

TEN QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

Replies by John Glen, Conservative Candidate for Salisbury

1. What is the view of candidates on the NIC rise, being discussed by all parties?

The Conservative policy is clear. The NIC rise is a tax on jobs and would stifle the recovery when we need to be doing everything we can to stimulate growth. Only the Conservatives have pledged to scrap these plans to increase NI.

2. How would candidates tackle the scourge of late payment facing small businesses?

The state has a poor record in paying suppliers on time. We will get the public sector to improve its payment times so that public bodies do not cause firms unnecessary cashflow problems.

3. Should small businesses be given the right of appeal against a decision by a bank to reject their loan application?

The real challenge is to get banks lending again. The Government's arbitrator will do nothing to help this - if it overrides a bank's decision not to lend, it means another business will lose out. We need to take action to get credit flowing again - this needs real change that only a Conservative Government will bring. We will use government guarantees to get credit flowing, building on our proposal for a big, bold and simple National Loan Guarantee Scheme.

4. Can candidates outline how they would ensure that small firms get a fair share when it comes to public sector contracts?

The Conservative Party will open up government procurement to small and medium-sized businesses by reducing administrative requirements, with an ambition that 25 per cent of government contracts go to SMEs.

5. Do candidates support the proposals for a Post Bank?

Conservatives would support local small firms by allow Post Offices to offer more business services. Labour have had 13 years to reform the Post Office, but only have a narrow set of proposals to show for it.

6. Would candidates declare a moratorium on employment regulations?

We will review employment and workplace laws for employers and employees to ensure they maximise flexibility in the workplace and provide the competitive environment required for enterprise to thrive in Britain in the 21st Century.

7. How would candidates halt the onward march of the big supermarkets?

Supermarkets provide consumers with a rich variety of choice and great convenience, but there is evidence that the big retailers have used unfair practices to squeeze the profit margins of producers. If farmers are to operate in the free market, government must ensure that the market operates fairly. We will introduce an Ombudsman, in the Office of Fair Trading, to enforce the Grocery Supply Code of Practice and curb abuses of power which undermine our farmers and act against the long-term interest of consumers. We also believe that co-operation between farms should be encouraged to give farmers more influence in the market-place and will promote the expansion of local food networks

8. Do candidates think that parking restrictions and charges should be lifted at certain times to encourage trade in the high street?

Parking decisions are a matter for local councils, and councils should take into account the effect of parking rules and charges on the local economy. However, planning guidance on transport issued by Labour tells councils to hike parking charges to discourage drivers and build fewer parking spaces in new development (so-called PPG13). We will scrap these anti-car rules imposed by Whitehall.

9. How would candidates ensure the police took crimes against businesses seriously?

The British Chambers of Commerce estimates the cost of crime against business has risen by 20% since 2004 with the total cost standing at £12.6 billion by 2008. We will give police the powers to deter troublemakers by restoring discretion to police officers so that they can respond quickly and easily to minor misdemeanours. There must be clear consequences for wrong-doing that deter young troublemakers from going on to commit more serious offences. We will also get more officers back out on the beat by cutting police bureaucracy.

10. Do any of the candidates have any real experience in running a business?

I grew up in a small, family horticultural business which is still run by my father.

After campaigning in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland for Michael (now Lord) Bates in the 1997 General Election I joined the Strategy practice of a large management consultancy firm. I worked on projects at Glaxo Wellcome, BP and the Post Office. From 2006 I took on a new role, managing my firm's relationship with the World Economic Forum.

Otherwise my experience is political, having helped prepare William Hague (the Conservative Party leader) for Prime Minister's Question Time and briefing the Shadow Cabinet for media appearances in my role as Head of the Political Section of the Conservative Research Department.

In early 2004 I was headhunted to return to the Conservative Party to work as Deputy Director of the Conservative Research Department looking after the day to day management of twenty researchers in the run up to the 2005 General Election. I then became Director of the Department and set up the secretariat for the Policy Review that was established after David Cameron became Leader.