

FORWARD,
TOGETHER

Our Plan for a
Stronger Britain and a
Prosperous Future

THE CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST PARTY
MANIFESTO 2017



*The next five years are the most challenging
that Britain has faced in my lifetime.*

*Brexit will define us: our place in the world, our
economic security and our future prosperity.*

*So now more than ever, Britain needs a strong and
stable government to get the best Brexit deal for our
country and its people.*

*Now more than ever, Britain needs strong and stable
leadership to make the most of the opportunities
Brexit brings for hardworking families.*

Now more than ever, Britain needs a clear plan.

*This manifesto, Forward, Together: Our Plan for
a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future will meet
the great challenges of our time, beyond Brexit.*

*With this plan and with a strong hand through Brexit,
we will build a stronger, fairer, more prosperous
Britain, for all of us.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. May', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Theresa May
Prime Minister

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FOREWORD

This election is the most important this country has faced in my lifetime. Our future prosperity, our place in the world, our standard of living, and the opportunities we want for our children – and our children’s children – all depend on getting the next five years right. If we fail, the consequences for Britain and for the economic security of ordinary, working people across this country will be significant. If we succeed, the opportunities ahead of us are great.

Now more than ever, Britain needs a strong and stable government to get the best deal for our country. Now more than ever, Britain needs strong and stable leadership to make the most of the opportunities Brexit brings.

I believe our United Kingdom can emerge from this period of great national change stronger and more prosperous than ever before. I believe we can be a country that stands tall in the world and provides leadership on some of the greatest challenges of our time. I believe we can – and must – take this opportunity to build a Great Meritocracy here in Britain.

The policies set out in the following pages will begin to build that stronger, fairer, more prosperous Britain. They do not offer a quick fix. People are rightly sceptical of politicians who claim to have easy answers to deeply complex problems. It is the responsibility of leaders to be straight with people about the challenges ahead and the hard work required to overcome them.

So this manifesto sets out a vision for Britain’s future – not just for the next five years, but beyond. It identifies the five giant challenges we face and what we will do to address them. In doing so, it offers a vision of the kind of country I want Britain to be.

A Britain in which every area is able to prosper, with a modern industrial strategy to spread opportunity across the whole United Kingdom. A Britain in which work pays, with a higher national living wage and proper rights and protections at work. A Britain in which the economy is strong to support world-class public services, with the most ambitious programme of investment in people, technology and buildings the NHS has ever seen; record – and fair – funding for schools; and the first ever proper plan to pay for – and provide – social care. And a Britain in which burning injustices are tackled and overcome, with the first new Mental Health Bill for thirty years to put parity of esteem at the heart of treatment and end the stigma of mental illness once and for all.

This is my plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future. It is a declaration of intent: a commitment to get to grips with the great challenges of our time and to take the big, difficult decisions that are right for Britain in the long-term.

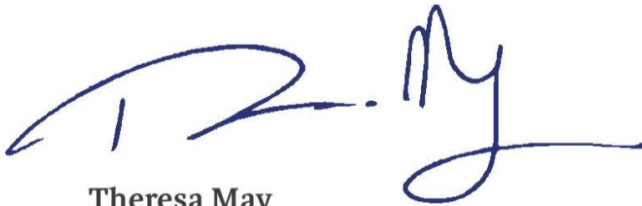
FOREWORD

None of this will be easy. It will require discipline and focus, effort and hard work. It will require leadership from a government that is strong enough to stand up for Britain, and stable enough to steer the country safely through the negotiations ahead.

Above all, it will require a unity of purpose stretching across this precious union of nations, from north to south and east to west. For as we embark on the momentous journey ahead of us over the next few years, our shared values, interests and ambitions can – and must – bring us together as a united country.

We can choose to say the task ahead is too great, to turn our face to the past and believe it cannot be done; or we can look forward with optimism, believing the best days for Britain lie ahead.

I choose to look forward: confident that we have the vision, the plan and the will to use this moment to build a better Britain. A stronger Britain where everyone has the economic security they need and the chance to live a secure and happy life. A fairer Britain that works for everyone, not just a privileged few.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Theresa May
Prime Minister

FIVE GIANT CHALLENGES

Strong and stable leadership

Like generations before us, we are living through a time of profound national change. At such moments, our country requires strong and stable leadership that is capable of taking the right long-term decisions for the United Kingdom's future security and prosperity.

Since the referendum result last summer, that is what the government has delivered. Despite predictions of immediate financial and economic danger, we have seen confidence remain high, record numbers of jobs and economic growth that has exceeded all expectations.

A new Conservative government will stick to the plan that has delivered stability and certainty. Over and above this plan, we know that we need to take the right long-term decisions for our future security and prosperity. In doing so, we will make sure that Britain not only meets the challenges of the future but grasps the opportunities these challenges present.

Five giant challenges

This manifesto offers our vision for Britain not just for the next five years but for the years and decades beyond. It is a programme for government but it is also a declaration that we intend to achieve what few governments even attempt: we will take the big, sometimes difficult, long-term decisions that are right for our future and for future generations.

For at this moment of national change, we believe that Britain faces five giant challenges, each of which requires strong leadership, concerted effort and intelligent policy to address.

1. **The need for a strong economy.** We need to make the most of our existing strengths, invest in infrastructure and people, and ensure that the whole of our economy across the whole of our country can grow. Without a strong economy, we cannot guarantee our security, our personal prosperity, our public services, or contented and sustainable communities.
2. **Brexit and a changing world.** We need to deliver a smooth and orderly departure from the European Union and forge a deep and special partnership with our friends and allies across Europe. As there is increasingly little distinction between domestic and international affairs in matters of migration, national security and the economy, Britain must stay strong and united – and take a lead in the world to defend our interests.
3. **Enduring social divisions.** For too many people, where you end up in life is still determined by where you were born and to whom. We need to make sure that everyone

has the opportunity to make the most of their talents and hard work, whoever you are and wherever you are from.

4. **An ageing society.** We need to respond to the reality of an ageing society, giving people security in old age and caring for those with long-term health conditions, whilst making sure we are fair to younger generations.
5. **Fast-changing technology.** For the sake of our economy and our society, we need to harness the power of fast-changing technology, while ensuring that our security and personal privacy – and the welfare of children and younger people – are protected.

Governing from the mainstream

If we do not take decisions now to address these challenges, our country risks becoming weaker, poorer and less stable; but if we show leadership and grasp the opportunities that these giant challenges present, Britain can emerge from Brexit, look beyond it and launch into the future with confidence.

To do that, we will need to govern in the manner established by Theresa May since she became prime minister last year. We must reject the ideological templates provided by the socialist left and the libertarian right and instead embrace the mainstream view that recognises the good that government can do.

Rather than pursue an agenda based on a supposed centre ground defined and established by elites in Westminster, we will govern in the interests of the mainstream of the British public. We will get on with the job and take Britain out of the European Union. We will restore the public finances and maintain economic stability. We will reduce and control immigration. We will be resolute in defending the country from terrorism and other security threats.

We will also stand up to those in positions of power who abuse that privilege. We will run public services in accordance with their values as important local and national institutions. We will not only guarantee but enhance workers' rights and protections. And we will develop our ambitious modern industrial strategy to get the economy working for everyone, across the whole of our nation.

Under the strong and stable leadership of Theresa May, there will be no ideological crusades. The government's agenda will not be allowed to drift to the right. Our starting point is that we should take decisions on the basis of what works. And we will always be guided by what matters to the ordinary, working families of this nation.

We will govern in the interests of ordinary, working families

As Theresa May said when she first became prime minister, the work of the government under her leadership will be driven not for the benefit of a privileged few but by the interests of ordinary, working families: people who have a job but do not always have job

security; people who own their own home but worry about paying the mortgage; people who can just about manage but worry about the cost of living and getting their children into a good school.

These families have been ignored by politicians, and by others in positions of power, for too long. Yet they do not ask for much: they want to get on with their lives, to do their best for their children, to have a fair chance. Under Theresa May's leadership, they will no longer be ignored.

They are the people to whom this manifesto is dedicated. They are the people who work hard every day and make this country what it is. And they are the people who deserve strong and stable leadership from a government that is determined to address the five giant challenges we face – and make the right long-term decisions for the future of the United Kingdom.

We believe in the good that government can do

To do that, we will need a state that is strong and strategic, nimble and responsive to the needs of people. While it is never true that government has all the answers, government can and should be a force for good – and its power should be put squarely at the service of this country's working people.

If we are going to keep our economy strong as the world changes, we will need government to play an active role, leading a modern industrial strategy to make the most of Britain's strengths and take advantage of new opportunities – bringing secure, well-paid jobs to the whole of the country.

If we are going to make sure Britain emerges from Brexit as a strong and united nation, we will need strong leadership and good government: to get the right deal for Britain in Europe, to strike new trade deals around the world and to make sure our economy is strong for the years ahead.

If we want to overcome Britain's enduring social divisions, we will need to give people real opportunity and make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy. That will require government to take on long-ignored problems like Britain's lack of training and technical education, as well as long-lasting injustices, such as the lack of care for people with mental health problems, and the inequality of opportunity that endures on the basis of race, gender and class.

If we are going to cope with our ageing society and if we want to give security to people in old age while being fair to younger generations, we are going to need positive, active government that will deal with increased demand for social care, fund and improve our National Health Service and build more houses across the

country. We will need to take sometimes difficult decisions that ask more of one generation in order to help another.

If we are going to respond to rapid changes in technology, we need government to make Britain the best place in the world to set up and run modern businesses, bringing the jobs of the future to our country; but we also need government to create the right regulatory frameworks that will protect our security and personal privacy, and ensure the welfare of children and younger people in an age when so much of life is conducted online.

Government alone cannot solve every challenge our country faces. Without business and enterprise, there would be no prosperity and no public services. Without the obligations and duties of citizenship, society would not function. Without individual responsibility, nothing can be achieved. But for a country to remain stable, an economy to be strong, a society to stay healthy, we need a partnership between the individual and the wider nation, between private sector and public service, and the strong leadership only government can provide.

Our principles

We believe these things not despite the fact that we are Conservatives but because we are Conservatives.

Because Conservatism is not and never has been the philosophy described by caricaturists. We do not believe in untrammelled free markets. We reject the cult of selfish individualism. We abhor social division, injustice, unfairness and inequality. We see rigid dogma and ideology not just as needless but dangerous.

True Conservatism means a commitment to country and community; a belief not just in society but in the good that government can do; a respect for the local and national institutions that bind us together; an insight that change is inevitable and change can be good, but that change should be shaped, through strong leadership and clear principles, for the common good.

We know that our responsibility to one another is greater than the rights we hold as individuals. We know that we all have obligations to one another, because that is what community and nation demands. We understand that nobody, however powerful, has succeeded alone and that we all therefore have a debt to others. We respect the fact that society is a contract between the generations: a partnership between those who are living, those who have lived before us, and those who are yet to be born.

A vision of a stronger Britain and a prosperous future

If we allow ourselves to be directed by these principles, if we have strong and stable leadership, and if we address the five giant challenges faced by Britain, we believe that the future of our country is a bright one.

We are already the fifth largest economy in the world, the biggest recipient of foreign investment in Europe and the fastest growing economy in the G7. We have three of the world's top ten universities and, despite forming less than one per cent of the global population, we boast more Nobel Laureates than any country other than America. We have the finest intelligence services and hugely respected armed forces that can project power around the globe. We have the greatest soft power of any nation, we sit in exactly the right time zone for global trade, our capital city is the global capital of finance and culture, and our language is the language of the world.

So there is no doubt that a country as great as ours can – with strong and stable leadership – rise to the giant challenges we face:

- to make sure our economy stays strong and to bring prosperity to the whole of our country;
- to emerge from Brexit a strong and united nation, able to take a lead in the world to defend Britain's interests;
- to overcome social divisions by giving people real opportunity and making Britain the world's Great Meritocracy;
- to restore the contract between the generations that provides security for older people while being fair to the young; and
- to seize the opportunities of changing technology, while ensuring that our security and personal privacy – and the welfare of children and younger people – are still protected.

Britain is a great nation. We have a glorious history but we believe that our best days lie ahead of us. With this plan to tackle the five giant challenges we face, with our proposals to establish a stronger Britain and a prosperous future, we will, as a nation, go forward, together.

1. A STRONG ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- A strong economy built on sound public finances, low taxes, better regulation and free trade deals with markets around the world.
- A new deal for ordinary, working people giving them a decent living wage and new rights and protections in the workplace.
- Fairer corporate governance, built on new rules for takeovers, executive pay and worker representation on company boards.
- Growth across the country through our modern industrial strategy and major investment in infrastructure, skills and research and development.
- Competitive and affordable energy costs following a new independent review into the cost of energy.
- Prosperous towns and cities, underpinned by strong local institutions, the relocation of government functions, and shared cultural assets across the country.

A strong economy is the basis for everything we want to achieve as a nation. If we are to have the prosperity, security and quality of life that Britain desires, we need to have an economy that is vibrant and robust.

But our economy also needs to be equitable. For in Britain today, there is a division between those people and places that have benefited from a changed global market, where opportunity is displayed in affluence and a good quality of life; and those people and places that have experienced a struggling economy, where opportunity has receded and people worry about their children's futures.

This is not right. So we will forge an economy that works for everyone in every part of this country. We will found our plans on the principles of sound public finances, low taxes, free trade and effective regulation. We will set rules for businesses that inspire the confidence of workers and investors alike. That is only the foundation, however. With our modern industrial strategy, we will build an economy that invests for the long term and supports growth across the whole country – not just in those places that have done well in the past few decades but also where prosperity has waned. Governments cannot use public money to prop up failing businesses, but they also cannot allow people and their communities to be cast aside. It is our duty to bring opportunity to every part of our nation and to ensure that we all prosper together.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A STRONG ECONOMY

Sound money and responsible public finances are the essential foundations of national economic success. A government that cannot manage its money properly cannot command confidence at home or with international investors. Firms and households cannot plan ahead if the government's thirst for their cash threatens higher taxes and cuts to vital services and investment; and when things spiral out of control, it is ordinary, working people who are hit hardest.

The Conservatives have laid these essential foundations. Ten years after the banking crisis, the deficit is back to where it was. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that the national debt is finally about to start falling.

There is still work to do on deficit reduction, so we will continue to restore the public

finances over the course of the next parliament. We will continue with the fiscal rules announced by the chancellor in the autumn statement last year, which will guide us to a balanced budget by the middle of the next decade.

This is our foundation. The time has now come to focus on Britain's next big economic challenge: to foster growth that works for everyone, right across our country.

Keeping taxes as low as possible

Paying your fair share of tax is the price of living in a civilised democracy but politicians should never forget that taxes are levied on businesses that employ people, and individuals who work hard and face tough decisions about how they spend their money.

The Conservatives will always be the party that keeps tax as low as possible and spends the proceeds responsibly. It is our firm intention to reduce taxes on Britain's businesses and working families.

By 2020, we will, as promised, increase the personal allowance to £12,500 and the higher rate to £50,000. We will continue to ensure that local residents can veto high increases in Council Tax via a referendum. And we will not increase the level of Value Added Tax.

Corporation Tax is due to fall to seventeen per cent by 2020 – the lowest rate of any developed economy – and we will stick to that plan, because it will help to bring huge investment and many thousands of jobs to the UK.

