

**The Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party
Manifesto 2024**

***FOCUSED ON
YOUR PRIORITIES***

A vote for the Scottish Conservatives in key seats is a vote to move Scotland on from the SNP's divisive independence obsession and get the focus onto:

Repairing the Roads:

We will fix and upgrade major and local roads across Scotland – including the A9, A96, A1, A90, A83, A77 and A75.

Ending Long NHS Waits:

We will recruit 1,000 extra GPs, deliver faster access to GP and hospital appointments and eradicate patient backlogs.

Restoring our Schools:

We will improve Scotland's education system through backing teachers to teach and increasing subject choice.

Making Scotland Safer:

We will put 1,000 extra police officers onto our streets and introduce longer sentences for dangerous criminals.

Cutting your Tax:

We will cut income tax and National Insurance for ordinary Scottish workers and families.

Contents

› Forewords	2
› Beat the SNP to get the focus onto your priorities	4
› Our plan to strengthen the United Kingdom	5
› Our plan for a secure, dynamic and growing economy	9
› Our plan to cut taxes and protect pensions	17
› Our plan to support families	21
› Our plan to get more people into work and build a fairer welfare system	25
› Our plan to give young people the opportunities and skills they need	29
› Our plan to secure our nation from global uncertainty	33
› Our plan to control immigration and stop illegal immigration	39
› Our plan to deliver better health and social care	43
› Our plan for safer streets and justice for victims of crime	47
› Our plan for an affordable and pragmatic transition to net zero	51
› Our plan to deliver more homes in the right places	55
› Our plan to strengthen communities	57
› Our plan to back farmers and fisheries to grow our food security	63
› Our plan to support our rural way of life and enhance our environment	67
› Our plan to support sport and the creative sector	71

Douglas Ross MSP

Scottish Conservative Leader

The General Election in Scotland is absolutely crucial. This is your chance to make the SNP pay the price for 17 years of failure and their obsession with independence. In key seats right across Scotland, it is only the Scottish Conservatives who can beat the SNP.

Every single person across our country will know someone who has been let down by this SNP Government. Whether it is a patient stuck on an NHS waiting list, a child who goes to school and does not get the education they deserve, or a friend who cannot get a good job because the opportunities just are not there. Yet, we are being taxed more for the privilege of being failed, with money frittered away on pet projects and campaigns about independence.

More and more Scots are viewing this nationalist administration as being campaigners first and a government second. They are tired of constantly seeing their priorities being put a distant second to separation. Scotland is moving on from the decade of division, but the SNP are not.

In this election, we can begin to bring down the curtain on the SNP's Scotland. But that requires the anti-SNP majority to come together to kick them out.

In key seats, from Moray and Aberdeenshire in the north, through Perthshire and East Renfrewshire, to Argyll and Bute and Ayrshire in the west, and the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway in the south, it is a straight fight between the SNP and the Scottish Conservatives.

John Swinney has said that this election is all about independence and that it will be 'page one, line one' of the SNP manifesto. They have

put their political obsession on the line. If the SNP lose heavily in this election, then we can close the lid on their independence campaign for good and force their government to focus on the issues that matter in these difficult times.

And you can elect MPs who will focus on the big challenges facing their communities. Local champions who will campaign on the need to upgrade major roads like the A9 and secure funding to fix potholes.

Local champions who will work to recruit 1,000 additional GPs and reduce waiting times for appointments and treatment.

Local champions who will support restoring standards in our schools and back a return to Scotland's educational traditions.

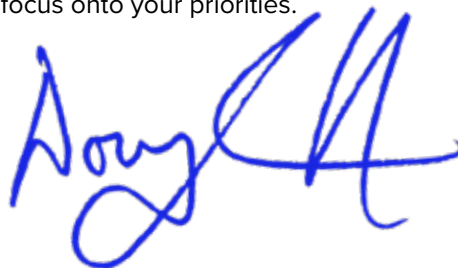
Local champions who will back putting 1,000 more police on our streets and longer sentences for dangerous criminals.

Local champions who will reduce your taxes and get Scotland's economy growing.

Yet we can only deliver on those priorities and the priorities of people across Scotland if we beat the SNP in key seats.

For 17 years, Scotland has been held back by the SNP. It is time to move forward and finally put to rest the divisions of the 2014 Independence Referendum.

Vote Scottish Conservative in key seats and together we can beat the SNP and get the focus onto your priorities.



Douglas Ross MSP
Leader of the Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak

Prime Minister

Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom faces an increasingly uncertain and dangerous world. From war in Europe, to uncertain energy markets and mass migration; the threats to our communities, our society and our country are real and growing.

In these difficult times, we need a clear plan and the courage to take the bold action to build a secure future for you and your family. We now need to pull together, not pull apart. To focus on the big challenges that really matter as one United Kingdom, rather than obsessing about the issues that have divided us for too long.

But the SNP are continuing to put their obsession with independence first. They have said that this election is all about winning a mandate for breaking up our country. Their plan for the challenges facing Scotland and the UK is more uncertainty and division. For us to turn inward and against each other instead of facing the world together.

Whereas Keir Starmer and Labour do not have a plan. They are looking for a blank cheque from the Scottish and British public rather than making clear promises to voters. And when push comes to shove, both in Holyrood and at Westminster, they do not stand up to the SNP when it really matters, such as when they voted for Nicola Sturgeon's gender reforms.

Our country needs to come together with a clear plan to build a brighter future for Scotland and the whole of the UK.

A future where hard work and doing the right thing is always rewarded, not punished with higher taxes or discouraged with unconstrained welfare.

A future where aspiration and opportunity are celebrated, and young people always get the skills they need to succeed.

A future where public services serve citizens not vested interests, and every citizen shares the values of decency, democracy, and service.

A future where national, energy and food security are put first, not taken for granted, and immigration is never allowed to run out of control.

A future where family is always supported, and communities decide their own priorities, not have them imposed from above.

A future where we can have pride – in ourselves, in our communities, and in our country.

And the only way to secure that future is to vote Scottish Conservative.

Let's beat the SNP and face the future with a clear plan together.



The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak
Prime Minister and Leader
of the Conservative and Unionist Party

Beat the SNP to get the focus onto your priorities

» The last five years have been incredibly difficult for the whole of the United Kingdom. Together, we have faced the Coronavirus pandemic, the impact of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and a global cost of living crisis. Yet our country is beginning to turn the corner, inflation is slowing, household bills are coming down and our economy is growing.

However, Scotland remains stuck. At a time when we all should be focusing on the national interest, the SNP Government are instead focusing on their nationalist obsession with independence. Their distraction is holding Scotland back and stopping us from tackling the big challenges facing struggling families, our overstretched public services and our sluggish economy.

John Swinney, following in the footsteps of his predecessors Alex Salmond, Nicola Sturgeon and Humza Yousaf, has even said that independence will be 'page one, line one' of the SNP manifesto for this election. He has also declared that every single SNP MP elected will contribute to his party's mandate for independence.

