



The TaxPayers' Alliance Manifesto: 1 Year On

Shortly before the last General Election, the TaxPayers' Alliance produced a manifesto. We pledged to judge any new Government on the standard it set. The manifesto set out recommendations in three areas – tax & spending, reforming services and democracy & transparency – and divided them between measures where it expected to see action within three months, a year and five years.

The 11th of May 2011 marks one year since the coalition Government took office and David Cameron became Prime Minister. This briefing sets out our current view of progress on the manifesto objectives with a rating and brief explanation for each of them. The projects are rated from zero – no progress at all or policy going in the wrong direction – to five out of five – where the objective has been satisfied or a clear path has been set out for that to happen. Often progress is the result of Government decisions, but in some cases backbench MPs and others have been responsible.

It is encouraging that progress has been made on some of the longer term – five-year – objectives and we have included an assessment of all the objectives in our manifesto. But the focus of this document is on the **one year objectives**. There has been significant progress in many areas, though in others little has been done or things have got worse.

In the rest of this Parliament, the TaxPayers' Alliance will continue to campaign on the objectives set out in our manifesto. In those areas where good progress has been made so far we will work to ensure that the initial promise is delivered upon, in other areas we will campaign for change.

Scroll down for our full assessment, or click on the headings below to jump straight to that section:

Tax & Spending

Reforming Services

Democracy & Transparency



TAX & SPENDING

WITHIN 3 MONTHS

Scrap the 50p tax rate	The Treasury announced a review in the 2011 Budget into whether the 50p rate will raise any revenue, as independent forecasts suggest it will not. This is better than nothing but the rate is hurting the economy now which is increasing the burden on ordinary families. It should be scrapped immediately.	1/5
Cut government advertising spending in half	The Central Office of Information announced last year that its turnover on advertising and marketing was down 52% on the same period in 2009.	5/5
Institute clear fiscal rules with expenditure targets	Fiscal rules with expenditure targets have not been introduced, despite the evidence that they strengthen fiscal consolidations. But the Office of Budget Responsibility does appear to have strengthened independent monitoring of government fiscal policy.	1/5
Abolish a range of quangos	A modest number of quangos have been abolished including the Standards Board for England, BECTA and the Sustainable Development Commission. But there are many more including the Carbon Trust and the Equality and Human Rights Commission that should be scrapped, and the Government's quango review led to fewer abolitions than expected.	2/5

FIRST YEAR

Introduce a 2-year public sector pay freeze, increase contributions to unfunded public sector pensions and cut pay for the top 10% of earners in the public sector	The vital step of imposing a 2-year public sector pay freeze was taken at the Emergency Budget in 2010. Lord Hutton's review recommended an increase in employee contributions to public sector pensions, which is a good start, and those recommendations have been accepted.	4/5
Cut middle class welfare	Steps have been taken to cut middle class welfare such as Child Benefit, but some of the measures have been poorly designed.	3/5
Scrap Regional Development Agencies and cut other business spending	The Emergency Budget in 2010 announced that Regional Development Agencies are to be abolished. Local Enterprise Partnerships are cheaper, but maintain a culture of dependency on Government money. Lower taxes and less regulation will help businesses grow, not bureaucracies picking winners.	2/5
Reform climate change policy	Most of the Coalition's plans for climate change policy are going to increase the burden on families, notably the carbon price floor, and some of their assumptions about the likely costs of current policy are entirely unrealistic.	0/5

WITHIN 5 YEARS

Cut corporation tax to 15% or lower	Corporation Tax will be cut to 23% by the end of the Parliament. This is welcome but the pace and scale of the cuts is too timid. Higher taxes on UK oil production announced at the Budget appear likely to result in lower jobs, growth and – over time – revenue from the industry.	(2/5)
Abolish Inheritance Tax	There is no sign of the Conservatives fulfilling their manifesto pledge to lift the threshold for Inheritance Tax, less still abolish it.	(0/5)
Reform taxes and benefits	The increase in the personal income tax threshold is welcome, though reducing the threshold for the 40p rate is not. Action to simplify taxes has not matched the rhetoric. Benefit reforms are impressive but could have gone further in reducing withdrawal rates.	(2/5)