We know that the business rates system presents considerable challenges to some smaller companies. That is why we have supported those businesses most affected by the recent revaluation of business rates. That is not all we will do. We will make longer-term reforms to the system to address concerns about the way it currently works. We will make sure that revaluations are conducted more frequently to avoid large changes to the bills that businesses face, and explore the introduction of self-assessments in the valuation process. To ensure the system is sustainable for the future we will also conduct a full review of the business rates system to make sure it is up to date for a world in which people increasingly shop online.

A good tax system is not just about the headline rates of tax, however, but about its simplicity. Our system remains too complicated, making it hard for people – especially self-employed people and small businesses – to assess their taxes. We will therefore simplify the tax system.

Increasing trade

Britain has always been a great trading nation. Trade will continue to be crucial to our future growth and prosperity. As we leave the European Union, we want to negotiate a new deep and special partnership with the EU, which will allow free trade between the UK and the EU's member states. As part of the agreement we strike, we want to make sure that there are as few barriers to trade and investment as possible. Leaving the European Union also means we will be free to strike our own trade agreements with countries outside the EU.

We will ensure immediate stability by lodging new UK schedules with the World Trade Organization, in alignment with EU schedules to which we are bound whilst still a member of the European Union. We will seek to replicate all existing EU free trade agreements and support the ratification of trade agreements entered into during our EU membership. We will continue to support the global multilateral rules-based trade system. We will introduce a Trade Bill in the next parliament.

We will create a network of Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners to head nine new regional overseas posts. These commissioners will lead export promotion, investment and trade policy overseas. We will reconvene the Board of Trade with a membership specifically charged with ensuring that we increase exports from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England, and that trade policy is directly influenced by every part of our United Kingdom.

We will work to forge a new culture of exporting among UK businesses, equipping them with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in the global marketplace, and take advantage of new high-growth markets around the world.

We will take a more active role in supporting British consortia to win the largest and most innovative contracts around the world. We will ensure that small and medium-sized businesses are able to identify the right markets and sectors to win vital contracts abroad. We will put UK Export Finance, which ensures that no viable UK export fails for lack of finance or insurance, at the heart of the UK's trade promotion proposition. And we will encourage the world to visit, study and do business in the UK through the GREAT Britain campaign and Visit Britain.

Effective regulation

Regulation is necessary for the proper ordering of any economy and to ensure that people – and their investments – are protected. However, poor and excessive government regulation limits growth for no good reason. So we will continue to regulate more efficiently, saving £9 billion through the Red Tape Challenge and the One-In-Two-Out Rule.

Reducing the cost of regulation is not just about reducing its volume. The wrong regulatory frameworks can over-reward investors for the risk they are taking in backing a particular project,

meaning households and businesses can become systematically overcharged. We will therefore examine ways in which the regulation of utilities and transport infrastructure can be improved to deliver a better deal for customers and sharper incentives for investment efficiency.

NEW RULES FOR A CHANGING ECONOMY

Conservatives believe that if you value something, you must be prepared to reform it in order to conserve it. So it is today with our economy. Capitalism and free markets remain the best way to deliver prosperity and economic security, lifting millions of people out of poverty around the world. Markets need rules and these rules need to be updated to reflect our changing economy.

Guaranteeing a decent wage

We must first ensure that everyone is paid fairly for their work. It was a Conservative government that introduced the National Living Wage and as a result, people across the United Kingdom now receive a minimum of £7.50 an hour. A new Conservative government will continue to increase the National Living Wage to 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020 and then by the rate of median earnings, so that people who are on the lowest pay benefit from the same improvements in earnings as higher paid workers.

Rights and protections in the ‘gig’ economy

In the modern economy many people choose jobs like driving, delivering and coding, that are highly flexible and can be mixed with other employment. This brings considerable advantages to millions of people but we should not ignore the challenges this kind of employment creates. These workers are officially classed as self-employed and therefore have fewer pension entitlements, reduced access to benefits, and no qualification for sick pay and holiday pay. Yet the nature of their work is different from the traditional self-employed worker who might be a sole trader, a freelancer or running their own business.

We will make sure that people working in the ‘gig’ economy are properly protected. Last October, the government commissioned Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts, to review the changing labour market. We await his final report but a new Conservative government will act to ensure that the interests of employees on traditional contracts, the self-employed and those people working in the ‘gig’ economy are all properly protected.

Stopping tax evasion

We have taken vigorous action against tax avoidance and evasion, closing the tax gap – the difference between the amount of tax due and the amount collected – to one of the lowest in the world.

We will now go further. We will legislate for tougher regulation of tax advisory firms. We will take a more proactive approach to transparency and misuse of trusts.

We will improve HMRC's capabilities to stamp down on smuggling, including by improving our policing of the border as we leave the European Union. We will also take further measures to reduce online fraud in Value Added Tax.

Protecting private pensions

Millions of people in this country look forward to a more secure retirement because of their private pension. These pensions exist because employees have saved diligently through their life, often foregoing luxuries and holidays abroad. Those people did the right thing. Business owners who abuse pension funds and put them at risk, sometimes for their own lavish enrichment, are entirely in the wrong.

The current powers of regulators and the Pension Protection Fund are insufficient to ensure that pension savers, pensioners and prudent company directors are protected from unscrupulous business owners. A Conservative government will act to tighten the rules against such abuse, and increase the punishment for those caught mismanaging pension schemes. We will build on existing powers to give pension schemes and the Pensions Regulator the right to scrutinise, clear with conditions or in extreme cases stop mergers, takeovers or large financial commitments that threaten the solvency of the scheme. We will also give the Pensions Regulator new powers to issue punitive fines for those found to have wilfully left a pension scheme under-resourced and, if necessary, powers similar to those already held by the Insolvency Service to disqualify the company directors in question. We will consider introducing a new criminal offence for company directors who deliberately or recklessly put at risk the ability of a pension scheme to meet its obligations.

Reforming rules on takeovers and mergers

Conservatives believe in the rights of business owners. We want to be a global nation that is competitive, outward-looking and open for business – the best country in Europe for doing business.

We welcome overseas investment and want investors to succeed here but not when success is driven by aggressive asset-stripping or tax avoidance. We will update the rules that govern mergers and takeovers. This will require careful deliberation but we can state now that we will require bidders to be clear about their intentions from the outset of the bid process; that all promises and undertakings made in the course of takeover bids can be legally enforced afterwards; and that the government can require a bid to be paused to allow greater scrutiny.

We shall also take action to protect our critical national infrastructure. We will ensure that foreign ownership of companies controlling important infrastructure does not undermine

British security or essential services. We have already strengthened ministerial scrutiny and control in respect of civil nuclear power and will take a similarly robust approach across a limited range of other sectors, such as telecoms, defence and energy.

Fair corporate pay

We believe people should be rewarded for their talents and efforts but the public is rightly affronted by the remuneration of some corporate leaders. Senior corporate pay has risen far faster than corporate performance, and the gap between those paid most and those paid least has grown from 47:1 in 1998 to 128:1 in 2015.

The next Conservative government will legislate to make executive pay packages subject to strict annual votes by shareholders and listed companies will have to publish the ratio of executive pay to broader UK workforce pay. Companies will have to explain their pay policies, particularly complex incentive schemes, better. We will commission an examination of the use of share buybacks, with a view to ensuring these cannot be used artificially to hit performance targets and inflate executive pay.

Better corporate governance

The modern joint stock company is a British invention. It works because it is rules-based, but the rules need to change as the world changes.

Boards should take account of the interests not just of shareholders but employees, suppliers and the wider community. To ensure employees' interests are represented at board level, we will change the law to ensure that listed companies will be required either to nominate a director from the workforce, create a formal employee advisory council or assign specific responsibility for employee representation to a designated non-executive director. Subject to sensible safeguards, we will introduce, for employees, a right to request information relating to the future direction of the company.

These strengthened arrangements will apply to publicly-listed companies. We will consult on how we might strengthen the corporate governance of privately-owned businesses.

A MODERN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Our modern industrial strategy is designed to deliver a stronger economy that works for everyone – where wealth and opportunity are spread across every community in the United Kingdom, not just the most prosperous places in London and the south east. It will help young people to develop the skills they need to do the high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future. And it will back Britain for the long term: creating the conditions where successful businesses can emerge and grow, and helping them to invest in the future of our nation.

The strategy is not about picking winners, propping up failing industries, or bringing back old companies from the dead. It is about identifying the industries that are of strategic value to our economy and supporting and promoting them through policies on trade, tax, infrastructure, skills, training, and research and development – just the same as in every other major and growing economy in the world. It is about identifying the places that have the potential to contribute towards economic growth and become homes to millions of new jobs. And, because this is about meeting our economy’s long term challenges, the industrial strategy will focus on creating the right institutional framework to make the strategy last for decades to come.

We will spend more on research and development, to turn brilliant discoveries into practical products and transform the world’s industries – such as the batteries that will power a new generation of clean, efficient, electric vehicles. We will establish funding streams to ensure investment for the long term, and make a modern technical education available to everyone, throughout their lives, to provide the skills they need. We will remove the barriers that hold back small firms with big potential – and let them compete when government itself is the buyer. We will build on the success of world-beating sectors such as car and aero manufacturing, financial services, life sciences, digital technology and our creative industries, and help other sectors develop the conditions which they need to thrive. We will ensure industry and businesses have access to reliable, cheap and clean power. We will deliver the infrastructure – the road, rail, airports and broadband – that businesses need.

Increasing innovation

Our long-term prosperity depends upon science, technology and innovation. The UK has an outstanding science base and many world-leading tech companies. We now need to go further. Our ambition is that the UK should be the most innovative country in the world.

At the last autumn statement, we announced a significant increase in government investment in research and development. We will deliver this and ensure further growth so that overall, as a nation, we meet the current OECD average for investment in R&D – that is, 2.4 per cent of GDP – within ten years, with a longer-term goal of three per cent. We will increase the number of scientists working in the UK and enable leading scientists from around the world to work here. We will work hard to ensure we have a regulatory environment that encourages innovation.

University investment funds

Our world-beating universities will lead the expansion of our R&D capacity. We must help them make a success of their discoveries – while they have a number of growing investment funds specialising in spin-outs, we have more to do to replicate the success of similar university funds in the United States.

To fix that, we will work to build up the investment funds of our universities across the UK. We want larger, aggregated funds to increase significantly the amounts invested in and by universities.

We want universities to enjoy the commercial fruits of their research, through funds that are large enough to list, thereby giving British investors a chance to share in their success.

National Productivity Investment Fund

If our modern industrial strategy is to succeed, it must address the UK's slow productivity growth and it must be funded properly from the start. So we have launched a new £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund. The government will target this spending at areas that are critical for productivity: housing, research and development, economic infrastructure and skills. This will include £740 million of digital infrastructure investment, the largest investment in railways since Victorian times, £1.1 billion to improve local transport and £250 million in skills by the end of 2020. The National Productivity Investment Fund will take total spending on housing, economic infrastructure and R&D to £170 billion during the next parliament.

Future Britain funds

People have long talked about the need to create UK sovereign wealth funds. We will now make this a central part of our long-term plan for Britain. We will create a number of such funds, known as Future Britain funds, which will hold in trust the investments of the British people, backing British infrastructure and the British economy. We anticipate early funds being created out of revenues from shale gas extraction, dormant assets, and the receipts of sale of some public assets. We will encourage pension funds with an interest in joining Future Britain funds to do so.

The skills we need

As we set out in chapter three, the next Conservative government will give Britain the technical education it has lacked for decades. This will take time but we must also address the immediate needs of those sectors of the economy suffering shortages in skills. We will make the immigration system work for these sectors, whilst ensuring that we develop the skills we need for the future.

We will therefore ask the independent Migration Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the government about how the visa system can become better aligned with our modern industrial strategy. We envisage that the committee's advice will allow us to set aside significant numbers of visas for workers in strategically-important sectors, such as digital technology, without adding to net migration as a whole.

However, skilled immigration should not be a way for government or business to avoid their obligations to improve the skills of the British workforce. So we will double the

Immigration Skills Charge levied on companies employing migrant workers, to £2,000 a year by the end of the parliament, using the revenue generated to invest in higher level skills training for workers in the UK.

Backing small businesses

The Conservative Party is the party of enterprise and of the entrepreneur. We understand that small businesses are the wellspring of growth. They form a key part of British life, valued for their contribution to every community across the country. We will continue to support small businesses through business rate relief and low taxation, and by reducing the bureaucracy and regulation that prevents small businesses from flourishing.

As part of broader reforms to the business energy market, we will consult on how to extend our safeguard tariff cap to micro-businesses.

Central government must play a role in supporting SMEs: across all government departments, we will ensure that 33 per cent of central government purchasing will come from SMEs by the end of the parliament. As part of our modern industrial strategy, we will explore how government can do even more to support innovation by small and start-up firms. We also recognise that government can improve the general business environment for SMEs, so we will use our buying power to ensure that big contractors comply with the Prompt Payment Code both on government contracts and in their work with others. If they do not do so, they will lose the right to bid for government contracts.

Supporting industries to succeed

Our modern industrial strategy is not about ‘planning’ the economy. It is about helping old industries find prosperous new life and unlock future opportunities, and new industries to grow.

Some industries have a great history. We believe they can have a great future too. We have already demonstrated that in advanced manufacturing, such as aero and automotive engineering, we can lead the world. We will continue to support these key industries so that they can grow further. We want to replicate that success in other sectors – like shipbuilding where, for the first time in decades, there is the prospect of a renaissance. We will take forward Sir John Parker’s review of shipbuilding, helping our shipyards modernise and collaborate. We want to see shipbuilding growing on the Clyde and on the Forth, in Belfast and in Barrow, and in the north-east and south of England.

Other industries, like the oil and gas sector, are transforming. The North Sea has provided more than £300 billion in tax revenue to the UK economy and supports thousands of highly-skilled jobs across Britain. We will ensure that the sector continues to play a critical role in our economy and domestic energy supply, supporting further investment

in the UK's natural resources. We will continue to support the industry and build on the unprecedented support already provided to the oil and gas sector. While there are very significant reserves still in the North Sea, it is expected to be the first major oil and gas basin in the world to decommission fully, and we will take advantage of that to support the development of a world-leading decommissioning industry. We will work with the industry to create a multi-use yard and the UK's first ultra-deep water port to support this industry.

Other industries are already highly successful. Life sciences, for example, employs 175,000 people and many of the world's top medicines have been developed in the UK. We will continue to support research into the diagnosis and treatment of rare cancers and other diseases, including Genomics England's work in decoding 100,000 genomes. This, together with the development of stronger research links with the NHS, can help scientists and doctors design more effective and personalised treatments, and help maintain our position as the European hub for life sciences.

Competitive and affordable energy costs

A successful industrial strategy requires competitive and affordable energy costs. We want to make sure that the cost of energy in Britain is internationally competitive, both for businesses and households.

We will therefore commission an independent review into the Cost of Energy, which will be asked to make recommendations as to how we can ensure UK energy costs are as low as possible, while ensuring a reliable supply and allowing us to meet our 2050 carbon reduction objective.

Our ambition is that the UK should have the lowest energy costs in Europe, both for households and businesses. So as we upgrade our energy infrastructure, we will do it in an affordable way, consistent with that ambition. And because for British companies, an energy-efficient business is a more competitive business, we will establish an industrial energy efficiency scheme to help large companies install measures to cut their energy use and their bills.

A diverse energy mix

We want to see a diverse range of sources for Britain's energy production, because a diverse energy economy is the best way to stimulate innovation, and also to ensure that we are getting the right generation in the right place. For instance, while we do not believe that more large-scale onshore wind power is right for England, we will maintain our position as a global leader in offshore wind and support the development of wind projects in the remote islands of Scotland, where they will directly benefit local communities.

