



**STRONG LEADERSHIP
A BRIGHTER, MORE SECURE FUTURE**

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We have a plan for every stage of your life:

FOR THE BEST START IN LIFE

We will continue to increase spending on the NHS, employ 1,000 extra nurses and midwives, expand the health visitor service and make it easier to see your GP – so you know you will always have access to a free and high quality health service when you need it most.

FOR YOUR SCHOOL YEARS

We will reform Scottish education, build a system where every child gets the best possible start in life and have zero tolerance for failure – so you have the skills you need to succeed.

TO SECURE YOUR FIRST JOB

We will create 10,000 new apprenticeships every year; take everyone earning less than £12,500 out of Income Tax altogether and pass a law to ensure we have a Tax-Free Minimum Wage in this country; and continue to create a fairer welfare system where benefits are capped to the level that makes work pay – so you are rewarded for working hard and doing the right thing.

AS YOU RAISE YOUR FAMILY

We will extend the Help to Buy scheme further in Scotland, reintroduce the Right to Buy and launch a new Step-by-Step scheme to gradually help tenants own their own home – and provide extended and more flexible childcare support – so you are able to work whilst having the security of your own home in which to raise your family.

WHILE YOU GROW OLDER

We will not raise VAT, National Insurance contributions or Income Tax but we will raise the 40p Income Tax threshold to £50,000 and take the family home out of tax by increasing the effective Inheritance Tax threshold for married couples and civil partners to £1 million – so you can keep more of your income and pass it on to future generations.

AND WHEN YOU RETIRE

We will continue to increase the Basic State Pension by at least 2.5 per cent through the triple lock, give you the freedom to use your pension savings as you want and pass them on tax-free – so you can have the dignity and security you deserve in your old age.

The next Conservative Government will secure a brighter future for you, your family and Britain.



On your side, at every stage of your life

Over the last five years, we have put our country back on the right track. Five years ago, Britain was on the brink. As the outgoing Labour Treasury Minister put it with brutal candour, ‘there is no money’. Since then, we have turned things around.

Britain is now one of the fastest growing major economies in the world. We are getting our national finances back under control. We have halved our deficit as a share of our economy. More people are in work than ever before. Britain is back on its feet, strong and growing stronger every day.

This has not happened by accident. It is the result of difficult decisions and of patiently working through our long-term economic plan. Above all, it is the product of a supreme national effort, in which everyone has made sacrifices and everyone has played their part.

It is a profound Conservative belief that our country is made great not through the action of government alone, but through the flair, the ingenuity and hard work of the British people – and so it has proved these last five years.

We can be proud of what we have achieved so far together, and especially proud that as we have taken hard decisions on public spending, we have protected the National Health Service, with 9,500 more doctors and 6,900 more nurses, and ensured generous rises in the State Pension.

Our friends and competitors overseas look at Britain, and they see a country that is putting its own house in order, a country on the rise. They see a country that believes in itself. But our national recovery remains a work in progress. It is fragile, and with the wrong decisions, it could easily be reversed.

So the central questions at this election are these: how do we maintain our economic recovery, upon which our ambitions for our country depend? And how do we make sure that the recovery benefits every one of our citizens, at every stage of their lives?

This Manifesto sets out our plan to do just that. It is a plan for a better future – for you, for your family. It is a plan for every stage of your life. For your new-born baby, there will be the world's best medical care. For your child, there will be a place at an excellent school. As you look for your first job, we are building a healthy economy that provides a good career for you with a decent income. As you look for that first home, we will make sure the government is there to help. As you raise your family, we will help you with childcare. And as you grow older, we will ensure that you have dignity in retirement. Throughout, we will make sure that if you or your family fall ill, you will always be able to depend on our cherished National Health Service to give you the care you need.

And in an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world, we will fulfil the most basic duty of government – to defend our country and keep it safe.

But all of these things depend on a strong and growing economy. So as you consider how to vote, I hope you will ask this: which party is best placed to keep our economy strong? The team which has delivered the growing economy we have today, which created more jobs since 2010 than the rest of the European Union put together; or the party which left behind a ruined economy just five short years ago?

Now is a time to build on the progress we have made, not to put it all at risk. This Manifesto is our plan of action – our plan to take our amazing country forward. Above all, it is a plan for you.

I hope you will give it your support, so that together, we can see through the task we have begun.



DAVID CAMERON
PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY



Securing a Brighter Future for Scotland

Last year, in the independence referendum, we chose to stay part of the United Kingdom.

Now, at this election, Scotland faces another massive decision.

In short, the question facing us is – how do we build on last year’s result and go forward as a country?

I believe we need to come together, using what’s great about our United Kingdom to make Scotland the most dynamic and exciting place to live in Europe.

This Scottish Conservative Manifesto is a blueprint for doing just that.

At its heart is our plan for a thriving economy – because, as Conservatives, we know that the great public services we need can only be afforded if this country pays its own way.

The foundations are there: having taken the difficult decisions after the recession, we’re now the fastest growing country in the western world.

Employment has never been higher – and 100 jobs have been created every day in Scotland since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010.

With those foundations in place, we can then focus on making Scotland a fairer, happier place to live and bring up a family.

So here are my priorities for change:

There are an extra 174,000 jobs in Scotland since we came to power in 2010. But I want an economy that provides another 200,000 jobs in Scotland so that anyone who wants a job can find one.

Too many Scottish schoolchildren, particularly from poorer backgrounds, aren't getting the head start in life they deserve. I back a fresh start on education that gives power to schools and parents to make a difference.

And let’s eradicate forever the social evil which says that, for some, a life on benefits is all they can hope for. The Scottish Conservatives refuse to accept this reality, especially for the young – so we are pledging in this manifesto to create 10,000 new apprenticeships per year by 2020.

It’s a policy to underwrite that most basic social contract – to offer our children the promise of something better than we had for ourselves.

That’s what the Conservative plan is all about: building the foundations every successful country needs, so that you, your children and your family can get on with your lives and make the most of it.

It’s about creating a social conscience which says that all of us, no matter our background, share a basic human right – the right to pursue a happier future for ourselves.

The last year has given me the opportunity to meet so many people in Scotland; Yes supporters, No supporters, and undecideds in the middle.

I love our United Kingdom and last year I campaigned as hard as I could to prevent its break-up.

But my time talking to people in all of these groups showed me that – whether we are Unionist, Nationalist, or somewhere in middle – we all care.

What a strength that is.

We have tremendous energy and passion as a people. With the right plan in place, we have the opportunity to set the bar as high as we like.

I stand where I did last year: for a stronger Scotland in a secure United Kingdom.

This Manifesto shows how we can use that strong foundation to secure a brighter future for you, your family and Scotland.

Let’s seize our moment.



RUTH DAVIDSON
LEADER OF THE SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE & UNIONIST PARTY



A strong economy to help you and your family

Our commitment to you:

Your job, your home, the mortgage you pay, the school your children go to, your local hospital, your pension – all these things depend on a strong economy. So we will carry on working through our long-term economic plan. We will:

- *keep our economy secure by running a surplus so that we start paying down our debts*
- *increase the tax-free Personal Allowance to £12,500 and the 40p Income Tax threshold to £50,000*
- *commit to no increases in VAT, National Insurance contributions or Income Tax*
- *crack down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance and ensure those who can afford to pay the most do*
- *pursue our ambition to become the most prosperous major economy in the world by the 2030s.*

Our long-term economic plan is turning around Britain's economy. Five years ago, Britain was reeling from the chaos of Labour's Great Recession; in 2014 we were the fastest growing of all the major advanced economies – last year, we grew 75 per cent faster than Germany, three times faster than the Eurozone and seven times faster than France. Five years ago, the budget deficit was more than 10 per cent of GDP, the highest in our peacetime history, and the national debt was rising out of control; today, the deficit is half that level and debt as a share of national income will start falling this financial year.

Industries are coming back to life. Companies are striding into new markets. Manufacturers are returning to our shores. More tech companies are starting up here than anywhere else in Europe. We have overtaken France as the third largest car producer in Europe and there are 760,000 more businesses than in 2010 providing jobs and creating wealth across the country.

The Great Recession has given way to a Great Revival, which is creating on average 1,000 new jobs a day: more than the rest of the European Union combined. This is no accident. It is the product of hard work by people in every part of the country and it is thanks to the success of our long-term economic plan. By halving the deficit,

we have helped to restore confidence to the economy. By maintaining fiscal discipline, we have helped keep mortgage rates lower than they otherwise would be. And by establishing the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), we have ended - permanently - the ability of politicians to cook the books for political gain at the nation's expense. With inflation at a record low, the latest OBR forecasts show that living standards will be higher in 2015 than in 2010, and are set to grow strongly every year for the rest of the decade, with the average family £900 better off. It is only by securing the recovery, dealing with our debts and creating jobs that we can continue to raise living standards. That means sticking to our long-term economic plan; Britain is on the right path.

But the job is not finished. There are clouds on the international horizon. Huge challenges remain at home. We have cut the record deficit we inherited to five per cent of GDP, but that is still too high. Our trade with emerging economies is up, with exports to China more than doubled since 2009, but overall we are still too dependent on slow-growing European markets. Business investment is rising, but we still underinvest compared to other countries. Productivity remains too low. And while prosperity is now spreading around the country, our economic growth remains uneven, too reliant on financial services.

We will finish the job we started in a balanced way. Those with the broadest shoulders have contributed the most to deficit reduction - which is why inequality has fallen, and both child and pensioner poverty are down - and they will continue to do so. We will increase NHS spending every year. We will control spending, eliminate the deficit, and start to run a surplus. We will go from stuck in the red, to back in the black. By building on the foundations we have put in place, we will have a truly national recovery and be able to pursue our ambition for Britain to become the most prosperous major economy in the world by the 2030s.

If we do not stick to our long-term economic plan, we will slip back again, reversing the progress we have made in the last five years. More borrowing – and the extra debt interest that it brings – means there is less money to spend on schools and hospitals. More spending means higher taxes for hardworking people, and interest rates that are higher than they would otherwise be – punishing homeowners, hurting businesses, costing jobs.

And failing to control our debt would be more than an economic failing; it would be a moral failing – leaving our children and grandchildren with debts that they could never hope to repay.

So you face a clear choice. Economic competence, with David Cameron as Prime Minister, following through on our long-term economic plan. Or economic chaos under Labour, with higher taxes, more debt and no plan to fix our public finances, create jobs or build a more secure economy.

Our plan of action:

We will finish the job by eliminating the deficit to keep our economy secure and keep your taxes and mortgage payments down

Our long-term economic plan reflects our values: we as a nation should not be piling up and passing on unaffordable levels of debt to the next generation. We will eliminate the deficit in a sensible and balanced way that will enable us to continue to increase spending on the NHS and cut Income Tax for 30 million working people.

Our deficit reduction plan has two phases. The first will see us continue to reduce Government spending by one per cent each year in real terms for the first two full financial years of the next Parliament, the same rate as over the last five years. That means saving £1 a year in every £100 that Government spends. We don't think there's a business that couldn't do that – and we don't think Government, when it is spending your money, should be any different.

That will require a further £30 billion in fiscal consolidation over the next two years, on top of the £120 billion that we have already identified and delivered over this Parliament. We will find £13 billion from departmental savings, the same rate of reduction as in this Parliament. We will find £12 billion from welfare savings, on top of the £21 billion of savings delivered in this Parliament. And we will raise at least £5 billion from continuing to tackle tax evasion, and aggressive tax avoidance and tax planning, building on the £7 billion of annual savings we have delivered in this Parliament. This £30 billion of further consolidation is necessary to ensure that debt keeps falling as a share of GDP and to deliver a balanced structural current budget in 2017-18, meeting the new fiscal mandate that Parliament voted on earlier this year.

Our commitment goes further than this. A balanced current budget is not enough to deliver a reliable reduction in our level of national debt, which remains far too high in a world of continuing economic challenges. International evidence and Treasury analysis shows that the only way to keep our economy secure for the future is to eliminate the deficit entirely and start running a surplus. Anything less would be to ignore the lessons of the past.

That is why, in the second phase of our deficit reduction plan starting in 2018-19, we are set to move into surplus, with the Government taking in more than it is spending for the first time in 18 years. That means we can start properly paying down our debts and reducing the scale of annual interest payments – reducing the UK's vulnerability to future shocks by fixing the roof while the sun is shining. We will achieve this by continuing to control government spending in 2018-19, no longer cutting it in real terms, but instead growing it in line with inflation.

From 2019-20, after a surplus has been achieved, spending will grow in line with GDP. A new fundamental principle of fiscal policy, monitored by the independent OBR, will ensure that in normal economic times, when the economy is growing, the Government will always run a surplus in order to reduce our national debt and keep our economy secure, with a state neither smaller than we need nor bigger than we can afford. Total government spending as a share of our national income at the end of the next Parliament is forecast to be very slightly higher than in the year 2000, the year before Labour lost all control of spending and the national debt started its longest rise for hundreds of years.

Our approach is focused on reducing wasteful spending, making savings in welfare, and continuing to crack down on tax evasion and aggressive avoidance. This means that we can commit to no increases in VAT, Income Tax or National Insurance. Tax rises on working people would harm our economy, reduce living standards and cost jobs. Instead, as we reduce the deficit, we will cut Income Tax, as we have done over the last five years: during the next Parliament, we will increase the tax-free Personal Allowance to £12,500 and the higher rate threshold to £50,000, so you keep more of your hard-earned money.

We will continue to build a stronger, safer and more secure banking system that serves its customers and provides businesses with the finance they need to grow and create jobs

We will make sure our financial services industry is the best regulated in the world with our new system of supervision. Our new Financial Policy Committee will monitor and control the growth of indebtedness and imbalances across the whole economy – a vital task that was totally ignored in the run up to the financial crisis. Our tough new Financial Conduct Authority will protect consumers and ensure that financial markets work for the benefit of the whole economy. To protect hardworking taxpayers from future banking crashes, we will finish the process of ring-fencing banks' high street branches from their investment arms by 2019 at the latest. In order to ensure that new pay structures for bankers rebuild trust and reduce short-termism, we will ensure that Britain continues to have the toughest regime of bonus deferral and clawback of any financial centre. We will continue to sell the Government's stakes

in the bailed-out banks and building societies in order to deliver value for money for taxpayers and support the economy. Hardworking taxpayers supported the banks during the financial crisis and so the banks should in turn support them during the recovery – that is why we will keep the bank levy in place and restrict established banks' ability to pay less tax by offsetting their profits against past losses.

We will make the banks work for you

Our plan is to ensure banks help secure our recovery and back businesses to create jobs and growth in our economy. We capped payday lenders, made it easier for you to switch your bank account and will continue to support the credit union movement in making financial services more accessible. We will continue the successful Funding for Lending scheme into 2016. We will help new and existing challenger banks to inject fresh competition into the market for personal current accounts, mortgages and business loans, including through the British Business Bank, while backing the financial technology revolution. We will improve our support for investment into start-ups and roll-out our innovative Help to Grow scheme, which will plug a £1 billion finance gap for firms that are looking to expand, invest and take on new employees.

We will continue to lead the world on tax and transparency

Tackling tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance and tax planning is an important part of our long-term economic plan. We will increase the annual tax charges paid by those with non-domiciled status, ensuring that they make a fair contribution to reducing the deficit, and continue to tackle abuses of this status. We will lead international efforts to ensure global companies pay their fair share in tax, as David Cameron did at the G8 Summit in Northern Ireland in 2013, which secured significant international progress on fairer tax rules and full transparency over who really owns companies. We will push for all countries to sign up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; review the implementation of the new international country-by-country tax reporting rules and consider the case for making this information publicly available on a multilateral basis. We will ensure developing countries have full access to global automatic tax information exchange systems and continue to build the capacity

of tax authorities in developing countries. We are also making it a crime if companies fail to put in place measures to stop economic crime, such as tax evasion, in their organisations and making sure that the penalties are large enough to punish and deter.

