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland will always trump the Union with Europe.

**That is why every Ulster Unionist candidate going into this election all share the one same, clear message – if the only choice is between accepting Boris Johnson's deal or remaining, then we have to choose remain.**

The outgoing Parliament was broken and perpetually divided. It is essential that Northern Ireland sends MPs to Parliament who can convincingly argue against and defeat this latest deal. The attendance and competency of local MPs is especially important as Northern Ireland drifts ever closer towards creeping direct rule as a result of the absurd political veto that Sinn Fein continues to have over the local political structures.

An MP that doesn't take their seat or use their vote at all will only make it easier for Boris Johnson to force his disastrous deal through Parliament.

That is why we are running in this election and why every Ulster Unionist MP elected on Thursday 12 December will use their vote to do what is best for Northern Ireland.

I am proud to lead the Ulster Unionist Party into this General Election and to offer a slate of candidates who I am confident will stand up for positive pro-Union values.

*Steve Aiken*

**Steve Aiken**



# The Union of the United Kingdom ahead of the European Union

During the 2016 referendum – on balance - the Ulster Unionist Party encouraged a remain vote, due to the detrimental impact it could have on the stability of the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the fact that Northern Ireland was by far the least prepared of all UK regions. However after the UK voted democratically to leave we wanted to see the result respected.

That was three years ago, and the intervening period has been dominated by stalemate, indecision and weakened international standing.

A disorderly Brexit on the basis of a bad deal would spell real economic harm. Leaving the European Union without a deal would have been calamitous for our people, our businesses, our economy and our place within the United Kingdom. That is why neither of these are options that the Ulster Unionist Party is, or has ever been, prepared to countenance.



**For the Ulster Unionist Party, maintaining the Union of our nation will always take precedence over securing Brexit at any cost.**

In September this year, the Ulster Unionist Party set out a clear alternative to the Irish border backstop issue. Our proposal included the creation of a new criminal offence for knowingly transporting non-compliant goods through the UK to the EU. A new body would have been established to monitor and regulate trade across the Irish border. It remains a matter of huge regret that as a consequence of the stubbornness of the EU, ROI and UK Governments, these alternative proposals were not given due consideration.

Instead, it appeared stalemate had set in and Brexit was simply going to consist of delay after delay as it seemed that the fissure between the EU and UK was too wide to close.

That was until 2nd October 2019 when the DUP conceded on the fundamental issue of a regulatory border in the Irish Sea. The moment that was agreed to, it simply no longer mattered what any unionist party subsequently said – a precedent had been set and Boris Johnson had all the political cover he needed.

As a direct result we are now faced with Boris Johnson's deal. The Government's own impact assessment has warned that the deal could see a downturn in trade, business investment and consumer certainty because of the trade barrier in the Irish Sea.

Under the proposed deal, companies will suffer as yet undetermined costs every time they want to move goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. They will even need to sign exit declarations if they wish to trade freely throughout the United Kingdom – yet politically they are not exiting anything.



The revelation that more than 60% of goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain could be subject to tariffs under Boris Johnson's deal is a stark illustration of just how economically devastating and administratively difficult the proposals are.

Huge uncertainty remains as to how Northern Ireland would have any influence over the VAT regime we would fall within or even our relationship with the single electricity market.

The Government's promise to local businesses that they would continue to have unfettered access to the GB market lasted only a matter of days before the Brexit secretary told the House of Lords European Union Committee that businesses would need to complete exit summary declarations when sending shipments from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK.

Boris Johnson's subsequent assertion that this would not be the case has still not been shown to be at all realistic or credible.

**There is no doubt that Boris Johnson's deal would be disastrous for Northern Ireland and disastrous for the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.**

**That is why if the only choice now is to leave under his deal or remain, we choose remain.**

**We joined the EU as one, we leave as one, or we remain as one.**



## Giving Stormont one more chance – if it doesn't work it's time for Direct Rule

Over 21 years on from the signing of the Belfast Agreement, it is a democratic and moral outrage that most 21 year olds living in Northern Ireland have never even had the opportunity to vote for a functioning Assembly.

Those young people - the generation that had been promised so much by so many - have been failed by the Sinn Fein and DUP politics of distrust, incompetence, intransigence and corruption.

It is hugely disappointing that the decade of devolution from 2007 to 2017 ended in such ruinous failure. Yet despite those disturbing mistakes of the past, the Ulster Unionist Party does genuinely believe that the



people of Northern Ireland are best served by a fully functioning Assembly and Executive.

