

Alliance Works



MANIFESTO Westminster and Local Government Elections

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Alliance

5th MAY 2005

Alliance Works

tribal politics costs

MANIFESTO

**Westminster and
Local Government
Elections**

Alliance
The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

5 May 2005

Alliance is Northern Ireland's cross-community and anti-sectarian party, working on behalf of all sections of the community.

Alliance is working for a shared future, where people can live and learn, work and play, together in safety.

Alliance is committed to preserving the fundamental principles of the Good Friday Agreement, while making the necessary reforms to allow it to work more fairly and effectively.

Alliance is a strong supporter of the rule of law. We are resolute in opposing all forms of paramilitarism and criminality from wherever they come.

Alliance is helping to build a fair, peaceful and prosperous society that cherishes diversity, and is committed to human rights, equality of citizenship and social justice.

Contents

12 Key Commitments

Alliance Working for You
making the difference

Introduction by the Party Leader

- 1. Voluntary Coalition Works**
deadlock costs
- 2. Sharing Works**
segregation costs
- 3. Justice Works**
gangsterism costs
- 4. Fair Taxation Works**
punitive charges cost
- 5. Education Works**
ignorance costs
- 6. Well-being Works**
illness costs
- 7. Sustainability Works**
pollution costs
- 8. Enterprise Works**
stagnation costs
- 9. Social Inclusion Works**
social exclusion costs
- 10. Celebrating Arts Works**
insularity costs
- 11. Internationalism Works:**
isolationism costs
- 12. Local Accountability Works**
bureaucracy costs

12 Key Commitments

- 1. Alliance will work to establish a voluntary coalition in the Northern Ireland Assembly.**
- 2. Alliance will work to ensure that people can live and learn, work and play, together in safety.**
- 3. Alliance will push for tougher enforcement of the law against gangsters, rioters and vandals.**
- 4. Alliance will ensure that every parent who wishes to send their child to an integrated school can do so.**
- 5. Alliance will abolish tuition fees for students in local universities.**
- 6. Alliance will introduce free personal care for those living in residential and nursing homes.**
- 7. Alliance will invest in better public transport services.**
- 8. Alliance will reform planning laws to preserve our countryside, and to protect important buildings.**
- 9. Alliance will work for a Northern Ireland that is open for business.**
- 10. Alliance will push for fairer international development policies on aid, debt relief and trade.**
- 11. Alliance will work to ensure fair taxation, ending the abuse of the regional rate and water charges.**
- 12. Alliance will reinvest the costs of segregation in providing quality services for the whole community.**

Alliance Working for You

making the difference

Alliance Working for You

making the difference

Alliance is at the centre of the political process in Northern Ireland. Despite the obstacles of Direct Rule, Alliance has been able to make many positive contributions to address the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

Many of the ideas put forward by Alliance have been taken up by Government, reflecting the high calibre of Alliance representatives.

1. Alliance proposals for reforming the Agreement, Agenda for Democracy, helped to set the agenda for the talks last year aimed at breaking the political deadlock. Alliance was widely congratulated for attempting to bridge the gaps, and to create the space for political movement and for putting forward compromise proposals. It is a pity that other parties could not step up to the mark.
2. Alliance has successfully pushed the Government to produce a more radical policy on promoting better community relations – *A Shared Future*. This policy recognises that it is not longer viable for Governments to merely manage divisions in Northern Ireland – they must overcome them.
3. Alliance has highlighted that over £1billion of taxpayers' money is wasted every year in managing a divided society. This money would be better spent on improving the quality of public services, and avoiding punitive water charges. Only Alliance has put forward any meaningful ideas as to how public expenditure in Northern Ireland can be redirected.
4. Alliance has successfully pushed for more effective enforcement of the terrorist laws against paramilitary flags. It is now a criminal offence to display them in public.
5. Alliance has secured for Northern Ireland the most comprehensive set of 'Hate Crime' laws in the UK, creating stiffer sentences for racial, sectarian and homophobic attacks.
6. Alliance was the only party during the Talks last year to keep pressing for a clear and unequivocal end to all paramilitary and criminal activity. Others chose to place their focus elsewhere, and failed to send a strong message that all of this should stop. It is regrettable, but hardly surprising, that the IRA thought they could rob the Northern Bank, and cover up a murder.
7. Alliance first proposed the creation of the Independent Monitoring Commission. This body is now successfully shining a spotlight on the continued dark deeds of the various paramilitary groups.
8. Alliance was the only party to vote to provide free personal care for the elderly in the last Assembly, and to oppose the measure that gave rise to proposals for water charges. Others make claims, but are contradicted by their actual votes and actions.
9. Alliance has protected the local environment. We successfully proposed the laws protecting the Irish Hare, and prepared comprehensive Marine Conservation legislation.
10. Alliance first set a target of 10% of children in integrated schools by 2010, a target that is now widely accepted.

Introduction by the Party Leader

This election is your chance to give your verdict on the right way forward for Northern Ireland.

You probably share the frustration that so little progress has been made in recent years. Both unionist parties and both nationalist parties have been given plenty of opportunities, but they have all failed to deliver. The people of Northern Ireland have been betrayed by the men of violence and the political hardliners.

The absence of devolution means that decisions are taken exclusively by remote-control Direct Rule ministers, who are not in tune with the real needs of the people of Northern Ireland. While our economy has certainly improved over the past decade, it is still performing well below its potential.

The deep divisions persist in our society. Segregation carries huge human and financial costs. It denies people opportunities, ruins lives, and deprives society of the full benefit of their talents.

Alliance has identified a billion pounds of public expenditure in Northern Ireland that is wasted every year in dealing with the direct and indirect costs of managing a divided society. At the same time, Northern Ireland suffers the longest hospital waiting lists in the UK, has a crumbling infrastructure, and is facing punitive water charges. Just think what we could do with that £1 billion if it was spent on providing quality services to all the community.

While other parties make empty promises, without any idea how they would pay for them, Alliance has identified the hidden costs from which Northern Ireland is suffering. Alliance is committed to using that money for the benefit of all our citizens: to improve schools and hospitals, to renew our public transport and roads, to avoid punitive water charges.

It is to Northern Ireland's shame that we have the highest rate of racist attacks in the UK. Alliance welcomes the growing diversity in Northern Ireland, and recognises that our new citizens are valuable members of our community.

On 5 May, there will be two elections on the same day – for Westminster and for the 26 Local Councils.

The strongest possible showing for Alliance in the Westminster election will demonstrate the strength of the centre ground in Northern Ireland, and the demand for a change in direction: to building a shared future, not managing a divided one.

Alliance has a proud record in Local Government. Across Northern Ireland, Alliance councillors have been a powerful voice for cross-community and anti-sectarian politics. We have ensured power sharing and the rotation of civic offices, and have become well-recognised for positive and responsible attitude to taking decisions on behalf of the whole community. Nowhere is this clearer than in Belfast. Alliance Councillors have used the balance of power to ensure constructive politics and Alliance Lord Mayors have provided strong civic leadership.

Alliance offers an alternative way forward. We have a clear and coherent plan to reform the Agreement, to restore devolution, and to create an effective form of power-sharing government, without giving anyone a veto over progress. It is clear that voluntary coalition works, continued deadlock costs.

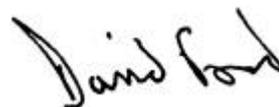
We will uphold the rule of law, and oppose all forms of paramilitary and criminal activity. We must prevent the creation of a mafia-state. It is clear that justice works, paramilitarism costs.

We will make improving community relations and working for a shared future our main priority. We do not want a Northern Ireland version of Apartheid. It is clear that sharing works, segregation costs.

We will treat every person as an individual citizen, valuing their contribution to society, and recognising their choice over identity. It is clear that respect works, bigotry costs.

Alliance provides a real alternative to the failed politics of unionism and nationalism. It's the only alternative. We have a clear vision, a clear set of values, and a clear purpose. We seek to build a united community.

Alliance Works, Tribal Politics Costs.



David Ford
Party Leader

1. Voluntary Coalition Works

deadlock costs

Voluntary Coalition Works

deadlock costs

Alliance has a clear plan to reform the Agreement, to restore devolution, and to create an effective form of power-sharing government, without giving anyone a veto over progress.

The creation of a voluntary coalition would allow those parties that wish to move forward to do so. The process could no longer be held hostage, either by political intransigence or a failure by some to give up continued paramilitary activity.

- **Alliance proposes that the Executive should be formed by negotiation among parties** endorsed by a weighted majority vote in the Assembly to ensure a cross-community composition. In almost every democracy, like-minded parties, or those at least prepared to cooperate together, form a voluntary coalition that has either simple or weighted majority support within the legislature, and operates on the basis of collective responsibility. Involuntary coalitions in which parties are allocated portfolios on the basis of their comparative strength in the Assembly, irrespective of their compatibility, simply do not work.