REFORMING SERVICES

WITHIN 3 MONTHS

Reform quangos	There have been few moves by the Government to introduce greater accountability for the many remaining quangos. Andrew Tyrie MP, the new Chair of the Treasury Select Committee, has insisted that the committee have the right to approve the head of the Office for Budget Responsibility and there is some sign other committees may follow.	2/5
Cancel Prevent grants from local authorities	It was announced last year that Prevent grants to Muslim community groups through local authorities were going to be scrapped.	5/5
Drop the 0.7% target for foreign aid spending and focus on results	Despite cuts elsewhere, spending on foreign aid is set to rise sharply. Some efforts have been made to cut wasteful 'Fake Aid' programmes but continued sharp rises in the budget are likely to result in further waste.	1/5

FIRST YEAR

Reform prisons	Proposals to reform to prison policy so far appear to be minor, leaving aside the debate over the numbers that should be in prison.	1/5
School choice	Despite significant opposition, groups of parents and teachers have been given the right to open new, free schools. This opportunity is being taken up and schools such as the West London Free School will open later this year. Many more schools have taken the opportunity to become academies too.	5/5
Scrap fixed speed cameras	With specific central government funding cut off, local authorities up and down the country began abandoning fixed speed cameras. However, some have started to switch them back on.	3/5
Introduce elected police commissioners	The Government appear to be on track to introduce elected police commissioners. They must avoid any backtracking or delay.	5/5
Refocus transport spending on high use commuter rail and roads	The Government are still focussing on big projects with dubious justification instead of doing more to relieve congestion on the roads and commuter trains. High Speed Rail will cost well over £1,000 a family.	0/5

WITHIN 5 YEARS

Decentralise government finance	The Government has achieved some fiscal decentralisation by removing many 'ring fences' on local authority grants. They have also proposed letting some councils keep business rates from their area. Referenda on excessive council tax strengthen local democratic control over funding.	(2/5)
Privatise Royal Mail	The Government have indicated their intention to privatise the Royal Mail but questions remain over the cost to taxpayers of an uncertain regulatory framework and preferential share purchasing rights for employees, in addition to the huge pension black hole	(3/5)
Reform the NHS	Proposed NHS reforms will give greater independence to frontline health services but without proper accountability to patients and taxpayers.	(2/5)

DEMOCRACY & TRANSPARENCY

WITHIN 3 MONTHS

Implement the Kelly proposals in full	New rules have been implemented and greater transparency introduced that should minimise the chances of a new scandal of the kind that ruined the reputation of the last Parliament. Unfortunately, there have been complaints from MPs and some members of the public that the implementation has been quite expensive and overly bureaucratic.	3/5
End all taxpayer funding for the unions	The Union Modernisation Fund has been scrapped but unions still receive huge amounts of staff time and public sector facilities at taxpayers' expense.	2/5
Start EU reforms	There has been little progress on EU reforms such as improving the scrutiny of laws emanating from the EU and a strengthened EU FOI law. Taxpayers are paying for ineffective eurozone bailouts and rising contributions.	0/5
Publish full data on spending	Substantial information has been published on central government spending. Councils are publishing spending over £500. More can be done to make data readable and there is a strong case to extend this kind of transparency to other bodies and to staff job descriptions and titles.	5/5

FIRST YEAR

Recall and citizens' initiatives	While both recall and citizens' initiatives have been proposed, it appears that both rights may be limited and progress has been limited.	1/5
Strengthen the Freedom of Information Act	There have been calls from the Deputy Prime Minister to strengthen the FOI Act, and to extend it to bodies not currently within its remit.	2/5
Reform lobbying	DCLG has moved to stop lobbying by councils and its quangos and the Sustainable Development Commission has been abolished. But the Public Administration Select Committee found that the Government missed an opportunity to stop quangos engaging in lobbying in their quango review.	2/5
Hold a referendum on fundamental renegotiation of our relationship with the EU	There have been no moves towards such a referendum.	0/5