

Beat: Politics

More united Britain!

UK Prime Minister Theresa May

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USPA NEWS - UK Prime Minister Theresa May has set out her desire to create a "more united" Britain, in a speech in Cardiff. The prime minister told the Conservatives' spring conference that Britons are "at heart one people" be they Welsh, English, Scottish or from Northern Ireland. Here is the full speech.

"It is good to be here in Cardiff today for our Spring Forum and Welsh Conference.

Bringing these two events together under one banner reminds us once again that we are "" and will always be "" the Conservative and Unionist Party. The only Party today that represents and delivers for every part of this precious United Kingdom.

I would like to thank Alun Cairns for that introduction. Alun is a determined and passionate campaigner for Wales's interests in Whitehall, always standing up for Welsh interests in government and speaking up for this great nation of the UK at the Cabinet table.

And I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the Conservative Group in the National Assembly "" and particularly to its leader, Andrew RT Davies "" the clearest, and without doubt the loudest, voice at Cardiff Bay doing the important work of holding the Labour Government to account.

Thank you to you also for all the work that you do for our Party here in Wales.

Thanks to you, some of our Party's best results at the last general election were achieved right here.

In the North, James Davies taking the Vale Of Clywd from Labour.

In Mid Wales, Chris Davies taking Brecon & Radnorshire back from the Liberal Democrats.

In this city, Craig Williams holding Cardiff North with a majority more than ten-times greater than we achieved in 2010.

And in the south-west, Byron Davies, becoming the first Conservative MP for Gower in its one hundred and thirty year history.

Not so long ago, people were quick to write us off here in Wales. I remember those days. People said we couldn't win here again. But you proved them wrong. And today we are winning in Wales once more.

People said the same elsewhere too. They said we couldn't win in the North of England.

But tell that to the voters of Copeland and their new, brilliant Member of Parliament Trudy Harrison "" the first Conservative Member of Parliament for Copeland since before the second world war.

This is the modern Conservative Party "" reaching out to all parts of the country and winning in all parts of the country.

A Party that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

Our task as party

And right across Great Britain on the 4th of May, people will go to the polls to decide who they want to run their local services, care for their local environment and set the council tax they pay.

In Scotland and here in Wales, there will be all-out elections in every single local authority.

In England, as well as county council and unitary authority elections, some of our great cities and the areas around them will choose powerful new mayors.

As a Party, we go into these important elections confident about the job we can do to serve local people and local communities.

Because from Cardiff to the Cairngorms, and from Dover to Durham, people are looking for a party with a plan to secure a better future for their town or their city, their county and their country.

Our task as Conservatives is clear ““ we must work to be that Party.

In local elections across Great Britain, that means being the Party that sets out the credible and compelling case to keep council tax low, for more effective and efficient local services and for more responsive representation.

In the elections for new metro-mayors, our candidates:

Andy Street in the West Midlands,

James Palmer in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough,

Sean Anstee in Greater Manchester,

Tony Caldeira in Liverpool city region,

Ben Houchen in Tees Valley, and

Tim Bowles in the West of England...

...must be the candidates pointing the way to a better quality of life, greater social, cultural and economic opportunity, and a more prosperous future for local people ““ with a plan to deliver.

And as Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom, responding to ““ and delivering on ““ the decision of the British people to leave the European Union and embark on a new global role, our task is clearer still.

It is to use this moment of opportunity to shape a brighter future for Britain.

It is to use this period of change to step back and ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be.

And it is to use the years ahead to deliver an ambitious programme of economic and social reform that prepares Britain for that brighter future and ensures we emerge stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking than ever before.

Plan for Britain

And that is why today, I want to talk to you about this Government's Plan for Britain.

A Plan for Britain that will guide our policies and actions.

A Plan for Britain that will deliver a stronger, fairer country.

For we stand on the threshold of one of the most significant moments Britain has known for many years.

During the next two weeks, we will trigger Article 50 and begin the negotiations to secure the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

And at such moments ““ great national moments that define the character of a nation ““ we have a choice.

We can look forward with optimism and hope. Or give in to the politics of fear and despair.

I choose to believe in Britain and that our best days lie ahead.

