European Manifesto 2014

Jim Nicholson 1
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Introduction by

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party

"Jim Nicholson is an exceptional MEP. Very few can match his skills, experience and commitment."

It is my honour to present the Ulster Unionist Party European Manifesto for 2014 and ask for your support for Jim Nicholson on the 22nd of May.

Jim Nicholson is an exceptional MEP. Very few can match his skills, experience and commitment. As the EU emerges from the Eurozone crisis, only to enter a period of uncertainty over the UK’s future relationship with Europe, those qualities are more important than ever. Simply put, this will be the most significant European election since Northern Ireland voted to remain in the then European Economic Community in 1975.

Jim Nicholson knows Brussels, but more importantly, Brussels knows Jim Nicholson, respects his track record of achievement, and listens to his opinions, whether it is over reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, ending roaming charges for mobile phones, or opposing the funding of the so-called Peace Centre at the Maze. Jim’s track record of attendance, voting and influencing makes him among the most impressive of all British and Irish MEPs.

The EU has come a long way from the original concept of a single market. Yes, some developments have been for the better. For example, increased co-operation across borders has hampered the activity of terrorists and criminals, whilst protecting the movement of law-abiding citizens. However, there have been other times it has wrongly tried to interfere with domestic UK policies.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that continued membership of the European Union has much to offer, but only after major reform. That is why we promote a policy based on the “3 Rs” of Review, Renegotiation and Referendum. The Review of what the EU does is already underway and you can read more about this:


When the Review is over, it will be down to people like Jim Nicholson to guide the UK Government in Renegotiating the relationship. Jim gets your concerns. He wants the EU to do more for the Northern Ireland economy. He wants a return to the original concept of a single trading market. He is taking a stand against nonsensical bureaucracy.

Then, it is time for you to make the ultimate decision. The Ulster Unionist Party supports a Referendum.

On Thursday the 22nd May, I ask for your “No 1” vote for Jim Nicholson, so he can continue to do what’s right for Northern Ireland in Europe.

Mike Nesbitt
It is a huge privilege to represent and serve the people of Northern Ireland in the European Parliament. I have consistently sought to secure the best deal for Northern Ireland since I was first elected in 1989.

You don’t have to be a farmer or a fisherman or a business owner to be affected by the EU. The decisions made in Brussels and Strasbourg impact us day and daily, so it is essential that local concerns are vigorously championed.

I believe in maximising the benefits of European Union membership for Northern Ireland, but as a Euro-realist I know the case for reform is clear.

My vision is a European Union that focuses on common sense regulation rather than red tape, promotes business rather than bureaucracy, and reduces expenditure rather than spending to excess – a reformed EU that works in your best interests.

That is why I believe in the “3 Rs” of Review, Renegotiation and then a Referendum for you to decide on a new pathway to a modern European Union. You deserve a full and frank discussion on the nature of our relationship with the EU, and a full assessment of the costs and benefits of a potential exit.

In the crucial years ahead, I want to continue to refocus the EU on what matters to you. My knowledge, experience and influence ensure that I am in the best position to protect and advance Northern Ireland’s interests in the European Parliament.

On Thursday 22nd May I am asking for your vote because when it comes to the EU, experience counts.

Thank you.

Jim Nicholson

“The decisions made in Brussels and Strasbourg affect us day and daily, so it is essential that local concerns are vigorously championed.”
Doing what’s right for Northern Ireland
A record of delivery in the EU

Jim Nicholson is the only current local MEP to deliver €2 billion of PEACE Funds for projects across all communities. Against the odds he has secured a PEACE IV Programme for Northern Ireland.

- Argued the case for the European Commission and UK Government to retain 100% coverage of assisted area status for Northern Ireland to allow maximum flexibility for the Executive to attract and support investment.

- Worked jointly with Regional Development Minister Danny Kennedy MLA to increase EU support for infrastructure projects, such as: £16 million to accelerate the replacement of Goldlink and Metro service vehicles; over £12 million for the A2 upgrade in East Antrim; £15 million for the A8 project; and a further £2.5 million for upgrading Portadown railway station.

