

David Cameron Spring Forum speech

In a speech to Conservative Party Spring Forum, Conservative Party Leader, David Cameron said:

(Check against delivery)

Party on the way up

“What a great Spring Forum we’ve had.

Ideas. Energy. Above all, a real commitment to change this country for the better.

Not just through speeches and policies for tomorrow.

But through action for a better country today.

For the last two days you’ve been out and about, helping with projects all over the North West.

We’ve been hearing about some of them at this conference.

I’m proud of you.

We’re all proud of you.

That is the spirit of the new Conservative Party.

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We’ve heard so many inspiring speeches and presentations over the past two days.

I am very lucky to have such a strong and united team.

Every morning we start with a meeting to agree our plans for holding the government to account...

...and taking forward our positive agenda.

I have David Davis on my left and William Hague on my right.

Good, gritty northern common sense.

And isn’t it great to have William Hague back in the top team?

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Well it's been a busy few months.

Charles Kennedy's retired.

Tony Blair's about to retire.

He's certainly taking his time over it...

Soon I will be the longest serving leader of a major political party in the country.

But don't worry, Gordon; don't worry Ming...

I won't be attacking my opponents for their youth and inexperience.

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For these last four months we have been a consistent voice for change, optimism and hope.

That's why we're now making progress on every front.

We're scoring an average of 40 per cent in council by-elections.

We won a seat from Labour on Thursday night, in South Ribble here in the North West...

...a seat we hadn't contested for 12 years.

Our candidate has been a midwife for 39 years.

She delivered a great victory.

Let's hear it for Dorothy Gardner.

We've signed up 20,000 new members – at a time when other parties are losing support.

People are once again looking at our Party and saying...

...yes, you're in touch with our lives...

...yes, you share our passions...

...and yes, you have the energy, the ideas and the drive to lead our great country once again.

That's the new mood here in Manchester.

And you know what...I like it.

Labour are tired and weary.

The Liberals are muddled and dreary.

We are the party that is fit for the future.

This Party is on its way back.

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Conservatives: the party of local government

In the last few weeks I've travelled all over this country supporting hard-working Conservative candidates and councillors.

From Coventry to Crawley.

From Hereford to Hackney.

From Lincolnshire to Leeds.

I have to say, it's been brilliant.

Morale is high.

Everyone is working flat out to get the best possible result on May 4th.

We are already the largest party in local government.

And I want us to build on that.

We believe in trusting people with more power and control over their own lives.

And that should mean trusting local councils with more power to improve their own communities.

I'm excited that we are reconnecting with a proud part of our political heritage.

Conservative faith in civic pride stretches back to Chamberlain.

I'm proud of our councils and the work they're doing for local people.

Councils like Woking.

They aren't waiting around for a global solution to climate change.

They've led the way.

Reducing carbon emissions through the use of combined heat and power.

Generating electricity from waste.

Achieving a 30 per cent improvement in home energy efficiency.

And I'm proud of our Tory-run councils like Wandsworth in London that have taken the initiative in tackling homelessness.

It's called Hidden Homes.

They scour every estate for empty houses and spare space.

They renovate and build new accommodation within existing structures.

And now they are set to create hundreds of new homes.

Trusting people. Sharing responsibility. That is modern Conservatism in action.

Labour: the party of regional government

What a contrast with the Labour Party.

Their drive for regionalisation is taking more and more power from local communities.

Regional planning. Regional transport. Regional housing.

Now – it's regional ambulances. Health authorities. Fire services.

We have never been asked if we want any of this.

And now it is getting worse, with Charles Clarke's plan for regional Police forces.

We need policing that is closer to the people - not further away.

The council elections on May 4th are a chance for everyone to tell Charles Clarke and John Prescott loud and clear – nobody wants your regionalisation.

A future Conservative government will scrap unelected regional assemblies and give power back to local people.

People want change – to meet the challenges of the future

I passionately believe that this country needs a change in direction.

Labour don't have the answers to the great challenges we face.

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When the next generation of British children leave school in ten years' time, 2016...

...China could be producing 8 million graduates every year.

In the competitive world of the future we cannot afford to leave the potential of a single child unfulfilled.

In the past we've allowed ourselves to be distracted by arguments over a small number of schools.

We have to get education right for everyone.

We know what works.

Giving head teachers the freedom to lead.

Ensuring discipline in the classroom so everyone can learn.

