

The
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Cell**

The Way Ahead

Key Speeches and Articles from Robert Jenrick's Leadership Campaign



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Introduction

2024 was a catastrophic year for the Conservatives. A general election saw the Party lose 244 seats and left with only 121.

Essays and books have and will be written on the factors that led to this, but ultimately it boiled down to a lack of competency, a lack of coherence, and a lack of purpose. These meant the party lost the confidence of the public.

The same year saw Rishi Sunak resign as leader and campaigning take place to find a successor. That provided a critical opportunity to determine the future direction of the party, for it to make a clean break with past errors, and to atone for its broken pledges – chief amongst them (but not solely) to take immigration down to the tens of thousands.

Of the candidates however, only one of them addressed head on the issues that had led to masses of voters leaving for other parties or simply staying at home. That candidate was Robert Jenrick MP.

Across a series of 200 public meetings, numerous speeches to think tanks and strategic organisations, and a raft of articles and interviews, he set out where Conservatism had gone wrong in government, where Labour was expanding the catalogue of errors, and what radical changes were needed for a national renaissance. It was, in short, both the necessary apology but also an ambitious manifesto, one which grappled with the critical problems that had been swept under the carpet.

Robert Jenrick, unfortunately, did not win. Unhappily, the winner avoided committing to any robust or controversial policies at all, deferring the hard choices to future working groups. Many of these correspondingly today have still not yet won the clear mandate that a leadership campaign pledge would have cemented in, and are yet to be argued over within the party. Others will not be worked through in time for the May 2025 local and mayoral elections. Meanwhile, Reform is on a roll.

Nevertheless, precisely thanks to the output of the Jenrick campaign, a large amount of the pivotal thinking has been done which challenges the taboos and sets the framework for others now to deliver. It is to help this process that this collection of articles and speeches has been put together. It serves both as an educational aid for students of the Party as well as a single point of quick reference to researchers – and to those looking at what the actual policy needs to be.

There is far more material out there and this collection can only be a starting point, uniting the most important and, critically, those coming directly from the candidate. Whether the Conservative Party finally listens is a different matter. But it is now an existential one.

“We must empower members to rebuild the Conservative Party as a mass movement”

ConservativeHome, 12 July 2024

The following article predates the start of the leadership campaign, but even at this stage addresses some of the key issues facing the Conservative Party that had only a few days before suffered a catastrophic election defeat.

Last Thursday, we suffered our Party's worst-ever electoral defeat. We must now reflect, in the cold light of day, on what went wrong.

The party Chairman has commissioned a review of the campaign. This is the right thing to do and mirrors the steps taken after the disastrous 2017 general election.

But for the review to be as productive as possible it must have a broad remit that goes beyond the campaign run by CCHQ. Our party's problems did not begin with a rain-soaked speech. Nor did we lose the election because of a slogan, a logo, or a soundbite. We must ask ourselves deeper questions about the record we were standing on, and the ground campaign across the country.

In no small part, our loss was attributable to the gradual hollowing out of our party organisation. We were outspent and outmaneuvered on the ground.

Astonishingly, some have argued that the solution to this is to disenfranchise our members. This could not be more wrong: the answer is to empower them.

Party members are not to blame for our shortcomings. They didn't set government policy. They didn't sit by as we failed to deliver what we had promised the public on immigration, taxation, and the NHS.

They pounded the streets. They knocked on doors. They donated their hard-earned money. And many of them did this despite being ignored when decisions were being taken in Westminster. Many are keen to say, our party is a big tent. But we should never forget who holds that tent up.

As we take the fight to Labour, we'll need our membership to play an even larger role in the life of our party.

The merits of the voluntary party and colleagues in Parliament working hand-in-glove are clear. My seat, Newark, was – according to most MRP polls – due to be lost to Labour. However, the combination of a distinctive conservative message and a campaign-focussed local association meant it was the only seat in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire that we held. I owe a huge debt to those incredibly generous volunteers. They were, and remain the lifeblood of our party.

To turn things around we must breathe life into the party with a renewed role and respect for members. That means revisiting the calls for greater party democracy that have been swirling for decades.

I know them well. I joined the party in 1997 in Wolverhampton where Conservatives were thin on the ground. I was an association chairman for four years. I fought a marginal seat. Then, in 2014, I fought and won a by-election – taking the fight to Nigel Farage – where thousands of party members campaigned for me.

Throughout that time, the need for greater party democracy has been acknowledged but ultimately ignored. If anything, the party has gone backwards.

What we saw before the election may have represented the nadir. It was wrong for local associations to have handpicked lists of Downing Street advisers foisted upon them. That can never be allowed to happen again.

I believe any Conservative party member should be able to apply for selection. We must scrap the approved candidates list which has morphed beyond all recognition. CCHQ's role should be limited to ensuring that candidates hold conservative principles and values, can perform the job of being an MP, meet the required moral and ethical standards expected of those in public life, and that local associations run fair and open contests.

Beyond that, choices should be returned to the members, as was the case in the not-so-distant past. Local associations – made up of longstanding councillors and activists – do not need to have their hands held.

We need CCHQ to focus on what it's there for: helping to win elections. Given the perilous position we face, and with the threat of Reform, every seat needs support. In the past MPs have been returned on the back of a successful campaign, only to see CCHQ's support dry up. This must end.

We should keep all new MPs with a majority of less than 5,000, on an 'Incumbency Program' with their campaign managers remaining in place, and ongoing digital and campaigning support. They should also help train members so that they have the confidence to design and deliver campaigns locally.

We need to select candidates in winnable seats far earlier. And we should put our arms around the many great candidates who stood this time and lost, due to no fault of their own, and wish to stand again. They have so much more to contribute to our party.

We must value those party professionals, whether at CCHQ or experienced agents in the country, who know how to campaign, build our membership, and nurture activists. Many feel disrespected and overlooked. They see cronyism and short-termism in place of meritocracy. They see bloated bureaucracy, detached from the specific circumstances at the local level.

Centre-right parties elsewhere in the West are growing. We must build up our membership by reaching out to all those who share our values of whom there are millions. And that must include younger people, who we need to enthuse, like never before. We only need to look at Pierre Poilievre and the Canadian Conservatives to see what is possible.

Finally, it's time we set out formally the principles that underpin our party. Yes, the Party should be a broad church, but it must have a common creed. The foundation for a Conservative revival and any successful programme of government is a clear declaration of the fundamental truths that conservatives with a small 'c' believe in. As Margaret Thatcher said in her 1996 Keith Joseph Lecture, that's the first lesson that needs to be drawn about the rethinking of Conservatism.

As my friend Mark Francois recalls an older party member telling him, when you put on a blue rosette, you should know what it stands for. And when someone spots it as they open their door to you, they should know it too. Neither has been true of late. It's time to change that.

The Conservative Party doesn't just need root-and-branch reform, it needs to be rebuilt. Rebuilt from the ground up as a mass movement of conservatives, united in a common endeavour and rooted in

our communities. I'm convinced it can be done. It will be the most important task of the years ahead. And that work must start now.

“Conservatives must have core principles around which we can unite – here are my 10 propositions”

Daily Telegraph, 17 August 2024

This extremely important comment piece sets out a sort of leadership manifesto. Notably it was not intended as an exclusive list, with Robert Jenrick subsequently for instance stating that reinforcing the role of the family was just as important a feature of the programme.

After 1997, it took 13 painful years to regain the trust of the public. During that time, Tony Blair transformed our institutions, politics and country.

This time, we must rebuild far more quickly. And yet the challenge we face is greater. Our parliamentary party is smaller; our intellectual movement is divided; our brand is tainted.

We rightly face a deep well of anger. If we do not listen and change, political wilderness awaits.

To rebuild, we must first collectively understand why we lost. I think the immediate answers are clear. We failed to deliver what we promised in 2019 on the economy, the NHS and immigration. We indulged in internal drama and lost our hard-won reputation for good governance.

Underpinning these errors was a more profound crisis of identity. The party failed to unite around the core conservative beliefs required to tackle our nation’s challenges.

We were a broad church, as we must always be. But we lacked a common creed. When we knocked on doors, too many voters didn’t know what we stood for. That blue rosette had lost its meaning. Our party has time-honoured principles that have been endorsed at the ballot box for almost three centuries. In opposition, we must rediscover this identity.