It is outrageous that just as the pressures on public services were reaching a critical juncture in January 2017, the Executive collapsed. In the almost three years since, the problems have been intensified dramatically.

Things are so serious in our health service that patients are coming to real physical and mental harm because they are being forced to wait for so long. Our schoolchildren are being failed as extracurricular activities all around them are being scaled back and more and more schools are being forced into letting key staff go. The absence of any political accountability or leadership during this critical period has been devastating.

Northern Ireland urgently needs Ministers in place who are ready and, most importantly, willing to step in and take decisions to start fixing the many problems we face.

The upcoming political talks are an opportunity to restore our political institutions. As far as the Ulster Unionist Party is concerned however, in the current political environment, they represent the final chance.



It is obvious what needs to happen. The operation of the Executive needs reformed so it is given a genuine chance to succeed, and we need to get back to the politics of consensus as envisioned in the Belfast Agreement. The first step must be reverting to the original system of appointing First and deputy First Ministers.

So we do hope that the upcoming political talks succeed. There have been too many false dawns. If there is no deal however, then we must immediately move to Direct Rule. This is the last chance.

### **Our political asks**

1. If there is no deal by mid-January then we must immediately move to Direct Rule. Any deal must include the genuine reform of both the Executive and the Assembly.
2. In the future if Ministers and Special Advisers are alleged to have broken the Code of Conduct they must face investigation like in any other democratic system.
3. There must be independent monitoring of delivery of the Programme for Government and improved transparency in Government decisions.
4. End the disgrace that one single party is allowed to hold a veto over an Executive.
5. The voting age should be lowered to 16 by Northern Ireland's Centenary in 2021, in order to demonstrate that we value and trust our young people of tomorrow.



# It's time to declare a healthcare emergency

Our health service is in the midst of an unprecedented and deepening crisis. Never before have so many people been forced to wait, and wait for so long. Almost every waiting time statistic is frightening, but it is worth reviewing the most recent figures just to realise the sheer scale of the crisis. With a population of only 1.8m people;

- There are 306,180 patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment,
- There are 108,582 outpatients waiting longer than 52 weeks. The target is that no one should wait longer than 52 weeks.
- There are 37,011 people waiting longer than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test. These include critical tests such as MRIs and CT scans. Again, the target is no one should wait longer than 26 weeks.
- In this year alone there is a gap between patient demand and funded health and social care capacity of 76,000 assessments and treatments.
- Only 49% of patients urgently referred with suspected cancer began treatment within 62 days, despite a medically recommended target of 95%. Cancer thrives in a vacuum.
- There are 1,625 people, including 629 children, waiting longer than the maximum nine weeks to access mental health services.
- Only 66% of patients attending Emergency Care Departments were treated or admitted within 4 hours and 3,482 had to wait longer than 12 hours. The target is 95% within 4 hours and no patient having to wait longer than 12 hours.
- During 2018/19 hospitals across Northern Ireland cancelled a total of over 180,000 appointments.
- The Ulster Unionist Party revealed that there are 7,436 job vacancies across the local health service. Vacancy levels have doubled since March 2017. The overall tally includes many critical frontline positions such as 2,482 vacant nursing posts, 704 allied health professionals, 654 carers, 454 nursing assistants, 413 social workers, 292 doctors and 120 pharmacists.



Never before in the 70-year history of the NHS have things been so precarious. With every passing month our waiting times, across almost every single speciality and patient type, are getting worse. Crisis is not a strong enough word to describe what is happening across our health service.

Aside from it being morally outrageous to have so many people waiting for so long, we are increasingly moving to a two tier health service as people who can afford it are opting to pay for treatment privately.

A previous draft commissioning plan for Northern Ireland also warned that 'increased waiting times for assessment may result in delayed diagnosis of a serious or life-threatening condition with reduced likelihood of a successful outcome. Spiralling waiting times could lead to severely delayed diagnoses of life threatening illnesses.' That warning was from four years ago however and the waiting times now are unimaginably worse.

It is a human tragedy of epic proportions that there are people in debilitating pain who are actually coming to harm as a result of the current crisis facing the health service.

And yet even though we all know that the problem is getting worse with each passing month, outrageously there is still nothing other than a passive acceptance of the spiralling emergency from the top of the local Health Department.

We have, by far, the worst waiting lists in any of the four parts of the United Kingdom. Our waiting times simply would not be tolerated anywhere else. If they were occurring in England, Scotland or Wales it would be a national scandal and heads would have rolled by now.

The failure to adequately workforce plan, and the outrageous disparity in pay for key staff groups that has been allowed to develop over recent years has contributed to an all-time low in morale across the workforce.