And setting by ability - so we stretch the brightest pupils and help those in danger of falling behind.

We must become the party not of excellence for the few, but a first class local school for everyone.

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As our children make their way in the world, we need to do much more to help them fulfil their aspirations.

In 1997 the average deposit for a house or flat was around £5,000.

Today it's approaching £25,000.

Put simply, we're pricing our young people out of aspiration.

There is a new housing apartheid in Britain between those who already own their own homes ...

...and those young people who look at their salaries, then look at house prices, and fear that they will never achieve that dream.

We need starter homes.

We need shared ownership.

We need more houses that are beautiful, environmentally sensitive, and above all, affordable.

We helped millions to buy their council houses in the 1980s.

And we must become the Party of aspiration once again.

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Young families need help with their aspirations too.

To strike the right balance between work and family life.

The cost of childcare in this country is steadily rising.

A place in a crèche now costs nearly £40 a day.

And for every five childcare places that open, three close.

For most families in Britain today, childcare is not one issue amongst many.

It is the most important issue in their lives.

We in this Party must be on their side.

That means backing flexible working.

It means more support for childcare.

And it means giving people more choice.

We must become the party that doesn't lecture parents about the choices they ought to make...

...but backs parents in the choices they want to make.

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And we must become the party that offers young families a vision of a cleaner, greener, brighter environment.

For our generation, the environment isn't an issue on the fringes of politics.

It's about the kind of world we want our children to enjoy and inherit.

Parks and public spaces that are a daily delight, not a daily obstacle course.

Towns and cities where it isn't a hassle to get around.

A method of modern living which combines creature comforts with care for our climate.

Climate change is a huge and growing problem.

In Britain the three hottest years since records began centuries ago all occurred in the last decade.

Our planet is rapidly getting warmer.

The polar ice caps are melting.

Sea levels are rising.

Hosepipe bans in April.

What more evidence do we need?

We simply cannot afford to ignore it.

This Government hasn't taken the environment nearly seriously enough.

We need to be the party that doesn't tiptoe around the issue.

Instead of just far-off targets that we will never meet, we need binding targets for carbon emissions every year.

We can take a lead.

We can make a difference.

Imagine if twenty years ago I'd have told you that all our cars would be running on unleaded petrol...

...that we'd be recycling our waste on a daily basis...

...that houses in England would have solar panels on their roofs.

You'd have thought I was mad.

Well today I want this Party to lead a new green revolution.

Daring to imagine possibilities that seem a distant dream today.

Unleashing innovation, imagination, inspiration.

Setting a clear framework that brings forward the best technology, the brightest thinking, the boldest plans.

And setting a clear challenge for individuals, for households, for business and for government...

...a clear challenge that says: this is our planet, our future, our responsibility.

We're all in this together, and together we can lead the way.

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Just as we think for the long-term on the environment...

...so too must we think for the long-term about that great challenge of our time: pensions.

The advance of science, medicine, prosperity means that we are living longer.

Forty years in work followed by forty years in retirement.

That could soon become everybody's expectation.

It must surely be our mission to help each individual live each precious stage of their life to the full.

Filling in forms to get means-tested benefits?

What a way to treat the elderly, those who by any moral code most deserve our respect and support.

So let us set a clear direction.

Raising state pensions to reduce means testing.

And raising the retirement age to help pay for it.

We must lead the debate on pensions.

A serious party must make serious decisions for the long term.

And a truly compassionate party must recognise what pensioners give our society.

Almost one and a half million are carers.

Fighting their own frailty, they tend the needs of others.

Dismissing their own vulnerability, they put their loved ones first.

What courage. What duty. What pure and selfless love.

Here then is a modern crusade for our Party.

Let's fight for the rights of carers.

Let's give them recognition, respite, support.

Let's help them keep on caring, but let's care for the carers too.

So we must become the Party that stands proudly for dignity, for security...

...and for richly-earned independence in everyone's old age.

Our Party must change

But remember something...

We'll never be in a position to make the changes the country needs until we, as a party, have shown that we have changed.

We lost three elections in a row.

The British people are looking to see if the Conservative Party has learned the lessons of defeat.

This Party has been around for a long time.

You could say we're Built To Last.

Our history has always been intimately bound up with the history of Britain itself.

During every period of social change the Conservative Party has changed too.

Sometimes we've led that change.

Sometimes we've reflected it.