We will rebalance our economy

In Scotland, we have seen 174,000 more people in work, 37,600 more businesses and 56,700 fewer Jobseeker's Allowance claimants since the last General Election. We

are committed to a truly national recovery, benefiting all parts of our country. We have devolved powers to Scotland and Wales, and set out long-term economic plans to raise the growth rate of all parts of England, bringing areas which have grown more slowly up to at least the national average. We will deliver in full the historic City Deal for Glasgow and we welcome the proposals for further City Deals for Aberdeen and Inverness. We will continue discussions with our local partners and the Scottish Government on how to take these proposals forward.



Better roads, trains and modern communications

Our commitment to you:

You depend on infrastructure at every stage of your life: to go to school, to go to work, to enable businesses to grow and create jobs for your children and grandchildren. We have a plan of action that will improve your roads, railways, airports and internet connections. We will:

- *invest in infrastructure to attract businesses and good jobs across the whole of the UK*
- *make your life easier, with more and faster trains, more roads and cycle routes*
- *roll out universal broadband and better mobile phone connections, to ensure everyone is part of the digital economy.*

Under Labour, road and rail were starved of resources, while too many people were stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide. This meant packed trains, potholes, patchy broadband coverage – businesses held back and cities left behind. Turning these problems around takes time.

But because we have made savings elsewhere, we have been able to make significant investments in infrastructure. We will commit, alongside running a surplus, to increase our capital spending- investment in infrastructure – at least in line with our national income. We have set out a plan to invest over £100 billion in our infrastructure over the next Parliament.

This will fund the biggest investment in rail since Victorian times, and the most extensive improvements to our roads since the 1970s. And it will give us the most comprehensive and cheapest superfast broadband coverage of any major European country.

Our plan of action:

We will support motorists and invest in our roads, to save you time and money

We abolished Labour's fuel duty escalator, and instead have frozen fuel duty, delivering the longest duty freeze in 20 years. We will invest £15 billion in roads. This will include over £6 billion in the northern road network, with the dualling and widening of the A1 north of Newcastle part of the investment. We will continue to challenge the Scottish Government to commit to dualling the A1 in Scotland too and push for the introduction of a Road Maintenance Fund to help Scottish councils with road repairs.

We will extend support for community transport providers

Community- and charity-run buses are essential to rural Scotland. For older people especially, these are often the only direct link to health care as well as friends, family or recreation. We believe the National Concessionary Travel Scheme should be aligned with the State Pension Age and extended beyond commercial operators to community transport and the Scottish Government should reimburse the full value of a ticket. We would also introduce a start-up transport capital fund to encourage the development of new networks. The fund would also provide support to install ticketing machines in vehicles to deal with the extension of the NCTS.



We will make motoring greener and promote cycling, to protect your environment

Our aim is for almost every car and van to be a zero emission vehicle by 2050 – and we will invest £500 million over the next five years to achieve it. We want to double the number of journeys made by bicycle and will invest over £200 million to make cycling safer, so we reduce the number of cyclists and other road users killed or injured on our roads every year.

We will deliver faster internet, to help you work and communicate more easily

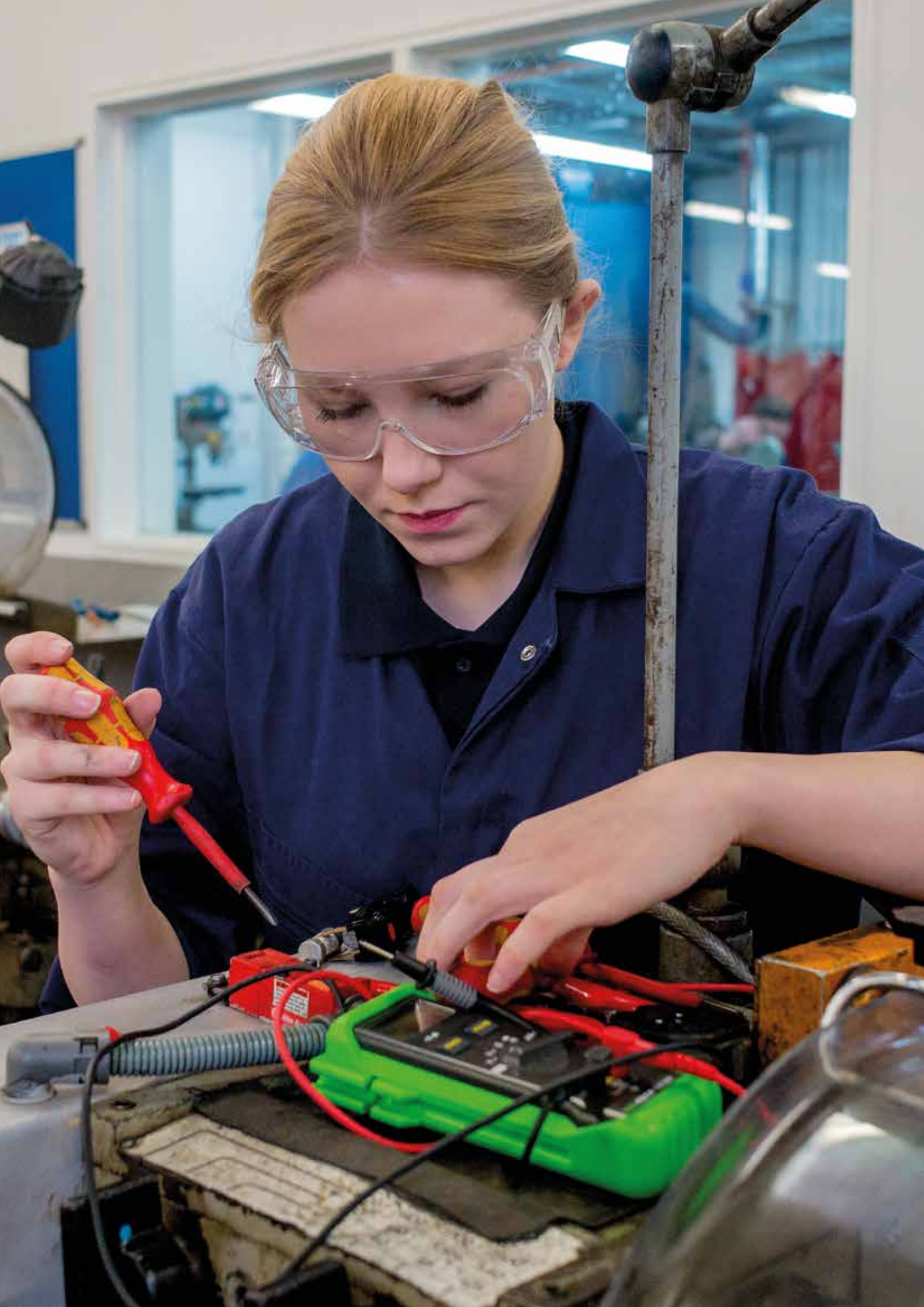
We will secure the delivery of superfast broadband in urban and rural areas to provide coverage to 95 per cent of the UK by the end of 2017, and we will ensure no one is left behind by subsidising the cost of installing superfast capable satellite services in the very hardest to reach areas. We will also release more spectrum from public sector use to allow greater private sector access. And we have set an ambition that ultrafast broadband should be available to nearly all UK premises as soon as practicable.

We will refocus and double the funding of Community Broadband Scotland

In addition to the superfast rollout, there are several alternative broadband solutions that are available to customers. Currently, the Scottish Government is funding a Community Broadband Scotland scheme through which communities can apply for funding to get broadband delivered through a range of alternative solutions. It is, however, not open to individuals, businesses or third sector organisations. We want to transform CBS into a Rural Broadband Fund, double the amount of its funding to £5m and refocus it so that it offers support to individuals, businesses, third sector and communities which have not yet been reached by the superfast rollout.

We will boost mobile coverage, so you can stay connected

We will hold the mobile operators to their new legally binding agreement to ensure that 90 per cent of the UK landmass will have voice and SMS coverage by 2017. We will continue to invest in mobile infrastructure to deliver coverage for voice calls and text messages for the final 0.3 – 0.4 per cent of UK premises that do not currently have it. We will ensure that Britain seizes the chance to be a world leader in the development of 5G, playing a key role in defining industry standards.



Jobs for all

Our commitment to you:

Whatever stage of life you are at – whether you're looking for your first job out of school, or coming to the end of your career – we will work to help you enjoy the satisfaction and rewards of a decent job. We will:

- *help businesses to create two hundred thousand new jobs in Scotland, so we achieve full employment*
- *give businesses the most competitive taxes of any major economy*
- *back small firms by reviewing business rates*
- *support 10,000 new apprenticeships every year by 2020, so young people acquire the skills to succeed.*

If you want to live in the most vibrant and dynamic country in the world, this election matters. Only the Conservatives have the vision, the optimism, the ambition and the discipline to transform Britain. That's because we know that a decent job is the best weapon against poverty and the best way to provide security for families.

Thanks to the success of our long-term economic plan, Britain is creating more jobs than the 27 other countries of the European Union put together. That means more people with the security of a regular pay packet. Over the past five years, 174,000 new jobs have been created in Scotland; 100 jobs for every single day that we have been in Government.

This represents a transformation in many people's lives; giving families more security; boosting the self-esteem of young people taken on; and providing hope for those who have been unemployed for years.

But we need to go further. We have set out the bold aim of achieving full employment, with the highest employment rate of any major economy. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to start a business and will create another two hundred thousand jobs over the next Parliament. We will abolish long-term youth unemployment, and make sure that all young people are either earning or learning. And we will make

our economy more inclusive, by removing barriers that stop women and disabled people from participating in our workforce.

To achieve this, we will back British businesses: cutting red tape, lowering taxes on jobs and enterprise, getting young people into work, boosting apprenticeships and investing in science and technology. With the Conservatives, Britain will be the best place in Europe to innovate, patent new ideas and set up and expand a business. We aim to be number one in Europe and in the top five worldwide in the World Bank's Doing Business rankings by 2020 and to lead Europe in attracting foreign investment.

Backing business also means helping our farmers and our rural communities. Neglected for 13 years under Labour and 8 years under the SNP, we have started the process of championing and connecting up the countryside. In the coming years, we will go further, helping our farmers, supporting British food around the world and opening up new export markets.

This is all at risk if the Labour Party forms the Government. Their policies to spend more, borrow more and tax more would be catastrophic for Britain's businesses – and for all the families thrown back into the despair of joblessness and financial uncertainty.

Our plan of action:

We will help you secure a good job

We aim to achieve full employment in Scotland, and across the wider UK, with the highest employment rate in the G7, and we will help businesses create two hundred thousand jobs over the Parliament. We have abolished the jobs tax – employers' National Insurance contributions (NICs) for the under 21s – and next year we will do the same for young apprentices under 25. We will continue to help smaller businesses take on new workers through the Employment Allowance, which frees businesses from the first £2,000 of employers' NICs meaning a third of employers pay no jobs tax.

We will boost apprenticeships

Around 30,000 young Scots are still classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) every year. Scottish Conservatives want to make it our priority to expand the number of modern apprenticeships in Scotland to give our young people the chance to develop their skills and work towards meaningful qualifications. We will work with employers and Skills Development Scotland to gradually deliver an additional 10,000 apprenticeships per year by 2020, in particular expanding opportunities for women as well as higher level apprenticeships. We want the new apprenticeships to match the demand for skills across all our industries – well-established or emerging. We will, for example, seek to develop a social enterprise apprenticeship framework to support our voluntary sector.

We will aim to abolish long-term youth unemployment

Our economic plan has helped deliver sharp falls in long-term youth unemployment, taking the numbers of 16-18 year-olds not in education, employment or training to historic lows. We will provide support to those 16-17 year-olds still not in education, employment or training and to those who risk becoming so. Jobcentre Plus advisers will work with schools and colleges to supplement careers advice and provide routes into work experience and apprenticeships. But it is not fair – on taxpayers, or on young people themselves – that 18-21 year-olds with no work experience should slip straight into a life on benefits without first contributing to their

community. So we will introduce tougher Day One Work Requirements for young people claiming out-of-work benefits. We will replace the Jobseeker's Allowance for 18-21 year-olds with a Youth Allowance that will be time-limited to six months, after which young people will have to take an apprenticeship, a traineeship or do daily community work for their benefits. It is also not fair that taxpayers should have to pay for 18-21 year-olds on Jobseeker's Allowance to claim Housing Benefit in order to leave home. So we will ensure that they no longer have an automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit.

We will reward entrepreneurship

To support jobs, we cut Corporation Tax from 28 to 20 per cent over the course of the Parliament, reduced National Insurance bills and capped the rise in business rates. In the next Parliament, we want to maintain the most competitive business tax regime in the G20, and oppose Labour's plans to increase Corporation Tax. We are reviewing the structure of business rates in Scotland and will come forward with policy recommendations ahead of the 2016 Holyrood election. We also want to see local councils support businesses by extending the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme allowing councils to keep all of additional revenue business rates revenue without any Government clawback.

We will protect you from disruptive and undemocratic strike action

Strikes should only ever be the result of a clear, positive decision based on a ballot in which at least half the workforce has voted. This turnout threshold will be an important and fair step to rebalance the interests of employers, employees, the public and the rights of trade unions. We will, in addition, tackle the disproportionate impact of strikes in essential public services by introducing a tougher threshold in health, education, fire and transport. Industrial action in these essential services would require the support of at least 40 per cent of all those entitled to take part in strike ballots – as well as a majority of those who actually turn out to vote. We will also repeal nonsensical restrictions banning employers from hiring agency staff to provide essential cover during strikes; and ensure strikes cannot be called on the basis of ballots conducted years before. We will tackle intimidation of non-striking workers; legislate to ensure trade unions use a transparent opt-in process for

union subscriptions; tighten the rules around taxpayer-funded paid ‘facility time’ for union representatives; and reform the role of the Certification Officer.

We will cut red tape, boost start-ups and small businesses

This Government was the first in post-war history to reduce the burden of regulation. We will cut a further £10 billion of red tape over the next Parliament through our Red Tape Challenge and our One-In-Two-Out rule. This will support our aim to make Britain the best place in Europe, and one of the top five worldwide, to do business by 2020. We will also treble our successful Start-Up Loans programme during the next Parliament so that 75,000 entrepreneurs get the chance to borrow money to set up their own business. We will raise the target for SMEs’ share of central government procurement to one-third, strengthen the Prompt Payment Code and ensure that all major Government suppliers sign up. We have already helped small businesses by increasing the Annual Investment Allowance, reducing the burden of employment law through our successful tribunal reforms and supporting 27,000 new business mentors. We will go further by establishing a new Small Business Conciliation service to mediate in disputes, especially over late payment. The creation of the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) in 2010 has resulted in many improvements to the UK tax system. We will establish the OTS on a permanent basis and expand its role and capacity. We will boost our support for first-time exporters and back the GREAT campaign, so we achieve our goal of having 100,000 more UK companies exporting in 2020 than in 2010 and reach our target of £1 trillion in exports. And we will set a new, significantly higher, permanent level for the Annual Investment Allowance.