Above all, we believe that energy policy should be focused on outcomes rather than the means by which we reach our objectives. So, after we have left the European Union, we will form our energy policy based not on the way energy is generated but on the ends we desire – reliable and affordable energy, seizing the industrial opportunity that new technology presents and meeting our global commitments on climate change.

Natural gas from shale

The discovery and extraction of shale gas in the United States has been a revolution. Gas prices have fallen, driving growth in the American economy and pushing down prices for consumers. The US has become less reliant on imported foreign energy and is more secure as a result. And because shale is cleaner than coal, it can also help reduce carbon emissions. We believe that shale energy has the potential to do the same thing in Britain, and could play a crucial role in rebalancing our economy.

We will therefore develop the shale industry in Britain. We will only be able to do so if we maintain public confidence in the process, if we uphold our rigorous environmental protections, and if we ensure the proceeds of the wealth generated by shale energy are shared with the communities affected.

We will legislate to change planning law for shale applications. Non-fracking drilling will be treated as permitted development, expert planning functions will be established to support local councils, and, when necessary, major shale planning decisions will be made the responsibility of the National Planning Regime.

We will set up a new Shale Environmental Regulator, which will assume the relevant functions of the Health and Safety Executive, the Environment Agency and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. This will provide clear governance and accountability, become a source of expertise, and allow decisions to be made fairly but swiftly.

Finally, we will change the proposed Shale Wealth Fund so a greater percentage of the tax revenues from shale gas directly benefit the communities that host the extraction sites. Where communities decide that it is right for them, we will allow payments to be made directly to local people themselves. A significant share of the remaining tax revenues will be invested for the benefit of the country at large.

Investing in transport

We are working through one of the largest-ever investment programmes in our roads and railways, putting some £40 billion into transport improvements across the United Kingdom over the rest of this decade.

We are investing to reduce travel time and cost, increase capacity and attract investment here in the UK. We will continue our programme of strategic national investments,

including High Speed 2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the expansion of Heathrow Airport – and we will ensure that these great projects do as much as possible to develop the skills and careers of British workers.

We will continue to develop the strategic road network, providing extra lanes on our motorways and improving key routes whilst also paying attention to parts of the country left behind because of poor transport connections. We will continue to invest in roads to fix pinch points and open up opportunities for new housing and local growth.

Our ambition is for Britain to lead the world in electric vehicle technology and use. We want almost every car and van to be zero-emission by 2050 – and will invest £600 million by 2020 to help achieve it. We will invest in more low-emission buses, as well as supporting audio-visual displays for bus passengers and community minibuses for rural areas poorly served by public transport.

We will focus on creating extra capacity on the railways, which will ease overcrowding, bring new lines and stations, and improve existing routes – including for freight. We will increase services on our main lines and commuter routes, and launch new services to places which are poorly served or host major new housing projects.

We will continue to support local authorities to expand cycle networks and upgrade facilities for cyclists at railway stations.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES FROM A STRONGER ECONOMY

Prosperous towns and cities across Britain

We have seen welcome growth and civic renewal in some major cities. There remains, however, a far greater gap between the capital and other cities in the UK than in any other major developed country. We see the opportunity to close this gap as the biggest prize in Britain today. It will be a great endeavour by government, business and civic society over many years. We are determined to lead the way in the next parliament.

First, we recognise the value of institutions to the vitality of towns and cities. As we explain in chapter two, it is why we are determined to move many of the functions of central government out to cities around Britain where possible and to see our vast cultural assets reach people around our country too. It is also why we will support local growth through combined authorities, mayoralities and local enterprise partnerships. We will make each partnership and combined authority responsible for co-ordinating their own local

1. A STRONG ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

industrial strategy in alignment with our national industrial strategy, bringing together local businesses, political and public sector leaders to drive growth and economic regeneration. We will wherever possible deliver growth funding through these organisations. We will give local enterprise partnerships greater weight by backing them in law.

Our institutions of education, old and new, will be critical to spreading success. It is why we will back new scientific and technical institutions. It is why we want to see universities make their full contribution to their local community and economy, sponsoring local schools and being creative about how they can open up opportunities for local people, especially those from ordinary working backgrounds.

Our towns and cities excel when they have vibrant cultural life. Britain's arts and culture are world-beating and are at the heart of the regeneration of much of modern Britain. We will continue our strong support for the arts, and ensure more of that support is based outside London. We will maintain free entry to the permanent collections of our major national museums and galleries. We will introduce a new cultural development fund to use cultural investment to turn around communities. We will hold a Great Exhibition of the North in 2018, to celebrate amazing achievements in innovation, the arts and engineering. We will support a UK city in making a bid to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. And in this 70th Anniversary Year of the Edinburgh Festival we will support the development of the new Edinburgh Concert Hall, reaffirming Edinburgh as the UK's leading festival city and a cultural beacon around the globe.

Our towns and cities should be healthy, well-designed and well-tended places. We will take action against poor air quality in urban areas. In addition to the 11 million trees we are planting across our nation, we will ensure that 1 million more are planted in our towns and cities, and place new duties on councils to consult when they wish to cut down street trees. We will encourage the very best practice in the design of buildings and public spaces, including a review of the design of government buildings, to ensure that when the state builds, it makes a positive contribution to a local area. We will do more to reduce litter, including by supporting comprehensive rubbish collection and recycling, supporting better packaging, taking new powers to force councils to remove roadside litter and prosecuting offenders. We will do more to improve the quality of road surfaces, filling potholes – especially in residential areas – and reducing road noise.

Our countryside communities

We will bring sustainable growth to the rural economy and boost our rural areas, so that people who live in the countryside have the same opportunities as those who live in our towns and cities.

We have huge ambitions for our farming industry: we are determined to grow more, sell more and export more great British food. We want to provide stability to farmers as we

leave the EU and set up new frameworks for supporting food production and stewardship of the countryside. So we will continue to commit the same cash total in funds for farm support until the end of the parliament. We will work with farmers, food producers and environmental experts across Britain and with the devolved administrations to devise a new agri-environment system, to be introduced in the following parliament.

Our countryside and rural communities have been moulded by generations of farmers. We will help Natural England to expand their provision of technical expertise to farmers to deliver environmental improvements on a landscape scale, from enriching soil fertility to planting hedgerows and building dry stone walls. We will deliver on our commitment to improve natural flood management, such as improving the quality of water courses to protect against soil erosion and damage to vulnerable habitats and communities. We will continue to ensure that public forests and woodland are kept in trust for the nation, and provide stronger protections for our ancient woodland.

We will continue to take action to improve animal welfare. We will implement our proposed reforms on pet sales and licensing and will make CCTV recording in slaughterhouses mandatory. As we leave the European Union, we can take early steps to control the export of live farm animals for slaughter.

We will also take steps to enhance the provision of public services in rural areas. We will safeguard the post office network, to protect existing rural services and work with the Post Office to extend the availability of business and banking services to families and small businesses in rural areas. A third of all SMEs in rural areas use their post office weekly and our ambition is that all routine small business and consumer banking services should be available in rural post offices. We will support pharmacies and village schools in rural areas.

We will grant a free vote, on a government bill in government time, to give parliament the opportunity to decide the future of the Hunting Act.

Finally, we pledge to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it. That is why we shall produce a comprehensive 25 Year Environment Plan that will chart how we will improve our environment as we leave the European Union and take control of our environmental legislation again.

Our coastal communities

Decades of profound economic change have left their mark on coastal communities around Britain. We will continue to work to ensure these communities enjoy the vitality and opportunity they deserve. In England, we will extend our successful Coastal Communities Fund to 2022, helping our seaside towns thrive.

1. A STRONG ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

When we leave the European Union and its Common Fisheries Policy, we will be fully responsible for the access and management of the waters where we have historically exercised sovereign control. A new Conservative government will work with the fishing industry and with our world-class marine scientists, as well as the devolved administrations, to introduce a new regime for commercial fishing that will preserve and increase fish stocks and help to ensure prosperity for a new generation of fishermen. To provide complete legal certainty to our neighbours and clarity during our negotiations with the European Union, we will withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention. We will continue our work to conserve the marine environment off the coast of the United Kingdom.

2. A STRONG AND UNITED NATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- The best possible deal for Britain as we leave the European Union delivered by a smooth, orderly Brexit.
- A strong and stable Union, with no divisive Scottish referendum at this time.
- A United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, taken from money coming back to the UK as we leave the EU, to reduce inequalities between communities across our four nations.
- Global leadership on development, backed by spending 0.7 per cent of our national income with new rules to spend it more effectively.
- Strong defence, meeting our NATO target of at least 2 per cent of GDP and increasing spending by at least half a per cent more than inflation every year.
- Security from crime and terrorism, backed by a new national infrastructure police force, a stronger response to white collar crime and our world-leading counter-terrorism strategy.

The United Kingdom is embarking upon another era in our centuries-old story. We are leaving the European Union. We want to ensure our departure is smooth and orderly and to agree a deep and special partnership with the 27 remaining member states.

In leaving the European Union, we have chosen a truly global role for Britain. To strike trade deals with old friends and new partners and take a leading position in the world to defend British interests, we must be strong and united.

This begins with our determination to defend the integrity of the United Kingdom and to strengthen the Union, bringing the peoples of the United Kingdom together.

OUR PRECIOUS UNION

We are a United Kingdom, one nation made of four – the most successful political union in modern history. Its very existence recognises the value of unity – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales achieve less as two, three, or four, than as the United Kingdom together. This unity between our nations and peoples gives us the strength to change things for the better, for everyone, with a scale of ambition we simply could not possess alone.

The settlement governing these islands has changed profoundly in the last twenty years. Significant decision-making have been devolved to the parliament in Scotland and assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland. Devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast exercise greater powers than equivalent governments elsewhere in the democratic world. In England, we have given considerable powers to city mayors and combined authorities, while local councils now have greater control of the taxes they collect.

This positive evolution of our constitution has given a voice to people who felt distant from the centre of power, and responsibility to people for their own part of our great country. We will continue to work in partnership with the Scottish and Welsh governments and the Northern Ireland Executive, in a relationship underpinned by pooling and sharing resources through the Barnett Formula. We will respect the devolution settlements: no decision-making that has been devolved will be taken back to Westminster. Indeed, we envisage that the powers of the devolved administrations will increase as we leave the EU. However, we can still do more for the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The United Kingdom Government has in the past tended to ‘devolve and forget’. This

Conservative government will put that right. We want the UK Government to be a force for good across the whole country.

So we will be an active government, in every part of the UK. We will work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish and Welsh governments, and the new devolved authorities in England, for the benefit of all our people – but that will not be the limit of our actions in the four nations. We are ambitious for everyone in Britain and will leave no-one behind in our efforts to spread opportunity and prosperity throughout the United Kingdom.

England

This Conservative government has devolved more power to English local authorities, closer to local people, than any previous government in over a century: across England, newly elected mayors, combined authorities, local councils and local enterprise partnerships are being empowered to improve local growth and public services. We will continue to give local government greater control over the money they raise and address concerns about the fairness of current funding distributions.

With devolution now established in London and other parts of England, we will consolidate our approach, providing clarity across England on what devolution means for different administrations so all authorities operate in a common framework. We will support those authorities that wish to combine to serve their communities better. For combined authorities that are based around our great cities, we will continue to support the adoption of elected mayors, but we will not support them for the rural counties.

Scotland

The Scottish Parliament has become the most powerful parliament of its kind in the world, with extensive powers over taxation and welfare. It was the Conservative and Unionist Party that delivered the 2012 and 2016 Scotland Acts, and only the Conservative and Unionist Party can deliver further powers and the best possible deal for Scotland as we leave the European Union.

The United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union but some would disrupt our attempts to get the best deal for Scotland and the United Kingdom with calls for a divisive referendum that the people of Scotland do not want. We have been very clear that now is not the time for another referendum on independence. In order for a referendum to be fair, legal and decisive, it cannot take place until the Brexit process has played out and it should not take place unless there is public consent for it to happen. This is a time to pull together, not apart.

Scotland's economic growth has lagged behind the rest of the United Kingdom in recent years. The Scottish Government has the tools to drive economic growth in Scotland but we take seriously our duty to secure prosperity for the whole of the United Kingdom.

We will, therefore, take concerted action to help secure the long-term sustainability of the Scottish economy. Scotland and Scottish industries will be central to our industrial strategy.

We will continue our investment in capital and infrastructure projects in Scotland. Building on the City and Growth deals we have signed across Scotland, we will bring forward a Borderlands Growth Deal, including all councils on both sides of the border, to help secure prosperity in southern Scotland. We will protect the interests of Scottish farmers and fishermen as we design our new UK farming and fisheries policy. And as we develop our new trade policies, we will pay particular attention to using the United Kingdom's muscle to promote Scottish exports around the world.

Wales

The Conservative Party has a proud record of promoting Welsh culture, helping economic growth and supporting devolution in Wales. The 2017 Wales Act, passed by a Conservative government, transfers significant new powers to the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government.

Wales plays a crucial role in our modern industrial strategy, in the promotion of growing industries in Wales and in the additional powers handed to Welsh local authorities and businesses to promote local growth. Welsh businesses will be central to our new trade and export policies, and our investment in improved infrastructure will help Welsh companies benefit even more from the UK single market than they do now. We will modernise the railway infrastructure across Wales, including new and improved stations, and explore ways to harness Welsh natural resources for the generation of power.

We will build on the Cardiff Capital region and Swansea Bay City region deals, and bring forward a North Wales Growth Deal, connecting north Wales with northern England. We will work with the Welsh Government to encourage further cross-border working, ensuring that the border between England and Wales does not become a barrier to business, education or communities. We will foster opportunities between cities in Wales and the rest of the UK, such as linking economic development between Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. We will protect the interest of Welsh farmers as we design our new UK farming policy and work with the devolved administrations to ensure the strength of the Welsh brand is maintained.

We will continue to support S4C as a part of a UK broadcasting structure and in its key role promoting the Welsh language, which a Conservative government first protected.

Northern Ireland

Our steadfast belief remains that Northern Ireland's future is best served within a stronger United Kingdom.

Our commitment to the 1998 Belfast Agreement and its successors, together with the institutions they establish, is undiminished. The next Conservative government will therefore work to re-establish a strong, stable and inclusive executive at the earliest opportunity. We will uphold the essential principle that Northern Ireland's future should only ever be determined by democracy and consent.

A Conservative government will work closely with an incoming executive to strengthen the economy even further, to improve productivity, reduce public sector dependency and promote Northern Ireland as a location for inward investment. We remain committed to the devolution of Corporation Tax powers subject to the executive demonstrating fiscal stability.

As we leave the European Union we recognise Northern Ireland's unique circumstances and will seek to ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are protected.

While the number of terror attacks from dissident republican terrorists has fallen from forty in 2010 to four in 2016, the threat they pose remains severe and the need for vigilance paramount. We will continue to confront and combat those who use violence, threats and intimidation, providing the fullest possible support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other agencies in their work to keep the public safe and secure.

A Conservative government will continue to work for the full implementation of the 2014 Stormont House and 2015 Fresh Start Agreements. This includes new bodies for addressing the legacy of the past in fair, balanced and proportionate ways which do not unfairly focus on former members of the Armed Forces and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

The immense contribution of the security forces during the troubles should never be forgotten. We will reject any attempts to rewrite history which seek to justify or legitimise terrorism.

