Issue campaign responses

General Election 2019
Sunday 3 November 2019

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Campaign pledges: quick guide

Throughout the campaign, candidates will be asked to sign pledges on various campaign issues. This pack contains substantive responses that can be used as the basis for a reply.

We strongly advise against signing up to any pledges, unless explicitly stated below.

If you have received a request to sign a pledge that is not included in this pack, please send to briefing@conservatives.com for advice on a response.

Candidates may sign up to the following campaigns if they deem it prudent to do so:

- Plastic pollution/Environment Bill
- Shooting

Other campaign resources from the Conservative Research Department:

- The Daily Campaign Brief – with the latest news each morning.
- Policy Brief – giving you in depth information about new policy announcements
- Political Campaign Brief – with briefs on the opposition parties and core campaign messages
- Local campaign statistics – tailored to your constituency
Stand up for Brexit

Pledge:

Campaign text: ‘I pledge to #StandUp4Brexit’

Recommended response: This pledge is unnecessary. A Conservative government with a functioning majority will immediately get Brexit done.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about Brexit. I share your determination to get Brexit done, and would like to assure you that, if Boris Johnson is elected Prime Minister on 12 December, he will ensure that we get Brexit done immediately.

The Prime Minister has done what many said he could not — we have renegotiated a great new deal which delivers a real Brexit and allows us to leave the EU without disruption. This deal has now won the support of the House of Commons.

But Labour and the Liberal Democrats refused to back our great new deal and forced a further delay on the British people. Now Jeremy Corbyn is trying to force two referendums on the British people — one on reversing Brexit, the other on Scottish independence. This means years more dither and pointless delay.

With a Conservative majority government you can be sure that on day one of a new Parliament we will start the process to get Brexit done with the new deal the Prime Minister has already agreed with the EU and we will be out of the EU no later than the end of January 2020.

And when Brexit is done and dusted, we will get on and bring the change that people voted for — improving local high streets and bus services, creating more GP appointments, investing money in schools, introducing an Australian-style points-based immigration system, putting more police on the streets, and keeping our economy strong. This is the better future that is there for Britain.

Additional political points:

When Boris took over, everyone said it would be impossible to get a new deal and get Brussels to retreat. He’s pulled it off. Boris has:

- Forced Brussels to re-open the deal – something many said was impossible.
- Ensured Britain will no longer be bound by EU laws and taxes – something many said was impossible.
- Ended the supremacy of the European Court in Britain – something many said was impossible.
- Removed the backstop and ensured that the people of Northern Ireland are in control of the laws they live by – something many said was impossible.

Put simply, this new deal means:

- Britain is out of all EU laws. We will be able to change our laws in a huge number of areas – from product standards to fishing rules to farming subsidies – where we are currently bound by EU rules.
- We will be able to strike our own free trade deals. We will have an unqualified right to strike our own trade deals around the world, and the whole UK will participate in them.
• European Court direct jurisdiction ends in Great Britain. It will be our courts, applying our laws, which will be the highest authority in the land.

• We will be in control of our taxes. We will be able to change VAT rules and other tax laws that are currently determined by Brussels.

• Northern Ireland will be in the UK customs territory. There is now no doubt that Northern Ireland remains part of the UK’s customs territory and will benefit from the free trade deals we strike.

• The anti-democratic backstop has been abolished. The people of Northern Ireland will be in charge of the laws that they live by, and – unlike the backstop – will have the right to end the special arrangement if they so choose.
Women’s State Pension Age (WASPI)

Pledge:

Campaign text: There are a number of WASPI-related pledges.

Recommended response: Avoid signing. Changes to the State Pension Age are part of a long overdue move towards gender equality and will put the pensions system on a more sustainable footing for future generations.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about the State Pension Age.

Since the Conservatives came into Government in 2010, we have provided greater security, choice and dignity for people in retirement, while also ensuring that the system is sustainable for future generations.

In 1995, the then-Government decided that it was going to make the State Pension Age the same for men and women, as a long-overdue move towards gender equality. Raising the State Pension Age in line with life expectancy changes has been the policy of successive administrations over many years.

The State Pension Age has been equalised in a gradual way by governments of all colours – Conservative, Labour and Coalition. When the rate of change was accelerated in 2011, nearly six million letters were sent out by the Department for Work and Pensions to inform people, and more than £1 billion has been provided to ensure no woman retired more than 18 months later than originally planned in 1995.