An Executive should be formed through a *voluntary* power-sharing coalition. It is possible for parties to negotiate a balanced executive, with an agreed programme for government, based on collective responsibility. This would be required to achieve a cross-community weighted-majority vote in the Assembly in order to come into effect. No party would have an automatic right to be in the Executive.

This approach to Executive formation will provide more efficient, effective and cohesive government. It will encourage greater co-operation among parties, and better promote the concept of a single Northern Ireland polity.

Alliance did not table this proposal with the intention of excluding Sinn Féin from office. However, in the context of the continued failure of Republicans to signal an end to all paramilitary and criminal activity, it does allow the restoration of local democracy.

At present, the Prime Minister maintains that progress is not possible until, and therefore unless, Republicans fall into line.

In contrast, Alliance believes that the train must leave the station, without Sinn Féin if necessary. Once they accept the same standards of democracy and justice as everyone else, they can come on board further down the track.

Unionists must make it absolutely clear that they are prepared to share power properly with Nationalists and others. Equally, the SDLP must make clear that they can actually resolve the conflict between integrity and inclusivity in favour of the former.

However, this proposal is only one of many from the Alliance Party to reform the Agreement, and to place it on a stable basis. These are set out in full in our document *Agenda for Democracy*.

The Agreement

The major strength of the Agreement continues to lie in its creation of a set of political institutions with cross-community legitimacy within a deeply divided society. The opponents of the Agreement continue to fail to produce any alternative that is capable of generating similar support across the community.

While the Agreement has many strengths, there are some flaws. Furthermore, continued arguments among the parties to the Agreement, as well as the failure to rise above narrow sectarian concerns to work for the common good, has undermined the implementation of the Agreement. Most crucially, there has been a deterioration in community relations, and an increase in sectarianism, racism and segregation on the ground.

Rather than trying to create a new political culture for Northern Ireland in which all parties compete over a common agenda and seek to work in the common interest, the Agreement has entrenched a system of 'winner takes all' intra-ethnic competition within two separate Unionist and Nationalist polities, which the extremes have been able to exploit.

Alliance is firmly committed to the principle of power sharing. We strongly advocate a move

1. Voluntary Coalition Works

deadlock costs

away from the rigid, consociational form of power sharing contained in the original Agreement towards more flexible and integrated versions of power sharing more appropriate for an evolving and diverse society. Ultimately, our objective is to fashion Northern Ireland as a model European liberal democracy.

Any political structures must address the deeply divided nature of Northern Ireland, yet they must be sufficiently flexible to allow for positive change in our political culture. While there is no guarantee that any set of political structures will be workable, there are certain institutional designs that are much more likely to be successful.

However, it is important that discussions do not focus exclusively on political structures, but address the wider problems in society that create the context for the current political impasse.

For Alliance, the Agreement is not the ceiling of our ambitions, but rather a foundation on which to build. Alliance does not view the Agreement as the end-point of a process, but as a tool to help us to reinforce peace and stability, to entrench liberal democracy, and to build a united community and a shared, non-sectarian society.

- Alliance proposes that, rather than restricting the people to the stark choice between maintenance of the union or the creation of a united Ireland, **the Principle of Consent could be used to test the level of popular support for other constitutional futures for Northern Ireland**, which may be devised in the future. A polarised argument over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland is neither in the interests of Northern Ireland nor these islands. In particular, a succession of 'border polls' would have a divisive effect on community relations. Alliance will promote what the people of Northern Ireland hold in common in order to counteract the forces that tend to separate and pull the people of Northern Ireland apart. Alliance seeks to develop multiple and interlocking relationships between all of the jurisdictions in these islands.
- **Alliance proposes a reduction in the size of the Assembly, to about 80 MLAs**, to

come into effect at the next scheduled election of the Assembly. This would better reflect the population of Northern Ireland, and provide more efficient and cost-effective Government.

- **Alliance proposes the introduction of an Assembly voting system for cross-community matters based on a weighted majority**, free from communal or sectarian designations. Alliance has had concerns with the designations and voting system for the Assembly since Good Friday 1998.

There are four particular problems with the current system:

- the institutionalisation of sectarian division
- a lack of equality of votes between MLAs
- an inability to adjust to changing demographic and political circumstances
- the ability of minorities effectively to hold the process to ransom

There was a certain inevitability that a crisis would happen, considering all of the above faults.

- **Alliance proposes that the number of Executive Departments be reviewed**, in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. This should have been part of the Review of Public Administration.

The Agreement only specifies that there shall be up to ten Departments; it does not specify that there must be ten Departments. There is a growing consensus that 10 Government Departments, plus the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, is excessive. The division of functions among the various Departments is not logical in every instance.

- **Alliance proposes a review of the composition of the Executive** and responsibilities of the Government Departments. Alliance advocates that a single Department would have major responsibilities for Equality and Community Relations.

There is also concern at the current split of responsibilities between Government Departments and centralisation of functions within the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The role of OFMDFM could be

1. Voluntary Coalition Works

deadlock costs

changed and functions transferred to other relevant Departments.

- **Alliance proposes that criminal justice and policing functions, when devolved, are placed within a single dedicated Department** as part of an Executive working to collective responsibility.

Alliance looks forward to the eventual devolution of policing and criminal justice to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Such local ownership of this machinery would go a long way to enhancing popular confidence in them. However, a security dimension has been a central feature of the conflict in Northern Ireland. It is important that these powers are delivered in an appropriate context and the necessary structures for accountability are in place.

Alliance does not believe that any of the structures offered in the Joint Declaration provides an ideal way forward, especially in the absence of collective responsibility.

- **Alliance proposes that a full Departmental Scrutiny Committee be established to scrutinise the functions of OFMDFM** (or any successor body).

At present, while there is a Statutory Committee to scrutinise each of the current ten Departments, there is no equivalent committee for the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister. It is instead monitored by the Committee of the Centre, whose remit only covers some of the OFMDFM functions. OFMDFM has taken on the appearance of a full Department of Government, as more and more functions have been concentrated within it.

- **Alliance proposes that the Assembly as a whole, on the basis of a weighted majority vote, be granted the power to negate a Ministerial decision.**

Substantial concerns have been expressed that Ministers have been able to exercise considerable Executive authority within their own areas of responsibility without effective challenge. This situation runs contrary to the notion of a cross-community Government with widespread ownership of decisions. The Executive did not prove effective in creating collective

responsibility, where all Ministers work together to deliver a common agenda. Ministers took a number of decisions that did not appear to have widespread support amongst other Ministers, let alone the Assembly. Hence, there is a need for a more equitable sharing of power between the Executive and the Assembly.

- **Alliance proposes that paragraph 13 of the Joint Declaration (2003) should be incorporated into the Pledge of Office.**

Ceasefires have been allowed to become far too narrowly defined, and too often violence has been ignored or downplayed so as not to disturb the commitment to inclusivity. A large number of paramilitary activities, such as beating, exiling, shooting and murder were treated as being beyond the scope of a 'ceasefire'. All of these activities undermine the democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is not acceptable for parties to be in Government and also have links to 'private armies'.

Alliance will be prepared to support sanctions against those in default of their obligations.

- **Alliance proposes a Single Transferable Vote election among Assembly Members as the fairest system of allocating chairs and vice chairs.** Under this system, a succession of counts of an STV ballot would be conducted among MLAs to work out a rank order of party choices of posts.

The current d'Hondt mechanism for the allocation of places in the Executive and Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs is unfair; d'Hondt is flawed as a proportional system. The greater the number of parties involved, the more likely it is that distortions will occur. It also significantly favours the larger parties. These reforms should apply wherever the d'Hondt system is presently used.

- **Alliance proposes that the Assembly be granted tax-varying powers.**

It is important to ensure that any legislature is held accountable for its spending decisions and ambitions. If the Assembly had tax-varying powers, it would have the ability to set and realise its own fiscal priorities and to promote economic growth, taking into account the

1. Voluntary Coalition Works

deadlock costs

differences between Northern Ireland and other UK regions and the significance of cross-border issues such as differential rates of taxation and grants.

- **Alliance proposes that the First Minister, Deputy First Minister, Taoiseach and Tanaiste present a joint report on the work of the North-South Ministerial Council, in the Assembly and Oireachtas annually**, and are subject to questions from legislators. While the NSMC has functioned reasonably well, Alliance wishes to see greater openness and transparency and a higher profile for this body.
- **Alliance proposes that the Assembly and Oireachtas be required to establish a North-South Parliamentary Tier**, which would be open to all parties, and to which each jurisdiction would send equal numbers of participants.
- **Alliance proposes increasing the scope of North-South co-operation**, on the basis of practical benefits. The number of North-South Implementation Bodies was arbitrarily set at six in the Agreement. The NSMC was invited to choose these from a suggested list of 12. There is a case for creating new implementation bodies, by mutual agreement, where a sound case is put forward, based on practical benefit.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that progress on a north-south basis often quietly occurs between agencies in an informal manner. One of the most significant economic problems in recent years, the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, was dealt with on a North-South basis without any formal structures.