Shared institutions of Union

For too long, power in Britain has been centred in London. This means opportunity has centred in London too. It is time major cities around Britain shared in the government of the United Kingdom. For our civil service and major cultural bodies to claim to be UK institutions, they need to represent and be present across our whole United Kingdom. It is also wrong that while some of our major cultural institutions have made efforts to gain a presence across the UK, others have not.

We will put this right. Starting with the UK Government's arm's-length bodies, we will start moving significant numbers of UK Government civil servants and other public servants out of London and the south-east to cities around the UK. We will ensure that senior posts move too, so that operational headquarters as well as administrative functions are centred not in London but around Britain. And we will do so in a way that encourages the development of

new clusters of public services, private businesses and, where appropriate, universities.

We will proceed on the same basis with the arts and cultural organisations that give our United Kingdom such strength. Channel 4 will remain publicly owned and will be relocated out of London, and we will work with the nation's most eminent museums and galleries to ensure their works and expertise are shared across the country.

United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

We believe in one nation – in helping every part of our country share in the prosperity and opportunity of our great United Kingdom. Yet there is much to do. Current EU-wide structural funding was designed to tackle disparities but it is expensive to administer and poorly targeted. As we leave the European Union, we must look at how we can better reduce and eliminate these inequalities.

We will use the structural fund money that comes back to the UK following Brexit to create a United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically designed to reduce inequalities between communities across our four nations. The money that is spent will help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth based on our modern industrial strategy. We will consult widely on the design of the fund, including with the devolved administrations, local authorities, businesses and public bodies. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be cheap to administer, low in bureaucracy and targeted where it is needed most.

LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION

Following the historic referendum on 23rd June 2016, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union. Only the Conservative Party, under Theresa May's strong and stable leadership, can negotiate the best possible deal for our country. In her Lancaster House Speech, the prime minister laid out the twelve principles she intends to follow in seeking a new deep and special partnership with the European Union. We have explained our approach in the White Paper on the United Kingdom's Exit from, and a new relationship with, the European Union, during the passage of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act, in the prime minister's letter to the president of the European Council invoking Article 50, and in the Great Repeal Bill White Paper.

We want to agree a deep and special partnership with the European Union. This partnership will benefit both the European Union and the United Kingdom: while we are leaving the European Union, we are not leaving Europe, and we want to remain committed partners and allies to our friends across the continent.

The negotiations will undoubtedly be tough, and there will be give and take on both

sides, but we continue to believe that no deal is better than a bad deal for the UK. But we will enter the negotiations in a spirit of sincere cooperation and committed to getting the best deal for Britain. We will make sure we have certainty and clarity over our future, control of our own laws, and a more unified, strengthened United Kingdom. We will control immigration and secure the entitlements of EU nationals in Britain and British nationals in the EU. We will maintain the Common Travel Area and maintain as frictionless a border as possible for people, goods and services between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Workers' rights conferred on British citizens from our membership of the EU will remain. We will pursue free trade with European markets, and secure new trade agreements with other countries. We want to work together in the fight against crime and terrorism, collaborate in science and innovation – and secure a smooth, orderly Brexit. And we will protect the democratic freedom of the people of Gibraltar and our overseas territories to remain British, for as long as that is their wish. The final agreement will be subject to a vote in both houses of parliament.

As we leave the European Union, we will no longer be members of the single market or customs union but we will seek a deep and special partnership including a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement. There may be specific European programmes in which we might want to participate and if so, it will be reasonable that we make a contribution. We will determine a fair settlement of the UK's rights and obligations as a departing member state, in accordance with the law and in the spirit of the UK's continuing partnership with the EU. The principle, however, is clear: the days of Britain making vast annual contributions to the European Union will end.

We want fair, orderly negotiations, minimising disruption and giving as much certainty as possible – so both sides benefit. We believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside our withdrawal, reaching agreement on both within the two years allowed by Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

Repatriating EU law to the United Kingdom

We will enact a Great Repeal Bill. Our laws will be made in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and interpreted by judges across the United Kingdom, not in Luxembourg. The bill will convert EU law into UK law, allowing businesses and individuals to go about life knowing that the rules have not changed overnight. This approach means that the rights of workers and protections given to consumers and the environment by EU law will continue to be available in UK law at the point at which we leave the EU. The bill will also create the necessary powers to correct the laws that do not operate appropriately once we have left the EU, so our legal system can continue to function correctly outside the EU. Once EU law has been converted into domestic law, parliament will be able to pass legislation to amend, repeal or improve any piece of EU law it chooses, as will the devolved legislatures, where they have the power to do so.

2. A STRONG AND UNITED NATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

As powers return from the EU, we will be able to determine the level best placed to take decisions on these issues, ensuring that power sits closer to the people of the United Kingdom than ever before. We expect that the outcome will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration but we must also ensure that as we leave the EU no new barriers to living and doing business within our own union are created. In some areas, this will require common UK frameworks. We will work closely with the devolved administrations to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the United Kingdom and reflects the needs and individual circumstances of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As well as the Great Repeal Bill, we will bring forward a number of additional bills to ensure that when we have left the EU there is a clear statutory basis for United Kingdom authorities to exercise powers that are currently exercised through EU law and institutions.

We will not bring the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights into UK law. We will not repeal or replace the Human Rights Act while the process of Brexit is underway but we will consider our human rights legal framework when the process of leaving the EU concludes. We will remain signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights for the duration of the next parliament.

GLOBAL BRITAIN

The United Kingdom is a global nation. Our history is a global history; our future must be global too. We believe Britain should play an active, leading role in the world. Not because it is our right or inheritance, but because our leadership in the world is the surest way to defend and advance the interests of the British people, and to extend around the world those values that we believe to be right.

The United Kingdom is already a global power. We have a leading diplomatic service and one of the largest overseas development budgets in the world. Our armed forces are respected around the world and enable us to project power globally. Our global businesses and London's position as the global centre of finance make us more interconnected with the global economy than any other comparable nation.

Britain is already a significant influence for good around the world. Our aid is giving millions an education and an opportunity to rise out of poverty. Our naval vessels are stopping the vile trade in people and in drugs. We are at the forefront of action against global climate change.

We can and should do more, not just because acting as a force for good is an important end in itself but because the result will be greater peace and prosperity for the British people. We will continue to champion British values around the globe: freedom, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. We will be the world's foremost champion of free trade. We will expand our global efforts to combat extremism, terror, and the perpetration of violence against people because of their faith, gender or sexuality. We will continue to lead international action against climate change, and the degradation of habitat and loss of species. We will continue to lead a global campaign for the education of women and girls, which is the key to progress in so many countries. We will lead the fight against modern slavery, just as we overcame the trade in slaves two hundred years ago. We will lead a global effort to close down online spaces for those who abuse children, incite violence or propagate hate speech. We shall lead the world in the hard work to end extreme child poverty and co-ordinate efforts against microbial resistance and emerging tropical diseases. And we will take up leadership in a new arena, where concern is shared around the world: we will be the global leader in the regulation of the use of personal data and the internet.

British leadership in international institutions

The security and prosperity of the United Kingdom is built on the international institutions that we helped to found and will continue to help maintain: the United Nations and the UN Security Council, NATO – the cornerstone of our defence, the Commonwealth, the G20, G7 and the World Trade Organization. We will continue to give strong support to an international order in which rules govern state conduct; in our own behaviour we will support this system and apply it in a principled way. We shall continue to seek to reform multilateral institutions, especially in the way they distribute development funds, so that money is used to greatest effect to protect and help the world's most vulnerable people.

Global partnerships and alliances

Alongside our proposed deep and special partnership with the European Union, we will maintain the historical, cultural and economic ties that link us to our old friends and allies around the globe. We will build upon our existing special relationship with the United States, and forge new economic and security partnerships that make us more prosperous at home and more secure abroad. We will strengthen our close links with our Commonwealth allies, continuing our mission together to promote democratic values around the world and build on our existing economic relationships to further our common trading interests. We will develop alliances and co-operate more with old friends and new partners.

A global champion of free trade

The United Kingdom will be a global champion for an open economy, free trade, and the free flow of investment, ideas and information. Open and free trade is key to international prosperity, stability and security – it is an essential component of an economy that works

for everyone. We believe the UK must seize the unique opportunities it has to forge a new set of trade and investment relationships around the world, building a global, outward-looking Britain.

Promoting British culture around the world

The United Kingdom is home to some of the finest cultural institutions in the world. We will continue to promote those institutions and ensure they have the resources they need to amplify Britain's voice on the world stage and as a global force for good. We will continue to promote democracy, the rule of law, property entitlements, a free and open media, and accountable institutions in countries and societies across the world.

We will place the BBC World Service and the British Council on a secure footing so they are able to promote the best of British values around the globe and build strong ties between our local communities and other countries.

Leading the world in development

British aid helps millions and is a powerful statement of Global Britain's place in the world. It protects our interests: by building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world, we can protect our own people from disease, conflict and instability. This is the right ambition for a country with a global outlook, so we will maintain the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our gross national income on assistance to developing nations and international emergencies.

We will continue to use our aid budget in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, to end extreme poverty, save children's lives, and provide an education for girls. We will work to end the subjugation and mutilation of women, to combat the brutal slave trade in fellow human beings and to prevent catastrophic environmental degradation. And we will continue to lead global efforts to tackle sexual violence in conflict.

British scientists and inventors have helped to address some of the greatest challenges facing the world's poorest people. A global Britain should aspire to do even more: we will significantly increase our funding of UK-led medical and technical research into the biggest threats to global health and prosperity.

There are still ways that we can improve the way that taxpayers' money is used to help the world's most vulnerable people. We do not believe that international definitions of development assistance always help in determining how money should be spent, on whom and for what purpose. So we will work with like-minded countries to change the rules so that they are updated and better reflect the breadth of our assistance around the world. If that does not work, we will change the law to allow us to use a better definition of development spending, while continuing to meet our 0.7 per cent target.

Reforming asylum

We will ensure Britain remains a place of sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. The existing system, however, is geared towards people who are young enough, fit enough, and have the resources to get to Britain, rather than those who are most in need of our help.

Wherever possible, the government will offer asylum and refuge to people in parts of the world affected by conflict and oppression, rather than to those who have made it to Britain. We will work to reduce asylum claims made in Britain and, as we do so, increase the number of people we help in the most troubled regions. We will continue to work with other countries in Europe, and the United Nations, to review the international legal definitions of asylum and refugee status.

We will make sure our councils get the help they need to deal with people as they arrive, and establish schemes to help individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses to provide housing and other support for refugees.

Protecting the global environment

The United Kingdom will lead the world in environmental protection. As Conservatives, we are committed to leaving the environment in better condition than we inherited it. That is why we will continue to take a lead in global action against climate change, as the government demonstrated by ratifying the Paris Agreement. We were the first country to introduce a Climate Change Act, which Conservatives helped to frame, and we are halfway towards meeting our 2050 goal of reducing emissions by eighty per cent from 1990 levels.

We will champion greater conservation co-operation within international bodies, protecting rare species, the polar regions and international waters. We will work with our Overseas Territory governments to create a Blue Belt of marine protection in their precious waters, establishing the largest marine sanctuaries anywhere in the world.

Modern slavery

The UK is a global leader in fighting the evil trade in human beings – both around the world and in our own country – for sex and labour exploitation. As home secretary, Theresa May brought forward the Modern Slavery Act, the first of its kind in Europe, appointed the world's first anti-slavery commissioner and set up the Modern Slavery Taskforce to bring together the heads of MI5, MI6 and the National Crime Agency to co-ordinate our response to criminal gangs operating across the world.

We now need to go further. We need to focus on the exploitation of vulnerable men, women and children for their labour, people who are moved around our own country and between nations, as if they were not human at all. We will review the application of

exploitation in the Modern Slavery Act to strengthen our ability to stop criminals putting men, women and children into criminal, dangerous and exploitative working conditions. And the UK will use its power to push the United Nations and other international bodies to make Modern Slavery a thing of the past.

STRONG DEFENCE IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Our world is full of opportunity but is also riven by conflict, terrorism and threat. As a global power, we have a responsibility to sustain our fine armed forces so that they can defend the realm, our overseas territories and our interests around the globe. We will play a leading role in NATO and maintain the ability to conduct strike operations, peacekeeping, security missions and the deployment of a joint expeditionary force. We will maintain the overall size of the armed forces, including an army that is capable of fielding a war-fighting division. We shall expand our reach around the world. We will retain the Trident continuous-at-sea nuclear deterrent to provide the ultimate guarantee of our security.

We have the biggest defence budget in Europe and the second largest in NATO. We will continue to meet the NATO commitment to spend at least 2 per cent of GDP on defence and we will increase the defence budget by at least 0.5 per cent above inflation in every year of the new parliament.

The finest servicemen and women

We will attract and retain the best men and women for our armed forces, including by engaging them on a flexible basis. We will protect our brave armed forces personnel from persistent legal claims, which distress those who risk their lives for us, cost the taxpayer millions and undermine the armed forces in the service they give. Under a Conservative government, British troops will in future be subject to the Law of Armed Conflict, which includes the Geneva Convention and UK Service Law, not the European Court of Human Rights. We will strengthen legal services regulation and restrict legal aid for unscrupulous law firms that issue vexatious legal claims against the armed forces. We will introduce better compensation for injured armed forces personnel and the families of those killed in combat.

The best equipment for our armed forces

We plan to invest £178 billion in new military equipment over the next decade, creating high-skilled jobs across the whole country. For the first time in a generation the Royal Navy is growing. We have cut steel on the first of a new fleet of four Dreadnought ballistic missile boats and we will complete the Astute class of hunter-killer submarines. Our

two new aircraft carriers will project British military power for the next fifty years: HMS Queen Elizabeth begins sea trials in the summer and HMS Prince of Wales is due to enter active service in 2020. Alongside our new Type 45 destroyers, we will build eight Type 26 anti-submarine frigates and develop our programme for a new class of lighter, general purpose frigates so that by the 2030s we can further increase the size of our fleet. We shall also deliver five Offshore Patrol Vessels.

For the Army we will deliver AJAX armoured vehicles, Apache attack helicopters, new drones, new missile and bomb systems, and better equipment for the Special Forces. The Royal Air Force will receive, with the Fleet Air Arm, the Lightning II strike fighter, as well as new Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Taken together, this is the largest programme of investment in our armed forces for generations.

Supporting our veterans

We will support former members of the armed forces, who were willing to risk their lives for us, as they move into civilian life. We will maintain and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant. We will help veterans to start new careers by ensuring that the skills and qualifications they gained in service are recognised by civilian employers and by introducing a one year holiday on Employer National Insurance Contributions for firms hiring service personnel after they leave service. We will improve the co-ordination of government services to veterans, including housing, employment and mental health services, by introducing a Veterans Board in the Cabinet Office.

THE HOME OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

This election will decide the composition of our parliament, the oldest of all large democracies. The laws that we make form the basis of judgments in our courts, which are respected around the world. This unequalled democracy and legal system is our greatest national inheritance. However, collective faith in our democratic institutions and our justice system has declined in the past two decades. It is the purpose of this Conservative Party, in responding to the historic vote on our membership of the European Union, to re-establish faith in our democracy, and in our democratic and legal institutions.

A flourishing and secure democracy

Our democratic institutions may be ancient but should not be neglected. We will continue to modernise and improve our electoral registration process, making it as accessible as possible so that every voice counts. We will legislate for votes for life for British overseas electors. We will continue with the current boundary review, enshrining the principle of equal seats, while reducing the number of MPs to 600, similar to other

Western democratic chambers. We will retain the first past the post system of voting for parliamentary elections and extend this system to police and crime commissioner and mayoral elections. We will retain the current franchise to vote in parliamentary elections at eighteen. We will repeal the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.