It is outrageous that at this time of such grave crisis, our health service is leaderless. That is why the current situation can simply no longer be allowed to continue.

#### **The Ulster Unionist Party wants:**

1. A healthcare emergency to be declared in Northern Ireland.
2. The next UK Government to then immediately intervene and announce it is initiating special measures.
3. Health functions to be formally transferred back to Westminster and a Westminster MP appointed as a NI Health Minister.
4. The £1.02bn Barnett consequential funding from the £34bn extra spending previously announced in NHS five-year settlement for the period between 2018/19 and 2023/24 to be ring-fenced for health. Consequentials for pay awards must also be ring-fenced to fund similar awards for staff in Northern Ireland.
5. £200m of additional funding to be borrowed in 2020/21 through the Reinvestment and Reform Initiative to enable the Trusts to undertake additional elective care activity.

## **Additional measures that must now also be taken:**

- Despite the blatant crisis in waiting times and growing demand for hospital services, between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of hospital beds decreased by 1.2% (72) from 5,902 to 5,830. We need immediate corrective investment to increase the number of acute hospital beds.
- In order to end the injustice of many patients having to wait years to see a consultant on the NHS, but only days to see the same consultant if paying privately, we must work with all staff to encourage and persuade them to remain within the health service. That has to include paying them fairer wages.
- Scrap the excessive maximum waiting time of 52 weeks for current inpatients and outpatients, and instead replace it entirely with a new system of an 18 week referral to treatment target. This would bring Northern Ireland into line with England.
- An independent Mental Health Champion should be appointed, to review, monitor and improve the necessary transformation of mental health services across Northern Ireland.
- We must invest the resources needed and urgently implement the recommendations of the GP-led Working Group Report in order to avoid any further deterioration in primary care.



## Tackling spin with the facts

### Was the two year DUP-Conservative Party deal a success?

The DUP claim they secured £1.5bn for our schools, our hospitals, our roads and broadband.

What they don't tell you is a third of it was funding already destined for the Executive simply being reannounced, and hundreds of millions of the remainder has still not been received.

2017	2019
£75 million per year was promised for 2 years to provide ultra-fast broadband	The plans were quickly scaled back and only £3m budgeted to be spent this year
£200 million per year for 2 years to deliver the York Street Interchange Project and other priorities	York Street Interchange has not even started
£20 million per year for 5 years to target pockets of severe deprivation to improve prosperity	One in five children across Northern Ireland are still living below the poverty line - most of the funding actually went to filling budget gaps
£100 million per year for 2 years to support the delivery of health service transformation	Much of the money was diverted to other areas and the system remains largely untouched
£10 million per year for 5 years for mental health, particularly to respond to the historical impact of the legacy of the Troubles	In 2019/20 83% of the funding was redirected to existing services, rather than anything new or additional as was expected
£50 million per year for 2 years to address immediate pressures in health and education	The scale of the pressures in health and education are now dramatically worse
In 2017 there were 308 local primary and post-primary schools in budget deficit	In 2019 there were 451 local primary and post-primary schools in budget deficit
Two years ago 64,000 patients were waiting longer than a year for their first appointment with a consultant	There are now 109,000 patients who have been waiting longer than a year for their first appointment with a consultant
In June 2017 there were 1,513 vacant nursing posts across Northern Ireland	There are now 2,482 vacant nursing posts across Northern Ireland
The UK Government committed to look into the damaging impact of VAT and APD on tourism	The UK Government then chose to do nothing, ignoring the clear pleas of local industries

# Priorities for Ulster Unionist MPs

## 1. Reimagining the Union

The Union of the United Kingdom works. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are better and stronger together than we ever would be apart. We have shared values, a shared history and shared cultures. New devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales, London and here in Northern Ireland have occurred and been subject to significant and ongoing amendment. Our unwritten constitution has had to bear many significant pressures in the last 20 years. Yet despite the many benefits of collectively belonging to the world's fifth largest economy, the Union is facing a number of existential challenges. Whether it is political populism or the disingenuous calls for a border poll or an independence referendum, Unionism is facing an uncertain future.

### Ulster Unionist MPs will:

- Examine in detail how the Act of Union can be sensibly updated in order to consolidate and stabilise the relationship between Westminster and the devolved administrations in the different parts of the UK.
- Ensure Northern Ireland is not left a place apart in any final Brexit deal. We won't support trade barriers East-West or North-South.
- Ensure unionism does better in selling the many benefits of the Union. Collectively Unionism must offer an open, tolerant and welcoming message that is able to both attract traditional support as well as appeal to new audiences.