The package of proposals published by the British and Irish Governments in December carries many shortcomings.

The fundamental principles of the Agreement are now defined and agreed across all of the main parties, including the DUP.

However, the reforms were a clear demonstration of Realpolitik, and the associated weaknesses of that approach. It was billed as comprehensive, but is anything but. No more and no less went into the documents than what was perceived to

be necessary to create the conditions for the DUP and Sinn Féin to share power.

While at the micro-level, there are some considerable improvements in the areas of accountability and collective responsibility, at the macro-level, the package contains some major weaknesses.

First, it has not really resolved the problem of all parties adhering to common understandings of crucial concepts of equality, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In particular, before Sinn Féin can again be considered suitable for a place in government, there is a requirement for a clear and unconditional statement from the IRA regarding an end to all paramilitary and criminal activity. This has been far from the case in the past as the IRA has addressed the conflict against, but not declared an end to paramilitary beatings and shootings, and criminality, nor accepted the unchallenged legitimacy of both the northern and southern states in relation to their monopoly on justice.

Second, the package conspicuously ignores community relations issues. Without doubt, there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between politicians who depend upon a sectarian mandate and intensified segregation across swathes of Northern Ireland. This vicious cycle must be broken. The Good Friday Agreement made commitments to integrated education and mixed housing, but these have not been followed up. The package is more consistent with the notion of managing a 'benign Apartheid', than building a shared future.

Third, there was an over-optimism that a deal was not only possible between the DUP and Sinn Fein but could actually hold. The basis for this belief was that any deal including the DUP and Sinn Fein would be more secure. But while both the DUP and Sinn Fein have moderated to some extent, they remain parties on the relative extremes of the Northern Ireland political spectrum. It is extremely difficult to create and sustain a political process on such a basis. The fundamental lesson is that political progress starts through from the centre.

2. Sharing Works segregation costs

Sharing Works segregation costs

The deep divisions in Northern Ireland society, and the associated community relations problems were neglected in the Agreement.

For some, the Agreement is about managing institutionalised differences and communities in Northern Ireland. This approach holds that separate but equal communities can be managed through some form of 'benign Apartheid'. However, no matter how skilful, conflict management cannot be constantly maintained. With few or no common bonds or overarching loyalties to a set of shared values, once there is a major crisis, it is relatively easy for 'separate communities' to go their separate ways.

Community relations issues must be made the top priority within the political process. Alliance will continue to do so.

We are committed to building a united community, and creating a shared future where people can live and learn, work and play together in safety.

Yet there is substantial evidence that a clear majority of the people in Northern Ireland would like to have mixed facilities in which to live, to work, and to be educated. Almost a quarter of Protestants and a third of Catholics do not wish to be described as either Unionist or Nationalist. Furthermore, the 2001 Census showed that 14% of the population do not wish to be described as either Protestant or Catholic.

However, people's choices are not being respected through the lack of provision of facilities and fears over security, while identities. Northern Ireland is a socially-engineered divided society.

Alliance welcomes the publication, *A Shared Future – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*, by the Government in March 2005. Unlike other parties, we play a central role in developing this approach.

The notion that Northern Ireland can be managed through some kind of 'benign

Apartheid' has been dismissed in favour of a Shared Future.

Alliance welcomes the new inter-agency strategy for dealing with paramilitary and other illegally-erected flags.

We also welcome the commitment to better quantify the human and financial costs of segregation. However, this must not be simply a paper exercise, but the basis for making fundamental changes in how services are delivered, and public policy more generally is structured.

It is important that this new thinking now permeates all aspects of Government and the public sector, and furthermore that detailed policy programmes are developed to put this new framework into practice.

However, building good relations in this society cannot just be a matter for government, it is a responsibility for civil society and indeed every person in society.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Ensure the implementation of the new community relations strategy for Northern Ireland**, and the triennial action plans. This should challenge how we live and learn, work and play together as a community.
- **Actively encourage de-segregation and communal integration**, through appropriate policies and by placing a duty upon all government departments and public sector agencies. This includes areas such as planning.
- **Introduce a new form of policy proofing** called Policy Appraisal for Sharing over Separation (PASS). This would ensure that the impact of any new policy upon community divisions would be assessed and taken into account.
- **Provide support for the work of a revamped Community Relations Council**, and significantly increase its budget, in order to expand its scope. Alliance would increasingly concentrate community investment funds on projects with a strong cross-community element. It is important that this body has an

2. Sharing Works

segregation costs

important challenge function with respect to both central and local government.

- **Achieve a target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.** We set out how we will accomplish this in the Education section of this manifesto.
- **Make the promotion and maintenance of mixed housing an explicit objective** of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
- **Urge the police and criminal justice agencies** to adopt a more pro-active policy of protecting and serving those individuals who choose to mix with others, in the name of preserving a common civic space.
- **Enforce the civil duties on public agencies**, such as the Road Service and the Housing Executive, to ensure that their property is free from paramilitary, sectarian or racist flags, murals and graffiti.
- **Ensure that public sector agencies build new leisure, educational, health, social and community facilities** with an explicit objective to encourage mixing. Best practice should also be developed, regarding the design of the urban environment, in order to maximise cross-community integration.
- **Promote Northern Ireland as a distinct region** within a decentralising British Isles and an emerging Europe of the Regions.

Equality

Alliance will promote equality of opportunity, equality of treatment, equality of access, and equality under the law for all people, irrespective of:

- Gender
- Age
- Marital or family status
- Religious belief
- Disability
- Perceived race or ethnic origin
- Nationality
- Sexual orientation

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. To this end, Alliance makes the following pledges—

- **Ensure the development and passage of a Single Equality Act.** This will provide a holistic approach to combat discrimination and other forms of unfair treatment.
- **Amend Fair Employment Monitoring Regulations**, to stop people being assigned as either 'Protestant' or 'Catholic' against their will. Similarly, Alliance will prevent the next census from pigeon-holing those who do not declare a religious belief to a 'religious community' against their will. Alliance stresses that people should be able to hold open, mixed and multiple identities.
- **Propose that the list of organisations exempt from Fair Employment Regulations be revised.** In particular, the ability of schools to hire teachers and other staff from one or the other 'community background' should be reviewed.
- **Develop an inclusive inter-departmental strategy on gender equality.**
- **Celebrate the economic and cultural benefits that come to Northern Ireland from a more diverse population.**
- **Ensure that the interests and needs of persons belonging to ethnic minorities are included** in the broader framework of community relations.
- **Place emphasis on the needs of speakers of ethnic minority languages within language policy** as such persons who are at greatest disadvantage in accessing crucial services.
- **Work with the police to ensure that new 'Hate Crime' laws are enforced effectively.**
- **Support measures to eradicate age discrimination.** This includes the voluntary extension of work, and the provision of health and social services.

3. Justice Works gangsterism costs

Justice Works gangsterism costs

Alliance is fully committed to the highest standards of justice and the rule of law. We believe that there is a fundamental relationship between democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The Agreement has not been the source of the law and order problems in Northern Ireland. These problems have persisted and developed despite the Agreement. Alliance believes that the platform of the Agreement provides the best means for asserting the primacy of the rule of law, democracy, and a Bill of Rights.

Our vision of policing in Northern Ireland is of a single, integrated, professional police service that is representative of, responsive to, and carrying the confidence of the entire community. Alliance gives its full support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland in upholding the rule of law. A key element of this new beginning must be an increasingly community-based approach, which will re-enforce the needs of the community.

Action is required at a number of levels:

- The creation and maintenance of the required structures, and the provision of necessary resources
- The proper enforcement of existing laws, and the application of new legislation
- The creation and the maintenance of a culture of lawfulness

Alliance priorities are to—

Structures and Resources

- **Demand that the Government abolish the use of 50:50 recruitment quotas.** We would replace this with a fairer form of affirmative action. Alliance supports the objectives of greater representation in the police from all under-represented sections of society. Alliance supports target and affirmative action for Catholic and female recruitment, and proactive steps to attract persons from ethnic minorities, as well as gays and lesbians, into the police service.
- **Oppose the premature phasing out of the Full-Time Reserve.** Alliance will also

push for the recruitment of the new Part-Time Reserve. We believe that the restriction on part-time reserve officers only serving in their own immediate area should be lifted.

