

2015 General Election Manifesto

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Environment



I first and foremost pride myself on working towards a more sustainable future. I recoanise this is an issue that needs alobal cooperation. I see that it is also imperative to focus on what can be done to tackle climate change at a local level.

Waste

I seek to encourage all local schools to get pupils to submit work



online as opposed to printing and Parent Mail wasting paper. I would also encourage all local schools to use electronic

communication software products such as Parentmail, Parentpay and Echosign (allows for electronic consent to be given) wherever possible. I would encourage all schools to take part in the Eco-Schools project, with recycling bins readily available throughout schools.

Cycling

With the recent opening of the Velo House cafe on St Johns Road and the boom in cycling generally, the lack of sufficient cycling provisions has been highlighted. I propose to add more dedicated cycling and running routes throughout the borough. This would focus particularly around



schools to ensure children who do choose to cycle to school can do so safely, thus reducing traffic within the town and increasing cyclist safety whilst benefitting the environment. I also seek to propose more places to park bicycles in order to further encourage cycling as a core means of transport.

Recycling, Fracking and Commuting!

I want a recycling revolution on the streets of Tunbridge Wells. I would add recycling facilities to all existing public bins in Tunbridge Wells. In addition to this, I propose to tighten up the already existing recycling scheme in household waste collection, ensuring that the council starts to collect glass.



For employers who allow employees to work from home, I would offer tax benefits to both parties as a reward for cutting down travel emissions.

On a larger scale, I oppose the introduction of fracking in the UK, and would push to overturn this.

Increased Air Traffic

I fully support the work of groups like www.gatwickobviouslynot.org who are seeking to address the dramatic increase in air traffic over our town. I am delighted that a judicial review is in process to look at a

number of the key issues. I recognise the need for airports and air-travel but seek a fair method of allocating take off and landing routes.



Environmental Friendly Products

I would look to support any initiatives that make environmentally produced and sourced products more economically feasible including the abolition of VAT on these items in order to help make them financially viable alternatives to the consumer.

Alternative Energy

The continuing extraction of fossil fuel by major oil companies occurs because it is profitable. Although some taxation benefit to the consumer exists, it's clear that the development of alternative forms of energy by these corporations needs to be profitable for them in order to encourage their serious engagement. Shell are bedfellows with Gazprom in drilling in the precarious Arctic shelf as this makes more



money for them than developing alternative fuels. Hybrid cars carry some tax advantages to some but ultimately their production needs to be financially beneficial to car manufacturers and consumers to such a degree that it becomes the primary focus of both.

We live in a capitalist society and the prevention of the destruction of our planet needs to be mandated in capitalist terms, with a fiscal carrot and stick, rather than a plea to the morality of the shareholder.

I strongly advocate tax relief and subsidies to alternative and sustainable energy and taxation and import restrictions on those that don't conform.

Flooding

Many parts of Kent experienced severe flooding in Dec/Jan 2013/14 and the risk of further flood remains in the event of inclement weather. Long term action needs to be taken to prevent this in the same way that action was successfully

undertaken with the flood relief schemes in Windsor.

Littering

I abhor the amount of unnecessary food packaging that a consumer is automatically presented with. McDonalds and other fast food companies provide a considerable amount of packaging that is almost



immediately disposed of. Statutory legislation may be required to provide a level of reasonableness in this respect as it's clear that, notwithstanding the environmental waste concerns, this contributes greatly to littering.

Littering, however, is ultimately the fault of the individual for the most part. Our propositions around "People Police" in the Crime section would go some way in mitigating what appears to be a worsening problem. However catching those that scar our land and affect our animals is just one aspect. The deterrent needs to be at a sufficient level to prevent re-offending. As it stands the chances of being caught are minimal. Worse though is that the repercussions once caught are almost negligible.

From the outset any punishments must include a period of community service that involves cleaning up the litter in question. And I am supportive of a progressive sentencing policy which would see increasing amounts of community service.

Human Rights

Gender Equality

The UK has slipped out of the top 20 countries for gender equality in 2014 highlighting that sexism is not a thing of the past¹. Although there is legislation in place, it is not enforced to the extent that it's continually effective. Legislation needs to be enforced and, where necessary, extended to ensure that it is helping women.