Because while the road before us may be uncertain at times, I believe - with the British people - that it leads towards a brighter future for our nation's children and grandchildren.

That brighter future won't just happen. The stronger, fairer country we want won't just emerge. It will take effort and focus. Discipline and hard work.

And above all, it requires that we set out and deliver on a plan.

So, our Plan for Britain is a plan for a brighter future.

A plan to make the most of the opportunities ahead and to build a stronger, fairer Britain that is more united and more outward-looking.

A plan to get the right deal for Britain abroad yes, but also a better deal for ordinary, working people here at home.

And that is crucial.

For the referendum result was not just a vote to leave the European Union. It was an instruction to change the way our country works ““ and the people for whom it works ““ forever.

It was a call to change the balance of Britain ““ to make this great United Kingdom a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

We ““ the Conservative Party ““ understand that.

We ““ the Conservative Party ““ will respond.

We will get the right deal for Britain abroad ““ forging a new partnership with our friends and allies in Europe, but looking beyond Europe to build relationships with old friends and new allies around the world too.

And at the same time, we will pursue the ambitious economic and social reforms we need to make Britain work for working people.

That means building a stronger economy and investing in the things that will deliver for Britain in the long-term, tackling the problem of low productivity and helping to secure the high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future.

It means creating a fairer society, as we break down the barriers of privilege and spread opportunity and prosperity around the country.

It means forging a more united nation, as we put the values of fairness, responsibility and citizenship at the heart of everything we do.

It means building a stronger, fairer Britain that our children and grandchildren will be proud to call home.

A global Britain

From the start, the Britain we build as we leave the EU must be a truly Global Britain.

A Britain that is outward-looking and embraces the world.

Because the vote to leave the European Union was not a vote to turn our backs on our international role, or abandon our international outlook.

Britain at its best has always been a great, global, trading nation.

We have always been shaped by, and have helped to shape, global events.

We are one of the world's largest economies, with strong and fruitful relationships with countries around the world.

Those co-operative and open-hearted relationships are vital to our future success.

As we leave the EU, we will embrace the world and build a global, outward-looking Britain that is a confident and responsible player on the world stage.

Of course, that means getting on with the job of delivering Brexit, striking the right deal for Britain – one that builds a new partnership with Europe.

And we have been clear about our negotiating objectives.

Certainty wherever possible. Control of our own laws. Strengthening the United Kingdom.

Maintaining the Common Travel Area with Ireland. Control of immigration. Rights for EU nationals in Britain, and British nationals in the EU.

Enhancing rights for workers. Free trade with European markets. New trade agreements with other countries.

A leading role in science and innovation. Co-operation on crime, terrorism and foreign affairs. And a phased approach, delivering a smooth and orderly Brexit.

Twelve objectives that amount to one big goal: a new, positive and constructive partnership between Britain and the European Union.

But a Global Britain also means making the Britain that emerges from the EU the leading advocate for global free trade, and promoting and defending the forces of economic liberalism which have such an overwhelmingly positive impact on our world.

It means building and strengthening our relationships with old friends and new allies, getting out and doing business right across the globe.

That is what the Department for International Trade has been doing since it was set up last summer – building up our capability and readiness for that new global role, and promoting British goods and services around the globe.

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It means continuing to attract the brightest and the best to work or study in Britain, but ensuring that process is managed properly so that our immigration system serves the national interest...

...continuing to meet our commitments to the world's poor and to support developing countries, protecting British interests and making the world a safer place for everyone.

And supporting our armed forces as they keep our country safe and secure.

Britain is one of the few nations anywhere in the world to meet both its UN aid target and its NATO defence target.

That is a global Britain of which we can all be proud.

A stronger economy

But our success as a Global Britain will be underpinned by the second objective of our Plan for Britain: a stronger economy where everyone plays by the same rules.

We have achieved a lot over the last six years to fix the economic mess left by Labour and restore our public finances.

The deficit has been reduced and our economy has grown.

In 2009-10 the UK borrowed £1 in every £5 that was spent. This year it is set to be £1 in every £15.

Working with businesses and business leaders across the country, we have delivered a record numbers of jobs, giving more people in our country economic security and peace of mind for their families.

We have taken the lowest-paid out of tax altogether, and brought in the National Living Wage, so that people who work hard every day in often arduous jobs can enjoy a better standard of living.

