

Brexit Together

A Manifesto to Bring Brexit Britain Together

MISSION STATEMENT

DEMOCRACY: RESPECT THE VOTE – AND WORK TOGETHER FOR A SHARED BREXIT FOR ALL OF BRITAIN

Leaving the European Union is the most important step our country has taken for fifty years. The best future for Britain after Brexit will now depend on a shared commitment from people on all sides of the argument to leave the referendum trenches behind.

The majority vote in the referendum must be respected by government and Parliament should vote for Article 50. Britain should leave the European Union and we now need to come together to make a success of Brexit.

We believe that a successful Brexit settlement cannot be the property of a single political party, nor solely the work of the 52% or the 48% alone. A majority across the UK voted for Brexit – but we believe that a shared Brexit must take care to address the key concerns underpinning the majority Leave vote across England and Wales, and those which led majorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland to vote Remain. We need to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom, and that means a Brexit deal which does address the specific concerns and interests of the nations of the UK including maintaining Northern Ireland's open land border with the Republic.

So we need a Brexit settlement which delivers on the core values of sovereignty and control reflected in the majority vote to Leave; which protects the close trading relationship between Britain and the EU that was the top concern of those who wanted to Remain; and which promotes a post-Brexit vision of an inclusive and outward-facing Britain. Nobody will get absolutely everything they want, but we believe that it is possible to forge a Brexit deal that most Leave and most Remain voters would support as we embark on the next chapter of our national story.

We want to begin a new debate about the best Brexit deal, one which can bring Britain together. We believe that a Brexit deal capable of uniting Britain would need to address the following priority issues.

PROSPERITY FOR ALL: AN OUTWARD-LOOKING TRADING NATION – WITH GROWTH MORE WIDELY SHARED

Britain needs to be a prosperous, open trading nation – and that prosperity needs to be more broadly felt, so that everyone has a stake in our national economic success. The government is right to argue that post-Brexit Britain should be a global champion of free trade – and should apply this in our relations within Europe and beyond it. In spite of the uneven costs and benefits of globalisation, free trade remains Britain's best hope of future prosperity.

The UK should negotiate the closest possible comprehensive economic deal with the EU on equal terms, seeking to minimise and eliminate both tariff and regulatory barriers to trade in goods and services. Failing to agree this with the EU27, and falling back to trade on WTO rules, would be a damaging economic and political failure for both sides. The UK should be ready to leave the customs union or to negotiate new arrangements with it that ensure Britain is free to negotiate new trade deals outside Europe too: Britain can now lead the world in showing that openness to trade delivers prosperity for all.

Britain's ability to be an outward-looking trading nation will depend on a wider sense of ownership as to who benefits from our national prosperity. To truly deliver on Brexit the government should push ahead with a radical devolution agenda. This would give Britain's regions a significant say over how public funds are spent – for example on infrastructure projects and skills programmes – so that every part of Britain can make the most of the opportunities now open to us. And to give confidence that leaving the EU will not disadvantage people in Britain or the places they love, existing EU consumer, worker and environment protections should be transferred into UK law upon departure.

IMMIGRATION: A NEW DEAL, ENDING FREE MOVEMENT, TO REBUILD CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTRIBUTION THAT MANAGED MIGRATION MAKES TO BRITAIN

The public expects significant changes to immigration after Brexit. Once Britain leaves the EU, we believe it must leave the existing free movement rules of the club behind. This is both to reflect the public desire for more control over immigration, and because we need to take this opportunity to now rebuild confidence in the positive contribution that well-managed migration can make to Britain's economy and society.

The Government should propose a positive new settlement for future European migration to Britain, which combines continued openness to migration from the EU with the capacity to control the scale and pace of immigration. The UK should propose that it is in our mutual interests to maintain visa-free travel for EU citizens to come to the UK and vice-versa for fixed periods of time. The UK should be open

to a new immigration deal with the EU, after free movement, where EU citizens would continue to gain preferential access to the UK labour market, as part of a broader trade deal.

We should guarantee the status of the three million EU nationals in Britain as quickly as possible, outside of the formal exit negotiations, and secure a reciprocal commitment to Britons who have made their lives elsewhere in the EU. We want to ensure that EU citizens who have come to Britain feel that this is their home and they are welcome to stay. We should clamp down on racial abuse, so that the perpetrators can be prosecuted and punished and make it clear that Britain remains a tolerant, open society.

SECURITY: A NEW SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP FOR OUR CONTINENT

In an increasingly unpredictable world, the UK must continue to make a vital contribution to the security of the European continent. It is in our interests as a country to have good relations with the EU and its member states and it is also in the UK's interests that the EU reforms and strengthens. It is not in Britain's interests to see a collapse of either the EU or the euro – and we should be clear that we will not promote their disintegration.

NATO should remain the primary instrument for the organisation of military force in Europe, and the UK will continue to make a substantial contribution to its collective efforts. At the same time, the UK should no longer stand in the way of efforts by other EU member states to build European capacities for common actions.

The UK should also make clear its willingness to take part in joint UK/EU military and civilian missions in the European neighbourhood, for example in the Balkans. As a result of Brexit, many of the civilian instruments of foreign policy (for example on sanctions and aid) will now revert to national control. We will seek new ways of ensuring that we work closely with the EU in employing these instruments for common purposes. Post-Brexit Britain should be clear that it will continue to make a strong contribution to international security in both military and development efforts. Specifically, it should maintain the current commitments to spending 2% of GDP on defence and 0.7% of GNI to aid.

SOVEREIGNTY: CHOOSING TO MAKE A POSITIVE NEW DEAL WITH THE EU.

Britain has voted to leave the European Union. After four decades it was clear we were never comfortable with the pooling of political sovereignty reflected in the Treaty commitment to ever-closer union, the primacy of law from the European Court of Justice over national law, and the push to monetary union. The decision to leave the EU will mark the end of European citizenship for Britons.

That concern for national sovereignty will influence the type of future relationships with other countries that Britain now wants from outside the European Union. There is little point in leaving the EU if the UK seeks a new relationship from the outside that simply imitated EU membership wherever possible – but the UK should not see breaking all ties as a positive outcome. Choosing to cooperate to pursue our mutual interests can also be a positive exercise of national sovereignty.

So we should seek to negotiate a positive, new partnership, different to EU membership but which does reflect our close historical and geographical ties with the rest of Europe, our wish to maintain close, friendly links with our neighbours, and the benefits for Britain that a strong relationship will bring.

We should seek to get the deal right - even if that takes more than two years - and should be open to a short, time-limited transition phase, outside the European Union itself, to get the right long-term settlement.

What is now more important than ever is that a clear, pragmatic, positive voice speaks up to demonstrate the strong appetite in the UK for a positive, friendly partnership with our EU neighbours after Brexit. If we can build a strong majority within the UK in favour of such a position then it will be clear to the EU governments that Britain is seeking to avoid a destructive 'lose-lose' outcome. This, we believe, maximises the likelihood of achieving a constructive negotiation, and ultimately a positive new relationship with the EU, as equals.

SIGNATORIES

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Ben Kelly (Conservatives for Liberty)

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All participants have signed in a personal capacity