

Chairman: Brandon Lewis: Spring Forum 2018

Thank you, Rob, for those warm words.

But thank you, above all, for your leadership of the National Convention.

And for all that you do, day in and day out, for our Party.

And – I know from all your phone calls and emails – night in, night out...

RENEWAL

I can't tell you how *proud* I am to be standing here today as the Chairman of our great Party...

Over the last couple of months, I've travelled right across our country, *meeting* and *listening* to so many members...

I even had to battle through the Beast from the East... (And I don't mean Dennis Skinner...!)

So I'm rather pleased that in three days, it'll officially be the beginning of spring – despite what the weather may tell us...

There cannot be a better time for us to launch our plan for renewal and our roadmap for the future.

Ours is a party that's always seeking to improve – to raise our game, politically and organisationally;

That's *how* we've kept going all these years.

That's *why* we're the oldest political party in the world.

And not just the oldest: *also* the most successful.

And we must – and will – do it again!

I want to thank my predecessor, Sir Patrick McLoughlin, for his leadership in steering the Party over the last year.

And I want to pay tribute to my *extraordinary* team.

Our new Deputy Chairman and Vice Chairman have hit the ground running, whilst our hardworking staff at CCHQ, led by Sir Mick Davis, have *thrown themselves* into building our election machine with energy and dedication.

To all of them – and to all our staff across the country who go that extra mile – I want to say thank you.

And so today, I want to tell you about my priorities as your Chairman.

Priorities that have been shaped by more than twenty years of political life:

- By the politics I learnt in Brentwood and Sherwood, in Great Yarmouth and Great Britain;
- And by my experience as an activist, as a councillor, as a parliamentary candidate and as an MP.

1.
I'm going to talk about our membership,

2.
I'm going to talk about how we are changing the way we campaign across our country and on social media...

3.
And I want to talk to you about the steps we are taking to ensure that we develop a more diverse pool of candidates...

So that – across *all* of these key issues – we can continue to build upon our recent successes, and deliver a Conservative campaign machine that is *fighting fit* for the next general election.

THE GENERAL ELECTION

A lot of our success is

down to the help and support of all of you.

At last year's General Election, I know many of you worked *relentlessly, tirelessly, selflessly*... to try to secure the result we all wanted.

We have learnt lessons, and I want to thank Sir Eric Pickles for his review and Sir Mick Davis for his business plan setting out how to ensure our team that is fighting fit for the next election.

I just wonder... How many of you thought about how much time and energy you put into the campaign?

Do you know how many calls you made?

(Don't worry...the interactive part comes later!)

But let me tell you: it was *one hundred and thirty-six thousand*.

And do you know how many leaflets we delivered between us?

It was 50 million!

And you talked, too, to millions of voters on the doorstep.

For all of this, and for all you continue to do as we look towards the local elections, I want to say thank you.

But right now, let's think for a moment about why we are proud to be Conservatives.

Let me tell you a story...

It's the story of Jack.

Jack is born in a hospital with extra doctors and extra nurses taking care of him thanks to our investment in the NHS.

When Jack's ready for nursery, his mum – if she wants to – can go back to work because we've introduced free childcare.

Along with nearly 2 million extra other kids, he'll go on to get a good or outstanding education

because of the conservative government's reforms

And Jack can go to a well-funded university or he may decide that academia is not for him, and because we've introduced apprenticeships, he'll have the skills to get a great job in the workplace – one of the thousands of jobs created since 2010.

And if Jack falls in love...

And he might fall in love with somebody of the same sex...

Thanks to the legislation that we as Conservatives introduced, he will be able to get married.

And Jack will be able to get on the housing ladder

and he'll get a deposit using Help to Buy,

and he'll live in a house built by the Conservatives.

And as Jack gets on in life, he'll have confidence that there's a well-funded NHS to look after him, and a pension that's sustainable thanks to our reforms.

And that's why, although over the past 8 years we have had to make difficult choices, I am proud of – we should all be proud – what the Conservative government has achieved.

And by the way, Jack's story is also Jane's... and Rashid's and Aisha's.

