

ALLIANCE PARTY WESTMINSTER MANIFESTO 2024

Alliance Leading Change for Everyone



JULY 2024

KEY POLICIES

- Reforming the Assembly and Executive so no one party can hold us all to ransom.
- 2 Delivering an improved financial settlement for Northern Ireland that properly reflects our relative need and allows investment in our public services and economy.
- 3 **Revising fiscal rules** to account for the costs of environmental inaction and to enable investment in climate action.
- 4 **Creating a Green New Deal** to decarbonise our economy, protect workers, tackle fuel poverty, and create thousands of jobs.
- 5 Repairing the UK-EU relationship, including negotiating a comprehensive Veterinary Agreement and better promoting dual market access under the Windsor Framework.
- 6 Securing dedicated funding for integration, early years, and early intervention projects as a successor to Fresh Start.
- 7 Supporting families with childcare costs by demanding more generous tax relief and the creation of a new childcare strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 8 Advocating for a fair, welcoming, and effective immigration system that upholds human rights and meets the needs of our economy.
- Reforming UK democracy by scrapping the Tories' anti-protest laws,
 First Past the Post and introducing votes at 16.
- 10 Championing human rights and the rule of law domestically and internationally.

Alliance, it adds up for Everyone



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LEADER'S FOREWORD

We stand ready to expand our team in Westminster, returning Stephen Farry alongside more Alliance MPs. Building on our successes in the 2022 Assembly election and local government elections last year, we know that people want strong Alliance representation at all levels of government.

Alliance is already leading change on better health outcomes, making our communities safer, expanding inclusive education and delivering affordable childcare. We are working to combat climate change, promote a cleaner, greener environment and to create a vibrant and dynamic economy.

In this Westminster manifesto, we have set out our policy priorities for the next five-year term. We have focused specifically on those matters over which Westminster has direct control or influence. This isn't a stand-alone document – to get the fullest picture of how Alliance plans to deliver better; it should be read in conjunction with our *Local Government* and *Assembly* manifestos and our policy documents on *Childcare*, *Institutional Reform* and our *Green New Deal*.

Crucially, we can use increased influence at Westminster to unlock a fairer financial deal for Northern Ireland and advance reform of the Assembly and Executive so no one party can collapse things ever again. Fairer funding and stable institutions add up to more sustainable politics and public services – a brighter future for everyone.

Alliance is growing as more people recognise that a divided society means less for everyone. The cost of division means hundreds of millions of pounds less to invest each year in what really matters to you. This election is a chance not only to remove a negative, destructive Conservative government but also to hold to account those local politicians who propped up, supported and backed some of their most divisive, regressive policies.

We have a chance for change.

But to make that change happen, you have to help us deliver it.

On Thursday the 4th of July, you have the opportunity to make a positive change to your life and the lives of everyone in Northern Ireland. To positively influence the issues that matter to you most. To support a united community and reduce division in our society.

To ensure you have positive representation at Westminster, committed to a more prosperous and fair society for everyone.

Together, we can lead that change. Your support plus our commitment to delivery equals a brighter, more optimistic future for everyone.

If that's the sort of leadership you want, play your part.

On July 4th, Vote Alliance.

Naonii R Long

Naomi Long

DEPUTY LEADER'S FOREWORD

It has been my greatest privilege to represent North Down in Westminster over the past four years. My dedication to serving the people of North Down has been unwavering and I am proud of my track record: delivering on behalf of my constituents and making their voices heard.

My small team and I have consistently punched well above our weight and achieved a great deal in this Parliament. I have used my platform to tackle crucial issues facing Northern Ireland and beyond, in line with the Alliance Party's vision of a shared and integrated society, ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and prosperity for all.

I led the charge in securing the £3.3 billion financial package for Northern Ireland, providing much-needed relief to support our public services and economy while continuing to advocate for sustainable, long-term solutions.

I have championed calls for the UK Government's fiscal rules to adopt a more long-term approach to investment, recognise the indirect costs of environmental inaction, and unlock essential funding for public services.

The Alliance Party has pioneered the concept of a Green New Deal for Northern Ireland, aiming to create new green jobs, promote social justice, and save our planet. I have been steadfast in defending Northern Ireland from a hard Brexit. I consistently opposed destructive unilateral actions from the Conservatives and the DUP, which would have severely damaged our economy. Instead, I have worked to provide practical solutions to a range of problems, and build a closer relationship between the UK and EU will remain a major priority in the forthcoming Parliament.

As the leading advocate for reforming Northern Ireland's political institutions in Westminster, I have worked tirelessly to ensure that we never again face a situation where they collapse, leaving a political vacuum and long-term damage to our economy and public services. I have consistently stood up for all our rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law, pushing back against divisive and toxic Tory rhetoric, and opposing regressive legislation.

The Alliance Party recognises that trust in politics is crucial for an effective democratic society. I am determined to help restore that trust by promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in public life.

I hope to be returned to Parliament with colleagues so that we can build on this success, using our influence at Westminster to make Northern Ireland a better place for everyone.

Hale Dury

Stephen Farry Deputy Leader of the Alliance Party



1 LEADING CHANGE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland has transformed in many ways since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. But while our society, our economy and even our politics have evolved, our institutions have not, and they are now holding back progress.

We believe:

- Northern Ireland deserves better than stop-start politics. Our institutions should be reformed to prevent any one party from holding them hostage ever again.
- In a society for everyone, underpinned by our shared values of equality, respect for diversity and interdependence. Funding should be released for key projects such as integrated schools and early years investment that will help us build a shared future.
- That justice should have no time limit, and we support those seeking truth, justice and acknowledgement for the events of the past. The Legacy Act should be replaced with an alternative that has the support of victims and local parties.

2 UK PUBLIC FINANCES

Public services have been squeezed beyond recognition and the UK's public finances are in a very bad place. Without reform, current UK fiscal policy is inhibiting investment, reinforcing climate inaction and storing up environmental, social and financial crises for the future. We want to see:

- Changes to the Fiscal Rules, so the impact of public spending decisions on the UK's overall asset base (or wealth) is reflected, rather than just its impact on debt. This would better capture and reflect the costs associated with climate inaction, unlock vital investment in struggling public services, incentivise investment in our infrastructure and skills, as well as provide resilience to external shocks and risks such as climate change.
- A progressive taxation system, where the super-wealthy pay their fair share, and the phased implementation of carbon taxes to raise more money for public services, and to progress the transition to net zero.
- A radical rethink of the social security system. Food bank use is rising and people are often unable to survive on the inadequate income benefits provide.
- A major investment in childcare, both through a bespoke model in Northern Ireland and through tax relief at Westminster.

3 NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC FINANCES

Northern Ireland is not adequately funded to reflect relative need, and so our capacity to sustain and transform public services is hindered. To sustain and transform our education, health and justice systems, to invest in public sector pay, drive the local economy and protect our environment, we need fair funding. To achieve this, Alliance will:

- Work to secure a base-lined fiscal floor, set above 124, at the next spending review. We do not believe the UK Government's figure of 124 captures our relative need and believe this will be borne out by independent analysis that the Treasury should commission.
- Continue to press for long-term transformation and public spending on an 'invest to save' basis. There is much more we can do with the money we have to ensure quality public services for people in NI.
- Tackle the cost of division. Research from 2016 cited the costs of division in NI ranged between £400-800m. We want the UK Government to fund new research into the updated costs, so that we can tackle it and funnel savings back into public services.

4 ECONOMY

We believe Northern Ireland can become Europe's most innovative and dynamic regional economy. We have many strengths, including unique dual market access. Whilst many economic levers lie in the hands of the NI Executive, Westminster can and should do more to enable NI's growth.

We want to see:

- The promotion of dual market access for Northern Ireland. The Windsor Framework provides NI with a relative opportunity compared to the rest of the UK in relation to unfettered access for goods. This opportunity should be exploited to the benefit of businesses and people in NI.
- The Apprenticeship Levy reviewed, with any levy raised from Northern Ireland ringfenced for re-investment in skills.
- Renewed partnerships between Government and local businesses in NI on a North-South and East-West basis.
- Support for regional industries by boosting research, innovation, skills, infrastructure and access to finance across the entire UK.

- A legal duty placed on the UK Government to ensure its economic policies are assessed on their likelihood of reducing regional inequality in the economy and that levelling up is accelerated.
- A fundamental review of the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds, so that they support local priorities in NI and are controlled by the NI Executive.

5 GREEN NEW DEAL

We believe tackling the climate emergency goes hand in hand with economic transformation and social justice. In 2021, we published the Alliance Green New Deal that sets out our plan for a fair, green economy. Since then, energy prices and the cost of living have reached a crisis point due to the Conservative Government's reckless inaction and u-turns on critical climate pledges.

We will continue to make the case for a Green New Deal. We believe:

- Energy security is more important than ever. We must invest in renewable energy to guard against price precarity and to boost the industry in Northern Ireland.
- We need a UK-wide emergency retrofitting programme to reduce emissions and tackle fuel poverty.
- A just transition to net zero, part funded through tax increases on fossil fuel giants and wealth, property taxes on the superrich and via long-term green bond issuance, ISAs and pension funds.
- The use of fossil fuels should end, with a ban on fracking and the opening of new coal mines and pits.