- **Propose that the Government should reassess its strategy and resources for the protection of witnesses.**
- **Better regulate restorative justice schemes,** to deal with low-level crime and anti-social behaviour, provided that they meet certain minimum conditions. Any community-based schemes should only accept referrals from the police, criminal justice or other statutory agencies. Any referrals that come from 'community sources' should be re-directed for screening by the Police Service, at the rank of Inspector.
- **Encourage the British and Irish Governments to develop a 'hot pursuit' protocol.** This would enable the PSNI and Garda to cross over into each other's jurisdictions when in pursuit of suspects. Such an instrument could be based on the terms of the EU's Schengen Agreement, and would be an important tool in the fight against terrorism.
- **Push for the seizure of criminal assets.** We welcome the establishment of the Organised Crime Taskforce and the Assets Recovery Agency. We believe these programmes will seriously frustrate the operation of all organised crime and paramilitaries.
- **Work for the phased devolution of policing and criminal justice responsibilities,** and the creation of a Northern Ireland Department of Justice.

Enforcement and Revision of the Criminal Law

- **Lobby for a review into the procedures regarding decisions on prosecutions and the length of sentences for offences,** such as public order and violence towards the emergency services. While it may not always be possible for the police to intervene at the time in public order incidents, Alliance believes that greater use should be made of video evidence for follow-up action.

3. Justice Works

gangsterism costs

- **Support the implementation of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in Northern Ireland**, in order to give the police and public authorities the powers to obtain court orders restricting the behaviour or movements of those that engage in persistent and serious loutish behaviour.
- **Urge the Government to consider creating specific offences of engaging in paramilitary -style attacks.** This would equate to an extension of the existing offence of Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH).
- **Lobby the police to adopt a more pro-active policy of intervening** when paramilitary flags and other emblems are being erected, and to take prosecutions under the Terrorism Act (2000).
- **Advocate the creation of specific offences concerning the erection of flags or other emblems**, and the painting of murals associated with proscribed organisations.
- **Challenge public agencies to end those practices and policies that can directly or indirectly trench the power of paramilitaries.**

A Culture of Lawfulness

- **Lead a culture of lawfulness.** We must have a zero-tolerance of paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland. Alliance wants schools and civic organisations to work together to promote a culture of lawfulness. Curricula can be developed to focus on teaching the value of the rule of law, and resulting consequences for individuals and wider society. Everyone, in particular young people, should be shown that gangsterism brings heavy costs for those directly involved, to local communities and to society as a whole.

Human Rights

As a longstanding supporter of human rights, Alliance believes that Northern Ireland should have the best set of human rights protections possible. These could, in turn, be a model for other parts of these islands and Europe. Alliance welcomes the passage of the Human Rights Act, and supports efforts of the Northern Ireland

Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) to draft a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

- **Lobby the NIHRC to proceed on the basis of drafting international conventions**, and properly reflect pluralism and diversity within its work. Such a Bill should respect individual rights of the whole community rather than entrenching 'group rights'.
- **Lobby for the enforcement of the Human Rights Act**, and any subsequent Northern Ireland Bill of Rights to be mainstreamed through the existing court system. Alliance will therefore reject the creation of a special human rights/constitutional court. Our supported approach will ensure that human rights are a material consideration at all levels of the judicial system.
- **Lobby the NIHRC to draw up a Charter of Freedom from Sectarianism.** This will emphasise the rights of people to live in mixed areas, to attend mixed schools, and to be supported in these choices by the state.
- **Establish an integration policy for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland** We would abolish the current practice of placing such persons in detention.

Victims

Alliance will work to help our society move beyond a 'hierarchy of victims', in order to ensure that those who have suffered throughout the community are supported in an inclusive way. We recognise the tensions in acknowledging all victims in our society, thus commit ourselves to strategies that strive to unite our community.

- **Support both statutory and community projects** that help victims build a shared sense of healing and recovery. We aim to remove communal bias in any such work.
- **Lobby for the creation of a public forum** to allow victims (self-defined) to tell their stories, which would be placed on an official record.
- **Ensure that adequate funding is put in place for victims' organisations.**

4. Fair Taxation Works

punitive charges cost

Fair Taxation Works

punitive charges cost

Under direct rule, water charges and regional rate hikes will be a reality. This is the punishment for other parties not reaching agreement on devolution. Indeed, what they have delivered is political stagnation.

Alliance will deliver political progress, and through the abolition of deliberately segregated social, educational and transport facilities, a financial package that would remove the need for water charges and regional rate hikes.

Costs of Segregation

Segregation carries huge human and financial costs. At the human level, it denies people opportunities, ruins lives, and deprives society of the full benefit of their talents.

Alliance has identified that approximately £1 billion of public expenditure in Northern Ireland is wasted in dealing with the direct and indirect costs of managing a divided society. At the same time, Northern Ireland suffers the longest hospital waiting lists in the UK, has a crumbling infrastructure, and is facing punitive water charges.

The costs of a divided society are apparent in three respects.

First, there are the direct costs of policing riots, other civil disturbances and parades, the distortions to policing that arise from the security threat, and the costs to a wide range of agencies in repairing damaged buildings and facilities.

Second, there are the indirect costs of providing duplicate goods, facilities and services for separate sections of the community, either implicitly or explicitly. This includes: schools, GP surgeries, job centres, community centre, leisure centres, and even bus stops. These costs are borne not just by the public sector, but by the private sector too.

Third, there are the opportunity costs of lost inward investment and tourism. While the Northern Ireland economy has performed better in recent years, it is still performing well below its potential capacity.

- **Alliance will reinvest the costs of segregation** in providing quality services for the whole community.

Water Charges

Water reform has been mishandled and misrepresented by both the Northern Ireland Executive and direct rule ministers. The proposed 'tap tax' is unfair and will lead to some of the most vulnerable being unable to afford a basic human necessity.

The Government has made a false comparison between what households in Northern Ireland and Great Britain pay.

The SDLP, UUP, Sinn Fein and the DUP were all part of the Northern Ireland Executive that severed the link between our regional rate and water payments.

Future consumers should not be required to pay for making good the water and sewerage infrastructure.

- **Alliance will work to ensure that future charges reflect consumption and ability to pay**, rather than rateable values of property.

Regional Rate

For 2005/06, the Northern Ireland Executive had approved a regional rate increase of 6%. Yet the direct rule minister responsible for Finance unilaterally raised this further to 9%. The regional rate will also increase by 9% per annum for two years after that. This is well over three times the current rate of inflation.

- **Alliance would abolish the regional rate.** This rate has been abused by the Northern Ireland Executive and successive direct rule ministers. We would replace the regional rate with a regional income tax.

Regional Income Tax

Direct rule ministers like to repeatedly accuse us in Northern Ireland that we don't pay our fair share of rates and taxes. They repeatedly ignore the facts that:

- Average Northern Ireland household income is 19% below the UK average

4. Fair Taxation Works

punitive charges cost

- More NI households (21%) rely on benefits, than in the UK overall (12%)
- NI households pay 26% more for fuel, light and power than in the rest of the UK

Alliance would use a fair method to pay our fair share of taxes, one that is based on our ability to pay.

- **Alliance would implement a regional income tax**, which would replace the regional rate. The principle of progressive taxation is well established — the higher your income, the more you're expected to contribute to societal needs.

Tax-Varying Powers

Alliance accepts that the Executive has only limited financial resources at its disposal. The windfall from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the continuation of European Structural Funds until 2006 reflects a somewhat artificial position. In the long term, the Barnett Formula erodes the advantages in public expenditure of the Northern Ireland Administration. Therefore, there is a responsibility upon the Executive to spend resources wisely, to invest in the future, and to prioritise addressing the causes (rather than the immediate symptoms) of problems.

- **Alliance would introduce tax-varying powers to Northern Ireland.** This will give the Assembly a greater ability to reflect the democratic wishes of local people and to have the capability to offer tax incentives to stimulate local economic growth.

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

Education Works

ignorance costs

Access to education is vital to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to realise his or her full potential. Alliance supports a universal education system, free at the point of access. Government should adequately cater for the demands of nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary places.

Furthermore, Alliance believes in lifelong learning and training. Educational opportunities must be available to all at every stage of life. The system needs to be sufficiently flexible to cater for a range of demands and abilities. The current education system serves well those most academically able, but does not adequately address the needs of pupils across the full spectrum of ability.

The system is fundamentally flawed by the segregated and fragmented nature of provision.

The Department of Education has been responsible for declining services and standards of Northern Ireland's education system. Direct rule ministers' lack of appreciation about our education funding system has significantly contributed to the budgetary crises of several Education and Library Boards. The lack of co-operation between DE and the ELBs is undermining confidence and service delivery to thousands of pupils and their parents.

- **Alliance would establish a funding review of the Northern Ireland education system.** This would examine the nature of the allocation of budgets, savings through greater efficiencies, and the elimination of duplication.
- **Alliance would support the establishment of a single education authority,** to replace the five existing ELBs and some operational functions of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.
- **Alliance supports the amalgamation of existing schools,** by consensus.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Ensure a proper system of civic education at secondary school level,** as proposed by the Council for the Curriculum,

Examination and Assessment (CCEA). The benefit will be new generations of young people taking on their responsibilities of citizenship.