But there is still so much more to do.

So our Plan for Britain will continue to bring the deficit down, so that the country lives within its means.

In doing so, we will take a balanced approach...

...allowing us to invest where it is needed...

...like the £2 billion additional money for adult social care we announced last week...

...and where it will make the difference for Britain in the long-term, like the £500m a year we committed in the Budget to bring genuinely world-class technical education to Britain for the first time.

This funding will help to increase the amount of technical training for 16-19 year olds by 50%.

It includes a high-quality 3 month work placement for every student.

And it means that, when they qualify, they will be genuinely "work-ready".

It means we will be taking technical education seriously "" and giving it the parity of esteem it deserves "" as we roll out our new modern industrial strategy to all parts of the country.

That strategy will encourage and support the key sectors of our economy; provide more opportunities for young people to find high-quality, high-skilled work; and spread opportunity and prosperity around the whole of the country.

This approach has already been welcomed by sectors across our economy, and I look forward to publishing our White Paper later in the year.

And to build a stronger economy that works for everyone, Government must also support competitive markets and an open economy.

That means recognising where markets are not working for customers, and being ready to step in on their behalf, so that consumers get a fair deal.

One market that is manifestly not working for all consumers is the energy market.

Energy is not a luxury, it is a necessity of life. But it is clear to me ““ and to anyone who looks at it ““ that the market is not working as it should.

Prices have risen by 158% over the last fifteen years, and ordinary working families are finding that they are spending more and more of their take-home pay on heating and lighting each month.

The vast majority of consumers, especially those with the lowest incomes, are on the most expensive tariffs.

Relying on switching alone to keep prices down is clearly not working.

Our Party did not end the unjust and inefficient monopolies of the old nationalised energy corporations only to replace them with a system that traps the poorest customers on the worst deals.

So we are looking very closely at how we can address this problem, and ensure a fairer deal for everyone.

We will set out our plans very soon.

This is a Government on the side of working people, acting to repair broken consumer markets, to improve the spending power of people who are just about managing with everyday costs and bills.

Because it is the job of Government to act in the national interest and to protect the people.

To crack down on individuals and businesses that abuse the system so that everyone ““ however big or small ““ plays by the same rules.

That is the fairer Britain we are building.

And our Conservative vision of a Britain that works for everyone is a Britain where workers' rights are protected and enhanced.

Employment rights in Britain already exceed those guaranteed by EU regulation, and under this Government they will only be extended, and never diminished.

Ensuring that in a modern, flexible economy people are properly protected at work will also be a priority.

That is why we have commissioned Matthew Taylor to lead a review into the rights and protections people have in work in the new modern economy, so that we can be certain that employment regulation and practices are keeping pace with the changing world of work.

The Conservative Party ““ the party of workers, of consumers, of responsible businesses with a plan to build a stronger economy for all.

A fairer society

And the third objective of our Plan is to build a fairer society, where success is based on merit, not privilege.

We have already started to rebalance our society in favour of ordinary working people.

Our plans for housing will deliver one million more homes, so that more people can afford a home of their own, while ensuring the housing market is fair to those who own their home and those who don't.

That means action to help renters, as well as buyers.

We will continue to put record investment into the NHS to help people at every stage of their life and support a vital national institution.

We will help people who can work get back into employment, so that they can benefit from a happier, healthier and more productive life...

...and so our welfare system is fair to those who need it and fair to those who pay for it.

But we need to go further, and turn Britain into a Great Meritocracy, where success is defined by work and talent, not birth or circumstance.

So our Plan for Britain will provide a good school place for every child ““ one that gives them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the future and reach their full potential in life.

We will support existing state schools to do even better, through sponsorship by universities and collaboration with the independent sector.

We will help faith schools to expand, while making sure they include pupils from different backgrounds.

And we will do something else, which no government has done for generations.

We will extend to the children of working class families the same opportunities enjoyed by the children of the well-off, by ending the ban on new academically selective schools in England.

These new schools will face rigorous requirements to ensure that as well as giving greater opportunities to their own students, they also support their neighbouring non-selective schools to do the best by theirs.