6 MIGRATION

Alliance believes in a united community. That means representing everyone in Northern Ireland, celebrating the diversity of our communities and upholding the rights and dignity of us all.

We reject the current rhetoric around migrants and asylum seekers, and we support a fair and compassionate immigration system for the UK that recognises the invaluable role migrants play in our economy. We want to see:

- An overhaul of the visa system to make it more affordable and the removal of cruel minimum threshold salary requirements for family visas.
- The scrapping of the shortage occupation list and points-based system, replacing it with a visa system based on the real needs of Northern Ireland's economy and society.
- The creation of safe routes for asylum seekers to reduce exploitation and trafficking, and so that no one is forced to make treacherous journeys to the UK.
- The Rwanda Scheme abolished, and asylum claims processed quickly in a trauma-informed way.
- The right to work for asylum seekers in any job after three months so they can support themselves and their families and become active members of their communities.

7 UK POLITICAL REFORM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Just as Alliance stands for openness, honestly and fairness in Stormont, we will continue to seek to enshrine these values in Westminster. We believe human rights, equality and the rule of law are cornerstones of safety and stability, and must be defended more robustly than ever after the last Government.

Alliance MPs will demand:

- A fairer electoral system for the House of Commons, and a directly-elected House of Lords.
- Votes at 16 for all elections and referendums.
- A trans-inclusive ban on so-called Conversion Therapy that extends to NI.
- Better regulation of AI and social media, including a watchdog for child safety online.

8 OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

We believe Brexit was and continues to be fundamentally destructive for the UK as a whole. For Northern Ireland, it poses huge challenges for our economy, environment, society and wider political stability.

We support the special arrangements provided for under the Windsor Framework but we want to improve its implementation to help people and businesses in NI.

We want:

- A negotiated Veterinary Medicines Agreement and a grace period for the next phase of goods labelling in the interim.
- Improved information and assistance to businesses based in Great Britain regarding trading in NI.
- Early and enhanced engagement between Northern Ireland's elected representatives, Executive departments and other stakeholders in the development of EU law.

9 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

International cooperation is essential in addressing shared global challenges. Alliance is guided by our liberal internationalist values and our commitment to the rules-based international order.

The world is an uncertain place, faced with many challenges. With these principles in mind, Alliance will:

- Work towards a two-state solution in the Middle East, based on international law.
 This includes the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state and an end to the illegal occupation of Gaza and the persecution of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- Continue in our support for Ukraine's fight for freedom against Russian aggression and for the ongoing provision of aid to Ukraine.
- Push to reinstate the Department for International Development and for spending on Official Development Assistance of 0.7% of the UK's gross national income.

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Northern Ireland has transformed in many ways since the Good Friday Agreement. Our politics, economy, and society have all evolved, and we've witnessed significant demographic change.

Yet Northern Ireland has not been able to reach its full potential, held back by the failings of and within our political institutions. Political division has led to poor outcomes on some issues, and complete deadlock on others. Our system of government has increasingly become marred by a lack of openness and accountability and is often characterised by populism and cronyism.

Particular concerns include:

- Institutional sectarianism, in particular, the designation and related voting system in the Assembly.
- The politics of 'them' versus 'us' over control of territory and resources rather than any consideration of a shared vision and common goals for Northern Ireland.
- Mutual vetoes granted to the largest parties in the Executive, which are undemocratic and destablising.
- Lack of incentivisation of co-operation, moderation and accommodation, with hardline and exclusionary politics rewarded.
- Departmental silos, with insufficient joining-up across government and a lack of collaboration on cross-cutting issues.

Every government needs to work on the basis of trust, respect, and partnership. There also needs to be a shared understanding of the common good, a commitment to cohesion, and adherence to collective responsibility. However, the nature and design of the institutions and mechanisms of government currently magnify disagreement and disincentivise cooperation and progress.

Alliance is committed to stable and sustainable power-sharing that respects liberal, democratic principles and which supports a shared future.

1.1 INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Northern Ireland deserves a working Assembly and Executive. Institutions that function in between periods of stop-start government are not good enough.

In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement provided us with a mechanism to manage divisions. Its success is demonstrated powerfully in the growing number of people who now reject the binary, divisive "two communities" model and instead embrace the concept of a pluralist, shared community, rich with diversity. This transition, evident in surveys and census data for some time, is now impacting the political sphere with a record number of MLAs elected in the most recent Assembly election who are not defined as either unionist or nationalist.

Despite that change, the architecture of the GFA continues to afford additional rights and privileges to those who remain wedded to binary politics at the expense of stability and progress and to the detriment of other minorities.

The continuing cycle of restoration and collapse proves that the institutions are fundamentally unstable. This impacts their effectiveness and, in turn, the extent to which they can serve the people of Northern Ireland.

Alliance remains committed to the principles and spirit of the Good Friday Agreement, but believe its structures were meant to evolve. Notwithstanding the recent restoration of the Assembly and the Executive, reform remains essential for cohesion, fairness, and stability in Northern Ireland. The lessons from recent history reinforce this.

We will defend the Good Friday Agreement against the potential threats posed by the UK leaving the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and through the pursuit of further divergence from the EU.

Reform must not be left to the Northern Ireland political parties alone. Rather, the UK and Irish governments must lead and drive reform through their roles as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement. We believe both immediate and medium-term reforms are necessary. We see the immediate changes required as falling under three broad strands:

- 1 To facilitate **Executive formation**, the process of nominating First and deputy First Ministers must be amended. If the largest party eligible to nominate the First or deputy First Minister is unwilling to do so, the entitlement should pass to the next largest party, creating the ability for those willing to nominate to do so.
- 2 To facilitate a functional Assembly, a weighted majority should replace parallel consent in "cross-community" votes. This should be a majority of approximately twothirds of the whole Assembly, with the precise figure to be determined after each election to ensure it includes unionists, nationalists and others. Without this, the Executive may not be able to pass a budget and the Assembly may be unable to elect a Speaker. Further, the petition of concern mechanism should be reformed, restricting its use to the small number of issues it for which it was originally intended. Once triggered successfully, votes should proceed by weighted majority.
- **3** To facilitate a **functional Assembly**, the threshold for triggering a "cross-community" vote within the Executive should also be raised to reflect the reforms proposed to the petition of concern in the Assembly, used only on key issues; in addition, the "three meeting convention" for adding items to the Agenda should be placed on a statutory footing.

In the medium-term, we recommend the following measures:

- 1 The titles of both 'First Minister' and 'deputy First Minister' are changed to 'Joint First Minister', acknowledging their offices are co-equal.
- 2 The positions of 'Joint First Ministers' be counted against D'Hondt calculations.
- **3** The system of designations be abolished.
- 4 Arrangements for an Executive to be formed through a voluntary coalition should be put in place.

Full details of our proposals for institutional reform can be found in our paper, *Sharing Power to Build a Shared Future*.



1.2 NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST COOPERATION

Strands Two and Three of the Good Friday Agreement mandate cooperation between Executive Ministers and their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland and across the UK. Whilst this cooperation is welcome, we believe it should be greatly enhanced.

Northern Ireland is entirely interconnected with Ireland and the UK. Yet, the Strand Two and Three institutions receive much less attention than those of Strand One, and their scope lacks the breadth and depth that is required for meaningful cooperation.

North-South

The Strand Two institutions have served as an early warning system ahead of political collapse, with withdrawal from or the frustration of the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) often indicating the beginnings of a political crisis that will ultimately affect Strand One institutions.

We believe there is significant scope for enhanced practical cooperation around economic, social and environmental areas, and these opportunities for cooperation are underserved by the NSMC. The NSMC needs more dynamic engagement and a substantive work programme, including on the integrated single energy market and on areas that have changed due to Brexit. For example, the Windsor Framework covers only the movement of goods into the Single Market but doesn't cover freedoms for services, capital and the free movement of people. These are areas in which the NSMC could meaningfully drive cooperation and collaboration.

There is currently an effective veto on NSMC meetings, whereby a Unionist or Nationalist Minister failing to agree to attend affects its 'balance' and can, therefore, prevent the meeting from taking place. This arrangement highlights the pervasive nature of vetoes within our political institutions and should be removed.

East-West

Whilst its origins lie in the desire for a new devolved administration in Northern Ireland to build relationships with both governments, the British Irish Council should now have a much wider role in enhancing and managing British-Irish relations and providing a forum for governments across these islands. This potential has not yet been realised, and post-EU Exit, it is more important than ever.

There are opportunities to further develop cooperation in areas such as energy, the environment, public health, education, trade, and transport.

The British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference has not met consistently, which has impacted on its success in developing cooperation between the UK and Irish governments.

Alliance believe that free movement and reciprocal rights under the Common Travel Area should be preserved and enhanced. This is explored in further detail in the section on Migration.

1.3 SHARED FUTURE

The Alliance Party vision is of a shared future where everyone is safe, can make a positive contribution and is treated fairly and with respect. We believe in a society for everyone, underpinned by our shared values of equality, respect for diversity and interdependence.

We reject the notion of "two communities" and instead believe a shared future will enable us to build a stronger Northern Ireland, making it a more attractive place to live, learn, work, and invest. This will also allow us to save resources by investing in services for everyone and ensure better public services for all.