We will fight for equal opportunity

Last year alone, 140,000 disabled people found work. But the jobless rate for this group remains too high and, as part of our objective to achieve full employment, we will aim to halve the disability employment gap: we will transform policy, practice and public attitudes, so that hundreds of thousands more disabled people who can and want to be in work find employment. We now have more women-led businesses than ever before, more women in work than ever before and more women on

FTSE 100 boards than ever before. We want to see full, genuine gender equality. The gender pay gap is the lowest on record, but we want to reduce it further and will push business to do so: we will require companies with more than 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay of their male and female employees. Under Labour, women accounted for only one in eight FTSE 100 board members. They represent a quarter of board members today and we want to see this rise further in the next Parliament. We also want to increase the proportion of public appointments going to women in the next Parliament, as well as the number of female MPs.

We will back you at work

Now that the economy is growing strongly again, we have seen the first real-terms increase in the National Minimum Wage since Labour’s Great Recession began. We strongly support the National Minimum Wage and want to see further real-terms increases in the next Parliament. We accept the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission that the National Minimum Wage should rise to £6.70 this autumn, on course for a Minimum Wage that will be over £8 by the end of the decade. We also support the Living Wage and we will continue to encourage businesses and other organisations to pay the it whenever they can afford it. We will extend the Small Business Bonus Scheme in Scotland further to cut business rates for small and medium-sized enterprises that decide to pay their employees a Living Wage, or agree to a phased-in timetable. We will also take further steps to eradicate abuses of workers, such as non-payment of the Minimum Wage, exclusivity in zero-hours contracts and exploitation of migrant workers.

We will continue to invest in science, back our industrial strategies and make Britain the technology centre of Europe

Science is worthwhile in its own right and yields enormous practical benefits too – curing diseases, driving technological innovation, promoting business investment and informing public policy for the better. We ring-fenced the science budget by making difficult choices to reduce spending in other areas. Now we will invest new capital on a record scale – £6.9 billion in the UK’s research infrastructure up to 2021 – which will mean new equipment, new laboratories and new research institutes.



This long-term commitment includes £2.9 billion for a Grand Challenges Fund, which will allow us to invest in major research facilities of national significance, such as the new Alan Turing Institute, and projects such as the Polar Research Ship and Square Kilometre Array. We have boosted research and development tax credits and we will continue to support our network of University Enterprise Zones, ensuring that Britain's world-beating universities are able to make money from the technology they develop. We will support our modern industrial strategies, such as our successful Life Sciences strategy, to help people compete and win in the intense global race for high value, high knowledge jobs. We will work with the Automotive Council in support of our resurgent car industry and direct further resources towards the Eight Great Technologies – among them robotics and nanotechnology – where Britain is set to be a global leader. We have delivered a network of catapult centres – R&D hubs in the technologies of the future – and we will create more to ensure that we have a bold and comprehensive offer in place for Britain's researchers and innovators.

We will support the rural economy and strengthen local communities

We have the land, the technology, and the entrepreneurial flair to enable us to make the most of the economic potential of our rural areas. We will provide rural Britain with near universal superfast broadband by the end of the next Parliament and secure the future of 3,000 rural Post Offices. We will continue to support balanced land reform. The SNP's land reform proposals will have far reaching consequences for the ownership, management and use of land in Scotland. Some of the proposals are in direct conflict with the basic principle of property ownership, which we will staunchly defend. We will, however, support measures to increase transparency of land ownership to, for example, help address tax avoidance. We also believe we need more flexibility for community groups, for which community buyouts are not always the best option. We would open up the Scottish Land Fund to provide continuous funding for long leases alongside community land purchases.

We will champion our new and retiring farmers and food producers

We believe Scotland's tenancy sector requires more

flexibility to allow for new entrants and more land being made available for rent. This would best be achieved by allowing landowners and tenants to come to regular business agreements. We will therefore introduce new Rural Business Tenancies to give future tenants a more flexible option. We also believe legislation needs to be strengthened to account for appropriate compensation paid to 1991 Act tenants if they choose to give up their secure tenancies at any given time. This must go hand in hand with changes to the planning system, which would either allow for a house being built for a retiring farmer on adjacent agricultural land (a “retiring farmer exception”) or allow for a house being built for a new entrant farmer entering a new lease. We will push for further reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. We will promote British food abroad by setting up a Great British Food Unit to help trademark and promote local foods around the world and back British food at home, by guaranteeing that all central government departments purchase food to British standards of production by the end of the Parliament. We will also help consumers to buy British by pushing for country of origin labelling in Europe, particularly for dairy products, following on from our success with beef, lamb, pork and poultry. And we will champion our new Groceries Code Adjudicator, so farmers receive a fair deal from the supermarkets.

We will support our fishing and coastal communities

We will defend our hard-won Common Fisheries Policy reforms, which include ending the scandalous practice of discarding perfectly edible fish and reforming the quota system so that all at-risk species will be fished sustainably by the end of the next Parliament. We will continue to devolve the management of North Sea fisheries to local communities, and rebalance the UK's inland water quotas to smaller, specific locally-based fishing communities.

We will support countryside pursuits

We will protect countryside pursuits including fishing, for all the benefits to individuals, the environment and the rural economy that these activities bring. We will oppose the SNP's proposals to bring back rural sporting rates which could threaten hundreds of rural jobs.



Cutting your taxes and building a fairer welfare system

Our commitment to you:

Our goal is a country that not only rewards those who work hard and do the right thing, but gives everyone – no matter their background – the chance to fulfil their potential. Achieving this means seeing through our major reforms of tax and welfare. We will:

- *cut income tax for 30 million people, taking everyone who earns less than £12,500 out of Income Tax altogether*
- *pass a new law so that nobody working 30 hours on the Minimum Wage pays Income Tax on what they earn*
- *back aspiration by raising the 40p tax threshold – so that no one earning less than £50,000 pays it*
- *cap overall welfare spending, lower the amount of benefits that any household can receive to £23,000 and continue to roll out Universal Credit, to make work pay*
- *bring in tax-free childcare to support parents back into work, and give working parents extended and more flexible childcare.*

Under Labour, those who worked hard found more and more of their earnings taken away in tax to support a welfare system that allowed, and even encouraged, people to choose benefits when they could be earning a living. This sent out terrible signals: if you did the right thing, you were penalised – and if you did the wrong thing, you were rewarded, with the unfairness of it all infuriating hardworking people.

Over the last five years, we have cut people's taxes wherever possible. We have raised the tax-free Personal Allowance to £10,600 from £6,475: over 2.3 million people in Scotland are now keeping more of their hard-earned money and over 260 thousand of the lowest paid are paying no Income Tax at all. We believe that cutting people's taxes is the right thing to do – not only because it is your money, but also because cutting the taxes of the lowest paid and helping them stand on their own two feet is the most effective poverty-tackling measure there is.

The devolution of further powers to the Scottish Parliament will make it a more responsible and

accountable body. They also give Scotland's politicians the chance to debate on new ground. The Scottish Parliament will no longer be solely responsible for spending money; it will be responsible for raising money too. Scottish Conservatives are very clear - we will aim to lower your and your family's tax burden through these new powers.

Real fairness means that where people really cannot work, they must be supported – but where they are able to work, they should. We have made long overdue changes to our welfare system. We have capped benefits so no household can take more in out-of-work benefits than the average working household earns. We have begun to introduce Universal Credit – a way to simplify benefits into a new single payment – so that work always pays. We are reassessing those on incapacity benefits so that help goes to those who really need it. The days of something for nothing are over – and all this has helped to reduce by 900,000 the number of people living in workless households. The number of children living in workless households in Scotland is lowest on record.

In the next Parliament, we will continue to reward hard work: raising the tax-free Personal Allowance so that those working 30 hours on the Minimum Wage pay no Income Tax at all and taking hardworking people out of a 40p higher rate tax band originally meant to capture only the wealthy. And we will see through our welfare reforms, lowering the benefit cap and rolling out Universal Credit, to make the system fairer and reward hard work.

Our plan of action:

We will reward work

A Conservative Government will not increase the rates of VAT, Income Tax or National Insurance in the next Parliament. Instead, we will ease the burden of taxation by raising the tax-free Personal Allowance – the amount you can earn before you start paying tax – to £12,500. This will cut Income Tax for 30 million people and take everyone who earns less than £12,500 out of Income Tax altogether. That means by the end of the decade, one million more people on the lowest wages will be lifted out of Income Tax, and people who work for 30 hours a week on the increased National Minimum Wage will no longer pay any Income Tax at all. We will pass a new law so that the Personal Allowance automatically rises in line with the National Minimum Wage. The new Tax Free Minimum Wage law will be applied from the first Budget after the General Election. The change will update the 1977 ‘Rooker-Wise’ amendment which forced government to uprate tax thresholds in line with inflation, meaning the Personal Allowance will now increase more quickly.

We will back your ambition

The 40p tax rate was only supposed to be paid by the higher earning people in our country. But in the past couple of decades, far too many have been dragged into it. We have already announced an above-inflation increase in the threshold next year. Now we will raise the 40p tax threshold much further, so that no one earning less than £50,000 pays the higher rate of Income Tax. The 800,000 people earning between £42,385 and £50,000 will no longer pay the 40p rate of tax.

We will support you as you raise your family

We will support you, whether you choose to go out to work or stay at home to raise your children. We will back the institution of marriage in our society, enabling married couples to transfer £1,060 of their tax-free income to their husband or wife, where the highest earner is a basic rate tax-payer. This applies to civil partnerships too, and the transferable amount will always rise at least in line with the Personal Allowance. And we will help families stay together and handle the stresses of modern life by continuing to invest at least £7.5 million a year in relationship support.

We will bring in tax-free childcare to help parents return to work, and give give working parents extended and more flexible childcare

We have already legislated to introduce tax-free childcare in the next Parliament - worth up to £2,000 per child per year – to help parents who want to work. We believe that childcare provision should be extended to all two-year-olds from the poorest backgrounds. We will also end birthday discrimination in free childcare provision, where currently children qualify in the term following their third birthday and would instead start provision at a fixed point in the year for all children. However, expanding childcare is only one side of the coin, we also need to look at how to make childcare more flexible, to help meet the circumstances and needs of individual families and find ways to extend nursery provision in Scotland. We will therefore introduce Childcare Credits giving families the choice between public preschools and nurseries and approved private and voluntary sector childcare providers.

We will cap the UK's overall welfare spending, to save you money

We will keep a check on the growth of welfare spending, enabling us to provide a system that is fair to those who need it, and fair to those who pay for it too. Our overall welfare cap will limit the amount that Government can spend on certain social security benefits in the five years from 2015-16. We will freeze working age benefits for two years from April 2016, with exemptions for disability and pensioner benefits – as at present – as well as maternity allowance, statutory maternity pay, statutory paternity pay, statutory adoption pay and

statutory sick pay. We will deliver Universal Credit, in order to provide the right incentives for people to work; target support at those who need it most; reduce fraud and error; and streamline administration of the welfare system. We will work to eliminate child poverty and introduce better measures to drive real change in children's lives, by recognising the root causes of poverty: entrenched worklessness, family breakdown, problem debt, and drug and alcohol dependency.

We will reduce the household benefit cap to make the system fairer

We will lower the maximum amount that a single household can claim in benefits each year from £26,000 to £23,000, so we reward work. We will continue to have exemptions from the cap for those receiving Disability Living Allowance or the Personal Independence Payment.

We will help you back into work if you have a long-term yet treatable condition

We will make sure the hardest to help receive the support they need for a fulfilling life. We will review how best to support those suffering from long-term yet treatable conditions, such as drug or alcohol addiction, or obesity, back into work. People who might benefit from treatment should get the medical help they need so they can return to work. If they refuse a recommended treatment, we will review whether their benefits should be reduced. We will also provide significant new support for mental health, benefiting thousands of people claiming out-of-work benefits or being supported by Fit for Work.

Controlled immigration that benefits Britain

Our commitment to you:

Our plan to control immigration will put you, your family and the British people first. We will reduce the number of people coming to our country with tough new welfare conditions and robust enforcement. We will:

- *keep our ambition of delivering annual net migration in the tens of thousands, not the hundreds of thousands*
- *control migration from the European Union, by reforming welfare rules*
- *clamp down on illegal immigration and abuse of the Minimum Wage*
- *enhance our border security and strengthen the enforcement of immigration rules*
- *develop a fund to ease pressure on local areas and public services.*

Conservatives believe in controlled immigration, not mass immigration. Immigration brings real benefits to Britain - to our economy, our culture and our national life. We will always be a party that is open, outward-looking and welcoming to people from all around the world. We also know that immigration must be controlled. When immigration is out of control, it puts pressure on schools, hospitals and transport; and it can cause social pressures if communities find it hard to integrate.

Between 1997 and 2009, under the last Labour Government, we had the largest influx of people Britain had ever seen. Their open borders policy, combined with their failure to reform welfare, meant that for years over 90 percent of employment growth in this country was accounted for by foreign nationals – even though there were 1.4 million people who spent most of the 2000s living on out-of-work benefits. For the past five years, we have been working to turn around the situation we inherited.

Since 2010, we have stripped more than 850 bogus colleges of their rights to sponsor foreign students; installed proper exit checks at our borders; cracked down on illegal working and sham marriages; made it harder for people to live in the UK illegally, by restricting their access to bank accounts, driving licences and private housing; and reduced the number of appeal routes to stop people clogging up our courts with spurious attempts to remain in the country. All of this has made a difference. Immigration from outside the EU has come down since 2010.

We have seen many more people from the EU coming to Britain than originally anticipated, principally because our economy has been growing so much more rapidly and creating more jobs than other EU countries. As a result, our action has not been enough to cut annual net migration to the tens of thousands. That ambition remains the right one. But it is clearly going to take more time, more work and more difficult long-term decisions to achieve. Continuing this vital work will be our priority over the next five years.

We will negotiate new rules with the EU, so that people will have to be earning here for a number of years before they can claim benefits, including the tax credits that top up low wages. Instead of something-for-nothing, we will build a system based on the principle of something-for-something. We will then put these changes to the British people in a straight in-out referendum on our membership of the European Union by the end of 2017. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen our borders, improve the enforcement of our immigration laws and act to make sure people leave at the end of their visas. Across the spectrum, from the student route to the family and work routes, we will build a system that truly puts you, your family and the British people first.

Our plan of action:

We will regain control of EU migration by reforming welfare rules

Changes to welfare to cut EU migration will be an absolute requirement in the renegotiation. We have already banned housing benefit for EU jobseekers, and restricted other benefits, including Jobseeker's Allowance. We will insist that EU migrants who want to claim tax credits and child benefit must live here and contribute to our country for a minimum of four years. This will reduce the financial incentive for lower-paid, lower-skilled workers to come to Britain. We will introduce a new residency requirement for social housing, so that EU migrants cannot even be considered for a council house unless they have been living in an area for at least four years. If an EU migrant's child is living abroad, then they should receive no child benefit or child tax credit, no matter how long they have worked in the UK and no matter how much tax they have paid. To reduce the numbers of EU migrants coming to Britain, we will end the ability of EU jobseekers to claim any job-seeking benefits at all. And if jobseekers have not found a job within six months, they will be required to leave.

We will tackle criminality and abuse of free movement

We will negotiate with the EU to introduce stronger powers to deport criminals and stop them coming back, and tougher and longer re-entry bans for all those who abuse free movement. We want to toughen requirements for non-EU spouses to join EU citizens, including with an income threshold and English language test. And when new countries are admitted to the EU in future, we will insist that free movement cannot apply to those new members until their economies have converged much more closely with existing Member States.