Instead of prioritising our economic recovery and rebuilding our public services, the SNP want to divide our country all over again. Just like they have for the last 17 years, they want to continue to spend the next five years campaigning for independence instead of focusing on the issues that really matter, like schools, roads and hospitals.

But Scotland has changed. Right across our country more and more people are fed up with the SNP's independence obsession and want to move forward from division and distraction. They want their MP to be focused on their local priorities and on delivering for their communities.

For all of those people, the Scottish Conservatives are on their side. Every single Scottish Conservative MP elected will be completely focused on tackling the big challenges facing families, our economy and public services. They will work hard to deliver for their local area by working to repair the roads, end long NHS waits, restore school standards and make Scotland safer by tackling crime and cut tax.

But we can only deliver on your priorities if the SNP are beaten locally and in key seats it is only the Scottish Conservatives who can beat the SNP. Even the SNP themselves have said that most seats across Scotland are a straight fight between them and the Scottish Conservatives. If voters unite behind us, then we can win. A vote for any other party, or not voting at all, risks the SNP winning locally and then claiming the result as a mandate for independence.

On 4 July, Scotland faces a clear choice: either we can elect MPs who will focus on our priorities or SNP candidates will win and spend the next five years campaigning for independence. In key seats, vote Scottish Conservative to beat the SNP and get the focus onto your priorities.

Our plan to strengthen the United Kingdom



» In recent years, each part of the UK has worked together to tackle shared challenges. The United Kingdom is a unique and uniquely successful Union, enabling Scotland to grow and thrive. As the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, we are committed to supporting our Union and continuing to deliver for people across the UK.

During the 25th anniversary year of devolution, we celebrate the progress which has been made and the relationships which have been built. We are focused on working together to deliver for people across the UK, including maintaining meaningful intergovernmental relations. Since the initial devolution settlements, significant further powers have been devolved to Holyrood. We believe the Scottish Government have the right balance of powers to deliver for people here.

As powers have been transferred, it has become more important than ever that the Scottish Government are held responsible for their performance. To support this, we will legislate to deliver comparable data across the UK so the performance of public services can be accurately compared.

We support greater accountability within the devolved parliaments and decentralisation within Scotland to ensure decisions are made as close to the communities they serve as possible. The Scottish Government should be focused on utilising the powers they have to deliver on people's priorities and we will continue to oppose attempts to distract from these with constitutional wrangling.

Levelling up across Scotland

Delivering for people right across the country requires joint working between the UK and Scottish governments as well as local partners. Our focus on delivery and working with local partners to do so, has paid dividends in recent years, providing over £3 billion of investment in levelling up in Scotland.

The UK Government has a duty to citizens right across the country. Over the course of the last Parliament, the UK Government have been building stronger relationships with local authorities and community groups in Scotland, to help us deliver for people here. We are committed to continuing to fund projects across the UK directly and will:

- » **Extend the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for another three years, delivering a further £124 million a year for communities across Scotland.**
- » **Expand the Long-Term Plan for Towns, supporting a further four towns in Scotland with £20 million endowments to make long-term improvements over 10 years.**
- » **Maintain the Community Ownership Fund for another three years, enabling community groups across Scotland to continue accessing funding to save community assets which are at risk of being lost.**
- » **Continue the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme throughout the next Parliament so sports facilities in Scotland can access vital investment.**

These schemes improve communities and support infrastructure as well as sports and cultural activities across the UK, sitting alongside our backing for events such as the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe and the UK and Ireland Euro 2028 tournament.

We will support Freeports and investment zones in Scotland, delivering jobs and investment from the Cromarty Firth to the Firth of Forth.

We will pursue the extension of the Enhanced Investment Zone to cover Stranraer and Cairnryan on the west coast of Scotland, recognising this vital route between Northern Ireland and Scotland and the opportunities for trade and economic growth.

Our Islands Forum will also continue to bring together island communities from across the UK to consider and identify solutions to their unique needs.

Delivering for Scotland

Ten years on from the 2014 independence referendum, the SNP remain focused on the constitution while Scotland has moved on. They are distracted from the day job, with falling educational standards, rising drug deaths and long-delayed ferries. The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party will continue to oppose the SNP's push for separation. The 2014 vote was decisive.

Instead, we will focus on what really matters to people.

We will **cut taxes for working people again**, benefitting 2.4 million Scots. We are also boosting Scotland's economy through mechanisms such as our City and Growth Deals, dedicated British Business Bank fund and support for Scottish exports. Our new Intertrade UK body will promote trade within the United Kingdom, with 61% of Scotland's exports going to the rest of the UK in 2021.

We will press for the permanent removal of tariffs on Scotch whisky with the US Government and work to achieve a significant tariff reduction in India through free trade agreement discussions. The Scottish Conservatives will always support the Scotch whisky industry which plays a vital role in many communities, through continued investment by the sector and the jobs it creates and sustains.

Scottish businesses will also continue to benefit from measures including tax reliefs for creative industries, support for small businesses and entrepreneurs and the Global Britain Investment Fund.

We will **invest in Scotland's public services**, with an additional £1.2 billion in Barnett Consequentials for the Scottish Government over the next five years.

We will **prioritise our energy security**. We have already put the Energy Security Investment Mechanism into legislation, ensuring the energy profits levy will end when oil and gas prices fall below a threshold. We will legislate to require annual oil and gas licensing rounds and maintain investment allowances for the oil and gas sector while supporting renewable technologies. Scottish Conservatives will continue to campaign for the Energy Profits Levy to be ended as soon as is practical.

We will continue backing the North Sea Transition Deal and Aberdeen City Region Deal, with Aberdeen's Investment Zone bringing £160 million of support to the area over the next ten years. We will focus on supporting Scotland's workforce transition to new industries such as carbon capture, offshore wind, hydrogen and tidal, including by providing £15 million to support the Energy Transition Zone's skills programmes. We will continue laying the groundwork for nuclear projects to be taken forward in Scotland to deliver cheaper, cleaner and more secure energy.

We will **support Scotland's fishing and farming industries**. We have extended the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme until 2029, introduced a new UK-wide Food Security Index and will increase the UK-wide farming budget by £1 billion over the next Parliament, ensuring the ringfenced amount provided to the Scottish Government rises by inflation each year. We will use powers in the Scotland Act to require the Scottish Government to provide annual reports on how this funding is being utilised and work with them to put a UK-wide food security target into law.

We will **establish a UK Farming Innovation Fund** to deliver grants for innovative agricultural projects directly to farmers in Scotland, promoting economic development in rural areas. Only the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party will support Scotland's fishing communities, with a further £100 million for the UK Seafood Fund to support small businesses and inshore fleets and a steadfast commitment to taking back control of our waters, negotiating the best quotas possible and remaining out of the hated Common Fisheries Policy.

We will **improve connectivity across Scotland with support for road and rail improvements and ferry services**, including guaranteed investment to improve pinch points on the A75, providing £5 million for the evaluation of proposals to extend the current Borders Railway from Tweedbank through Hawick and on to Carlisle, updating the East Coast Main Line timetable to provide faster rail journeys between Edinburgh and London and providing funding for the UK Islands Forum Connectivity Project.