The British public deserves to have confidence in our democracy. We will legislate to ensure that a form of identification must be presented before voting, to reform postal voting and to improve other aspects of the elections process to ensure that our elections are the most secure in the world. We will retain the traditional method of voting by pencil and paper, and tackle every aspect of electoral fraud.

Although comprehensive reform is not a priority we will ensure that the House of Lords continues to fulfil its constitutional role as a revising and scrutinising chamber which respects the primacy of the House of Commons. We have already undertaken reform to allow the retirement of peers and the expulsion of members for poor conduct and will continue to ensure the work of the House of Lords remains relevant and effective by addressing issues such as its size.

Celebrating public service

Our nation is made great by millions of people who work every day to serve the public. Public service is a noble vocation, one which we will celebrate. We want the most committed and capable people to come into public service, and for public services to be motors of social mobility – which is why we are looking at ways to make sure civil service recruitment is as diverse as possible, not only from the perspective of gender and race but social class too.

We will continue to fund schemes to get graduates from Britain’s leading universities to serve in schools, police forces, prisons, and social care and mental health organisations. These programmes are now some of the UK’s largest graduate employers, taking the brightest and best from our universities and using their talents to tackle entrenched social problems. We want to go further. We will provide seed funding for similar schemes to recruit older professionals from other sectors, including those returning to the workplace having cared for children and relatives and those approaching retirement.

We know public services are dependent upon the public servants who run them, which is why we will establish in law the freedom for employees to mutualise, where appropriate, within the public sector. We will review the honours system to make sure it commands public confidence, rewards genuine public service and that recipients uphold the integrity of the honours bestowed.

Reforming the justice system

The last seven years have seen historic falls in crime and improvements in public safety.

We will build on that record.

A strong criminal justice system requires a good legal system. We cherish our strong and independent judiciary. Our courts and judiciary are respected as the finest in the world. Legal services are a major British export and underpin our professional services sector. We will continue to modernise our courts, improving court buildings and facilities and making it easier for people to resolve disputes and secure justice.

We will take action to make it harder for people to enter the country if they have a criminal conviction and will implement satellite tracking for every foreign national offender subject to an outstanding deportation order or deportation proceedings.

Standing up for victims

We will ensure that victims of crime are supported at every stage of the criminal justice system. We will enshrine victims' entitlements in law, making clear what level of service they should expect from the police, courts and criminal justice system. We will ensure that child victims and victims of sexual violence are able to be cross-examined before their trial without the distress of having to appear in court. Publicly-funded advocates will have specialist training in handling victims before taking on serious sexual offences cases. To ensure that the pain and suffering of the Hillsborough families over the last twenty years is not repeated, we will introduce an independent public advocate, who will act for bereaved families after a public disaster and support them at public inquests. We will extend the scope of the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme so a wider range of sentences can be challenged. And we will push forward with our plan for tackling hate crime committed on the basis of religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

Strengthening the police and security services

We will help Britain's world-leading police forces and prosecutorial services to fight crime, protect the public and provide security for businesses. We will create a national infrastructure police force, bringing together the Civil Nuclear Constabulary, the Ministry of Defence Police and the British Transport Police to improve the protection of critical infrastructure such as nuclear sites, railways and the strategic road network. We will strengthen Britain's response to white collar crime by incorporating the Serious Fraud Office into the National Crime Agency, improving intelligence sharing and bolstering the investigation of serious fraud, money laundering and financial crime. We will extend direct entry into the police, including at chief officer level. We will continue to invest in our world-leading security services and maintain and develop our counter-terrorism strategy to protect us from terrorism at home and abroad. And we will bolster the response to cyber threats on private businesses, public services, critical national infrastructure, and individuals, working with the National Cyber Security Centre to prevent attacks wherever possible and with the police and international law enforcement agencies to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

We will widen the role of police and crime commissioners to help them cut crime for their local communities. We will ensure that commissioners sit on local health and wellbeing boards, enabling better co-ordination of crime prevention with local drug and alcohol and mental health services. We will build on the Policing and Crime Act, which introduced better co-ordination of policing and fire and rescue services, with greater devolution of criminal justice responsibility and budgets to local commissioners.

Punishment and reform

Prisons should be places of reform and rehabilitation, but we should always remember that incarceration is punishment for people who commit serious crimes.

The £15 billion annual cost to society of reoffending shows we have so much more to do to make the penal system work better. Prisons must become places of safety, discipline and hard work, places where people are helped to turn their lives around. They should help prisoners learn English, maths and the work skills they need to get a job when they leave prison, whilst providing the help prisoners require to come off drugs and deal with mental health problems.

We will invest over £1 billion to modernise the prison estate, replacing the most dilapidated prisons and creating 10,000 modern prison places. We will reform the entry requirements, training, management and career paths of prison officers. We will create a new legal framework for prisons, strengthening the inspectorate and ombudsman to provide sharper external scrutiny.

Community punishments do not do enough to prevent crime and break the cycle of persistent offending. So we will create a national community sentencing framework that punishes offenders and focuses on the measures that have a better chance of turning people around and preventing crime, such as curfews and orders that tackle drug and alcohol abuse. We will introduce dedicated provision for women offenders.

3. THE WORLD'S GREAT MERITOCRACY

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- More good school places, ending the ban on selective schools and asking universities and independent schools to help run state schools.
- World class technical education, underpinned by prestigious new institutes of technology with the freedoms that make our universities great.
- A government unafraid to confront the burning injustices of the gender pay gap, racial disparity, the stigma of mental health and disability discrimination.
- Protections for victims of domestic abuse in law through a new landmark Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill.
- Fairer markets for consumers and action on the cost of living, including a safeguard tariff cap to protect energy customers from unacceptable rises.
- Controlled, sustainable migration, with net migration down to the tens of thousands.

We have done much in recent years to break down longstanding divisions in our country. Yet some social injustices endure. If you are at a state school you are less likely to reach the top professions than if you are educated privately. If you are a white, working-class boy, you are less likely than anybody else in Britain to go to university. If you are black, you are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system than if you are white. If you are born poor, you will die on average nine years earlier than others. If you are a woman, you will earn less than a man. If you suffer from mental health problems, there is not enough help at hand. These are burning injustices that damage the unity of our country, and we will address them.

The truth is that if we are to make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy, we also need to do much more to support millions of people who live in ordinary, working families. Because life is often much harder for these families than many in positions of power seem to realise. They might have a job, but not always job security; they might be homeowners, but they worry about paying the mortgage and wonder if their children will be able to afford a home of their own; they can just about manage, but worry about the cost of living and getting their children into a good school. They deserve a government that is on their side.

A COUNTRY FOUNDED ON MERIT

The greatest injustice in Britain today is that your life is still largely determined not by your efforts and talents but by where you come from, who your parents are and what schools you attend. This is wrong. We want to make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy: a country where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow, where advantage is based on merit not privilege. To succeed, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that everyone, no matter who they are or where they are from, can have a world-class education.

More good school places

We are proud of our reforms to education, which are giving millions of children a better start in life than they could have expected a decade ago. Thanks to our school reforms – such as the establishment of free schools and academies, and changes to ensure a rigorous curriculum – there are more good and outstanding schools today than ever before. There are now more than 1.8 million more children in schools rated good and outstanding than in 2010. The proportion of pupils taking core academic subjects at GCSE has almost doubled.

There remains a long way to go. For too many children, a good school remains out of reach. There are still 1 million children in primary and secondary schools rated by Ofsted as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. If schools across the Midlands and north of England had the same average standards as those in the south, nearly 200,000 more children would be attending good schools. We need to give every child in our country the best possible education if we are to provide them with the best opportunities in the world.

To achieve that ambition we will have to go further in reforming our education system. So we will continue with our programme of free schools, building at least a hundred new free schools a year. We will prohibit councils from creating any new places in schools that have been rated either 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' by Ofsted.

We will make it a condition for universities hoping to charge maximum tuition fees to become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools. We will introduce new funding arrangements so we can open a specialist maths school in every major city in England. We will replace the unfair and ineffective inclusivity rules that prevent the establishment of new Roman Catholic schools, instead requiring new faith schools to prove that parents of other faiths and none would be prepared to send their children to that school. We will work with the Independent Schools Council to ensure that at least 100 leading independent schools become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools in the state system, keeping open the option of changing the tax status of independent schools if progress is not made.

We will lift the ban on the establishment of selective schools, subject to conditions, such as allowing pupils to join at other ages as well as eleven. Contrary to what some people allege, official research shows that slightly more children from ordinary, working class families attend selective schools as a percentage of the school intake compared to non-selective schools. While the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils stands at 25 per cent across the country, at selective schools it falls to almost zero.

These changes will have a great effect, but alone they cannot overcome the unfairness of selection by house price, where ordinary, working class families find it difficult to access the best schools because they cannot afford to live in the catchment area. We will therefore conduct a review of school admissions policy. We will be clear at the outset that we will never introduce a mandatory lottery-based school admissions policy.

A knowledge-rich curriculum

Our reforms to what is taught in schools have been profound. We have addressed grade inflation and poor standards and developed a world-class curriculum. This has meant considerable change for pupils, teachers and schools. So now we will help them consolidate those gains, starting with the early building blocks of learning.

A Conservative government will strengthen the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the early years so that all pupils – regardless of background – get the best possible start in life. We will build on the success of the phonics screening test. We will expect every 11-year-old to know their times tables off by heart. To maintain progress as children go through secondary school, we will improve schools' accountability at key stage 3. We will expect 75 per cent of pupils to have been entered for the EBacc combination of GCSEs by the end of the next parliament, with 90 per cent of pupils studying this combination of academic GCSEs by 2025.

We will ensure all children have access to an academic, knowledge-rich curriculum. We will introduce a curriculum fund to encourage Britain's leading cultural and scientific institutions, like the British Museum and others to help develop knowledge-rich materials for our schools, and we will ensure that assessments at the end of primary school draw from a rich knowledge base, and reduce teaching to the test. We will consider how Ofsted can give parents more information on what their children are being taught.

Supporting teachers

We want great people to become teachers, teach in our most challenging schools and stay there. We will continue to provide bursaries to attract top graduates into teaching. To help new teachers remain in the profession, we will offer forgiveness on student loan repayments while they are teaching and bring in dedicated support to help them throughout their careers.

We will provide greater support for teachers in the preparation of lessons and marking, including through the use of technology, and we will bear down on unnecessary paperwork and the burden of Ofsted inspections. We will create a single jobs portal, like NHS Jobs, for schools to advertise vacancies in order to reduce costs and help them find the best teachers.

Fairer funding

The way funding is distributed to schools in England is not fair. Across the country, children with the same needs and expectations receive markedly different rates of funding for their school place. We have begun to correct this and in the next parliament we will make funding fairer still. We appreciate that it is hard for schools receiving a higher level of funding to make cuts in order to pay for increases elsewhere, so while we will make funding fairer over the course of the parliament, we will make sure that no school has its budget cut as a result of the new formula. We will increase the overall schools budget by £4 billion by 2022, representing more than a real terms increase for every year of the parliament. We will continue to protect the Pupil Premium to support those who need it.

In order to fund these commitments, we have taken an important decision. We do not believe that giving school lunches to all children free of charge for the first three years

of primary school – regardless of the income of their parents – is a sensible use of public money. There is now good evidence that school breakfasts are at least as effective in helping children to make progress in school. So under a new Conservative government, schools in England will offer a free school breakfast to every child in every year of primary school, while children from low-income families will continue to receive free school lunches throughout their years in primary and secondary education. The savings made from this change will be added to the core schools budget, meaning that every penny saved will go towards children’s education.

World-class technical education

For too long in this country, technical excellence has not been valued as highly as academic success. We want British technical education to be as prestigious as our world-leading higher education system, and for technical education in this country to rival the best technical systems in the world.

This will require bold reform of the funding, institutional and qualifications frameworks for technical education, in partnership with British industry. We have already introduced high quality apprenticeships that can reach to degree level and beyond for the 200,000 young people who choose to enter full-time vocational study after their GCSEs each year. We now need to go further to improve technical education and offer young people a real choice between technical and academic routes at sixteen.

We will start by replacing 13,000 existing technical qualifications with new qualifications, known as T-levels, across fifteen routes in subjects including construction, creative and design, digital, engineering and manufacturing, and health and science. We will increase the number of teaching hours by fifty per cent to an average of 900 hours per year and make sure that each student does a three-month work placement as part of their course. And we will extend our reforms to the highest levels of technical qualification.

We will invest in further education colleges to make sure they have world-class equipment and facilities and will create a new national programme to attract experienced industry professionals to work in FE colleges.

We will establish new institutes of technology, backed by leading employers and linked to leading universities, in every major city in England. They will provide courses at degree level and above, specialising in technical disciplines, such as STEM, whilst also providing higher-level apprenticeships and bespoke courses for employers. They will enjoy the freedoms that make our universities great, including eligibility for public funding for productivity and skills research, and access to loans and grants for their students. They will be able to gain royal charter status and regius professorships in technical education. Above all, they will become anchor institutions for local, regional and national industry, providing sought-after skills to support the economy, and developing their own local identity to make sure they can meet the skills needs of local employers.

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To ensure that further, technical and higher education institutions are treated fairly, we will also launch a major review of funding across tertiary education as a whole, looking at how we can ensure that students get access to financial support that offers value for money, is available across different routes and encourages the development of the skills we need as a country.

We will put employers at the centre of these reforms. We will deal with local skills shortages and ensure that colleges deliver the skills required by local businesses through Skills Advisory Panels and Local Enterprise Partnerships working at a regional and local level. We will deliver our commitment to create 3 million apprenticeships for young people by 2020 and in doing so we will drive up the quality of apprenticeships to ensure they deliver the skills employers need. We will allow large firms to pass levy funds to small firms in their supply chain, and work with the business community to develop a new programme to allow larger firms to place apprentices in their supply chains. We will explore teaching apprenticeships sponsored by major companies, especially in STEM subjects.

Lastly, we will make the system easier for young people taking technical and vocational routes. We will introduce a UCAS-style portal for technical education. We will introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices to ensure that no young person is deterred from an apprenticeship due to travel costs.

Career learning

We will in the next parliament produce the best programme of learning and training for people in work and returning to work in the developed world.

We will help all workers seeking to develop their skills in their existing jobs by introducing a new right to request leave for training for all employees. Alongside this, we will help workers to stay in secure jobs as the economy changes by introducing a national retraining scheme. Under the scheme, the costs of training will be met by the government, with companies able to gain access to the Apprenticeship Levy to support wage costs during the training period.

We will break down the barriers to public sector workers taking on more qualified roles because of their prior educational attainment. For instance, we will ensure that teaching assistants can become qualified teachers and healthcare assistants can become nurses via a degree apprenticeship route, in addition to other routes.

We will equip people with the digital skills they need now, and in the future, by introducing a right to lifelong learning in digital skills, just as we have done for literacy and numeracy.

More people in work

Employment is at a record high and we will continue to strive for full employment. We will continue to run the welfare system in accordance with our belief that work is the best route out of poverty, that work should always pay, and that the system should be fair both to the people in need of support and those who pay for it. We have no plans for further radical welfare reform in this parliament and will continue the roll-out of Universal Credit, to ensure that it always pays to be in work.