We will continue to cut immigration from outside the EU

We have already capped the level of skilled economic migration from outside the EU. We will maintain our cap at 20,700 during the next Parliament. This will ensure that we only grant visas to those who have the skills we really need in our economy. We will reform the

student visa system with new measures to tackle abuse and reduce the numbers of students overstaying once their visas expire. Our action will include clamping down on the number of so-called ‘satellite campuses’ opened in London by universities located elsewhere in the UK, and reviewing the highly trusted sponsor system for student visas. And as the introduction of exit checks will allow us to place more responsibility on visa sponsors for migrants who overstay, we will introduce targeted sanctions for those colleges or businesses that fail to ensure that migrants comply with the terms of their visa.

We will strengthen the enforcement of immigration rules

We have introduced a ‘deport first, appeal later’ rule for foreign national offenders. We will now remove even more illegal immigrants by extending this rule to all immigration appeals and judicial reviews, including where a so-called right to family life is involved, apart from asylum claims. We will also implement a new removals strategy to take away opportunities for spurious legal challenge and opportunities to abscond. We will introduce satellite tracking for every foreign national offender subject to an outstanding deportation order or deportation proceedings. And we will implement the requirement for all landlords to check the immigration status of their tenants.

We will tackle people trafficking and exploitation

We have already reintroduced a proper system of exit checks across the country, passed a Modern Slavery Act that will protect people from exploitation, and quadrupled the fines for unscrupulous employers who undercut the Minimum Wage. Now we will introduce tougher labour market regulation to tackle illegal working and exploitation. To crack down further on illegal working, we will harness data from multiple agencies, including Exit Checks data, to identify illegal immigrants and businesses that employ illegal workers. And to incentivise tougher action on employers who do not pay the minimum wage, we will allow inspection teams to reinvest more of the money raised by fines levied on employers.

We will ease pressure on public services and your local community

We are taking unprecedented action to tackle health tourism and will recover up to £500 million from migrants who use the NHS by the middle of the next Parliament. To help communities experiencing high and unexpected volumes of immigration, we will introduce a new Controlling Migration Fund to ease pressures on services and to pay for additional immigration enforcement. To prevent sectors becoming partially or wholly reliant on foreign workers, we will require those regularly utilising the Shortage Occupation List, under which they can bring skilled foreign workers into the UK, to provide long-term plans for training British workers.

We will promote integration and British values

Being able to speak English is a fundamental part of integrating into our society. That’s why we have introduced tough new language tests for migrants and will legislate to ensure that every public sector worker operating in a customer-facing role must speak fluent English. And to encourage better integration into our society, we will also require those coming to Britain on a family visa with only basic English to become more fluent over time, with new language tests for those seeking a visa extension.



Giving your child the best start in life

This is our commitment to you:

Wherever you live, whatever background you come from, we want to build an education system that gives your child the best possible start in life. While Scotland's schools generally provide a good standard of education, we are not keeping up with international benchmarks and it is our most deprived children who bear the heaviest cost. Reform is required, so we will:

- *allow individuals, groups of parents and charities to set up new schools*
- *give more control over the running of schools to head-teachers*
- *introduce a Parent Power Bill to give parents more choice over their children's education*
- *increase the focus on vocational education and deliver more apprenticeships.*

The reason why we need such fundamental change is clear.

Firstly, the attainment gap between children from the most deprived areas and children from the most affluent areas continues to be the biggest challenge of the Scottish education system. We know that children from the top fifth most affluent households are over three times as likely to achieve 5 SCQF passes and almost ten times as likely to achieve 3 or more A Grades in Highers than children from the bottom fifth.

Secondly, Scotland's performance in international league tables also dramatically declined between 2000 and 2006 and has stagnated ever since. Our literacy and numeracy statistics are unacceptable, with thousands of children still leaving school without being functionally literate. This has a huge impact on the opportunities for study and the work available to them in the future.

We know a good education can make a lifetime of difference to children; there is no better route out of poverty. A good teacher who can spot talent and provide essential support can change a child's life forever. We know good qualifications can lead to better jobs, in whichever sector.

Where appropriate we have supported and worked with the Scottish Government and have, for example, welcomed moves towards more flexibility in the curriculum. But our overall vision for education policy is very different to the SNP and Labour.

Where these parties prefer a one-size-fits-all comprehensive system, we believe in diversity, choice and the pursuit of individual children's skills and strengths. Where they want central control of schools, we believe head-teachers and parents should have the power of decision. Where they want to maintain the illusion of free university tuition for all, at the expense of other budgets, we believe in a fairer balance between taxpayers and graduates.

Our educational system needs comprehensive reform and only the Scottish Conservatives are offering it. All of the reforms we propose are based on parent power, diversity, autonomy and equality of opportunity.

We believe that more choice in schools, real autonomy for head-teachers, a focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, schools operating out-with local authority control where there is parental demand and support for that, flexibility in the curriculum and greater support for children with additional support needs have the potential to transform education.

Our plans would ensure children from all backgrounds get the best possible opportunities to pursue the educational path they want, get support to develop their skills and talents, and get the best chance to enjoy a successful career.

The Scottish Government's further and higher education policy underlines the wrong-headed choices

they decided to pursue. Our universities rely more and more on fees from international and English students, with bursaries for Scots from most disadvantaged backgrounds falling.

At the same time, the SNP's college cuts have resulted in unprecedented losses in college places, with around 140,000 places lost - many of these part-time places which were particularly valuable to women, people in work and students with care responsibilities. The number of college places in the key Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subject areas has plummeted by 30,000 on the SNP's watch.

Increasing the focus on vocational education and skills must be a priority. Scottish Conservatives want to see closer cooperation between employers, schools and colleges and would expand the number of apprenticeships available in Scotland by 10,000.

Scotland must be ambitious for excellence in our schools and learn from examples around the world, which have improved standards for all no matter their background.

Our plan of action:

We will allow individuals, groups of parents and charities to set up new schools

Scottish Conservatives do not think the state always knows best. We trust individuals to make their own decisions, we support innovative ideas and we value the contribution our voluntary sector makes to Scottish society. We believe that these principles should extend to education too. A greater diversity of schools, with a variety of approaches, can only help our children develop their talents. We will therefore allow individuals, groups of parents and charities to set up new schools with government funding.

We will introduce a Parent Power Bill to allow schools to be run independently from local authorities

Scotland's one-size-fits-all system has simply not worked for many of our schools and pupils. Alongside the setting up of innovative new schools, we believe that parent groups should be given the opportunity to opt-

out of local authority control if they wish to do so. We will bring back legislation to allow existing state schools to become grant-funded, but run by parent boards.

We will give more power to head-teachers of schools

We also believe that head-teachers of schools remaining within local authority control should be given more powers over the running of their own school. This particularly applies to discipline policy, recruitment of staff and control over the school budget.

We will introduce Opportunity Vouchers to allow parents choose the right school for their child

As part of long-term educational reform, we are convinced we need to take steps to break the monolithic structure of local authority education provision. We will introduce Opportunity Vouchers, which would allow parents to send their child to a state school of their choice, with payment following the pupil. The value of a voucher would be the average local authority cost of education, with additional funding for children from disadvantaged backgrounds or special educational needs.

We will increase focus on basic numeracy and literacy skills

It is crucial that pupils get the best start in their educational journey as a failure to learn the most basic numeracy and literacy skills will have a knock-on effect on their future years. We need a better tracking of performance, improved continuous monitoring and more rigorous testing of these basic skills before pupils leave primary education.

We will increase the provision of vocational education and deliver more apprenticeships

New schools being set up will allow for greater diversity in Scotland's school system. Comprehensive education is not for everybody and we need to ensure children can pursue their talents whatever they may lie. We support the Wood Report and want to see it implemented as soon as possible. This means allowing vocational qualifications to be started while still at school, with close cooperation with businesses and the third sector to

develop skills that Scotland requires. We will work with employers and Skills Development Scotland to deliver an additional 10,000 apprenticeships per year by 2020, in particular expanding opportunities for women as well as higher level apprenticeships.

We will extend childcare provision to all two-year-olds from the poorest backgrounds and end birthday discrimination

There is a wealth of evidence which shows that intervening in the earliest years makes a positive difference. We believe that childcare provision should be extended to all two-year-olds from the poorest backgrounds. We will also end birthday discrimination in free childcare provision, where currently children qualify in the term following their third birthday and would instead start provision at a fixed point in the year for all children.

We will introduce Childcare Credits to give parents maximum flexibility

Expanding childcare is only one side of the coin, we also need to look at how to make childcare more flexible, to help meet the circumstances and needs of individual families and find ways to extend nursery provision in

Scotland. We will introduce Childcare Credits giving families the choice between public preschools and nurseries and approved private and voluntary sector childcare providers.

We will repeal the "Named Person" provisions in the Children and Young People Act

The Named Person policy is the worst example of the SNP's statist approach. Not only are there philosophical objections to the policy but there are practical concerns regarding cost, accountability and indiscriminate information sharing – we will repeal it.

We will introduce a Graduate Contribution to fund more bursaries

Scottish Conservatives do not support upfront tuition fees, but we do believe in a fairer balance between the taxpayer and the graduate when it comes to university tuition by way of a Graduate Contribution scheme. We must ensure that our higher education sector is adequately funded for it to remain competitive and to widen access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds through more bursaries. Relying on tuition fees from foreign and English students, and deep cuts to the college budgets are not the answer.



Protecting and improving our National Health Service

This is our commitment to you:

Our National Health Service is there for you throughout your life: from the day you are born to your final days. We will value and protect it, and implement a common-sense plan to make it even more efficient and effective. We will:

- *continue to increase spending on the NHS, supported by a strong economy*
- *keep the NHS free for you to use*
- *employ 1,000 extra nurses and midwives in Scotland*
- *make it easier for you to access your GP seven days a week.*

The NHS is vitally important to all of us. Founded on the noble but simple ideal that no person should ever have to worry about their healthcare, it is a profound expression of our values as a nation.

Few families in Scotland, if any, have not had cause to give thanks for healthcare which has either helped them or their loved ones. All Scots know of the tremendous dedication shown by all NHS staff – from doctors to porters – without whom the NHS would simply crumble. Their constant willingness to go the extra mile or stay behind another hour is what keeps the NHS going.

However, their dedication points to the very challenges that the NHS faces. For the truth is, it is more stretched than ever. An ageing population is placing more pressure on health and social care services, and amazing but expensive new drugs will push up costs further.

That's why it is right that we continue to back the NHS and improve it for everyone. We will not waver in our commitment to a universal and comprehensive health service, free at the point of use. SNP claims to the contrary are simple scaremongering. The truth is that only by building a strong economy through our long-term economic plan, we will be able to invest more in the NHS, increasing spending in real terms every year. All underpinned by a strong economy, so the NHS you know and love is safeguarded and secured for the years ahead.

Contrast that with the SNP's record in Scotland over the last 5 years. While the Coalition Government

increased health spending in England, which resulted in an additional £1.5bn to the Scottish Government, independent experts confirmed the SNP still failed to protect the overall budget.

The SNP's own figures have shown that waiting times for outpatient appointments are longer than in England and that a higher proportion of people are waiting for longer to be seen in A&E too. They simply can't keep blaming other governments which have no control over the Scottish NHS for their own failings.

People in Scotland want politicians to come up with constructive answers to help our doctors and nurses do their job, and ensure that our families are given the best possible care. That will require extra funding in some areas. But it will also require society to accept a more responsible approach to healthcare. Simply put, we all need to care for our NHS.

Our plan of action:

We will deliver a strong NHS through a strong economy

Over the last five years the Conservatives in Government have increased health spending in England by more than £7 billion above and beyond inflation. We are now able to commit to increasing NHS spending in real terms by a minimum of £8 billion over the next five years, which would mean an additional £800 million for the Scottish

NHS. Scottish Conservatives will demand that all of this spending is passed on to the health service in Scotland in full and not diverted elsewhere.

We will fund an extra 1,000 nurses by reintroducing prescription charges for those who can afford to pay them

Scottish Conservatives pledge an extra 1,000 nurses and midwives for Scotland. Once introduced, we will not let numbers drop below that mark. This will be funded by a reintroduction of prescription charges for those who can pay. We should not be taking money from stretched health budgets to fund prescriptions for people who could afford to pay for them. We would gradually reintroduce prescription charges at levels before they were scrapped, but with exemptions aligned with state pension age and an extended list of long term conditions.

We will introduce a National Carers' Break Guarantee

Carers are the unsung heroes of our society. Without their dedication our public services would collapse under the weight of so many demands. It is right that we give them all the support we can. We will therefore introduce a National Carers' Break Guarantee, which would guarantee a fully funded, flexible week of respite for any carer caring for over 50 hours a week. Currently this support is very inconsistent and many carers don't know what they are entitled to - this must change.

We will expand the Health Visitor service

We believe £20 million should be directed towards health visitors so that they are able to provide all children under 7 with regular development check-ups and a high level of support. Our commitment is to develop a universal national health visiting service in order to tackle the current post-code lottery. Health visitors should be attached to a GP, allowing for greater communication between the health visitor and the family doctor and ensuring more of the children's' and families' needs are picked up on.

We will pilot a network of Recovery Centres to ease A&E pressure

We will pilot Recovery Centres in Scotland, where

intoxicated people, who do not need urgent medical attention, would be sent to by ambulances and the police, thereby easing pressure on A&E. This would be combined with long-term treatment support for regular users. A&E should not be there to mop up drunks after a night out. It is there to help to help people in genuine need. This policy is one of the ways we can ensure doctors' and nurses' valuable time is not wasted.

We will improve people's access to their GP

People are telling us that accessing their local GP is getting harder and harder due to the GP contract introduced by the previous Labour government. Too many people have no choice except between an inaccessible GP and the local A&E department. So we will look to improve out-of-hours provision and expand GP's online presence. We will introduce a fund that would allow for each surgery to have a website and a bespoke online booking system. If you can book your seat on an aeroplane online before you check-in, you should be able to do the same at the local family doctor.

We will promote a culture of personal responsibility in our NHS

More funding can only go so far in meeting the costs of an NHS that too many take for granted. And when demand is also rocketing, we need to find more creative ways as a society to ensure our NHS continues to function. This means a new culture of responsibility. It is not acceptable for patients to miss their appointments, nor to call emergency services for spurious reasons. We need to learn from previous generations who treated our public services with respect. For its part, the NHS needs to focus on early intervention, and provide more information to people so they can make informed choices about their health and lifestyle.

We will continue to pursue the integration of health and social care

We have supported the integration of health and social care right from the beginning. As the population ages, it is becoming more necessary than ever to link up all the stages of a patient's journey. Joined-up approaches have the potential to massively reduce so-called bed-blocking and we will ensure that the implementation of this programme is championed.

Enabling you to enjoy our heritage, creativity and sports

Our commitment to you:

Wherever you live in the country, we want you to be able to enjoy the best our culture and sports have to offer. We will:

- *keep our major national museums and galleries free to enter*
- *build on our Commonwealth Games, Olympic and Paralympic legacy, and deliver the Rugby and Cricket World Cups and the World Athletics Championships*
- *promote Scottish sporting excellence*
- *freeze the BBC licence fee, to save you money*
- *support our creative industries and defend a free media.*

Two sporting events have defined our nation in the last few years. Glasgow's Commonwealth Games showed off the best of Scotland and left a legacy that has rejuvenated the city.

London's Olympic and Paralympic Games captured the world's imagination and showed that when the pressure is on, we deliver; when the stakes are high, we come together; when it comes to taking on the world, we can win.

The UK may not be the biggest country, but our museums are second to none. In music, art, fashion, theatre, design, film, television and the performing arts, we have an edge. Conservatives understand these things do not just enhance our national prestige and boost our economy; they help tie our country together, strengthening the bonds between all of us.