Our plan for a secure, dynamic and growing economy



» In 2010 we inherited an economy in tatters, with Labour admitting themselves there was 'no money'. We have faced three generational global economic challenges: the aftermath of the financial crisis; a global pandemic; and the biggest energy shock since the 1970s.

Against this backdrop, since 2010 the UK has had the third highest growth rate in the G7. We have created four million more jobs, cut taxes for working people and pensioners and repaired the public finances. The UK economy is now growing faster than Germany, France, Italy and the United States, real wages have been rising for nearly a year, inflation has fallen from 11.1% to 2%, lower than in Europe and the US, and debt as a share of GDP is forecast to start falling next year. The plan we set out last year, to halve inflation, grow the economy and reduce debt, is working.

Economic security is the bedrock of any future success, which is why we have a clear plan to take the bold action needed to build a strong economy:

- › reducing borrowing and debt;
- › backing businesses to invest, innovate and trade;
- › cutting taxes and reforming our welfare system;
- › delivering world class education; and
- › delivering an affordable transition to domestic, sustainable energy.

Reducing debt and borrowing

Sustainable public finances are essential for a strong economic plan. It was only because

of the difficult decisions we took to repair the public finances after 2010, which saw the deficit fall from 10.3% under Labour to 2.1% on the eve of the pandemic, that we were able to provide almost £400 billion of support to families and businesses to get through Covid and the energy shock.

The only way to give people the peace of mind that government will be able to support them again when future shocks hit is to get borrowing and debt down. The alternative is to let borrowing get out of control, driving inflation and interest rates up, and leaving our children and grandchildren to pick up the bill.

In the next Parliament, we will continue to meet our fiscal rules of having public sector net debt falling and for public sector net borrowing to be below 3% of GDP in the fifth year of the forecast. **The measures in this manifesto are fully funded and would result in lower borrowing in 2029-30, which will be the target year for our fiscal rules in the first fiscal event of the new Parliament.**

Backing business to invest, innovate and trade

A competitive tax system

The Scottish Conservative Party will always be the party of business. It is the private sector which will unlock the investment, growth and opportunities of the future. We will work with the businesses in Scotland to deliver a new vision for growth.

That is why a tax system that incentivises business to invest is at the heart of our economic plan. We introduced the biggest business tax cut in modern British history, which hundreds of business leaders have described as the 'single most transformational' measure for growth and investment. So more businesses can benefit, we will look to extend our 'full expensing' policy to leasing, once the fiscal conditions allow. And **we will not raise corporation tax.**

For the very smallest businesses, the four million people who are self-employed, **we will abolish the main rate of National Insurance entirely** by the end of the next Parliament. We will back the risk takers and entrepreneurs who help drive our economy.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and we are making the UK the best place in the world to start or grow a business. We have great foundations: world-class talent, an internationally envied legal system and a business-friendly regulatory environment.

Yet under the SNP, many Scottish businesses are having to pay more tax than their counterparts south of the border. The SNP Government have failed to pass on business rates relief worth hundreds of millions of pounds delivered to shops, pubs, hotels and restaurants in England by the UK Government. **The Scottish Conservatives would pass on 75% rates relief to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in Scotland**, for the years it is delivered by the UK Government in England.

We have taken 28,000 small businesses out of paying VAT altogether by raising the VAT registration threshold to £90,000. In the next Parliament, to support SMEs, we will:

- › **Keep the VAT threshold under review and explore options to smooth the cliff edge at £90,000.**
- › **Improve access to finance for SMEs including through expanding Open Finance and by exploring the creation of Regional Mutual Banks.**
- › **Take more companies out of the scope of burdensome reporting requirements. Making use of freedoms granted by Brexit, we will lift the employee threshold allowing more companies to be considered medium-sized. This is expected to save small businesses at least one million hours of admin per year.**

- › **Retain key tax incentives that encourage small businesses to grow, including the Enterprise Investment Scheme, Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme, Venture Capital Trusts, Business Asset Disposal Relief, Agricultural Property Relief and Business Relief. We will not increase Capital Gains Tax.**
- › **Promote digital invoicing and improve enforcement of the Prompt Payment Code to support small businesses with the perennial challenge of cashflow, building on our creation of the Small Business Commissioner with powers to tackle unfavourable payment practices.**
- › **Ensure that Basel III capital requirements do not inhibit lending to SMEs.**
- › **Continue our world leading programmes including the Invest in Women Task Force and the Lilac Review to encourage more female and disabled entrepreneurs.**
- › **Work with the British Business Bank and private sector fund managers to secure a £250 million Invest In Women Fund to support female entrepreneurs.**
- › **Work with public sector organisations including local authorities and NHS boards and companies benefitting from government contracts to ensure that procurement opportunities are focused on SMEs in their local economies where possible and practical.**
- › **Introduce a ‘regulation handbrake’ to pause new business laws during times of weak economic performance – if the regulations are harmful to the Scottish economy.**
- › **Cut red tape in business regulations where they are holding back growth.**
- › **Exempt ATMs from having to pay business rates and offer discounts to businesses that have a ‘free to use’ ATM on their premise.**

- › Introduce a **Scotland First public procurement policy** and blacklist companies that fail to pay their supply chain on time.

Scotland's business rates system is outdated and not fit for purpose. The Scottish Conservatives will continue to pressure the SNP Government to bring forward reform proposals before the 2026 Scottish Parliament Election.

The Scottish Conservatives would ensure that Scotland's two governments are working together to take forward the Scottish economy. We would introduce a Joint Scottish Economic Board comprising of UK and Scottish ministers, to better align economic policy between Scotland's two governments. We will create a network of trade offices in major UK cities to promote Scottish businesses and tourism.

We would build regional clusters of excellence to drive exports and create growth. This will see economic development funding used to back winners and build off of regional strengths and expertise such as energy in the North East, financial services in Edinburgh and life sciences in Glasgow. We will create a Scottish Future Growth Fund to commercialise Intellectual Property and help support university spin outs, like business fellowships for researchers to build the Scottish economy of tomorrow.

Investing in infrastructure

Good road, rail, sea, air and digital connections are essential to build secure foundations for Scotland's economy to grow. Yet **the SNP Government have broken promise after promise in delivering key infrastructure** – with the dualling of the A9 due to be completed at least a decade late, the Ferguson ferries due to be completed seven years late and the R100 broadband upgrade also due to be seven years late. At the same time, local roads have only gotten worse and the aging ferry fleet to our islands has become increasingly unreliable. This is leading to a situation where communities

across the North and South of Scotland are being left behind, while travel between our cities and major towns is becoming increasingly expensive and congested.