Manifestos detailing our policy proposals must respond to specific circumstances. But our foundational values must endure. It is these principles that will stop us from getting blown off course or failing to deliver.

We must state afresh the shared values around which our entire party can unite, updated for the modern world. Our country faces a truly stark set of challenges: the shift of power from West to East, technology such as AI upending old industries, and mass migration, to name but a few. We need pragmatic principles to guide us, not wishful thinking, and a positive vision of the future we seek to build.

This can’t be done overnight. No one person or part of our party has a monopoly on wisdom. It must be a collective endeavour between our MPs, councillors and members. And it must extend beyond our voters too, including those who collectively rejected us, like the younger Britons whom I am determined to win back.

But we must start somewhere. The following 10 principles are a first attempt to outline what our common creed should be.

1. The nation-state is fundamental

The nation-state is the most successful vehicle for peace and prosperity ever created. Nations, not supranational bodies, are what naturally command loyalty. It is the duty of the government to advance the interests of the citizens that constitute this national community over those outside it.

2. Our people and Parliament are sovereign

Sovereign authority is vested in our democratic Parliament. The protections and freedoms British citizens have enjoyed for centuries do not derive from international human rights treaties, but from statute and the common law. Contested interpretations of international law should never prevent us acting in the national interest. Government can and should deepen co-operation to tackle shared challenges via international agreements, but must never cede control. Public agencies and quangos must be clearly responsible to Ministers, who themselves should be accountable to Parliament.

3. Market economics drive growth

Prosperity is not the creation of the state, but of people acting freely in collaboration and competition with each other. Government is there to create the conditions for entrepreneurs and investors to succeed, dismantle monopolies and crony capitalists, and promote property ownership as a moral good. Like many developed countries, we are trapped in a low-growth cycle. Boosting our GDP per person is a moral imperative. Growth alleviates poverty, increases opportunity, and enables strong public services.

To improve our productivity, we must densify our cities and build infrastructure faster.

We need reliably cheap energy built on nuclear power – not expensive, intermittent energy sources with no plan for when the sun doesn't shine and wind doesn't blow. We must pragmatically balance net zero against economic growth and energy security, generating enough energy at prices we can afford. Energy costs have trebled in the last 20 years – we will reindustrialise only if they fall.

And we need to equip the next generation with real skills, not low value qualifications. One in five graduates now end up earning less than they would if they had never gone to university.

This must change.

4. The NHS is a public service. We must make it deliver

Government should ensure that all, regardless of means, have support in sickness, infirmity and old age.

The pandemic caused NHS waiting times to surge. But our performance was not good enough.

Our failure was not resources but productivity: the NHS has a fifth more money, doctors and nurses than it did in 2019, but hospitals are barely treating any more patients.

Too often, the NHS story is that of heroic frontline staff being let down by poor management. We cannot allow fear of our opponents distorting our arguments to deter us from advancing bold solutions. Nor can we allow the NHS to be hijacked by unions at the expense of patients.

5. Mass migration must end

Illegal migration is a national security emergency. People we know nothing about have entered the country with scant prospect of removal.

Without secure borders, we don't have a country.

Over the last 25 years, legal migration has been nearly 100 times higher than the quarter-century preceding it – fuelling the housing crisis, suppressing wages, causing public service waiting lists and destroying trust in politics.

The only test for immigration policies is whether they benefit the British people.

We must become the Grammar school of the Western world, admitting those who contribute more than they receive in benefits and services.

6. We need a small state that works, not a big state that fails

Government isn't working as it should. The state costs more than ever, but public sector productivity is lower now than it was 25 years ago.

As the pace of global change increases, the importance of state capacity increases. To seize future opportunities – like AI and life sciences – the UK must move faster than our competitors. We need an entrepreneurial state that employs the brightest, harnesses technology, obsesses over performance, and can take advantage of the regulatory opportunities afforded by Brexit. A state that has the self-awareness to recognise some decisions are best taken at a local level, closer to local people.

The state should believe in itself. It should champion our history and institutions, and deploy its full powers to defend our Union.

7. We are a national party, serving the whole country

Disraeli called it One Nation; Boris, Levelling Up. Different words, but the same point: the Conservative Party is a national party or it is nothing.

It's a party of and for everyone in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, working to spread opportunity and tackle social injustice.

Our base is too narrow. We won just 11 seats across the North, London and Wales. Amongst non-homeowners, we won just 13 per cent of the vote. The Greens won more votes than us amongst people under 40.

Becoming a national party again means standing for forgotten Britain: the 30-somethings stuck in their childhood bedroom; the deprived towns Westminster neglects; the parents struggling with bills; the white working-class boys falling behind; the communities across the four nations whose patriotic unionism isn't reciprocated. In short, we must become the trade union for the entire country.

8. Prison works

We have witnessed a breakdown of law and order. Crime is an offence against both its victims and society itself, which depends on the trust prevailing amongst law-abiding citizens. The purpose of prison is to punish people and keep the public safe from dangerous criminals. Yet criminals with 50 or more previous convictions have been spared jail in more than 50,000 cases since 2007. Fifty per cent of crime is committed by 10 per cent of offenders. Too much anti-social behaviour goes unpunished.

We urgently need more prisons so we can jail repeat offenders for longer and cut crime. We believe in rehabilitation and second chances, but we can't be taken for fools.

9. Promote national unity

A nation is not just a people, but compatriots bound together by shared values, traditions, stories and experiences. These bonds are weakening as family breakdown accelerates, mass migration triggers unprecedented change, and communal rituals fade.

And our culture is under attack from extremists that threaten many of our public institutions. They oppose free speech, subjugate individuals to group identities, denigrate our past, and side with our enemies.

In the face of such an assault, our aim cannot be meek, liberal neutrality. We must promote a unifying national identity and robustly defend it from those who oppose the very ideals upon which our way of life depends. We must nourish civil society, and robustly defend our values against those who despise us.

10. Peace comes through strength

The UK is a great nation with a great history. We believe the Western democratic model is the best means of achieving security, prosperity and freedom. The purpose of British foreign, defence and development policy is to protect the British people. Our commitment to other countries stems from that.

We must stand up to our enemies and stand alongside our allies that share our values and interests. As our adversaries rise, we must defend our beliefs in the marketplace of ideas and the arena of geopolitical reality by investing substantially more in our defences and protecting our critical industrial capabilities.

“We must be a party that rejects mass migration”

Daily Telegraph, 22 August 2024

The immigration figures released yesterday will come as no surprise to the public. They confirm what the British people can see with their own eyes.

The pace of change in our towns and cities is still too fast. Public services remain under strain from huge numbers that were never planned for. The housing crisis is as bad as it's ever been, with demand generated by immigration outstripping even the most ambitious targets for supply.

For nearly 30 years the public have voted for lower immigration, only for politicians of all stripes to raise it. Even after Brexit, when we finally regained control of our borders, the public were betrayed. Decisions taken in 2019 relaxed controls and sent net migration spiralling to historically unprecedented levels. Freedom of movement with Europe was replaced with a system so liberal it effectively amounted to freedom of movement with the rest of the world.

In the first quarter of this year, the government issued more family visas to the dependants and relatives of Somali nationals (269) than it did work visas to physicists, chemists and biologists from all other countries put together (198).

The post-Brexit health and social care route – which was forecast to draw just a few thousand workers – ballooned and still managed to leave social care with huge numbers of vacancies. Even once corrected, the consequences will be with us for a long time, as yesterday's data made clear. Extensions are up by 43 per cent. The large numbers who arrived under the lax system are triggering chain migration, with family visas up by 35 per cent.

Nevertheless, the reductions I secured after mammoth negotiations with the then prime minister are starting to make some difference. Few would imagine the internal resistance faced when, alongside Parliamentary colleagues, I fought tooth and nail for these last year. In the first six months of this year, the number of student dependants are down by 81 per cent; foreign students by 23 per cent; health and social care visas down by 26 per cent; and work visas down by 11 per cent. Once they have had time to bed-in, they should reduce legal migration in the region of 300,000. But placed in their context, these are still only modest dips. They came too late and off the back of an historic increase. So it would be offensive to the public for us to celebrate them as a success.