## 2. Supporting communities

Welfare reform was meant to have simplified the overall benefits system, but instead it has made the system more complicated and has driven even more people into real financial hardship. Fortunately however, individuals and families across Northern Ireland were shielded from some of the worst aspects as a result of the mitigation payments previously agreed to in 2015. Those measures are set to expire at the end of March 2020 so legislation must be introduced at Westminster to extend mitigation measures on key issues such as the bedroom tax, especially as a result of the continuing mismatch in the local housing stock.



### **Ulster Unionist MPs will:**

- Demand the shamefully overdue publication of the Sexual Orientation and Racial Equality Strategies for Northern Ireland.
- Vote to restore free TV licences for over 75s and retain the triple lock protection for pensions.
- End the scandal of Northern Ireland remaining the only UK jurisdiction without funded childcare provision and support calls for the full implementation of a Childcare Strategy, with specific objectives supported by legislation.

### **3. Preventing the rewriting of history**

The Ulster Unionist Party will never support the proposed Historical Investigations Unit - the parallel police force agreed by the DUP and Sinn Fein as part of the Stormont House Agreement. The body would trawl State archives, scrutinising the actions of police officers during the Troubles, whilst being unable to open up any equivalent records held by the terrorists responsible for 90 per cent of deaths during the Troubles. This is exactly the sort of organisation terrorists would want investigating the 30 years of mayhem that Northern Ireland endured.

### **Ulster Unionist MPs will:**

- Vigorously oppose the establishment of a one-sided, and parallel police force under the guise of a Historical Investigations Unit.
- Support the Asset Freezing (Compensation) Bill to use some of the £12.5bn of frozen Libyan assets in London to compensate IRA victims of Libyan supplied weaponry.
- Support bespoke measures on health, education and housing, funded as a non-devolved solution by Westminster, to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant is fully compliant in Northern Ireland.

### **4. Protecting communities**

Throughout our existence, the Ulster Unionist Party has been proud to be the Party of law and order. The 1999 Patten Report made two key recommendations regarding police numbers. It said that for a country of Northern Ireland's size, and with the particular challenges it faces, the size of the police service should be 7,500 full time officers. It also recommended that those officers be backed up by a Part Time Reserve of 2,500, giving a total of 10,000 officers.

### **Ulster Unionist MPs will:**

- Recognise the ongoing threat of violence, and the particular challenges of policing in Northern Ireland and seek additional funds from the UK Government so that the current shortfall of 734 full-time PSNI officers is resolved.
- Back calls for the UK's Defence spending to meet the NATO Target of 2% of national GDP, as well as recognising the need to maintain our own nuclear deterrent.
- Support closing the loophole in existing legislation which prevents the DPP referring unduly lenient sentences for animal welfare abuses in the Magistrates' Court to the Court of Appeal.

### **5. Safe, affordable and sustainable homes**

Northern Ireland is simply not building enough houses. Over the next ten years, Northern Ireland needs 12,500 new homes per annum just to keep up with demand, but that target is not being met. As a consequence we are heading for a housing crisis.

### Ulster Unionist MPs will:

- Seek to make it mandatory for properties, with a reasonable expectation of habitation, to meet a minimum EPC rating.
- Support major structural reform of social housing provision, including splitting the landlord function away from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
- Legislate to reclassify housing associations and to introduce a cross departmental duty to prevent homelessness on statutory services such as the health service and prisons.

## 6. Tackling the climate emergency

The Ulster Unionist Party cares passionately about protecting the environment and taking steps to proactively tackle the threats it faces. Our planet is facing a climate emergency. Tough decisions need to be taken and they need to be taken now. This generation has a moral obligation to protect the environment and the planet to safely pass it on to the next.

### Ulster Unionist MPs will:

- Support a new Environmental Protection Act, which would include for the first time Northern Ireland specific legal targets for net zero emissions by 2035, the establishment of a new Environmental Protection Agency and a renewed emphasis on tackling environmental crime.
- Introduce a new statutory duty on tackling invasive species, as well as a target to halt the rate at which local species and habitats are declining.
- Set a target to plant 1 million new trees by 2025 in order to address the failure that we have just 8% woodland cover compared to the EU average of 37%. The 2007-2011 Programme for Government set a target which wasn't even half met and the subsequent two PFG's didn't even include setting a target.





## **7. Giving our children the best chance for success**

Every child in Northern Ireland deserves to have the chance to succeed in life and we can help achieve that by ensuring they get the very best start. Yet our schools are facing unprecedented budgetary pressures, with increased class sizes and reduced extra-curricular opportunities. That is why the additional funds that will subsequently come to Northern Ireland as a result of the increases in school funding in England should be ring-fenced for front-line education spending.