- **Guarantee a nursery school place** for every child who wishes to have one. There are 35 nursery places per 1,000 here, versus a UK average of 71.
- **Devote additional resources to the education of children with learning difficulties,** including additional numbers of teachers and classroom assistants. Alliance supports the right of choice for children with disabilities to go to the schools most appropriate for them, whether mainstream or special needs.

Post-primary education

- **Support the abolition of the 11-plus exams.** Schools should not be allowed to use academic ability to decide who should be given a place.
- **Ensure that all children would progress to study a common, middle-school curriculum,** for the first three years of post-primary education. Importantly, any existing school could provide this middle-school education.
- **Defer the age of electing a particular educational route to age 14.** We do not believe that 11 is the appropriate age to make educational decisions that will restrict later choices.
- **Provide adequate provision for distinct technical, vocational and academic educational choices.** Pupils will be free to 'mix and match' vocational and academic subjects. Grammar schools will be a valued sector of a greater partnership with other education providers, including the Further & Higher Education sector.
- **Bring business enterprise and business entrepreneurship into the curriculum of Northern Ireland schools.** This will require collaboration with the business sector, to ensure efficient delivery of this aspect of the curriculum.

5. Education Works

ignorance costs

- **Implement the use of a Pupil Profile**, which will provide a holistic assessment of pupils' skills, abilities and interests throughout their entire educational career.

Integrated education

The Alliance Party has a long-standing commitment to the support and expansion of integrated education, based on two party principles: pluralism in a united community and the provision of parental choice in education. Integrated education is an excellent example of actual reconciliation, benefiting children and adults alike. Integrated education has also made a significant contribution to social cohesion in Northern Ireland.

Alliance will implement the following 9-point plan to expand the provision of integrated education in Northern Ireland, in line with demand:

- **Support the creation and maintenance of new-build integrated schools.**
- **Set a target of 10% of children being educated in integrated schools by 2010.**
- **Place a duty upon the Education and Library Boards to encourage the development of integrated education.**
This duty exists upon Department of Education, and goes beyond mere facilitation.
- **Survey local residents** when new schools are being built (for example, to service new housing developments), with a presumption that they will be integrated or inter-church; as far as possible, new schools should be sited to service mixed catchment areas.
- **Encourage the transformation** of existing schools to 'transformed' integrated status.
- **Reform and relax the criteria** for the creation and maintenance of integrated schools, giving recognition of those children of mixed, other or no religious background.
- **Give formal recognition** to the contribution being made to the process of reconciliation by 'mixed' schools, those that have a mixed enrolment but no formal integrated status.
- **Oppose any creation of an established 'right' in a Bill of Rights to a guarantee of public funding for segregated schools**, as this could forever entrench segregated schools and frustrate the process of integration.
- **Advocate the de-segregation of teacher training courses and facilities**, and the familiarisation of integrated education policies and practices in such institutions.

Employment and Learning

The Northern Ireland economy depends on people with good skills and education. To move to a knowledge-based economy, access to learning must be encouraged for all. Academic, vocational and occupational pathways need to be given equal respect and appropriately resourced. Our education and training system must support lifelong learning.

- **Abolish tuition fees being charged by all Northern Ireland universities.** Cost should not prevent able students from entering a third-level education. Alliance also opposes any introduction of additional top-up fees to Northern Ireland. We support a Scottish-style endowment fund, which graduates would contribute to only after earning £17,000.
- **Enable students to repay current student loans over a longer period of time and contingent on income.** Only those earning over £23,000 would have to make repayments.
- **Encourage initiatives that increase attainment** in areas of high deprivation and draw students from across the community.
- **Increase funding for university research projects.** Such research brings about the innovation vital to the regeneration of Northern Ireland.
- **Introduce an entitlement to student loans for lifelong learners over 54**, and reinstate funding for LearnDirect courses for the over 60s.
- **Develop the cross-border, mutual recognition of qualifications.** We welcome the removal of the Irish language qualification as compulsory in public sector employment in the Republic of Ireland.

6. Well-being Works

illness costs

Well-being Works

illness costs

A healthy population is a happier and more prosperous society. Investment in improved primary, community and acute health and social services is a critical one that affects every individual and family.

Alliance is committed to a National Health Service free at the point of delivery and to the continued development of integrated Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland.

Alliance supports the development of primary and community care on a truly multi-disciplinary basis. Alliance believes that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety must work closely with the other Departments responsible for housing, education, policing and the economy, in order to promote health and well-being.

Regional specialties, such as cancer treatment, need to be centralised, in order to provide the best treatment and achieve economies of scale. There is, however, a serious lack of capacity in acute hospital provision. This can be alleviated by innovative models of hospital and community provision, including the use of local hospitals in ways that address local circumstances and needs. There should be no standard model. Rather, each hospital should reflect local needs and strengths.

Alliance believes that the health sector is one where significant benefits can come from cross-border co-operation, through the mutual provision of hospital services (particularly emergency services), the sharing of specialised equipment, and the employment of an air ambulance, amongst others.

Alliance believes that a smaller number of strengthened Health and Social Services organisations would make better use of managerial experience and resources. It is important that professionals and local communities are fully involved in shaping future developments.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Distribute resources in favour of Health and Social Services.** Alliance would make a

commitment to raise the share of GDP spent on the NHS to the average EU level within five years.

- **Introduce free personal care** for those living in residential and nursing homes. Only Alliance MLAs voted to introduce such a provision in the Northern Ireland Assembly. We would also remove the age restrictions on the receipt of disability benefits.
- **Prohibit smoking in all enclosed public places.** We support a complete ban on tobacco advertising, and would support an increase in the price of cigarettes to pay for front line health services.
- **Prioritise cardiovascular disease prevention** in public health strategy. Coronary heart disease in Northern Ireland is one of the highest in Europe.
- **Develop radiotherapy and chemotherapy services** within an acute hospital setting. These services play a central role in the curative and palliative treatment of cancer.
- **Develop and implement a multi-disciplinary health promotion strategy.** This should utilise the previous experience of the involvement of District Councils, and work in conjunction with schools, youth services, and the voluntary and community sectors. This strategy will be an important means of reducing teenage pregnancy and promoting the welfare of young people.
- **Abolish eye and dental check charges,** and ensure the availability of NHS dental care.
- **Provide free digital hearing aids** for those who need them.
- **Adopt a two-year training course for ambulance paramedics.** An improved ambulance service is an integral part of the emergency service.
- **Amend regulations to extend the scope of nurse prescribing.**
- **Prioritise addressing the workforce crisis in Health and Social Services.** Emphasis should be placed on long-term workforce planning, staff development, and

6. Well-being Works

illness costs

active measures that will support and retain staff (including flexible working arrangements).

- **Increase the provision of acute beds**, to address immediate need. Furthermore, we will apply waiting times as a form of service measurement, in preference to waiting lists.
- **Ensure adequate staffing of professions** such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy, to prevent a forecasted significant shortfall. Proper staffing of physiotherapists will enable patients to get rapid access to vital rehabilitation and recovery, which will help produce shorter stays in hospital, reduce waiting lists and provide more community-based support.
- **Develop rehabilitation services**. This includes the need to increase the number of occupational therapists, to further reduce an unacceptable backlog, as well as to allow people to regain best possible quality of life and live longer in their own homes.
- **Develop community services for people with learning difficulties**. We are particularly concerned at the shortfalls in day and respite care as well as in employment opportunities.
- **Support diabetes and health eating awareness initiatives**. We will work to prevent diabetes and address its complications.
- **Develop primary and community care-based mental health services**, including out-of-hours services. This can ensure early, skilled intervention, as well as to prevent admissions to hospital.
- **Increase the provision for services to support families**, to protect children from abuse and to assist children in need with disabilities. Spending in Northern Ireland is two-thirds of that in England. This poor performance by our local administration cannot be allowed to continue.

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

Sustainability Works

pollution costs

Alliance believes that a quality local and global environment is integral to a good quality of life. Alliance supports regional, national, European and international efforts to protect the environment. Alliance supports the implementation of the Rio and Kyoto Treaties.

Yet there is much that can be done in Northern Ireland to protect our local environment, and to contribute to wider efforts to protect the environment generally. All sections of society, including the public and private sector, civic society and local communities, producers and consumers, have important roles to play.

Alliance priorities are to—

Structures

- **Establish an independent Environmental Protection Agency.** This body will have the power to enforce environmental legislation.
- **Create a Green Economy Task Force.** This body would make local businesses aware of the true economic and environmental costs of their actions, to illustrate the potential savings from the more efficient use of resources and the minimisation of waste, and to show the potential of new markets for environmentally friendly products.

Planning

Alliance favours balanced development that creates new investment, prosperity and homes, while respecting both the environment and our built heritage. Alliance is concerned at the lack of proper planning frameworks in most parts of Northern Ireland, and the particular absence of current Area Plans. Alliance is also deeply concerned at the destruction of many buildings of historic importance or architectural merit, and incursions into the Greenbelt.