- Helped to end roaming charges in Northern Ireland by 2015.

- Challenged overzealous EU legislation that threatened local jobs, including amending proposals that put at risk production lines operated in Northern Ireland by international business.

- Urged European officials to ensure continued access for flights from Belfast to London Heathrow, a vital route for local businesses and households.

- Defended the local agricultural industry as Northern Ireland’s most senior member of the Agriculture Committee.

- Steered the EU Milk Package through the Parliament, defending the interests of Northern Ireland’s dairy farmers by ensuring they would have increased power in the supply chain after the abolition of milk quotas in 2015.

- Produced an accessible funding guide to link businesses, researchers and NGOs to EU funding opportunities.

Jim Nicholson’s top priority has always been to do what’s right for Northern Ireland in the European Parliament. During his five terms as an MEP, Jim Nicholson has cultivated an unrivalled knowledge of how the European Union works, and how to make it work for you. His achievements over the last five years are a testament to his reputation as Northern Ireland’s most experienced representative in the EU.
Ensured small and micro businesses would have greater access to the EU’s €80 billion Horizon 2020 Programme by helping to simplify and streamline the application process.

Represented Northern Ireland on the Special Committee on Organised Crime and worked to increase the level of cooperation between the PSNI and other law enforcement agencies in the EU.

Campaigned successfully against using EU money to fund the proposed Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze.

**A vital link to the European Union**

Opened doors for Northern Ireland in Brussels with Commissioners, senior MEPs and officials to ensure local views are heard at the centre of EU decision-making.

Hosted the visit of the EU’s Agriculture Commissioner, Dacian Cioloş to Northern Ireland at a crucial point during the reform of Common Agricultural Policy.

Facilitated direct engagement between the dairy industry and the EU Competition Commissioner, Joaquín Almunia.

Welcomed the EU’s Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva to Belfast to meet with over 50 local charities and organisations involved in crucial international development and humanitarian aid work.

Secured the visits of influential MEPs to Northern Ireland, including the chair of the Internal Market Committee Malcolm Harbour, and the chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee Paolo De Castro.

Welcoming a group of Northern Ireland visitors to the European Parliament in Brussels
The European Union in 2014 is very different to the Common Market we agreed to join. 40 years on, the EU is too often seen to act in an over-bearing and unnecessarily intrusive manner.

Continuing in the same direction of travel is simply not an option. The Ulster Unionist Party is convinced that reform of the EU must take place following this election.

The EU shouldn’t fear reform, it should welcome the chance to refocus on its original objectives. This is why the Ulster Unionist Party supports the “3 Rs” of Review, Renegotiation and then a Referendum.

**Review**

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union has become confused, convoluted and cumbersome. We welcome the UK Government’s Balance of Competences Review which is necessary to assess the nature of this relationship, and to create a coherent strategy for the scrutiny and integration of EU policies into national legislation.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that review should also encompass the exorbitant costs of the EU institutions. For instance, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee have cost the taxpayer €89 million and €130 million each annually. The European Parliament’s monthly ‘travelling circus’ to Strasbourg costs an estimated €180 million per year, a completely unacceptable waste of money.

**Renegotiation**

Aspects of the EU are incredibly valuable to our economy, but we cannot deny that the EU has overburdened businesses with red tape and intruded on our daily lives by undermining local decision-making.

**Referendum**

The outcome of the renegotiation must then be put to you in a referendum no later than the Autumn of 2017. A referendum is the only way for the EU to restore the public trust and confidence it currently lacks.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes renegotiation is imperative following review if we are to re-establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the European Union. Not all 28 countries of the EU enjoy membership on the same terms. The UK’s current differentiated status sets a precedent which we must build upon and strengthen.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes you deserve a full assessment of the costs and benefits of continued membership or withdrawal. The public will be faced with a clear choice, either remain in the reformed EU or exit – ultimately it will be for you to decide.
Doing what’s right for Northern Ireland

Energising our economy

Key priorities:

- Establish a single, dedicated Department of the Economy for Northern Ireland
- Reduce the regulatory burden on businesses and ensure legislation suits the needs of our many small enterprises
- Create links with emerging economies
- Increase European Investment Bank funding
- Engage local businesses in European law making
- Enhance the sustainability of our energy market

The last five years have been a turbulent period for the European Union, not least as a result of the challenges emerging from the Eurozone crisis. The UK was right to stay out of the European single currency, and we must retain the pound and maintain our fiscal sovereignty.