That's why, despite all the economic chaos we inherited, we have put over £8 billion of public and Lottery funding into the arts, heritage, museums and galleries during the last five years. We have also increased the share of National Lottery funding going to good causes.

Our plan of action:

We will support our world-leading museums, galleries and heritage

We support the retention of free entry to our major national museums and galleries. We will enable our cultural institutions to benefit from greater financial autonomy to use their budgets as they see fit. Over the last five years, we have made sure that arts funding benefits the whole of the UK. We significantly increased National Lottery funding for heritage and we will continue to support essential roof repairs for our cathedrals and churches, along with other places of worship.

We will support our media

A free media is the bedrock of an open society. We will deliver a comprehensive review of the BBC Royal Charter, ensuring it delivers value for money for the licence fee payer, while maintaining a world class service and supporting our creative industries. That is why we froze the BBC licence fee and will keep it frozen, pending Charter renewal. And we will continue to 'top-slice' the licence fee for digital infrastructure to support superfast broadband across the country. We will continue to support BBC Alba being included on Freeview.

We will defend press freedom

We will continue to defend hard-won liberties and the operation of a free press. But alongside the media's rights comes a clear responsibility, which is why we set up the public, judge-led Leveson Inquiry in response to the phone-hacking scandal, created a new watchdog by Royal Charter and legislated to toughen media libel laws. Because the work of the free press is so important we will offer explicit protection for the role of journalists via the British Bill of Rights and we will ban the police from accessing journalists' phone records to identify whistle-blowers and other sources without prior judicial approval. Local newspapers are an important source of information for local communities and a vital part of a healthy democracy. To support them as they adapt to new technology and changing circumstances, we believe the Scottish Government should consult on the introduction of a business rates relief for local newspapers.

We will support our creative industries

The creative industries have become our fastest-growing economic sector, contributing nearly £77 billion to the UK economy - driven in part by the tax incentives for films, theatre, video games, animation and orchestras we introduced. Our support for the film industry has resulted in great British films and encouraged Hollywood's finest to flock to the UK. We will continue these reliefs, with a tax credit for children's television next year, and expand them when possible. We will protect intellectual property by continuing to require internet service providers to block sites that carry large amounts of illegal content, including their proxies. And we will build on progress made under our voluntary anti-piracy projects to warn internet users when they are breaching copyright. We will work to ensure that search engines do not link to the worst-offending sites.

We will continue to support tourism in our country

Our tourism industry already supports 200 thousand jobs in Scotland and accounts for almost a tenth of all employment here. Scotland is renowned world over as one of the greatest destinations for culture, scenery or golf. But we must do more. We will simplify and speed up visa issuance for tourists. And because tourism is an industry that depends more than most on young people, we will step up efforts to recruit more apprentices into the business.

We will build on our Commonwealth Games, Olympic and Paralympic legacy

We want our sportsmen and women to win even more medals in Rio 2016 than they did in London 2012. So we will continue to support elite sports funding as part of our Olympic and Paralympic legacy. Across Britain, we will deliver the Rugby World Cup in 2015, the World Athletics Championship in 2017, IPC World Championships in 2017 and the Cricket World Cup in 2019. Meanwhile, Scotland will co-host the first European Sports Championship in 2018, maximising the opportunities for tourism and jobs. We will support new sports in the UK, in particular through greater links with the US National Football League, the National Basketball Association and Major League Baseball, with the ultimate ambition of new franchises being based here.

We will introduce pilots that would bring back alcohol at football

There seems no rational reason why ordinary football fans should not enjoy the same rights as fans who attend other sports and enjoy a drink in the stadium. Scottish football fans have shown themselves to be amongst the best in the world, so we believe – and the clubs believe – that it is time to change. We believe the sport has moved on and will therefore introduce a series of pilots across football stadia to examine the best way to enhance the visitor experience without compromising safety.

Helping you build the Big Society

Our commitment to you:

Building the Big Society is about involving the people, neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities of Britain in the great task of improving our country – and giving young people the power and opportunity to play a real part in their community. We will:

- *extend National Citizen Service to Scotland, so children can learn new skills and meet young people from different walks of life*
- *promote equal treatment and equal opportunity for all in a society proud of its tolerance and diversity*
- *give more power to our local communities and continue to challenge SNP centralisation*
- *give those who work for a big company and the public sector a new workplace entitlement to Volunteering Leave for three days a year, on full pay.*

The Big Society is a vision of a more engaged nation, one in which we take more responsibility for ourselves and our neighbours; communities working together, not depending on remote and impersonal bureaucracies. Of course, there are many tasks which require the resources and grip of government. But there are also many areas of national life in which we need more people to step forward, take responsibility and play their part. This is about a national culture change, saying to everyone in Britain: ask what you can do for your community and your country.

In the past five years, there has been real progress. Volunteering is now at a ten-year high, with over three million more adults giving their time last year than in the year to March 2010. Charitable donations are on the up, with one million more people giving to good causes than at the end of the last Parliament. There are social enterprises helping people into jobs through the Work Programme. We have launched the world's first social investment bank, introduced more social impact bonds than the rest of the world combined and highlighted the great work done in communities with the Big Society Awards and the Prime Minister's Points of Light award.

Across the rest of the UK a generation of teenagers has undertaken National Citizen Service (NCS), developing their skills, broadening their horizons and growing in

confidence; over the next five years, we will expand NCS to Scotland – so it becomes a rite of passage for young people in our country. We will give more people the power and support to run a school, start their own social enterprise, and take over their own local parks, landmarks and pubs. We will support communities who want to have more say in planning decisions or in how public services are run. And we will take new steps to encourage volunteering, enabling more people to join the unsung heroes who are the backbone of communities across Britain.

Our plan of action:

We will expand National Citizen Service

Over 130,000 young people have graduated from NCS in the rest of the UK. The Conservative Government has now guaranteed a place on NCS for every 16 and 17-year-old who wants one and we believe the service should be extended to Scotland too. In addition to this, we will increase the number of cadet units in schools, so that more students have the chance to learn skills such as leadership and self-reliance.



We will innovate in how we deliver public services

We have pioneered ways to deliver high-quality public services, including through further involvement of the voluntary sector. For example, our Work Programme has helped harness the talent and energy of charities to help people turn their lives around and find their way back into work. We will examine ways to build on this type of innovative approach in the future. We have also pioneered the use of social impact bonds and payment-by-results, and we will look to scale these up in the future, focusing on youth unemployment, mental health and homelessness.

We will introduce a Community Right to Challenge

While the Scottish Government copied some elements of the Localism Act in Scotland, it could have gone a lot further in devolving power to local communities. We would introduce a new Scottish Community Right to Challenge, which would give community and voluntary bodies the right to express interest in taking over a particular council-run service. The local authority in question would be required to respond to this challenge and unless there are reasonable grounds for refusal the council would have to run a procurement exercise where the services would be opened up to bids.

We will help you volunteer and support action to help the vulnerable

We will support the Prince of Wales' Step Up To Serve initiative, encouraging young people to serve in their

community. And we will make volunteering for three days a year a workplace entitlement for people working in large companies and the public sector. People could, for example, volunteer for a local charity or serve as a school governor. We have always believed that churches, faith groups and other voluntary groups play an important and longstanding role in this country's social fabric, running foodbanks, helping the homeless, and tackling debt and addictions, such as alcoholism and gambling. We have already introduced tougher regulation of gambling, capped payday lending and backed financial inclusion, and will continue to support action that helps vulnerable people get the assistance they need.

We will champion equal rights and correct past wrongs

The historic introduction of gay marriage has helped drive forward equality and strengthened the institution of marriage. But there is still more to do, and we will continue to champion equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people. We will build on the posthumous pardon of Enigma codebreaker Alan Turing, who committed suicide following his conviction for gross indecency, with a broader measure to lift the blight of outdated convictions of this nature. Thousands of British men still suffer from similar historic charges, even though they would be completely innocent of any crime today. Many others are dead and cannot correct this injustice themselves through the legal process we have introduced while in government. So we will introduce a new law that will pardon those people, and right these wrongs.



Making government work better for you

Our commitment to you:

The Government is the servant of the British people. Every pound spent must be scrutinised, and Government run as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will:

- *save you money by cutting government waste*
- *put more of the essential services you use online, to make them more convenient*
- *continue to make government more transparent, so you can hold us to account for how your money is being spent*
- *reform the Scottish Parliament into a responsible, accountable and transparent body.*

Government is the servant of the British people, not their master. That simple fact was forgotten when Labour was in power. Quangos grew in number, wasteful projects proliferated and the bureaucracy swelled – symptoms of a Government that believed it always knew best.

Conservatives have brought in a new approach. We are determined to measure success not by how much money is spent, but how much it improves people's lives. Whitehall is now leaner and smaller than at any time since the Second World War. We have abolished or merged over 300 quangos. We have moved paperwork online. We have shone a bright light on Government spending – requiring all central government spending over £25,000 to be published online. We have also ensured that people receive a transparent breakdown of how their taxes are spent.

In the next five years, we will ensure this efficiency revolution continues. We will also continue to reform our political system: make votes of more equal value through long overdue boundary reforms, reducing the number of MPs and ensuring the Electoral Commission does more to tackle voting fraud.

In Scotland, the Parliament will become one of the most powerful sub-state legislatures in the world. The Scotland Act 2012 and the Smith Commission recommendations, once in place, vastly expand Scottish tax-raising as well as spending powers. This makes independent fiscal oversight an absolute necessity.

Whereas the UK Government set up an independent Office for Budget Responsibility within weeks in power, an equivalent body does not exist in Scotland. The Scottish Fiscal Commission needs to be strengthened to ensure its full independence from Government, with broader powers over producing devolved tax revenue forecasts and analysing Scottish Government tax and spend policy.

However, it's not only devolution that changed the Scottish political landscape. The 2011 Scottish Parliamentary Election result, and the consequent SNP majority in the Chamber as well as Parliamentary Committees, has highlighted the need for reform to ensure proper legislative scrutiny and accountability in a Parliament without a second chamber. Scottish Conservatives have proposed a series of changes to our Committees and Parliamentary procedure in order to strengthen the Parliament's ability to hold the government of the day to account.

These measures will help to restore public confidence in British and Scottish politics.

Our plan of action:

We will cut government waste

We have reduced the cost of government, by selling empty buildings, managing big projects better, shrinking the Civil Service, reforming pensions, moving more services online, and improving contracting. We plan a further £10 billion annual savings by 2017-18 and £15-20 billion in 2019-20.

We will deliver better public services and more open government

We have supported the growth of public service mutuals - organisations that are owned by their staff and deliver public services. We want more of them, so we will guarantee a 'right to mutualise' within the public sector. This will free up the entrepreneurial spirit of public servants and yield better value for money for taxpayers. Transparency has also been at the heart of our approach to government. Over the last five years, we have been open about government spending, provided access to taxpayer-funded research, pursued open data and helped establish the Open Government Partnership. We will continue to be the most transparent government in the world. We addressed public concern about the influence of money on politics, with a law that strengthened rules governing non-party campaigning and established a register of consultant lobbyists. In the next Parliament, we will legislate to ensure trade unions use a transparent opt-in process for subscriptions to political parties. We will continue to seek agreement on a comprehensive package of party funding reform.

We will make government more efficient

We value our outstanding public servants. Over the last five years, we have made efficiencies in government. We have ruled out the introduction of regional pay in the public sector, which we do not support and will not introduce. Britain's impartial, professional and highly capable Civil Service is admired around the world and is one of our nation's strengths. We will push ahead with reform of the Civil Service to make it more dynamic and streamlined. We will make recruitment to the Civil Service more open and actively look for exceptional talent, especially in areas where capabilities are in short

supply. We will continue to tackle all the bureaucracy of Whitehall that clogs the arteries of government. We will end taxpayer-funded six-figure payoffs for the best paid public sector workers. We will continue to sell unneeded government property and co-locate services wherever possible. We have already created 20 high-quality digital services, which include apprenticeships applications and tax self-assessments. We will save you time, hassle and money by moving more services online, while actively tackling digital exclusion. We will ensure digital assistance is always available for those who are not online, while rolling out cross-government technology platforms to cut costs and improve productivity – such as GOV.UK.

We will reform Parliament

We have improved the operation of the UK Parliament, strengthening its ability to hold the Government to account, with reforms such as the election of Select Committee chairs and the creation of the Backbench Business Committee, which enables backbenchers, for the first time, to determine a significant proportion of the House of Commons' business. We have also passed the Fixed Term Parliament Act, an unprecedented transfer of Executive power. In the next Parliament, we will address the unfairness of the current Parliamentary boundaries, reduce the number of MPs to 600 to cut the cost of politics and make votes of more equal value. We will implement the boundary reforms that Parliament has already approved and make them apply automatically once the Boundary Commission reports in 2018. This will deal with the fact that the current electoral layout over-represents parts of the country where populations have been falling and under-represents parts where populations have been rising.

We will ensure that the House of Lords fulfils its valuable role as a chamber of legislative scrutiny and revision

While we still see a strong case for introducing an elected element into our second chamber, this is not a priority in the next Parliament. We have already allowed for expulsion of members for poor conduct and will ensure the House of Lords continues to work well by addressing issues such as the size of the chamber and the retirement of peers.

We will protect our electoral system to safeguard our democracy

Building on our introduction of individual voter registration, we will continue to make our arrangements fair and effective by ensuring the Electoral Commission puts greater priority on tackling fraud and considers insisting on proof of ID to vote. We will complete the electoral register, by working to include more of the five million Britons who live abroad. We will introduce votes for life, scrapping the rule that bars British citizens who have lived abroad for more than 15 years from voting. We will respect the will of the British people, as expressed in the 2011 referendum, and keep First Past the Post for elections to the House of Commons.

We will reform and strengthen the Scottish Fiscal Commission

For governments to be held to account, strong and independent fiscal oversight is necessary. Currently, the Scottish Fiscal Commission provides commentary on Scottish Government tax forecasts in devolved taxation, but its remit needs to be considerably extended in the face of the significant devolution of fiscal powers. We believe it should be put on a statutory footing and be fully independent from the government. Its functions should include the publication of official tax forecasts of their own and the production of regular analyses of Scottish public finances.

We will issue Scottish personal tax statements

Transparency and accessible information about government revenue and spending must be at the heart of public debate. Last year, millions of people received a personal tax statement from HMRC setting out how much the tax they paid contributed to public expenditure. The full devolution of income tax to Scotland offers an opportunity to issue Scottish versions of these statements, which would also clearly communicate the devolved responsibilities of the Scottish Government.

We will reform Scottish Parliamentary procedure to improve accountability

The last four years have shown that the Scottish Parliament needs procedural reform to be able to properly hold government to account. We believe, for example, that convenors of mandatory committees should be elected by committee members from one of the opposition parties. Reforms to parliamentary questions should also be pursued, with more time for principal opposition spokespersons and a more representative allocation of questions.



Helping you to buy a home of your own

Our commitment to you:

The chance to own your own home should be available to everyone who works hard. We will:

- *help to keep mortgage rates lower by continuing to work through our long-term economic plan*
- *extend Help to Buy across the UK and in Scotland to help more people onto and up the housing ladder, and introduce a new Help to Buy ISA to support people to saving for a deposit*
- *reintroduce the Right to Buy in Scotland and launch a new Step-by-Step scheme to gradually help tenants own their own home*
- *ensure local people have more control over planning.*

Conservatives believe passionately in home ownership. We understand how good it feels when you have worked long hours, saved money for years, and finally take possession of the keys to your first home. For years, however, people have been finding it harder and harder to get on the housing ladder. Developers were building too few homes and the aftermath of the banking crisis saw young people struggling to raise a deposit.