From politics and the boardroom to The Sun's page three, it's evident that modern day sexism is as diverse as it is far reaching. Positive action is necessary and I advocate a statutory enforced group to proactively dip-sample and scrutinise the decision making process in recruitment and promotion across all sectors.



I recognise the good work William Hague has done within Parliament to end sexual violence within conflict. I hope to support this work and the work done within the EU on the same subject.

It's evident that this needs to start at the top in British politics. When the UKIP political party has more

members named David and Steve than women and fewer than one in four MPs across all parties is a woman, then we have a problem.

¹ <u>http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=GBR</u>

Black, Minority and Ethnic Communities

With the recent insurgency of far-right movements across Europe, ranging from the National Front to Golden Dawn, I recognise the correlation this has had with racially motivated attacks and the insidious creep of racism. I seek to challenge racist behaviour and threats whilst offering support to black, ethnic and minority groups. This extends to support within the workplace, tackling discrimination that prevents BME workers earning the same as their white counterparts or reaching the same level of their chosen profession. I recognise the need for affirmative action in some cases but only to the extent of the interview process being made accessible to under-represented candidates similar to the Rooney Rule². However I advocate no quota or preference in the hiring of candidates. Much of the legislation is already in place; I feel, however, that it needs to be actively enforced, and, where appropriate, altered.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Communities

I pledge total support to pursuing equal rights for all members of these communities. I hope to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying, creating a positive discourse within schools. I aim to make the current school sex education system less heteronormative and include LGBTQ rights as a core aspect for (PSHE) Personal, Social and Health Education in schools. A recent survey found that 48% of trans people under 26 said they had attempted suicide and 30% said they had done so in the past year with 59% saying they had at least considered doing so³. With this in mind, I seek to increase funding for gender identity clinics to prevent massive waiting lists for operations and referrals. I also look to combine this by tackling discrimination within the healthcare system for LGBTQ people.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rooney_Rule

³ <u>http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/19/young-transgender-suicide-attempts-</u> <u>survey?CMP=twt_gu</u>

Disabled People



The current government's 'Bedroom Tax' has disproportionally impacted disabled people. Due to lack of alternative accessible housing, unless it can be proved that constant overnight care is needed, disabled tenants are forced into paying more rent. I am alarmed at the current government's willingness to inflict this pressure on

disabled people. I would also work towards ensuring greater accessibility of public services and transport for those with a disability.

International

I see the current government's stance towards human rights as very muddled. Cameron condemns ISIS yet actively trades with the Saudi Arabian government whose track record for public beheadings is far murkier. In 2013 in Saudi Arabia three children were executed and late last year another was sentenced to death, openly contravening the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴. Between 2007 and 2010 345 public beheadings occurred. In the first few weeks of August 2014, 19 people were executed⁵ including one man for sorcery and adultery⁶.

I believe that the UK has a duty to enforce human rights on the international stage. I see the lack of condemnation of the Saudi death penalty as a failure of the current government. I propose trade



embargoes for breaches of human rights.

I fully support government provision of aid and expertise in crisis areas around the world.

⁵ <u>http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-executes-19-during-half-of-august-in-disturbing-surge-of-beheadings-9686063.html</u>

⁴ <u>http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/saudi-arabia-scheduled-beheading-reflects-authorities-</u> <u>callous-disregard-human-rights-2014-08-22</u>

⁶ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18503550

Education



Grammar Schools

Being one of the few remaining constituencies that continue to have grammar schools, I am especially proud of our schooling system. I firmly stand behind selective grammar schools as a model and will fight for its expansion. I propose the creation of more grammar schools that successive Labour and Tory governments sought to abolish. Far from

increasing the standards within the comprehensive system, it merely levelled it out whilst fueling the private educational system as those of wealthy stock flocked to private schools.