Over three million women stand to receive an average of £550 more per year by 2030 as a result of the recent reforms Conservatives have made to the State Pension – and we are providing a clearer, sustainable system for the future.

Additional political points:

• Labour’s 2015 manifesto supported pension age rises. ‘Increases in the state retirement age are necessary to keep our pensions system affordable’.¹

• Under Labour, the state pension rose by as little as 75p. In 2000, the basic state pension rose from £66.75 per week to £67.50 per week, an increase of just 75p.²

¹ Labour Party Manifesto 2015, April 2015, link.
² Watson Wyatt, UK Basic State Retirement Pensions, link.
Trade deals and the NHS

Pledge:

Campaign text: ‘I pledge to protect our NHS from trade deals with new legislation which ends privatisation’

Recommended response: Avoid signing, as to do so would give credence to factually inaccurate smears. The NHS is not for sale and no trade agreement will change this fact.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about the NHS and future trade deals.

The NHS is not for sale. It never has been and never will be. We will never allow any trade agreement to change this fundamental fact. Any suggestion otherwise is simply untrue and just a blatant political manoeuvre by Labour to distract from their failings, including Jeremy Corbyn’s attempt to override the British people on Brexit.

Rather than talking about how we can get Brexit done, Labour have decided to spread lies and score political points on the NHS, scaring the most vulnerable in our society – the very people they claim to represent.

Boris Johnson and the Conservatives have given the NHS the biggest funding boost in its history, putting £33.9 billion more into frontline NHS services by 2023-24. This means the NHS will always be there for the people of this country when they need it, free at the point of use.

Additional political points:

- **The Prime Minister has been clear that under no circumstances would we agree to any free trade deal that put the NHS on the table.** He has told the US President and Vice President that ‘when we do a free trade deal, we must make sure that the NHS is not on the table’ and ‘we will do everything to increase free trade, but the National Health Service is not on the table as far as our negotiations go’.  

- **The US President has confirmed that the NHS will not be part of any future trade negotiation.** ‘No not at all, we wouldn’t even be involved in that … it’s not for us to have anything to do with your healthcare system … with respect to us taking over your healthcare system, it’s so ridiculous’.

- **The Former General Counsel for the Office of the US Trade Representative confirmed that pharmaceuticals would not have to be on the table in trade deals.** ‘If the UK really, really is determined to make no changes at all on pharmaceuticals, they can absolutely hold that position … That doesn’t have anything to do with us. That’s up to y’all’.

- **Labour offered less money for the NHS.** Labour’s manifesto committed 2.2 per cent more a year, which they said would make the NHS ‘the envy of the world’. This is much less than our 3.4 per cent a year.

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3 The Independent, 24 September 2019, link; The Times, 6 September 2019, link.
4 LBC, 31 October 2019, archived.
5 Channel 4, Dispatches, 28 October 2019, archived.
6 The Health Foundation, 16 May 2017, link; Labour Manifesto 2017; link.
Voter ID

Pledge:

Campaign text: There are a number of voter ID-related pledges.

Recommended response: Avoid signing. Voter ID is not new and will protect the integrity of the electoral system.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about voter ID.

A secure electoral system is a vital component of a healthy democracy, and the public must have confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century. Asking voters to bring ID to their polling station is an important way of achieving this – although it will not be introduced in time for this election in December.

Voter ID is not new. Northern Ireland had required paper ID at polling stations since 1985, and photo ID since 2003 – introduced by the last Labour Government. It has proved to be effective at tackling fraud and has not curtailed election turnout.

Identification to vote has been backed by the Electoral Commission and international election watchdogs. At present, it is harder to take out a library book or collect a parcel at a post office than it is to vote in someone else’s name.

In pilot schemes earlier this year and in 2018, the overwhelming majority of people cast their vote without a problem and the success of the pilots proves that this is a reasonable and proportionate measure to take, and there was no notable adverse effect on turnout.

Under our proposals, anyone who doesn’t have an ID can apply for a new free one – meaning that no voters will be disenfranchised.