These past five years have been about reversing this trend. We have introduced Help to Buy, making it much easier for people to secure a mortgage. This helped thousands of ordinary Scottish families to own their home – more than three quarters of whom were first-time buyers.

As the party of home ownership, we want to go further and faster – and this manifesto sets out our plan. At its heart, a clear objective to provide more affordable homes and help people to get on the housing ladder. We will continue the Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee until the start of 2017 and will extend the Scottish Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme to 2020, introduce a new Help to Buy ISA, bring back the Right to Buy and launch a new Step-by-Step scheme in Scotland and make sure that, when it comes to planning decisions, local people are in charge.

And for all those already in their home, we will make sure we continue working through our economic plan, so mortgage rates stay lower for longer and people can keep hold of their homes and plan for the future – safe in the knowledge they have a government that is competently looking after the public finances so they can look after their own.

Our plan of action:

We will help more people own their own home

Our Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee has helped over 4,000 Scots buy their own home. 79% of those were first-time buyers. More widely, the number of first-time buyers increased by 50% from 2010 to 2014. This is good progress, but we want to go even further. We will continue the Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee until the start of 2017, and extend the Help to Buy Equity Loan in Scotland until at least 2020. From this autumn, we will introduce a new Help to Buy ISA to support people who are working hard to save up for a deposit for their first home. A ten per cent deposit on the average first home costs £15,000, so if you put in up to £12,000, government will put in up to £3,000 more. A 25 per cent top-up is equivalent to saving a deposit from your pre-tax income – making it effectively a tax cut for first-time buyers.

We will introduce incentives to expand the provision of affordable housing

In rural areas especially, we have a range of empty properties that could be brought back into use or converted to be used as affordable housing. Fiscal and non-fiscal incentives that help rural private owners bring properties into the affordable sector would have an exponentially positive effect. We will introduce conditional Land and Buildings Transaction Tax exceptions for private buy-to-let investors who would have to offer affordable rents for a set period of time. We will also look to incentivise property owners through long-term rent lock schemes, where landlords provide long-term (over 10 years) affordable housing in exchange for guaranteed rent income, paid even if the property sits empty for a period of time.

We will introduce a new Step-by-Step scheme to help tenants gradually own their own home

People who aspire to home ownership, no matter their background, should be offered help as and when their circumstances change. Even after moving into employment, it is still beyond the reach of many social tenants to buy their own home outright. Others do not want to leave the place they have called home for years, despite their change in circumstances. We will therefore reintroduce the Right to Buy in Scotland and launch a responsive Step-by-Step scheme to help tenants on their journey to home ownership. This would allow them to gradually buy parts of their property and only pay rent on the part remaining in public hands.

We will free up social housing allocation constraints

Social landlords today do not have the freedom to shape their allocations policy according to the needs of local communities. Central constraints prevent them from taking certain factors into consideration and we believe it should be up to social landlords to decide whether they take income, property ownership, age or local connections into account when deciding on who will get a home.

We will ensure local decisions are paramount in planning

We have previously outlined proposals for planning appeal reform in our Local Devolution manifesto. We believe that if a major development application decision is taken in line with the Strategic and Local Development Plan the appeal should be decided in a full council meeting, as opposed to being referred to Scottish Ministers. We also believe in a better consultation process during the drawing up of Strategic and Local Development Plans is also crucial. We also want to see a more localised planning fee system, with councils setting their own planning fees, with a centrally-set cap.

We will help you build a strong local economy

We want local authorities to help create strong local economies. We also want to see local councils support businesses by extending the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme to allow councils keep 100% of extra business rates revenue. We will support Business Improvement Districts and other forms of business-led collaboration on high streets - giving more say to retailers on issues such as minor planning, cleaning and parking. Our Coastal Communities Fund will help our seaside areas thrive, helping boost skills and create jobs. We will also introduce another round of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund in Scotland.

Protecting and enhancing our natural environment

This is our commitment to you:

Scotland's natural environment not only supports thousands of jobs across our rural economy, but it is what makes us proud to call it home. We will:

- *protect the unique and world-famous Scottish landscape*
- *ensure our countryside can thrive and is not stifled by central belt politics*
- *keep working with our international partners to protect animal welfare and wildlife.*

Scotland is the most beautiful country in the world and we are all rightly proud to call it home. We have hundreds of natural wonders sitting on our doorstep – no matter where in Scotland we live. Our landscape attracts millions of tourists every single year, employing hundreds of thousands of Scots and making a contribution worth billions of pounds to our economy.

Our rural businesses provide jobs for tens of thousands of people and are home to some of the most recognisable produce on international markets - from Scottish beef, through North Sea fish to Scotch whisky. These are all industries we must cherish and support, for they are part of what makes Scotland.

Our natural environment is part of our inheritance. We want to make sure all of it is there for future generations to enjoy. But this isn't just about their emotional wellbeing. It's about their economic future too. Any plan for our economy must include a plan for our natural environment.

The SNP does not understand rural Scotland. Nowhere is this more patently clear than in their top priority for our rural areas - land reform, which is ideological in its aim and will have far reaching consequences for the ownership, management and use of land in Scotland. Not supporting farmers, fishermen or tourism; not providing more affordable homes, improving transport or extending broadband access; land reform is their priority – driven by a central belt government.

Scottish Conservatives will always stand up for what is best for our countryside. We understand the challenges faced by rural communities across Scotland and have

continuously supported measures that make a real difference - fuel duty freezes, whisky duty cuts, a better deal for new and retiring farmers and more local decision-making on issues like wind farms.

It is our duty to support our natural environment, for Scotland today – and Scotland tomorrow – depends on it.

Our plan of action:

We will protect your countryside

The SNP seems to have no understanding of the difference between rural Scotland and the central belt. Their centralising tendencies have been exposed over their time in government, with decision-making powers flowing only one way - from rural communities straight into Holyrood. Scottish Conservatives believe there is a better way. We believe in public services accountable and responsive to local communities. We believe in decisions on things like wind farms being made locally, not overridden by Edinburgh. We believe in rural policy tailored for rural Scotland.

We will ensure Scotland's wild fisheries reform remains local

The Scottish Parliament is currently considering reform of Scotland's wild fisheries, following a recently published review. Freshwater angling contributes over £200 million to Scotland's economy and it is essential that any reform does not undermine this important industry. While we support greater clarity in the

governance framework, we have expressed concerns over the creation of yet another central public body overseeing one more policy area. We will ensure that fisheries management, while reformed, remains locally-led and respects regional river specifics.

We will reform of state-owned and state-managed forestry estates in Scotland

Our forests are one of the key ingredients of our beautiful landscape and provide ample opportunities for recreation, tourism or outdoor sport activities. We will maintain our forest parks for all people to access when they wish to escape the urban jungle. We do, however, believe that we should trial more inventive community or private models of managing a state-owned resource, with any profits reinvested back into our forests. We would also want to see an increased role for the private sector in state-owned commercial timber production.

We will protect animal welfare

The quality of the food on your plate, and the economic security of our farmers, depend on us upholding the highest standards of animal welfare. We will push for high animal welfare standards to be incorporated into international trade agreements and into reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. We will ban wild animals in circuses and press for all EU member states to ensure that animals are only sent to slaughterhouses that

meet high welfare standards. We will encourage other countries to follow the EU's lead in banning animal testing for cosmetics and work to accelerate the global development and take-up of alternatives to animal testing where appropriate. We want people to integrate fully into British society, but that does not mean they should have to give up the things they hold dear in their religion. So while we will always make sure the Food Standards Agency properly regulates the slaughter of livestock and poultry, we will protect methods of religious slaughter, such as shechita and halal.

We will tackle international wildlife trade

As hosts of the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade, we helped secure the adoption of the London Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade and will continue to lead the world in stopping the poaching that kills thousands of rhinos, elephants and tigers each year. We will oppose any resumption of commercial whaling, and seek further measures at the EU and internationally to end shark-finning. We will promote effective worldwide measures for tuna conservation, press for a total ban on ivory sales, and support the Indian Government in its efforts to protect the Asian elephant. We will press for full 'endangered species' status for polar bears and a ban on the international trade in polar bear skins, as well as for greater attention to be paid to the impact of climate change on wildlife and habitats in Polar Regions in the Arctic Council and other international fora.



Guaranteeing you clean, affordable and secure energy supplies

Our commitment to you:

Affordable, reliable energy is critical to our economy, to our national security, and to family budgets. We will:

- *keep your bills as low as possible and promote competition in the energy market*
- *ensure your homes and businesses have energy supplies they can rely on*
- *help you insulate your home*
- *halt the spread of subsidised onshore wind farms*
- *meet our climate change commitments, cutting carbon emissions as cheaply as possible, to save you money.*

Without secure energy supplies, we leave British families and business at the mercy of fluctuating global oil and gas prices; we increase our dependence on foreign sources of energy; and we become less safe and less prosperous as a result.

National energy policy demands a willingness to take decisions today for the good of tomorrow. But Labour took the opposite approach. Power margins – the safety cushion we need to prevent blackouts – have fallen to record lows because of their historic failure to invest in new capacity. Domestic sources of oil and gas were unexploited. And Labour failed to deliver the next generation of energy projects that will help us keep the lights on, drive bills down and reduce carbon emissions.

All this hurt consumers. The number of major energy suppliers halved and energy bills soared, with the average gas bill more than doubling.

The SNP has compounded these mistakes in Scotland with an irresponsible drive to rely on wind power, failing to recognise the need for a balanced energy policy which includes gas and nuclear, both of which would help us reduce our carbon footprint and keep the lights on. With the imminent closure of Longannet, energy-rich Scotland now faces the bizarre prospect of having to import energy from England. Meanwhile, Scotland has

been subjected to an unseemly bidding war between the SNP and Labour to rule out unconventional gas, when an evidence-based approach should have been taken.

Where Labour and the SNP's approach to energy has been chronically short-term, we have secured decent, affordable energy supplies not just for the coming years, but for the coming decades.

Our long-term plan has unlocked £59 billion of investment in electricity. All parts of the UK will soon be helping to deliver secure, affordable and low-carbon energy, from the Hinkley Point nuclear power station, to offshore wind turbine manufacturing at the new Green Port in Hull, the next generation of pipelines West of Shetland and the Swansea tidal lagoon. Our oil and gas industry has been of great benefit to Scotland and the UK. It has, however, recently faced serious challenges due to the plummeting oil price. The 2015 Budget included a significant package of measures worth £1.3 billion to help the industry flourish again.

And we have delivered a better deal for consumers too. We have demanded that energy companies simplify their tariffs; encouraged more independent suppliers - which now account for ten per cent of the household market; and made it much easier for people to switch energy providers.

But the job is only half done. We need a Conservative Government to see through this long-term plan and secure clean but affordable energy supplies for generations to come. This means a significant expansion in new nuclear and gas; backing good-value green energy; and pushing for more new investment in UK energy sources. Healthy competition, not short-termist political intervention, is the best way to secure a good deal for consumers. So we will keep on relentlessly pushing for more competition to keep bills low.

This is a long-term plan to keep the lights on; keep our homes warm; and keep families from endless worry about their energy bills.

Our plan of action:

We will promote competition to keep your bills as low as possible

We have helped increase the number of independent energy suppliers from seven to 21, made it easier for customers to switch to better deals, slashed the number of tariffs to just 4 per supplier, and cut switching times in half. We will go even further, implementing the recommendations of the Competition and Markets Authority investigation that we triggered. We will ensure that every home and business in the country has a Smart Meter by 2020, delivered as cost-effectively as possible, so consumers have instant, accurate bills and can switch to an alternative provider within one day. And we will support low-cost measures on energy efficiency, with the goal of insulating a million more homes over the next five years, supporting our commitment to tackle fuel poverty.

We will secure your energy supplies

We will continue to support the safe development of shale gas and will be evidence-based in our approach in contrast to the bidding war between Labour and the SNP in Scotland. Further powers over unconventional gas are being devolved following the Smith Agreement meaning all decisions will be made by the Scottish Parliament. We will also continue to support development of North Sea oil and gas, securing the sector's future for the long-term.

We will reduce the spread of onshore wind farms

Onshore wind now makes a meaningful contribution to our energy mix and has been part of the necessary increase in renewable capacity. Onshore wind farms often fail to win public support, however, and are unable by themselves to provide the firm capacity that a stable energy system requires. As a result, we will end any new public subsidy for them. We will also allow councils to suspend all new planning applications on onshore wind farm developments, so that local communities get the final say. We will also scrap business rate exemptions for large renewable energy projects and will introduce a compensation scheme for loss of property value due to wind farms.

We will protect our planet for our children

We have been the greenest government ever, setting up the world's first Green Investment Bank in Edinburgh, signing a deal to build the first new nuclear plant in a generation, trebling renewable energy generation to 19 per cent, bringing energy efficiency measures to over one million homes, and committing £1 billion for carbon capture and storage. We are the largest offshore wind market in the world. We will push for a strong global climate deal later this year – one that keeps the goal of limiting global warming to two-degrees firmly in reach. At home, we will continue to support the UK Climate Change Act. We will cut emissions as cost-effectively as possible, and will not support additional distorting and expensive power sector targets.

Fighting crime and standing up for victims

Our commitment to you:

Your local area should be a safe place to grow up, work, raise a family and retire. We will continue to cut crime and make your community safer. We will:

- *conduct a review of Police Scotland to ensure it is accountable to local communities as well as Parliament*
- *toughen community sentencing to make sentences more robust*
- *reform the prison system, so dangerous criminals are kept off your streets and have the chance of meaningful rehabilitation*
- *scrap the Human Rights Act and curtail the role of the European Court of Human Rights, with the Scottish Parliament retaining the final say on the Court's role in relation to the Scotland Act 1998.*

Law and order is and always will be a Conservative priority. We believe that people must face the consequences of their actions – good or bad. If people break the law, they should not expect to get away with it.

Without that assurance, the security which any community needs to prosper is lost. Often it is poorer communities which feel the cost of a broken justice system the most. A strong sense of law and order is the most basic form of social justice there is.

In Scotland, our policemen and women do a superb job every day in protecting communities. We believe, however, that too often the justice system is skewed towards those who commit crimes as opposed to those who suffer from them. Community sentences, while necessary, often appear to be used as a cost-saving exercise, rather than as appropriate punishment or meaningful rehabilitation. This began under previous Labour governments and has increased under this SNP administration.

Our principles are very clear – you should serve the sentence you are given by the courts, not automatically released midway through. Serious crimes should result in the loss of your liberty and not a spell in the community which has suffered from your actions. And if your crimes are of the most serious form, you should not be released at all.

The most basic function of prison is deterrence and punishment, but rehabilitation and help with integration back into communities must have its place if we want to tackle reoffending. Meaningful activity within prison walls, the experience of a working week and the acquisition of new skills will all help to reduce recidivism. The voluntary as well as private sectors have a key role to play in bringing this about.

A cornerstone of any justice system is trust in the people who watch over it. The centralisation of Scotland's new police force has led to growing concerns among people that local community links are being lost. This is felt particularly in rural and remote parts of Scotland. There are also concerns that the oversight of Police Scotland is not functioning properly. When a body like this has such huge powers these concerns must be taken seriously. This is no criticism of ordinary policemen and women; in fact it is in their interests that the structures under which they operate are sound.

Scottish Conservatives have always stood up for victims of crime and they remain at the heart of our justice policy. We will continue to argue for local accountability, robust sentencing and meaningful rehabilitation.

