

# SPEAKING UP FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO JUNE 2024











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# Leader's Message

# n 4th July voters will face a clear choice at this General Election.

Do they want to elect those who will go to our national Parliament and unashamedly make the case for Northern Ireland within the Union, wanting to promote it and do the best for it or will they be represented by people who won't go or who will spend their time talking Northern Ireland down?

The Democratic Unionist Party has **an experienced track record** of speaking up for you on issues that matter. While others talk about delivery, we can stand over what has been achieved. The **DUP** has the **strength and depth** to be able to **make the Pro-Union case and to unashamedly make the case for Northern Ireland in Parliament**. For Northern Ireland to truly flourish, it needs the United Kingdom to succeed and likewise for the UK to truly flourish it needs all its constituent parts and regions to succeed.

This requires a strong DUP team in Westminster who will take their seats on the opposition benches and **speak up for Northern Ireland**, a team who will work with their DUP colleagues in the Assembly to ensure we collectively deliver for you. As we proved before, **more seats means more influence which means more delivered** for Northern Ireland.

This manifesto and our commitments at this General Election are focused on ensuring Northern Ireland can thrive as a secure and vibrant part of the United Kingdom. We are seeking a mandate to **continue Making Northern Ireland Work** by:

- 1. Promoting the Union and Removing Barriers Within the United Kingdom;
- 2. Putting You First Delivering Fair and Equitable Funding for Our NHS, and Other Public Services;
- 3. Campaigning to Protect Family Incomes;
- 4. Unleashing our Full Economic Potential;
- 5. A Strategic Role for UK Defence and Security;
- 6. Backing our Farmers and Food Security;
- 7. Leading a Fairer Not Faster Path Towards Net-Zero;
- 8. Defending Our Most Vulnerable;
- 9. Investing More in National Infrastructure, and;
- 10. Standing Up for Victims of Crime.

By **voting DUP** on 4th July, you can **back our positive plan** and ensure our children inherit Northern Ireland in better shape than when we found it.

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Gavin Robinson Leader, Democratic Unionist Party











# OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU...



The Democratic Unionist Party has an experienced track record of speaking up for you on issues that matter. The DUP has the strength and depth to be able to make the Pro-Union case and to unashamedly make the case for Northern Ireland in Parliament.

On 4th July we seek your support to elect Democratic Unionist Members of Parliament who are committed to...

## PROMOTING THE UNION

Working as a strong DUP team to promote and strengthen the case for the Union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in Parliament.

#### 🂫 PUTTING YOU FIRST 🗸

Putting you, the people of Northern Ireland first, by working with other parties in Parliament to ensure that Northern Ireland's case is always spotlighted, particularly focusing on the just cause of a long-term fair and equitable funding model for Northern Ireland's needs.

#### ightarrow REMOVING BARRIERS WITHIN THE UK $\,ullet$

Sending a strong message to a new Government that, building on the progress to date, we will continue to fight to fully restore Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom, including removing the application of EU law in our country and the internal Irish Sea border which it creates.

#### PROTECTING AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Campaigning to ensure Northern Ireland is fully protected in law against illegal immigration and that Northern Ireland is part of a United Kingdom wide immigration policy that works.

### DELIVERING IN THE CONSTITUENCY

Delivering an unrivalled, dedicated and professional constituency advice service to constituents where the issues that matter to you will be championed and help provided when you, or those you know, need it.



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# Our Record of Delivering for Northern Ireland at Westminster

# **Promoting the Union**

The Democratic Unionist Party has an experienced and unrivalled track record of making the Pro-Union case for Northern Ireland in Parliament. Through our negotiations with the Government, the DUP has secured meaningful, visible and practical proposals to deepen connections throughout our United Kingdom, whilst driving forward the Northern Ireland economy. This includes:

- ✓ the establishment of a new U.K East-West Council to foster deeper links for Northern Ireland as part of the Union across business, education and culture;
- the creation of Intertrade UK to boost, and remove barriers to, trade throughout the United Kingdom;
- a twinning programme for primary schools, enabling students from Northern Ireland to benefit from opportunities across the Union.

# **Broadband**

Northern Ireland is on course to be the first region in Europe to have 100 per cent fibre broadband availability because of £150 million delivered by DUP MPs. A recent Ofcom report, Connected Nations, found that 91 per cent of all premises in Northern Ireland have access to full-fibre broadband, making it by far the best-connected region within the British Isles.

# **Pensions Triple Lock**

The DUP made the retention of the triple lock on pensions a key pillar of our Confidence and Supply Agreement with the Government in 2017. In the last Parliament, we have continued to stress the importance of this guaranteed protection for pensioners across the United Kingdom.

# Jobs and Growth

DUP MPs have secured significant investment for driving growth, creating jobs and generating prosperity in every corner of Northern Ireland. This included:

- ✓ working with UK Ministers to unlock £350 million from the Government for the Belfast Region City Deal, which will create up to 20,000 new jobs, build new worldclass visitor experiences and support the regeneration of our towns and cities;
- ✓ achieving significant progress toward a Heads of Terms agreement for the Londonderry and Strabane City Deal and the Mid South West and Causeway Coast and Glens Growth deals;
- ✓ £150 million in UK Government funding for creating and underpinning an Enhanced Investment Zone in Northern Ireland, to boost growth and attract investment;
- securing a new £10 million fund to boost investment in strategically important ports linking Northern Ireland and Great Britain.



# Help with Energy Costs and Household Bills

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DUP Parliamentarians ensured all households in Northern Ireland received the Government's £600 energy support payment and benefited from discounted bills under the Energy Price Guarantee. They also supported the 'Essentials Guarantee' campaign launched by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Trussell Trust, which seeks to ensure that, at a minimum, Universal Credit protects people from going without essentials.

# **Stronger Communities**

The DUP team at Westminster has successfully fought for vital funding to strengthen local communities and support those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. This included:

- delivering a £20 million funding package for town centre regeneration in Coleraine and Londonderry;
- securing tens of millions of pounds in Levelling Up funding for local projects, including the redevelopment of Dundonald International Ice Bowl;
- ✓ fighting for, and delivering, £15 million in emergency support from the UK Government to support flood recovery schemes in Northern Ireland;
- successfully lobbying the Development for Levelling Up and Department for Communities to fund and launch a scheme to address Non-ACM (Aluminium Composite Material) cladded buildings in Northern Ireland, post-Grenfell.

# **Better Infrastructure**

DUP MPs secured almost £5 million through the Union Connectivity Review to progress plans for the electrification of the railway from Belfast to the Border and allowing Translink to deliver feasibility studies to:

- o reopen the Antrim-Lisburn railway line, with an additional stop at Belfast International Airport;
- o re-instate the Portadown to Armagh railway line.

They also obtained a Government commitment to improving the connections between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, including through the A75 in Scotland.

# **More for Public Services**

DUP Leader Gavin Robinson was the first MP to campaign for change on how Northern Ireland is funded. It is now accepted that going forward the Treasury's contribution to public services in Northern Ireland must be on the basis of assessed need. The DUP has led where others have followed and we will continue to seek to address the legacy of chronic underfunding across our government departments.

# Levelling Up

The DUP has challenged, and will continue to challenge, the Government to remedy low levels of financial support awarded to projects in Northern Ireland under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and press for a remedy to the lack of a formal appeals process.





# Roll-out of the Armed Forces Covenant

Brave men and women from Northern Ireland make an invaluable contribution to the Armed Forces both at home and abroad. They and their families deserve to be treated fairly and equitably in the provision of key services. In the last term, DUP MPs:

- ✓ supported the Armed Forces Act 2021, delivering on our pledge to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant was legally protected in Northern Ireland as in other parts of the United Kingdom;
- ✓ insisted on the appointment of a Northern Ireland Veterans' Commissioner to act as an independent point of contact for, and support, service families locally.

# **More for Defence**

DUP Leader Gavin Robinson promoted the significant contribution Spirit Aerospace, Thales, Harland and Wolff and other companies in the Aerospace, Defence, Security and Space sectors play in creating high-quality and high-paid jobs in Northern Ireland. He has campaigned to deliver significant Ministry of Defence contracts to help secure their future.

The DUP also secured a Government commitment to launch a review into Northern Ireland's role in the UK defence network. This review will:

- o look to increase public and commercial awareness of the Northern Ireland defence sector;
- develop proposals to ensure Northern Ireland is benefiting from investment in defence industries in the same way as other parts of the UK;
- o explore how to leverage Northern Ireland's cyber security clusters and academic centres of excellence;
- o build on established R&D programmes;



 examine how a steady pipeline of highly-qualified graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics can generate military and security capabilities.

Building on our agreement with the previous Government that the United Kingdom's 2% NATO defence spending target should continue to be met, DUP MPs continued to pursue an upward trajectory in defence expenditure during the last term. The latest NATO figures show that the UK spent an estimated 2.3% of GDP on defence in 2023.







## **Strengthening British Citizenship**

The DUP introduced the British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Bill to ensure people born in the Republic of Ireland who have lived in Northern Ireland or other parts of the United Kingdom for at least five years can claim British citizenship without the need for tests and fees. This legislation was supported by the Government and became law in May 2024.

# Muckamore Abbey Public Inquiry

DUP Leader Gavin Robinson was at the forefront of bringing allegations of abuse and ill-treatment of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital to public attention. The DUP successfully fought for the establishment and commencement of a public inquiry and continues to advocate for increased resources to ensure this work, and the police investigations, continues.

# **Infected Blood Scandal**

The DUP in Parliament has supported calls for comprehensive compensation for the victims of the infected blood scandal. Our MPs signed an Early Day Motion in July 2023, which recognised the government's initial actions in making interim compensation payments and called for urgent further compensation for those affected. When this issue was raised in Parliament, our MPs have ensured that Northern Ireland and its citizens were represented.

# Down's Syndrome given Minority Status

DUP Parliamentarians have been a committed and consistent voice for people with disabilities. One of our MPs co-sponsored the Down Syndrome Act 2022, the world's first piece of legislation recognising people with Down's syndrome as a specific minority group.