But we have never allowed ourselves to remain isolated from the people of this country.

In recent years Britain has changed faster than ever.

Much of that change, the direct result of our own actions in government.

So true to our traditions, we are changing once again.

Changing our priorities.

Changing our attitudes.

Changing the face of our party with action to select more women and ethnic minority candidates.

So don't think it's enough to change the leader.

This change I'm leading has got to get faster, wider, deeper.

We all have to change.

We must show that the change is real, that it is lasting.

That means every aspect of how we behave.

The candidates we select.

The decisions you make in local government.

The issues and causes that we choose to champion.

We all have a role in the change that must take place.

We've made a good start.

We're once more the place to go for the exciting ideas in British politics.

Ask anyone who's involved in our policy groups.

It's been thrilling to see how many people with real expertise in their fields have been eager to work with us.

We're championing radical and exciting policies like decentralised energy, independence for the NHS, setting in schools and freeing social enterprise.

Even before we get into government the strength of our ideas is setting the agenda for Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

There is a new dynamic in British politics – we propose something, they grab hold of it.

I launch a campaign for synthetic phonics to help every child learn to read properly.

They implement it.

I launch a national school leaver programme – to help bind us together as a nation.

They take it up.

I have even got Gordon Brown to talk about the environment – quite an achievement.

Of course, the real achievement would be to get him to actually *do* something about it.

In the last four months we have shown that we will be consistent Conservatives, offering positive and constructive opposition.

In the case of the Education Bill we had a choice.

Score a political point by opposing the bill and trooping through the lobbies with left-wing dinosaurs like Dennis Skinner and Frank Dobson.

Or we could do the right thing by backing a measure that will bring nearer the school freedom that we profoundly believe will help our children.

We made the right choice.

And at the same time we demonstrated that the Conservatives are the only party that's united in favour of real reform.

Under my leadership, we'll always strive to do the right thing.

That means saving our energy to oppose the government when it's wrong.

Like on ID cards.

Labour can't decide what it's for.

They can't control what it costs.

They can't explain why they're making it compulsory.

Labour's plastic poll tax has no place in modern Britain.

It's an ugly monument to the waste, chaos and vanity of intrusive, over-mighty government.

I promise you this....in office, we will pull it down.

Brake or accelerator?

There's so much we need to change in our country - we can't afford to waste time going slow on changing our Party.

So now is not the time to put our foot on the brake.

Now is the time to press on the accelerator.

We must fast forward to the new Conservative Party.

I know some of you think we've had quite enough change for the time being.

I read the letters...

Asking me to slow down...

Telling me to take it easy...

Sometimes reminding me to wear a tie...

Well I say this.

Britain cannot wait while we take it easy.

We have a massive mountain to climb if we're to win the next election.

If we falter on the way, then Labour will win again.

And that means not just another three or four years of Labour government.

It means another eight or nine years of it.

And Britain cannot wait that long to tackle the urgent challenges we face.

In a world of fierce competition and amazing advance...

...Britain can't wait eight or nine years for a government that understands how to create a dynamic economy, rich in jobs, wealth and opportunity.

In a world where the pace of change can all too often pull us apart instead of bringing us together...

...Britain can't wait eight or nine years for a government that believes in strengthening families and communities.

And in a world where man is constantly tempted to purchase progress at nature's expense...

...Britain cannot wait another eight or nine years for a government that truly, deeply understands that we have to put the environment first.

Every day we see that these challenges are just not being met.

We see the barriers holding Britain back...

...and we know we have the right values, the right ideas, the right approach to do so much better.

We believe that the more we trust people, the stronger they and society become.

We believe that we're all in this together – government, business, the voluntary sector, families and individuals.

There is such a thing as society, it's just not the same thing as the state.

Trusting people.

Sharing responsibility.

These are the values Britain needs to face the challenges of the future.

It is our ideas - Conservative ideas - whose time has come again.

The spirit of enterprise.

The ladder of opportunity.

The instinct to conserve.

In this generation, the chance to place these ideas - our ideas - in service once more to the greatest cause of all...

...the future of our country.

So don't let them tell you that politics is boring.

Don't let them tell you it's all just the same.

Here is the difference.

Here is the passion.

Here is the chance to be part of great change.

Come with me, and show me you can do it.

Come with me, and show them we can do it.

Changing our Party.

Changing our country.

The fire of hope burning bright once again.”

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121