The SNP Government is holding Scotland back. The Scottish Conservatives would deliver on the promises that the SNP have failed to meet and deliver the key infrastructure Scotland needs:

- › We would **make the upgrading of major roads, like the A9, A96, A1, A90, A83, A77 and A75, our first infrastructure priority.**
- › We would fix the potholes in local roads by investing in a **National Pothole Action Fund** and through fair funding for local councils.
- › We would reopen Beeching lines and stations, where there is an economic case for doing so.
- › We would deliver on the SNP's promised improvements for rail links to Aberdeen and Perth and extend the Borders Railway to Carlisle.
- › We would put the Infrastructure Commission onto a statutory footing, and working with Regional Transport Partnerships, produce long-term infrastructure plans for each region of Scotland.

Public transport can be expensive for families struggling with cost-of-living pressures. To keep the cost of public transport down, the Scottish Conservatives would:

- › Introduce discounted travel for islanders on Scotland's ferry network.
- › Introduce a **national £2 bus fare** for any single ticket on a bus route.
- › Make permanent the ScotRail off-peak fares pilot.

We have transformed our digital infrastructure

by rolling out gigabit broadband to over a million hard to reach premises, helping to deliver high-speed internet to over 80% of the country. We are set to achieve at least 85% gigabit coverage of the UK by 2025 and nationwide coverage by 2030. Our ambition is for all populated areas to be covered by 'standalone' 5G mobile connectivity and to keep the UK at the forefront of adopting and developing 6G.

Automated vehicles will be on British roads in the next Parliament, thanks to our new world-leading legislation. We will support people to choose electric cars by ensuring our charging infrastructure is truly nationwide, including rapid charging, and delivering the Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate to support manufacturers to safeguard skilled British jobs.

We will support the growth and decarbonisation of our aviation sector. We will back British Sustainable Aviation Fuel through our SAF mandate, an industry-backed revenue support mechanism and investment in future aviation technology. We will support domestic flights including through Public Service Obligations, protecting vital routes within the UK, including to islands and remote areas.

We will back our maritime sector, including shipping and ports, as it decarbonises. We will foster our science and innovation expertise in the space industry.

Protecting communities

The Scottish Conservatives know the importance of getting the balance right between delivering on key regional and national infrastructure priorities, while at the same time ensuring community consent.

We will end the SNP power grab of local decisions being overturned by ministers by ensuring that councils have the final say on planning decisions.

We will also ensure that community benefit is a key part of developer contract awarding for infrastructure projects.

Securing the UK's position as a world leader in innovation

Artificial intelligence (AI) will accelerate human progress in the 21st century, just as the steam engine and electricity did in the 19th century.

The UK is well positioned to spearhead this transformation and is already leading global work on AI safety. Over the last 14 years, the Conservatives have turned the UK into an innovation superpower. The UK now has the highest level of direct government funding and tax support for business research and development (R&D) of any country in the OECD. We pioneered the fastest development and deployment of the Covid vaccine. The UK has Europe's leading tech ecosystem. We have secured improved financial terms to join Horizon.

We will:

- ▶ **Increase public spending on R&D to £22 billion a year**, up from £20 billion this year.
- ▶ **Maintain our R&D tax reliefs**. Recent changes worth £280 million a year have simplified and improved R&D tax reliefs, including by bringing more SMEs into scope of the relief.
- ▶ **Continue investing over £1.5 billion in large-scale compute clusters**, assembling the raw processing power so we can take advantage of the potential of AI and support research into its safe and responsible use.
- ▶ **Push forward with our Advanced Manufacturing Plan**, providing a £4.5 billion commitment to secure strategic manufacturing sectors including automotive, aerospace, life sciences and clean energy.
- ▶ **Build on the success of our nine specialist Catapults**, which support innovation and de-risk the transition from research and delivery, distributing £1.6 billion of funding across the country by 2028.

We are proud to be the leading market for starting and growing a FinTech firm – part of our world-leading financial and professional services which supports the employment of almost 2.5 million people. We will build on the policies set out in the Edinburgh Reforms **so that the UK continues to be the world's most innovative and competitive global financial centre**. We will further this through the implementation of the Mansion House reforms and measures such as a retail sale of NatWest shares. We will maintain the highest standards of consumer protection and prudential regulation to ensure there can never be a repeat of the banking crisis under the last Labour Government.

Building new trade links to help British businesses thrive

The UK is a global exporting superpower and is now the **fourth biggest exporter in the world**, having overtaken France, the Netherlands, and Japan.

Having left the EU, we have seized the opportunity to negotiate trade deals that suit the UK, boosting our exports and creating jobs at home. UK exports are growing, reaching £850 billion last year and service exports are at an all-time high. We have secured trade deals with 73 countries plus the EU and last year we removed £1 million of trade barriers every single hour.

Last year we signed a deal to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a modern and ambitious trade deal spanning economies across Asia and the Pacific. With the UK as a member, it will account for 15% of global GDP and in time is expected to boost UK GDP by around £2 billion a year.

We will complete free trade agreements with India and with the Gulf Cooperation Council, home to some of the world's biggest investors. And we will continue to pursue free trade agreements with countries such as Israel and Switzerland.

Our Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is the most comprehensive FTA the EU has ever agreed. We will build on it, but will not agree to anything in the forthcoming review of the TCA that would infringe our legal sovereignty or involve submission to the CJEU or dynamic alignment. We will take a tough approach on ensuring that the EU are meeting their commitments under the TCA and not discriminating against our exporters.

We have always been clear the NHS and the services it provides are not on the table in trade negotiations. All food and drink products imported into the UK, including those from countries we have trade agreements with, must comply with the UK's high standards. We will always stand up for UK agriculture in our trade deals.

The US is our single largest trading partner. We have signed the Atlantic Declaration and deals with eight US states, including Florida and Texas, with a combined GDP of £5.7 trillion. And we will look to agree a free trade agreement with the US when they are ready to do so.

Using our Brexit freedoms to deliver regulatory reform

Conservatives believe in reducing the burden of regulation, freeing up businesses to thrive. We want small businesses free to innovate, balanced with proportionate protections for consumers and working people. We will never introduce Labour's package of French-style union rules, which are a threat to jobs, our competitiveness and our economy. We will go further to transform the UK regulatory landscape, making sure regulators deliver the best outcomes for business, consumers and the environment.

Thanks to Brexit, we have taken back control of our laws and freed British businesses from unnecessary burdens. We legislated to remove the principle of EU law supremacy and have undertaken a root-and-branch review of the more than 6,000 laws we had inherited from the EU.

We have already repealed or reformed over 2,000 EU laws and by July 2026 **we will have repealed or reformed over half of the entire stock of EU law we inherited**. Only the Conservatives will keep on removing EU laws from our statute book. Our Smarter Regulation approach has already saved 50 million hours of administrative time for business, saving them an estimated £1 billion.

We have also used post-Brexit tax freedoms, including introducing VAT-free installations of energy-efficient materials and replacing complex EU alcohol duty rates. And to protect our pubs we will **maintain our Brexit Pubs Guarantee** that means the duty on drinks on draught, such as beer and cider, will be less than in supermarkets.