## Justice for NI Sub-Postmasters

DUP MPs successfully fought to extend legislation exonerating sub-postmasters wrongly convicted as a result of the Horizon IT scandal to Northern Ireland.

# **Religious Freedom**

DUP MPs have been consistent advocates for freedom of religion or belief both in the United Kingdom and across the globe. They have:

- worked with Open Doors and other nongovernment organisations to throw a spotlight on the persecution of Christians internationally;
- supported the International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill in Parliament;
- endorsed the appointment of a special envoy for freedom of religion and belief;
- ✓ sought additional protections to ensure government procurement takes cognisance of international human rights underpinning freedom of religion.

We will build on this record to ensure that the rights of those of all faiths and none are protected across the United Kingdom.

# **Pro-Life**

DUP MPs continued to adopt an unequivocal and determined pro-life stance in Parliament, opposing the commissioning of, and funding for, abortion services in Northern Ireland. One of our MPs chaired the pro-life All-Party Parliamentary Group.





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# Automated External Defibrillators

A DUP MP brought forward a 10-minute rule motion on Automated External Defibrillators (Public Access) Bill 2022-23 with regards to securing public access defibrillators in schools and new public buildings. This was accepted and implemented by the government with funding attached.

# **GCSE in Sign Language**

DUP MPs supported plans to consult on the introduction of British Sign Language as a GCSE qualification in schools in England, whilst campaigning for similar steps to be considered in Northern Ireland.

# Baby Loss Certificates

DUP MPs worked closely with colleagues in the Assembly to seek the introduction of a Baby Loss Certificate scheme in Northern Ireland on a similar basis to England.



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# Delivering for Northern Ireland in the Assembly

orking together from Westminster, at Stormont and in local government, the DUP has the strength, depth and experience to deliver for communities across Northern Ireland. Since the restoration of devolution in February, DUP Ministers have been to the forefront of delivering results for households, businesses and workers.

# Department for Communities <u>Outcomes Delivered:</u>

- Announced the way forward for a sign language bill, ensuring that deaf people have the same rights and opportunities as those in the hearing community;
- ✓ Help for working families by launching the 'Intermediate Rent' product, where a long-term low interest loan is offered to an operator to develop a new supply of affordable homes for rent at 20% discount off market value;
- Approved the Northern Ireland Football Fund - a £36 million fund of investment into performance clubs, grassroots clubs and a National Training Centre;
- ✓ Introduced legislation for defective premises - a bill introduced by accelerated passage to ensure homeowners in Northern Ireland enjoy the protections offered elsewhere in the UK, as highlighted by the case of Victoria Square apartments;
- Launched a new low interest loan scheme for the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector to develop capital projects to tackle social need, such as the funding of a new 3G pitch for Crusaders;

- ✓ Introduced legislation to keep Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the UK on pensions and reduce the lower age limit for auto enrolment and increasing the amount of qualifying earnings allowing more young people to start saving earlier;
- ✓ Introduced legislation to introduce a Pensions Dashboard - a digital service which will allow individuals to see their pensions information (including State pension) in one place online;
- Progress on an Anti-Poverty and Fuel Poverty Strategy, so that more people are helped into work and that we can drive down poverty in Northern Ireland;
- Introduced legislation for better protections to parents using Child Maintenance Services;
- Progress on a Disability and Work Strategy, ensuring no one who wants to work is prohibited from doing so because of their disability;
- Increased the upper property value limit for Co-Ownership Housing, so that more people can be supported into home ownership;
- Hosted the UK Sports Minister in Northern Ireland to highlight the need that exists in local sport;
- ✓ Allocated additional funding in 2023/24:
  - o £1 million on library books;
  - o £100,000 towards musical instrument grants;
  - o £3 million supporting people programme - helping vulnerable people to live independently.
- Launch of consultation to reduce the threshold for charity registration to reduce bureaucracy and burdens on smaller local charities.





# Department of Education <u>Outcomes</u> <u>Delivered:</u>

- Settled the long-running industrial action by teachers and increased the starting salary for teachers in Northern Ireland to £30,000;
- Resolving the pay and grading review for educational support staff, including classroom assistants;
- Announced the biggest step change to education planning for a generation, with an ambitious and far-reaching programme of investment in facilities for children with special educational needs, which will transform the education and lives of our most vulnerable children and their families;
- Announced an interim £25 million package of measures to support children, parents and providers with early learning and childcare from September;
- Announced an additional £80 million of capital funding for education this year, which will allow fifteen important new build and extension and refurbishment projects for schools from all sectors to proceed to construction, as well as the launch of a new programme of curriculum-led investment;





- Announced a £20 million programme of investment to deliver innovative and community informed approaches to raise achievement and reduce educational disadvantage in Northern Ireland;
- ✓ Defended the right of schools and boards of governors to decide what is best for their learners against some at Stormont who think they know better and want to impose their own ideology on our children;
- Announced a new way forward on how controlled schools are managed by the Education Authority;
- Launched a consultation on improving the affordability of school uniforms;
- ✓ Secured Executive agreement to provide £150 million of earmarked additional funding over the next three years to deliver the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh which will bring together 4,000 children and young people from all community backgrounds on a vibrant and dynamic education campus of world and international renown.

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# **Making Northern Ireland Work**

# 1. Promoting the Union and Removing Barriers within the United Kingdom

The DUP will always work to promote and strengthen the case for the Union between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. In Parliament we also stand ready to work in co-operation with other Unionists.

The Northern Ireland Protocol was imposed over the heads of the people of Northern Ireland and without support from any unionist elected representative.

It wrecked the settled political balance within Northern Ireland and led directly to a loss of unionist confidence. This party voted against the imposition of the NI Protocol in both our national Parliament and the European Parliament but it was passed by Boris Johnson and the Conservative Government following the 2019 General Election.

Equally this Party, whilst recognising some progress had been secured did not support the Windsor Framework, negotiated by Rishi Sunak, and spent a further year in various discussions with the UK Government about what further progress could be achieved. We did this while others simply complained about the problems.

Northern Ireland was cast aside by the so-called Conservative and Unionist Party and some of the greatest harm inflicted on Northern Ireland has been as a consequence of choices made by the Conservative Party; endorsed by our National Parliament.

The truth is that as the leaders of Unionism, we were left to pick up the pieces and make

the difficult decisions as to what is in the best long-term interests of Northern Ireland. We could have complained, but done little else, leaving power in the hands of those who delivered so much harm.

Making NJ Work

Or we could act, in the interests of Northern Ireland, step by step, to right the wrongs.

Following many months of discussions with the Government, it was clear by mid-January that we had to make a judgement as to whether we had secured sufficient progress to allow us to participate in a reestablished Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive following the ending of those talks by the Government.

On balance, we judged that it was right to return to Stormont in the interests of seeing local decisions being made for the benefit of all our citizens. Even in the first 100 days, our Ministers have played a key role in providing leadership and taking decisions that have benefitted everyone - from childcare to grassroots football provision decisions that would not have been taken by direct rule Conservative Ministers.

We returned on the basis of the roadmap set out in the Government's Command Paper. That paper did not secure all of our negotiating objectives and did not remedy a number of the long-term problems born out of the Protocol. It did however contain some important gains which were worthy of banking.

These included amongst other things;

- Parliament legislating to ensure mutual recognition of standards on goods, through a goods guarantee throughout the United Kingdom;
- ✓ the creation of the new U.K East-West Council which is a new forum, bringing together all four nations of the United Kingdom, to meet to work together







and identify opportunities for greater connections between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in areas such as trade, transport, education and culture;

- ✓ the establishment of Intertrade UK, a new body to promote trade within the United Kingdom and to provide advice and facilitate businesses across the UK, boosting internal trade, and to promote the full extent of the UK's market to businesses and traders;
- ✓ an Independent Monitoring Panel to provide oversight of the workings of new arrangements and to ensure the Government and other public bodies are held to account for delivering in a pragmatic way;

- ✓ a strengthened independent review of the Windsor Framework underpinned by a statutory duty to initiate a review later this year in circumstances where current arrangements do not command cross-community support in the Assembly;
- a commitment from the Government on the continued supply of veterinary medicines in Northern Ireland beyond 2025;

Whilst progress was made, grounded in principle, there is more still to do.

Our clear message going forward is that we are campaigning to send a strong message to a new Government, whether Labour or Conservative, that building on the progress to date, we will continue to fight to fully





restore Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom, including removing the application of EU law in our country and the internal Irish Sea Border it creates.

We will continue to argue the case for the full primacy of the United Kingdom internal market and we will continue to reject the undermining of its integrity.

The Stormont Brake mechanism was not part of the original Protocol and the fact that local Members of the Assembly now have this mechanism is because the DUP pushed for it and secured it. We will use it to full effect in the pursuit of our overall objective.

In October, as part of the NI Assembly vote on the current arrangements, we will not hesitate to vote against their continued application and, drawing upon the new mechanisms at our disposal, we will continue our quest through the inbuilt review.

#### Delivering Confidence-Building Measures for Unionist Communities across Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Protocol has acutely impacted confidence in unionist and loyalist communities and the DUP is committed to securing a practical and ongoing demonstration from future UK Governments of their commitment to both promoting and developing British culture, heritage and traditions in Northern Ireland.

The DUP recognises the need to support communities that tend to be less able to avail of other funding opportunities and where a lack of capacity, networks and confidence restricts the ability to secure funding, particularly in rural areas, but also in urban communities that have felt left behind over recent years. We want to assist and develop support for projects that enhance community capacity generally, as well as seeing delivery on long standing commitments for projects of cultural significance.

DUP MPs will work with the next Government to build on preparatory work completed to date and deliver a long-term programme to support communities.

#### **Strengthening Trust in Politics**

#### Donations

Political donations in Northern Ireland should be subject to the same regime as the rest of the United Kingdom. In particular, the foreign donation loophole must be closed which sees Northern Ireland stand alone in the British Isles as the only place where foreign donations of money can influence politics.