We believe the UK Government should help build a shared future in Northern Ireland by:

 Funding research to fully cost economic, social and financial divisions in Northern Ireland. The Executive should use this to inform their work, factoring the cost of division into departmental decisionmaking, including capital investment, and agreeing an action plan to dismantle it.

- Creating a successor fund to the Fresh Start capital fund for shared and integrated education. This should encompass the remaining integrated school projects that lost out on Fresh Start funding and should also expand to include investment in early years and early intervention. This fund would be transformative in its scope and should be collaborative in nature and focused on shared outcomes through trauma-informed projects. As with Fresh Start, this would be additional to other funding streams such as PeacePlus and from philanthropic funding.
- UK Government departments operating in Northern Ireland should uphold their equality duties as outlined in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This should also extend to capital spending decisions.

1.4 DEALING WITH THE PAST Legacy Act

Alliance has long campaigned for truth, justice and support services for victims and survivors of the Troubles. We have long held that the following principles should guide all proposals to deal with the legacy of the conflict:

- Promoting reconciliation.
- Upholding the rule of law.
- Acknowledging and addressing the suffering of victims and survivors.
- Facilitating the pursuit of justice and information recovery.
- Complying with human rights.
- Proportionality, fairness, transparency and equity.

We believed that the proposals contained within the Stormont House Agreement adhered to these principles and provided a sound path to progress for those seeking truth, justice and acknowledgement.

Unfortunately, after years of delay, the UK Government recommitted itself to the Stormont House Agreement proposals in January 2020, only to abandon them within weeks. The new Legacy Act was driven by internal Conservative politics and perceptions of what veterans wanted, rather than the best interests of victims and survivors and Northern Ireland society. It represents a betrayal of previous political agreements and is at odds with the rule of law, justice, and reconciliation.

It has no legitimacy, having been foisted on the people of Northern Ireland without their support. It defies the views of stakeholders, including political parties, human rights experts, and victims' groups.

Justice should have no time limit, and the criminal justice system should always be available to those who seek to use it. The ruling of the High Court in Northern Ireland around the central immunity clause is welcome, and we await the outcome of the Irish Government's interstate case.

We will advocate for the replacement of the Legacy Act with an alternative co-designed with local political parties and victim and survivors' groups.

Victims and Survivors

We have long supported the introduction of a pension for victims and survivors of the Troubles, and Justice Minister Naomi Long MLA took the lead in implementing the Troubles Permanent Disablement Pension Scheme when other executive ministers refused.

The August 2024 deadline for backdated applications should be extended to allow victims and survivors the time to access support in completing their applications and to allow the Victims' Payment Scheme to manage the flow of applications.

We support the campaign for a payment for those bereaved during the Troubles, and we welcome the scoping work being undertaken to establish the best way forward.

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UK public finances are in a difficult space – Public Sector Net Debt is at a level last seen in the early 1960s. This is after over a decade of damaging austerity initiated by the UK Government to address the post-2008 financial bailout and associated debt overhang. Covid-related expenditure has since contributed to debt levels, and there is no obvious way out of this precarious financial position under current Treasury rules.

The Truss/Kwarteng Mini Budget compounded the situation by undermining trust and credibility in the UK Government and causing underlying interest rates to spike; they remain elevated as a result. This has had the dual effect of increasing borrowing costs for the UK Government and homeowners and businesses – many households are still to feel these impacts when they reach the end of fixed-rate mortgage deals.

Realistically, future economic and financial shocks are highly probable, particularly given rising global geopolitical tensions. Public sector debt levels will continue to face pressure from emerging crises, and the UK Government must unravel the conflict that this creates in terms of financing essential public services and investing in the future.

2.1 IMPACT ON PUBLIC SERVICES, ECONOMY AND CLIMATE

In this fiscal climate, our public services have been squeezed beyond recognition. Health waiting lists are rising, school budgets are inadequate to meet needs, and there is insufficient funding for key areas of public concern, such as the economy, policing and justice, and environmental protection. Without reform, public services will continue to decline and decay at the expense of societal wellbeing, and our economic and environmental future.

The UK economy continues to underperform. Brexit has caused further challenges, and the additional resultant trade barriers to the UK's largest market have hindered growth significantly. The UK is also facing significant environmental risks. There are enormous costs associated with climate inaction. Recent research suggests that this will cost the global economy £30 trillion per year by 2049. Huge economic and social impacts are currently accruing and are not actively factored into political decision-making.

Significant investment is required to offset this decline in public services and to mitigate economic and environmental risks. Alliance believes that there is a potential solution to the public funding/debt deadlock and that it lies in fundamental reform of elements of the UK's fiscal framework – specifically, Fiscal Rules.

2.2 FISCAL RULES REFORM

We know that fiscal discipline is vital in protecting the UK's credit rating and the associated costs of servicing public sector debt. Fiscal Rules – essentially the spending discipline that the Government observes to ensure that expenditure is responsible, sustainable, and not unduly subjected to political short-termism – are extremely important in ensuring financial stability.

However, there is an emerging argument that these Fiscal Rules are too restrictive and, as such, are constraining investment, economic growth and environmental protection.

Alliance believes that this argument is particularly pertinent in relation to expenditure on the environment. The UK's current fiscal framework does not adequately reflect future costs associated with *environmental inaction*, which, as quantified above, runs into trillions of pounds annually. The disconnect between political shorttermism and the inherently future-orientated impact of environmental spending needs to be better identified and mitigated in public spending decisions.

Alliance believes reforming the Fiscal Rules could unlock significant investment, including for a Green New Deal – see *Chapter 4* for more information. This could be funded via long-term bond issuance in addition to existing UK Green Gilts. Without such reform, UK fiscal policy is reinforcing relative climate inaction and storing up environmental, social and financial crises for the future. On this basis, Alliance believes there is scope to unlock additional expenditure at a UK Government level, including for NI. This can be done in a fiscally prudent manner to prevent unintended consequences regarding financial market reactions and underlying interest rates. This would necessitate strategic targeting of associated expenditure in areas that will mitigate the – as yet not fully captured – costs of environmental inaction and would add to the future value of the UK's natural environment, economy and wider infrastructure.

We believe that UK Fiscal Rules should recognise the impact of spending on UK Government's overall *asset base* in terms of broader economic infrastructure, natural resources and the quality of our environment - not merely the impact on *debt and deficit*, as is currently the case. If public sector spending creates additional net wealth, albeit on the basis of interim debt incurrence, then it could and should be deemed fiscally prudent.

Significant climate and environmental expenditure would also provide enhanced cover for households and businesses in terms of ongoing geopolitical risks and shocks, and the threat that this presents in terms of energy price fluctuations, and the impact on the cost of living/doing business. A greener and more energy-efficient infrastructure would reduce exposure to oil and gas price shocks and be a sound investment for households and businesses alike.

We believe this investment is also key to addressing many of the deficiencies in the overall UK and NI economies at present. Strategic, targeted investment could unlock new skills, jobs and technologies. This would also address stalled investment levels in the UK - which are constraining growth providing a stable policy outlook and unlocking additional private sector investment.

Alliance will continue to advocate for reform of the Fiscal Framework on a strategic and fiscally prudent basis, to benefit public services, the economy and the environment. We firmly believe this would unlock muchneeded funding for NI and enable us to invest in public services and our future prosperity.

2.3 TAXATION, PENSIONS AND WELFARE SUPPORT

As set out above, Alliance believes there is a credible case for increasing the total quantum of funding available to the UK Government for strategic expenditure via a revised fiscal framework. Two other core components of the net funding envelope, namely taxation and welfare support, are determined by UK Government Fiscal Policy, and have huge implications on household wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

Taxation

Alliance maintains that there is potential for a fairer, more redistributive system without any additional tax being levied on ordinary working households. We believe the current UK taxation policy fails to adequately capture and reflect wealth and should be revised to ensure a more progressive tax system. Loopholes in the tax system accommodate significant tax avoidance for the super-wealthy.

Increasing tax on the super-wealthy would allow for increased personal income tax allowances, providing much-needed relief for hard-working individuals/households – many of whom have been subjected to fiscal drag over recent years due to inflation-linked pay increases, which, in fact, leave them worse off in net income terms.

We believe there is scope for a shift in taxation related to environmental protection, including carbon taxes. Evidence suggests that sectors in which environmental taxes have been becoming more onerous – industry, power generation and waste – have been successful in reducing emissions, whereas sectors with more stable taxation, such as aviation and transport, have made much less progress.

We would therefore support enhanced taxation in these areas, provided it is phased and proportionate, implemented in a manner that is progressive for consumers and minimises any unintended disruption to business activity and investment intentions. It is also our preference that, where environmental taxes are levied, there is a clear linkage with investment in environmental improvement and tackling climate change. We would also like to see a tax on share buybacks, as has recently been implemented in the US, to incentivise productive business investment, support the transition to net zero and raise much-needed public funds for investment in public services. These buybacks occur when huge corporations use their profits to inflate their own share price – usually this involves oil and gas giants and big banks; the same corporations who are profiting the most from the cost-of-living crisis. It is estimated that a tax on share buybacks would raise around £1.4bn per year.

Pensions

Alliance is committed to protecting UK State Pensions, including keeping the Triple Lock. The current levels of state pension provisions in the UK are relatively low by European standards.