Cutting government bureaucracy

- 】 We will make the UK Government more efficient, cut waste and attract the best and the brightest, by:
 - 】 Returning the civil service to its pre-pandemic size to pay for our commitment to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP.
 - 】 Halving the amount of taxpayers' money spent on external consultants. We will introduce controls on all 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' initiatives and spending.
 - 】 Bring quango spending under control.
 - 】 Moving 25,000 more civil servants outside of London.
 - 】 Opening up civil service recruitment by requiring jobs to be advertised externally to identify the best candidates.
 - 】 Doubling digital and AI expertise in the civil service, to take advantage of the latest technologies to transform public services.

These reforms will allow us to achieve a significant productivity boost in UK Government departments. If we returned public sector productivity to pre-pandemic levels that would

deliver up to £20 billion of annual savings. We will require all Departments to deliver plans for **2% annual productivity growth** at the next Spending Review.

Over recent years, the size of the devolved civil service has grown faster than the workforce of our NHS or local government. At Holyrood, we would **reduce the size of the devolved civil service to save money** and increase the private sector workforce.



NS IONA

Our plan to cut taxes and protect pensions



» As Scottish Conservatives, we believe in lower taxes because people, not governments, make the best decisions about how to spend their money. But we can only ever cut taxes responsibly – when we have a way to fund it sustainably, consistent with getting debt and borrowing down and in a way which does not send inflation spiralling.

Because of the support we provided to families and businesses through Covid and the energy shock, we had to make difficult decisions to pay down our debts. But we were clear that once inflation was under control and the public finances were on a sustainable path, we would cut taxes. Because of the progress we have made, with inflation back to normal and debt on track to fall from next year, we have been able to afford to begin cutting taxes as part of our plan to reward work and grow the economy, all without increasing borrowing or cutting spending on public services.

In Scotland, the SNP have taken the decision, backed by Labour, to raise taxes on working families – with all Scots earning over £28,867 paying more tax. At the same, our public services have only declined, with school standards and NHS performance at record lows. **Thanks to the SNP, Scots are paying more to get less.**

Cutting tax for working people

In the first half of this year, we began cutting National Insurance. It is unfair that working people pay two taxes on their income – income tax and National Insurance – when other people only pay income tax.

Our long-term ambition, when it is affordable

to do so, is to keep cutting National Insurance until it's gone, as part of our plan to make the tax system simpler and fairer. As the next step in that plan, **we will cut employee National Insurance to 6% by April 2027 – meaning that we will have halved it from 12% at the beginning of this year, a total tax cut of £1,350 for the average worker on £35,000.**

This comes on top of the significant above inflation increase to the personal allowance we have delivered since 2010, nearly doubling it from £6,475 to £12,750.

This means the tax burden on workers is falling, with the average earner paying the lowest effective personal tax rate since 1975, lower than in the US, France, Germany or any G7 country.

As a further downpayment on our long-term ambition to abolish National Insurance, there is one group for whom we will make that a reality in the next Parliament. Last year, the main rate of National Insurance for the self-employed stood at 9%. To recognise the unique contribution of these risk-takers and entrepreneurs to our economy and the insecurity they face without the rights and protections that employees enjoy, we will abolish it entirely by the end of the next Parliament. **The abolition of the main rate of Class 4 National Insurance contributions builds on our abolition of Class 2 contributions for self-employed people from April this year.** This will not affect their entitlement to the State Pension. This is a massive simplification of the tax system which means that 93% of self-employed people – four million of them – will no longer pay self-employed National Insurance.

As well as cutting National Insurance for 29 million people, we will also **not raise the rate of VAT.**

The Scottish Conservatives are the only party to have consistently opposed the SNP's income tax rises. We believe that higher taxes only damage growth and take money away

from hardworking families and that it is wrong that Scots should pay more income tax than taxpayers in the rest of the UK.

We would **deliver an immediate 1p cut in the intermediate rate of income tax**. This would reduce the rate from 21p to 20p, **saving over half of Scottish taxpayers up to £171 in tax**. This would help hardworking families with the cost of living and reduce the tax gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK. It would be fully funded through Barnett Consequentials and by reducing the size of the devolved civil service.

When financial conditions allow, we would continue to cut income tax rates to achieve our long-term ambition of **no worker paying more tax in Scotland on their earnings than in the rest of UK**.

Increasing pay for working people

We introduced the National Living Wage in 2016 and this year achieved our ambition of raising it to two thirds of median earnings, increasing it to £11.44 per hour and extending it to cover all workers aged over 21. This ended low pay for those on the National Living Wage, with someone working full-time receiving a pay rise worth £1,800. **As a result of our personal tax cuts and increases in the minimum wage, the take-home pay of someone working full time on the National Living Wage has gone up by 35% in real terms since 2010.**

We will maintain the National Living Wage in each year of the next Parliament at two-thirds of median earnings. On current forecasts, that would mean it rising to around £13 per hour, up from a minimum wage of £5.80 under Labour in 2010.

We will ensure the UK retains the flexible and dynamic labour market that gives businesses the confidence to create jobs and invest in their workforce. The number of payrolled employees is at a near record high, and there are around

four million more people in work than when we came to office in 2010.

Cutting tax for pensioners

We believe that those who have worked hard during their lives should have dignity and security in their retirement. We came to power in 2010 after Labour had hit pensioners with a £118 billion pensions tax raid and a paltry 75p per week increase to the State Pension.

Since 2010, we have made it a priority to give people peace of mind in their retirement. We introduced the Triple Lock, which has seen the basic State Pension rise by £3,700 since 2010. This year, the new State Pension increased by £900.

We will continue to provide pensioners with dignity in retirement and ensure the new State Pension is not dragged into income tax for the first time in history by **introducing the new Triple Lock Plus**. This has two elements:

1. **Continuing to uprate the State Pension in line with the highest of prices, earnings or 2.5%.** On current forecasts, this will mean the new State Pension increases by a further £430 in April next year to £11,970 and increases by £1,685 a year to £13,200 by the end of the Parliament.
2. **Ensuring that from next year the tax-free personal allowance for pensioners also rises by the highest of prices, earnings or 2.5%, guaranteeing that the new State Pension is always below the tax-free threshold.** From April 2025, we will increase the personal allowance for pensioners by introducing a new age-related personal allowance. This is a tax cut of around £100 for eight million pensioners next year – rising to £275 a year by the end of the Parliament.

Under our new Pensions Tax Guarantee, the Conservatives will not introduce any new taxes on pensions. We will maintain the 25% tax free lump sum and maintain tax relief on

pension contributions at their marginal rate. We will not extend National Insurance to employer pension contributions.

We will maintain all current pensioner benefits, including free bus passes, Winter Fuel Payments, free prescriptions and TV licences. We are carefully considering the Ombudsman report into WASPI women and will work with Parliament to provide an appropriate and swift response.

By opposing the Triple Lock Plus, Labour's Retirement Tax will mean millions of pensioners paying more tax. It will also mean that for the first time in history, someone whose only income is the new State Pension will be dragged into paying income tax, which alongside making them worse off means the administrative burden of going through a tax assessment.

