Table of contents

1. Theresa May sets out vision for 'united Britain rooted in the centre ground'........................................ 1
Prime Minister Theresa May has targeted the centre ground as she set out her vision for Britain after Brexit and sought to overcome the Tories’ reputation as a party that works for a privileged minority. Speaking at the Conservative party conference, Mrs May said the referendum result on June 23 was about something “broader” than EU membership, and that it reflected a “deep” and “profound” sense among many people that the world works for the privileged few and not for them.

"Knock on almost any door" and you’ll find the roots of that feeling, the prime minister said.

"Our society should work for everyone but if you can't afford to get on the property ladder or if your child is stuck in a bad school it doesn't feel like it's working for you," she said. 

Mrs May, who took over from Mr Cameron after the "Leave" camp prevailed in the Brexit referendum, said she wanted to build a "new, united Britain rooted in the centre ground", where everyone plays "by the same rules".

Signalling a crackdown on corporate behaviour, including around working conditions and efforts by multi-nationals to reduce their tax bills, Mrs May said: 

If you are a boss who earns a fortune but doesn't look after your staff, an international company that treats tax laws as an optional extra...a director that takes out massive dividends while knowing that a company pension is about to go bust...I am putting you on warning. A change has got to come and this party is going to make it. 

She also stressed she would fight to keep the UK in tact, despite aspirations by the Scottish National Party to achieve independence for Scotland. 

Mrs May said she would always fight to preserve the union and never let "divisive" nationalists "drive us apart". In her closing speech in Birmingham she also took aim at "a lot of politicians and commentators" who "dismiss" the concerns of "ordinary working people". 

Among the other key takeaways from the speech:

* Mrs May repeated that Article 50 would be triggered "no later" than the end of March next year.
* It is too early to say "exactly" what agreement will be reached with the EU and it will not be in the "national interest" to keep up a running commentary on negotiations
* The Conservative Party will always believe in free markets, she said, but where markets are dysfunctional, "we must be prepared to intervene"
* Mrs May said "it's not right" that two-thirds of energy customers are stuck on the most expensive tariffs.
* The government may have to take "controversial" decisions about infrastructure to drive growth and will "shortly" make a decision on where a new runway in the south east of England should be built
* The government will later this year publish plans to ensure consumers and workers are represented on company boards
* Workers' rights aren't under threat from a Conservative government, she insisted.
* She said the Conservatives believe in a low tax economy but recognised tax is the "price we pay" to live in a civilised society. "It doesn't matter to me who you are, if you are a tax dodger, we are coming after you," she said.
* On monetary policy, she said"change has got to come".
* The government will lift the ban on establishing new grammar schools

Image from Getty/
Credit: Nathalie Thomas