The public weren't content for numbers to come down gradually. They expected us to deliver the promises they voted for. And, the truth is – with or without the positive changes – we failed. As I said when I resigned last year, this package was only designed as a start, and the government needed to go further, faster.

It is a convenient myth and a comforting delusion to tell ourselves that if only the public had seen this data, the election result would have been markedly different. It wouldn't. While

the date of the election was clearly a mistake, we lost because, for 14 years, we failed to deliver our promises on the economy, the NHS, and most consequentially of all, migration.

The public aren't obsessed with this topic. They do not wish to spend every day thinking about it. They just want action to match words. And despite the rhetoric of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer's policies tell a different story.

Despite the increase in spousal visas, Labour have already scrapped the plan to raise the minimum income requirement for family visas from £29,000 to £38,700. It's a return to the type of low-skilled immigration that has burdened, not boosted, our economy.

They are also considering bringing back free movement with the EU for those under 30. Of course there is a place for highly selective and capped youth mobility schemes, but this proposal is neither. It would be an insult to the 17 million who voted for control over our immigration system.

And as the Budget approaches, expect to see the Chancellor pushing for visa liberalisations as an easy way to inflate GDP figures. The headline growth rates might be higher as a result, but it doesn't translate into more money in the pockets of working people. In fact, the evidence suggests it will suppress living standards and deter productivity investment. Migrants can bring skills, but they don't bring homes, GP surgeries or motorways, so our capital stocks are diluted between more people.

As I have written at length in these pages, the only way to end the cycle of broken promises is to create a legally binding cap on immigration. That figure should be in the tens of thousands – or less – as was the case before the onset of mass migration initiated by Tony Blair.

Our goal should be to become the grammar school of the Western world, attracting top talent – those that contribute more in taxes and skills, than they take out in services. It won't be plain sailing but we must do it.

I am under no illusions: the anger the public feel towards us is visceral. Their deep frustrations are completely understandable. We must be honest and admit we made serious mistakes. We must repent. And we must show the public that we have changed. Only then can we begin the long, painful road to restoring credibility.

“A smaller state. Smarter regulation. And lower taxes. My manifesto for national prosperity”

ConservativeHome, 17 September 2024

Why is it that the country which led the Industrial Revolution is now trapped in a cycle of low growth and relative economic decline?

There have indeed been huge global headwinds. Low growth is by no means unique to Britain. But the hard truth is that the UK is one of the countries where the post-2008 slowdown has been most pronounced.

I believe the reason is relatively simple. Rather than standing back and letting prosperity flourish, too often the state gets in the way.

Over our 14 years in government, we showed plenty of ambition for reforming the state. In many areas, we succeeded.

We restored the dire public finances we inherited from the last Labour government. We oversaw a revolution in England's schools, overseeing a dizzying rise in standards. As Housing Secretary, I took on the blockers and got housing starts up to their highest level since 1987. And, of course, we delivered Brexit, providing us with the ability to design smarter regulations than our competitors.

But, we didn't get everything right. While we steadied the ship from the Covid pandemic and energy crisis, we didn't do enough to get it moving again. Now we must show the electorate that we have a credible plan to get Britain growing again.

It won't be enough to point out that Labour doesn't have one, or that the hostility to wealth displayed by Rachel Reeves is already scaring off investors. We need to make the case for how we will unlock Britain's potential.

Here's what we should be doing instead.

First of all, we need to get Britain investing again. British workers don't produce less than their counterparts in Germany, France, or America because they're slacking off. It's because we aren't giving them the tools they need to do their jobs as efficiently. Look at the league table for investment as a share of GDP at any point in the last 30 years, and most of the time the UK will be at the bottom of the G7.

It's not the state's business to tell firms how much to invest, or how to spend it. But we find ourselves in a place where we effectively tell companies they can't invest.

Between our byzantine planning system and the uncertainty of our judicial review system which constantly upends decisions, getting planning approval to build a data centre or factory is markedly harder in the UK than elsewhere.

Investors are optimistic about Britain but we turn them away. Companies spend years pleading for the right to spend their money here creating jobs, only to be declined by the vetocracy. The cost of a planning application for a project in Britain can be more than building the project overseas.

I proposed the most substantial supply-side reforms of the last parliament to free up our sclerotic planning system, but they were only partially implemented. We must build on them to simplify requirements for environmental impact assessments and offset impacts on neighbours and the environment through larger monetary transfers.

And these reforms should be carried over to the housing sector. A huge part of boosting productivity is matching the right people to the right places, where they can take the jobs that best suit their skills. In the United States, economists have estimated that reducing restrictions on house building in just three large cities to the 'average' for the rest of the country could have increased US GDP by around 9 per cent in the 45 years leading to 2009.

The restrictions in Britain are if anything more stringent — and the potential returns to loosening them greater. We should make it far easier to densify our inner cities and smooth the process of adding additional stories to properties in the suburbs.

The first step is allowing people to invest again. The second step is encouraging them. The mini-Budget illustrated what happens if you lose fiscal credibility. However, it would be a mistake to assume that there is no hope of bringing the tax burden down from its highest level since 1948.

Unfashionable as it may be, I recognise that higher tax rates can lead to lower receipts. When in 2020 I persuaded the Chancellor to cut stamp duty, it spurred the largest-ever number of property transactions in a single year and benefited businesses throughout the supply chain.

We are now highly over-reliant on a small number of people to raise funds. The top 10 per cent of taxpayers account for 60 per cent of all income tax receipts; the top 1 per cent, a startling 29 per cent. Labour might be happy to drive these people overseas, but the rest of us should be asking how we fund the NHS when they've left.

Rather than raising taxes to fund a larger state, we need to shrink the state to suit a lower tax burden, restoring the incentives for companies to grow and invest, and for people to take risks and work hard.

Some of this can be done with a relatively light touch, addressing cliff edges within the tax system to avoid absurd marginal rates. But we will also need to look hard at the size of the state.

I've already set out my ambition to slash the number of civil servants to pre-Brexit levels. We must also make the most of our Brexit freedoms to secure our competitive advantages in areas like financial services and life sciences by building a leaner, more entrepreneurial state.

But it's long past time we examined not just how the state goes about its business, but what it does, reevaluating functions as times change.

Too often, when the state has looked to save money, the capital budget has been the first place it looks. This saves pain in the short-term, averting the hard work of redesigning systems to work more efficiently. But it stores up long-term challenges.

In some European countries, healthcare workers have up to five times the equipment to work with than their British counterparts do. We need to give the NHS the capital investment it has long needed by cutting waste elsewhere.

One place to cut is in the benefits system. Just as we can increase GDP per capita by giving our workers more equipment to work with, we can increase it by bringing more people into work.

The explosion in the number of working-age people claiming benefits for health reasons — and particularly mental health conditions — suggests something is wrong. Too many indicators show that we are medicalising normal human stress.

The reforms introduced by Mel Stride to tackle this created savings that allowed us to cut national insurance. That serves as a blueprint for how to cut taxes responsibly

A smarter immigration system is also essential for growth. A tightly controlled, high-skilled immigration system that attracts the very top talent is one of the best tools we have for generating growth. But as the Office for Budget Responsibility has made very clear until recently our system attracted low-wage work and piled up long-term fiscal costs.

Unwinding 25 years of low-skilled mass migration won't be easy. It requires a proper skills strategy, equipping the next generation to fill jobs with real skills, not low-value degrees. One in five graduates now ends up earning less than they would if they had never gone to university. This must end.

We must also bring down sky-high energy costs and make it our objective to deliver cheap and reliable energy. Between the cost of connecting to distributed renewable generators, and the subsidies offered for their production, our attempts to decarbonise our national grid have resulted in British industry paying some of Europe's highest electricity costs in Europe.

Labour's rush to complete decarbonisation by 2030 will only send bills spiralling higher. We should not be decarbonising faster than our major competitors.

Other countries, like South Korea, can build nuclear power stations at a far lower cost than we can. We will have the humility to learn from their example, following best practice in regulation and design to follow a smarter, cheaper path to decarbonisation, bringing down the price paid by energy users in the process.