Northern Ireland's 40 plus years of membership of the European Union has nevertheless had a phenomenal impact on our economy. At the heart of the Union are 500 million customers in the world's largest single market. Membership of this market drives growth and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

Our local economy

The Ulster Unionist Party believes the creation of a single streamlined Department of the Economy is essential if we are to capitalise on opportunities for promoting growth and prosperity in the EU. The Northern Ireland drawdown to date of competitive funds has been derisory by any measure. The proposed Department must target European funds as aggressively as any other region of the EU.

This Department would make provision for crucial pillars of our local economy, namely exports and tourism. We must ensure that the European Union does not act as a protectionist bloc. Growing our private sector is the only way to make our people wealthier. Exports to the EU are key to achieving this goal.
We want to see an outward-looking Europe that fosters greater economic links with emerging markets and opens up more opportunities for our local businesses. As the only local MEP directly involved in the trade talks between the EU and the USA, Jim Nicholson will have a unique opportunity to protect our regional interests.

We must avail of EU support to develop major tourism infrastructure. The Ulster Unionist Party considers it a priority to reduce this competitive disadvantage experienced by our tourism industry. For instance domestically, high rates of Air Passenger Duty have seen passengers voting with their feet, increasingly using airports in the Republic of Ireland as a more cost effective alternative. The Ulster Unionist Party will continue to campaign to reduce the rate of Air Passenger Duty on all flights from Northern Ireland to address this competitive disadvantage.

**Standing up for small and micro businesses**

For many small and micro businesses, the European Union has become synonymous with bureaucracy, red tape and additional burden. The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to ensuring that all forthcoming legislation suits the needs of our local businesses, and that the EU realises the completion of the Single Market.

We support the European Commission’s REFIT initiative, designed to simplify EU laws and reduce regulatory burdens, we believe the logic of this initiative should be adopted when implementing all EU legislation at the local level.

![Discussing the EU-US trade negotiations with Deputy US Trade Representative Miriam Sapiro](image1)

The UK was right to stay out of the European single currency and we must retain the pound and maintain our fiscal sovereignty

![Meeting the Bradshaw family, owners of Drumhoney Holiday Park, Lisnarick with Tom Elliott MLA](image2)

**A stable and sustainable energy market**

High energy costs are having a hugely detrimental impact on businesses and domestic consumers in Northern Ireland. Given our reliance on imported sources of energy, the Ulster Unionist Party supports greater interconnection to Europe, the development of the smart grid system, and an extension of natural gas throughout Northern Ireland.
We advocate a cautious approach to the issues of underground energy storage and hydraulic fracturing, more commonly known as fracking, until scientific evidence of the environmental and human health impact has been confirmed.

We need to increase our energy security and mitigate against the worst effects of climate change, but binding EU Directives must not make our industry less competitive or force our older and vulnerable people to decide between heating their homes or eating. We have concerns about the unintended consequences of policies relating to renewables which could impact upon health and well-being, damage tourism or plunge people into fuel poverty.

A long-term, joined up strategic approach to energy, coupled with a strategic land-use policy, is needed to deliver energy security and affordability and ensure there is the capacity to meet the future needs of local households and businesses.
Doing what’s right for Northern Ireland
Supporting our rural and coastal economies in a sustainable environment

Key priorities:
• Defend the interests of local producers during international trade negotiations
• Ensure a fair food chain that is free from criminality
• Support research, innovation and collaboration in the agri-food industry
• Safeguard local interests in the mid-term reviews of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy
• Address fishing industry concerns regarding compliance with landing obligations, supervision of vessels and enforcement difficulties with CFP reform
• Fight for the reintroduction of Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme
• Ensure the new Clean Air package enhances the NI Air Order 1981
• Deliver a solution to the issue of poultry litter

As Northern Ireland’s most senior and influential member of the Agriculture and Environment Committees Jim Nicholson MEP has been a strong and respected voice in the EU, speaking up for local needs at the highest level.