Clamping down on tax avoidance

It is vital we make sure people and companies are paying the tax they owe. That's why, since 2010, Conservative Governments have introduced over 200 measures to tackle tax non-compliance. In total across all the fiscal events we have delivered since 2010, the OBR has scored these measures as raising £95 billion across the forecasts it has produced – £6.7 billion for each year. Building on that, **we will raise at least a further £6 billion a year from tackling tax avoidance and evasion by the end of the Parliament.**

Our plan to support families



» Scottish Conservatives believe that every child in Scotland deserves a supportive and inclusive education system that follows them from birth right the way through to young adulthood and beyond.

All too often when we think of education we focus on the later years, when exams and college or university prospects become more important, but good quality early years education is essential for the formative years of a child's life.

However, the SNP have left our childcare system underfunded and struggling to even deliver on its current commitments, let alone expand provision further. The Scottish Conservatives would address this and build quality in our system by:

- » **Enabling eligible working parents to access 30 hours of free childcare from nine months to when they start school.**
- » Ensuring that funding follows the child, so that the disparity is removed between public and private nurseries.
- » Introducing a pre-school kindergarten model, which better prepares children for beginning primary education.
- » Expanding wraparound childcare to all primary school pupils, utilising extra-curricular activities so that every child receives a first-class, all-round education.

To deliver this we would ensure that every penny of the Barnett Consequentials from the rollout of free childcare in England is spent on childcare in Scotland.

Cutting tax for families

In April, we raised the threshold at which individuals begin to lose Child Benefit from £50,000 to £60,000 and halved the rate at which it is withdrawn. This is the right thing for families and the right thing for the economy.

But it still isn't fair that single earner households can start losing their Child Benefit when a household with two working parents and a much higher total income can keep it in full. We will **end this unfairness by moving to a household rather than individual basis for Child Benefit**. So nobody is worse off than under the current system, we will set the combined household income at which a family will start losing Child Benefit at £120,000 and gradually remove it until household income reaches £160,000, above which families will no longer receive Child Benefit. This will benefit over 700,000 households, each gaining an average of £1,480 a year.

Protecting children online

Digital technology is a force for good. But as technology develops, we need to respond to the concerns many parents have.

Children are spending much more of their time using screens, often unsupervised, with research finding 63% of eight to 11-year-olds are now using social media. We also know that the number of children suffering from mental illness is rising dramatically and children spend less time playing, sleeping and socialising.

In the last decade, we have done more to protect children online than any other country. From next year, our Online Safety Act will make it a legal requirement for social media firms to protect children from illegal or harmful

content online. This includes fining social media companies who shirk their responsibilities to keep children safe.

But we need to do more to protect young people and empower parents to make decisions in the best interests of their children. We support a ban on mobile phones in schools and will back headteachers who wish to take this action forward.

We will also consult on introducing further parental controls over access to social media. We know this is a complex area and we need more effective age verification and parental controls. That's why we will consult widely to get this right, including developing the necessary technology, in partnership with other countries who are considering similar measures. We expect to build on the existing responsibilities set out for social media companies under the Online Safety Act.



Our plan to get
more people into
work and build
a fairer welfare
system



» We believe in fairness and the value of hard work. Alongside a tax system that rewards work, we want a welfare system which supports everyone to fulfil their potential and live dignified and independent lives. There should always be a safety net for those who need it most; but those who can work to support themselves should work, and they should be better off for doing so.

Since 2010, we have delivered transformational reforms to put work at the heart of our welfare system. We have rolled out Universal Credit and cut its taper rate by 10p in the pound to make work pay. We've brought discipline to the system through tougher sanctions and conditionality. We introduced the household benefit cap and the two-child limit to make the system fairer to the taxpayers who pay for it and ensure benefits are always a safety net, not a lifestyle choice.

All of this has delivered near record levels of employment and low unemployment, with around four million more people in work since we came to office.

At the same time, we have protected the most vulnerable, safeguarding millions of jobs through the pandemic and delivering unprecedented support to help households through the energy shock from Putin's war.

Since the pandemic, new challenges have emerged. The number of people who are economically inactive due to ill health has risen from 2 million to 2.8 million, with a significant increase in mental health conditions among younger people. As a result, **the number of working age people claiming benefits is projected to grow at an unsustainable rate**, with all the wasted human potential that entails.

We are now spending £69 billion a year on benefits for people of working age with a disability or health condition, a figure which has risen by two thirds since the pandemic. By the end of the decade, that spending is projected to increase to £90 billion. **It would be irresponsible not to take bold action to put the welfare system on a sustainable footing.**

So we will reform the system to make it fairer and more sustainable, unlocking the potential of millions of people and giving them the support they need to get into work.

This next generation of welfare reforms will build a system fit for the post-pandemic world. They will give everyone who can the best possible chance of returning to work, while providing the right support to those who need it. With fewer people moving onto welfare and more people in work fulfilling their potential, we will save taxpayers £12 billion a year.

To deliver this, we will take a two-pronged approach.

First, to address the unsustainable rise in benefit claims for people of working age with a disability or health condition, we will:

- » **Reform disability benefits**, so that they are better targeted towards those who need it most.
- » **Tighten up how the benefits system assesses capability for work.** People are now three times more likely to be assessed as not fit for any work and put on the highest tier of sickness benefits than they were a decade ago. We will change the assessments from September 2025 so that those with more moderate mental health issues or mobility problems who could potentially engage with the world of work are given tailored support, instead of being written off on benefits. The OBR has forecast that these reforms will reduce the number of people on these benefits by 424,000.

- Overhaul the fit note process so that people are not being signed off sick as a default.** Currently, 94% of fit notes are being signed off as ‘not fit for work’. We will design a new system which moves the responsibility for issuing fit notes away from our hard-pressed GPs towards specialist work and health professionals, and we will test integrating this with the new WorkWell service to provide tailored support to help people stay in or get back to work.

Second, to make sure that being on benefits remains a safety net, not a lifestyle choice, we will:

- Introduce tougher sanctions rules so people who refuse to take up suitable jobs after 12 months on benefits can have their cases closed and their benefits removed entirely.** We will bring forward the new claimant review point for the long-term unemployed from 18 months to 12 months. At the claimant review, Work Coaches will set renewed conditions for claimants. If they fail to accept or comply with those conditions, such as refusing a suitable job or a mandatory work placement, their claim will be closed and their benefits will stop.
- Accelerate the rollout of Universal Credit to ensure it always pays to work.** We will move all of those remaining on outdated legacy benefits onto Universal Credit, removing disincentives for them to work and ensuring they will always be better off in work.
- Continue to clamp down on fraudsters.** Since 2019 we have delivered cumulative scored savings of £7.7 billion through measures we have taken to tackle fraud in the welfare system. Despite this, the level of welfare fraud remains far too high, having more than doubled during the pandemic. To deliver further savings, we will maintain our zero-tolerance approach

to fraud. This will include a new Fraud Bill to give DWP powers similar to that of HMRC, so we can treat benefit fraud like we do tax fraud with new powers to identify, investigate and pursue fraudsters.