Additional political points:

- The last Labour Government introduced photo ID at polling stations across in Northern Ireland in 2003. It has not affected turnout and has helped prevent election fraud. Labour Ministers said: ‘The measures will tackle electoral abuse effectively without disadvantaging honest voters.... [ensuring that] no one is disfranchised because of them.’

- Many constituency Labour parties currently require two types of voter ID to vote in Labour Party selection meetings. One local Labour Party explains: ‘It is rare members have no form of ID.’ The Labour Party’s NEC mandates two forms of ID for any members joining an association which is in special measures.

7 Hansard, 10 July 2001, link.
Private schools

Pledge:

Campaign text: There are a number of private school-related pledges.

Recommended response: Avoid signing. Each campaign is different, although we agree that Labour’s plans to abolish private education would be hugely damaging.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about private education.

Labour’s plans to abolish private schools would cost the taxpayer over £7 billion a year, dramatically increase class sizes and do nothing for our children’s education.

Labour couldn’t care less about improving standards or discipline in schools or helping disadvantaged children. They want to end choice, stop independent inspections and destroy free schools and academies. It’s crystal clear – you cannot trust Corbyn with your child’s education.

Only Boris Johnson and the Conservatives are delivering the change people want, giving every child the world class education, they deserve and properly funding our schools. We are determined to raise standards in all school, which is why we’re increasing funding by £14 billion so that every child can get a good education.

Additional political points:

- We are increasing funding in primary and secondary schools by £14 billion so that every child can get a good education. We will lift per pupil funding to a minimum of £5,000 for secondary school pupils next year and £4,000 for primary school pupils by 2021-22, and provide £780 million more for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities next year.9

- We are raising teachers’ salaries and benefits, recognising teaching as the high-value, prestigious profession it is. In the biggest reform to teacher pay in a generation, we are increasing salaries for new teachers to £30,000 by 2022-23 and fully funding increased contributions into the Teacher’s Pension Scheme, so that school leaders can focus as much of their resources as possible on the front line.10

- Abolishing independent schools would increase class sizes by up to 9 per cent. There are currently 4,297,570 pupils in state funded primary schools, abolishing primary schools would add an additional 209,744, taking the average class size from 27.1 to 28.4. Secondary school pupils would increase from 3,090,500 by an extra 278,438, taking the average class size from 21.7 to 23.6.11

- Abolishing independent schools would cost 15 per cent of the schools budget. In 2019-20 the schools budget is £45.2 billion. Abolishing private schools would cost £7 billion, or 15.5 per cent of this.12

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9 DfE, Press Release, 11 October 2019, [link](http://example.com).
10 DfE, News Story, 2 September 2019, [link](http://example.com).
11 DfE, Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2019, 27 June 2019, [link](http://example.com).
12 UK Government, Spending Round 2019, 4 September 2019, [link](http://example.com).
Rivers (plastic pollution)

Pledge:

Campaign text: ‘Will you pledge your support for a flagship Environment Bill?’

Recommended response: Candidates may sign if they deem it appropriate to do so. The Conservatives have already introduced a new Environment Bill in the recent Queen’s Speech.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about plastic pollution.

Leaving the EU is a defining opportunity for the UK to set its own course and take ambitious action to protect our natural environment for future generations.

The Conservatives are taking word-leading action to tackle the scourge of plastics. We have already banned plastic straws, drinks stirrers and cotton buds from April next year and we’re introducing a landmark Environment Bill that both encourage producers to cut waste and protect our precious water resources.

This is on top of the action we’ve taken to ban microbeads, which can be so harmful in our rivers and oceans, and to reduce the number of plastic bags that so often end up discarded. Thanks to our efforts, plastic bag sales are down by 90 per cent since 2015 and the fee we introduced is being used for environmental causes.

We are getting Brexit done to focus on the issues that really matter to people, like delivering on our commitment to tackle climate change at the same time as keeping bills low and leaving our precious planet in a better condition than we found it.

Additional political points:

• We’ve introduced a landmark Environment Bill to tackle environmental priorities and leave our planet in a better condition for future generations. The Bill was announced in the Queen’s Speech – it will ensure we can embrace the opportunities of leaving the EU, going further on environmental protections and truly cementing our position as a world leader.13

• Labour want to remain in the EU – meaning they could not seize many of the environmental opportunities presented by leaving. They are backing a second referendum on any deal and would campaign to remain.14

• Labour’s climate change plans are ‘utterly unachievable’. Labour plan to reduce emissions to Net Zero by 2030, but the GMB union has said: ‘Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 is utterly unachievable’.15

13 DEFRA, Press Release, 15 October 2019, link.
14 Express, 7 June 2018, link.
Climate change

Pledge:

Campaign text: There are a number of climate change-related pledges.

