MANIFESTO FOR LANGUAGES

From the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages*

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 ON MONDAY 14 JULY 2014

English is an important world language, but the latest cutting-edge research shows that, in the 21st century, speaking only English is as much of a disadvantage as speaking no English.

Knowledge of other languages - and of other cultures - is important for education and skills, the economy, international engagement, defence and security and community relations.

The 2015 General Election provides an ideal opportunity to make some milestone commitments – for the short, medium and long term – to making a step change in the UK’s national capacity in modern languages.

Without this step change:

· our economy will suffer as British firms are held back from trading across the world,
· our young people will suffer as they lose out in a global jobs market,
· our international reputation and capacity for global influence will suffer,
· our defence and security interests abroad will be damaged, and
· our cultural capital at home will be impoverished.

We need sustained action across the UK to revive national competence in languages and to arrest the growing tendency for language learning to be the preserve of an intellectual or affluent élite.

All children, not just the 7% in private education, should have a high quality language education to equip them to play their part in a globalised world.

*Chair: Baroness Coussins (Crossbench) Vice Chairs: Paul Maynard MP (Conservative), Nia Griffith MP (Labour), Baroness Sharp of Guildford (Liberal Democrat)

THE PRESSING CASE FOR IMPROVING OUR LINGUISTIC SKILLS BASE

£48 billion a year that the UK stands to lose in international sales because of language and cultural ignorance.

J Foreman-Peck, Cardiff Business School

‘In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, language skills are gaining rather than losing their relevance.’

British Academy

Jobs are going unfilled because applicants do not have language skills – and the greatest shortages are amongst elementary staff (22% in 2013) – UKCES

‘The next generation of business owners must be ‘born global’ with language skills’

British Chambers of Commerce
The APPG is leading a call to all political parties to support a Framework for National Recovery in Language Learning in their 2015 General Election manifestos:

- A long term commitment to transforming the reputation of UK citizens as poor linguists, reluctant to value languages other than English. Languages are as important for our future as STEM subjects. Leadership is needed to ensure they are given similar recognition.

- High quality language learning for all children throughout the UK from age 7. Support for teachers and trainers to develop their linguistic and professional skills and lead the recovery.

- A goal for every child to have a high quality language qualification by the end of secondary education. The reform of GCSEs and A-levels must encourage and reward progression to higher levels.

- Active encouragement for business and employers to get involved in tackling the crisis. Support for schools and employers to work together. Tax breaks and other incentives for business to train and recruit home-grown linguists.

- A commitment to maintaining and developing UK expertise in modern languages and cultures in university language departments. Maintain the status of languages as ’strategically important and vulnerable’ subjects and continued support for the Year Abroad.

The Framework for National Recovery in Language Learning is supported by over 100 businesses, organisations and leaders which include:

The British Academy
The British Council
Businesses, including:
Association of Translation Companies
British Chambers of Commerce
Conversis Global; Eriez Magnetics
Education & Employers Taskforce
HSBC
Rosetta Stone
UBS

Schools and teachers, including:
Association of Schools & College Leaders (ASCL)
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
Headmasters & Headmistresses Conference (HMC)
Girls’ School Association,
Girls’ Day School Trust

University groups, including:
Guild HE
UK HE International Unit
University Council of Modern Languages (UCML)
Association of University Language Centres (AULC)

Universities, including:
Bangor; Birkbeck; Cardiff; Durham; Leeds Met;
Sheffield; Southampton; UCL; UEA
University of Cambridge Faculty of Education
London School of Economics Language Centre

All the major language education bodies incl:
Academy of Social Sciences
Association for Language Learning (ALL)
BAAL, British German Association
Chartered Institute of Linguists, Languages Company
ISMLA, ITI, NALA, NALDIC, Speak to the Future

The full & updated list of supporters is at http://blog.britishcouncil.org/appg-modernlanguages/