#### House of Lords Reform

The DUP remains committed to reform of the House of Lords. We believe it should be a smaller chamber, with a majority of its membership elected. The distribution of seats should strengthen representation for the devolved regions. Any reform of the Upper Chamber should respect the primacy of the House of Commons in our parliamentary democracy. DUP MPs will also seek to ensure practices in a reformed Lords reflect, and balance, both the values and traditions of communities from which its membership is drawn.

#### Sinn Fein Allowances

The DUP remains committed to urging both the Government and Commons authorities to end the obscenity of Sinn Fein's abstentionist MPs receiving expenses and allowances despite not attending Parliament.





## 2. Putting You First -Delivering Fair and Equitable Funding for our NHS, and other Public Services

The DUP believes underfunding has systematically destroyed Northern Ireland's capacity to provide frontline services that are fit for the 21st century.

Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of public sector workers in the United Kingdom. Only Scotland's population is more dispersed. Yet when it comes to distributing money under the Barnett Formula, Northern Ireland receives less than it needs to match public services in England. That means money for health reform and pay awards simply does not go far enough. It means the money to repair our roads and increase school budgets does not exist. Meanwhile Scotland continues to receive more than it needs and Wales benefits from the protection of a funding floor. The Democratic Unionist Party has led the charge for a new needs-based funding model for Northern Ireland. Our campaign is now mainstream and the Government has been forced to accept a new definition of need going forward. However, fundamental problems remain unresolved.

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While the other parties welcomed the financial package presented by the Government on the return of devolution earlier this year, the DUP made it clear that what was offered fell well short of what was required to put our public finances on a stable footing.

The failure to baseline the new formula from the CSR period in 2022, will lead to a further cliff edge in just two years' time. At that point funding levels will again drop below what is required to fairly and sustainably fund services on a comparable basis to those in England – and potentially stay there for decades.

The DUP believes this situation is unacceptable. It will only be avoided by reaching agreement on a new, responsible, long-term fiscal framework that equitably funds our public services.





In the next Parliament, DUP MPs will press the next Government to ensure that funding cannot drop below the definition of assessed need in NI - £124 for every £100 spent in England.

We will also campaign for Northern Ireland's baseline funding to be increased proportionately by the same amount above need as the Government applied to Wales with a new needs-based factor and 5% transitional uplift. Collectively this will be worth hundreds of millions of pounds in additional resources for our government departments every year moving forward.

#### **Building a Better Health Service**

The DUP believes our National Health Service is the jewel in the crown of the Union and must be prioritised throughout the United Kingdom.

In the last term, DUP MPs have sought to improve access for patients in Northern Ireland to NHS services and treatments available in other parts of the United Kingdom. This included pursuing greater access for women seeking surgery for endometriosis, campaigning on rare diseases and ensuring Cystic Fibrosis sufferers have access to wonder drug Orkambi.

We have also recognised the need to end disparities between arrangements benefiting health staff working in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. This is essential for the delivery of primary care in particular, for skills retention, as well as for wider reforms of health and social care.

Going forward, DUP MPs will campaign to:

- drive waiting lists down fostering large-scale partnerships between health and social care in NI and national independent providers or not-for-profit organisations;
- provide fellowships for young GPs in substantive posts;
- commission a practitioner health scheme;
- provide a permanent state-backed scheme for indemnity for GPs;





- ensure a fair and equitable approach to pensions and residence for qualified GPs seeking to live and work in the United Kingdom;
- establish clusters of universities, business and clinicians throughout the UK to harness and accelerate the use of new medical technology and diagnostics;
- support accessible and portable health information throughout a patient's life;
- ✓ tackle the harm caused by smoking and vaping, including through exploring alternative options such as raising the age of sale to 21. Any restriction of the right of adults to make choices must always be justified.

We have been committed to improving care and support for those with a terminal illness. Two of our MPs, Party Leader Gavin Robinson and Carla Lockhart, are members of the Dying Well APPG. They have:

- supported a change in the law to allow those with a life expectancy of up to 12 months to get faster and easier access to certain benefits and pensions;
- promoted better quality and better access to palliative care so people across the United Kingdom can have a valued end-of-life experience.

The DUP will continue to press for enhanced provision for families affected by terminal diagnoses. We will also firmly oppose efforts to legalise assisted suicide.

#### **Public Sector Pay**

The DUP is alarmed that pay awards for public sector staff have not kept pace with other parts of the United Kingdom. This is another symptom of chronic underfunding of our public services from Westminster. Our nurses, doctors, police officers and teachers deserve to receive fair pay and conditions for the vital work that they do. It is wrong that too many of our best public servants are now employed by agencies rather than the public sector. DUP MPs will:

- engage in discussions with the UK Government about public sector pay across the UK, including as part of a new fiscal framework for Northern Ireland;
- campaign for recurrent funding to provide decent pay awards;
- support strategies to improve occupational support and attract, recruit, train and retain frontline staff;

#### **Civil Service Reform**

The DUP values the work and contribution of our dedicated civil servants. However, we feel that a lack of requisite skills, expertise and senior leadership in the Northern Ireland Civil Service has contributed significantly to the lack of progress in delivering key infrastructure projects in Northern Ireland, such as the York Street Interchange and the A5, in recent years.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service is different to its counterparts in Scotland and Wales. Whereas the civil service in Scotland and Wales remain part of the UK Home Civil Service, NICS Civil Service is a standalone body and as a result has been unable, and at times unwilling, to benefit from economies of scale in terms of skills present in the public sector in Great Britain.

We sought to tackle this during our negotiations with the Government. The Safeguarding the Union command paper sets out a programme for skills exchange between the NICS and the UK Home Civil Service. Encouraging those secondments and movement across all parts of the UK will boost capacity and help bring specific expertise to projects where necessary.

The DUP will seek the faithful implementation of these schemes, the expansion of short-term placements and the recruitment of more external experts to achieve better outcomes within our civil service. Northern Ireland is well placed to benefit from greater integration with the Home Civil Service.





# **3. Campaigning to Protect Family Incomes**

As the cost-of-living crisis continues to place new and significant pressures on household budgets, the DUP is clear that Government should do more to protect incomes, ensure taxation is fair, with more remaining in the pockets of working people, and ensuring that wages are able to lift more people out of poverty.

DUP MPs will campaign to:

- oppose the freeze on the personal tax allowance and higher rate income tax threshold;
- seek further reductions in national insurance, building on consecutive cuts in the last Parliament;
- support an increase in the starting age for employee national insurance;
- encourage the Government to explore the merits of moving to single tax on all income, replacing income tax and national insurance;
- support the uprating of benefits in line with inflation;
- continue to support rises to the national living wage;
- maintain the national minimum wage above two-thirds of median income;
- ✓ freeze Vehicle Excise Duty and look to better link future rates to road use;
- ✓ abolish VAT on domestic electricity bills;
- ✓ maintain the freeze on fuel duty;
- tackle the soaring cost of motor insurance by:
  - opposing any increase in Insurance Premium Tax;
  - supporting a UK-wide investigation into fairness of insurance industry practices - to include reviewing the role of Financial Conduct Authority.

#### Easing the Burden on Families

The DUP continues to stand on the side of families across Northern Ireland, many of whom are feeling the squeeze as a result of high childcare bills and soaring costs for basic goods such as food and utilities.

DUP MPs:

- ✓ supported legislation which would see the thresholds for child benefit be determined by household income instead of individual income. This helped force the Government into increasing the point at which this benefit begins to be clawed back, bringing relief to working families.
- ✓ campaigned for an increase in the Tax-Free Childcare Allowance;
- proposed scrapping VAT on school uniforms;

In the next Parliament, we will support proposals to:

- ✓ increase the Tax-Free Childcare allowance from 20% to 35%;
- remove the cap on Tax Free Childcare (TFC) above £2,000;
- ✓ implement an 'Essential Guarantee' in Universal Credit, ensuring the standard allowance cannot reduce below a legal minimum amount required to afford basic essentials;
- remove the two-child limit on Universal Credit for 3-and 4-child households;
- ✓ scrap VAT on school uniforms;
- ✓ apply the High-Income Child Benefit charge on the basis of household, rather than individual, income.

#### **Childcare for Working Parents**

The lack of access to affordable, flexible and high-quality childcare has a negative impact on employment and recruitment and retention of staff in frontline services in particular. In many cases, parents are





working reduced or condensed hours, or not all, in order to meet childcare needs, due to cost and availability of alternative provision. For this reason, the DUP Education Minister Paul Givan MLA has announced a fresh package of measures worth £25 million designed to:

- stabilise and support expansion of the early learning and childcare sector;
- ✓ offer all children 22.5 hours pre-school education per week, and;
- reduce childcare bills for working parents through a Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme.

At this election, DUP candidates are supporting the need for flexible childcare work policies that are co-designed with parents, teachers and employers. If elected, they will:

- work with employers and HMRC to incentivise the Workplace Nursery Model in NI, including through removing unnecessary complexity;
- promote access to capital grants for businesses and employers seeking to establish workplace nursery sites.

#### Pensions

The DUP believes the next government should be in the business of helping people to plan for, and secure, a good income in retirement. Importantly that means encouraging saving, developing a culture of saving, and also enabling employees to get more value out of their pension pots.

The DUP has consistently opposed attempts to dismantle or dilute the triple lock on pensions. Our MPs have also been to the forefront of the campaign for redress by thousands of WASPI women in Northern Ireland who were mistreated by the Department of Work and Pensions in relation to changes to the State Pension Age. This has included being incredibly vocal on the need for government to urgently progress a scheme for compensation.



Going forward, we will:

- act to support the Triple Lock on state pensions;
- support the personal allowance for pensioners always being above the amount of the state pension;
- oppose any further rise in the state pension age;
- support a review of auto-enrolment, whilst ensuring no additional costs for business;
- campaign to ensure Northern Ireland receives necessary funding to address age discrimination identified in the McCloud judgement relating to changes to public service pensions;
- continue to seek suitable compensation and fair transitional State Pension arrangements for women born in the 1950s;





 support small business owners to fund their retirement by retaining Business Asset Disposal Relief and keeping the value of relief in line with increases to the standard lifetime allowance for pensions.

