

Democratic unionist party: history and ideology



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Part A - Democratic Unionist Party

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is the larger of the two main unionist political parties in Northern Ireland. Founded by Ian Paisley and currently led by Peter Robinson, it is currently the fourth-largest party in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom. As well as being the largest party in Northern Ireland, they are also currently holding eight seats at Westminster and 38 seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly. It also has one seat in the European Parliament, where its MEP, Diane Dodds, sits as a Non-Inscrit.

History of the Democratic Unionist Party

The party was established in 1971 by Ian Paisley and Desmond Boal and other members of the Protestant Unionist Party. Since its foundation it has won seats at local council, province, national and European level. It won eight seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly of 1973-1974, where it opposed the formation of a power-sharing executive made up of unionists and nationalists following the Sunningdale Agreement. The establishment of this political party arguably stemmed from insecurities of the Protestant working class. The Ulster Unionist Party and the DUP took increasingly divergent stances in multiparty talks in the mid-1990s, and the DUP boycotted the talks when Sinn Féin was admitted in 1997. The product of the talks, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement) on steps leading to a new power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, was rejected by the DUP, which denounced the new Northern Ireland Assembly as a dilution of British sovereignty and objected to the inclusion of Sinn Féin in the assembly and

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the new executive body (the Northern Ireland Executive Committee) and to the release of paramilitary prisoners.

Paisley was then elected as one of Northern Ireland's three European Parliament members at the first elections in 1979 and retained that seat in every European election until 2004. In 2004 Paisley was replaced as the DUP MEP by Jim Allister, who resigned from the party in 2007 while retaining his seat.

It has long been the principal rival to the other major unionist party, the Ulster Unionist Party (known for a time in the 1970s and 1980s as the Official Unionist Party (OUP) to distinguish it from the then multitude of other unionist parties, some set up by deposed former leaders). However, the DUP's main rivals are currently Sinn Féin.

Ideology

The DUP describes itself as "right wing in the sense of being strong on the constitution," but "to the left on social policies," though it has regularly adopted conservative positions on most social issues. Its constituency spans rural communities in Northern Ireland and inner-city working-class areas and includes some deeply religious groups, a fact that reflects the fundamentalism and anti-Catholicism of the party's leader. The DUP staunchly supports union with Britain. Citing the territorial claims in the Irish constitution, which the party viewed as illegal and a threat to the security and religious freedom of Protestants in Northern Ireland, the DUP traditionally avoided all contact with the Irish government. In the early 21st century, however, the party moderated its stance on a number of issues, <https://assignbuster.com/democratic-unionist-party-history-and-ideology/>

most notably its long-time opposition to Sinn Féin's participation in any power-sharing institution.

Democratic Unionist Party Policies

Housing

The case for investment in housing is a compelling one. House building has a hugely positive impact upon the local economy, creating and sustaining jobs not just in the construction sector, but also in professional services and retail. A safe, secure and warm home also produces health and educational benefits.

The DUP say they would seek to:

- " Examine how a single regulator for the whole housing sector could be created"

I actually disagree with this policy as I believe multiple regulators would be rather more successful and fortuitous in the long term. I don't see any benefits from having just a single regulating group for this sector. Wouldn't the roles and responsibilities be better carried out and completed if they were given to individual specialists?

- " Seek to extend the programme of installing carbon monoxide monitors in social homes"

As recent building regulations in Northern Ireland dictate, all new homes must be built with carbon monoxide alarms, due to the large number of fatalities that the poisonous gas is causing, especially in Northern Ireland.

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The DUP have made this a policy of theirs which will either stricken the regulations or expand them, ensuring every household with in “ x” number of years has at least one. This policy could only be seen as a positive and really a necessity.

- “ Engage with telecommunications companies with a view to developing a roll out programme to provide affordable broadband access in social housing”
- “ Assist first time buyers including through a graduate home loan scheme for those with degrees in subjects crucial to improving our economy such as STEM, finance and business”

Environment

The DUP’s environmental policy places emphasis on promoting renewable energy, reducing pollution and preserving the Province’s countryside and wildlife. As well as the DUP saying they plan for Northern Ireland to reach a carbon neutral state they also mention that that their ministers would seek to:

- Aim to secure 40% of our energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020, assisting small scale renewable energy generation, ensuring simplified processes to secure approval for renewable projects, publishing a Northern Ireland Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy and seeking to establish the Province as a renewable manufacturing hub
- “ Support Research and Development in renewable and low carbon technologies”

- “ Increase the number of schools involved in the Eco-Schools programme”
- “ Promote low energy lighting and fittings in public buildings”

Planning

The DUP aims to improve quality of life across the Province through measures that will empower communities to help themselves, assist the most disadvantaged people whilst also in the process of regenerating urban areas. They also point out that just one poorly maintained property can drag an entire estate or area down so they claim that they will explore means for agencies to carry out any necessary work and be compensated retrospectively when individuals persistently fail to maintain acceptable standards. They also plan on:

- Working with housing associations to scope out the potential to enhance their role in developing affordable housing and regenerating communities, whilst seeking to achieve optimum efficiency through consolidation and procurement

Economic

The last Programme for Government prioritised the economy. The DUP say that they will pursue the same approach over the current Assembly term, as they seek to assist the Province to emerge strongly from the recession. The DUP also say that they will have the economy and employment as two of their key priorities for the incoming four years, as they claim they will focus on:

- “ Seek to increase exports by 50% over the next decade by supporting first-time exporters and assisting companies to diversify into new markets”
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- “ Encourage firms from the Far East and elsewhere to locate European bases in Northern Ireland”
- “ Offer student loan relief for individuals who commit to working in the Province for ten years”
- “ Maximise benefits from the significant capital investment in tourism, particularly in 2012 with the Titanic and Ulster Covenant anniversaries and the opening of a new Giant’s Causeway Visitor Centre, and Londonderry’s Year as the UK’s City of Culture in 2013”