Doing all of this offers a chance to close regional imbalances. Talent is spread evenly in our country but opportunity isn't. Generating cheaper energy and investing in defence and domestic supply chains isn't just good economics — it offers a chance to 're' rather than

continually 'de'-industrialising our economy. With it, we can provide new, well-paid skilled jobs to places neglected by Westminster for far too long.

Underpinning all these ideas is a very simple idea: our economy needs a small state that works, not a big state that fails. Rather than treading further down the path to ever more government intervention — more regulation, more price controls, more nationalisation — we should instead take a lighter touch approach. The economy will only grow if enterprise is rewarded and the private sector does more of the work.

Britain is still a country of immense potential. It's time we stepped back, and let it succeed.

“The attitudes and policies of our metropolitan establishment have weakened English identity. They have put the very idea of England at risk”

Daily Mail, 19 September 2024

Our country is not at ease with itself.

In recent years we've seen inter-communal violence, radicalisation and diminishing trust in our communities, all of which came to a head during the summer riots.

As a consequence, a frank discussion is needed about the state of the nation. The state of Britain, yes, but the state of England, in particular – as England is where most of the rioting occurred, and it was the St George's flag that some misappropriated.

We won't be able to heal our divided nation if we refuse to confront complex issues about identity.

Who we are, and what community we belong to, matters. It gives our lives meaning and purpose. Confidence in our identity reassures and grounds us in a world changing at dizzying speed.

The identities that matter to most people are not their gender, sexuality or politics, but their family, community and – yes – their nation.

Most people in the United Kingdom are proud to be British. And so we should be. We Brits invented parliamentary democracy, pioneered the Industrial Revolution, ended the slave trade, and stood alone against Hitler in Europe's darkest hour.

But almost all people in Britain have an additional national identity too. Most Scots are unashamedly proud to be both British and Scottish. As are the Welsh. These are identities that pre-date our Britishness but also bolster it. The same is true with the English.

Unfashionable as it may be, I am deeply proud to be both English and British. My roots are in provincial England but I have an equally strong sense of belonging to the UK.

But there's a key difference. Whereas all of the most high-status people in Scotland and Wales are proud to be Scottish and Welsh, most of the English political and media elite are far from proud to be English.

Indeed, with the exception of when the football is on, they seem to actively disapprove of it.

The Labour view is best represented by Emily Thornberry's mocking tweet in 2014 of a house adorned with three St George's flags above a white van parked in the drive.

While the metropolitan establishment have denigrated and mocked expressions of English identity, they seem happier celebrating other cultures, instead.

I can't stomach such lofty arrogance, as most of the country can't either. We don't want a new identity, we want our existing identity to be championed again with passion.

As proud Unionists, the Conservative Party should encourage all four nations to embrace both Britishness and their distinct national identities. Scottish and Welsh Conservatives have long led the way in this.

A nation should be proud of its past but, as the social critic Roger Scruton wrote, English elites repudiate our inheritance and national identity. English children learn little of our history. Legions of graduates are taught that England has a uniquely evil past that is responsible for the world's injustices. And the national arts council funds projects that consistently denigrate our past. We can't possibly forge a united country around an identity we aren't proud of.

A nation should put its own citizens first.

But whether it's us giving foreign aid to parts of the world that are richer than parts of England or half of all social housing in London being occupied by those born abroad, it's clear this isn't always happening.

A nation cannot exist without a border, but the UK has experienced record illegal migration – and England has been saddled with the brunt of the burden.

And, most importantly, the ties that bind a nation together fray if we have huge numbers of people arriving over a short period of time. It is England, and England's cities in particular, that have been most affected by the unprecedented mass migration of the past 25 years.

This influx has put our roads, GP surgeries and schools under pressure, while not making England, or any part of the UK, richer.

We are an open and tolerant nation, perhaps more so than any other country on Earth. People of every background have not just come to England, but, over time, become both English and British.

But let's be clear: the combination of unprecedented migration, the dismantling of our national culture, non-integrating multiculturalism and the denigration of our identity has presented huge problems.

The public, whose depth of anger Westminster is underestimating, have consistently voted against all of this.

We need only look to Europe where the far-Right is surging in popularity to see what happens if mainstream parties continue to sweep the issue under the carpet.

If I am elected Conservative leader, I will unashamedly fight for a strong United Kingdom.

For a proud Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland – and yes, a proud England too.

“Even Rachel Reeves knows Labour have hurt Britain”

Daily Telegraph, 23 September 2024

It's been a bad week for Rachel Reeves – and the British public. We are bracing ourselves to pay more in tax; she is bracing herself to pay for her own wardrobe.

And today, in her speech in Liverpool, the Chancellor conceded that in her attempt to discredit her strong economic inheritance, she has hurt the British economy.

Her doom-and-gloom rhetoric has knocked consumer and investor confidence. Already, wealth creators are leaving this country at a faster rate than any other nation apart from China. This is the cost of her political choice to attempt to roll the pitch for Autumn tax rises.

She's panicked. So, in a screeching U-turn, we heard Reeves talk up her “optimism” for the years ahead, built – of course – on the economic legacy the Conservative party passed them.

Standing in front of a sign emboldened with “change begins” she reheated the same tired, failed ideology that Labour always offers: more government, more intervention, more of your money spent on their favoured causes.

She spoke of “stability” but fuelled uncertainty. The public are being forced to keep guessing, wondering whether the Chancellor will come for their pension, investments, savings or house.

And for all her talk of creating growth, Reeves is leading us down the path of stagnation. Even the mooted deregulation is a damp squib; for all the warm words, there was no practical plan forthcoming. Labour's planning policy changes mean fewer homes in cities like London where the productivity gains are greatest, while their drive to decarbonise the grid by shutting down gas capacity will send electricity costs soaring and hurt British industry.

The Chancellor tried to paint her choices as necessary repair work on the public finances, but that's plainly nonsense. They've found money to give above-inflation pay rises to the public sector and Ed Miliband's £8 billion pounds for his fantasy energy company.

With her immoral decision to remove the winter fuel payment for 10 million pensions blowing up in her face, the Chancellor is desperately trying to pin the blame on the economic and fiscal inheritance she received. It bears repeating: there is no “black hole” in the public finances, only the decisions taken by a government which wishes to avoid accountability for them.

Let's run through that inheritance, briefly: the deficit last year was down to 4.4 per cent of GDP – less than half the 10.3 per cent the Coalition inherited in 2010 – and, thanks to the hard work put in by the last government, already set to fall substantially.

The employment rate at 74.8 per cent, higher than in any year under the last Labour government. GDP expanding, with the UK posting better figures than Germany, France, and the eurozone. Inflation has been brought down to a fraction over the 2 per cent target.

It's certainly true, as I've already written, that we could have, and should have, done more to secure long term growth, as well as putting out the fires on the deck. But broadly, the foundations are in place for the Government to build upon.

And Labour is going to undermine them. Perhaps the most important part of the Chancellor's speech was the refusal to countenance "austerity" coupled with the careful non-denials around raising taxes.

It all comes down to the fundamental difference between the Conservative and Labour parties. Conservatives believe that you know best how to spend your money, that our society functions better when the government steps back to let you build and invest, and that it is better to grow the pie rather than squabble over its division.

Labour does not. Since 1970, no Labour chancellor has left office having cut the tax burden. Reeves' speech showed that she has learned nothing from the failures of her predecessors.

It is a potent reminder of the costs of losing office – and why my party must change, so the Conservatives can offer the public what they deserve at the next election.

Speech to Conservative Party Conference, 2 October 2024

The four remaining shortlisted candidates were invited to make their pitch to the 2024 Party conference. Robert Jenrick's, which incidentally was the only one delivered without notes, reaffirmed a number of solid pledges. The text is set out below (marginally sub-edited here as in the HJS one later on into a more readable paragraph format.)

INTRODUCTION

It's great to be here – to be home.

I am a Midlands man. I grew up down the road in Wolverhampton. So before I tell you where I want to take our party, our country let me tell you about the place that made me.

50 years ago, in 1974, my Dad, Bill, and my Mum, Jenny, came here to Birmingham. Dad had a job at the last great iron foundry in the Black Country, in Coseley. A vast, Victorian metalworks that made the pots and pans of the Empire.