#### A Brighter Future for our Young People

The DUP is committed to ensuring our children and young people not only have the best start in life but the opportunities required to fulfil their potential and play a full part in our society.

DUP MPs will campaign to:

- ✓ deliver increased economic and educational opportunities for young people by building relationships across the United Kingdom, including through the U.K East-West Council;
- promote a joined-up approach to educational under-achievement across our four nations, with a focus on adult numeracy;
- ✓ reduce disparities in support between under-20s who undertake apprenticeships and those in this age group who remain in school or education, including through retaining child benefit or subsidising travel costs;



- reintroduce financial incentives for businesses that hire young apprentices at risk of long-term unemployment;
- promote apprenticeships as part of a strategy for supporting young people leaving care;
- seek to address the soaring cost of motor insurance for young people, including through exploring the potential for measures such as:
  - graduated driving licences;
  - a restriction on the number of young passengers;
  - a lower blood alcohol limit for young drivers.

#### Licence Fee

In the last four years, the DUP has fought for a fairer deal for BBC licence feepayers. This included:

- o opposing hikes in the BBC licence fee;
- o pursuing more transparency in the commissioning process and recruitment of staff;
- challenging the award of salaries to political commentators masquerading as TV presenters;

As media consumption patterns change, most people spend less time on traditional channels and consume more media online via phones and tablets. The people who in the main depend more on the traditional channels are older people. Yet this is the group the BBC has betrayed by scrapping free licence fees for over 75s. We will campaign to reverse this.

We will continue to seek the abolition of the BBC licence fee and the creation of a successful subscription-based service to replace it. In the interim, the licence should be frozen, then cut.





# 4. Unleashing our Full Economic Potential

The Democratic Unionist Party has been, and remains, committed to growing the Northern Ireland economy. We want to see an ambitious approach taken toward creating more and better jobs, which in turn will lead to greater prosperity for all of our people.

Between 2007 and 2021, the DUP has helped create 50,000 jobs and ensure we punched well above our weight within the UK in terms of securing record levels of investment.

In the last five years alone, we have unlocked more funding for City and Growth deals, attracted major defence contracts to our shores and scaled up efforts to make Northern Ireland a hub within the United Kingdom for advanced and low-carbon manufacturing as well as a global leader in hydrogen technology and production. However, this is not the limit of our ambitions.

#### Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The DUP values the diverse mix of SMEs across all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy. We want to increase the number of SMEs established, growing and competing globally as part of our vision to make Northern Ireland one of the elite, small and open economies in the world. However, if this is to be achieved, and if we are to help them to reach their full potential, we must first address the challenges that are threatening the survival of many of these businesses.

DUP MPs will campaign to:

- ✓ increase the VAT threshold for SMEs to £100,000 and then uprate it in line with inflation;
- drive up the number of SMEs benefiting from government procurement spend, tax reliefs and business support;

- protect cash flow for SMEs by tackling late payments to small suppliers as part of government contracts;
- ensure national insurance liability for small businesses is fair - the Employment Allowance should be uprated in line with increases to the national living wage;
- promote greater awareness of capital allowances and R&D reliefs among local businesses;
- ✓ seek to reduce retail crime by creating a standalone offence for assaults on staff.

#### Regulation of Online Marketplaces

It is wrong that that online giants and marketplaces can undercut shops on our high streets, who often pay more in rates than those online retailers pay in taxes. The DUP believes there should be a step change in how government regulates this area, particularly given that working families have been expected to lose more of their income in taxes than previous generations.

We will:

- explore the potential introduction of an online sales tax targeting online corporates and marketplaces;
- support robust efforts to crack down on global tax evading corporations.

#### VAT

The DUP wants to see the Value Added Tax system better utilised to incentivise investments that promote improved productivity through low-carbon and green technologies. We will also continue to campaign for a reduction in VAT for hospitality across the United Kingdom in order to address the comparative disadvantage facing local businesses as a result of a reduced rate in the Irish Republic.





#### **Research and Development**

It is clear that the United Kingdom's national target for research and development has lacked ambition. Statistics indicate that the official target of 2.4% of GDP by 2027 has already been exceeded, yet R&D intensity lags well behind that achieved in other leading nations, including Germany and the United States. That should change.

DUP MPs would back proposals to:

- ✓ increase the official target for UK Research & Development spend to at least 3.0% of GDP by 2027 and to a G7leading intensity by 2030;
- support long-term ambitious innovation programmes benefiting all parts of the UK;
- expand UK Research & Development tax relief for small and medium sized enterprises to include capital expenditure;
- review how Innovate UK grants are administered to increase opportunities for local input and take account of the needs of industry and institutions here;
- ✓ require universities to provide up-front clarity on Intellectual Property ownership before conducting joint R&D activity with businesses and students.

#### **Boosting Trade and Exports**

At the last election, the DUP set out a clear vision to better incorporate Northern Ireland's export potential into it's trade ambitions by employing more staff, greater advertising and ramping up the number of trade missions to benefit local firms and producers. Progress has been achieved in this with Invest NI's global footprint expanded with the support of UK Government funding and more trade advisers recruited. We want to see the next Government go even further.

In particular, we will:

 support the development a new UK export strategy with a specific trade plan for NI;

- seek government funding to help expand NI's trade presence across the world, including through recruitment of more staff;
- make support by trade advisors locally more accessible and tailored to the ambitions of those seeking to export goods and services outside of the UK;
- seek to provide export vouchers to help firms with the costs of exporting to a new market for the first time or for travel to international trade shows in new or emerging markets;
- ✓ aim to strengthen links between the Department for Business and Trade and Invest NI to grow export sales, including consideration of a more visible presence in NI;
- pursue an increase in the level of digital exports;
- work toward the implementation of a Single Trade Window for imports and exports;
- seek to ensure Northern Ireland's interests, export potential, and the barriers facing traders locally, are reflected by the Government in the review of the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement in 2026;
- ✓ aim to review the monitoring and evaluation framework used by the Department for Business and Trade to monitor its export promotion activities;
- pursue further discussions with the Government on extending the benefits of the freeports programme to Northern Ireland.

#### **Advanced Manufacturing**

The DUP is focused on unleashing the potential of emerging economic sectors that are best placed to add value to the Northern Ireland economy. We will consolidate Northern Ireland's place as a global destination for investment within the United Kingdom. Advanced manufacturing







and engineering are among the most productive local sectors, with job creation and survival rates for new firms higher than those in the wider economy.

DUP MPs will press for a new national industrial strategy in which advanced manufacturing and other thriving sectors, including digital, agri-tech, life and health sciences and fintech - are prioritised through effective support, fair regulation and have the certainty to plan, expand and innovate. We will also press the Government to retain the Full Expensing rules for capital investment.

#### Hydrogen

Northern Ireland is fast emerging as an innovator in hydrogen technology. Many recognise that Northern Ireland is leading the world in terms of hydrogen usage in the transport sector. Companies such as Wrightbus are developing cutting-edge technologies which are revolutionising whole sectors. Indeed, it is estimated that it could in time meet approximately one-third of local energy needs. The DUP has consulted key stakeholders to develop a Hydrogen Growth Strategy and we will continue to seize, exploit and maximise economic and social opportunities associated with hydrogen. Our Province boasts a comparative advantage in this field because of our location and open coastlines, which present scope for off-shore wind technology and generation.

There is also an established, and growing, presence of local academia and entrepreneurs across Northern Ireland.

We will:

- seek a dedicated Hydrogen Innovation Strategy;
- support investing in skills via a new dedicated green hydrogen apprenticeship programme;
- ✓ open discussions with the UK Government to consider funding streams and incentives for SME innovation in the hydrogen sector.







#### Skills

The DUP believes that a failure to invest in, and strengthen, Northern Ireland's skills base holds our economy back and represents missed opportunities to create jobs and lift more people out of poverty. We are committed to putting into action strategies which adopt a sustainable and sustained approach to identifying and meeting skills shortages in key and emerging sectors of our economy and throughout public services.

DUP MPs will:

- ✓ support the establishment of an Independent UK Skills Commission with representation for Northern Ireland and the other devolved regions. This body would be tasked with assessing our current and future labour needs, with a remit to scrutinise policy and decisions taken at national and devolved level;
- ✓ press the next Government to use the tax system to incentivise businesses to upskill and re-skill employees in skills shortage areas.

#### **Apprenticeships**

The DUP remains committed to replacing the Apprenticeship Levy with a new system that ensures ringfenced contributions by employers and government are reinvested in skills. DUP Economy Ministers led on an Apprenticeship Recovery Package during the Covid period to minimise apprenticeship job losses, maintain and grow the supply of apprenticeships.

Any new training levy must be co-designed with the private sector and deliver opportunities for businesses to attract and upskill their workforce irrespective of sector or size. It must also be flexible as our economy pivots toward green growth and other exciting fast-growing industries. The quality of apprenticeship training in Northern Ireland is already extraordinarily high and that is testament to those delivering these schemes day in day out.

However, our apprenticeships and skills offering needs to evolve and keep pace with demand for skills both across industry and in frontline services.



In driving this forward, DUP MPs will seek to:

- deliver more all-age, public sector and SME-led apprenticeships;
- ensure funding arrangements enable those undertaking apprenticeships to work anywhere in the United Kingdom;
- ✓ promote a consistent approach to the design of the curriculum for apprenticeships across the UK, ensuring employers of all sizes are equipped to deliver this training;
- increase female representation in STEM apprenticeships;
- continue to explore the potential introduction of a Nursing Higher Level Apprenticeship Framework;
- ensure the drive to expand apprenticeships is part of a joined-up approach to careers advice.