- **Give District Councils the ability to initiate third-party appeals.** While it may not be practical to give this power to individual residents, Alliance believes that it should be vested in local representatives through a

weighted-majority vote on the relevant District Council.

- **Initiate a general review of Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).** We will ensure that planning policies are consistent with both the economic and social needs of Northern Ireland, and the concerns of local communities.
- **Set targets for 'brownfield development' as part of Area Plans**
- **Lobby for the abolition of VAT on all renovations and repairs to existing buildings.** This will protect our cultural heritage for future generations, with the judicious use of existing buildings.
- **Support the creation of additional 'Conservation Areas',** to protect the built environment in key areas of historical or architectural interest.
- **Ensure necessary infrastructure is put in place before new major housing developments commence.** For example, sufficient consideration must be given to potential new residents' access to public transport.
- **Ensure that out-of-town retail developments are only permitted as part of an approved strategic plan .**
- **Amend planning regulations and procedures** so that planning applications with clear economic development potential can have accelerated consideration. This will not be carried out at the expense of standards.
- **Develop best practice regarding design of the urban environment** to maximise cross-community mixing.

Sustainable Development

Protecting the environment and developing our economy are not mutually exclusive but interdependent. Sustainable development reflects this reality.

- **Make sustainable development an overarching theme** in central, regional and local government. Furthermore, Alliance will introduce an ecological footprint indicator as a means of measuring the progress of sustainable

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

development. We believe this is the best way of assessing Northern Ireland's impact on the world's natural resources.

- **Integrate sustainable development into the Northern Ireland education curriculum.** This will include entitling quality out-of-school environmental trips and experiences.
- **Endorse the 'polluter pays' principle.** This means that those who pollute more should pay more, and provides a financial incentive to pollute less.
- **Support a shift in taxation towards pollution and resource depletion.** Consistent with the 'polluter pays' principle, the use of market forces can contribute to the protection of the environment.

Conservation

- **Implement the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.** This strategy contains 76 recommendations for conserving and enhancing our local biodiversity—the intricate and interdependent relationships between species and their habitats—essential to the health of the whole planet.
- **Introduce legislation to ensure Marine Wildlife Conservation.** This will identify, designate and protect Marine Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Alliance is committed to the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the OSPAR Convention.
- **Fully implement the Water Framework Directive,** to ensure the maximum opportunities to protect and restore our wetlands. These deserve sustainable management, because wetlands protect us from floods, filter out pollutants, provide homes for wildlife, are a source of recreation and beauty, and attract thousands of visitors.
- **Ban hunting of mammals with dogs.** Hunting foxes and deer, as well as hare coursing, is incompatible with animal welfare.
- **Ban unlicensed bonfires.** Such events must be done only under approved safety conditions.

Waste Management/Recycling

Alliance is concerned at the amount of waste that is both produced and dumped in landfill within Northern Ireland. This is not only bad for the environment, but puts additional costs onto the District Rate. The Landfill Tax has already produced financial incentives to minimise landfill dumping. There are now European Union targets for waste minimisation and recycling, and a Northern Ireland waste management strategy is in place. Northern Ireland is considerably behind both the rest of the United Kingdom and most of our partners in Europe in the amount of waste that is recycled.

Alliance favours a broad-based approach to waste management that stresses waste reduction, reuse, recycling and energy recovery. Waste disposal in landfill must only be the option of last resort. It is important that all producers of waste are made aware of the true cost.

- **Introduce Public Sector Purchasing Policies that will favour recycled products.** This will give a substantial boost to the creation and maintenance of markets for such products.
- **Actively promote recycling** This can be done through influencing public attitudes, the creation of financial incentives, lobbying Councils to introduce separate kerbside collection streams for recyclables, increasing the number of, and accessibility to, recycling facilities, and helping to consolidate markets through public purchasing policies.
- **Accelerate the implementation of the Waste Management Strategy,** and the various Waste Management Plans. Alliance favours a five-year moratorium on the creation of any waste to energy plants (incinerators) in order to allow the further development of recycling.
- **Introduce a levy on plastic bags.** A similar scheme has been launched successfully in the Republic of Ireland. We will also investigate extending such a levy to unnecessary packaging.

7. Sustainability Works

pollution costs

Transport

Safe, effective, and efficient transport is essential to the success of the economy, the protection of the local and global environment, and the quality of life of the people in Northern Ireland. Traffic levels are growing at an exponential and unsustainable rate, with increased gridlock on important roads. Investment in public transport is well behind European and even British levels. The building of more roads cannot solve our problems alone. Public transport must be developed on priority routes and in urban areas, and be safe, reliable and affordable. The creation of such a network will require a significant injection of public funds. However, we must also recognise that Northern Ireland has a large rural population that is dependent upon private transport.

- **Increase the funding directed to public transport.** At present, the Northern Ireland Regional Transportation Strategy devotes 65% of funding to roads, and only 35% to public transport. This ratio is the opposite in Great Britain.
- **Provide for residents-only parking schemes.** Too many residents, in and around busy city and town centres, have difficulty accessing their own properties due to all-day parkers.
- **Improve road safety**, through better education and more traffic calming measures. We will also improve street lighting and favourably amend the pedestrian crossings formula.
- **Secure and expand the railway system in Northern Ireland.** Particular consideration will be given to the creation of a rapid transit system in the Belfast Metropolitan Region.
- **Improve public transport**, through the increase in park and ride schemes, more dedicated bus lanes, cross-city bus routes, better integrated timetables, and more efficient fare collection systems.
- **Extend the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to a range of community groups with Small Bus Permits**, in line with England, Scotland and Wales.
- **Introduce free public transport for women aged 60–65.** Presently, this provision is for the over 65s, but women receive state pensions at age 60. This will need to be revised in line with an equalisation of the pension age.
- **Extend free travel to people with disabilities.** Mobility must be assured for all sections of the community. Public transport is a necessity for many people with disabilities and should be free and disability-friendly.
- **Improve the co-ordination of road works**, and boost the repair and maintenance of roads. Northern Ireland has a very extensive road network of almost 25,000 kilometres. We must not neglect our roads but ensure they are maintained to a high standard. Utilities and communication companies who dig up our roads must repair them to a satisfactory level.
- **Reward those drivers who use low emission vehicles.**
- **Encourage a wider debate on ‘congestion charges’** and other forms of road pricing. Such initiatives would be consistent with the ‘polluter pays’ principle. However, motorists should not be so penalised until a proper public transport infrastructure has been put in place.

8. Enterprise Works stagnation costs

Enterprise Works stagnation costs

Alliance favours a mixed economy, in which a primacy of market solutions is balanced by a government and public concern for social justice. The role of government, especially with the onset of a knowledge-driven economy, should be to create the right framework conditions for a dynamic and high-growth economy.

A successful economy and prosperity are essential to creating the favourable conditions for the development of a shared, non-sectarian society, and giving people a stake in the consolidation of peace.

The economy of Northern Ireland is our own responsibility. We must stand on our own financial feet. What is required is a change of attitude.

We need to encourage entrepreneurship and applaud local success stories. We need to be positive and outward-looking, with confidence in our abilities and skills. We need a 'can-do' culture that focuses on results.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Lobby for the introduction of the Euro.** Membership of the Euro could bring net benefits such as greater economic stability, lower interest rates, lower inflation, a more favourable climate for investment, greater price transparency and competition, reduced transaction costs, and the reduction of risk associated with fluctuating exchange rates.
- **Reduce needless regulations and bureaucracy for small businesses.** Such obstacles to growth must be minimised.
- **Introduce age-positive hiring programmes.** Forcing older people to prematurely leave their employment robs the economy of decades of knowledge and expertise. We recommend re-training of the older workforce, and we will provide positive solutions to employers, to employ older workforces.
- **Extend the minimum wage to be extended to those aged 16+.** Young

employees should not be paid less for the same work, simply because of their age.

- **Develop Information Technology in Northern Ireland.** We will lead a drive to improve the understanding of this sector and support from leading businesses, banks and government departments. We will provide assistance, where necessary, in order to encourage IT to grow.
- **Change re-employment schemes.** New Deal has been too cumbersome. We need better and more efficient schemes to recruit women, mature trainees and the long-term unemployed.
- **Introduce parental leave schemes,** so that fathers as well as mothers can address the competing demands of work and family life.
- **Integrate economic and education policy.** The needs of business can be compatible with educational provision. For example, collaborative clusters of schools, businesses and colleges should be established. Lifelong learning can maximise an individual's employability.
- **Give priority to the Belfast – Dublin, Derry – Dublin and other key cross-border transport corridors.** We will also work to establish a central UK-wide plan to develop strategic routes and linkages on the west coast of Great Britain.
- **Increase funding for tourism product marketing activities,** to revise the overall image and profile of Northern Ireland overseas. Furthermore, Alliance believes a public-private sector partnership is central to the success of tourism. We support efforts to involve the private sector more in the growth of the tourism industry.
- **Lead the way in engaging more actively in European, UK and Republic of Ireland initiatives,** especially in areas of technology, competitiveness, IT, and education and training. This will build a wider perspective and international outlook.