Recommended response: Avoid signing. Each campaign is different, but many contain unrealistic targets, like achieving Net Zero emissions by 2025 or 2030 that would be impossible to achieve – we instead favour practical, reasonable steps to protect our planet while keeping bills down.

Template response:

Thank you for contacting me about climate change.

As Conservatives, we have always cared deeply about our environment. It was under our party that the UK became one of the first countries to call for global action on climate change and, since then, we’ve taken a leading role on the world stage.

It was under the Conservatives that the UK became the first advanced economy to legislate for Net Zero emissions by 2050. We have already reduced emissions by a quarter since 2010 and boosted renewables to record levels. But we know we have more to do and we will put climate change at the heart of the Conservative agenda.

Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party simply don’t have a credible approach when it comes to tackling climate change. Even Labour-supporting unions have called their plans ‘utterly unachievable’ and their plan to renationalise the energy system will drive away the crucial investment we need to introduce new clean technology and wreck the economy, meaning higher bills for families.

By delivering a truly green Brexit, we can focus on the issues that really matter to people, like tackling climate change and leaving our precious planet in a better condition for future generations.

Additional political points:

- **We were the first major economy to legally commit to ending our contribution to global warming by 2050.** We will go Net Zero by 2050, ending the UK’s contribution to climate change by expanding electric vehicle use, supporting new clean technologies like fusion and making all new homes energy efficient. 16

- **We have reduced greenhouse gases by a quarter under the Conservatives.** We have reduced greenhouse gases by 25 per cent since 2010, whilst decarbonising faster than any other G20 nation since 2000. 17

- **Labour’s climate change plans are ‘utterly unachievable’.** Labour plan to reduce emissions to Net Zero by 2030, but the GMB union has said: ‘Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 is utterly unachievable’. 18

- **The IFS described Labour’s 2030 target as ‘almost certainly impossible’.** Paul Johnson said: ‘Aiming for zero emissions by 2030 is almost certainly impossible, hugely disruptive and risks undermining consensus’. 19

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16 Prime Minister’s Office, Press Release, 12 June 2019, link; BEIS, Press Release, 3 October 2019, link; MHCLG, Press Release, 1 October 2019, link.
17 BEIS, 2018 UK greenhouse gas emissions: provisional figures, 28 March 2019, link; PwC, Low Carbon Economy Index 2019, accessed 7 October 2019, link.
19 Paul Johnson, Twitter, 24 September 2019, link.
**Shooting**

**Pledge:**

*Campaign text:* 'If elected, will you join the All Party Parliamentary Group on Shooting and Conservation?'

*Recommended response:* Candidates may sign if they deem it appropriate to do so.

**Template response:**

Thank you for contacting me about shooting.

For many people, shooting is an important part of rural life – both in terms of countryside management and as a sporting industry.

It is, of course, essential that our wildlife is properly protected, and anyone involved in game management must respect the country’s conservation laws, which are rightly among the toughest in the world. Shooting is worth around £2 billion to the economy, much of it in some our remotest communities and it is important to recognise an industry that does so much for rural jobs and livelihoods.

The Conservatives are determined to be the party that stands up for countryside and ensures that rural communities across this country can continue to thrive. That’s why we are taking action to level up opportunities across all parts of our country, by improving local transport, improving broadband and upgrading vital infrastructure.

**Additional political points:**

- **We have announced a new package of measures to protect animals in homes, farms and in the wild.** This package includes banning pet primates, extending cat microchipping, consulting on banning live exports for slaughter or fattening and controlling trade in hunting trophies.\(^\text{20}\)

- **Labour are belatedly playing catch-up with the huge progress made by this Government on animal welfare.** But they wouldn’t be able to deliver on many of the promises in their animal welfare plan because they want to keep following EU rules after Brexit.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{20}\) DEFRA, Press Release, 1 October 2019, [link](#).

\(^{21}\) Labour, *Our Plan for Animal Welfare*, 14 June 2018, [link](#).