Alliance believes auto-enrolment in workplace pensions is a key tool in ensuring people have a dignified retirement. We are committed to implementing a range of improvements in the auto-enrolment system, including lowering the age for automatic enrolment from 22 to 18, action to prevent the exclusion of low earners from auto-enrolment as a result of the current earnings trigger, and exploring options to default self-employed people into pension savings.

To address the maladministration suffered by women born in the 1950s and affected by changes to the State Pension age, we support a compensation system that – in line with the WASPI campaign – is adjusted to reflect the extent of the change in the individual's State Pension age and how much notice they received.



Welfare Support

The UK continues to face a very significant cost of living crisis, with many households – including both those with and without people in employment – struggling to meet the basic standard of living. The use of food banks continues to increase every year and pressures on households with children are particularly acute.

Alliance will work to end to the callous approach to welfare reform, which has severely harmed low-income households. We support ending the Benefits Cap, Bedroom Tax and two-child limit on Child Benefit on a UK-wide basis. We also believe in a more empathetic approach to medical assessments; cessation of regular re-assessments for those with progressive or incurable conditions; the abolition of punitive sanctions and a renewed focus on skills development and training for those within the welfare system.

A wealth of evidence has demonstrated the link between the two-child limit in Universal Credit and higher poverty rates among larger families, with a harsh impact on children. Scrapping the policy would be one of the most efficient ways of reducing child poverty across the UK.

The five-week wait for initial Universal Credit payments is also leaving many claimants struggling to afford basic living costs and locked into a cycle of debt from the beginning of their UC journey. A wider review is needed to look at ways of making the Universal Credit system more flexible and responsive for new claimants. We also support the establishment of an Essentials Guarantee in the social security system, ensuring that people's incomes cover the cost of living.

Carer's Allowance remains one of the lowest benefits of its kind in the entire welfare system. To better recognise the enormous contribution unpaid carers make to public services, Alliance supports the delivery of a Carer's Allowance Supplement and extension of the Carer's Allowance earnings threshold.

We also support increases in support for maternity, paternity, shared-parental and adoption entitlements.

2.4 CHILDCARE

Families and households in Northern Ireland are currently suffering from a super-disparity in childcare support relative to those in other regions of the UK. Not only is this inequitable, but Alliance considers childcare to be key infrastructure that would allow us to unlock current and future economic potential, and we would urgently prioritise investment in childcare provision.

We have proposed a bespoke model for Northern Ireland – an Affordable Childcare Scheme – that will deliver better outcomes for children, reduced costs for parents, and enhance the sustainability of childcare provision.

We note the Northern Ireland Education Minister's announcement that he aims to develop an interim scheme later in the year. This is welcome, and we recognise much of our own proposals in what the Minister has set out. However, Westminster also has a role to play.

We are calling for:

- Improvements to the UK Government's Tax-Free Childcare scheme such as a more user-friendly interface; increasing/removing the cap, and increasing the relief from 20% to 35%.
- Better information for parents on the types of childcare available, support with costs and the potential risks of using unregistered providers.

You find can out more about our childcare policy and see our more comprehensive range of recommendations in *Children First: Alliance's Proposals for Child-centred and Affordable Childcare,* published in October 2023.

2.5 NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC FINANCES

The level of public finances available to NI underpins the Executive and Assembly's capacity to sustain and transform public services such as health, education and justice, invest in public sector pay, drive the local economy, and protect our environment.

Public Finances

Alliance played a pivotal role in negotiating and securing the £3.3bn financial package in December 2023. During the period of collapse, we made numerous representations to the UK Government to flag the false economies associated with the neglect of public services and pay levels in Northern Ireland. We advocated for a financial package to stabilise and transform public finances and public services.

Restoring our financial health will require stabilisation of the current financial crisis, and subsequent transformation of public spending to place public finances and services on a more sustainable footing. Northern Ireland cannot achieve better outcomes through continued cuts. Longer-term solutions are needed.

Whilst welcome, the financial package that ultimately materialised from the UK Government fell far short of what was required and entirely failed to account for the funding gap in previous years. Northern Ireland's public finances are in a perilous state, and essential public sector pay awards have largely subsumed any additional money for this financial year contained in the Treasury package.



Fundamentally, the core level of funding for NI is key for our economic, social and financial wellbeing. There is a credible basis to question whether Northern Ireland is adequately funded by the UK Government based on relative need. The Fiscal Council suggests that we have been structurally underfunded by between £300-£400m per year since 2022 versus the level we would receive if an appropriate Fiscal Floor were in place. This is based on an assessment of relative need of 124% in NI, i.e. for every £100 spent in England, £124 must be spent in NI to ensure equivalent funding based on relative underlying needs.

Alliance believes that a Fiscal Floor of 124 does not reflect our relative need in NI versus England. The current assessment of 124% is based on spending on policing and justice in the period from 2017-2022 (which has been used as a measure of related 'need'). However, this period was characterised by continuing cuts to the Department of Justice budget, whereas the prior, ringfenced funding period from 2010-2015 was arguably more reflective of true policing and justice needs, as identified by the UK Government when the powers were first devolved.

Alliance is committed to securing a base-lined fiscal floor, set at a level in excess of 124, as part of the next UK Spending Review. This process should be informed by external independent analysis.



This historical underfunding continues to be compounded by significant inefficiencies in how money is spent in Northern Ireland, including the slow rate of reform in many areas and the distortions that come from trying to manage a divided society. Research by Ulster University in 2016 indicated that division in NI costs between £400m and £800m per annum. Alliance, of course, advocates inclusivity and a phased elimination of division. As referenced in chapter one, we believe the UK Government should fund new, comprehensive research into the updated cost of division in NI.

Building on our Assembly Party Manifesto, in order to maximise the impact of the Northern Ireland budget, we believe four key areas of reform are needed:

- 1 Reducing the costs of division.
- 2 Reforming the public sector, including early intervention and protection.
- 3 Improving budget setting and scrutiny processes.
- 4 Reviewing existing and potential revenue raising options, and consideration of tax-varying powers.

For further details on what we would do in these areas, please see our *2022 Assembly Manifesto*.

Maximising Shared Island Funding

Alliance also welcomes the Shared Island Funding, and the support it has provided to a broad range of projects in Northern Ireland over recent years. Alliance will explore with the Irish Government how this fund can be increased and deployed to further projects in a wider range of areas, where our shared challenges and solutions across the island would be enhanced by such investment.

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We believe Northern Ireland can become the most innovative and dynamic regional economy in Europe. Despite the challenges facing us, Northern Ireland has the capacity to become more competitive and outwardlooking.

We must build on our emerging strengths in terms of fintech, cyber, pharma and the creative industries, while bolstering our foundation in advanced manufacturing, agrifood, retail and hospitality. Within an open and market-based economy, businesses are the driving force behind employment and prosperity.

However, we acknowledge that relatively low levels of productivity, skills gaps and mismatches, infrastructure gaps, labour market inefficiencies and high levels of economic inactivity all need to be addressed.

Alliance will strive to exploit all trade and business services opportunities with other parts of the UK, on an all-island basis, with the wider EU and, indeed, globally. Of particular significance is how the UK rebuilds its relationship and more closely aligns with the EU.

Our most recent *Assembly Manifesto* provides more details on Alliance's priorities in the devolved space, including investment in skills, research and infrastructure, and reform of the planning system.

3.1 CHANGING UK ECONOMIC POLICY

The UK's economic strategy is in need of a cohesive and comprehensive overhaul. In recent years, the UK economy has grappled with a host of challenges, from productivity levels and public and private investment to skills shortages and labour market inefficiency. The impact of Brexit, including increased trade barriers with the EU, our largest and closest market, has further hampered growth. It's crucial to note that the UK economy is one of the most regionally unbalanced in Europe, with only 3 out of 12 regions contributing to the Treasury.

In other sections of this manifesto, Alliance sets out our proposals for a *Green New Deal* and our relationship with the *EU*, both of which are central to the development of a new economic plan.

In addition to those steps, the UK government can take many other measures to assist the Northern Ireland economy. Alliance MPs will work at Westminster to secure action from the UK Government to:

- Support regional industries by boosting research, innovation, skills, infrastructure and access to finance across the entire UK.
- Continue the development of broadband, high-speed mobile internet access and similar telecommunications projects in a manner that ensures all parts of the UK benefit from this technology.
- Support expansion of the British Business Bank & UK Infrastructure Bank to perform a strategic role in the local economy, ensuring that viable small and mediumsized businesses have access to capital, including in relation to environmental and other investment with deferred returns.
- Establish a UK Export Fund for SMEs, to enable enhanced export orientation.
- Introduce a reduced rate of VAT for tourism and hospitality businesses.
- Create a legal duty on the UK Government to ensure its economic policies are assessed on their likelihood of reducing regional inequality in the economy and that levelling up is accelerated.
- Support ongoing delivery and expansion of City Deals for Northern Ireland.
- Seek introduction of Regional Rebalancing Programme for infrastructure spend across the nations and regions of the UK, with local and devolved authorities to be given a say in how it is used, reinforced by Just Transition funding for areas particularly affected by the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- Seek expansion of Enhanced Investment Zone (EIZ) funding to focus on job creation and economic development in areas of innovative and sectoral strength.