### **Ulster Unionist MPs will:**

- Promote a single state education system, where children of all faiths and none are educated together. Breaking down sectors, would lead to immensely positive outcomes – both societally and financially.
- Vote to remove Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Equal Treatment Order which outrageously still permits religious discrimination in the appointment of teachers.
- Recognise that our universities are key drivers for future economic growth, and will support the lifting of the cap in order to allow more students to study and stay within Northern Ireland. They will also support a review of interest rates on student loans.

## **8. Supporting economic prosperity**

Businesses are at the heart of any successful economy, and that is especially the case here in Northern Ireland. We want to see a strong economy that generates wealth, offers growing wages and provides the opportunity for record levels of employment. Yet across Northern Ireland the economic output is still 4.2% below 2007 levels. This is in comparison to the overall UK GDP average which is 12.9% higher. That productivity deficit, along with the obvious skills gap, must be closed in order to fully support the local economy. By taking proactive decisions such as opening up the Apprenticeship levy to local employers, putting energy pricing to the forefront of future energy strategies to assist larger companies in Northern Ireland who at present pay among the highest electricity tariffs in Europe, and allowing the personal taxation allowance to rise with inflation, there is much that could still be done.

### **Ulster Unionist MPs will:**

- Support a new concessionary 5% VAT rate for the repair, maintenance and improvement of existing dwellings and a concessionary 9% VAT rate being applied to the hospitality sector, to negate the huge disadvantage with the Republic of Ireland.
- Support our tourism industry and create a more level playing field for our airports by abolishing Air Passenger Duty.
- Recognise the importance, and for some sectors the absolute necessity, of attracting migrant workers. That is why we will reject the proposed arbitrary cap of £30,000 for migrant salaries.

## **9. Assisting our farming and fishing communities**

Whilst Northern Ireland's farmers have potentially the most to lose from a bungled Brexit deal, our Province still remains by far the least prepared region of the UK. The ongoing absence of a Northern Ireland Executive is proving disastrous at such an important time for local farmers as there has been no progress made on the future model of post-Brexit support. Bearing in mind the now broken pledge of the Conservative Party to guarantee the current cash totals until the end of the 2022 Parliamentary session, we believe farmers here need to be granted a period of certainty.

### Ulster Unionist MPs will:

- Seek to provide farmers with certainty by guaranteeing CAP payments at the current level up until the end of the next 5 year term.
- Ensure in the imminent trade negotiations that the UK does not compromise on the quality, traceability and high animal welfare standards of its agri-food produce.
- Prioritise access to UK inshore zones to UK vessels to ensure UK fishermen get a fair deal on quotas.

## 10. Strengthening our straining infrastructure

For a small country, Northern Ireland continues to be a world leader in a range of industries. Yet in order to further widen our abilities, we need world class infrastructure. However our hard infrastructure is already struggling - key arterial routes are congested, railway connections – especially to the West - are limited and often non-existent, and the list of projects requiring serious upgrading are growing year on year. We also need to improve key rail routes such as the Antrim line and create new connections to strategic sites such as the Belfast International Airport. Whilst progress has been made in promoting alternative methods of transport such as cycling - better conditions are needed to make sustainable transport a long-term and viable alternative.

### Ulster Unionist MPs will:

- Prioritise taking forward major economically important capital projects including the York Street Interchange.
- Support investment in our digital network infrastructure, with a particular emphasis on making sure every home and business in Northern Ireland has access to superfast broadband.
- Demand that a multi-year road maintenance budget be set in the DfI baseline, rather than untenably relying on the monitoring round process.



## Your Ulster Unionist Candidates



**Steve Aiken**  
*East Antrim*



**Robin Swann**  
*North Antrim*



**Danny Kinahan**  
*South Antrim*



**Carl McClean**  
*East Belfast*



**Michael Henderson**  
*South Belfast*



**Richard Holmes**  
*East Londonderry*



**Tom Elliott**  
*Fermanagh  
South Tyrone*



**Andy McKane**  
*West Tyrone*



**Darren Guy**  
*Foyle*



**Robbie Butler**  
*Lagan Valley*



**Neil Richardson**  
*Mid Ulster*



**Sam Nicholson**  
*Newry & Armagh*



**Alan Chambers**  
*North Down*



**Jill Macauley**  
*South Down*



**Philip Smith**  
*Strangford*



**Doug Beattie**  
*Upper Bann*



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