There will be no return to the binary models of the past, but rather a step into a more egalitarian future, where the opportunity to receive the education which suits a child best is within reach of everyone in our society, and not just a privileged few.

Because being a Government at the service of the people means taking action on the issues that concern them.

Not thinking we know best and turning a blind-eye to their concerns, but listening and responding to what people want.

So we will take control of immigration and make sure the immigration system works in the national interest.

We will welcome immigrants who make a valued and necessary contribution to our economy and society, but we will once again have

control of the system, and manage it according to our needs.

And at the very same time that we take action to address people's legitimate concerns about immigration, we will be unstinting in our determination to tackle the historic injustices, like racial and gender discrimination, that hold too many people in our society back.

The Britain we will build must be a country where everyone has an equal chance to succeed and where getting on in life is dependent on talent and hard work, not background or connections.

Our Party should aspire to be the servant and the voice of hard-working and patriotic British people of every social class and race, of any religion and none, of women and men equally, of gay and straight, young and old.

We are a union of people who are bound together by enduring common interests "" and all are respected and welcome in our party and our country.

A United Nation

Because everything I have been talking about today adds up to the over-arching goal of our Plan for Britain: the creation of a more united nation, that our children and grandchildren are proud to call home.

Our Party believes heart and soul in our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The precious bond between four nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

But that union is more than just a constitutional artefact.

It is a union between all of our citizens, whoever we are and wherever we're from.

So our Plan for Britain will put strengthening and sustaining that Union at its heart.

It means taking the big decisions when they're the right ones for Britain in the long-term.

Putting the national interest above any other consideration.

And it means ensuring that we act in the interests of the whole country "" creating jobs and supporting cities, towns and communities right across our United Kingdom.

It has always been the special mission of our Conservative Party to be the true national party in Britain.

To aspire to represent all of the country and all of the people.

And today our goal must be nothing less.

Because we are now the Party of the new centre-ground of British politics.

Rejecting the extremes of Labour's socialist left, UKIP's libertarian right, and the divisive and obsessive nationalisms of Plaid Cymru and the SNP.

And we have seen that tunnel vision on display again this week. The SNP argue that we should break up the UK because we are leaving the EU...

...but three years ago they campaigned for a result that would have taken Scotland out of the EU altogether.

They are happy to see power rest in Brussels. But if those powers come back to London... they want them given to Edinburgh... so that they can try to give them back to Brussels.

And now they apparently say that an independent Scotland would no longer seek to become a member of the EU after a vote for separation.

It is muddle on muddle.

The fact that more Scottish voters backed Scotland staying in the UK in 2014, than supported the UK staying in the EU in 2016...

...and that almost half a million independence supporters actually backed Brexit last year...

...seems to count for nothing.

It is now clear that using Brexit as the pretext to engineer a second independence referendum has been the SNP's sole objective ever since last June.

But it would be bad for Scotland, bad for the United Kingdom, and bad for us all.

The coming negotiations with the EU will be vital for everyone in the United Kingdom.

Every person, every family, every business, every community the length and breadth of the United Kingdom "" England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is essential that we get the right deal, and that all of our efforts and energies as a country are focused on that outcome.

We can only get that deal if we are united, as one United Kingdom, all pulling together to get the best outcome.

That is what we have always done when faced with challenges.

We have pulled together as one and succeeded together.

We are four nations, but at heart we are one people.

As the Prime Minister of this United Kingdom, I will always ensure the voices and interests of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are represented as we negotiate to leave the EU.

And I will always fight to strengthen and sustain this precious, precious Union.

Conclusion

A great leader of our Party once said that 'the Tory Party, unless it is a national party, is nothing.'

Our Party, he went on to say, 'is a party formed from all the numerous classes in the realm "" classes alike and equal before the law, but whose different conditions and different aims give vigour and variety to our national life.'

At its best, it has always been the mission of our Party to serve all of the people.

To be the truly national party.

To act always in the national interest, and never in a sectional interest.

To encourage the strong, and to protect the vulnerable.

To enable success, and to use the fruits of our collective success to advance the common good.

In the years ahead, these are the values that should light our path.

With our vision of a better future for our country...

a plan for a stronger, fairer Britain...

and the determination to see it through...

we will achieve that mission and be worthy of that better future."

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