- Invest strategically to ensure that Northern Ireland has the skills and ability to attract greater levels of funding from projects such as UK Research Councils and meet emerging labour market skills demands.
- Establish renewed partnerships between Government and local businesses to formalise business representation, improve co-ordination and enable engagement North-South and East-West.
- Review investment levels in skills, the funding model for colleges, universities and apprenticeships and student finance for England – as revised outcomes may have beneficial outcomes for Northern Ireland.

3.2 SUPPORTING NORTHERN IRELAND'S ECONOMY

While the devolved institutions hold many economic policy levers, the UK Government has a crucial role to play. By working in collaboration with the Executive and Assembly, the UK Government can significantly bolster the Northern Ireland economy.

NI Trade and Exports

The UK Government has an important role in supporting exports from Northern Ireland, as well as ensuring UK trade deals do not have a detrimental effect on key NI industries, such as agrifood. This includes the appropriate inclusion of Northern Ireland businesses on trade missions and access to trade shows. Similarly, fair access to export finance must be ensured. However, there needs to be a clear distinction between the roles of the UK Government and Invest NI.

We would support the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Business and Trade and Invest NI to clarify and formalise those roles and linkages.

Promoting Dual Market Access

The Windsor Framework provides Northern Ireland with a relative opportunity compared to the rest of the UK that comes from unfettered access to both the market in Great Britain and the Irish/EU market in terms of goods.

Alongside the Northern Ireland Executive and Invest NI, the UK Government must take action to promote this particular opportunity and avoid taking any steps or failing to keep EU law up-to-date that would undermine this comparative advantage.

Alliance will hold the UK Government to account with regards to exploiting all opportunities associated with dual market access.

Apprenticeship Levy

The Apprenticeship Levy is collected from many Northern Ireland businesses; however, they do not receive any direct benefits from it, as the proceeds of the levy are collected by the UK Government and then reallocated to the Northern Ireland Executive's Block Grant. Discontent regarding the Apprenticeship Levy has also been raised in Great Britain.

Alliance will support a general review of the Apprenticeship Levy across the UK, and ensure that any levy raised from Northern Ireland is ring-fenced for re-investment in skills.

Defence Procurement

Northern Ireland currently receives the lowest share per capita in the United Kingdom of defence contracts.

Alliance will continue to lobby the Ministry of Defence to ensure that Northern Irelandbased companies have proper opportunities to compete for contracts and that the local SME sector can access related opportunities in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity

Alliance recognised the significant impact of the loss of EU funding to Northern Ireland, particularly the Structural Funds of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. We are deeply concerned that the replacement funds, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund and other Levelling Up Funds are controlled by the UK Government, rather than aligned with devolved priorities and without requisite tailoring to local needs. There has been a significant reduction in funding to Northern Ireland, coupled with the imposition of unnecessary and costly bidding competitions, short-termism, uncertainty as to the areas of activity that will be supported, plus duplication in some areas and gaps in others. Many core services, including apprenticeship, labour market inclusion measures, disability employment, regeneration and economic development measures are in jeopardy.

Alliance will seek a fundamental review of the design of Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds to ensure they target the most impactful and sustained interventions and will continue to lobby for the resources and responsibility for these funds to be transferred to the Executive.



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The climate crisis has existential implications for our planet and humanity. The world, and particularly the UK, is not on course to meet net-zero targets of the Paris Climate Agreement, which is considered the bare minimum to preserve a liveable planet.

A Green New Deal recognises that tackling the climate emergency goes hand in hand with economic transformation and social justice. It's about urgently decarbonising our economy, and in doing so, unlocking a fairer, more resilient economy filled with clean, affordable, renewable energy and well-paid, secure green jobs in existing and emerging industries.

The impacts of climate change are already upon us, hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. We are experiencing increasing flooding, and changes in the natural environment, habitats and biodiversity. Extreme weather changes will only continue to accelerate, causing needless financial distress for households, businesses and public services if we don't future-proof our infrastructure and meet net zero targets.

As a Party, Alliance has long recognised that we need urgent action to overcome the climate crisis and improve our environment and economic wellbeing.

This is why, in 2021, we developed the Alliance *Green New Deal*: our plan for a fair, green economy.

Since we published the Alliance Green New Deal, energy prices and the cost of living have reached crisis point. The Conservatives have u-turned on critical climate pledges, recklessly approving fossil fuel expansion in the North Sea and failing to insulate the UK's inefficient homes.

Furthermore, over the past 15 years, the Conservatives have underinvested in our economy by over half a trillion pounds when compared to the G7 average, leaving our public services and infrastructure in desperate need of Green New Deal investment and transformation. Since the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, it is imperative that we reassess our progress in meeting our climate targets. It is worth noting that while the European Union continues to strengthen its climate legislation, the United Kingdom's legislation is being weakened. We can no longer let this be the case.

Alliance MPs will continue to demand that the UK Government puts in place a Green New Deal for the UK as a whole, in line with our Alliance Green New Deal policies.

With Alliance MLA Andrew Muir now Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Alliance is leading climate action at every level of government. This includes working towards a specific Green New Deal for Northern Ireland by the Executive and the Assembly, which covers devolved responsibilities.

4.1 TACKLING THE ENERGY CRISIS

It has been estimated that as many as 45% of homes in Northern Ireland might now be living in fuel poverty. This is unacceptable.

In today's world of rapid change and precarity, we need affordable running costs for households and resilient infrastructure and public services that can adapt quickly and effectively to changing demands – a consideration that is increasingly vital, given emerging geopolitical risks and their associated impacts on the cost of living. This means a national plan for massive investment in renewables and properly insulating our homes.

The initial expenses of overhauling our energy infrastructure can be covered through a mix of public and private investment, with increased taxes on the wealthiest individuals – i.e. the richest 1% of people in the UK with a total wealth of £2.8tn – helping to stabilise the economy. Reforming wealth taxes on the super-rich has been estimated to generate up to £50 billion annually.

Although many energy powers are devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive, the renewable energy industry stands ready to bring incredible opportunities for Northern Ireland and should be championed by Northern Ireland's MPs.

4.2 KEY GREEN NEW DEAL COMMITMENTS

Alliance MPs will work in close collaboration with our Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to demand the UK Government paves the most ambitious and just path possible to Net Zero.

We will build on our work holding the UK Government to account to meet, and where possible exceed, international climate commitments, by implementing a comprehensive climate action plan for the UK.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Embedding environmentalism at the heart of planning and delivery, at every level of Government.
- Ending the use of fossil fuels, banning fracking and the opening of new coalmines and pits, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.
- Upholding Net Zero goals and opposing destructive policy rollbacks from the Conservative Government, including reversing new oil and gas licences.
- Demanding tax increases on fossil fuel giants, and wealth and property taxes on the super-rich to create equity in the tax system and support the transition to Net Zero and an end to fuel poverty.
- Creating of a "wealth tax" for the top 1% of UK earners who are responsible for 26 times the carbon emissions of the bottom 10%.
- Funding a Green New Deal via long term bond issuance, ISAs and Pension Funds.
- Requiring the UK Government to change current approaches to spending and taxation. See more on this in our Finance chapter.
- Enhancing collaborative relationships between UK Government and devolved administrations in relation to climate policy.

- Ensuring UK Government recognises transboundary issues in relation to agriculture and the environment, including in relation to marine plan.
- Strengthening the powers of the Groceries Code Adjudicator to ensure fair trading practices for farmers.
- Ensuring adequate funding for Agriculture, Rural Affairs and Fisheries sectors to enable a genuine just transition.
- Calling for enhanced funding for the Office of Environmental Protection to ensure adequate enforcement and on ground presence.
- Ensuring Northern Ireland receives its fair share of funding raised under the UK's Emissions Trading Scheme.
- Scrutinising every UK-wide energy package to ensure it prioritises renewable energy and acts to keep prices as low as possible.
- Continuing the development of the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard and supporting a UK-wide emergency programme to reduce energy consumption from all buildings, including providing insulation to cut emissions and fuel bills, retrofitting homes and increasing energy efficiency of private rented sector homes and social housing, ultimately ending fuel poverty for good.
- Introducing UK air quality limits in line with World Health Organisation levels to guarantee and monitor the right to breathe clean air both indoors and outdoors.
- Supporting the continued existence of the all-island energy market, and ensure its continued effective operation despite the ongoing changes around implementation due to the Protocol and Windsor Framework.
- Securing research and development investment in Northern Ireland to match other UK regions, realising Northern Ireland's potential as a leader in green innovation.

- Establishing citizens' assemblies to work alongside the UK Government, under the Parliament's scrutiny, to ensure that a just and democratic transition involves all of us, especially those most affected.
- Strengthening just transition principles through expanding the UK's climate disclosure regulations to require every UK listed company to make just transition plans and to involve their workforce and trade unions in this planning.
- Scrapping the Conservatives' anti-protest laws to support trade unions' right to organise and advocate during the just transition.
- Banning advertising for high-carbon products.

Animal Welfare

In addition to protecting biodiversity, wildlife and habitats, Alliance has always prioritised animal welfare and sought to tackle cruelty against animals. People who show such brutality are not only a danger to the animals involved but potentially to our society as a whole.

We will continue to pursue high welfare standards at the UK level and to use the UK's influence to end global "trophy hunting" and the trade of illegal animal products. We remain committed to extending the ban on hunting mammals with dogs to Northern Ireland.