It was named "Cannon Industries" because it produced the cannon for Wellington's army. My Dad loved that.

My parents came here to put down roots, get on in life. But their dreams were put on hold - because Britain was broken. Industries were crippled, councils bankrupt, hope gone.

For then as now, we had a fresh Labour government, stale already. Stuck in the past. Out of answers.

And the Conservative opposition? We were broken too.

We'd drifted into accepting the failed status quo, believing the best Government could do was manage decline.

But in 1974, we made a big decision: We chose to change. To change our leadership and our policies. To reject defeatism. To rediscover our confidence by reigniting our purpose.

And the changes we made took us to victory in 1979, led by one of my heroines. A woman as strong as the iron cast in Dad's foundry - Margaret Thatcher.

Our party reversed Britain's decline – and we did it by backing people like my Mum and Dad. Who bought a home; started a family; and set up a small business.

My parents didn't tell me about their values. They didn't need to. They lived them. As they worked day and night at our kitchen table building up their business. In their slog and their sacrifice. In the love and security they gave to our family. With the solemn respect they had for Queen and country.

Decency. Hard work. Aspiration. Patriotism.

These were their values – cast in iron, built to last.

I owe so much to my parents - and to them I want to say thank you.

I am in politics for millions of people like them. The devoted parents, the good neighbours, the silent majority who do their bit and do the right thing, who have no pressure group fighting their corner, no lobby banging on about their 'rights'.

Well let me tell you – if I become leader, the pressure group for Britain's hard-working silent majority is going to be the people in this room: the Conservative Party.

LABOUR

That's who I'm fighting for.

So who is Sir Keir Starmer in politics for? The last three months have shown us who...

Convicted criminals – walking free.

Illegal migrants - getting an amnesty.

Well-paid train drivers – given yet more money.

Meanwhile, the hard-working majority? Preparing for huge tax rises. The country's wealth creators? Fleeing en masse. And millions of pensioners, betrayed.

Imagine. Imagine how cowardly you have to be to rob poor pensioners to placate your union paymasters.

That's not just cowardly. That's shameful.

Fourteen years. They had fourteen years to plan for power. Where's the boldness? Where's the vision?

The truth is Labour are too stale; too cowardly to tackle the big challenges.

Keir Starmer will take the knee, but he won't take a stand.

He won't even take a stand at the football anymore - he's up in the executive box.

The country voted for change... it got managed decline.

It's so painful that Starmer can't see what we see. A nation that's given more to the world than any other, that's brimming with talent, potential, and energy, but that's held back by big government and small mindedness - high taxes and low ambition.

Starmer sees a nation fated to decline. In need of more migration

More tax

More state

More woke

Britain needs a leader; we've got an undertaker.

And what of the Cabinet?

Rachel Reeves, as wooden as Pinocchio and only marginally more honest.

Ed Miliband, a Wallace missing a Gromit.

David Lammy, proof at last that there is a more annoying LBC presenter than James O'Brien.

Starmer's Labour... out of touch...out of their depth.... out of answers...

And that's why, despite everything, our party remains our country's best hope.

RECORD

But if we're going to realise that hope, we need to change.

I am so proud of all we achieved in Government...

We fixed our public finances

Transformed our schools

Built a fairer welfare system

Unleashed an employment boom

Got Brexit Done

And led Europe in standing with Ukraine in their darkest hour.

I will always defend all we achieved. But, at the same time, we won't recover if we bury our heads in the sand.

It's hard to say it, but the country doesn't trust us.

We just suffered our worst defeat ever. We lost more seats and won fewer votes than any Government ever has.

It was a comprehensive defeat. And it must lead to a comprehensive rethink.

Alongside our achievements, we need to recognise our failures. Our failure to deliver the strong economy, border and NHS we promised. And friends, we must never fail our people again.

NEW CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The truth is this. If we're to tackle the immense challenges we face, if we're to restore the public's trust, we must build something new.

A new Conservative Party. That is what I call for today.

Nothing less than a New Conservative Party, built on the rock of our oldest values and best traditions.

If I become our leader, this is what - together - we will build.

But look, I loathe empty rhetoric. Big talk and little action... that's part of the reason we are where we are.

You know I will take a stand. That's what I did last year.

It's frankly the reason I won my constituency of Newark, against every poll and pundit, the only seat we held in the whole of Nottinghamshire, because my constituents - to whom I owe so much - knew I took a stand. For them. For the country. For the change we need.

So today let me set out, specifically, five changes the New Conservative Party must make - five things we need to stand for and take a stand on.

1. MIGRATION

I'll start with this.

We've got to take a stand on securing our borders. We must secure our borders.

Over 120,000 people came here illegally on a small boat on our party's watch.

99% of them are still here, costing us billions.

Frankly our party will be consigned to history unless we stand for fixing this problem.

The only way to do so is to detain and quickly deport those who come here illegally.

But we will never do that - it isn't possible - unless we leave the European Court of Human Rights and free ourselves from Blair's Human Rights Act.

These institutions give illegal entrants an arsenal of laws to prevent their removal.

We have to change that.

We can't ignore the European Court — we're a common law nation.

And we certainly can't reform it either. That'd require unanimity. That's a fantasy.

On this, it's Leave or Remain.

And I'm for Leave.

I'm for the country of the Magna Carta, habeas corpus, the Bill of Rights, protecting our own freedoms and liberties.

I'm for finishing what Brexit started. For restoring sovereignty to our people and Parliament.

So the New Conservative Party must stand for a new Great Reform Act. Under which we leave the ECHR, repeal the Human Rights Act and write a new British Bill of Rights.

That's how - the only way - we deport the terrorists and foreign criminals on our streets ... and end illegal migration for good.

The era of mass migration must end too. It's not made us any richer - just putting immense pressure on our hospitals, houses and roads. And - let's be frank - the sheer numbers and lack of integration has sapped our culture and national cohesion.

So as your leader, I will fight for the effective freeze in net migration Britain needs.

And this time we will cast it in iron... We will do it with a vote in Parliament. So that each and everyone of us can look the British public in the eye and say we mean it, we are going to do it this time.

And if we do that, we give our country the effective breathing space that we need.

Will we be open to the world's best and brightest? Absolutely.

But will we be wide open to the world and his wife - and their entire extended family? No. Not anymore. And - with the new Conservative Party - never, ever again.

2. ENERGY

We've got to take a stand on net zero, too.

Since 2001, the cost of our energy has quadrupled.

Factories have closed. Families suffered. All because we've become more reliant on more expensive forms of energy like offshore wind.

Over the next five years Ed Miliband wants us to phase out gas. We knew in 2015 that putting Ed Miliband and power together was a bad idea. How right we were.

His plan will send bills sky high. And we have to oppose it.

But we also have to oppose the root of the problem. Which isn't the principle of net zero. But the crazy and binding interim targets created by Gordon Brown.

It's these mad carbon budgets - which don't allow for any innovation - driving the mad policies.

So I say: the new Conservative Party should stand for cutting our emissions... but never on the backs of working people and further deindustrialising our country.

3. BUILDING

Next, we've got to take a stand on getting Britain building.

We need more homes in this country. More infrastructure and industry too.

So I have a tough message for us all today. We cannot be the party of growth and low taxes, and business unless we're for reforming the broken system blocking the homes, roads, trams and train lines... factories, data centres, and investment that our country desperately needs.

We must, of course, stand for protecting our beautiful countryside. And for ensuring what gets built has local people's support.

But the New Conservative Party must also stand for the scientist who needs lab space. The towns in need of better roads. And the 30 year old men and women, still stuck in their childhood bedroom, staring at faded posters of Jeremy Corbyn, waiting to be able to afford a home, waiting for their life to begin.

We must stand for the most ambitious programme of urban densification and regeneration in our nation's history.

The New Conservative Party must stand for Getting Britain Building Again...

4. STATE

The New Conservative Party must also take a stand for a small state that works, not a big state that fails.

This election was as much a referendum on our NHS as it was our border.

The NHS has 20% more money, nurses and doctors than it did five years ago. But hospitals are barely treating any more patients.

Our courts, prisons, police, universities and welfare system... none of them are working as they should.

Of course, the pandemic is a factor. But our public services were sick long before Covid...

