



Wednesday 3rd July 2019

Dear Owen

Thank you for writing to me.

Firstly, let me thank you for the terrific work the Tory Reform Group continues to do to put moderate, modern and compassionate Conservatism at the heart of our Party's mission. This is the only type of Conservatism which wins elections and which can deliver the opportunities the people of our country deserve.

I am proud to run under the One Nation banner in this leadership election. As well as delivering Brexit and sound public finances, our mission should be to show the British people what One Nation Conservatism can be. For example, since this contest began, I have highlighted the scandal of illiteracy which is a blight on opportunity and a cause of lost potential which we should no longer tolerate. Conservatism's true strength is that it commits us to both an economic and a social mission for the improvement of our country.

You raise a number of important questions.

1. What is your plan to deliver on the result of the European referendum and reunite our country?

I believe this campaign is fundamentally about who members trust to actually get a deal that enables us to leave the European Union. The quickest way, the safest way, and the most secure way to leave the EU is with a good deal.

As an entrepreneur who has been doing business deals all his life; an experienced Cabinet Minister who has negotiated a BBC Licence Fee, the junior doctors' contract and peace talks in the Yemen; and a Foreign Secretary with good relationships with European leaders; I believe I am that candidate.

But we also have to prepare for the possibility the European Union refuses to budge. We cannot leave the European Union on a wing and a prayer, or by being flippant about the risks of No Deal. I have therefore set out a Brexit Delivery Plan including: a No Deal Cabinet Task

Force and a No Deal Relief Programme including a £6bn fund for the farming and fishing sectors.

As Prime Minister I will make a judgement on 30th September as to whether there is a realistic chance of a new deal being agreed that can pass the House of Commons. If so, I will seek to conclude negotiations and pass necessary legislation. If not, as a responsible Prime Minister I will cease negotiations and focus the whole country on No Deal preparations.

2. How will you tackle climate change and preserve our environment for future generations, both at home and abroad?

I'm incredibly proud to have been part of the Government that has legislated to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This is obviously an ambitious target, but one that is achievable. It is vital that we achieve it to preserve our planet for future generations. We have already made decent progress as we are well on our way to phasing out coal entirely by 2025 and we will end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040. I am proud to have made climate change policy central to my work as Foreign Secretary, and I am delighted we have recently reached an agreement on hosting the UN's major international climate change conference, COP26, next year, five years after the Paris summit.

As Prime Minister, I would ensure we lead the world on the global stage, but I would go further at home too and have already announced plans to introduce a Clean Air Act to give local authorities the power and funding to introduce pollution free cities. I would also fund the roll out of a national network of 2.5 million electric charging points.

Tackling climate change is an economic imperative and a moral mission. But it is also a political necessity for the Conservative Party. If we are to win back the support of young people, we need to show them we can be trusted with their futures, and that starts with showing our commitment to protecting the environment.

3. With devolution in place in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, do you think constitutional reform or further devolution in Wales, Scotland, NI or English regions is desirable, and how will you strengthen the Union?

I am a Unionist to my fingertips: I have Welsh and Irish blood in me and I spent a couple of very happy years of my childhood in Scotland. My approach is both to respect fully the devolved settlements and to showcase the benefits of the Union at every opportunity. We should shout louder about the positive investments and the jobs the UK Government is already delivering. We should do more to encourage local economies through bigger and better City Deals.

When it comes to Scotland, we were complacent in the run up to the referendum on independence, and we have frankly been complacent since. To address this, we must firstly

ensure a form of Brexit which works to strengthen, not sever our precious Union. I have made clear that representatives from the Scottish and Welsh Conservatives will feature in my reshaped negotiating team. After Brexit, we need Government to become an unrelenting campaigning machine for promotion of the Union across the four nations.

I am keen to support further devolution, including more directly elected mayors, and greater devolution of public services and funding. At a national level, I believe it's time we reached a more permanent settlement about the balance of powers and responsibilities rather than the change and uncertainty which has too long impacted our constitution.

4. How would you tackle the decline in home ownership and support renters to have greater stability of accommodation?

Improving housing supply is central to my ambitions to transform opportunities for young people. I joined the Conservative Party when I was 19 years old because my dreams were to build a business, buy a house, and save for a family. These are still the dreams of many young people today, and they are still fundamental to Conservative principles.

On home ownership, I would introduce a new Right to Own to ensure that young people get the homes they need. Through this scheme we will support 1.5m more people to own their own home. And I would introduce a new permitted development right called Build Up Not Out, to allow developers in urban areas to build up to five or six storeys.