Agriculture and Rural Development
Alongside increasingly difficult climatic conditions, our rural economy and coastal economies have faced major upheaval in the wake of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). These reforms are worth over £2 billion to Northern Ireland across the next seven years and it is extremely important for our farmers, our fishermen, our environment and you as consumers and businesses owners, that implementation is efficient and effective.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development must not ‘gold plate’ the CAP legislation as they interpret and transpose the EU obligations into the law of the land. Restrictive legislation that ties farmers up in red tape is not a fertile environment for growing a prosperous rural economy.

The Rural Development allocation secured by the UK Government is but a fraction of the available budget. It is a great shame that we do not have the requisite funding to effectively invest in two of our greatest assets: our rural community and our natural environment. Notwithstanding the size of Rural Development allocation farmers and communities
must be offered quality advice and information to ensure that new schemes have maximum environmental and societal benefit.

Moreover, the regrettable court case between Ministers from the DUP and Sinn Fein regarding the transfer of funds from Pillar I to Pillar II has created considerable uncertainty regarding funding for the Rural Development Programme. Clarity is urgently needed if we are to make the most of the allocation we have been apportioned.

Agri-food is a booming industry. Locally the Agri-Food Strategy Board’s Going for Growth Action Plan contains recommendations designed to maximise the potential of the industry and aims to increase sales by 60% to £7 billion and employment by 15% to over 115,000 by 2020. The Ulster Unionist Party believes that the agri-food industry cannot sustain such tremendous growth unless we protect the integrity of the food chain. A fair food chain free from corruption is required to restore consumer confidence after the horsemeat scandal, and support the tremendous trajectory of the agri-food industry.

Northern Ireland lags behind other regions of the EU with regard to the designation of PDO / PGI products. The Comber potato and Lough Neagh eels are just two examples of local excellence recognised by the EU. Nevertheless, this is simply not representative of the breadth and depth of our world-class agri-food industry, and Jim Nicholson will lead the campaign for further recognition.

While a mid-term review of the CAP will be important to assess the viability and effectiveness of the 2014 reform, significant attention must be paid to the review and revision of the legislation on animal welfare and cloning. Jim Nicholson is a prominent member of the Animal Welfare Intergroup in the European Parliament, and will continue to demand effective measures to tackle animal cruelty and wildlife crime. The Veterinary Medicines Directive will also be extremely important as antimicrobial resistance associated with poor animal welfare is amongst the biggest threats to our farming community and our food chain.

The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to delivering a science-based review and proportionate and enforceable legislative action. It is extremely important that we do not repeat the mistakes of the Welfare of Laying Hens Directive or Partial Ban on Sow Stalls where UK farmers were left at a competitive disadvantage when compared to other farmers across the EU.

As the European Parliament’s chief negotiator on the Dairy Package Jim Nicholson will be at the forefront of the EU response to the ending of milk quotas. The Ulster Unionist Party will continue to fight against unfair and uncompetitive over-quota policies throughout the EU, ensuring local industry receives all the assistance it needs during the transition.

**Fisheries**

The CFP’s micromanagement and overzealous rules have been disastrous for our fisheries industry and coastal communities. Whilst elements of the reformed CFP such as multiannual finance and meaningful regionalisation should aid with long-term planning, support will be required for fishermen and seafood processors to adapt to the practical challenges within the package.

As on-going discussions take place on complicated landing obligations of the reformed CFP, Jim Nicholson has been a vital link between our fishermen and the European officials setting the rules. At Jim Nicholson’s invitation, Bernhard Friess, the relevant EU official, came to Northern Ireland for a successful awareness raising session with our inland and coastal fishermen.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports proper implementation of the landing obligations which work in the interests of the industry while also safeguarding healthy fish stocks.