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Alliance believes in a shared and united community. That means representing everyone in Northern Ireland, celebrating our community's diversity, and upholding the rights and dignity of all.

Migration is a normal part of human life: it enriches our culture, opens our minds, causes love and families to grow, and significantly improves our economy.

Immigration must be managed, but Alliance supports a compassionate, fair system and we have always opposed the 'hostile environment'. We believe that an immigration system can both fulfil our legal and moral responsibilities and at the same time grow our economy and improve our society.

The Conservative Party has used Brexit as a vehicle to introduce an increasingly punitive, cynical immigration system that has threatened the rule of law, human rights, our economy and the UK's international standing. The UK Government has perpetuated divisive mistruths and anti-migrant tropes, defying international law as well as the overwhelming economic evidence and needs of businesses. It has also failed to provide community resources for integration and created an unprecedented backlog in processing applications.

Northern Ireland's key sectors include retail, hospitality and tourism, agri-food and social care – all of which rely upon migrant workers. Since 2019, Northern Ireland businesses have experienced major job shortages due to the Government's increasingly restrictive approach to economic migration.

While immigration policy is set at

Westminster, we also believe there is scope to use devolved powers to boost integration and strengthen migrant and asylum seekers' rights in Northern Ireland. More information on these policies can be found in the Alliance 2022 Assembly Manifesto.

5.1 REFORMING THE VISA SYSTEM

The Conservative Government has hiked up visa fees, increased qualification requirements and doubled the minimum salary levels to be eligible for a visa to work in the UK. Given lower salary levels in Northern Ireland, the impact of this policy has been particularly acute for local families. It has devastated and separated couples and families, led to major job shortages, and left untold numbers vulnerable to exploitation.

Alliance MPs will campaign for changes so that our economy and businesses can thrive, families can be together, and all of us can live and work in dignity. We will support action to:

- Reverse the increased minimum threshold salary requirements for family visas and make the system affordable.
- Scrap the ban on dependents for those on a Health and Care Worker visa and student visa.
- End punitive, unjust policies such as No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Cut extortionate visa fees and make visa renewals automatic and affordable.
- Repeal the Immigration Act 2020 to scrap the shortage occupation list and pointsbased system, creating a visa system based on the real needs of the Northern Ireland economy and society.
- End employer-dependent visas so workers can change jobs or leave an exploitative employer.
- Reject the assertion that workers in critical low-paid front-line roles are "low-skilled" and therefore ineligible to work in the UK.
- Cap routes to settlement at five years, and create a simplified route to status based on five years' residence.
- Grant overseas students two years to find work after graduation.

5.2 OVERHAULING THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

The annual number of asylum applications to the UK peaked in 2002, and people who originally came to the UK seeking asylum make up a mere 0.6% of the UK's total population. This small minority is not responsible for the systemic issues in our economy: the under-resourcing of our public services is.

Under the current system, it is virtually impossible to seek asylum in the UK legally, and entering the UK via irregular journeys is the only way people can seek sanctuary.

The UK therefore takes a tiny fraction of the world's refugees. Most asylum seekers stay in the first country they feel safe. The small minority that travel onwards to reach the UK do so because they have ties to the country: familial, historical and language – some have even served with the British military, as is the case for many Afghan arrivals.

Around 85% of refugees globally live in developing regions, with 73% of refugees living in countries neighbouring the one they have fled.

Over recent years, smuggling gangs have capitalised on heightened border security between the UK and France and the UK's departure from the EU. With fewer irregular journeys to claim asylum made by lorry and other vehicles, asylum seekers are forced to reach the UK via treacherous small boat crossings.

The Conservative Government has spread the notion that people arriving on these boats are making bogus claims. In reality, 92% of small boat arrivals from 2018 to March 2023 claimed asylum, with over 86% of those who had received a decision by March 2023 being offered protection.

The Conservative Government's extreme approach to immigration is not based on evidence and does not stop people from entering the UK. Instead, it emboldens smuggling gangs and puts untold numbers at risk of death in the Channel, modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation in the informal economy. In particular, Rwanda-style schemes are impacting people's willingness to come forward as victims of human trafficking, and the inability to work is causing significant vulnerability to economic, sexual and criminal exploitation.

The only meaningful way to reduce treacherous Channel crossings is to provide safe routes for asylum seekers to reach the UK and to expand the UK's highly restrictive family reunification criteria.

MPs will work to:

- Restore the universal right to seek asylum by repealing the Illegal Migration Act 2023, Nationality and Borders Act 2022, Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024.
- Abolish the Rwanda Scheme and any other third-country forced resettlement agreements.
- Establish safe, legal routes to claim asylum in the UK, expanding resettlement schemes and making it easier for vulnerable family members to be reunited.
- Process asylum claims fairly and quickly in a trauma-informed way, without discriminating based on the method of travel.
- Grant asylum seekers the right to work in any job after three months so they can support themselves and their families and become active members of their communities.
- Call for more investment for communities to support asylum seekers and promote integration.
- End the use of hotels and privatisation of accommodation for those seeking asylum, moving to a not-for-profit-based system that's integrated into communities and works alongside social housing.

- Make providers of asylum accommodation subject to a statutory duty to refer people leaving asylum support accommodation who are at risk of homelessness to the local housing authority.
- Ensure that migrants' and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognised to reflect need in the local economy and to ensure they can continue their education and find employment that corresponds to their skills.
- Explore options to strengthen and streamline community sponsorship.
- Call for adequate funding for the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP) and improved governance across the UK.
- Establish independent monitoring of all accommodation provisions for those seeking asylum to ensure adequate health and safety precautions and safeguarding.
- Support a trial in Northern Ireland to explore community-based Alternatives to Detention (ATDs).

5.3 PROTECTING THE COMMON TRAVEL AREA

The Common Travel Area is a mixture of conventions and legal instruments that govern movement and reciprocal rights across the UK and Ireland. As a consequence of Brexit, it has been placed under growing stress.

Furthermore, we have seen attempts to redefine the Common Travel Area (CTA) based exclusively around the rights of British and Irish nationals, resulting in unjust restrictions on migrant communities and reports of increasing racial profiling on crossborder journeys.

It is critical that the integrity of the Common Travel Area is upheld and that its rights are afforded to all those lawfully resident in the United Kingdom and in Ireland. In Westminster, Alliance MP Stephen Farry successfully secured an exemption for thirdparty non-visa nationals living on the island of Ireland from the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation. The Irish and UK Governments must work together to protect residents' CTA rights and make a positive case for immigration, showing that we can handle arrivals in a way that unlocks economic opportunities and fulfils international human rights responsibilities.

Alliance MPs will work to ensure that:

- The Common Travel Area is placed on a formal treaty basis by the UK and Irish Governments.
- Essential cross-border services be made available to all legally resident non-EU/EEA citizens on the island of Ireland.
- Non-EU/EEA residents who have lawful residency in Northern Ireland are provided "deemed permission" to cross the border as visitors.
- A social mobility assessment is undertaken for migrant communities on the island of Ireland.
- The requirement for non-EU/EEA citizens to carry and produce passports when crossing the border and to notify authorities of their visit in advance of travel is abolished.
- An exemption for Northern Ireland tourism is created under the UK's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme.
- A labour mobility scheme on the island of Ireland is created.

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CHAPTER 6 UK POLITICAL REFORM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

UK POLITICAL REFORM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Human rights, the rule of law and civil liberties have long been cornerstones of UK society. Yet since 2019, the Conservative Government has passed authoritarian legislation with increasing vigour, dangerously undermining fair process and democratic rights, and demonising refugees, workers and climate protestors.

Just as Alliance stands for openness, honesty and fairness in Stormont, we will continue to seek to enshrine these values in Westminster.

6.1 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Alliance believes human rights are inherent and universal: an essential part of modern governance that protects the individual from injustice. The Conservatives have repeatedly attempted to repeal the Human Rights Act and leave the ECHR, which would have devastating consequences for the rights of everyone across the UK. This would have particular implications for the Good Friday Agreement and specific areas such as policing and criminal justice.

It is imperative that the next UK government restores the rule of law, civil liberties, and equal access to justice as foundational pillars of our society.

Alliance MPs will demand the Conservatives' draconian anti-protest laws be scrapped and the Illegal Migration Act repealed.

6.2 DEMOCRACY AT WESTMINSTER

The UK democratic system has long required significant reform. Many governments have been formed over past decades with a Parliamentary majority but with only the support of a minority of those who voted in proceeding elections.

Norms and conventions of good behaviour have increasingly been flouted, frequently with impunity, including Ministers and others blatantly lying, failing to be transparent, or correcting the record. We cannot continue to rely on conventions to safeguard democracy and provide checks on executive power. Alliance has long supported constitutional change in the UK, and we believe that can no longer be delayed.