Productivity today is no higher than it was 20 years ago.

Labour will never fix this. The unions won't let them. But a New Conservative Party can.

We can do for all our public services what we did for our schools in the last decade - empowering the best leaders, while cracking down on failure.

I'm so proud when I look at our Conservative family and see so many entrepreneurs and business leaders. But where are the doctors, nurses, teachers, police and prison officers? We must stand for them – must stand with them.

The New Conservative Party must build a state that works — and the public services every Briton deserves.

5. CULTURE

And friends, we must take a stand to protect our nation and culture, identity and way of life.

Why does our establishment always seem to put Britain last?

I'm told we have enough munitions to last just a few weeks in a war. At the same time, we're giving foreign aid to parts of the world richer than parts of our country. If I'm your leader, we'll stand for cutting our bloated foreign aid budget so we can invest 3% of our GDP in our defences, finally doing what a government is meant to do - keeping its people safe.

And on our culture. How have we got to the point where a teacher from Batley remains in hiding because - in a class on free speech - he showed a cartoon of Mohammed?

Where the NHS has facilitated thousands of children to have life-changing gender surgery?

Where the RAF has hired pilots based on their race and gender?

We're a tolerant people – but the New Conservative party must stand for not tolerating this any longer.

We are the lucky inheritors of unparalleled national identities, British, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and English identities. The New Conservative Party must stand for carrying the torch of those identities forward and handing them on to our children and grandchildren, with pride, passion and purpose.

CONCLUSION

So, securing our border by leaving the ECHR.

Yes to net zero, but no to Ed Miliband's mad plan.

Getting Britain building.

A small state that works.

Putting our culture and country first.

Five changes the New Conservative Party must make. Five stands we must take.

Friends - I will always take a stand. The New Conservative Party will always take a stand.

Stand up for what's right.

Stand up to those who are wrong.

And stand alongside the good, decent, hardworking men and women who make this country great, and can make it greater still.

That is when our party's at its best - when we're a trade union for the British people, from our seaside resorts to our rural outposts, our village greens to our industrial heartlands, from world-class cities like this to small market towns like the one I'm so proudly from and the one I proudly represent.

Britain rises when its people can rise – all of them. We must help them rise again.

1974. 2024.

A country facing big challenges. A Labour government with no answers. And a Conservative Party facing a choice: Stick with an exhausted consensus that's driving our country into the ground, or have the courage to set a new way forward, to unite around the actual, practical solutions to the challenges we face, and to change. Really change.

I want to lead that change, to be that change.

So come with me. Work with me. Join me, in the New Conservative Party. And, together, let's take a stand for the country we love.

“Send Labour packing”

Daily Express, 12 October 2024

Labour's first 100 days have been nothing short of a disaster.

They've already broken their promises, surrendered British territory and become mired in chaos and sleaze.

They've jeopardised our economic recovery through their doom and gloom, already forcing investment overseas.

It's terrifying to think there are another 1,700 days to go. On this trajectory, Britain will be on its knees. For a government so new, they couldn't look more broken.

No wonder six in 10 Brits disapprove of their record, and Labour have plummeted in the polls. Their next assault will come at the Budget. For months they have been rolling the pitch to break their promises to raise taxes and control borrowing by inventing a £22billion black hole.

No serious economist will repeat their claim. It's a black hole of their own making: they've splashed out billions on a fantasy energy company and in above-inflation pay rises for their union paymasters.

And to fund it they've decided to scrap the winter fuel payment for 10 million pensioners. Those on as little as £13,000 a year could be £600 worse off, when energy bills are rising. It is indefensible, and as leader I would reverse it.

The Budget is shaping up to be the biggest democratic betrayal of modern times, a return to the dark days of Gordon Brown's high tax-and-spend agenda.

When it comes, the new Conservative leader should be there to hold Labour to account for their appalling dishonesty.

Under my leadership I'll end the infighting and unite my party around the serious answers to the huge challenges we face.

We will stand for ending mass migration by calling legal migration in the tens of thousands and leaving the ECHR so we deport the dangerous foreign murderers, racists and paedophiles from our country.

I will reclaim the low-tax, pro-growth agenda and restore our reputation for sound financial management. I have a proper plan for growth: getting people off welfare and into work, securing cheap, reliable energy and the biggest urban densification in a generation to build the homes we need, in places we need them.

We will once again be the party of strong public services. For too long we've treated the NHS like a religion to be worshipped, not a public service to be reformed.

Under my leadership we will send Labour packing. Quickly.

“We will return the Conservative Party to the service of its members”

Robert Jenrick and Jacob Rees-Mogg

Daily Telegraph, 12 October 2024

The Conservative Party has just received the lowest share of the vote since 1832 under Wellington. We have the fewest MPs since 1761 under the obscure Edmund Isham.

This year, hundreds of effective, hard-working Conservative MPs and councillors lost their seats, swept away by a tsunami of dismay with the Conservative government.

Our party has a mountain to climb if we are to ever return to power.

To rebuild, we must start by being honest about what went so badly wrong.

In no small part, our defeat was caused by the hollowing out of our party organisation. We were outspent and outmanoeuvred on the ground.

Many are keen to say our party is a big tent. But we must never forget who holds that tent up.

As we take the fight to Labour, the Lib Dems and Reform, we need our membership to play a larger role in the life of our party. We must breathe life into our party with a renewed role and respect for members. That means revisiting the calls for greater party democracy that have been swirling around for decades, and taken forward in recent years by the Conservative Democratic Organisation.

In recent years, the party has gone backwards. It was wrong for local associations to have handpicked lists of candidates forced upon them. Members were constantly badgered for money, but their thoughts and ideas on policy disregarded. That can never be allowed to happen again.

So, if we win this contest, we will work together to reform our party.

The opportunity in front of us is immense.

Any Conservative Party member should be able to apply for selection. The role of central office should be limited to ensuring candidates can perform the function of being an MP, and meet the moral and ethical standards expected of those in public life.

Candidates must be committed to the fundamental conservative principles and values that define our party so that we reinstate meaning in the blue rosette.

Beyond that, choices should be returned to the members. Local associations-made up of longstanding councillors and activists-do not need to be micromanaged.

We need central office to focus on what it’s actually for: helping to win elections. Given the perilous position we face, and the local elections fast approaching, every association needs support.

We will keep all new MPs on low majorities with an incumbency programme with their campaign managers remaining in place and continuing digital and campaign support. They will be there to help train members so they are empowered to run the campaigns that have the best chance of success locally.

We will ensure candidates are selected in seats earlier. And we will put our arms around the many great candidates who stood this time and lost, through no fault of their own. They have so much more to contribute to our party.

Conservative Party Headquarters will be restored to a place of meritocracy, home to the best campaigners in the business.

The opportunity in front of us is immense. Centre-right parties elsewhere in the West are growing. We too, can be a party of mass membership once again-home to all those who share 'small c' conservative values. The Conservatives have twice before become a mass membership organised with both the Primrose League and the post-war reforms leading to between one and two million members.

The Conservative Party doesn't just need root-and-branch reform, it needs to be rebuilt.

Grassroots Answers

“The Conservative Democratic Organisation (CDO) sent a questionnaire to all the candidates in the first round of the Leadership contest asking their views on certain topics we feel are key to success at the next General Election. Note: Robert Jenrick gave a very detailed, fifteen page reply to our questions, so I have had to summarise his answer in the final section, otherwise the replies / wording from all candidates are exactly as were sent to us.”

DEMOCRACY within the Conservative Party:

I strongly support many of the Conservative Democratic Organisation’s proposals on party reform. The CDO has led the way on democratic reform and dragging the party into the 21st century.

It was a disgrace for special advisers to be parachuted into safe constituencies and deeply wrong that great servants of our party like Lord Frost and leading lights of the CDO found it difficult to be put in front of members to be selected. We have to give power back to our members and empower them. Candidate selection must be returned to the members. No ifs, no buts.

At the beginning of the leadership campaign a number of people suggested that party members should be stripped of their role in choosing the leader. I completely oppose this. I think we need a formal change to the party constitution to safeguard the role of party members in electing the leader so some people get the message on this.

Will you back a new Party Constitution that will replace William Hague’s 1998 over centralising Party Constitution?