Eleven Plus

The 11+ system that dictates entry to the few grammar schools that are left undoubtedly requires a complete over-haul. Three exams over two days to a large extent defines the future paths of many of the 10 year old children who take it. It's as primitive a method of selection as it is **unfair** and it needs a wide reaching review. The current system of the wealthier being able to afford private tutoring is **unfair** and I would push for 11+ tutoring within state schools (in the same way it is permitted in independent schools) to make for a more level playing field. As it stands private tutoring for the 11+ is akin to drug taking in cycling during the Lance Armstrong era. Those that can, do it; those that can't are severely disadvantaged.

Holidays

I propose a system where the local education authority is granted considerable flexibility in fixing school calendar dates that will go some way to reducing the high demand and corresponding high prices that parents experience with the current rigid regime. At the moment those in state



schools are disadvantaged considerably with their narrower school holidays and, further, receive fiscal punishment when they do attempt to take term time holidays.

University Fees

I believe that the current government's £9,000 university fees are absurd. There should be no tax on aspiration especially not one that disproportionately discourages prospective students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from applying to university. One of the



reasons for the increased number of applications for university places over the last 20 years is because it was seen as the only viable entry into the working world. The logical and **fair** response is not to financially burden students for years and years after graduation but to offer more apprenticeship schemes and paid work experience programs.

Private Education

For parents who decide to place their children in private education, I believe there should be a system of tax relief. As the child in private education is not using state resources I think it is unnecessary for their parents to subsidise a sector they do not use.

Teachers

When considering the hours that teachers put in and the increasing administrative overheads that they are burdened with, they surely rank as one of the most poorly paid professions in the public sector. They are responsible for our children, the



foundation of our future, and their importance and contribution needs to be reflected in competitive salaries that attract top calibre graduate candidates.



Parenting

Becoming a parent is arguably the most responsible thing a person ever has to do. Whilst driving a car, getting a job and even passing exams have a considerable level of scrutiny levelled at them, becoming a parent has none. Currently, prior to the birth, ad-hoc



and differing levels of pre-birth support are provided that help with key elements of birth and the initial few weeks of babyhood but offer virtually nothing on parenting itself. For most their natural approach to parenting is a mirror of what they themselves received or, arguably, were subjected to. Where this hasn't been good then it's self perpetuating. Bad parents bring up children badly who then have children themselves and so the cycle continues.

Good parenting is a skill that requires a vast amount of knowledge, ability and patience. I advocate a free system of parental classes that provide continuing post-birth advice and support around health, safety, discipline, nutrition, consideration and standards up to the age of 5. In extreme cases, lack of attendance would be enforced by exclusion of child benefit.



Body Cameras

With continuing accusations of institutionalised racism and sexism being levelled at the police, I think it is more important than ever before to create a culture of police transparency. One of the methods by which I propose to achieve this by is ensuring that all front line

officers, Specials and PCSOs wear body-cams as a matter of course. Far from creating a "Big Brother" state this protects the people the police are being paid to protect whilst offering the police protection from false accusations.

People Police

Neighbourhood Watch started in our country as several groups of neighbours keeping their eyes open in the local area and then reporting crime and suspicious occurrences to the police. I want to take this precedent and elevate it, creating a national online system, accessible by iPhones and android devices, for submitting details of anti-social behaviour, littering, poor driving and other less serious crimes. This will result in fixed penalty tickets and other fines being handed out and, where guilt is not admitted, people courts where

these cases can be heard. A vast amount of crime goes unreported and an increasingly reduced police service have little resources to follow up on this level of crime and anti-social behaviour. This would be a significant step towards alleviating the burden on the police and the frustration of the public.





Reporting to the Public

The relationship between the police and the population needs to be one fostered on trust. Increasingly, when members of the public report incidents to the police, they never receive a response back from the them to inform them of the eventual outcome. I propose a system whereby the police must inform, within a specified period, the outcome of any report made to them by a member of the public. Currently there is a perception that contact with the police goes into a void and no action is taken. Although undoubtedly not the case, the perception is there and I would suggest it impacts heavily on the propensity of that member of the public to make contact again in the future.

Police Cutbacks

I totally oppose the extreme cutbacks that police forces around the country have been subjected to. Whilst advocating a more efficient use of resources and independent reviews of performance, the cuts have been down to the bare bones in many forces. The impact of these cuts may not be immediate but they will be dramatic. A fully resourced police service is at the cornerstone of any civilized society and cuts in the fashion that we've witnessed, is a false economy. There will be a price to pay unless I dramatically improve funding.