#### **Access to Labour**

The DUP welcomes the fact those coming from the EU and the rest of the world to work in Northern Ireland are now treated on the same basis. However, the current system of work visas has proven ineffective in responding to the pressing needs of businesses and employers across the United Kingdom.

There are particular concerns in Northern Ireland about labour shortages in key industries such as agri-food and hospitality, whilst for many smaller businesses the costs of accessing the system have effectively cut off this route to meeting the growth needs of their company.

We will promote a more agile and responsive migration system.

DUP MPs will seek:

✓ a review of the structure and operation of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC). This should include consideration of formal representation from the devolved regions and how a reformed MAC could work in partnership with a new Independent Skills Commission to map and meet labour shortages across the UK;

- ✓ progress on the recommendations of the Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain, including ensuring Northern Ireland benefits from a new comprehensive strategy to enhance the sector's attractiveness;
- ✓ to ensure fair minimum salary thresholds for skilled overseas workers to protect food production, manufacturing, hospitality and the provision of health and social care. The current threshold is £38,700, well above the average salary in NI;
- a multi-year rolling seasonal workers scheme for agriculture with a suitable length visa;
- ✓ to make it easier for international students qualifying in primary care roles, such as GPs, to gain permanent residence - ensuring our Health Service can realise the full benefit of increasing the number of training places.

#### **Access to Finance**

The DUP recognises that many businesses are struggling to keep their heads above water because of increasing costs and higher interest rates. We believe banks and financial institutions need to do more to support their customers in these challenging times. This is particularly the case for those in the agri-food chain, who are facing spiralling input costs coupled with slim price margins, and SMEs, who are often dissuaded from borrowing by the need to put up significant personal guarantees.

DUP MPs will support:

- the extension of the Growth Guarantee Scheme, providing a 70% guarantee to participating lenders on finance provided to SMEs, for the duration of the next Parliament;
- encouraging banks and lenders to provide additional low-cost finance options for firms across the UK;





- a review of small business lending, with an emphasis on assessing the impact of unnecessary personal guarantees on investment by SMEs;
- ✓ bringing more small businesses under the scope of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) consumer duty and Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS).

#### **Banking Hubs**

Recent years have seen a large number of bank branches closing in towns and villages across Northern Ireland, indeed across the whole of the United Kingdom. This impacts older people, the vulnerable and those living in rural areas, where banks have been a visible part of the social fabric.

The DUP supports protecting access to cash and other banking services for those who are less likely to use online services, as well as the businesses and high streets impacted by decreased footfall. That should include the provision of an ATM or cash point in each of our towns and villages.



Northern Ireland's first banking hub has been established in Kilkeel. It is a shared service that operates in a similar way to a standard branch, with a counter service run by Post Office staff where customers of almost any bank can withdraw and pay in cash, pay bills and carry out regular transactions.

The DUP will:

- work with banks to establish more banking hubs on our high streets and town centres;
- campaign to ensure government and financial institutions fund a scheme covering establishment costs for banking hubs;
- support continuity of local branch services while an alternative model is in place.

#### Debanking

The DUP will support tighter rules to protect businesses and consumers from having their bank account frozen and closed unfairly. There should be a substantive notice period before accounts can be closed and a requirement for banks to provide clear explanations for what they have chosen to do. Nobody should have their bank account closed because of their political views or because somebody else decides they are not politically correct.

#### Insurance

The recent spikes in home and car insurance premiums have not just affected families. Businesses are deeply frustrated that insurance companies continue to generate huge profits, while they face increasing pressures on all fronts. The DUP will look to increase transparency in how insurance products are advertised, so businesses and consumers can make informed decisions. We will also support a market review into professional indemnity insurance (PII).





#### **Artificial Intelligence**

The DUP wants to see the United Kingdom harness the potential of Artificial Intelligence and smart data to build stronger communities and drive economic growth. However just as Al brings many benefits, it also carries significant risk. We will oppose plans to allow AI developers to use existing music, literature and works of art without permission or payment and disregarding copyright laws.

DUP MPs will also seek more robust, but proportionate, regulation of data and emerging technologies in order to crack down on abuse, harmful practices such deepfakes and efforts to undermine democracy through misinformation and disinformation.

#### Workers' Rights

We have already shown our support for public sector staff by leading the charge for changes to Northern Ireland's funding model so their needs in terms of fair pay can be met. In the Assembly we delivered a statutory entitlement for parental bereavement leave in the last mandate as well as a commitment to see that urgently extended to support those who sadly experience miscarriage.

In the last Parliament, new employment protections were enacted in Great Britain, including:

- new legal rights for parents of children requiring neonatal care;
- the right to unpaid leave for employees with caring responsibilities;
- ✓ protection for workers who receive tips;
- ✓ increased rights for employees on or recently returned, from family leave in a redundancy situation.

These developments leave disparities for staff in Northern Ireland which ought to be remedied.



#### **Corporation Tax**

In our 2022 Assembly Election manifesto, the DUP argued that the necessary capacity did not exist in the contemporary context of Northern Ireland to devolve additional fiscal powers. That remains our position at this time.

Lowering the rate of corporation tax in Northern Ireland has been a longstanding DUP policy. This would boost Northern Ireland as an attractive investment opportunity, building on the strength, skill and ingenuity of our workforce. The minimum effective 15% rate in the Irish Republic places firms in Northern Ireland at a competitive disadvantage and we want to see this addressed. We continue to advocate for a reduction in corporate tax across the United Kingdom and DUP MPs opposed the increase in the main UK corporation tax rate from 19% to 25% in 2023.

The DUP believes there are a number of fundamental issues that require resolution with the Treasury before the powers to vary corporation tax rates - which are already provided for in law - can be enacted. We are clear that progress must be based on solid foundations. That means ensuring a process of implementation that protects spending on public services in the short to medium-term.





# 5. A Strategic Role for UK Defence and Security

The Democratic Unionist Party believes that now more than ever there is a need to strengthen the United Kingdom's defence industrial base and grow our Armed Forces. Putin's abhorrent invasion of Ukraine and the proliferation of cyber threats from China, Iran and North Korea has demonstrated the importance of the UK being equipped with the military and intelligence capabilities to protect our national interests.

Without a vision to deter and respond to residual threats posed by those intent on undermining our democratic institutions and harming our citizens, we believe the UK's role in a volatile and fast-changing global landscape will become increasingly precarious. The multi-faceted and everevolving nature of the challenges we face requires a constant appraisal of our Armed Forces and intelligence agencies to ensure they are not only fighting-fit but equipped with the right skillsets to respond in an agile and decisive fashion irrespective of the threat facing them.

DUP MPs will pursue the greater integration of Northern Ireland into our national defence structures, networks and operations. This is in keeping with the principle of consent and the Belfast Agreement. We support calls for the UK to use an increased RAF and Royal Navy presence in Northern Ireland to fortify its northwestern naval and air patrol presence. This can act as a deterrent to attempts by Russia to target western critical undersea infrastructure around the UK, a threat which the Republic of Ireland also faces.

#### **Defence Spending**

The stakes are too high to view defence expenditure as a burden, rather than a benefit. It needs to increase immediately to meet the challenges posed to liberty and democracy by state actors and terrorism. The DUP believes the UK should commit to spending 3.0% of GDP on defence by 2035.

#### NATO

The United Kingdom has rightly made an unshakeable commitment to NATO and we support continued cooperation with key strategic partners in protecting our national interests and practically supporting the cause of freedom abroad, including in Ukraine. However, we are also clear that as a country we need to be able to stand on our own feet and retain the sovereign strategic and operational independence to act decisively to preserve the security of our borders and communities.

#### **NI Defence Industries**

The aerospace, defence, security, and space sectors in Northern Ireland continue to thrive, employing 9,000 people and providing over 500 apprenticeships for people across Northern Ireland.

In evidence to a recent inquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the Ministry of Defence stated that its strategic suppliers in Northern Ireland include: -

- Cooneen Defence which provides combat uniform and occupational clothing to the armed forces.
- ✓ Harland & Wolff part of Team Resolute (a UK consortium consisting of Navantia, Harland & Wolff and BMT). They have been awarded the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship programme. This will deliver a class of three solid store vessels for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, delivering more than 1,200 new UK shipyard jobs across Harland & Wolff's Belfast, Appledore and other sites.
- ✓ Spirit AeroSystems which manufactures aerostructures for defence platforms and have expertise in advanced composite manufacturing solutions. They are designing and developing the Royal Air Force's Lightweight Affordable Novel Combat Aircraft (LANCA) while also collaborating on Team Tempest to deliver the UK's Future Combat Air System (FCAS).





✓ Thales - the firm employs more than 500 people across the defence and space sectors. Thales's Northern Ireland site specifically produces the Next generation Light Anti-tank Weapons (NLAWs), along with the STARStreak and Lightweight Multi role Missile (LMM) which have been central to the UK's support to Ukraine.

Belfast is also home to the global Space Electric Propulsion Integration Centre, a joint venture between Thales and Thales Alenia Space.

Despite these successes, there is still untapped potential to grow the ADS industry and unlock further economic opportunity for those living and working in our communities.

Since 2019, DUP MPs have pressed the Ministry of Defence to address historically and disproportionately low levels of spend from its procurement budget in Northern Ireland. Although this work is starting to pay dividends, in 2022/23, MOD expenditure per person with UK industry was still only £100 in Northern Ireland compared to a regional average of £380 in Scotland and England, and £250 in Wales. There is much more that can be achieved.