This is a Conservative government that works for everyone.

MEMBERSHIP

We know that we can't continue to improve the lives of people in this country unless we *win* elections.

And to *win* elections we must have an effective campaigning force.

Our members *lie at the heart* of our ability to do

this.

As members and supporters,
you are the backbone of this Party.

I'm in politics to make a
difference.

My guess is that that's why
you're in politics, too.

And believe me, you do make
a difference.

Every door you knock on...

Every one of those 50
million leaflets you pushed through a letterbox...

(And the ones I hope you'll
be delivering in the weeks ahead of the local elections)...

Every post you share
online...

It makes a difference:

- A *difference* to the debate;
- A *difference* to our democracy;
- A *difference* to our party's chances of victory and of government.

We will be going out there
to make a difference as a *family* of
members that is *growing* in numbers...

You know, in recent years
there has been much speculation about the number of members we have.

Apparently we have *100,000...70,000... or 30,000* members.

None of these figures were
correct.

It is time to end that
speculation.

I can tell you, that as of
today, we have *124,000* members.

And *thousands* have joined since the general

election – and in fact we have 6,000 new members since January.

But it could, and should, be higher still.

And let's not forget that the *Conservative family* extends way beyond our party membership...:

...The *thousands of* activists, who aren't full members...

...The 350,000 members of Conservative Clubs, many of whom go out at the weekend to make the case for us on the doorstep.

I want us to find ways of making sure that *everyone*—all 500,000— in our Conservative family feel like they are part of the team.

We can do this by bringing forward a vision of *modern* Conservative membership.

And one of the most important things we *need* to do – as part of that modernisation process – is to start administering our membership centrally.

Members will *always* belong to constituency associations.

The constituency association is the *rock on which* the Conservative party is founded.

It is *fundamental* to our internal culture, *fundamental* to our approach to politics and *fundamental* to our success.

CANDIDATES

On which note, I want to make clear that local associations will *always* have the *right* to choose their own parliamentary candidates.

I want to make sure that we have the best pool of candidates for you to choose from...

And I believe that we can have the very best candidates without using shortlists and quotas, which do not get to the root of the problem.

There is one area, in particular, that we should be focusing on as a Party: *women*.

It's *why* the Prime Minister co-founded Women2Win and *why* we are working with CWO to reach out to women up and down the country.

There are so many talented women in this country who would make excellent Conservative candidates.

And we need to go out and find more of them to join our already inspiring group of Conservative female MPs.

Just for the record, at CCHQ, we are leading by example:

We are today publishing gender pay figures that demonstrate across CCHQ – whether that's at director level, executive officers or managers – we are giving our male and female staff equal pay for equal work.

We must and can do more – in particular, we need more women in CCHQ.

This is a challenge *across* parties, politics and our society...

We need to create an environment in which we proactively reach out and encourage women to join our Party, run for local council, stand for Parliament and work for our Party.

CAMPAIGNING AND DIGITAL

And finally, as Party Chairman, I will be doing everything I can to renew our party machine and to build on our successes.

For example, we have now hired 81 new campaign managers and ramped up our digital operations since the election.

We're producing far more online content and we're doing it every single day.

But what we do at CCHQ is only part of the battle:

I need you to get involved!

To spread the message:

- On Facebook, engaging with friend and political foe, alike... but *nicely*...
- On Twitter, re-tweeting

positive news and supporting your local candidates...

· And on Instagram, sharing pictures of yourselves and your fellow campaigners, taking the fight to Labour...

CONCLUSION

The point is that we all have a part to play...

And you are as important in helping us as I am.

We are only six weeks to our next electoral test.

There is so much at stake.

Because the consequences of inaction are just so serious...

In some of your areas, the difference between winning and losing is a handful of votes.

That *extra hour* we put in could be the thing that makes the difference.

That *extra hour* that means we win one extra seat, in one extra ward, that gives us the right to govern....

So I would ask all of you – our Conservative family:

To let us go from here...

To take the fight to Labour...

In every town, on every street, on every doorstep...

To earn the right to build a Britain that is fit for the future!

Thank you.