Yes.

We need to reform the Party Constitution for two reasons:

First, our Party must be united by a common creed. When people wear that blue rosette and knock on a door I want them to know what it stands for and feel proud. We need to reform our constitution to put our values at its heart, to end the division and unite the party. I have set out ten principles for reform to guide our thinking on this.

Second, our Constitution should secure and extend the hard won rights of party members. We should remove the powers of CCHQ to force candidates on associations. I have fiercely resisted the efforts to strip party members of their role in selecting the party leader. I want to grow this party and to become a mass membership party again and that starts with respecting and empowering our members.

CCHQ reform: Will you bring fundamental and total reform to Conservative Campaign Headquarters/the party's Central Office?

Yes.

I have been clear that we need to empower party members and trust them. I will ensure we grip our party machine this autumn, so it is in fighting shape ahead of the crucial May local elections.

In the short term, that means raising money to fund campaigning, getting campaign managers and assets to you that you actually want and mobilising the parliamentary party and all the resources of CCHQ to support you - and to win. I will have a local government representative attend the shadow cabinet alongside the Shadow Secretary of State to bring their voice.

In the medium term, CCHQ needs complete and utter reform. In fact, re-founding. It has failed you. Under my leadership it will change completely. We will start by scrapping the approved candidates list. CCHQ should focus on ensuring candidates are principled conservatives, and ethical people. Fair and open contests in which any Party member can stand will determine future candidate selections. We must trust local associations to manage this.

Commitment to Conservative Objectives, Values, and Principles

Lowering taxes

Ensuring monetary and fiscal probity

Reducing the size of the State; common sense, radical ideas for public sector reform including NHS

Free enterprise, small business, and free trade

Patriotism (Not Nationalism), love of country, and commitment to duty

International engagement and a big role for Britain in global affairs

Showing the importance of country and patriotism

Supporting freedoms such as free speech and free expression, fighting woke censorship, and for a Bill of Rights to safeguard these

The rule of law and proper policing and justice

Strong control of immigration and effective border control

Control of welfare spending and measures to encourage independence not dependence

Keeping the pension triple lock

The importance of family

Strong defence - increase to 3% GDP

Leave the EHCR

Honour the Referendum result and seize the benefits of Brexit

Windsor Framework needs radical improvement to take back full control.

Educational and skills excellence, schools, apprenticeships, universities

Independence not dependence in social care.

Protecting and enhancing the environment

“The first duty of Government is to protect the public”

Speech to the Henry Jackson Society, 25 October

The first duty of Government is to protect the public. Protect them from criminals at home, and defend them from hostile threats abroad.

There is nothing more important. It's why I take an uncompromising approach on illegal migration.

I make no bones about it: the situation in the Channel is a national security emergency. We have next to no idea who is crossing in small boats, and we are hamstrung in our ability to remove them.

It's why I have said we must leave the ECHR so we can stop the boats and remove dangerous foreign criminals from our streets. And it's also why I've spent my campaign talking about building more prisons and locking up hyper-prolific offenders for longer.

But today I am here to talk about defending our country from proliferating state threats abroad. And there is no better place for me to deliver my speech today than at the Henry Jackson Society.

Since the Henry Jackson Society was founded in 2005, it has been sounding the alarm. Along with many parliamentarians, like Mark Francois, Julian Lewis and Bob Seely. And former defence secretaries like Ben Wallace and Grant Shapps who fought for more funding.

Those warnings have been vindicated.

The threats we face are more acute than any point since the Cold War. We face an axis of authoritarian states - an axis of repression - on the offensive. Russia, China, Iran - and indeed North Korea - are deepening their cooperation to weaken the West.

The warning lights are flashing red.

China is currently undergoing the biggest military build up in history. They have ratcheted up their military drills to intimidate Taiwan, to unprecedented levels. And according to US intelligence, Xi Jinping has ordered the PLA to be able to invade Taiwan by 2027.

In the Middle East, Iran is on the verge of a nuclear weapon. Their proxies are working day and night to spread havoc and destroy Israel. British warships and commercial ships have come under fire from their partners, the Houthis jeopardising not just British lives but our prosperity too.

And closer to home, the Russian war machine has gone into overdrive in Ukraine. We know Putin's twisted desires do not end there. This is a tyrant who once described the collapse of the Soviet Union as “the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century” and whose aim is now clearly to attempt to rebuild a Russian empire. Russian tank factories are now working three shifts.

Faced with these mounting threats, the UK and NATO appear dangerously exposed. Our Army has shrunk to its smallest size since the Napoleonic era. The Royal Navy has also shrunk. At the outbreak of the Falklands War in 1982, the Royal Navy had 43 frigates and 12 destroyers. It now has nine and six respectively.

What's more, many of the ships we do have are stuck in docks because we don't have enough sailors to crew them, such as the vital amphibious warfare vessels HMS Albion and Bulwark. For our aircraft carrier the HMS Prince of Wales to carry out exercises in the North Sea, we were reliant on the Norwegians to lend a support ship.

And most worrying is the state of our nuclear deterrent. Our four Vanguard class deterrent submarines are ageing and are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. And, as a result, the loyal submarine crews who this deterrent depends on are routinely being asked to perform unsustainably long five or six month patrol.

This situation is untenable. Peace comes through strength, but right now we are displaying vulnerability. Something must change. Now.

To its credit, the previous Conservative Government increased defence spending to around 2.25 per cent of GDP and committed to reach 2.5 per cent by 2030. But the post-cold war peace dividend has well and truly expired - and we are now playing catch up.

We must spend 3 per cent of our GDP on defence. And because we should not be borrowing or taxing more, this money should come from our overseas aid budget. Our generosity will soon look foolish if our weakness contributes to a war.

And while the topic of overseas aid and reparations is being discussed, let me confront it head on. We must unequivocally reject these claims. They are based on false and misleading narratives about our past. After all, it was Britain that worked harder than nearly any other country to eradicate the slave trade. Britain spent 1.8 per cent of its GDP between 1808 and 1867 on eradicating slavery – the most expensive moral foreign policy in human history. It was a campaign in fact opposed by many African kings. The West African squadron sacrificed their lives for liberty and freedom - and it is high time we recognised their contribution with a national memorial to honour them.

Under my leadership, we will bolster our soft power with tangible hard power. And we will renew and refresh our alliances to multiply our collective power. Because we cannot do this alone.

If Russia invaded a NATO ally tomorrow, the House of Commons Defence Committee estimated we currently only have enough munitions to last for just the first eight to ten days of the resulting war.

Leading by the force of our example, 3 per cent of GDP should be the new NATO standard expected of all member states. We have no choice.

Currently, the burden of European defence has fallen disproportionately on America, which is now also challenging rising Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. In this context, Keir Starmer's decision to surrender the Chagos islands to an ally of China is strategic madness.

In their place, the UK and our allies must step up.

And with this additional funding, we need a new covenant with our armed forces personnel. At present, recent migrants to the UK often find themselves at the front of the queue for council homes. Meanwhile - and despite huge progress under Johnny Mercer - too many veterans are homeless. It must end, our policy will be clear: veterans – those who have bravely served our country – will get priority for council housing. We should also settle the pay dispute with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary crew, who support our warships, immediately.

As leader, I will not play politics with national security. But there are worrying signs that this Labour Government does not understand the gravity of the situation.

The entire Royal Fleet Auxiliary wage bill is under £100 million – a fraction of the cost of Labour's deal with the train drivers union. That Labour chose to give well paid train drivers a £10,000 year raise rather than quickly get the Royal Fleet Auxiliary fleet back on its feet reveals a dangerous set of priorities. They've placed their party's interests over the country's defence.

We should give the rest of our service personnel a pay rise to reflect their commitment to our country and address the recruitment and retention crisis. Our troops start out on just £25,000 for the most dangerous job we ask of any of our fellow citizens. I think that's too low, far too low. Especially when well-unionised professions get bumper pay rises that outstrip inflation while pay for soldiers has lagged.

No more. Under my leadership, we will pay our armed forces what they are worth. If Labour are able to find the money to pay for massive pay rises for train drivers, we can find it for our brave airmen, sailors, submariners and soldiers too.

