

Dear Colleagues,

2022#4 Our Next Manifesto

“I will make the Conservative Policy Forums central to the policy making process to ensure our vision is always properly Conservative.” (Liz Truss, August 2022)¹

Thank you to everybody who participated in our summer consultation on Jobs and Pensions. As the new Prime Minister leads the Party and the country forwards with a fresh vision and agenda, we will continue to ensure that your voices are heard in the corridors of power.

Although the topic and timing of this consultation was agreed with the previous PM's policy team, its timing could not be better as we publish on the same day that the new PM is announced. If you and your CPF Group want to be part of the winning team for the next election, then it is vital that together we maximise participation at this time. Make sure that your Conservative Association or Federation has a date in the diary to discuss the questions in this briefing paper – and be sure to invite as many members and supporters as possible. Remember: the more our discussions are inclusive, the more they will lead to better policy outcomes; enhance public trust in government and the Party; help counteract polarisation; and provide a long-term vision on policy issues.

As usual, please send your responses to the questions in this briefing paper to CPF.Papers@conservatives.com, using the associated response form published alongside the paper on the CPF website. The deadline for submitting your response is 6th November. We aim to publish our next discussion paper, provisionally on strengthening grassroots conservatism, on 7th November.

A summary of responses to this consultation paper will be sent to the Prime Minister's Policy Unit, relevant Ministers, Party Chairman and CPF Chairmen by early-December. We look forward to hearing your ideas.

Kind regards,

The CPF Team

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The Challenge

“Opponents have often wondered why the [Conservative & Unionist] party has been so successful, in marked contrast to many other parties of the European centre-right. ... Part of the answer lies in the ability of the party to reinvent itself, not to allow itself to get stuck in a ditch, always to be pragmatic and flexible. This has meant giving priority to statecraft and the pursuit of power rather than to ideology.”²

Since 1900, Conservative & Unionist manifestos have averaged just over 10,200 words in length, varying from just 424 words (December 1910) to a massive 29,893 words (1992) (see Chart 1). This “was more than three times the size of Thatcher’s first election manifesto and was the longest postwar manifesto produced by any of the three main parties.” Historians have observed that it “seems reasonable to conclude that the 150-word Labour manifesto of 1900 was read in full by many more people than the Tory one of 1992, which was almost 200 times that length.”³ Even among those who do read party manifestos, however, many have ceased to believe that they will hear or see actual progress delivered on the promises made. Pollsters suggest that, these days, parties’ manifesto pledges “are much less important to how people vote than other factors like leadership and core values” and that “winning election campaigns join up core values, big issues and leadership, using policies as an illustration of these forces.”⁴

The Party has achieved a great deal since returning to power over twelve years ago: see *Biggest changes under Conservative government since 2010*, below. Notwithstanding the upheaval to our lives and way of life since the last election, the government has also already delivered a significant proportion of the Party’s December 2019 manifesto⁵ or is on target to do so. For instance:

- Investing an extra £36 billion to reform the NHS and social care, increasing registered nurse numbers by 34,672, with over 72,000 more in training, and delivering over 10 million more GP appointments in the twelve months to July 2022 than in 2019, as per our pledge of “Extra funding for the NHS, with 50,000 more nurses and 50 million more GP surgery appointments a year”⁶
- Recruiting 13,790 new police officers and passing the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, well on our way to our target of “20,000 more police and tougher sentencing for criminals”⁷
- Introducing our promised “Australian-style points-based system to control immigration”⁸

Yet, the world is ever changing and we must respond by changing with it. The challenges faced by the country today are very different from those of 2010, or even 2019, not least: war in eastern Europe; escalating tensions with Russia and China; threats to the Union in both Scotland and Northern Ireland; global supply chains still reeling from the impact of restrictions introduced on businesses and families across the Western world from spring 2020; economic growth lagging behind our international competitors (Charts 2 and 3); inflation at its highest for 40 years (Chart 4); government debt and related costs at levels last seen in the early 1960s⁹ (Chart 5); the highest tax burden since the 1940s (Chart 6); fewer than three-in-five primary school-leavers meeting the expected standards for reading, writing and maths;¹⁰ and record numbers of patients waiting for an operation or cancer screening, diagnostic tests and treatment (Charts 7 and 8).

Questions for discussion

1. What length do you think the Party’s next manifesto should aim to be?
2. How might we “join up core values, big issues and leadership, using policies as an illustration of these forces” to produce a manifesto that inspires voters?
3. What do you think the major overarching or organising themes (chapters or sections) of the next manifesto should be?
4. What short phrase (3-6 words) do you think should capture the overall message of the next manifesto?
5. What key areas of legislation would you pledge to (i) withdraw, (ii) revise or (iii) introduce?
6. Is there any other observation you would like to make?

Biggest changes under Conservative government since 2010

- Launched the National Citizen Service in 2011
- Introduced same-sex marriages in England and Wales in 2014
- Introduced the National Living Wage in 2016
- Delivered Brexit by leaving the EU on 31 January 2020
- Enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant into law in 2021
- More than halved unemployment, from 7.9% in May 2010 to 3.8% in June 2022, levels not seen since 1974¹¹
- Created over four million new jobs in the private sector,¹² increasing the proportion of jobs in the private sector, from 78.1% in Q1 2010 to 82.5% in Q2 2022¹³
- Despite more recent trends, raised average household wealth by 21% from July 2010 to March 2020, after adjusting for inflation¹⁴
- Raised the personal income tax allowance from £6,475 and the National Insurance threshold from £5,715 in 2010, both to £12,570, lifting millions of the poorest out of paying any income tax
- Increased average pensioner income in real terms after housing costs, from £321 in 2010 to £361 in 2021, reducing the proportion of pensioners in receipt of income-related benefits from 31% to 20%¹⁵
- Reduced the proportion of workless households from 19.2% in June 2010 to 13.4% in March 2022 and the proportion of children living in workless households from 16.2% to 9.9%¹⁶
- Reduced income inequality between 2010 and 2021, as measured by the Gini coefficient, S80S20 ratio, Palma ratio, and top 1% share indicators¹⁷
- Cut corporation tax from 28% in 2010 to 19% since 2017, the joint fourth lowest in the OECD, boosting investment in business while also increasing receipts from the tax¹⁸
- Increased the supply of new housing each year by an average of 185,000 new homes, including 51,100 affordable homes per year¹⁹
- Average net migration of 257,000 per year²⁰
- Reduced the estimated incidents of crime by at least 40% and of violent crime by at least one-third²¹
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions by one-third since 2010²²

Sources and Further Details

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- ¹² *Private Sector Employment*, Office for National Statistics, 14 June 2022, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/g7k5/pse>
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