We will also work to help those groups who have in the past found it difficult to get employment, by incentivising employers to take them on. So for businesses employing former wards of the care system, someone with a disability, those with chronic mental health problems, those who have committed a crime but who have repaid their debt to society, and those who have been unemployed for over a year, we will offer a holiday on their employers' National Insurance Contributions for a full year. We will also provide targeted support for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 so that everyone, no matter what their start in life, is given the very best chance of getting into work.

A COUNTRY THAT COMES TOGETHER

Controlling immigration

Britain is an open economy and a welcoming society and we will always ensure that our British businesses can recruit the brightest and best from around the world and Britain's world-class universities can attract international students. We also believe that immigration should be controlled and reduced, because when immigration is too fast and too high, it is difficult to build a cohesive society.

Thanks to Conservatives in government, there is now more control in the system. The nature of the immigration we have – more skilled workers and university students, less abuse and fewer unskilled migrants – better suits the national interest. But with annual net migration standing at 273,000, immigration to Britain is still too high. It is our objective to reduce immigration to sustainable levels, by which we mean annual net migration in the tens of thousands, rather than the hundreds of thousands we have seen over the last two decades.

We will, therefore, continue to bear down on immigration from outside the European Union. We will increase the earnings thresholds for people wishing to sponsor migrants for family visas. We will toughen the visa requirements for students, to make sure that we maintain high standards. We will expect students to leave the country at the end of their course, unless they meet new, higher requirements that allow them to work in Britain after their studies have concluded. Overseas students will remain in the immigration

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statistics – in line with international definitions – and within scope of the government's policy to reduce annual net migration.

Leaving the European Union means, for the first time in decades, that we will be able to control immigration from the European Union too. We will therefore establish an immigration policy that allows us to reduce and control the number of people who come to Britain from the European Union, while still allowing us to attract the skilled workers our economy needs.

Integrating divided communities

Britain is one of the world's most successful multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious societies. We are proud of our diversity, and the cultural and economic enrichment it brings.

The enjoyment and pride we take in our diversity should not cause us to ignore the fact that in too many parts of our country, we have communities that are divided, often along racial or religious lines. To address this, we will bring forward a new integration strategy, which will seek to help people in more isolated communities to engage with the wider world, help women in particular into the workplace, and teach more people to speak English. We will work with schools to make sure that those with intakes from one predominant racial, cultural or religious background teach their students about pluralistic, British values and help them to get to know people with different ways of life.

Defeating extremism

Our enjoyment of Britain's diversity must not prevent us from confronting the menace of extremism. Extremism, especially Islamist extremism, strips some British people, especially women, of the freedoms they should enjoy, undermines the cohesion of our society and can fuel violence. To defeat extremism, we need to learn from how civil society and the state took on racism in the twentieth century. We will consider what new criminal offences might need to be created, and what new aggravated offences might need to be established, to defeat the extremists. We will support the public sector and civil society in identifying extremists, countering their messages and promoting pluralistic, British values. And we will establish a Commission for Countering Extremism to identify examples of extremism and expose them, to support the public sector and civil society, and help the government to identify policies to defeat extremism and promote pluralistic values.

CONFRONTING BURNING INJUSTICES

To make Britain the world's Great Meritocracy, where your talent and hard work, not who you are or where you come from, determine your life chances, we must look beyond divisions in educational opportunity. We must tackle the burning injustices

that Theresa May identified on the steps of Downing Street last year: longstanding, entrenched injustices that affect people of different ethnicities, genders and those with disabilities and mental ill health.

The gender pay gap

We will take measures to close the gender pay gap. We will require companies with more than 250 employees to publish more data on the pay gap between men and women. We shall continue to work for parity in the number of public appointments going to women, and we shall push for an increase in the number of women sitting on boards of companies.

We will take steps to improve take-up of shared parental leave and help companies provide more flexible work environments that help mothers and fathers to share parenting. We want to help those who have been caring for a child or children for a number of years or supporting an elderly relative. For these people, returning to work can be daunting: things have moved on and people worry that their skills have been eroded. We will address this, providing parents and carers with the confidence to return to work when and how they wish. So we will support companies to take on parents and carers returning to work after long periods of absence and back similar schemes in the public sector, including the country's biggest employer, our NHS.

The race gap

Theresa May's first act as prime minister was to order an unprecedented audit of racial disparity across public services, to reveal the outcomes experienced by people of different ethnicities. That audit reports in July and a Conservative government will not hesitate to act on its findings, however uncomfortable they may be.

Alongside that assault on injustice, we will tackle those issues we already know about head on. We will strengthen the enforcement of equalities law – so that private landlords and businesses who deny people a service on the basis of ethnicity, religion or gender are properly investigated and prosecuted. We will legislate to mandate changes in police practices if 'stop and search' does not become more targeted and 'stop to arrest' ratios do not improve. We will reduce the disproportionate use of force against Black, Asian and ethnic minority people in prison, young offender institutions and secure mental health units and we will legislate here too if progress is not made. We will launch a national campaign to increase the number of Black, Asian and ethnic minority organ donors to cut the long waiting times for patients from those groups and save more lives. We will also ask large employers to publish information on the pay gap for people from different ethnic backgrounds.

The mental health gap

It was Conservatives in government that gave parity of esteem to the treatment of mental health in the National Health Service. We have backed this with a significant increase in

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funding: since 2010 we have increased spending on mental health each year to a record £11.4 billion in 2016/17, with a further investment of £1 billion by 20/21, so that we can deliver the mental health services people deserve. We will now build on this commitment.

First, we will address the need for better treatments across the whole spectrum of mental health conditions. We will make the UK the leading research and technology economy in the world for mental health, bringing together public, private and charitable investment.

Improving treatment services will not be sufficient, however. We will also reform outdated laws to ensure that those with mental illness are treated fairly and employers fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The current Mental Health Act does not operate as it should: if you are put on a community treatment order it is very difficult to be discharged; sectioning is too often used to detain rather than treat; families' information about their loved ones is severely curtailed – parents can be the last to learn that their son or daughter has been sectioned. So we will introduce the first new Mental Health Bill for thirty-five years, putting parity of esteem at the heart of treatment.

We will transform how mental health is regarded in the workplace. We will amend health and safety regulations so that employers provide appropriate first aid training and needs-assessment for mental health, as they currently do for risks to physical health, and extend Equalities Act protections against discrimination to mental health conditions that are episodic and fluctuating. We will consider the findings of the Stevenson-Farmer Review into workplace mental health support, working with employers to encourage new products and incentives to improve the mental health and wellbeing support available to their employees. And, as we did with Dementia Friends, we will train one million members of the public in basic mental health awareness and first aid to break the stigma of mental illness.

The disability gap

We will build on the proud Conservative record in supporting those with disabilities, including the landmark Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. We want to see attitudes to disability shift as they have for race, gender and sexuality in recent years: it should be completely unacceptable for people with disabilities to be treated negatively.

We will get 1 million more people with disabilities into employment over the next ten years. We will harness the opportunities of flexible working and the digital economy to generate jobs for those whose disabilities make traditional work difficult. We will give employers the advice and support they need to hire and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. We will continue to ensure a sustainable welfare system, with help targeted at those who need it most. We will legislate to give unemployed disabled claimants or those with a health condition personalised and tailored employment support.

We believe that where you live, shop, go out, travel or park your car should not be determined by your disability. So we will review disabled people's access and amend regulations if necessary to improve disabled access to licensed premises, parking and housing. We will work with providers of everyday essential services, like energy and telecoms, to reduce the extra costs that disability can incur.

Preventing domestic violence

Conservatives in government have already acted to help victims of domestic violence to seek refuge. We can and should go further. We need the police to investigate allegations thoroughly and treat victims with the care they deserve. We need to bring to the justice system greater guidance and clarity about the impact of domestic violence and abuse on families. And we need to understand and respond to the devastating and lifelong impact that domestic violence and abuse has on children, who carry the effects into adulthood.

A Conservative government will bring forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill in the next parliament to consolidate all civil and criminal prevention and protection orders and provide for a new aggravated offence if behaviour is directed at a child. There is currently no statutory definition of domestic violence and abuse. We will therefore also legislate to enshrine a definition of domestic violence and abuse in law, providing the legal underpinning for everything in our new act. This will enable us to work with victim support groups, experts and agencies to determine whether the current statutory definition is wide enough, to help survivors understand more easily if they have a basis for a complaint, and to provide a more reliable basis for police forces to investigate and the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute.

We will create a domestic violence and abuse commissioner in law, to stand up for victims and survivors, monitor the response to domestic violence and abuse and to hold the police and the criminal justice system to account. And we will take action to support victims of domestic violence to leave abusive partners, reviewing the funding for refuges and ensuring that victims who have lifetime tenancies and flee violence are able to secure a new lifetime tenancy automatically.

Reducing homelessness

Finally, we will continue to combat homelessness and rough sleeping including through full implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Our aim will be to halve rough sleeping over the course of the parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027. To achieve this we will set up a new homelessness reduction taskforce that will focus on prevention and affordable housing, and we will pilot a Housing First approach to tackle rough sleeping.

CUTTING THE COST OF LIVING

Breaking down long-standing social divisions in our society means tackling everyday economic pressures that hold back ordinary, working families. Government can help with the cost of living by keeping tax as low as possible. As we set out in chapter one we want to reduce taxes on British businesses and working families. But government can also help by making consumer markets work more fairly, and in doing so reducing the cost of the essentials that families have no choice but to buy. These costs make up a much larger share of working class household budgets than those of better-off households.

Fair markets for consumers

Tackling living costs must mean making consumer markets work fairly. Markets should work for consumers, as well as producers – with competition keeping prices low and encouraging new product development. Poor information, complex pricing and exploitative behaviour prevents markets operating efficiently for the benefit of all.

As Conservatives, we believe in markets as the best means to bring about prosperity and innovation, but we should act firmly and fast when a market works against the interests of consumers. Since 2010, we have capped the cost of credit for expensive payday lenders and will shortly ban letting agent fees. We will now go further to reform markets in the interests of consumers and reduce the cost of living.

A Conservative government will strengthen the hand of regulators. We will strengthen the powers of consumer enforcement bodies to order fines against companies breaking consumer law and deliver redress for wronged parties. We will explore how to give consumers a voice in the regulation of business. We will put the interest of vulnerable consumers first, including considering a duty on regulators to weigh up their needs. We will investigate how switching sites can better serve competition, including by providing shoppers with information about quality of service and complaints. We will strengthen the hand of online consumers. We will act to make terms and conditions clearer, and end the abusive use of subscription services, including by making it clearer when free trials come to an end.

We will also act in specific markets. A Conservative government will reform and modernise the home-buying process so it is more efficient and less costly. We will crack down on unfair practices in leasehold, such as escalating ground rents. We will also improve protections for those who rent, including by looking at how we increase security for good tenants and encouraging landlords to offer longer tenancies as standard. We will make billing for telecoms customers fairer and easier to understand, including making clear when a mobile customer has paid off the price of their handset. We will consider a ban on companies cold calling people encouraging them to make false personal injury claims. We will take steps to tackle rogue private parking operators. We will reduce insurance costs for ordinary motorists by cracking down on

exaggerated and fraudulent whiplash claims. We will review rail ticketing, removing complexity and perverse pricing, and introduce a passenger ombudsman to stand up for the interests of rail users suffering a poor deal. We will work with train companies and their employees to agree minimum service levels during periods of industrial dispute – and if we cannot find a voluntary agreement, we will legislate to make this mandatory.

Fair energy markets

We will pay immediate attention to the retail energy market. Customers trust established brands and mistakenly assume their loyalty is rewarded. Energy suppliers have long operated a two-tier market, where those constantly checking for the best deal can do well but others are punished for inactivity with higher prices. Those hit worst are households with lower incomes, people with lower qualifications, people who rent their home and the elderly. A Conservative government will act in their interests.

First, we will ensure that smart meters will be offered to every household and business by the end of 2020, giving people control over their energy bills that they have not had before.

We will go further. We will introduce a safeguard tariff cap that will extend the price protection currently in place for some vulnerable customers to more customers on the poorest value tariffs. We will maintain the competitive element of the retail energy market by supporting initiatives to make the switching process easier and more reliable, but the safeguard tariff cap will protect customers who do not switch against abusive price increases.

Alongside giving individuals greater control over their energy bills and protecting customers from unfair bills, we will help them to save energy. An energy efficient home is a more affordable and healthy home. We will improve the energy efficiency of existing homes, especially for the least well off, by committing to upgrading all fuel poor homes to EPC Band C by 2030. We will also review requirements on new homes.

Fair debt

For some people, the cost of living can become too great. Problem debt can be hard to escape and can compound family breakdown, worklessness, stress and mental health issues. We will adopt a “Breathing Space” scheme, with the right safeguards to prevent abuse, so that someone in serious problem debt may apply for legal protection from further interest, charges and enforcement action for a period of up to six weeks. Where appropriate, they will be offered a statutory repayment plan to help them pay back their debts in a manageable way. This will give eligible debtors time to seek advice and assistance to apply for a sustainable solution to their debt.

4. A RESTORED CONTRACT BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- Sound public finances, built on fiscal credibility and a balanced budget by the middle of the next decade.
- Guaranteed annual increases in the state pension through a new Double Lock to be introduced in 2020.
- Dignity and protection in old age through the right long-term solution for elderly care.
- Exceptional healthcare, whenever, wherever, delivered by an NHS with the money, buildings and people it needs.
- Homes for all, including a new generation of fixed-term council housing linked to a new Right to Buy.
- High-quality childcare for working families, supported by thousands of new nursery places a year.

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No grandparent wants to see their grandchildren worse off than they were, yet that is precisely the fear many older people now have. No son or daughter wants to see their parents poorly cared for or their hard-earned assets whittled away, yet that is the reality for too many old people in care. We must admit that the solidarity that binds generations is under strain in our country.

We will restore the contract between the generations, providing older people with security against ill health while ensuring we maintain the promise of opportunity and prosperity for younger generations. That contract includes our National Health Service, which is founded on the principle that those who have should help those who do not. It is a system of solidarity to which we all contribute, not just to help us and our families when we are in need but to protect others in our community when they need help too. This not just expediency: we do it because the support we give each other ties us together.

This solidarity is a Conservative principle, growing out of family, community and nation – all things that Conservatives believe in and work to conserve. At times, solidarity will require great generosity from one group to another – of younger working people to pay for the dignified old age of retired people, and of older people balancing what they receive with the needs of the younger generation.

Our United Kingdom can seize enormous opportunities but only if we make decisions for the long term. We trust the people of this country, who know that we face difficult choices – and demand the respect of politicians who should be honest about how those choices can be resolved.

DEALING WITH THE DEFICIT

The greatest impact a government can have on future generations is the amount it chooses to borrow to pay for current spending. Borrowing always means spending money you do not have; but government borrowing differs because the repayment falls to others – those who come later, including people not yet born. Conservatives believe in balancing the books and paying down debts – because it is wrong to pass to future generations a bill you cannot or will not pay yourself.

The next Conservative government will continue the difficult but necessary work of restoring our public finances while still ensuring that we are investing for the future. As

we set out in chapter one, we will continue to aim for a balanced budget by the middle of the next decade, in line with the fiscal rules announced by the chancellor in his autumn statement last year.

AN AGEING SOCIETY

People are living longer. This is a good thing, but we should not ignore the consequences. As our society ages, the costs of caring for older generations – pensions, pensioner benefits, health and social care – rise; and these are borne by working people through their taxes. As the relative number of younger people is falling, those costs increase, not just in total, but also for individuals. So if we are to give older people the dignity we owe them and younger people the opportunities they deserve, we face difficult decisions.