Our plan of action:

We will conduct an accountability review of Police Scotland

One of the SNP's most controversial policies has been to scrap local police forces and their replacement with a single police force. Scottish Conservatives voiced concerns about the loss of local accountability from the outset. Recent revelations surrounding armed police and stop and search made it quite clear that these concerns were justified. We have called for a thorough review of the arrangements in place and believe this must include looking at how local accountability can be restored. We believe the review should, in particular, look at the possibility of a tiered police service, which would combine national strategic co-operation with local autonomy.

We will end automatic early release for good

Automatic early release means serious offenders are not punished properly, but it also makes a mockery of our criminal justice system and is an insult to victims. The time offenders spend behind bars should be decided by judges and not politicians. Ending automatic early release would mean offenders serve the sentence handed out and would spend more time behind bars being punished and, crucially, being rehabilitated. Current SNP changes affect only 3% of prisoners, but we believe all sentences should be served in full

We will introduce whole life orders

For some of the worst offenders out there the punishment should be straightforward – life should mean life. There are some crimes so heinous that, if convicted, prisoners should not have the right to apply for parole. This would require a small legislative change, but would send a big signal that our justice system will bear down on the worst of crimes with the strongest possible measure.

We will champion real work schemes in prisons

Breaking the cycle of reoffending has to be the focus of justice policy, with rates still unacceptably high. The lack of any meaningful activity within prisons has been consistently highlighted by a series of inspectorate reports. There is no point in prisons which simply house criminals, without any attempt at rehabilitation. We think that skills and employment must be at the centre of our prisons policy. We believe that prisoners should gain experience of a full working week behind bars by setting up workshops within prison walls, in cooperation with the private and voluntary sectors.

We will strengthen community sentences and toughen breaches

Community sentences have an important role to play in our justice system, but they need to be credible. We will introduce an unpaid work presumption into Community Payback Order legislation, where the courts would have to justify not imposing a work element. We will also look to import “swift and certain” schemes which where those who breach community sentences are sent to prison for 24 or 48 hours. Evidence on cutting reoffending has been remarkable in countries where this policy has been implemented.

We will reform human rights law

We have stopped prisoners from having the vote, and have deported suspected terrorists such as Abu Qatada, despite all the problems created by Labour's human rights laws. The next Conservative Government will scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights. This will break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights, and make our own Supreme Court the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK. The Scottish Parliament will retain the final say on the role of the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the Scotland Act 1998.

Preventing terrorism, countering extremism

Our commitment to you:

Keeping you and your family safe is our overriding priority. The threat of extremism and terrorism remains serious, but with our tough, intelligent and comprehensive approach, we will confront and ultimately defeat it. We will:

- *strengthen the ability of the police and intelligence agencies to disrupt terrorist plots, so the authorities have all the tools they need to prevent attacks*
- *deal with online radicalisation and propaganda, so we can reduce the risk of young people being drawn into extremism and terrorism*
- *tackle all forms of extremism, including non-violent extremism, so our values and our way of life are properly promoted and defended.*

The first duty of government is to keep you safe. We will always do whatever is necessary to protect the British people. We have protected and increased the budgets for the security and intelligence agencies and counter-terrorism policing. But the scale of the threat to our country from a number of terrorist groups remains serious, and the rise of ISIL in Syria and Iraq has created new havens for terrorists from which attacks against Britain can be planned, financed and directed.

However, the nature of the threat we face is making it more difficult for the security services to identify terrorist plots – especially thanks to new technology. We must always ensure our outstanding intelligence and security agencies have the powers they need to keep us safe. At the same time, we continue to reject any suggestions of sweeping, authoritarian measures that would threaten our hard-won freedoms. In the last year alone, we have given the authorities greater powers to disrupt and control the movements of people who want to

travel abroad to fight, including strengthening powers to confiscate the passports of those seeking to travel to commit terrorism.

The next Conservative Government will continue to take a tough, intelligent and comprehensive approach to preventing terrorism and confronting extremism. We will update our counter-terrorism laws wherever necessary to make sure they properly reflect the threats we face.

Dealing with these threats is not just about new powers. It is about how we combat extremism in all its forms. We need to tackle it at root, before it takes the form of violence and terror. At the heart of our approach lies an uncompromising defence of British values, and a very simple message: in Britain, you do not just enjoy the freedom to live how you choose; you have a responsibility to respect others too.



Our plan of action:

We will strengthen counter-terrorism powers

We have strengthened counter-terrorism laws, including making it easier to stop British nationals travelling abroad to fight, and control the return of those who do. We will keep up to date the ability of the police and security services to access communications data – the ‘who, where, when and how’ of a communication, but not its content. Our new communications data legislation will strengthen our ability to disrupt terrorist plots, criminal networks and organised child grooming gangs, even as technology develops. We will maintain the ability of the authorities to intercept the content of suspects’ communications, whilst continuing to strengthen oversight of the use of these powers.

We will confront all forms of extremism, including non-violent extremism

We have already reformed the Prevent strategy so that it focuses on non-violent as well as violent extremism. We will now go even further. We will outlaw groups that foment hate with the introduction of new Banning Orders for extremist organisations. These could be applied to dangerous organisations that fall short of the existing thresholds for proscription under terrorism legislation. To restrict the harmful activities of extremist individuals, we will create new Extremism Disruption Orders. These new powers might, for instance, prevent those who are seeking to radicalise young British people online from using the internet or communicating via social media. We will develop a strategy to tackle the infiltration of extremists into our schools and public services. We will strengthen Ofcom’s role so that tough measures can be taken against channels that broadcast extremist content. We will enable employers to check whether an individual is an extremist and bar them from working with children. And we will take further measures to ensure colleges and universities do not give a platform to extremist speakers.



Dignity in your retirement

Our commitment to you:

If you have worked hard during your life, saved, paid your taxes and done the right thing, you deserve dignity and security when you retire. We want Britain to be the best country in which to grow old. We will:

- *take the family home out of Inheritance Tax for all but the richest by raising the effective threshold for married couples and civil partners to £1 million*
- *continue to increase the State Pension through our triple lock, so it rises by at least 2.5 per cent, inflation or earnings, whichever is highest*
- *reward saving by introducing a new single-tier pension*
- *give you the freedom to invest and spend your pension however you like – and let you pass it on to your loved ones tax-free*
- *protect pensioner benefits including the free bus pass, TV licences and Winter Fuel Payment.*

Our pensioners have made this country what it is, and we believe that, in return, younger generations owe it to them to ensure they have dignity and security in their old age.

In office, Labour neglected the elderly. They raided pensions with a £150 billion stealth tax. One year they increased pensions by a paltry 75 pence. And they did nothing to give people control over their savings and pensions, or to stop them from having to sell their homes to pay for care. In place of these meagre pension increases, we have introduced the triple lock: the Basic State Pension will now always rise in line with whichever is higher – earnings, inflation or 2.5 per cent. Since

2010 we have seen the Basic Pension has risen in value by £950. We have abolished the Default Retirement Age, so you can keep working as long as you like. We are replacing the Pension Credit - basically a means test - with a new Single-Tier Pension: whatever people save, they will keep. On top of all this, we have scrapped compulsory annuities, giving people complete control over their pension pots; kept all pensioner benefits; and protected NHS spending.

In the next five years, as our country recovers and our elderly population grows, we will continue to put pensioners at the heart of our long-term economic plan.



Our plan of action:

We will guarantee your financial security as you grow older

We will keep the triple lock pension system. From April 2016 we are bringing in a Single Tier Pension; this will effectively abolish means-testing the pensions of people who have contributed all their lives. We will maintain all the current pensioner benefits including Winter Fuel Payments, free bus passes, free prescriptions and TV licences for the next Parliament, while implementing the "temperature test" for Winter Fuel Payment, so that expats in hot countries no longer receive it. And we will allow pensioners to access their pension savings and decide whether or not to take out an annuity, so they can make their own decisions about their money.

We will help you support your loved-ones

We have guaranteed that ISAs can now be passed on to a spouse tax-free, so that from this April they are no longer subject to Income Tax and Capital Gains Tax. We have abolished the 55 per cent tax on pension pots, so that when the deceased is 75 or over any beneficiary only has to pay their marginal Income Tax rate - normally 20 per cent - when they draw down the pension. We have also enabled anyone who dies before the age of 75 to pass on their pension pot completely tax-free, so that beneficiaries will pay no tax on pensions they inherit, or on the income they draw down. We will take the family home out of tax for all but the richest by increasing the effective Inheritance Tax threshold for married couples and civil partners to £1 million, with a new transferable main residence allowance of £175,000 per person. This will be paid for by reducing the tax relief on pension contributions for people earning more than £150,000.



Stronger together: a Union for the 21st century

Our commitment to you:

Wherever you live in the great nations of our United Kingdom, we are on your side. We will:

- *honour in full our commitments to Scotland to devolve extensive new powers*
- *give English MPs a veto over matters only affecting England, including on Income Tax*
- *implement the agreed settlement for Wales, handing over more responsibility to the Welsh Assembly*
- *continue to build a Northern Ireland where politics works, the economy grows and society is strong.*

Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland – ours is the greatest union of nations the world has seen. Together we have done so much, and we can do much more. The Conservative Party is the party of the Union – and we will always do our utmost to keep our family of nations together.

It was right to create the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, but the job was not finished. Without the ability to raise money, the devolved Parliaments have not been accountable to taxpayers. Without devolution to local councils and communities, power has felt as distant as ever. And one fundamental unfairness remains today: Scottish MPs are able to cast the decisive vote on matters that only affected England and Wales, while English and Welsh MPs cannot vote on matters that only affect Scotland. This leaves a space for resentment to fester – and put our Union in jeopardy.

We have tackled the problems we inherited. First, we held the referendum on Scottish independence. It was the right thing to do, and the question of Scotland's place in the United Kingdom is now settled. We have made the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly responsible for funding more of what they spend. And make no mistake, the Smith Agreement is a package designed, built and delivered by the Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Conservative ideas. We have agreed with Northern Ireland's parties a deal to help ensure that politics works, the economy grows and society is more cohesive and united. And we have set out clear plans for English votes for English laws.

Our commitment to the Union means we want to strengthen it. We will let local people have more say on local planning and let them set their own policies. We will continue devolution settlements for Scotland and Wales, and implement the Stormont House Agreement in Northern Ireland. We will not let anyone impose artificial regions on England – our traditional towns, boroughs, cities and counties are here to stay. And we will give English MPs a veto over English-only matters, including on Income Tax – answering the West Lothian Question.

In the last five years we have proven that we are the party of the Union. We will go further in the next Parliament, pushing power out beyond Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont, so we keep our United Kingdom strong and secure for the long term.

Our plan of action:

We will build an enduring settlement for the United Kingdom

We will work to ensure a stable constitution that is fair to the people of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We will strengthen and improve devolution for each part of our United Kingdom in a way that accepts that there is no one-size-fits-all solution: we will implement the Smith Commission and St David's Day Agreement and equivalent changes in the rest of the UK, including English votes for English laws.

We will honour in full our commitments to Scotland

A new Scotland Bill will be in our first Queen's Speech and will be introduced in the first session of a new Parliament. We will:

- implement the recommendations of the Smith Commission – including the devolution of Income Tax – so that more than 50 per cent of the Scottish Parliament's budget will be funded from revenues raised in Scotland and it will have significant new welfare powers to complement existing devolved powers in health and social care.
- provide the Scottish Parliament with one of the most extensive packages of tax and spending powers of any devolved legislature in the world.
- retain the Barnett Formula as the basis for determining the grant to cover that part of the Scottish Parliament's budget not funded by tax revenues raised in Scotland.
- agree new rules with the Scottish Government for how the block grant will be adjusted, to take account of the new devolved tax and welfare powers. And we will ensure that where responsibility for taxation has been devolved, tax changes only affect public spending in that part of the country.

We will give English MPs a veto over matters only affecting England

We will maintain the Westminster Parliament as the UK and England's law-making body. But we want Parliament to work in a way that ensures decisions affecting England, or England and Wales, can only be taken with the consent of the majority of MPs representing constituencies in England, or in England and Wales. We will end the manifest unfairness whereby Scotland is able to decide its own laws in devolved areas, only for Scottish MPs also to be able to have the potentially decisive say on similar matters that affect only England and Wales. We will maintain the integrity of the UK Parliament by ensuring that MPs from all parts of the UK continue to deliberate and vote together, including to set overall spending levels. But we will:

- change parliamentary procedures so that the detail of legislation affecting only England or England and Wales will be considered by a Committee drawn in proportion to party strength in England or England and Wales.
- add a new stage to how English legislation is passed; no bill or part of a bill relating only to England would be able to pass to its Third Reading and become law without being approved through a legislative consent motion by a Grand Committee made up of all English MPs, or all English and Welsh MPs.
- extend the principle of English consent to financial matters such as how spending is distributed within England and to taxation – including an English rate of Income Tax – when the equivalent decisions have been devolved to Scotland.

We will implement Wales' devolution settlement

We will clarify the division of powers between Wales and the UK Government. We will:

- devolve to the Welsh Assembly control over its own affairs – including the Assembly name, size and electoral system, Assembly elections and voting age.
- implement other recommendations of the second Silk Report where there is all-party support as set out in the St David's Day Agreement; this will include devolving to the Welsh Assembly important economic powers over ports and energy consents.
- introduce a new Wales Bill if these changes require legislation.
- continue to reserve policing and justice as matters for the UK Parliament.
- introduce a 'funding floor' to protect Welsh relative funding and provide certainty for the Welsh Government to plan for the future once it has called a referendum on Income Tax powers in the next Parliament.
- make the Welsh Government responsible for raising more of the money it spends so the Welsh people can hold their politicians to account.

We will continue to build a Northern Ireland where politics works, the economy grows and society is strong

We will maintain Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom on the basis of the consent of its people. Our strong support for the political institutions established over the past two decades as a result of the various Agreements will continue. We will:

- put the safety and security of the people of Northern Ireland as our highest priority. We will develop and implement our strategy to combat terrorism, giving the strongest possible support to the brave men and women of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.
- work to implement fully and faithfully the historic Stormont House Agreement to enable devolution to function more effectively; to deal with the legacy of the past; and to make progress on divisive issues such as flags and parading.
- continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive to implement commitments in the 2013 economic pact to rebalance the economy and to build a more united and stronger society.
- complete the devolution of Corporation Tax powers to the Assembly, consistent with the Executive fulfilling its commitments on finance, welfare reform and efficiencies in the Stormont House Agreement.

Real change in our relationship with the European Union

Our commitment to you:

For too long, your voice has been ignored on Europe. We will:

- *give you a say over whether we should stay in or leave the EU, with an in-out referendum by the end of 2017*
 - *commit to keeping the pound and staying out of the Eurozone*
 - *reform the workings of the EU, which is too big, too bossy and too bureaucratic*
 - *reclaim power from Brussels on your behalf and safeguard British interests in the Single Market*
 - *back businesses to create jobs in Britain by completing ambitious trade deals and reducing red tape.*
-

The EU needs to change. And it is time for the British people - not politicians – to have their say. Only the Conservative Party will deliver real change and real choice on Europe, with an in-out referendum by the end of 2017.

Labour failed to give you a choice on the EU. They handed over major new powers to Brussels without your consent, and gave away £7 billion of the British rebate. We have taken action in Europe to promote your economic security. We cut the EU budget for the first time ever, saving British taxpayers £8.15 billion. We took Britain out of Eurozone bailouts, including for Greece – the first ever return of powers from Brussels. Our Prime Minister vetoed a new EU treaty that would have damaged Britain's interests. And we have pursued a bold, positive, pro-business agenda, exempting smallest businesses from red tape, promoting free trade, and pushing to extend the Single Market to new sectors, like digital.