**International Trade Opportunities**

Bilateral trade negotiations with the EU have become increasingly important as the World Trade Organisation struggles to manage multilateral trade agreements.

Jim Nicholson has been appointed to lead the Agriculture Committee’s response to the on-going trade negotiations between the EU and the USA. In the EU we have the highest animal welfare, food safety and production standards. These should not be diluted nor should they put our producers at a competitive disadvantage on the global market. In Northern Ireland we produce and process some of the world’s best food, Jim Nicholson is the only local MEP whose voice will be listened to at this international negotiating table.
Recurring environmental concerns

We depend on our natural environment. Life’s essentials stem from our environment, it is integral to our wellbeing and wealth but our current use of the environment is not sustainable. EU legislation has long focused on the introduction of common environmental standards relating to water, soil, chemicals, biodiversity, waste, land use, the marine environment and air pollution. The sheer volume of environmental legislation is overwhelming with even our local Departments falling foul of their obligations. The Ulster Unionist Party considers that streamlining this enormous body of complex legislation would not only reduce the unnecessary costs on households and businesses but would also lead to more effective environmental legislation.

The new Clean Air Package provides an opportunity to address escalating carbon emissions levels. The unintended consequences of rigid environmental targets have caused significant damage to business and environmental interests. Jim Nicholson will argue for flexibility to establish the most appropriate way of reducing carbon emissions locally.

The Ulster Unionist Party has two specific environmental problems to which it is seeking resolution. Firstly, the reintroduction of the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme and secondly, the improvement of water quality particularly in relation to the poultry litter issue. Failure to find a timely, acceptable and workable solution threatens the environment, the development of the agri-food sector, and leaves Northern Ireland vulnerable to substantial penalties.

Working in partnership

The Northern Ireland Environmental Agency must continue to develop good working relationships with businesses, farms and non-governmental organisations. Advice and assistance must come before policing and penalties.

The designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest is causing concern to the local agricultural industry. The impact of this designation, which has its roots in EU legislation, is significant and the Ulster Unionist Party believes that consultation with landowners must be improved and the designation system reviewed.
Northern Ireland has undoubtedly benefitted from the drawdown of EU funding over the years, whether it be monies to promote reconciliation in our society or improving our transport infrastructure.

Jim Nicholson MEP has been at the forefront of negotiating and securing funding from the PEACE Programme, which has delivered approximately €2 billion since 1994. His level of experience and expertise will ensure that the upcoming PEACE IV funding will be properly focused for the long-term benefit of communities across Northern Ireland.

The years ahead will be crucial in determining how well Northern Ireland performs in maximising funding opportunities. The Ulster Unionist Party believes that the Northern Ireland Executive must raise its level of ambition in terms of the drawdown of competitive funding for the 2014-2020 period, which has lagged significantly behind our close neighbours.

Jim Nicholson has produced a funding guide giving local businesses and organisations practical advice into the overly-bureaucratic world of EU funding applications, considerably simplifying the process to improve access to EU funding.

**Facilitating the effective use of EU funds**

The allocation of PEACE III funds to the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze, caused not only unnecessary distress to innocent victims, but it also deprived
many more worthy projects of funding. While funding has now been withdrawn from the project, a limited time frame necessitates fast reallocation to ensure the £18 million granted is not returned to the European Union’s coffers.

The effective use of EU funds requires a joined-up approach between Government Departments, local councils and stakeholders. The pot of money for existing EU funding schemes, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, and the European Social Fund, will receive a boost in the 2014-2020 funding period. A coordinated approach is essential for these enhanced streams to facilitate their effective use locally.

Although the Ulster Unionist Party opposed the 11 ‘super-council’ model the new councils will invariably need to engage more proactively with the EU. In preparation for developing this relationship, new councils should identify best practice models in terms of the delivery of EU Programmes, prepare to meet obligations imposed by EU legislation and target hitherto unexplored funding opportunities, such as support from the European Investment Bank. Individual methods between councils may differ, but the end goal remains the same, the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to delivering for ratepayers.