By itself, though, that is not enough. We must equip our service personnel with the lethal weapons they need. The defence uplift should be used to rapidly rebuild our defence industrial base so our forces are deployable and match-fit.

We have just bought two aircraft carriers, currently without enough planes to fly from both of them in war time. That's ridiculous. We also must proceed with the new Typhoon replacement, the Tempest, for both strategic and industrial reasons. We must not cancel the Spitfire of the 21st century.

The Type 45 destroyer fleet needs all its systems upgraded to defend against ballistic missiles. And we need to be able to build more lethal drones, anti-tank missiles, and artillery shells quickly and at scale: to replenish our own armed forces, as well as those of Ukraine.

To ensure this additional money makes the difference we need, we must transform procurement. Defence programmes are routinely stretched out to keep within annual spending limits imposed by the Treasury, although this massively inflates costs in the long run. Ben Wallace fought against these insane practices – the Government must listen to him and fix them. The crazy ESG rules that hold back the defence industry need to be scrapped. Without a defence industry building Spitfires and Hurricanes in 1940, this contest would not be taking place and the House of Commons would no longer exist.

The Ministry of Defence should be solely focussed on making our armed forces more lethal, rather than tackling climate change. And we need to look beyond the big defence contractors - vital as they are - to where innovation is also happening: in the SME sector, where tech-savvy entrepreneurs are developing the kit that will fight the next war. Tanks, ships, planes and heavy munitions aren't the only weapons of war anymore. In space and cyber, in the grey zone where hostile actors attack civilian infrastructure, and on the battlefield itself, warfare is increasingly a contest of technology. We must not find ourselves behind the curve - and the way to stay ahead is to back the innovators that the UK excels in.

The Government must wake up to the next big threat on the horizon. And that is China. It is a threat - and we should classify it as such.

The CCP is guilty of genocide in Xinjiang, it's attempting to turn the South China Sea into a Chinese lake, and it has extinguished freedoms in Hong Kong. A move on Taiwan would upend the world order in a way that dwarfs the Ukraine war.

We may only have 3 years to prepare ourselves for an invasion of Taiwan and no time to waste. That's why AUKUS - the pact originally negotiated by Boris Johnson with Australia and the US for new subs and other defence innovations - is such an important development.

We must urgently reduce our reliance on China in critical sectors, invest in domestic and Western semiconductor capability and engage our allies in planning our collective response.

With such clear warnings from the CCP, we cannot be said to be caught by surprise when it comes. And while China may be a growing threat to the UK and our allies, their methods of interference in our country are far from unique. Just as Beijing uses Confucius Institutes to exert malign influence, so Tehran funds Islamic centres to do the same. This Government should make good on previous promises and shut them down.

A British Government that safeguards British interests would not delay placing China on the Enhanced Tier of the Foreign Influence Registration scheme either. It would proscribe the IRGC - as I have consistently campaigned for - and as Labour promised in opposition.

The Iranian regime may have sanctioned me, but I will not be silenced.

The solution is clear: strong defence at home, which will make the UK a more influential player abroad. Whether we like it or not, the challenge is upon us and the gauntlet has been thrown down by the axis of authoritarian regimes. We have faced down these threats before, and we can do so again.

We will meet these challenges confidently - as our forebears did. We will not go quietly into the night.

As a Conservative, I have always believed that the first duty of Government is the Defence of the Realm. As your leader, I vow I will never, ever, forget that.

A Great Reform Act

The Daily Telegraph ran an interview with Robert Jenrick on 19 October 2024. In it, he flagged a number of bad laws that were having unintended but catastrophic consequences. A blitz on them, using the approach of the Great Reform Act of 1832, would have revolutionary impact.

The list set out below, drawn from that interview, is far from a complete tally of the many proposals that were under early discussion behind the scenes of what may feature in such an Act. But even set down as bullet points they are a useful prompt for anyone seeking to tackle the root causes behind many issues that the public rails against but which politicians appear powerless to fix.

- Repeal the Climate Change Act, including Carbon budgets which are “Soviet-style five-year plans”, and features that impede the building of critical national infrastructure projects;
- Repeal the Equality Act, particularly public sector equality duty, including drivers of positive discrimination and political correctness and which lead to recruitment based on identity rather than merit, and where the chief beneficiary has been EDI consultants and those that peddle divisive and false narratives about Britain’s past;
- Repeal the Human Rights Act, particularly Section 6 which gives the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) force in British law;
- Repeal bad legislation introduced by the Starmer Government, including a mooted Race Equality Act;
- Shake up the greater quangocracy, starting with new creations Great British Energy, the Nationwide Climate Export Hubs and the Office for Value for Money;
- Ensure that decision-making and accountability needed to be restored to ministers.

“Many of Britain's former colonies owe us a debt of gratitude for the inheritance we left them”

Daily Mail, 28 October 2024

The end of October saw wokery in the news as some Commonwealth leaders showed support for reparations by the UK over slavery. This did not meet with universal acclaim.

Sir Keir Starmer spent the weekend doing what he does best: capitulating to those determined to tear our country down.

After 48 hours of pressure to 'start a conversation' on paying reparations to Commonwealth countries for the slave trade, he U-turned on his position and capitulated.

As if that was not bad enough, Labour MPs attacked him for having a 'colonial mindset' because he has not already forked out billions of taxpayers' money.

Just over 100 days into this Government, Labour are cooking up ways to send our money overseas while they slash winter fuel payments for pensioners on as little as £13,000.

But this weakness points to a wider confusion in our society: the bizarre, unpatriotic belief that we should be embarrassed about our history.

It has seeped into our national debate through universities overrun by Leftists peddling pseudo-Marxist gibberish to impressionable undergraduates.

Our island story is remarkable in many ways. One thing we have never been, however, is uniquely bad.

I do not flippantly argue that the Empire was an unadulterated good. Like any story of human beings, it is complex.

As theologian Nigel Biggar has written, the Empire committed crimes on a terrible scale, including slavery, the displacement of peoples, and military aggression.

Yet given the prevailing narrative – stoked by a liberal elite and Labour politicians – that our attitude to the Empire should be one of crippling shame, I want to make the balancing case.

Alongside honesty about the crimes of colonialism, we should be proud of its achievements.

Walk into almost any courtroom across the Commonwealth and you could be back in the UK. Advocates dress like British barristers and the courtrooms are modelled on the Old Bailey.

But the similarities go deeper. Long after independence, the institutions we built in these countries endure.

Why? Well, even amid their resentment towards us, former colonies recognised that the British system of governance was the best in the world for promoting peace and prosperity.

Sir Keir Starmer spent the weekend doing what he does best: capitulating to those determined to tear our country down, says Robert Jenrick

It's why our former colonies have performed markedly better than, for example, French ones.

But academics don't judge our record against other empires of the day. They assume that modern western values were somehow universal 400 years ago.

It's an impossible standard to meet. The territories colonised by our Empire were not advanced democracies. Many had been cruel, slave-trading powers. Some had never been independent.

The British Empire broke the long chain of violent tyranny as we came to introduce – gradually and imperfectly – Christian values.

In West Africa, we initially continued the barbarism of slavery. But – confronted by its cruelty – we ended it.

Not only for ourselves, but for the world. It wasn't cheap either. Ending the trade cost an estimated 1.8 per cent of our GDP between 1808 and 1867 – over twice what we spend on overseas aid today.

British blood was spilled fighting the African kings that sought to perpetuate it. Ultimately, we willingly gave up our imperial treasures.

In 1940, after Germany's victories in Europe, Hitler implied that Britain could retain its empire if it accepted his dominance on the continent.

His overtures suggested that Britain might avoid invasion if it withdrew from European affairs.

Churchill refused, risking Britain's global position to stand against Nazi tyranny. The result was a free Europe, and a lost Empire. Of that we can be proud.

The malign idea that Britain's history is one of crime and shame is gaining currency in our national conversation.

Our elites uniquely practise what philosopher Roger Scruton called 'the culture of repudiation': a rejection of our national story and our national institutions.

To create the peaceful and united country we want, which immigrants can integrate into, we need a positive national identity.

I'm not ashamed of our history. It may not feel like it, but many of our former colonies – amid the complex realities of Empire – owe us a debt of gratitude for the inheritance we left them.