5. What are your domestic policy priorities, and why?

When we leave the European Union, a huge set of opportunities awaits our country. I have set out three clear priorities:

Firstly, turbo-charging our economy, to improve our growth rates to drive more jobs and opportunity across our country. My radical cuts to corporation tax and business rates are critical to this.

Secondly, to transform opportunities for young people and to achieve social reform by abolishing illiteracy and ensure that every young person has the skills they need to get a well-paid job.

Thirdly, we need to walk tall in the world again, projecting and protecting the democratic values we have always stood for, and this means re-committing to spending 0.7% of GDP on overseas development, alongside an increase in spending on our defence and military capability to 2.5% of GDP.

6. How will you promote a welfare system that supports those in need with dignity, while ensuring affordability for taxpayers?

The Conservative Government has always defended the basic principle of the welfare state that it will provide for those in need. It has provided the resources to do so: welfare remains the largest government budget. Our success in providing support and in encouraging personal provision means that, for example, rates of pensioner poverty are substantially lower than 20 years ago.

One area of care that I see as unfinished business is social care. In my final year as Health Secretary I gained responsibility for social care and immediately set out the need to cap the costs of social care, so that older people never need to face the catastrophic costs of high care needs and the prospect of losing their home. I argued for this in Cabinet and, having secured £20 billion extra funding for the NHS, was moved to the Foreign Office before I could push through reforms on social care funding.

As Prime Minister I would bring forward the green paper on social care quickly and ensure that nobody will ever face the risk of losing everything just because they have high care needs. These measures will be accompanied by support to help people save for their old age more easily, and new tax incentives to help families who want to look after an elderly relative at home.

7. How will you tackle intergenerational division?

Those who have raised concerns about the opportunities available to this generation of young people have pointed to housing and student debt above all. I have outlined my proposals on housing above. I would tackle the burden of debt by reducing the rate of interest paid by students both at university and after they graduate. And in particular, I want a rethink of the services available to the 50% who do not go to university.

8. How will your administration support women and the LGBT+ community in Northern Ireland to enjoy the same rights shared by fellow citizens across the rest of the UK?

If I lived in Northern Ireland, I would want the law changed and I hope that it will be. I am proud of the steps our government has taken to improve LGBT+ rights, including the introduction of same sex marriage. The need to resolve these issues is a key argument for the revival of the Assembly, which will be one of my Day One priorities.

9. How will you support aspirational, entrepreneurial people to start and grow a business in the UK? And restore the Conservative Party as the party of business, enterprise and entrepreneurialism?

My main priority after securing our exit from the European Union is to turbo-charge our economy. As an entrepreneur who started their own business, and ended up employing 200 people, I know how hard it is to run a business. But I also know how incredibly rewarding and exciting it can be.

My Government would prioritise supporting business because it is the wealth creators in our society who generate tax revenues that support our public services. I would therefore cut corporation tax to 12.5%, increase the annual investment allowance from £1m to £5m, and take 90% of high street companies out of business rates altogether. I set up my business when I was young, and I believe the government should support those who do the same. So I would cancel the tuition fee debts of young entrepreneurs who run successful start ups.

10. With trust in politics running at an all-time low, what steps will you take to bring faith in our politicians, political processes and institutions?

In my view, politicians earn trust by speaking honestly to voters and by delivering on their promises. As I hope I have made clear, my message to the country is that I would achieve Brexit alongside a radical programme of economic and social reform. I would rightly be judged on my ability to deliver that.

11. What is your plan to connect with BAME, younger and metropolitan voters?

I was very struck by recent polling that showed that the Conservatives were far behind other parties in support from 18-24 year-olds and from BAME voters. As well as new policies for greater opportunity, as much as anything we have to make our party even more inclusive and welcoming to all parts of society. I would make it a personal priority to increase the number of BAME members on the candidate list.

12. What will your approach be to international aid and the UK's place in the world?

As Foreign Secretary I have visited nearly 40 countries, and so often I am struck that the people I meet overseas seem to have a lot more respect for Britain than we sometimes have for ourselves. This Brexit crisis and paralysis has shaken our confidence and, in parts, our reputation. We should be a country which walks tall in the world. This is what the world needs from us – Britain playing its traditional global role in standing up for freedom and democracy.

My plans will ensure we walk tall on the world stage once again. I would protect the international aid budget and the 0.7% commitment, while continuing efforts to ensure it is well spent. As Foreign Secretary, it has been my privilege to promote the UK around the world and to see at first hand the esteem in which we are held. I would want us to do even better, and that would partly be achieved by my pledge to increase defence spending by £15 billion over the next five years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jeremy Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font. The first name "Jeremy" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and the surname "Hunt" is written in a smaller, more compact script to the right.

Jeremy Hunt