Raising our ambition

The Executive has demonstrated an embarrassing lack of ambition when it comes to the drawdown of competitive funding. Over the 2007-2013 period, the Executive requested €35 per capita from Framework Programme 7, a €8.1 billion package to support research and technological development across the EU. The Republic of Ireland government requested €590 per capita in the same period, a vast and unacceptable disparity. As a region of the UK we should not expect parity in figures, however the Ulster Unionist Party believes this is no excuse for lack of ambition, and it is crucial over the 2014-2020 funding period for the Executive to aim considerably higher and unlock the true potential of Northern Ireland’s research and innovation to make us wealthier.

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We cannot stand still – we must be adaptable and dynamic to remain competitive

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Competition for the EU funding will be intense. The EU’s €80 billion research and innovation programme, known as Horizon 2020, offers a vast array of opportunities to our local businesses, start-ups and universities. Jim Nicholson has ensured small and micro businesses will have greater access to Horizon 2020 by helping to simplify and streamline the application process.

Other EU funding programmes should not be overlooked, whether it is support for SMEs in the form of the Competitiveness of Enterprises, and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME) programme, or providing opportunities for our young people to study abroad via the Erasmus+ programme. Both have contact points at either the local or UK level. These must be fully utilised in the future, remembering COSME funds may be more relevant and accessible than Horizon 2020 for many of our local businesses.

Current trends in the global marketplace have put a premium on economies which nurture research and innovation. We cannot afford to stand still – we must be adaptable and dynamic to remain competitive. We have seen what Northern Ireland can produce when provided with the right tools. The Ulster Unionist Party will press the NI Executive to help obtain as much funding as possible to unlock the true potential of our flourishing enterprises and micro businesses.
Key priorities:

- Prepare for a single education system for Northern Ireland particularly through drawdown of European Funds
- Reduce regional health and education disparities
- Adopt an EU wide strategy to tackle obesity, alcohol and substance abuse
- Promote the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing
- Implement eHealth action plan
- Ensure immigration brings a positive and meaningful contribution to society

The European Union cannot legislate in areas of national competency however the drive by some towards an ever closer Union has naturally lead to the creation of common European standards in areas traditionally reserved for Member States such as Health and Education.

Healthy European Union

The role of the European Union in the development and implementation of Northern Ireland’s health policy is limited. Public health has regional specificities which are best addressed by our local health authorities and by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

A strategy to reduce the pressure on our hospitals and health care professionals must be swiftly executed. Waiting times must be reduced, A&Es must be rendered efficient, health care professionals must be paid in full and on time, and a safe, clean, and hospitable environment must be created for both patients and medical staff.

While Northern Ireland has unique health care requirements there is no doubt that there are a number of public health emergencies affecting the European Union as a whole. Alcohol and substance abuse, obesity, and mental health concerns are spiralling out of control across the European Union.
One of the hidden legacy issues of our troubled past, has been the high incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Northern Ireland. Some 40% of adults have had one or more traumatic experiences linked to the Troubles. The Ulster Unionist Party believes the development of a Mental Health Initiative in Northern Ireland would begin to deal with one of our most toxic legacies. This initiative would be world-leading, drawing on best practice and experience from across Europe and further afield, to offer practical help to anyone seeking better mental health.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports the introduction of harmonised EU recommendations on public health strategies on these pan-EU emergencies. Effective solutions and best practice from across the EU must be drawn together and widely implemented if we are to see a reduction in premature death.

Jim Nicholson is a prominent member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and a driving force behind the eHealth Action Plan which seeks to facilitate effective and efficient use of IT in health care provision. This plan emphasises the need to reduce widespread inequalities in access to healthcare which is particularly prevalent in Northern Ireland despite our universal NHS provision.

Across the EU inequality is particularly acute amongst the elderly population. Jim Nicholson is committed to delivering further EU funding for Active Ageing projects in Northern Ireland.