Alliance MPs will continue to call for:

- A fairer electoral system for elections to the House of Commons. Our preferred system is multi-member Single Transferrable Vote, the system we use for all other elections in Northern Ireland.
- Votes at 16 for all elections and referendums.
- Votes for anyone legally resident in all elections and referendums.
- A directly elected House of Lords. Elected representatives could be elected by proportional representation from the 12 regions of the UK, including Northern Ireland and would serve one or at most two longer terms to avoid party politicisation of the role.
- An extension of the ban on double-jobbing to include those sitting in the House of Lords or Seanad Éireann whilst elected to the NI Assembly.
- UK-wide constitutional convention to develop a fully codified constitution. This should explicitly deal with the democratic deficit in England following devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Independent and transparent enforcement of the Ministerial Code.
- Making donations to political parties in Northern Ireland more transparent. Changes brought by Naomi Long in November 2013 ensured that all political donations were recorded from January 2014 onwards. However, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland chose only to publish those from July 2017 onwards, so we still have a period of secrecy, which needs to be addressed.
- Amending the 2014 Lobbying Act to ease restrictions on campaigning activities by affected organisations and to implement a comprehensive lobbying register.

6.3 EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

In pursuing an agenda of undermining human rights, the Conservative Government has also failed to legislate on critical equality and social justice issues.

Alliance MPs will continue to advocate for:

- An immediate trans-inclusive ban on socalled Conversion Therapy, without loopholes, that extends to NI.
- The domestic incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- The delivery of a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights to supplement the ECHR and Human Rights Act.
- A Royal Commission on drug policy to ensure we adopt evidence-based interventions, particularly in relation to harm-reduction.
- Urgent, just compensation for all those affected by the Infected Blood Scandal, including scrutinising the operation of the Government's recently created Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.
- Introduction of a statutory Duty of Candour, which has been highlighted by the Hillsborough disaster investigations, the Post Office (Horizon) Scandal and others.
- Westminster to intervene when required to ensure the highest standards of rights and equality in Northern Ireland in line with international standards, where the Assembly or Executive manifestly fails to act.

6.4 DIGITAL DEVELOPMENTS AND ONLINE SAFETY

Developments in how we use technology have transformed our lives and our work over recent years. We believe there is enormous potential in both Artificial Intelligence (AI) and in social media as forces for good; however, there are significant dangers if both are not properly regulated.

The value of AI should be harnessed in a way that benefits society as a whole, whilst protecting human rights. The use of AI is increasing rapidly and has implications for almost every aspect of our lives: safety, democracy, work, the arts and the economy.

Linked to this, social media is rapidly becoming a space in which people are at risk of harm, misinformation is endemic, and radicalisation can take hold. We are particularly concerned about the use of machine learning algorithms, the lack of accountability around anonymous accounts, and the effects of social media on children and young people, and vulnerable adults. We are also concerned that over-reliance on selfregulation of social media platforms, results in varying standards of acceptable content and levels of due diligence in respect of breaches of standards and, consequently, inconsistency in whether and how harm is addressed in the online space.

We believe the new Government should:

- Introduce a Digital Bill of Rights to protect everyone's rights online, including the rights to privacy, free expression, and participation without being subjected to harassment and abuse.
- Incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law.
- Set up an independent advocacy body for children's safety online.
- Build on the measures introduced through the Online Safety Act to introduce verification requirements for social media accounts.

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Alliance was firmly opposed to Brexit, which continues to be fundamentally destructive for the United Kingdom as a whole. Most notably, it poses vast challenges for Northern Ireland's economy, environment, society and wider political stability.

In many respects, the story of the past eight years has been a series of attempts to reconcile the challenges and contradictions of Brexit for Northern Ireland, which depends on both north-south and east-west dimensions and can only operate successfully through sharing and interdependence.

7.1 OUR POSITION ON BREXIT

Successive attempts have been made to mitigate the impact of Brexit upon Northern Ireland through the Backstop, the Protocol, and the Windsor Framework. Whilst we helped devise many of these responses and welcome others, we recognise that some aspects of Brexit amount to a circle that cannot be entirely squared. Certain problems will either persist or not be fully solvable.

Alliance believes that there is a hierarchy of responses to address Northern Ireland's relationship with the EU.

Alliance has always been open to maximising flexibilities within those special arrangements. Our tests remain:

- Protection of the Good Friday Agreement.
- Preservation of dual market access.
- Changes being mutually agreed between the UK and EU, and therefore legal.

Alliance is committed to the ongoing continuance of the Windsor Framework in the forthcoming Democratic Consent vote which is scheduled before the end of 2024.

Alliance will seek to exploit the relative opportunities that come from dual market access, whilst continuing to recognise the wider disadvantages and challenges posed to Northern Ireland by Brexit.

Beyond the nature of the special arrangements for the region, broader steps can be taken to address the impact of Brexit upon Northern Ireland through to ultimately returning to the European Union.

Most immediately, the more the UK and EU can improve their current relationship under the Trade and Co-operation Agreement, including alignment, then the easier the interface across the Irish Sea becomes and the softer the impact of Brexit overall. This should include consideration of rejoining the Single Market and Customs Union.

It remains Alliance's policy that Northern Ireland and the UK should return to the European Union at an early opportunity. Only a full reversal of Brexit can resolve all of the tensions, contradictions and limitations that it poses.


7.2 IMPLEMENTING THE WINDSOR FRAMEWORK

Alliance broadly welcomes the Windsor Framework as a mitigation of some of Brexit's impacts. However, we are clear that it remains an imperfect solution, with some issues still outstanding. We also note that it only addresses the movement of goods and fails to address the free movement of labour, services, and capital.

Ultimately, closer alignment between the UK and the EU can reduce the need for some aspects of the Windsor Framework, and we are open to further negotiated, bilaterally agreed changes that can deliver improvement. Pending further changes, we will play our role in ensuring the implementation of international obligations.

Alliance also recognises the importance of Article 2 in protecting rights under the Good Friday Agreement and the European Convention on Human Rights. We will continue to defend this from any attack.

Whilst we acknowledge the positive intention of some of the measures within the *Safeguarding the Union* Command Paper, we remain concerned with the overall process and presentation, particularly its import for UK Government impartiality and balance with respect to Northern Ireland political parties. Furthermore, we are highly sceptical of the veracity of some of its claims. Alliance will, therefore, continue to scrutinise all underlying secondary legislation and its evidential basis robustly.

Alliance is clear that there are key areas where further work with the EU is required to deliver improved implementation of the Windsor Framework, including:

Veterinary Medicines

The current Veterinary Medicines grace period ends on 31 December 2025. Whilst many pharmaceutical companies are planning at least 18 months in advance, we support a UK-EU free trade Veterinary Medicines agreement to overcome issues and an extension of the grace period to facilitate the adoption of a mutually agreed position.

Not for EU Labelling

We are conscious of businesses' major concerns regarding this measure and competing demands with respect to which approach should be taken. Particularly in light of our shared desire with other parties for a comprehensive UK-EU Veterinary Agreement, we will seek a grace period to defer the next phase of goods labelling pending such an agreement being concluded.

'At Risk' Test

The treatment of goods moving into Northern Ireland deemed at risk of moving into the European Union should remain under constant review to find opportunities to relax how this rule is interpreted and applied.

GB-based Businesses

Alliance will encourage the Government to take further tangible steps to inform and support businesses based in Great Britain regarding the requirements for doing business with Northern Ireland, and to promote the minimisation of trade friction between Great Britain and NI.

North-South Mapping Exercise

The Irish Government last conducted an exercise to assess the impact on north-south cooperation in 2019. Given developments since then regarding the nature and shape of Brexit and the particular solutions created for Northern Ireland, and its likely impact on areas such as skills, free movement and public services, the UK and Irish Governments should repeat this exercise collectively. This will help inform future policy responses.

Democratic Deficit, Stormont Brake and Applicability Motions

We are concerned about the nature and operation of the Stormont Brake and Applicability Motions. Both are blunt instruments that come at the end of the process of developing EU law. Significant uncertainty remains regarding how the UK Government will respond if the Assembly either pulls the Stormont Brake or fails to pass an Applicability Motion. Fundamentally, it is in Northern Ireland's interests to remain aligned with the European Union on updated EU law and the adoption of new EU law.

Northern Ireland's elected representatives, departments and other stakeholders should seek to influence the development of relevant EU law much earlier in the process. Alliance will continue to develop such capacity and opportunities to influence outcomes.

7.3 FIXING THE UK-EU RELATIONSHIP

Brexit has had major consequences for the UK, including a lower rate of economic growth, upward pressure on costs and prices, greater labour shortages, border friction for imports and exports, and a loss of freedom of movement for professionals, students, and performers.

The deteriorating geopolitical situation underscores the pressing need for the next UK Government to negotiate a closer, mutually beneficial relationship with the European Union. The scheduled review of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement during the next Parliament presents a focused opportunity, which, if seized, can bring about positive changes. Pending formal agreements with the European Union, it is still in the interests of the UK to voluntarily align with the European Single Market.

Alliance was the first party to advocate a comprehensive UK-EU Veterinary or Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement. This would be in the interests of the agri-food sector of Northern Ireland and the UK economy as a whole. Crucially, it would also significantly reduce the nature and level of related checks across the Irish Sea.

Other areas that should be addressed include:

- Foreign policy and security co-operation.
- A progressive return to freedom of movement, starting with particular cohorts e.g. performers and a youth mobility scheme.
- Deeper policing and justice co-operation, dependent on ongoing adherence to the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications.
- Merging of UK and EU emissions trading regimes (ETSs) and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAMs).
- Joint approach on chemicals.
- Rejoining EU agencies and programmes.
- Rejoining the Erasmus Plus programme so young people have full restored access to study, teach and volunteer abroad.