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DUP MPs will:

- work to increase the number of major MoD contracts placed in Northern Ireland;
- encourage MoD support for the creation of an official defence and security cluster in Northern Ireland, similar to the South West Regional Defence and Security Cluster;
- promote the creation of more highquality, well-paid and secure jobs in the ADS sector;
- ✓ advocate for the MoD to address low levels of investment in defence SMEs in NI - they received just 0.15% of such spend in 2022/23;
- ✓ press for regional breakdowns of indirect expenditure on local defence SMEs;
- promote a greater understanding of NI defence industries and regional supply chains within MoD and wider government;





- pursue specific targets for defence spend in Northern Ireland;
- propose a small grants scheme for local businesses attending meet-the-buyer events in GB;
- ensure the next Government expedites a review into public and commercial awareness of the Northern Ireland defence sector;
- ensure future skills policies prioritise a steady pipeline of apprenticeships and highly-qualified graduates in STEM subjects in order to generate military and security capabilities;
- support outreach, and formal links, between NI's defence community and schools, particularly in deprived and hard to reach areas;
- press for the appointment of Export Advocates for all ADS' sectors, building upon the Defence Export Advocate model;
- seek to reduce barriers to defence and security export growth by reviewing UK's export promotion and licensing functions.

#### Nuclear

The DUP will support increased spending to safeguard the UK's nuclear deterrent. We want to ensure that Northern Ireland's industrial and manufacturing base can benefit from the economic opportunities provided by major investment in the readiness of our nuclear forces over the next decade.

#### Armed Force and Veterans

In the last Parliament, the DUP was a relentless advocate for veterans and those from Northern Ireland who bravely and proudly serve in our Armed Forces. The full roll-out of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland and the appointment of a Veterans Commissioner were testament to this work, however we recognise that there is still much to do to ensure service families can gain access to support and have a full stake in our society.

#### DUP MPs will:

- explore the potential expansion of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty to include employment, pensions, social care and criminal justice;
- promote a UK-wide memorandum of understanding on access to public services, and bespoke support, for service children with special educational needs;
- call on the government to consider disregarding War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme as income from benefits and pensions;
- ✓ continue to call on the Government to ensure that all Afghan citizens who risked their lives to assist our Armed Forces against the Taliban are urgently resettled in the UK and do not face deportation while seeking asylum.

#### Northern Ireland-Related Terrorism

In Northern Ireland, there is an enduring threat posed by dissident republicans and the repugnant and lifechanging attack on DCI John Caldwell underlines the need for a sustained, laser-sharp focus on rooting out those still intent on perpetrating murder and bloodshed on our streets. We welcome the role played by the national intelligence community in helping to erode the capabilities of splinter groups like the New IRA and to take prominent terrorists out of circulation.

Our security forces should have at their disposal the powers and autonomy required to defeat these groups. The DUP will advocate for an uplift in funding provided by the Government for additional security needs in Northern Ireland. We also want to address lengthy delays trying terrorism cases in our courts, whilst bringing sentencing for serious offences into line with higher tariffs elsewhere in the United Kingdom.





It is unacceptable that terrorist defendants should be given different sentences depending on whether they are arrested and prosecuted in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. The DUP supports enshrining a presumption that there should be consistency of sentencing principles for such cases throughout the United Kingdom. This should be delivered through the creation of a sentencing guidelines body akin to those established in Scotland, and in England and Wales, to ensure the ongoing injustice of shorter sentences being imposed for terrorism offences in Northern Ireland is addressed.

#### Foreign Development Aid

The DUP wants to see the United Kingdom consolidate its position as one of the world's most generous donors of foreign aid. We will achieve this by urging the next Government to:

- restore the UK foreign aid budget to 0.7% of gross national income (GNI);
- ✓ spend a higher proportion of the foreign aid budget on bilateral aid and humanitarian assistance - more than a quarter was spent inside the UK in 2023;
- review the number and profile of countries currently in receipt of UK aid;
- target more support toward poorer nations.

#### Immigration

The DUP supported an end to the free movement of people from European countries in the last Parliament. We remain committed to the aims of a firm, fair and controlled immigration system where the rules for those seeking to come to the United Kingdom are governed solely by our national parliament and are equally and fully applicable in all parts of the United Kingdom.

The courts have ruled that Government's policy on sending illegal migrants to Rwanda cannot extend to Northern Ireland



because of Article 2 of the Protocol. That risks making Northern Ireland a magnet for asylum seekers seeking to escape enforcement.

DUP MPs will:

- ✓ fight to ensure national immigration and asylum policy applies equally across the United Kingdom by restoring Parliamentary sovereignty over the law in Northern Ireland;
- support an approach that allows those fleeing war or persecution to find refuge in the United Kingdom, underpinned by:
  - renewed efforts to smash and deter crime gangs who profit from illegal and unsafe transports across the Channel;
  - a recognition that our neighbours and allies must do their fair share;
  - speedier and more efficient processes for dealing with asylum claims;
  - reviewing the impact of the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts on housing need and public services in all UK regions.





# 6. Backing our Farmers and Food Security

The DUP recognises that farms and our rural communities are an integral part of the social and economic fabric of Northern Ireland. We know that the challenges facing primary producers can, at times, take their toll on farm families, negatively impacting their health and wellbeing. DUP MPs will fight to ensure they receive the right support, and the proper recognition, going forward.

#### **Direct Farm Support**

In the last term, the DUP team at Westminster secured a guarantee from the Government that the level of annual support provided for direct farm payments would be maintained at pre-2020 levels for the duration of the Parliament. We are committed to standing up for farmers and their businesses once again.

DUP MPs will:

- ✓ seek an increased, ring-fenced and multiannual farm support and development budget. This must, at a minimum, ensure that the annual level of funding provided by the Treasury is increased to match the impact of inflation - both in the period since 2020 and on an ongoing basis;
- ✓ highlight the need for long-term, inflation-proof financial commitments to agriculture - including beyond a single parliamentary mandate - in order to provide certainty for businesses and industry

#### **Food Security**

The DUP believes food production should be recognised as a strategic national asset in the United Kingdom. The needs of our farmers cannot be sacrificed in favour of other policy objectives. Investing in agriculture and primary production is essential for boosting productivity, job creation and delivering progress toward environmental goals. DUP MPs will:

- ✓ pursue measures to make farm businesses more profitable, productive and resilient, as well as attractive to the next generation, with a particular focus on encouraging longer-term land leasing and rental arrangements through tax relief and by exploring alternative, additional options to the current conacre system.
- ✓ seek a national review of planning policy and law to unlock greater levels of on-farm investment for purposes of growing and processing fruit, vegetables, cultivating crops and improving animal welfare. This should include ensuring rules around permitted development and ammonia emissions adopt a long-term approach to delivering more sustainable farming practices.

#### Trade

The DUP believes the UK should forge international trade deals that benefit agriculture in all parts of our nation. We are clear that food should not be used as a bargaining chip. There is a risk that unfair and unworkable environment targets levied on local farm businesses may lead to the conditions, and reduction in livestock numbers, that usher in a reliance on foreign, cheaper produce farmed under conditions, and to standards, that we would never accept in the UK.

The DUP will seek protection for sensitive food and animal products in trade negotiations. We are also urging Ministers to publish annual impact assessments of free trade agreements impacting domestic agriculture.

#### **Promoting Local Produce**

The DUP is in favour of setting ambitious targets for the sourcing of local, highquality food. This should include a commitment by the Government to source 50% of food into the public sector from British farms.



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#### **Animal Welfare**

DUP MPs have been united in support for various animal welfare campaigns and bills, including the banning of trophy hunting imports, foie gras import ban, and greater protections for puppies and kittens against smuggling. Specifically, we voted for stronger custodial sentencing for animal cruelty in England and Wales, bringing other parts of the UK into line with the maximum five-year penalty in place in Northern Ireland.

We will build on this record by:

- taking forward provisions of the Kept Animals Bill to tackle puppy smuggling and livestock worrying;
- promoting a new approach to tackling increases in attacks by dogs;
- continuing to argue that all animal welfare legislation, including on the live export of animals for slaughter, should be decided by the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland.

#### Fairness and Transparency

We will support policies that promote a more transparent supply chain for agri-food. This should include expanding the powers of the Groceries Adjudicator to address unfair practices and encouraging better pricing for primary producers.

#### **Bovine TB**

The consequences of an outbreak of TB are devastating for farm businesses, removing hundreds of cattle per week from local agriculture with lost production potential. This also has debilitating effects on the health and wellbeing of farm families.

DUP MPs will:

- oppose any reduction in compensation rates for cattle infected with bTB;
- support robust bTB eradication policies and programmes, including targeted badger culling, with the aim moving to a vaccination-only approach to tackling the disease as soon as possible.



#### Fisheries and Coastal Communities

Northern Ireland's fishing fleet based across Kilkeel, Portavogie and Ardglass is the heartbeat of our coastal communities and the DUP is committed to supporting those working and living there to become more prosperous, improve the marine environment and build on their reputation as suppliers of high-quality produce.

There is huge development potential to grow and expand the sector to make fishing operations more efficient, our harbours more accessible and exploit new opportunities flowing from green growth and the blue economy. DUP MPs will continue to press the Government for investment in these important areas.

NI fishermen have benefited from leaving the Common Fisheries Policy. It is right that the discrimination that saw fishing opportunities and quotas, for herring, for example, effectively stolen from Northern Ireland fishermen and awarded to their competitors in the Irish Republic has ended. However, they also deserve a fair allocation of quota within the UK and the DUP will continue to press for this.

The DUP also recognises that coastal erosion is also a concern for many residents and businesses and we will build on efforts to date to enhance defences and put in place alleviation schemes.





# 7.Leading a Fairer - Not Faster - Path Towards Net-Zero

The DUP supports the United Kingdom's long-term net zero ambitions and will advocate for policy and initiatives that are environmentally responsible and support decarbonisation.

Although we appreciate that there is a role for ambitious and flexible emissions targets in driving forward progress, we remain concerned that recent legislation, including in Northern Ireland, has been rushed, poorly drafted and conflicts with independent scientific advice by the Climate Change Committee.

# Recognising NI's Contribution to Date

Northern Ireland has:

- reduced greenhouse gas emissions per capita by 36% since 1990 and by 51% per unit of electricity generated since 2021;
- ✓ 45.4% of our electricity now comes from renewables;
- ✓ our dairy farmers have reduced their green-house gas footprint by 37% for each litre of milk produced since 1990.