The Scotland Act 2016 gave the Scottish Government control over welfare spending which is now worth over £5 billion and the power to create new benefits. However, eight years on spending has rapidly grown, yet the SNP have still not assumed full control over its devolved responsibilities.

The Scottish Conservatives would use these powers to deliver more targeted interventions that reflect genuine needs. We would deliver a system that is **sustainable but fair and compassionate**.

We have increased Carer’s Allowance by almost £1,500 since 2010 and given employees who are also unpaid carers entitlement to a period of unpaid leave. We will continue to stand behind our carers, with the changing of Carer’s Allowance to the Care Support Payment in Scotland.

The vast majority of parents work incredibly hard to give their children the best start in life, but sadly a small number shirk their responsibilities. **We will reform the Child Maintenance Service to prevent non-compliance and new laws to help crack down on non-payment.** We’ll also look at how the Service can better support victims of domestic or economic abuse, building on recommendations from Dr Samantha Callan’s 2023 Independent Review.



Our plan to give
young people the
opportunities and
skills they need



» In their 17 years in office, the **SNP have let down a generation of Scottish schoolchildren. Despite promising that education and closing the attainment gap would be Nicola Sturgeon’s ‘defining mission’, Scotland’s schools have fallen to record lows in international league tables – behind not just England but also Latvia and Poland. This must be considered one of the SNP’s greatest failures in government.**

The Scottish Conservatives believe that Scotland’s international reputation for quality in education must be restored. We would deliver an education system that gets back to basics and trusts headteachers to know what is best for their schools and teachers to teach.

Restoring Scotland’s schools

Scotland’s schools need to get back to basics to restore standards in Scottish education, yet the SNP Government are dragging their heels on education reform. The Scottish Conservatives would reform Curriculum for Excellence to ensure there is a greater focus on a knowledge-based approach, whilst ensuring our young people leave school with appropriate skills for the modern economy. We would **introduce a Subject Guarantee**, ensuring that all pupils across the country will be entitled to take at least seven subjects at S4. We would ensure that one of the new education agencies is based in Aberdeen, so that the issues facing schools outside of the Central Belt are properly represented.

The Scottish Conservatives believe that headteachers know what is best for their staff and pupils. We would **increase school**

autonomy by giving headteachers more control over school budgets, staffing and the curriculum. We would also formalise and broaden the system of school clustering – both physically and virtually – to encourage schools beyond local authority boundaries to work together to widen subject choice. We will pilot giving more schools access to the same status as Jordanhill School and being funded directly by government.

There has been a worrying trend of some councils reducing school hours to cut costs. The Scottish Conservatives would introduce a national minimum standard ensuring that all of Scotland’s school pupils are entitled to a baseline number of hours of teaching each week.

It is essential that Scotland’s teachers are supported to teach. Yet the SNP have cut over 1,000 Scottish teachers and ELC staff since 2007. The Scottish Conservatives would recruit more teachers and more teaching staff and ensure that they are properly encouraged to locate in the areas of greatest need. This would enable us to deliver **a New Deal for Teachers and Parents** which would include commitments to:

- » **Cut red tape in schools to reduce paperwork and bureaucracy to allow teachers to focus on teaching.**
- » **Ensure that all teachers are paid for extra-curricular activities and lunchtime classes.**
- » **Reduce contact time for teachers from 22.5 hours to 18.5 hours per week, to give them more time to plan high quality lessons for pupils.**
- » **Improve teacher pay and conditions by implementing the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Career Pathways for Teachers.**
- » **Encourage teachers to take sabbaticals for Continuing Professional Development.**
- » **Create a national Rural Teachers Fund to**

attract more teachers to live and work in remote and rural areas and protect rural schools.

The Scottish Conservatives strongly believe that all of Scotland's schoolchildren deserve the chance to study the same subjects and have access to a good education regardless of where they live. We would ensure that all pupils can participate in one week of residential outdoor learning. We would also ensure that music education is a core part of the national curriculum and that every primary school has a dedicated STEM teacher.

There has been a worrying rise in violence in Scotland's schools. This not only challenges the authority of teachers within their classrooms, but it also disrupts the learning experience of hardworking pupils. We will empower teachers in classrooms to place a renewed emphasis on rules and the consequence of breaking them. We will ensure that the right support and staffing is in place for constructive

interventions towards disruptive pupils. Scottish Conservatives support the continued use of exclusion to discipline pupils, when all other methods have failed.

Independent schools play an important role in adding greater choice in the education system and reducing pressures on local state schools. The Scottish Conservatives oppose Labour's plans to charge VAT on independent school fees.

Evidence shows that pupils who go to school hungry and without a decent breakfast and lunch often fall behind in learning. The Scottish Conservatives believe that education is the best way to deliver opportunity and a route out of poverty. That is why we restate our commitment to rollout free breakfasts and lunches for every Scottish primary school pupil.

The Scottish Conservatives would ensure that material and lessons in school are age appropriate and that parents are made aware of what their child will be taught in school. We will take forward statutory guidance to stop schools from sending intrusive questionnaires to young children on sexuality and gender. Parents will have a right to know if their child wants to be treated as the opposite sex and schools will have to involve parents when it comes to decisions about their children.

A new model of modern National Service

We will **reinvent National Service for this century** to give young people valuable life skills and build a stronger national culture. National Service will be compulsory, so it becomes a rite of passage for every 18-year-old, but **young people will be given a choice**, between:

- 1 **civic service.** The equivalent of one weekend a month (25 days a year) volunteering in the community, alongside work or study, for a year. Roles could include special constable, NHS responder or RNLI volunteer; or
- 2 **military service.** A year-long full-time placement in the armed forces or cyber defence. This placement will be competitive and paid, so our armed forces recruit and train the brightest and the best.

We will establish a Royal Commission, the first in a quarter of a century, to design our modernised National Service. It will be backed by funding rising to £2.5 billion in the final year of the Parliament and a new National Service Act.

Driving a skills revolution

Too many people in Scotland have been left behind by the SNP. The SNP Government's own adult learning strategy found that over 300,000 Scottish adults have low or no qualifications and almost 2 million Scottish adults have low numeracy skills. Meanwhile, CIPD analysis found that more than four in ten graduates in Scotland were working in jobs that do not require a degree, the highest level of any region or nation in the UK.

Ensuring that Scotland's workforce has the right skills and qualifications to support the Scottish economy is absolutely essential for

growth. The Scottish Conservatives believe that it is never too late to learn and that everyone should be supported throughout their lives to continuously develop and succeed.

The Scottish Conservatives would work with industry to create a **National Skills Strategy** to inform our approach to developing an education and skills system that delivers for our economy, both today and in the future. We would flip the apprenticeship funding model, so that apprenticeship places are funded by the Scottish Government on the basis of need and the number of good places being offered and remove the cap on funding. As part of these changes, we would ensure that all of Scotland's share of the revenue from the Apprenticeship Levy is made available for funding apprenticeships. This could create potentially unlimited apprenticeship opportunities for Scotland's young people.

We would also establish a single digital record achievement for every Scot, which would include school and professional qualifications. In addition, we would ensure that the qualification system recognises part-time work and volunteering while at school.