Police officers risk their lives for us and need the support of the people



and the government. The rock bottom morale within the service is in no small part down to the lack of such support. We have the best police force in the world but, if the media is to be believed, it's the worst.

Anti-Social Behaviour



There is a large amount of actions that a minority of people take that affect others in a negative way but falls below what society appears willing to enforce. Middle and fast lane hogging, driving with fog lights on, taking up two parking spaces with one car, not letting people out of junctions and, worse still, blocking them are just a few. Spitting, swearing in front of children and putting shoes up on

public seats fall squarely within this camp as well. These are acts undertaken by the ignorant, selfish or culturally unaware. As with anything, if there are no repercussions for failing to conform to socially acceptable behavior, there are those who will continue to act selfishly. But this behavior affects our lives and, in some cases, not insignificantly.

These are the things that on a daily basis frustrate the majority and, if we aspire to be a **fair** society, need to be addressed.

With the "People Police" some of this will be tackled but there needs to be a



focus on these areas by policing organisations. For example the deployment of speed cameras is something that should be a last resort to a serious problem and not the first port of call to a non-existent problem. Their presence needs to be reviewed in light of the risk they were deployed for. In many cases the resources used for police cameras could be focused instead on bad motorway driving habits that frustrate many and can result in death and serious injury.



Alternative Methods

I am disappointed that the current focus on transport relies so heavily on traffic creating measures. I prioritise cycling and walking, for health reasons and benefits to the environment. I also see public transport as a vital component in cutting down on traffic. I think the government should shift its focus towards transport at the local level rather than focusing on national solutions.

Railway Nationalisation

I resent the privatisation of the railway services and feel that South Eastern Railway does not offer an adequate service for its customers. Rail watchdog Passenger Focus' most recent survey (2014) showed

12% of passengers rating Southeastern's performance as poor and only 30% satisfied with value for money – the worst scores of any of the 23 franchises⁷.I feel that South Eastern Railway has persistently failed to produce adequate results



and should be nationalised as a result. Far from bringing the competitive efficiencies that were predicted once out of public sector hands, privatisation has resulted in exploitation of the public. Profit has been put at the core of this sector to the detriment of the consumer.

⁷ http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/sep/11/southeastern-new-four-year-rail-deal

Road Tax



Road tax, or Vehicle Excise Duty, is as **unfair** a tax as there is. Rightly based on the tax emission band it is a disproportionate tax where no weighting is put on the mileage undertaken by the vehicle owner. A vehicle in the highest bracket currently is due a levy of £1,065 in

the first year regardless of the mileage that they do. Tax benefits should be made available to the car manufacturers, company car owners and first time purchasers of vehicles depending on their emissions. Road tax should primarily be charged against fuel thereby making it more proportionate to the environmental impact and road usage.



Housing

Housing is absolutely critical to the growth of this country and construction serves as the backbone, contributing almost 10% of the GDP. I support the work of groups like www.getbritainbuilding.co.uk who KI highlight the benefits to housing, jobs, skills and growth that construction brings. We need more housing. How my kids will afford a place when they grow up is beyond me.



However careful consideration needs to be given to where this building takes place. We can't run roughshod over long established planning regulations and protocols. Greenfield building isn't the way forward – our countryside is our heritage and our children's inheritance.

What is key is that building houses needs to be properly supported with the appropriate infrastructure around it including roads, drainage, schools and doctors' surgeries. And it needs to be distributed fairly both in terms of where is it built and who can buy it. This needs to be a fundamental principle.

I'm concerned about a number of the decisions that have been made in Kent around where housing should be built. At the moment there are proposals to build over 1,000 homes in Paddock Wood with little improvement to the infrastructure. In advance of that Southern Water have admitted that, as it stands, one of the pumping stations is

at maximum capacity and maintenance issues with it have resulted in sewage water flooding. This has not been helped by combined drainage where surface water and foul water share the same drain. Just before last Christmas, the primary school was forced to close as a result of surface water flooding.