**Investing in education**

Education is the key to a better future for Northern Ireland which is why the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to taking the education portfolio if the opportunity arises after the Assembly Elections in 2016.

The Ulster Unionist Party’s vision is for Northern Ireland to operate a single education system, built on collaboration, where our children learn, play and develop together. This will act as an inoculation to protect our children against the poisonous sectarianism that plagues our society. We must encourage the implementation of the Shared Education Programme across all Education and Library boards, and ensure that we draw down significant levels of European funding to facilitate this objective.

Part and parcel of the shared education vision is the reduction of educational inequalities. In Northern Ireland we have some of the best teacher training facilities in the EU and yet our education system still does not accommodate the diverse needs of our young people. The privatisation of the transfer system is but another example of poor management of Northern Ireland’s most valuable resource. Our children deserve to be taught by exceptional teachers in exceptional environments.

As our economy fights to retain a competitive edge in an increasingly globalised market, technology will become an ever greater commodity. It is deeply regrettable that young people in Northern Ireland do not have sufficient skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. A highly skilled and well-educated workforce is essential for growing our economy and strengthening our society.

**Positive integration**

From our foundation, the Ulster Unionist Party has stood for a prosperous, thriving society for all in Northern Ireland. In the modern world, that means embracing the many benefits that flow from cultural diversity and the positive role immigrants can play in the economic growth of the country.

We unequivocally condemn all racist attacks and support continued dialogue to secure a greater understanding of community concerns.

We want to see a sensible immigration policy, where those coming to our shores fully integrate into our society, which works to build a better Northern Ireland, and is mindful of the finite resources available to our health service, benefits system and social housing stock.

*Promoting the European Day of Languages*
Doing what’s right for Northern Ireland
Tackling crime, tackling injustice

Key priorities:

- Fully implement the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland
- Build operational capacity for cross border investigations
- Retain participation in the European Arrest Warrant
- Increase protection of personal data
- Ensure the innocent victims and survivors of terrorism, and their families receive support

In Northern Ireland we are all too aware of the devastating impact organised crime and terrorism has had on our local communities. During five terms in the European Parliament, Jim Nicholson has worked tirelessly to highlight threats to our local security, not least during his membership of the Special Committee on Criminality, Organised Crime and Money Laundering.

While strategies to prevent crime and terrorism are vital, the European Union also has a role to play in the consequences of these abhorrent acts. Jim has consistently argued that the needs of innocent victims, survivors and their families must be addressed. The €2 billion secured in PEACE Funding and the successful campaign against the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze are demonstrative of Jim taking local concerns to the heart of Brussels.

Tackling crime without borders

In the age of sophisticated ‘borderless crime’ robust cooperation between the PSNI, counterparts in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and other EU law enforcement agencies is imperative.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that the full implementation of the National Crime Agency is a crucial pillar in disrupting organised crime and terrorist networks. Both the SDLP and Sinn Fein vetoed the proposals to introduce the agency last year, risking the creation of a deadly vacuum in which dissident republicans, human traffickers, and money launderers evade justice.
The UK Government is re-evaluating which EU Justice and Home Affairs measures it wishes to exercise an ‘opt out’ from. The Ulster Unionist Party will be urging the UK Government to retain the European Arrest Warrant, tightening the net on criminals fleeing from one country to another. Between 2004 and the beginning of 2013, some 192 suspected criminals and terrorists have been surrendered to the PSNI by An Garda Síochána. The European Arrest Warrant is clearly delivering the desired results, and its retention must be a priority.

As telecommunications and interconnectivity have increased across the EU, an emerging challenge to our security is the protection of personal data. The National Crime Agency has a special unit specifically to deal with the threat of cybercrime, which has developed close links with the EU’s European Cybercrime Centre. The Ulster Unionist Party reiterates its call for the full implementation of the National Crime Agency in order to tackle the threat to our personal security.