Guaranteed annual increases in the state pension

A decade ago, pensions were in crisis and poverty blighted the retirement of many older people. It was wrong and it has been a Conservative government that has helped to put it right. By introducing the Pensions Triple Lock and the new State Pension, we have lifted the incomes of millions of older people, reducing pensioner poverty to historically low levels. The Triple Lock has worked: it is now time to set pensions on an even course. So we will keep our promise to maintain the Triple Lock until 2020, and when it expires we will introduce a new Double Lock, meaning that pensions will rise in line with the earnings that pay for them, or in line with inflation – whichever is highest. We will also ensure that the state pension age reflects increases in life expectancy, while protecting each generation fairly.

The state pension is the basic building block for income in retirement. In addition to safeguarding the rising state pension, we will continue to support the successful expansion of auto-enrolled pensions, enabling more people to increase their retirement income with help from their employers and government; we will continue to extend auto-enrolment to small employers and make it available to the self-employed. We will promote long-term savings and pensions products, including the Lifetime ISA, to encourage and incentivise more people to make provision for long-term needs, including a house purchase and retirement.

A long-term plan for elderly care

Our system of care for the elderly is not working for the hundreds of thousands currently not getting the dignified and careful attention they deserve, nor for the people and organisations providing that care, nor is it sustainable for today's younger people who will potentially one day face care costs themselves. It is not fair that the quality of care you receive and how much you pay for it depends in large part on where you live and whether you own your own home.

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Where others have failed to lead, we will act. We have already taken immediate action, putting £2 billion into the social care system and allowing councils to raise more money for care themselves from Council Tax. We are now proposing medium and long-term solutions to put elderly care in our country on a strong and stable footing.

Under the current system, care costs deplete an individual's assets, including in some cases the family home, down to £23,250 or even less. These costs can be catastrophic for those with modest or medium wealth. One purpose of long-term saving is to cover needs in old age; those who can should rightly contribute to their care from savings and accumulated wealth, rather than expecting current and future taxpayers to carry the cost on their behalf. Moreover, many older people have built considerable property assets due to rising property prices. Reconciling these competing pressures fairly and in a sustainable way has challenged many governments of the past. We intend to tackle this with three connected measures.

First, we will align the future basis for means-testing for domiciliary care with that for residential care, so that people are looked after in the place that is best for them. This will mean that the value of the family home will be taken into account along with other assets and income, whether care is provided at home, or in a residential or nursing care home.

Second, to ensure this is fair, we will introduce a single capital floor, set at £100,000, more than four times the current means test threshold. This will ensure that, no matter how large the cost of care turns out to be, people will always retain at least £100,000 of their savings and assets, including value in the family home.

Third, we will extend the current freedom to defer payments for residential care to those receiving care at home, so no-one will have to sell their home in their lifetime to pay for care.

We believe this powerful combination maximises protection for pensioner households with modest assets, often invested in the family home, while remaining affordable for taxpayers. We consider it more equitable, within and across the generations, than the proposals following the Dilnot Report, which mostly benefited a small number of wealthier people.

An efficient elderly care system which provides dignity is not merely a function of money. So our forthcoming green paper will also address system-wide issues to improve the quality of care and reduce variation in practice. This will ensure the care system works better with the NHS to reduce unnecessary and unhealthy hospital stays and delayed transfers of care, and provide better quality assurance within the care sector. We will reduce loneliness and promote technological solutions to prolong independent living, and invest in dementia research. As the majority of care is informally provided, mainly by families, we will give workers a new statutory entitlement to carer's leave, as enjoyed in other countries.

Creating a sustainable elderly care system means making decisions about how the rising budget devoted to pensioners is spent, so we will target help where it is needed most. So we will look at Winter Fuel Payments, the largest benefit paid to pensioners, in this context. The benefit is paid regardless of need, giving money to wealthier pensioners when working people on lower incomes do not get similar support. So we will means-test Winter Fuel Payments, focusing assistance on the least well-off pensioners, who are most at risk of fuel poverty. The money released will be transferred directly to health and social care, helping to provide dignity and care to the most vulnerable pensioners and reassurance to their families. We will maintain all other pensioner benefits, including free bus passes, eye tests, prescriptions and TV licences, for the duration of this parliament.

OUR NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Our National Health Service is the essence of solidarity in our United Kingdom – our commitment to each other, between young and old, those who have and those who do not, and the healthy and the sick.

The Conservative Party believes in the founding principles of the NHS. First, that the service should meet the needs of everyone, no matter who they are or where they live. Second, that care should be based on clinical need, not the ability to pay. Third, that care should be free at the point of use. As the NHS enters its eighth decade, the next Conservative government will hold fast to these principles by providing the NHS with the resources it needs and holding it accountable for delivering exceptional care to patients wherever and whenever they need it.

The money and people the NHS needs

In five ways, the next Conservative government will give the NHS the resources it needs.

First, we will increase NHS spending by a minimum of £8 billion in real terms over the next five years, delivering an increase in real funding per head of the population for every year of the parliament.

Second, we will ensure that the NHS and social care system have the nurses, midwives, doctors, carers and other health professionals that it needs. We will make it a priority in our negotiations with the European Union that the 140,000 staff from EU countries can carry on making their vital contribution to our health and care system. However, we cannot continue to rely on bringing in clinical staff instead of training sufficient numbers ourselves. Last year we announced an increase in the number of students in medical training of 1,500 a year; we will continue this investment, doing something the NHS has never done before, and train the doctors our hospitals and surgeries need.

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Third, we will ensure that the NHS has the buildings and technology it needs to deliver care properly and efficiently. Since its inception, the NHS has been forced to use too many inadequate and antiquated facilities, which are even more unsuitable today. We will put this right and enable more care to be delivered closer to home, by building and upgrading primary care facilities, mental health clinics and hospitals in every part of England. Over the course of the next parliament, this will amount to the most ambitious programme of investment in buildings and technology the NHS has ever seen.

Fourth, whilst the NHS will always treat people in an emergency, no matter where they are from, we will recover the cost of medical treatment from people not resident in the UK. We will ensure that new NHS numbers are not issued to patients until their eligibility has been verified. And we will increase the Immigration Health Surcharge, to £600 for migrant workers and £450 for international students, to cover their use of the NHS. This remains competitive compared to the costs of health insurance paid by UK nationals working or studying overseas.

Fifth, we will implement the recommendations of the Accelerated Access Review to make sure that patients get new drugs and treatments faster while the NHS gets best value for money and remains at the forefront of innovation.

Holding NHS leaders to account

It is NHS England that determines how best to organise and deliver care in England, set out in its own plan to create a modern NHS – the Five Year Forward View. We support it. We will also back the implementation of the plan at a local level, through the Sustainability and Transformation Plans, providing they are clinically led and locally supported.

We will hold NHS England's leaders to account for delivering their plan to improve patient care. If the current legislative landscape is either slowing implementation or preventing clear national or local accountability, we will consult and make the necessary legislative changes. This includes the NHS's own internal market, which can fail to act in the interests of patients and creates costly bureaucracy. So we will review the operation of the internal market and, in time for the start of the 2018 financial year, we will make non-legislative changes to remove barriers to the integration of care.

We expect GPs to come together to provide greater access, more innovative services, share data and offer better facilities, while ensuring care remains personal – particularly for older and more vulnerable people – with named GPs accountable for individual patients. We will support GPs to deliver innovative services that better meet patients' needs, including phone and on-line consultations and the use of technology to triage people better so they see the right clinician more quickly. We will ensure appropriate funding for GPs to meet rising costs of indemnity in the short term while working with the profession to introduce a sustainable long-term solution.

We will introduce a new GP contract to help develop wider primary care services. We will reform the contract for hospital consultants to reflect the changed nature of hospital care over the past twenty years. We shall support more integrated working, including ensuring community pharmacies can play a stronger role to keep people healthy outside hospital within the wider health system. We will support NHS dentistry to improve coverage and reform contracts so that we pay for better outcomes, particularly for deprived children. And we will legislate to reform and rationalise the current outdated system of professional regulation of healthcare professions, based on the advice of professional regulators, and ensure there is effective registration and regulation of those performing cosmetic interventions.

We will also help the million and more NHS clinicians and support staff develop the skills they need and the NHS requires in the decades ahead. We will encourage the development of new roles and create a diverse set of potential career paths for the NHS workforce. And we will reform medical education, including helping universities and local health systems work closer together to develop the roles and skills needed to serve patients.

We want the NHS to become a better employer. We will strengthen the entitlement to flexible working to help those with caring responsibilities for young children or older relatives. We will introduce new services for employees to give them the support they need, including quicker access to mental health and musculoskeletal services. We will act to reduce bullying rates in the NHS, which are far too high. We will take vigorous and immediate action against those who abuse or attack the people who work for and make our NHS.

Exceptional standards of care, wherever, whenever

Outcomes in the NHS for most major conditions are considerably better than three, five or ten years ago. However, the founding intention for the NHS was to provide good levels of care to everyone, wherever they live. This has not yet been achieved: there remain significant variations in outcomes and quality across services and across the country. We will act to put this right.

To help the NHS provide exceptional care in all parts of England, we will make clinical outcomes more transparent so that clinicians and frontline staff can learn more easily from the best units and practices, and where there is clear evidence of poor patient outcomes, we will take rapid corrective action. We will ensure patients have the information they need to understand local services and hold them to account.

We will empower patients, giving them a greater role in their own treatment and use technology to put care at their convenience. In addition to the digital tools patients already have, we will give patients, via digital means or over the phone, the ability to book appointments, contact the 111 service, order repeat prescriptions, and access and

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update aspects of their care records, as well as control how their personal data is used. We will continue to expand the number of NHS approved apps that can help monitor care and provide support for physical and mental health conditions. We will pilot the live publication of waiting times data for A&Es and other urgent care services. We will further expand the use of personal budgets. We will also continue to take action to reduce obesity and support our National Diabetes Prevention Programme.

Our ambition is also to provide exceptional care to patients whenever they need it. That is why we want England to be the first nation in the world to provide a truly seven-day healthcare service. That ambition starts with primary care. Already 17 million people can get routine weekend or evening appointments at either their own GP surgery or one nearby, and this will expand to the whole population by 2019.

In hospitals, we will make sure patients receive proper consultant supervision every day of the week with weekend access to the key diagnostic tests needed to support urgent care. We will also ensure hospitals can discharge emergency admissions at a similar rate at weekends as on weekdays, so that when someone is medically fit to leave hospital they can, whichever day of the week it is.

We will retain the 95 per cent A&E target and the 18-week elective care standard so that those needing care receive it in a timely fashion.

We will continue to help the NHS on its journey to being the safest healthcare system in the world. We will extend the scope of the CQC to cover the health-related services commissioned by local authorities. We will legislate for an independent healthcare safety investigations body in the NHS. We will require the NHS to continue to reduce infant and maternal deaths, which remain too high.

Our commitment to consistent high quality care for everyone applies to all conditions. We will set new standards in some priority areas and also improve our response to historically underfunded and poorly understood disease groups.

In cancer services, we will deliver the new promise to give patients a definitive diagnosis within 28 days by 2020, while expanded screening and a major radiotherapy equipment upgrade will help ensure many more people survive cancer.

We will continue to rectify the injustice suffered by those with mental health problems, by ensuring that they get the care and support they deserve. So we will make sure there is more support in every part of the country by recruiting up to 10,000 more mental health professionals. We shall require all our medical staff to have a deeper understanding of mental health and all trainees will get a chance to experience working in mental health disciplines; we shall ensure medical exams better reflect the importance of this area. And

we will improve the co-ordination of mental health services with other local services, including police forces and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

We have a specific task to improve standards of care for those with learning disabilities and autism. We will work to reduce stigma and discrimination and implement in full the Transforming Care Programme.

We will improve the care we give people at the end of life. We will fulfil the commitment we made that every person should receive attentive, high quality, compassionate care, so that their pain is eased, their spiritual needs met and their wishes for their closing weeks, days and hours respected. We will ensure all families who lose a baby are given the bereavement support they need, including a new entitlement to child bereavement leave.

HOMES FOR ALL

We have not built enough homes in this country for generations, and buying or renting a home has become increasingly unaffordable. If we do not put this right, we will be unable to extend the promise of a decent home, let alone home ownership, to the millions who deserve it.

We will fix the dysfunctional housing market so that housing is more affordable and people have the security they need to plan for the future. The key to this is to build enough homes to meet demand. That will slow the rise in housing costs so more ordinary, working families can afford to buy a home and bring the cost of renting down. And it will ensure that more private capital is invested in more productive investment, helping the economy to grow faster and more securely in future years.

We will meet our 2015 commitment to deliver a million homes by the end of 2020 and we will deliver half a million more by the end of 2022. We will deliver the reforms proposed in our Housing White Paper to free up more land for new homes in the right places, speed up build-out by encouraging modern methods of construction and give councils powers to intervene where developers do not act on their planning permissions; and we will diversify who builds homes in this country.

More homes will not mean poor quality homes. For too long, careless developers, high land costs and poor planning have conspired to produce housing developments that do not enhance the lives of those living there. We have not provided the infrastructure, parks, quality of space and design that turns housing into community and makes communities prosperous and sustainable. The result is felt by many ordinary, working families. Too often, those renting or buying a home on a modest income have to tolerate

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substandard developments -some only a few years old -and are denied a decent place in which to live, where they can put down roots and raise children. For a country boasting the finest architects and planners in the world, this is unacceptable.

We will build better houses, to match the quality of those we have inherited from previous generations. That means supporting high-quality, high-density housing like mansion blocks, mews houses and terraced streets. It means maintaining the existing strong protections on designated land like the Green Belt, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It means not just concentrating development in the south-east but rebalancing housing growth across the country, in line with our modern industrial strategy. It means government building 160,000 houses on its own land. It means supporting specialist housing where it is needed, like multigenerational homes and housing for older people, including by helping housing associations increase their specialist housing stock.

We will never achieve the numbers of new houses we require without the active participation of social and municipal housing providers. This must not be done at the expense of high standards, however: councils have been amongst the worst offenders in failing to build sustainable, integrated communities. In some instances, they have built for political gain rather than for social purpose. So we will help councils to build, but only those councils who will build high-quality, sustainable and integrated communities. We will enter into new Council Housing Deals with ambitious, pro-development, local authorities to help them build more social housing. We will work with them to improve their capability and capacity to develop more good homes, as well as providing them with significant low-cost capital funding. In doing so, we will build new fixed-term social houses, which will be sold privately after ten to fifteen years with an automatic Right to Buy for tenants, the proceeds of which will be recycled into further homes. We will reform Compulsory Purchase Orders to make them easier and less expensive for councils to use and to make it easier to determine the true market value of sites.

We will also give greater flexibility to housing associations to increase their housing stock, building on their considerable track record in recent years. And we will work with private and public sector house builders to capture the increase in land value created when they build to reinvest in local infrastructure, essential services and further housing, making it both easier and more certain that public sector landowners, and communities themselves, benefit from the increase in land value from urban regeneration and development. And we will continue our £2.5 billion flood defence programme that will put in place protection for 300,000 existing homes by 2021.

These ambitious policies will mean more and better homes, welcomed by existing communities because they add, rather than subtract, from what is already there. This is the sustainable development we need to see happen in every village, town and city

across our country. These policies will take time, and meanwhile we will continue to support those struggling to buy or rent a home, including those living in a home owned by a housing association.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Britain should be the best country in the world for children. We want to reduce levels of child poverty, and have high ambitions for the quality of childcare, children's health and support for vulnerable children for whom the state acts as a parent.