The proposals by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to have 1,000 new homes built there, some of which are on a flood plain, without any

'real' improvement to the overall infrastructure will seriously exasperate the problem.

Regrettably this clumsy and ill-thought out approach to a serious problem which needs to be addressed is not unique to Paddock Wood.

We need more housing but let's be fair about where we put it, how much we put there and how we support it.





Tax Avoidance

The tax avoidance tactics of a number of large corporations such as

Starbucks, Google and Amazon is morally repugnant. Amazon even received more money in government



grants from the UK tax payer than it paid in corporation tax⁸, an absolutely diabolical situation that our government allowed to happen. Our mandate is a simple one - if you earn money in Britain, you pay tax in Britain. I would pursue a far more aggressive policy in



eliminating tax avoidance schemes and confronting those who avoid corporation tax. I see these corporations as happy to benefit from the

skilled labour and services of the UK and the revenue streams that their customers bring in, yet are unwilling to give anything back. These are some of the more high profile companies but there are many others. The cost to this country can be measured in billions.



I would extend this crackdown on tax avoidance to individuals also. actively pursuing off-shore taxing, umbrella and all tax avoidance schemes. Whilst I recognise that they may be within the current remit of the law, I propose closing these loopholes so that everyone pays their fair share of the tax burden.

⁸ http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/tax/10060229/Amazon-received-moremoney-from-UK-grants-than-it-paid-in-corporation-tax.html

Small Businesses

IR35, the much aligned and seemingly fluid clause that subjects small business to **unfair** taxation, needs to be abolished once and for all. Mighty oaks from little acorns grow and the array of British business success stories that started out as one man bands is the envy of



many countries. IR35 seeks to stifle this and acts as a barrier to the growth of those micro businesses. Small businesses should have the same taxation opportunities that large business currently do.

Stamp Duty



I am delighted that the system of stamp duty has finally stepped out of the dark ages and moved away from a "slab" system whereby a single £1 into a given band would render the whole purchase price of a property to be taxed. I advocate the elimination of graduations (apart from an initial minimum value) in favour of a

calculation based on the prevailing rate and selling value, thus avoiding jumps in duty incurred.

Health



I feel deeply concerned with the insidious creep of privatisation within the NHS. I feel that organisations concerned with profit are not suitable to ensure the wellbeing of the ill within it. The primary focus of a private company is to maximise profit which is at odds with the ethos of a National Health Service. I would question the current government's intentions in upholding the NHS as a national institution.

In parallel with the above proposal I would like to strip back a prior privatisation move and make dental care free to all. Dental hygiene is a basic need and should not be something that is charged for.

As great as I feel the NHS is, I feel it has become entangled in a system of bureaucracy. Whilst the system of initial and emergency care is excellent, beyond this the care can be questionable and inconsistent between trusts. Additionally many hospitals and A & E units are too heavily reliant on paperwork and repetition. I hope to remove this, enabling doctors and nurses to spend time treating, not writing. Moving towards a paperless health system would play a significant role in this.

Our patient's charter would remove the postcode lottery and mandate maximum waiting times for all medical treatments regardless of the trust the patient found themselves in.

Above all the NHS should be free at the point of use for all.

Immigration



Benefits

Migrants are good for the UK as a whole and add far more to the economy than they take despite what the Daily Mail would have us believe.⁹ Their ill-informed racist rhetoric has almost single handedly fuelled the rise of UKIP. I recognise that we need to know who comes into and out of our country but do not think this equates with the harsh

policies suggested by our current government. I have deep concern at Cameron's proposal to stop EU migrants claiming benefits for four years, seeing that discrimination based on nationality is inherently wrong. It will be our prime objective



to seek a consistent policy of benefits (and access to them) across all countries within the EU in order to prevent the inequitable influx of asylum seekers and benefit claimants that we've seen. Although I am supportive of the EU in principle, I would advocate withdrawal from the EU if this equality was not enforced in EU member states.

⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-29910497

Asylum Seekers

I think that the nation has a duty to support genuine asylum seekers. Those fleeing war and **unfair** persecution need help from everyone. The Public Accounts Committee recently stated that the Home Office has still not resolved 29,000 asylum applications, dating back to 2007¹⁰. This backlog undoubtedly impacts on the efficient processing of new asylum seekers applications. I call upon the current government to fix this broken system that is leaving thousands of people in an uncertain



transitory limbo often within the confines of prisons that the government labels "detention centres". I completely support genuine asylum seekers coming to us but, as highlighted, I do require a similar approach from EU member states.



Constitutional Reform

Voting Age

I advocate that the voting age is reduced to 16. An age when we allow soldiers to die serving our country whilst giving them no choice on who decides to send them to die.



Although the 2011 proportional representation referendum remarkably (and arguably ironically) saw 28% of the country successfully decide that PR should not form part of our democratic process, I do still feel



that there is considerable scope for reform in terms of constituency boundaries. The Isle of Wight has over 110k eligible voters in contrast to the 21k of Na h-Eileanan Siar (Outer Hebrides)¹¹. Both have an MP that sits in Parliament, a situation that I do not believe is **fair**.

Prisoners to Vote

At a national level, I express deep concern at the approach to



prisoners in terms of voting rights. By denying prisoners the right to vote I deny the humanity of the prisoners. Although behind lock and key, they are still part of society and will sooner or later re-emerge. How we as a society treat our prisoners says much about us as a society. The argument that they gave up their rights when

they committed the crime is a weak one and carries no place in a civilised society.

¹¹ <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List of United Kingdom Parliament constituencies</u>

Foreign Policy



I recognise that a consistent and **fair** approach is required to foreign policy. Our military involvement in conflicts appears to be dictated from the other side of the Atlantic whilst our lack of involvement in conflicts in Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Sudan is a stain on this country's integrity

and sense of fairness.

As Sweden recently became the 135th nation to recognise the state of Palestine, I think it is time that the UK followed suit and recognised

them as full members more than symbolically¹². Although neither side is blameless, to anyone but the most pro-Israeli observer, Israel continues to adopt more of a protagonist role and we should be condemning their actions in the strongest possible terms.



¹² <u>http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palestine-recognised-as-a-state-in-principle-by-european-parliament-in-symbolic-vote-9930981.html http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-29596822</u>

Defence



Whatever the political motivations of the conflicts that our armed forces are involved in, I am exceptionally supportive of those who risk their lives for our country. I recognise also that the armed forces face a constantly diminishing budgetary resource at a time when their role continues to increase. It is right that their role evolves and adapts but I don't think I should come to rely on the army as a secondary police



force, for instance employing them as security guards at the Olympics. Their time and expertise is better spent on humanitarian work, engineering projects and hospitals, something I would grant more funding and assistance to. The

recently opened Ebola hospital in Sierra Leone is a great example of the remote expertise that can be offered and I would encourage more activity of this nature.

The current government's proposal to renew Trident means that the UK would possess nuclear weapons as late as the 2060s. The UK is a

signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and agreed to disarm in 1970. Global unilateral disarmament needs to be the primary objective in this regard. Until this is achieved I would support a very small submarine launched nuclear ballistic capability.



Europe



The current conversation surrounding Europe is being polarised by our media and certain politicians thus distorting objectivity. I want to return the debate to the facts minus the scaremongering politics. I know EU migrants have brought a fiscal benefit to the UK. And I am a strong advocate of a **fair** and consistent approach to immigration and asylum throughout the EU member states. But the EU offers us clear benefits such as collective action schemes which we otherwise wouldn't enter into. It is far easier to successfully tackle climate change together rather than alone.

The rise of UKIP is something that can't be ignored. The issues they raise are an area of concern to many and this needs to be addressed openly, objectively and **fairly**.

Future Aspirations

Although not detailed formally in this manifesto, it is this candidate's aspiration to eradicate use of the word "chillax", people with low hanging trousers, using the word "bought" instead of "brought" (and vice versa), "itch" instead of "scratch", "sat" and "stood" instead of "sitting"



and "standing", limiting use of the word "like" and any references to people giving more than 100%.

And don't get me started on double parking and fog lights on when it's not foggy!

One step at a time though.