Tackling injustice

Recent revelations regarding the ‘On The Runs’ letters scheme demonstrated a total disregard for the rights and needs of victims and survivors of terrorism, and their families. They deserve better than having their fundamental right to truth and justice side-lined.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that the definition of “victim” must be settled in order to distinguish between those who chose to commit terrorist acts and the innocent victims of that criminality. This is not simply a semantic issue. Equating victims with the perpetrators of terrorism has a fundamental impact on the emotional well-being of innocent victims, as well as on the distribution of funding and support.

Undoubtedly, funding and support for victims and survivors of terrorism, and their families could be more effectively delivered. For instance, more attention should be paid to carers who have assisted innocent victims with great dignity, as well as those in Great Britain who were victims of the terrorist campaign waged in Northern Ireland. The development of a Mental Health Initiative is just one mechanism that should be implemented to support the victims and survivors of terrorism, and their families.

The EU also has a major role to play in ensuring innocent victims receive adequate support. The Ulster Unionist Party has called on the Department for Justice to ensure the effective implementation of the EU’s Victims of Crime Directive, which establishes the minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime across the EU.

For a more detailed consideration of these issues, the Ulster Unionist Party has published its proposals for parades and protests, flags, and dealing with the past, which is available on the homepage of our website, www.uup.org.

Addressing the Ulster Unionist Party Conference
Doing what’s right for Northern Ireland
Advancing humanitarian aid, human rights and international development

Key priorities:

- Improve the coordination and protect the independence of humanitarian aid
- Support the primary objective of the EU to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty
- Reach the development aid target of 0.7% gross national income by 2015
- Promote long-term development by building upon the success of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals
- Defend the fundamental rights enshrined in the European Treaties

Jim Nicholson MEP has been actively involved with local and EU development projects. His visit to Uganda with Fields of Life to assist with well drilling and leading a group of EU monitors to Haiti subsequent to the earthquake have given first-hand experience of the practical difference that aid can make in crisis situations both in the short and long-term.

Responding to humanitarian crisis

In Northern Ireland we are world leaders in demonstrating generosity. We need only look to our wealth of NGOs to establish the depth of commitment to international development. A fundamental objective of the European Union development cooperation is the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty. The Ulster Unionist Party lends its full support to this objective and believes that Northern Ireland has much expertise to contribute to the EU development programmes.

Aid agencies in Northern Ireland face serious challenges, many of which are beyond our control. However we have a duty to exert positive influence on the areas in which we can legislate. We need a legislative environment which enables NGOs, including faith-based organisations, to pursue their mission. Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response Kristalina Georgieva came to

Assessing the needs of communities in Haiti
Northern Ireland in 2013 at Jim Nicholson’s invitation to discuss some of these challenges. Key questions on the nature of humanitarian aid on issues such as independence, freedom from corruption and efficacy were discussed. Protecting the integrity of humanitarian aid is fundamental if we are to reach our aid commitment of 0.7% of gross national income by 2015.

Advocating Fundamental Rights

The right to be free from poverty is a fundamental right but for millions across the world it is a right they may never enjoy. It is wrong that poverty prevents people from experiencing life in all its fullness.

From 2014-2020 a minimum of €439 million will be spent on advocating fundamental rights in the European Union. Jim Nicholson believes that discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation is completely unacceptable and will work to ensure that European legislation does not impede on the exercise of these rights.

Promoting long-term development

As Vice-Chair of the Africa Caribbean Pacific-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly since 2009, Jim Nicholson has been heavily involved in several international development initiatives, including the upgrading of the role of women in the development process, closer co-operation with NGOs engaged in development, and the improvement of measures aimed at combating epidemics and the reinforcement of health and hygiene services.

The Ulster Unionist Party supports the EU’s efforts to deliver the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education by 2015. The next European Parliament will be involved in assessing what has been achieved, and what lessons can be learned when agreeing the MDG’s successor. Jim Nicholson believes these discussions should focus on placing property rights at the forefront of the development policy designed to empower people in developing countries to invest sustainably in their own futures.

Jim Nicholson will stand as a strong voice which speaks up on behalf of NGOs from Northern Ireland.