But there is much more to do. The EU is too bureaucratic and too undemocratic. It interferes too much in our daily lives, and the scale of migration triggered by new members joining in recent years has had a real impact on local communities. We are clear about what we want from Europe. We say: yes to the Single Market. Yes to turbo-charging free trade. Yes

to working together where we are stronger together than alone. Yes to a family of nation states, all part of a European Union – but whose interests, crucially, are guaranteed whether inside the Euro or out. No to 'ever closer union.' No to a constant flow of power to Brussels. No to unnecessary interference. And no, of course, to the Euro, to participation in Eurozone bail-outs or notions like a European Army.

It will be a fundamental principle of a future Conservative Government that membership of the European Union depends on the consent of the British people – and in recent years that consent has worn wafer-thin. That's why, after the election, we will negotiate a new settlement for Britain in Europe, and then ask the British people whether they want to stay in the EU on this reformed basis or leave. David Cameron has committed that he will only lead a government that offers an in-out referendum. We will hold that in-out referendum before the end of 2017 and respect the outcome.

So the choice at this election is clear: SNP, Labour and the Liberal Democrats won't give you a say over the EU. UKIP can't give you a say. Only the Conservative Party will deliver real change in Europe – and only the Conservatives can and will deliver an in-out referendum.

Our plan of action:

We will let you decide whether to stay in or leave the EU

We will legislate in the first session of the next Parliament for an in-out referendum to be held on Britain's membership of the EU before the end of 2017. We will negotiate a new settlement for Britain in the EU. And then we will ask the British people whether they want to stay in on this basis, or leave. We will honour the result of the referendum, whatever the outcome.

We will protect Britain's economy

We will protect our economy from any further integration of the Eurozone. The integration of the Eurozone has raised acute questions for non-Eurozone countries like the United Kingdom. We benefit from the Single Market and do not want to stand in the way of the Eurozone resolving its difficulties. Indeed, given the trade between Britain and the Eurozone countries we want to see these economies returning to growth. But we will not let the integration of the Eurozone jeopardise the integrity of the Single Market or in any way disadvantage the UK.

We will reclaim powers from Brussels

We want to see powers flowing away from Brussels, not to it. We have already taken action to return around 100 powers, but we want to go further. We want national parliaments to be able to work together to block unwanted European legislation. And we want an end to our commitment to an 'ever closer union,' as enshrined in the Treaty to which every EU country has to sign up. Furthermore, we will continue to ensure that defence policy remains firmly under British national control, maintaining NATO and the transatlantic relationship as the cornerstones of our defence and security policy.

We will scrap the Human Rights Act

We will scrap Labour's Human Rights Act and introduce a British Bill of Rights, which will restore common sense to the application of human rights in the UK. The Bill will remain faithful to the basic principles of human rights, which we signed up to in the original European Convention on Human Rights. It will protect basic rights, like the right to a fair trial, and the right to life, which are an essential part of a modern democratic society. But it will reverse the mission creep that has meant human rights law being used for more and more purposes, and often with little regard for the rights of wider society. Among other things the Bill will stop terrorists and other serious foreign criminals who pose a threat to our society from using spurious human rights arguments to prevent deportation. The Scottish Parliament will retain the final say on the role of the European Court of Human Rights in relation to the Scotland Act 1998.

We will take action in Europe to make you better off

We want an EU that helps Britain move ahead, not one that holds us back. We have already succeeded in exempting our smallest businesses from new EU regulations, and kicked-off negotiations for a massive EU trade deal with the USA, which could be worth billions of pounds to the UK economy. We will build on this. We want to preserve the integrity of the Single Market, by insisting on protections for those countries that have kept their own currencies. We want to expand the Single Market, breaking down the remaining barriers to trade and ensuring that new sectors are opened up to British firms. We want to ensure that new rules target unscrupulous behaviour in the financial services industry, while safeguarding Britain as a global centre of excellence in finance. So we will resist EU attempts to restrict legitimate financial services activities. We will press for lower EU spending, further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and Structural Funds, and for EU money to be focused on promoting jobs and growth.



A Britain standing tall in the world

Our commitment to you:

Everything we do around the world will be driven by a determination to protect your security and help you prosper. We will:

- *ensure Britain is a major player on the world stage, using diplomacy to protect your interests, uphold British values and tackle threats to your security and prosperity*
- *help generate new trade, investment and job opportunities, to benefit you and your family*
- *maintain our world class Armed Forces so they continue to guarantee your security*
- *uphold our commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on international development.*

Economic security and national security are two sides of the same coin. Without one, you cannot have the other. Our prosperity depends upon Britain remaining an active, outward-looking nation, one that is engaged with the world, not looking in on itself. We will maintain Britain's strong global role and our capacity to project UK power and values around the world.

Labour's Great Recession weakened Britain on the world stage. They left a £38 billion black hole in the defence budget, went 12 years without conducting a Strategic Defence Review, and, at times, failed to provide our Armed Forces with the equipment they needed in Afghanistan. They shut down over 30 British diplomatic missions, failed to plan properly for Iraq's reconstruction, ignored trade and investment opportunities overseas, and neglected vital relationships.

We have strengthened Britain's influence in the world. The National Security Council that we established ensures proper, strategic decision-making at the top of government. We have boosted exports to emerging markets, opened new diplomatic posts in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and led the world in promoting women's rights and tackling sexual violence in conflict. We have balanced the defence budget and set out a clear strategy to defend our nation for the long term.

We and our allies face major challenges: Islamist extremism, an aggressive Russia, economic uncertainty in the Eurozone, nuclear proliferation and infectious diseases. A Conservative Government will tackle these challenges. We will use our membership of NATO, the EU, the Commonwealth, our UN Security Council seat, our Special Relationship with the USA, our intelligence agencies, vital institutions like the BBC World Service and British Council, and the strong personal links between our diaspora communities and other countries, to achieve the best for Britain.

We will back this up with UK military power and international aid. Our long-term economic plan will ensure we have the economic strength to maintain our world-class Armed Forces, to uphold our national security and project power globally. Aid helps prevent failed states from becoming havens for terrorists. It builds long-term markets for our businesses, by promoting global prosperity, and reduces migration pressures. So we will maintain our commitment to tackling conflict, poverty, and disease around the world.

A stronger voice for our nation on the world stage

Our plan of action:

We will keep you secure

We will tackle global terrorism and the poisonous ideology of Islamist extremism, while taking a patient, long-term approach to preventing conflict and state failure. We will work with our partners to address threats to UK security, including the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, pandemic diseases, the illegal drugs trade, piracy and organised crime. We will:

- work for peace, stability and an inclusive settlement in Syria and Iraq; and pursue a comprehensive political and military strategy to defeat ISIL
- uphold the sovereignty, integrity and capacity of Ukraine, and continue to reject Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea
- stand shoulder to shoulder with our NATO allies, reassuring all its members - especially those closest to Russia – of their security, and continue to support the Euro-Atlantic path for Western Balkan nations
- ensure that the significant achievements of our Armed Forces in Afghanistan are maintained; and support the Government of Afghanistan in ensuring that the country remains stable and never again becomes a haven for international terrorists
- support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, robustly defending the right of Israel to protect its security, while continuing to condemn illegal settlement building, which undermines the prospects for peace
- protect global security by helping to lead international efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon; and work to ensure that North Korea ends its development of nuclear weapons.

We will help make you better off

Over the last five years, we have used foreign policy to boost our prosperity. UK exports to China have more than doubled since 2009. We will do more, using the new embassies and diplomatic posts we have opened to connect Britain to the fastest-growing economies in the world. We will push for freer global trade, concluding major trade deals with the US, India and Japan and reinvigorating the World Trade Organisation. As part of our drive to attract more investment into the UK and increase British exports, we will:

- build on our strong relationship with India, push for an ambitious EU-India trade deal and support India's bid for permanent representation on the UN Security Council
- strengthen our economic links with China, doubling support for British firms selling goods there and championing an EU-China trade deal.

We will stand up for British values

Our long-term security and prosperity depend on a stable international system that upholds our values. Over the last five years, we have stood up for what we believe in: intervening to stop a massacre in Libya, leading the world in tackling sexual violence in conflict, and helping women and children who have fled violence in Syria. We will continue this leadership. We will stand up for the freedom of people of all religions - and non-religious people - to practise their beliefs in peace and safety, for example by supporting persecuted Christians in the Middle East. We will strengthen the Commonwealth's focus on promoting democratic values and development. We will drive forward the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. We will support global processes on arms control. And we will continue to support universal human rights. We will:

- uphold our Special Relationship with the USA and further strengthen our ties with our close Commonwealth allies, Australia, Canada and New Zealand

- uphold the democratic rights of the people of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands to remain British, for as long as that is their wish, and protect our Overseas Territories
- stand up for the rule of law and human rights in Zimbabwe
- support a democratic transition in Burma
- promote reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka, including through supporting the UN investigation into war crimes, which the Prime Minister was instrumental in securing following his historic visit to Jaffna
- actively support Cypriots to find a peaceful and lasting settlement to reunite their island.

Keeping Britain safe

Our plan of action:

We will protect our nation

We will continue to keep our Armed Forces strong so they can continue to keep you safe. We will maintain the size of the regular armed services and not reduce the army to below 82,000. We will retain the Trident continuous at sea nuclear deterrent to provide the ultimate guarantee of our safety and build the new fleet of four Successor Ballistic Missile Submarines – securing thousands of highly-skilled engineering jobs in the UK. We will work closely with our allies to continue to strengthen NATO – supporting its new multi-national rapid response force. We will maintain our global presence, strengthening our defence partnerships in the Gulf and Asia. Later this year, we will hold a National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review to plan for the future.

We will maintain a balanced defence budget and give our Armed Forces the equipment they need

We can only have strong, well-funded Armed Forces by continuing to build a stronger economy. We have the second largest defence budget in NATO and the largest in the EU. We are meeting NATO's two targets: that each country should spend two per cent of its gross national income on defence, and of that spending, 20 per cent should go on major equipment. We have made commitments for the equipment plan to be funded at one per cent above inflation for the next Parliament. We plan to invest at least £160 billion in new military equipment over the next decade: as well as our six new Type 45 destroyers, we are building a class of seven Astute submarines and buying the Joint Strike Fighter, Scout armoured vehicles, Type 26 frigates and new Apache attack helicopters. We will bring both of our new Aircraft Carriers - HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, the largest vessels the Royal Navy has ever possessed and both built right here in Scotland - into service, so we have one available for use at all times. We will continue to seek value for money in defence procurement, recognising the important contribution that the UK defence industry makes to our prosperity.

We will maintain strong, modern Armed Forces

Modern, flexible Armed Forces need strong reserve capacity, alongside strong regular forces. We have invested significantly in our reserves, and we will deliver on our commitment to expand numbers to 35,000. We will continue to invest in our cyber defence capabilities. We will also provide more opportunities for talented people from all communities and walks of life to serve their country. We will ensure our Armed Forces overseas are not subject to persistent human rights claims that undermine their ability to do their job.

We will continue to honour the Armed Forces Covenant

We have honoured our commitment to enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant in law and done much to support our servicemen and women. We have delivered better accommodation for service families and helped service personnel buy their own home. To ensure that those who serve can enjoy greater economic security, we have boosted allowances and tax reliefs. We have protected pensions for our servicemen and women. We have ensured that injured service personnel have access to the latest prosthetics and world-class rehabilitation facilities. And we have used £450 million of LIBOR fines from banks to support the Armed Forces community. The money has been used to support a wide range of charities and good causes, from providing better play facilities for the children of service families, to helping rehabilitation through sport for injured veterans. We pressed for the introduction of the Arctic Star medal - for veterans of the Arctic Convoys - and the Bomber Command Clasp, to ensure proper recognition for those who risked their lives to keep us free. We will build on this proud record, implementing Lord Ashcroft's recommendations on the way the nation fulfils its obligations to veterans. We will work to address hearing loss among veterans. And we will continue to support the unsung heroes of the Armed Forces community: the partners and families of those who serve.

Tackling global challenges to make you safer and more prosperous

Our plan of action:

We will continue to honour our commitments

Tackling global poverty is both the right thing to do and in Britain's interests. We have delivered on our promises to meet the UN target of spending 0.7 per cent of national income as aid and to enshrine this in law. We will continue to meet the 0.7 per cent target, maintain an independent Department for International Development and keep aid untied. Our aid budget meets the OECD aid rules, and we will actively engage in international discussions to ensure that these rules fully reflect the importance of peace, stability and effective institutions for reducing poverty. We will insist that every government and organisation we fund meets global transparency standards.

We will save lives

By 2020, we will save 1.4 million children's lives, by immunising 76 million children against killer diseases. We will help at least 11 million children in the poorest countries gain a decent education, improve nutrition for at least 50 million people, who would otherwise go hungry; and help at least 60 million people get access to clean water and sanitation, to stop terrible diseases. We will continue to lead the response to humanitarian emergencies, and establish a means to respond rapidly to crises. Our leading role in dealing with the recent outbreak of Ebola in West Africa is a good example of how our aid programme helps protect Britain from serious threats, while also helping countries tackle major emergencies which put their stability at risk. We will lead a major new global programme to accelerate the development of vaccines and drugs to eliminate the world's deadliest infectious diseases, while investing to

save lives from malaria and working to end preventable child and maternal deaths. We will expand payment by results and ensure all money to governments is clearly earmarked for specific purposes.

We will tackle the causes of poverty and promote gender equality

We will push for new global goals to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 and promote human development, gender equality and good governance. We will work to prevent climate change and assist the poorest in adapting to it. As the route out of poverty is about much more than just aid, we will boost growth and jobs, making it easier for people to start up businesses and trade freely with each other. We will continue to promote the golden thread of democracy, the rule of law, property rights, a free media and open, accountable institutions. We will promote girls' education, encourage equal access to property rights and work to achieve access to family planning for everyone who wants it. We will continue to lead efforts to tackle violence against women and girls, end FGM and combat early and forced marriage, both at home and abroad.

We will help you fight poverty

Our International Citizen Service has given thousands of young Brits the opportunity to volunteer abroad. We will triple it in size. We will also double our successful Aid Match scheme, which matches donations to charity from the aid budget. We will boost partnerships between UK institutions and their counterparts in the developing world, and help people in the UK give or lend money directly to individuals and entrepreneurs around the world.

Conclusion

SO THIS IS OUR DETAILED PLAN FOR BRITAIN.

Our plan to entrench the progress of the past five years. Our plan for you and your family, at every stage of your life.

IT IS UNDERPINNED BY SOME SIMPLE CONSERVATIVE VALUES.

Those who work hard and do the right thing must be rewarded. Everyone should be able to rise as high as their talents and effort will take them. We measure our success not just in how we show our strength abroad, but in how we care for the weakest and most vulnerable at home.

ABOVE ALL, RUNNING THROUGH THIS PLAN IS A TRUE BELIEF IN BRITAIN.

In the past five years, as so often before in our history, we have once again defied the expectations of the world to rise up and meet our challenges. The British character is renewed every day by the millions who work hard, raise their families, care for those who need help, who do the right thing – and make this country what it is.

THIS MANIFESTO IS ABOUT IMPROVING THE LIVES OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THESE PEOPLE.

Together we have come so far. If we stick to our long-term plan, we can secure a brighter future for you and your family. So let us keep moving forward; and set our sights on making our great country greater still.