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International co-operation is essential to addressing shared global challenges. Alliance is guided by our liberal, internationalist values.

At present, the world faces its biggest range of inter-related challenges in many decades, with wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and parts of Africa, and many tensions elsewhere.

This is accompanied by situations of gross human rights abuses, humanitarian crises, growing numbers of displaced people, economic disruption, poverty and challenges in respect of development, pandemics and the climate emergency.

The nature of the international community's response to many of these problems, including some significant failings, has undermined international institutions and the international rules-based order more generally.

Additionally, around the globe, liberal democratic structures are being challenged by the rise of populism and authoritarianism.

8.1 SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Alliance reiterates its support for the central role of the United Nations and the wider family of institutions within the United Nations System and for the rules-based international order. This includes support for the work of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.



Conflict Resolution

War and global conflict have a disastrous effect on international relations, economic stability, the environment, and public finances, and create human misery and destruction.

As a result, Alliance supports:

- Military intervention only as a last resort. Any such interventions must be legal, have defined aims and an exit strategy, assurances that the result will be sustainable, and be accompanied by nonmilitary attempts at tackling the problem.
- The "Responsibility to Protect" doctrine. We accept that this must be a factor in decision-making about intervention.
- Reforming global institutions, including membership of the UN Security Council, to better promote globally agreed objectives and recognise the central role of the United Nations in maintaining global peace and security.

Gaza

The Middle East is one of the major fault lines in the world, with a long and troubled history.

Hamas's terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023 were abhorrent, inexcusable war crimes that Alliance has consistently condemned in the strongest terms possible. Israel's response from the outset has gravely and brazenly breached international humanitarian law, collectively punishing Palestinians and leaving people in Gaza in unspeakable, apocalyptic conditions.

Since 9 October 2023, Alliance has consistently condemned war crimes committed by Israel and Hamas, demanded an immediate ceasefire, an end to the illegal siege, and the release of hostages and detainees. We have called out the UK's blatant double standards in not challenging Israel's breaches of international law and called for an end to arms exports to Israel.

The Israeli Government's acceleration of its illegal occupation and the intensification of subjugation of Palestinians in recent years has threatened the security of Palestinians and Israelis alike. Both the Israeli Government and Hamas must be held accountable for breaches of international law through the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. This includes ending Israel's 57 year occupation and 17 year blockade of Gaza, and dismantling the systematic discrimination of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories that amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.

We remain committed to a two-state solution based on existing international law, specifically upon UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967) lines. This includes the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign independent state. Peace in the region will come through Israel and Palestine both being safe, secure and prosperous inside internationally recognised borders.

Ukraine

Alliance fully supports Ukraine's fight for freedom against Russian aggression. We have continuously advocated for immediate support for Ukrainians and the ongoing provision of military and other assistance to the country. Any solution must have the support of the Government and people of Ukraine.

We will also support the most robust economic crime legislation that will prevent oligarchs from corrupt regimes from channelling their money through the UK. This would allow proceeds from the seizure of frozen Russian assets in the UK to be repurposed to support Ukraine.

8.2 SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED FORCES

Alliance respects and values the difficult work that our armed forces undertake. That is why we believe several changes must be made to ensure they are properly remunerated and rewarded for their efforts.

This should include:

- An audit of the equipment and training provided to the armed forces to ensure that they are adequately prepared for the various types of missions that they face. This audit should ensure appropriate equipment for the changing natures of deployments.
- Provision of quality housing for armed forces personnel and their families.
- Supporting the continuing implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland, including regular monitoring of the scheme.

8.3 DEFENCE SPENDING AND CO-OPERATION

Alliance continues to support NATO as the cornerstone of the defence of the UK and Europe.

We also advocate stronger defence cooperation between the UK and the European Union and for a formal agreement to be reached early in this forthcoming Parliament.

Alliance recognises the need for the UK and other countries to increase defence spending. We will support a full defence review in this regard.

We believe that changing the UK's defence posture can yield savings. Other approaches, reflecting the security challenges of the future rather than the nuclear standoff of the Cold War era, can be used to ensure the UK's security.

The UK can and should help combat nuclear proliferation by leading by example in reducing nuclear weapons as part of agreedupon multilateral efforts.



8.4 GLOBAL JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Alliance believes that the UK has both a moral obligation and a strategic interest in international development spending.

Countries in the Global South faced with geographical exposure, heightened levels of poverty, political instability, and exploitation of their natural resources are the most at risk from and least responsible for the climate emergency.

As a result of climate change, experts estimate that between 25 million and 1 billion people could be forced to leave their homes by 2050.

Industrialised nations such as the UK disproportionately bear responsibility for climate change. The UK's global responsibility is compounded by ongoing funding of overseas fossil fuel projects, destabilising foreign policy decisions and its history of exploitation.

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement demands that high-income countries go further and faster in radically reducing emissions by no later than the "second half of this century". It also requires governments to reduce emissions "on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty." Alliance MPs will demand that the UK upholds its international commitments and is as ambitious as possible when it comes to climate action.

We want to build a fair, sustainable world: reducing poverty and inequality, addressing the climate crisis, and ensuring that the most marginalised groups, such as women, girls, people with disabilities and the LGBT+ community, are at the forefront of international development and humanitarian assistance policy.

Therefore, Alliance will support:

- Reestablishing the Department for International Development (DFID) as a standalone department.
- Restoration of the commitment to spend 0.7% of the UK's gross national income on Official Development Assistance.

- Sustaining the UK's pledge of £11.6 billion for climate finance over the five-year span from 2021/22 to 2025/26, ensuring that funds come from new and additional sources, not international aid or development budgets.
- An end to all fossil fuel expansion globally under the UNFCCC, phaseout all fossil fuels and support a just transition to renewables, with the richest, most historically polluting countries such as the UK moving fastest.
- NI and UK-based international development NGOs to continue to play a leading role in tackling poverty, mitigating against the impacts of climate change, and reducing violence around the world.
- The financing and delivery of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitment made by all UN member states to 'leave no one behind' by 2030.
- Tackling tax-dodging which harms the economies of both the UK and the Global South.
- The establishment of the new Loss and Damage Fund under UNFCCC, ensuring the UK pays its fair share and that fossil fuel companies pay towards loss and damage.
- Greater investment in water, sanitation and hygiene as a matter of priority. This not only reduces disease and improves sanitation but can help prevent the development of new diseases with a global threat, as well as impacting directly on economic growth and inclusion. Its impact on the safety, security, education, economic and social participation of women and girls is also hugely significant.
- The rights of small-scale farmers in the Global South to gain access to land, seed and finance, and uphold indigenous peoples' right to land.
- Increasing focus on human security as defined by the United Nations Development Programme.
- An end to all aid spending on fossil fuel production overseas, redirecting it towards international climate aid.

- Ensuring any trade deals are consistent with tackling climate injustice, rejecting any new trade deals which fail to maintain or enhance human rights and climate, environmental, food and farming standards.
- Prevention of environmental and human rights' abuses in supply chains by establishing due diligence obligations on UK companies.
- A global climate change fund to help ensure that low-income countries can mitigate the impact of climate change and support international calls for compensation.
- UN efforts to introduce a binding international treaty on business and human rights, making companies legally accountable for failing to prevent human rights abuses or environmental damage in their operations and supply chains.
- The creation of much higher scrutiny and restrictions on UK arms exports, ending exports to countries that engage in aggression against others and repression domestically.
- The development of an ambitious UN Global Plastics Treaty to mitigate against plastic as a threat multiplier and reduce plastic-aggravated flooding in the Global South.
- Calls for the UK's urgent ratification of the UN Global Ocean Treaty and support a ban on deep sea mining.

8.5 DEALING WITH PANDEMICS

Alliance believes that we must learn lessons from the recent COVID-19 pandemic to enhance the response to future disease outbreaks with pandemic potential. We must ensure that the health service and other key workers are better prepared and supported to meet the challenges of another pandemic. We will advocate for better global co-operation from the next UK Government to mitigate and manage outbreaks.

We value expert scientific advice and believe that it should inform government policy to help protect the population's health during outbreaks.



8.6 SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL FREEDOMS

Alliance respects and promotes human rights, civil liberties, and political freedom. We believe that these issues are universal and must be respected by governments worldwide. We will always seek to promote our values abroad, promoting a tolerant world that respects human rights and supports political freedom.

Alliance will:

- Support the international rules-based order, and the international structures for protecting and advocating for higher human rights standards.
- Continue to promote our unwavering commitment to freedom of and from religion across the world and oppose discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.
- Recognise that civil liberties and the rule of law are a crucial part of developing stable governments and enabling economic growth, and ensure this recognition is embedded in foreign affairs.

- Pay particular attention to protecting the rights and well-being of women across the world, given that women are typically financially and politically disadvantaged in comparison to men, and recognising that, access to education is a priority.
- Use the UK's role in the Commonwealth to make progress on protecting the rights of women, religious minorities and LGBTQIA+ people.
- Strengthen the role the international community plays in overseeing elections abroad so that we can continue to promote fair and free elections.
- Continue to support the fight against modern slavery, human trafficking and criminal, labour and sexual exploitation.
- Improve control of arms exports and end continued arms sales to countries with poor human rights records.
- Increase overseas financial support for the ongoing refugee crisis, focusing on countries that have accepted millions of refugees.











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