High-quality childcare

We know high-quality childcare is important not just to working parents but even more so to a child's development and happiness. That is why a Conservative government will introduce, this year, thirty hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds for working parents who find it difficult to manage the costs of childcare. We will go further. The next Conservative government will assess what more is needed, including looking at the best ways that childcare is provided elsewhere in Europe and the world. As a sign of our commitment, we will immediately institute a capital fund to help primary schools develop nurseries where they currently do not have the facilities to provide one. We will introduce a presumption that all new primary schools should include a nursery. And we will continue to support maintained nurseries and allow them to take on academy freedoms, supporting them to grow independently or as part of a multi-academy trust.

Children's and young people's health

We believe government has a role to play in helping young people get the best possible start in life. We are seeing progress: smoking rates are now lower than France or Germany, drinking rates have fallen below the European average and teenage pregnancies are at record lows. We will continue to take action to reduce childhood obesity. We will promote efforts to reduce unhealthy ingredients and provide clearer food information for consumers, as our decision to leave the European Union will give us greater flexibility over the presentation of information on packaged food. We shall continue to support school sport, delivering on our commitment to double support for sports in primary schools.

We understand the massively increased pressures on young people's mental health. We will take focused action to provide the support needed by children and young people. Half of all mental health conditions become established in people before the age of fourteen. So we will ensure better access to care for children and young people. A Conservative government will publish a green paper on young people's mental health before the end of this year. We will introduce mental health first aid training for teachers in every primary and secondary school by the end of the parliament and ensure that every school has a

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single point of contact with mental health services. Every child will learn about mental wellbeing and the mental health risks of internet harms in the curriculum. And we will reform Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services so that children with serious conditions are seen within an appropriate timeframe and no child has to leave their local area and their family to receive normal treatment.

Protecting vulnerable children and families

We have made significant progress in helping vulnerable children and families over the past seven years. Our investments in the social work profession and in successful, innovative programmes have given tens of thousands of vulnerable families the co-ordinated support they need.

Placing a child under the oversight of social services and taking a child into care are amongst the most serious duties the state may discharge. We will demand all local authorities be commissioners of the highest-quality family support and child protection services, removing these responsibilities from the weakest councils and placing them in trust. We will ensure that councils provide consistency of care and cannot relocate vulnerable children far from their home when it is not in their best interests to do so. We will review support for Children in Need to understand why their outcomes are so poor and what more support they might require, in and out of school.

Finally, we shall explore ways to improve the family justice system. The family courts need to do more to support families, valuing the roles of mothers and fathers, while ensuring parents face up to their responsibilities.

5. PROSPERITY AND SECURITY IN A DIGITAL AGE

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- The world's most dynamic digital economy, giving digital businesses access to the investment, skills and talent they need to succeed.
- Protections for people's data online, backed by a new data protection law.
- Safety for children online, and new rights to require social media companies to delete information about young people as they turn eighteen.
- Digital government and public services, using data and digital technology to transform school choice, local services and issues like planning and social care.
- New rules for the digital economy, underpinned by domestic regulation and international partnership.
- Security online, with unprecedented investment in cyber security and stronger cyber standards for government and public services.

The opportunities and threats arising from the advance of digital technology pose significant practical and philosophical challenges to people, communities and governments around the world. These new technologies provide us with new and faster ways to communicate, learn, travel, have fun and do business. They accelerate the pace of change – ushering in new norms in the space of years rather than decades; challenging our laws and regulations to keep pace.

The UK has always been at the forefront of such changes, from the earliest days of computing to the development of the World Wide Web. Today, we continue that tradition with our world-leading digital economy, boasting particular expertise in artificial intelligence, cyber security, gaming, FinTech, GovTech, and virtual reality. We are optimistic about the opportunities on offer in the digital age, but we understand these opportunities come with new challenges and threats – to our security, privacy, emotional wellbeing, mental health and the safety of our children. A Conservative government will respond to these challenges, to assure the British people of security and fairness in the new digital age, and to strengthen the UK's position as one of the world's leading digital economies.

A DIGITAL CHARTER

For hundreds of years, the United Kingdom has determined the rules and formed the environment where new ideas and new technologies prosper – from financial markets to the steam train to human embryology and the code of life itself. Our wealth and security as a nation is founded on our ability to shape the future not just for ourselves but for the world. Now we must do it again, to create the rules-based framework in which the new technologies can create prosperity and growth.

A Conservative government will develop a digital charter, working with industry and charities to establish a new framework that balances freedom with protection for users, and offers opportunities alongside obligations for businesses and platforms. This charter has two fundamental aims: that we will make Britain the best place to start and run a digital business; and that we will make Britain the safest place in the world to be online.

The best place for digital business

Britain's future prosperity will be built on our technical capability and creative flair. Through our modern industrial strategy and digital strategy, we will help digital companies at every stage of their growth. We will help innovators and startups, by

encouraging early stage investment and considering further incentives under our world-leading Enterprise Investment Scheme and Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme. We will help digital businesses to scale up and grow, with an ambition for many more to list here in the UK, and open new offices of the British Business Bank in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newport, specialising in the local sector. As we set out in chapter one, we will ensure digital businesses have access to the best talent from overseas to compete with anywhere in the world. This will be complemented by at least one new institute of technology in the UK, dedicated to world-leading digital skills and developed and run in partnership with the tech industry. When we leave the European Union, we will fund the British Business Bank with the repatriated funds from the European Investment Fund.

We will ensure there is a sustainable business model for high-quality media online, to create a level playing field for our media and creative industries. We will help provide the skills and digital infrastructure that creative companies need and will seek to build upon the favourable tax arrangements that have helped them, including the highly successful creative industries tax credits scheme. We will ensure there is a robust system for protection of intellectual property when the UK has left the EU, with strong protections against infringement.

We will make doing business online easier for companies and consumers. We will give businesses the right to insist on a digital signature and the right to digital cancellation of contracts. We will oblige all digital companies to provide digital receipts, clearer terms and conditions when selling goods and services online and support new digital proofs of identification. We will give consumers the same protections in online markets as they have on the high street. For broadband customers, we will make broadband switching easier and pricing more transparent.

We will ensure that consumers and businesses have access to the digital infrastructure they need to succeed. By the end of this year, 19 out of 20 premises will have access to superfast broadband and our Universal Service Obligation will ensure that by 2020 every home and every business in Britain has access to high speed broadband. We will work to provide gigaspeed connectivity to as many businesses and homes as possible. We will introduce a full fibre connection voucher for companies across the country by 2018 and by 2022 we will have major fibre spines in over a hundred towns and cities, with ten million premises connected to full fibre and a clear path to national coverage over the next decade.

We have similar ambitions for mobile phone coverage. By 2022 we will extend mobile coverage further to 95 per cent geographic coverage of the UK. By the same date, all major roads and main line trains will enjoy full and uninterrupted mobile phone signal, alongside guaranteed WiFi internet service on all such trains. We will continue to release

more spectrum from public sector use to allow greater private sector access and begin the roll-out of a new 5G network, providing gigaspeed connection to your smart phone. We plan to have the majority of the population covered by a 5G signal by 2027.

The safest place to be online

In harnessing the digital revolution, we must take steps to protect the vulnerable and give people confidence to use the internet without fear of abuse, criminality or exposure to horrific content. Our starting point is that online rules should reflect those that govern our lives offline. It should be as unacceptable to bully online as it is in the playground, as difficult to groom a young child on the internet as it is in a community, as hard for children to access violent and degrading pornography online as it is in the high street, and as difficult to commit a crime digitally as it is physically.

Where technology can find a solution, we will pursue it. We will work with industry to introduce new protections for minors, from images of pornography, violence, and other age-inappropriate content not just on social media but in app stores and content sites as well. We will put a responsibility on industry not to direct users – even unintentionally – to hate speech, pornography, or other sources of harm. We will make clear the responsibility of platforms to enable the reporting of inappropriate, bullying, harmful or illegal content, with take-down on a comply-or-explain basis.

We will continue to push the internet companies to deliver on their commitments to develop technical tools to identify and remove terrorist propaganda, to help smaller companies build their capabilities and to provide support for civil society organisations to promote alternative and counter-narratives. In addition, we do not believe that there should be a safe space for terrorists to be able to communicate online and will work to prevent them from having this capability.

We will educate today's young people in the harms of the internet and how best to combat them, introducing comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education in all primary and secondary schools to ensure that children learn about the risks of the internet, including cyberbullying and online grooming.

Where we believe people need more protections to keep them safe, we will act to protect them. We will give people new rights to ensure they are in control of their own data, including the ability to require major social media platforms to delete information held about them at the age of 18, the ability to access and export personal data, and an expectation that personal data held should be stored in a secure way. To create a sound ethical framework for how data is used, we will institute an expert Data Use and Ethics Commission to advise regulators and parliament on the nature of data use and how best to prevent its abuse. The Commission will help us to develop the principles and rules that will give people confidence that their data is being handled properly. Alongside

this commission, we will bring forward a new data protection law, fit for our new data age, to ensure the very best standards for the safe, flexible and dynamic use of data and enshrining our global leadership in the ethical and proportionate regulation of data. We will put the National Data Guardian for Health and Social Care on a statutory footing to ensure data security standards are properly enforced.

We will continue with our £1.9 billion investment in cyber security and build on the successful establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre through our world-leading cyber security strategy. We will make sure that our public services, businesses, charities and individual users are protected from cyber risks. We will further strengthen cyber security standards for government and public services, requiring all public services to follow the most up to date cyber security techniques appropriate.

A free media

At a time when the internet is changing the way people obtain their news, we also need to take steps to protect the reliability and objectivity of information that is essential to our democracy and a free and independent press. We will ensure content creators are appropriately rewarded for the content they make available online. We will be consistent in our approach to regulation of online and offline media. Given the comprehensive nature of the first stage of the Leveson Inquiry and given the lengthy investigations by the police and Crown Prosecution Service into alleged wrongdoing, we will not proceed with the second stage of the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press. We will repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2014, which, if enacted, would force media organisations to become members of a flawed regulatory system or risk having to pay the legal costs of both sides in libel and privacy cases, even if they win.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES

We believe government should not only be exceptional in dealing digitally with the people it serves but should also at the forefront of using digital technology in all its systems so that it can deliver better public services.

We will therefore create a new presumption of digital government services by default and an expectation that all government services are fully accessible online, with assisted digital support available for all public sector websites. We will publish far more information about public services online, including relevant information about local issues and public transport so that every person can find out up to date information about roadworks, planning applications and bus routes online, without the hassle and

delay that currently exists. We will create new 'schools maps' to help parents choose the school that is right for their child, giving them key information about quality of teaching, attainment and the curriculum of local schools as they choose their school preferences to support their decisions.

We will publish operational performance data of all public-facing services for open comparison as a matter of course – helping the public to hold their local services to account, or choose other better services if they prefer. In doing so, central and local government will be required to release information regularly and in an open format, and data will be aggregated and anonymised where it is important to do so. We will incubate more digital services within government and introduce digital transformation fellowships, so that hundreds of leaders from the world of tech can come into government to help deliver better public services. We will continue the drive for open data, maintaining our position as the world leader.

If we are to make full use of this opportunity, we must use common platforms across government and the wider public sector. That must start with the way we identify ourselves online, so that people have one single, common and safe way of verifying themselves to all parts of government. That is why we shall roll out Verify, so that people can identify themselves on all government online services by 2020, using their own secure data that is not held by government. We will also make this platform more widely available, so that people can safely verify their identity to access non-government services such as banking. We will set out a strategy to rationalise the use of personal data within government, reducing data duplication across all systems, so that we automatically comply with the 'Once-Only' principle in central government services by 2022 and wider public services by 2025.

We also want to use digital innovation to help tackle the great challenge of an ageing population, in conjunction with our social care reforms set out in chapter four. We will support new providers seeking to use digital technology to monitor long-term conditions better, deploy carers to patients or support better domiciliary care away from hospitals.

Digital infrastructure

Digital technology will also transform the management of our national infrastructure. We are leading the world in preparing for autonomous vehicles and will press ahead with our plans to use digital technology to improve our railways, so that our roads and tracks can carry more people, faster, more safely and more efficiently. Smart grids will make the most efficient use of our electricity infrastructure and electric vehicles, and we will use technology to manage our airspace better to reduce noise pollution and improve capacity. We will step up our programme of support for businesses developing these new technologies, creating a better environment for them to be tested in the UK.

Digital land

And we will use digital technology to release massive value from our land that currently is simply not realised, introducing greater specialisation in the property development industry and far greater transparency for buyers. To make this happen, we will combine the relevant parts of HM Land Registry, Ordnance Survey, the Valuation Office Agency, the Hydrographic Office and Geological Survey to create a comprehensive geospatial data body within government, the largest repository of open land data in the world. This new body will set the standards to digitise the planning process and help create the most comprehensive digital map of Britain to date. In doing so, it will support a vibrant and innovative digital economy, ranging from innovative tools to help people and developers build to virtual mapping of Britain for use in video games and virtual reality.

A FRAMEWORK FOR DATA AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Some people say that it is not for government to regulate when it comes to technology and the internet. We disagree. While we cannot create this framework alone, it is for government, not private companies, to protect the security of people and ensure the fairness of the rules by which people and businesses abide. Nor do we agree that the risks of such an approach outweigh the potential benefits. It is in the interests of stable markets that consumers are protected from abusive behaviour, that money is able to flow freely and securely, and that competition between businesses takes place on a level playing field. It is in no-one's interest for the foundations of strong societies and stable democracies – the rule of law, privacy and security – to be undermined.

So we will establish a regulatory framework in law to underpin our digital charter and to ensure that digital companies, social media platforms and content providers abide by these principles. We will introduce a sanctions regime to ensure compliance, giving regulators the ability to fine or prosecute those companies that fail in their legal duties, and to order the removal of content where it clearly breaches UK law. We will also create a power in law for government to introduce an industry-wide levy from social media companies and communication service providers to support awareness and preventative activity to counter internet harms, just as is already the case with the gambling industry.

Just as we led the world in regulating embryology thirty years ago, we know that if we create the right system of governance for the digital economy and use of data, we will attract the right businesses who want to become the global centre for data use and research.

An international settlement

These are questions with which every nation is grappling. The internet is a global network and it is only by concerted global action that we can make true progress.

We believe that the United Kingdom can lead the world in providing answers. So we will open discussions with the leading tech companies and other like-minded democracies about the global rules of the digital economy, to develop an international legal framework that we have for so long benefited from in other areas like banking and trade. We recognise the complexity of this task and that this will be the beginning of a process, but it is a task which we believe is necessary and which we intend to lead.

By doing these things – a digital charter, a framework for data ethics, and a new international agreement – we will put our great country at the head of this new revolution; we will choose how technology forms our future; and we will demonstrate, even in the face of unprecedented change, the good that government can do.

CONCLUSION

This is our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future. This is our vision of a nation united, of shared opportunity, of safe, vibrant and sustainable communities and of a Great Meritocracy, where everyone, in every part of our country, is given the chance to go wherever their talents will take them. In this period of profound national change, we will only achieve our ambitions if we have the strong and stable leadership our national interest demands. With Theresa May and her team, we will secure the best possible deal with the European Union and chart a course to a new global future. Now is the time that we must show, once again, our strength as a nation and the character of our united people. We shall succeed, if we go forward, together.