#### **A Fairer Transition**

There is no question that more sustainable policies in areas like energy, housing and transport can bring benefits for the standards of living enjoyed by people in Northern Ireland and help to tackle deprivation and isolation. However, many of our citizens now perceive climate action to mean higher taxes, increased costs for basic goods and services and a residual threat to jobs and livelihoods, particularly in farming families. This comes as families face the highest tax burden since the Second World War.

The DUP will press for a truly fair transition which is inclusive of all communities, households and industries and addresses the looming threat of further costs threatened by changes to emissions trading schemes and the impact of the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Carbon Mechanism on trade between GB and NI.

#### Protecting our Rivers and Lakes

Northern Ireland has a beautiful natural environment and one that is envied across the world. The DUP believes the crisis engulfing our rivers and lakes cannot be ignored.

Our rivers systems are our precious natural resource which sadly in some cases are being turned into open sewers ultimately resulting in the loss of this once valuable resource.

There must be a concerted effort to tackle the sources of pollution, protect habitats, prevent biodiversity loss and preserve water quality in both Lough Neagh and our rivers throughout Northern Ireland.

DUP MPs will support:-

- ✓ a multi-agency response, and approach, to the ecological crisis in Lough Neagh;
- targeted initiatives to prevent pollutants entering our waterways;
- enforcement action for those who repeatedly or deliberately pollute our rivers or lakes;




# **Green Growth**

Progress toward net-zero cannot be treated in isolation from an economic programme focused on green, clean and inclusive growth. We are committed to doubling the size of Northern Ireland's low carbon and renewable energy economy to more than £2bn turnover.

The NI Executive's overarching Green Growth Strategy and Delivery Framework for Northern Ireland is aiming to transform our society towards net zero by 2050, protect and enhance our environment and deliver sustainable economic growth. It is undeniable that reducing emissions will have very significant economic opportunities for Northern Ireland. There will be massive opportunities to exploit emerging green technology across various sectors, including energy, transport and manufacturing.

We support the ambition of creating more local green jobs in these sectors and want to explore how Northern Ireland businesses and projects with green and clean ambitions can better tap into UK-wide funding, supply chains and incentives.

# **Energy Security**

The DUP remains committed to phasing out fossil fuels. The Energy Strategy brought forward by DUP Economy Ministers in the Executive contain a range of ambitious targets and policies to support the transition to safe, affordable and clean energy solutions in Northern Ireland.

We are clear that the status quo of importing and consuming fossil fuels at current levels is not sustainable. However, two thirds of homes are still heated by oil and in the interim, supplies of fossil fuels - including North Sea oil - will still be required unless we want our communities to go without basic services.

The DUP wants to see a strategic national approach to transforming the production of clean and renewable energy in all parts of the United Kingdom.

# A National and Joined-Up Approach

A national approach to co-design, delivery and monitoring of climate policy will be crucial in the next Parliament, as will ensuring there is an approach to enforcement that provides a level playing field across the United Kingdom.

# **Petrol/Diesel Ban**

Shifting public transport to alternative energies and away from diesel has been a DUP commitment for many years. This is a core component of the Path to Net Zero Energy Strategy delivered by DUP Economy Ministers in the Executive and we will lobby government to significantly increase investment in, and availability of, sustainable transport.

The DUP supports the decision to push back a ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles to at least 2035. We believe there should be a further review of these plans which takes account of the high upfront costs facing families to transition to electric vehicles, the practical impact on businesses and productivity, and the current postcode lottery of EV charging infrastructure availability.

# **Active Travel**

The DUP will support improved, structured working between local, central and national government to improve active travel infrastructure, including through closely aligned active travel tourism strategies.

# Waste and Circular Economy

Ensuring waste is kept in the economy and not in our landscape holds economic benefits and can help promote a circular economy. Businesses reprocessing paper, plastics and glass from our households employ hundreds of people in local communities and add significant value to our economy. There is scope to grow and expand this sector by ensuring more material of sufficient quality is available within Northern Ireland.







In our view, that goal will not be achieved by a costly move to require households to sort their waste into as many as six bins.

The DUP supports a uniform method for household waste collection in Northern Ireland. We support keeping it simple to collect the highest recycling volumes and promote innovation in sorting technology. This reduces cost for the taxpayer, drives higher volumes in recycling and promotes investment in the private sector.

In order to contribute to the 70% recycling rate for all waste in Northern Ireland by 2030, DUP MPs will work with the next Government to:

 ✓ unlock funding for the circular economy in Northern Ireland through the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research (NICER) programme;

- encourage more businesses to adopt circular business models, with appropriate support and building on trailblazer firms such as Artemis Technologies and Frylite locally;
- promote sustainability in design of goods, improve material efficiency and reduce waste;
- seek to reduce the annual material footprint per person across the UK;
- form clusters to raise awareness of responsible practices and promote best practice;
- develop a circular economy monitoring framework for all parts of the UK;
- embed circular economy principles at all levels of education.





#### **Pro-Life**

The DUP is unashamedly pro-life and continues to oppose the radical abortion laws foisted on communities in Northern Ireland. Since 2019, DUP MPs have:

- ✓ opposed the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland and legal instruction from the Government to ringfence funding for this from the block grant;
- supported legal action by disability campaigner Heidi Crowter against legislation allowing the abortion of babies with Down's Syndrome up until birth;
- opposed regulations foisting abortion on the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum in schools across Northern Ireland;
- raised concerns regarding at-home abortion pills and possible coercion of women who take them without medical advice or support.

DUP MPs will continue to support legislation and policies that affirm the value and dignity of all life.

We do not believe prayer, including silent prayer, should be criminalised or regarded as anti-social behaviour. We will seek a review of Section 9 of the Public Order Act 2023 and the impact of Public Space Protection Orders on those who seek to reasonably express their pro-life beliefs in the public square.

#### **Disabilities**

The DUP is committed to ensuring those with disabilities can live full and active lives. We will continue to advocate for better access to, and provision of, vital services that can help ensure they can play a stronger role in their local communities and the labour market.



MANIFESTO

DUP MPs will:

- support a wide-ranging audit of central and local government facilities to ensure they are accessible to those with disabilities;
- work with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) in future transport projects;
- ✓ promote close collaboration between IMTAC, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) in England and Wales and Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland;
- support the introduction of further resident parking zone schemes;
- encourage government departments, public bodies and local authorities across the UK to join Access Able or require them to provide comparable information on disability access and services;
- invest more in community transport, including services that provide a lifeline to older people.





# 9. Investing More in National Infrastructure

Delivering high quality infrastructure will be the foundation of future growth across the United Kingdom. The DUP not only has a strong record of improving links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland but a clear vision for better connectivity nationally, throughout the British Isles and with the rest of the world.

# **Union Connectivity Review**

Since the 1950s, the Northern Ireland rail network has been cut by some 450 miles and there has been historical underinvestment compared to other regions of the United Kingdom. We do not have any railway electrification currently and there are clear disparities in access to services in specific areas, such as the North West.

The Union Connectivity Review recommended that the Government support the Executive in developing, funding and implementing a long-term pipeline of improvements to transport infrastructure. Although progress to date has been modest, the Government has provided:

- ✓ £3.3 million to Translink to deliver a study on the cost, feasibility and value for money of electrification of the railway in Northern Ireland from Belfast to the border with the Irish Republic;
- ✓ £700,000 for a feasibility study on reopening the Antrim-Lisburn railway line, with an additional stop at Belfast International Airport;
- ✓ £800,000 to deliver a feasibility study on reinstating the Portadown to Armagh railway line.

This funding is extremely welcome, however the full realisation of these projects for the social and economic benefit of all communities in Northern Ireland require a step change from UK Ministers, both in terms of resourcing and project expertise with local departments and stakeholders. A strengthened National Infrastructure Commission, with increased regional representation and fairer access to its skills and expertise for Northern Ireland, can play a key role in achieving the conditions necessary to scale-up and deliver NI's infrastructure ambitions. Hosting a major infrastructure conference in Northern Ireland would also be a signal of the Government's overriding commitment to strengthening connections and relationships between our four nations.

DUP MPs will pursue the full implementation of the Union Connectivity Review. We will also work closely with the Treasury to maximise the benefits of Financial Transactions Capital and better access to the UK Infrastructure Bank in order to turbocharge major infrastructure plans locally.

We will never apologise for prioritising improvements to connectivity to our single largest trade market in Great Britain. As part of our negotiations with the Government, we secured commitments to:

- ✓ improving journeys on the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer, following the recommendations in the Union Connectivity Review, to alleviate pinch points on the road; providing better links between the Cairnryan ferry terminals serving Northern Ireland and southwest Scotland, connecting with the M6 and Cumbria, and the A77 towards Glasgow;
- ✓ boosting port connections and infrastructure between NI and GB, including through £10m for infrastructure development.

These commitments are a practical demonstration of the importance of ensuring businesses and consumers in all regions can grasp the full economic potential and opportunity arising from membership of the United Kingdom.

The DUP believe there is no contradiction between our Pro-Union stance and support for growth-oriented and mutually beneficial expansion of transport links between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.





There are clear synergies between the All-Island Rail Review and the Union Connectivity Review and the latter recommended that the Government provide funding and major project expertise for the purposes of delivering specific recommendations for cross-border rail. We will work with the Government to take forward this workstream in a way that promotes growth, jobs, housing and social cohesion for communities in Northern Ireland and right across the UK.

#### **Air Connectivity**

The DUP is committed to strengthening Northern Ireland's air connectivity with Great Britain and internationally.

Our MPs have also campaigned extensively for a solution which allows the reinstatement of duty-free shopping for flights between NI and the EU. Preventing airports and businesses in Northern Ireland from accessing this revenue stream - which can account for as much as 40% of an airport's revenue - is unfair and places them at a competitive disadvantage to the rest of the UK. DUP MPs will work the Government and at Stormont to design and deliver a new scheme to secure new and direct routes to Northern Ireland from European, transatlantic and Middle Eastern countries.