Energy

A sustainable energy policy is needed for Northern Ireland, one that aims to maximise

8. Enterprise Works stagnation costs

energy efficiency and minimise consumption of non-renewable resources. Consumers of energy should become more aware of the true economic and environmental costs of their consumption. Tax and subsidy regimes should be altered accordingly to better reflect the 'polluter pays' principle.

- **Promote energy efficiency and conservation.** Unacceptable amounts of energy are wasted through inefficiencies. Alliance would consider the introduction of energy rating for private dwellings and encouragement for householders to effect energy conservation.
- **Increase access of renewable energy sources to the general public.** With the development of a strategic approach, Northern Ireland is well placed to take advantage of the potential of both wind and wave energy. In a region rich in renewable resources, government policy must emphasise and encourage new, imaginative sources of energy. Energy technology should be supported by government funding as well as by the private sector.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Northern Ireland contains many rural communities that are reliant on the agri-food industry, providing employment and a valuable contribution to our Gross Domestic Product.

Like any other sector, the forces of modernisation and globalisation cannot be ignored or wished away. Alliance will provide the leadership to face these challenges and more, to ensure the vitality and success of our food and drink industries.

- **Bring about greater co-ordination** between the Department for Agriculture & Rural Development and the Department of the Environment over agri-environment and planning policies. Northern Ireland needs the highest environmental standards, but farmers need to receive a better appreciation of the difficulties they experience.
- **Earmark 10% of production subsidies for environmental schemes**, as recommended in the report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food in England.

- **Ensure that money directed towards agri-environmental schemes directly benefit farmers.** Modulated funds should not be used for other aspects of departmental expenditure. Alliance will explore ways in which farmers can produce environmental benefit while increasing farm income.
- **Give farmers the option of receiving their direct support payments in euros.**
- **Initiate a re-examination of the Rural Planning strategy**, to promote balanced development, including farm diversification, in rural areas of Northern Ireland.
- **Promote the highest standards of agriculture.** We need to move away from commodity production, and develop niche markets, including organic foods, building on our existing green image. Alliance opposes the introduction of genetically -modified crops.
- **Improve the relationship between suppliers and retailers in Northern Ireland.** We will highly encourage suppliers, retailers and food service companies to sign up voluntarily to the 'Code of Practice on Supermarkets' Dealings with Suppliers'.
- **Devise and implement a comprehensive animal health strategy.** Informed consumers will need to support highest welfare standards with their purchasing decisions.
- **Develop a strategy for organic food production.** This will cover research, development, standards and marketing, and address all parts of the food chain. We will seek practical ways to promote the production of more locally produced organic food.
- **Extend compulsory country of origin labelling** We endorse the efforts of the Food Standards Agency to improve food labelling policy.

9. Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs

Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs

The Alliance Party acknowledges the vital role that the voluntary and community sector has in Northern Ireland, especially in delivering public services, addressing issues of diversity and cross-community work, and promoting reconciliation and addressing the needs of those who have survived and/or have been victimised by the Troubles.

Alliance would lead in the building of social capital for the objective of tackling sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland.

Alliance supports the Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector, and its efforts to progress the way forward for the continued development of this sector.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Introduce a comprehensive programme** for the support of community development activity.
- **Provide mainstream funding** for those local community organisations the Government already supports. Mainstream funding would be able to be used to cover core costs.
- **Encourage joint working and collaboration** between voluntary and community organisations, with financial incentives such as the allocation due to Northern Ireland from the *future*builders fund as well as a social innovation fund.
- **Enhance multi-organisation resource/network centres**. A shared working facility can assist in de-segregating services, and provide the potential of cross-community development.
- **Establish a Charity Commission** for Northern Ireland. This would provide public confidence in the integrity of charities, and provide a forum for their development in Northern Ireland.

Poverty and Social Inclusion

Alliance will fully implement integrated policies that target social exclusion. Such policies need to be based on improving income, employment, health and education.

- **Clarify and simplify benefit applications and procedures**, which will particularly improve the situation of our elderly population. Alliance will make the benefit system more transparent and accessible.
- **Ensure adequate funding for Citizens Advice Bureaux and other independent advice centres**. This is essential to help people disadvantaged by inadequate advice on social security, debt, housing and employment.
- **Improve provision for training** to better advise those who are entitled to benefit schemes. This is to assist the training provided by charities and voluntary groups.

Women

Women are fully equal citizens in society, and Alliance is committed to redressing those issues that prevent them from being deemed as such.

- **Provide adequate pensions and a living minimum wage**, as well as further enforcement of the 1970 Equal Pay Act. Alliance also supports gender-based affirmative action programmes.
- **Ensure access to information and advice on health and fertility issues**.
- **Provide support to the network of crisis centres for women**.

Children

Alliance endorses the establishment of the Children and Young People's Unit, the Children's Commissioner, and the consultation for a Children's Strategy. We are committed to safeguarding and improving children's lives.

- **Increase resources for parenting and family support**. This includes early intervention programmes, such as Sure Start and others, which promote better health, education, play and child development. We will create a single advice and information line, to

9. Social Inclusion Works

social exclusion costs

make it easier for parents to learn the range of support available.

- **Provide adequately resourced childcare provision.** There are successful childcare voucher and employer/employee tax incentive schemes that we will promote and implement with sufficient financing.
- **Ensure that children's rights are secured in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland,** entrenched as a named group. Of all in society, children's welfare must be the best protected.

Carers

- **Provide recognition and financial support to carers,** who look after the welfare of their sick and dependent relatives.
- **Establish a respite care system** that is flexible, reliable and meets the needs of carers and those they care for.

Disability

Alliance believes that people with disabilities should have equal rights and opportunities within an inclusive society. They must be able to access mainstream services in all areas.

- **Improve the efficiency for Disability Living Allowance applications and appeals.**
- **Improve access to public facilities** for all disabled people. This will be achieved through comprehensive access policies.
- **Ensure the choice of mainstream education** is available for people with disabilities.

Housing

Alliance will provide the leadership necessary for the Housing Executive to tackle the blight of paramilitary graffiti and flags, which contribute to hostile living environments for so many in Northern Ireland.

- **Break the cycle of homelessness,** by creating linkages between employment, health and social services.
- **Compel the Housing Executive to tackle the problem of unruly and disruptive tenants.** Alliance would also tackle the segregation that has resulted in housing.
- **Earmark resources for the Housing Executive to improve specialist accommodation** for older people and people with disabilities, single homeless persons and those with specialist needs.
- **Ensure adequate public funds to pay for housing arrears or repairs.** Alliance would not increase rents of those living in Housing Executive properties above the rate of inflation.

10. Celebrating Arts Works

insularity costs

Celebrating Arts Works

insularity costs

Alliance believes the promotion of culture, arts and leisure are integral to the quality of life of every citizen, the building of community self-esteem, economic regeneration, and the projection of a positive image of Northern Ireland. Nurturing and harnessing creativity throughout the province is central to this process.

Alliance supports the appreciation and expression of our rich and varied cultural identities. We believe that cultural participation and self-expression should be developed in the context of respect and understanding of our own and others' heritage.

Alliance priorities for are to—

- **Increase the level of appreciation** of, and participation in, arts, culture and leisure activities. This will be based upon the principles of social inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- **Establish an integrated strategy for cultural tourism** — a full appreciation of the unique cultural heritage products we have to offer, how these can be developed, managed and projected to a wider audience. This can enhance Northern Ireland's image as a quality venue and destination.
- **Ensure that creative education** is part of the schools curriculum, as well as in all professional, vocational and academic courses.
- **Increase investment in the creative industries.** In conjunction with the Creative Enterprise Research Programme, we are committed to a co-ordinated approach, encouraging innovation and enterprise.
- **Support the appreciation and promotion of Cantonese, Irish and Ulster-Scots**
Alliance recognises the linguistic diversity within our community, and believes that all ethnic minority languages practiced in Northern Ireland deserve as much protection as local languages.
- **Provide easier and more affordable access to museums, galleries and other places of interest, for all socially excluded groups.** We would make this a criteria for public funding for such places.
- **Enhance the Library Service.** We would adequately resource and publicise initiatives such as mobile libraries, which will particularly benefit older people and those living in rural areas.
- **Extend the Football Offences Act (1991)** and other relevant legislation to Northern Ireland, to deal with sectarian and racist chanting at local sports grounds.

11. Internationalism Works

isolationism costs

Internationalism Works

isolationism costs

Alliance is a pro-European and internationalist party. We are proud members of ELDR (the European Liberal Democratic and Reform party), and of Liberal International, in association with the European and international liberal families.