MANIFESTO

Delivering an attractive proposition to airlines on a sustainable basis will be crucial to securing more inward investment and inbound tourists, which will in turn provide a catalyst for jobs and prosperity in every corner of Northern Ireland.

Domestically, we continue to advocate for a more strategic approach to boosting regional linkages, including through ensuring updated plans for a potential third runway at Heathrow prioritise regional interconnection and provide opportunities for the construction industry in all parts of the United Kingdom.

In Parliament we will continue to advocate for the abolition of domestic air passenger duty, which disproportionately impacts competitiveness of our airports. A 50% cut is a welcome start but the next Government should do more to level up the regulatory environment for air routes and tourism in all parts of the UK.







# **Shared Rural Network**

The DUP believes the benefits of the Shared Rural Network initiative between the Government and four leading mobile network operators - EE, Three VMO2 and Vodafone - must extend to all areas of Northern Ireland.

The SRN aims to ensure the provision of high-quality 4G mobile coverage and at present 82% of areas in Northern Ireland has coverage by all four operators. However, in many areas, that figure is much lower and further investment in upgrading the mobile network and investing in masts has been put on hold due to major delays in the planning process. This could lead to millions of pounds of lost investment, leaving rural infrastructure in some of our most hard-to-reach areas behind.

DUP MPs will work with Government, networks and local ministers to find an urgent solution to this issue.

# 5G Roll-Out

The DUP spearheaded the provision of fullfibre broadband across Northern Ireland, securing £150 million for this project in 2017 and ensuring its roll-out will be completed by the end of 2025.

Building on this record of making Northern Ireland the best-connected region in Europe, we will work with the Government to ensure communities in Northern Ireland benefit from further capacity, such as gigabit-capable broadband, whilst seeking to accelerate the roll-out of 5G coverage.

# **Public Land Register**

The DUP would campaign to establish a national database of public land. A major benefit of this would be to ensure smaller businesses in the construction industry can identify future projects earlier.



# **10. Standing Up for Victims of Crime**

#### **Online Harm**

The DUP will campaign to end the 'Wild West' of social media and to protect children and all internet users from harm, abuse and misinformation online. Our MPs supported key aspects of the Online Safety Act, including:

- age verification for social media and pornography sites;
- risk assessments by social media platforms;
- new duties on platforms to remove illegal and harmful content and prevent it being shared;
- new criminal offences for encouraging self-harm, trolling, cyber-flashing and targeting people with epilepsy online with harmful content;
- sanctions and fines for social media platforms.

While we are clear that freedom of speech must be protected, and that what is legal offline must also be legal online, there is much more to do to build safer online communities.

We will:

- campaign to ensure that smaller and emerging social media platforms and sites hosting potential harmful content are subject to regulatory controls and Ofcom oversight;
- oppose a lower minimum age for social media use, recognising that:
  - it is wrong to penalise children and young people for the failures of platforms;
  - it could dilute focus on more proactive regulation by big tech companies;
  - social media remains a key tool for children to socialise and learn;

- it would likely displace risk to other settings, including gaming platforms;
- promote strategies to reduce the risks of end-to-end encryption for children and young people online;
- consider the merits of a duty of candour for social media firms;
- seek a better alignment of Ofcom's responsibilities to target and monitor reductions in harm online;
- support a rapid review of emerging risks from AI, including chatbots;
- work to support progress on stronger rights for bereaved parents in accessing their child's social media profiles and data;
- support ring-fencing receipts from fines levied on social media companies as part of the Online Safety Act for online harm prevention and reduction;
- identify policies to address gaps in existing regulation of online services, including harmful content hosted on app stores;
- ✓ agree a statutory definition of grooming.

# **A Voice for Victims**

The 1998 Belfast Agreement resulted in the early release of terrorists and ensured that anyone later convicted of a Troubles-related offence would serve a maximum of two years in prison. Letters of Comfort were later provided to on-the-run suspects. This erosion of the rule of law was never justified.

Two decades later, it is still unacceptable. The Government's decision to grant an amnesty in all but name to those responsible for wrongdoing under the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act would extinguish the flame of justice for many innocent victims.

The DUP will support efforts to repeal this legislation as well as resist attempts to rewrite the past.





Since 2007, the DUP has:

- delivered on our policy of a Troubles victims' pension, ensuring not a single penny is handed to perpetrators;
- overseen a fundamental reform of victim support services;
- created a Victims Commission and Victims Forum;
- secured the appointment of a Victims Commissioner;
- ✓ quadrupled the level of funding provided to victims and survivors under Direct Rule;
- ensured the needs of victims who are not part of advocacy organisations are also addressed;
- ✓ introduced a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons to provide a UKwide definition of a victim which excludes those killed by their own hand;
- ✓ guaranteed the full implementation of Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland;
- ✓ appointed a Veterans Commissioner;
- established a Victims' Charter to prioritise the needs of victims within our criminal justice system and set minimum standards for support;
- pressed for compensation for victims of IRA weapons supplied by the Gaddafi regime in Libya;
- ensured memorials to murdered police officers are not placed out of sight in PSNI stations;
- raised alleged Irish Government collusion in IRA atrocities.

In the last mandate, DUP MPs:

- ✓ vociferously opposed the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023;
- ensured no Troubles-era offender could gain immunity from prosecution for sexual offences;

- proposed a new and bespoke criminal offence of glorifying terrorism;
- sought legal protection against recipients of Government amnesty profiting from activities linked to their offending, including criminal memoirs, or contacting victims or their families;
- delivered the Troubles pension for innocent victims, securing a commitment in law that victim-makers will not receive a single penny;
- supported the Omagh families' call, and the High Court's recommendation, for a public inquiry;
- ✓ tabled a debate in Parliament on the findings of the inquest into the Kingsmill Massacre;

We will:

- support innocent victims in robustly challenging the Government's amnesty legislation in the courts;
- ✓ urge UK Ministers to repeal the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act within the first 100 days of the next Parliament;
- prioritise a victim-centred and victim-led approach to investigating the past
- ✓ guarantee continued funding for the Troubles victims' pension and seek to expedite the application process;
- continue to direct substantial funding to the Victims and Survivors Service and work of Veterans Commissioner;
- pursue a UK-wide definition of a victim which rejects any equivalence between the perpetrator and the victim;
- resist attempts by republicans and elements of the media to justify terrorist campaigns;
- seek to prevent human rights legislation being exploited to rewrite the past;
- explore the potential to define collusion in legislation to address sweeping and call for a full investigation by the Irish Government into allegations of collusion between the Garda and the IRA;







- ✓ press for further progress by the Omagh Public Inquiry following the announcement of the Terms of Reference in February 2024;
- challenge the Irish Government to launch a public inquiry into the Omagh atrocity;
- ensure paramilitaries and organised crime gangs are pursued by all legal means and put out of business;
- seek to establish an oral and video archive for victims and survivors of the Troubles which incorporates the stories of first responders;
- ✓ increase transparency in out-of-court settlements agreed by the MoD and PSNI in legacy cases.

#### **Crime and Policing**

The DUP believes that when it comes to tackling increasingly sophisticated and harmful forms of crime and breaking the cycle of harm and control exerted by criminal and paramilitary gangs, there can be no substitute for a fully staffed and properly resourced police service. In Northern Ireland those efforts have not only been frustrated, but undermined, by a steady decline in policing budgets. In more than a decade, there has been a 3% growth in the policing and justice budget compared to 70% and 45% for health and education respectively, and the recruitment of tens of thousands of additional officers in England and Wales has not been replicated here.

The Treasury needs to accept that this is about more than how an Executive slices the cake - the cake simply is not big enough. The most visible symptom of this rising crisis is the loss of police officers. A recent independent review commissioned by the Chief Constable concluded that had police resources kept pace with England, Scotland and Wales in recent years the PSNI would presently have over 8,000 officers. Instead, we have 6,400. That is not a sustainable position for any public body, let alone an organisation tasked with investigating crime, fighting terrorism and keeping our communities safe. The outworking, of course, is slower response, a reduced neighbourhood presence and fewer detectives.





It is imperative that the next Government prioritises the safety of its citizens in all parts of the United Kingdom through a fiscal framework and funding model that is fair and meets the needs of police service, courts and wider criminal justice system.

DUP MPs will:

- press for uplifts in Government funding for Northern Ireland's Additional Security needs and the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme;
- seek a statutory definition of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) to better target paramilitaries and crime gangs who prey on children and young people;
- seek to resist the further erosion of stop and search powers;
- campaign to strengthen the role of the National Crime Agency in NI;
- support national strategies to reduce high demand for police services that could and should be routinely dealt with by the health service;
- seek to protect neighbourhood policing resources;
- ensure the design of national police command courses reflect Northern Ireland's policing requirements and encourage strong representation by PSNI officers;
- campaign to enhance resources for occupational health and wellbeing services within policing;
- support tough measures to address all forms of elder abuse, including financial crime.

#### **Violence Against Women & Girls**

DUP MPs will:

- seek to address gaps in funding for specialist support for survivors of domestic abuse;
- support robust and up-to-date vetting in police forces across the UK;

- seek an improved response to trolling and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse against women online;
- promote a review of arrangements governing the disclosure of victims' personal information in sexual and domestic abuse cases;
- call on the Government to review the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) for migrants who suffer domestic abuse and are at risk;
- seek a review by DWP of the requirement for those experiencing domestic abuse to apply for split payments of certain benefits.

#### **Justice and the Courts**

DUP MPs will support:

- establishing a Royal Commission into the effectiveness of the criminal justice system across the UK;
- pressing for stronger custodial sentences for murder and terror offences in NI, bringing NI into line with other regions;
- seeking to try terrorism cases faster, reducing the cost to our prison budgets from suspects spending months, even years, on remand;
- investing in community-based initiatives and diversionary programmes aimed at addressing the root causes of crime;
- increasing funding for speech and language and mental health support services within the criminal justice system, including prison service;
- promoting tougher sentencing for physical assaults on retail staff;
- reviewing how the criminal justice system deals with peer-on-peer and teenage relationship abuse.







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