It is important that Northern Ireland looks beyond its own problems and engages with the wider world. Northern Ireland has much to gain economically and culturally from engagement with others, and can learn many important lessons, just as Northern Ireland has much to give to the world.

Europe

Alliance prides itself on its firm commitment to Europe. European membership has been an enormous benefit to both the United Kingdom, and in particular Northern Ireland, through promoting economic growth and prosperity, protecting the environment, and supporting agriculture. The EU has helped to promote human rights multiculturalism. We strongly believe that the best future for Northern Ireland is as an integrated region within a deepening and widening European Union. But equally, there is a duty upon the European Union to become much more open and transparent, and meaningful to the citizens of Europe that it serves.

- **Alliance supports the United Kingdom's entry into the Euro at the earliest appropriate opportunity.** Membership of the Euro will bring net benefits to local businesses through greater economic certainty and confidence, lower interest rates, lower inflation, a more favourable climate for investment, greater price transparency, competition and efficiency, more efficient use of resources, reduced transaction costs, and the elimination of risk associated with unstable and fluctuating exchange rates.

Alliance priorities for are to—

- **Reform of the EU's institutions** to make them more open, democratic and efficient.

Alliance supports the creation of a European Constitution.

- **Empowering the European Citizen.** Institutions should become more accountable and transparent. People should be made more aware of their rights as European citizens.
- **Further enlargement of the EU** to include new emerging democracies in Eastern Europe on top of the recent successful expansion to include 25 nations. Alliance is further committed to a Europe that will offer peace, stability and liberty to those threatened by war or oppression.
- **Developing and Reinforcing the Single Market.** All member states should be encouraged to comply with their requirements under this development.
- **Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.**
- **Fighting European organised crime.** Alliance will advocate that the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland work more closely with our European partners.
- **Co-operation with fellow members of the European Democratic and Reform Party (ELDR)** to achieve our aims in these areas.

Global Affairs

As a liberal internationalist party, Alliance supports an international system based on human rights, justice, equality of opportunity, stability, the rule of law and peaceful change.

The international system is today under great change, through growing interdependence of states, the emergence of greater transnationalism, and continued development of globalisation. The power of state is still strong, but has become more restricted. With a growing global consciousness, human rights abuses, poverty and environmental degradation are becoming world-wide concerns. The continuing technological, communications and scientific revolutions are turning the world into a Global Village.

11. Internationalism Works

isolationism costs

We recognise that these changes can bring great advantages, but they also create new threats and dangers, not least that of global terrorism.

Above all, Alliance is concerned that the positive benefits are not equitably distributed across the globe. Far too many people continue to live in abject poverty. This situation is made even worse through famine, war and conflict, international crime and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Alliance priorities are to—

- **Support the work of global institutions** in promoting global objectives, and, in particular, recognises the central role of the United Nations in maintaining global peace and security. Alliance looks forward to a world based upon the rule of law.
- **Favour the progressive strengthening of global institutions** backing the Reform of the United Nations System, and endorsing the recommendation of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.
- **Urge the UK Government to support the creation of a Standing Rapid Reaction Force for the United Nations.**
- **Call for greater clarity on and consolidation of the grounds for international humanitarian intervention,** to address mass abuse of human rights and the consequences of natural disasters on a more consistent basis.
- **Support the work of the United Nations and NGOs** in promoting democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, and good governance. British Foreign Policy should respect these values.
- **Favour an open and fair international trading system.** The procedures of the WTO should become more transparent.
- **Call in particular on the industrialised world, including the EU and USA, to lower trade barriers to goods from the developing world.**
- **Endorses the realisation of the UN's Millennium Development Goals**
- **Call upon the UK Government and other Governments to meet the UN target of 0.7% of GDP for Overseas.** We further encourage the use of the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index to measure the quality of life in countries.
- **Call for 100% cancellation of debt from the most highly indebted countries,** as burdensome debt repayments prevent scarce resources being invested into development.
- **Support the Make Poverty History** campaign to address developing world debt, for higher aid, and fairer trade. Alliance supports its measures fully. Alliance will continue the fight against slave labour, advocate the end of UK subsidies to arm sales and tying aid to trade.
- **Urge a stronger approach to the fight against HIV/AIDS.** We must increase education programmes and work to make available cheaper mother to child drug treatments.
- **Work to see the swift implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conferences on the Environment and Development held in Rio and Kyoto.** We further support the work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.
- **Support the International Criminal Court,** and wider efforts to establish global rule of law.
- **Further support an enhanced role for NATO in peacekeeping and peace enforcement within Europe.** We further support the creation of a credible Common Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union, linked to a credible defence arm. We will maximise the effectiveness of defence expenditure by increasing co-operation with our NATO allies.

12. Local Accountability Works

bureaucracy costs

Local Accountability Works

bureaucracy costs

Alliance is a strong proponent of representative local democracy. Decisions should be taken as close to the people possible, without compromising the efficiency of the delivery of services.

Alliance councillors have a strong track record of providing quality, but cost-effective services, and making strong and rational representations to other public bodies, such as the Planning Service, Roads Service and the Housing Executive.

Alliance councillors have built up a strong reputation for hard work, of dealing with the range of constituency problems, from planning to policing, from housing to the environment. They listen to the electorate and endeavour to keep them informed of their activities and positions.

Where Alliance has representation, we have been a powerful voice for reason and moderation, and for progressive, cross-community and anti-sectarian politics. People know that they can rely upon Alliance for responsible decision-making.

Alliance has pioneered the concepts of power-sharing, rotation and proportionality on Councils. In Belfast, in particular, where Alliance has held the balance of power for the past eight years, there has been the emergence of more constructive politics. Indeed, Alliance has ensured that Belfast has seen its first ever holders of civic office from the Nationalist tradition.

Alliance has played a major role in improving the image of local government, and downplaying the constitutional and sectarian battles within Council chambers.

The next four years are set to involve many challenges for Local Government, including promoting recycling and dealing with the rising costs of waste management, and developing local policing and community safety.

These elections are likely to be the last for the current Councils. Alliance recognises that there is a trade-off to be made between the number of District Councils and their powers. Accordingly, Alliance believes that a reduction in numbers from 26 to 15 would be most appropriate.

Alliance believes that District Councils provide an important civic role, and are crucial to providing local democratic accountability. Alliance favours giving Councils increased responsibilities with respect to planning decisions, though not strategic planning, some roads functions, libraries and a bigger, but still secondary role, with respect to community relations. Councils should also be given greater functions in relation to economic development and urban regeneration, and a power of general well-being so that they can engage in community planning.

Alliance is fielding a very diverse team. In Local Government, the stereotype of a councillor is a retired person. Only three, or 6%, of our candidates are over 65. Indeed, the average age is well below 50. Alliance is building up critical mass of candidates aged below 40. Alliance brings together a breadth of skills talents, and experiences.

Alliance councillors will work for a Shared Future

- A society where people can live and learn, work and play together
- Expansion of access to integrated education
- Greater funding for local community relations projects
- Tackling paramilitary and sectarian symbols

Alliance councillors will work for Fairer Planning

- Protection of significant buildings and the greenbelt
- Local targets for brownfield development and abolition of VAT on renovations
- Support for giving Councils powers regarding Third Party Appeals

Alliance councillors will work for the Local Environment

- Expansion of kerbside household recycling facilities
- Protection of local natural assets

12. Local Accountability Works

bureaucracy costs

- Promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency

Alliance councillors will work for Better Value for Money

- Continued opposition to punitive water charges
- Keeping local rates down, while providing quality, cost-effective services
- Opposition to the abuse of the Regional Rate

Alliance councillors will work for Cleaner Streets

- Tougher enforcement of the anti-litter laws
- Prompt cleaning up of graffiti
- Tougher penalties and better facilities for dealing with dog-dirt

Alliance councillors will work for the Local Community

- Support for local voluntary and community organisations
- Funding for amateur sport
- Protections of local identity and accountable democracy in the Review of Public Administration

Alliance councillors will work for the Local Economy

- Support for local job creation and economic growth initiatives
- Working for urban regeneration and the development of town centre shopping
- Promoting local tourist facilities

Alliance councillors will work for Community Safety

- Pushing for greater police presence on the streets
- Supporting the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Using good relations with the police to highlight local concerns

Alliance councillors will work for Local Partnership

- Power-sharing on the Council, and the rotation of civic offices
- The use of STV for internal elections and appointments, and weighted majorities on key decisions
- A new strong and enforceable Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Ensuring that all sections of the community are treated fairly in the delivery of services
- Keeping local people informed of the issues affecting them

**Sharing Works
segregation costs**

**Respect Works
bigotry costs**

**Justice Works
gangsterism costs**

**Alliance Works
tribal politics costs**

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
Alliance

88 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE

Tel: 028 9032 4274

Fax: 028 9033 3147

e-mail: alliance@allianceparty.org

www.allianceworks.org