We need to make training and qualifications as accessible as possible. The Scottish Conservatives would work with the further and higher education sector and employers to set up a **virtual National College of Scotland**, offering modular learning and entry courses to everyone in the country, for those unable to attend an institution in person.

We support free tuition in Scotland's universities for Scottish students but also recognise the problems that it is creating. We believe that this policy needs to be properly funded in order to continue or else we risk more Scots being denied access to university.

Scotland is lagging behind England and Wales when it comes to government support for skills and training. The Scottish Conservatives would **invest in a universal Personal Skills**

Fund for every Scottish adult from the point they leave school. This could be used to contribute towards government support for an apprenticeship, the cost of training towards a qualification or the cost of a university degree. A premium would be made available for study in areas where there is a shortage, such as medicine or engineering, to contribute towards masters or PHD study.

The retention of skills is just as important as the development of new skills. This is particularly the case when looking at the transition to net zero and the North East of Scotland. The Scottish Conservatives would work with employers and trade unions to set up a network of Job Security Councils, with the first of these being focused on the energy sector. In recognition of the importance of developing skills essential to our transition we would support the Energy Transition Skills Hub in Aberdeen.

Our plan to secure our nation from global uncertainty



» The world is an increasingly dangerous place so we will take bold action to keep the British people safe and our homeland secure. Our prosperity depends on our ability to preserve international security. As our record proves, we will do so by deterring our adversaries and acting as a force for peace and stability in the world.

We will fully deliver our new pledge for the defence of the nation.

We will hit **2.5% of GDP on defence in 2030 with our fully funded plan**. This is the biggest strengthening of our defence since the Cold War, ensuring we remain the largest defence power in Europe. It will protect our security, cement our UK leadership in NATO and create more jobs in the UK.

If all NATO partners spent 2.5% of GDP on defence, our collective spending would increase by over £140 billion. Therefore, we will launch **a campaign to set a new baseline of 2.5% for all NATO allies by 2030**.

We will invest in the vital capabilities of the future, to give our Armed Forces the best equipment to do their job.

Taking pride in our record

- » We have led the world in support of Ukraine against Putin's aggression, as the first European country to mobilise lethal aid and to send Western tanks and long-range missiles. Russia's attempts to destroy Ukraine are an assault on European security.
- » We will always be steadfast in our support for our Trident nuclear deterrent and have invested in its modernisation, including a nuclear skills package worth up to £763 million by 2030.
- » We have taken action to prevent Iran and its proxies from attacking the UK and its partners.
- » We have toughened our cyber defences and national security laws to protect the nation from terrorists and hostile state actors.
- » We have chased dirty money out of the UK with new measures to protect our economic security.
- » We have ripped out Huawei from key parts of our telecommunications system and reduced Chinese influence in our critical national infrastructure and sensitive technological sectors.
- » Due to our post-Brexit freedoms, we have introduced a new independent sanctions regime that we have used to stand up for human rights around the world in countries such as Russia, Belarus and Iran.
- » We have agreed new trade and security deals across the world including in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Indo-Pacific.
- » We have delivered major new investment. The Integrated Review was supported by an additional £24 billion and the Integrated Review Refresh by an additional £5 billion to invest in stockpiles and our nuclear enterprise. We have pledged over £12 billion to date on support to Ukraine.
- » We have created new defence industrial partnerships, including AUKUS to create the world's most advanced nuclear-powered, conventionally and continually armed, submarines and the Global Combat Air Programme to create a new fighter jet with Italy and Japan.
- » We will always stand up for British values and interests and will never be afraid to act when it is necessary. We have been part of a coalition that protected maritime security from Houthi attacks and helped police the airspace of our partners in the Middle East.

Our strategic defence priorities

We will adapt to the lessons from the war in Ukraine which showed us it is vital to be able to replenish equipment quickly and that the acceleration of disruptive technologies is changing the character of warfare. Our strategic priorities will be:

- ▶ **Boosting the UK defence industrial base** by giving industry the multi-year certainty it requires to produce the equipment we need when we need it, with at least £10 billion of investment in munitions production, the majority of which will be spent in the UK over the next decade. We will do this in the areas in which we have the most pressing priorities, building on UK expertise. We will build long-term strategic partnerships with our industrial partners and invest in high quality British defence industry jobs across the UK.
- ▶ **Accelerating the modernisation of our Armed Forces and investing in technology** that is advantageous on the modern battlefield. Through our new Defence Innovation Agency, we will scale R&D funding to a minimum of 5% of the defence budget, together with an additional 2% to exploit that R&D, accelerating investments in new weapon systems.
- ▶ **Guaranteeing Ukraine the support it needs for the long haul**, assuring current levels of support for as long as they are required. We will secure additional military supplies for Ukraine and build international agreement to use immobilised Russian assets to support Ukraine.

We will deliver a National Defence and Resilience Plan for our security, preparedness and resilience as a nation. This will be based on the latest assessment of threats and risks, bringing together defence and civilian planning to reflect our increasingly interdependent world, and sit alongside work to build on learnings from Covid to improve the country's preparedness for risks on the National Risk Register.

We will improve Service Family Accommodation, improving quality and ensuring military families get the support they deserve.

Our pledge to Veterans

We are proud to have created the United Kingdom's first Office for Veterans Affairs, run by a dedicated Minister who attends Cabinet, transforming what it feels like to be a Veteran in the United Kingdom.

- ▶ We will maintain the Office for Veterans Affairs in its current position in the Cabinet Office, with a **dedicated Minister for Veterans Affairs in Cabinet**.
- ▶ We will **maintain the base operating budget of the Office for Veterans Affairs at £10 million throughout the next Parliament**. We will retain the National Insurance holiday for those who employ veterans and we will bring forward measures so that War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme awards are not counted as income for the purpose of benefits and pensions.
- ▶ We will **extend the visa fees waiver introduced to cover Commonwealth personnel**, to include their direct dependants. We will fully implement the findings of the independent review into Veterans UK. We will bring forward measures to ensure public bodies record whether someone has served in the UK's Armed Forces.
- ▶ We will **cut the cost of the Veterans Railcard so that it costs the same as the HM Forces Railcard**.
- ▶ We will **pass the UK's first ever Veterans' Bill** to enshrine Veterans' rights in law. Ensuring qualifications from Service are correctly recognised in civilian life, creating a legal duty on government to look after our Veterans and widening the scope of the Armed Forces Covenant in law to include the UK Government and devolved administrations.
- ▶ We will change the law to ensure **Veterans ID cards are valid identification in all future elections**.

Improving efficiency and investing across the United Kingdom

Defence already contributes significantly to our economic prosperity, supporting over 400,000 jobs in the UK. As part of our new investment in defence, we will **prioritise growth in UK industries and supporting communities across the United Kingdom.**

We will make sure new investment is spent more effectively than before. By delivering our new **Integrated Procurement Model**, we will make defence procurement faster, smarter and more joined up, boost private sector investment by confirming that ESG considerations are entirely consistent with investment in our vital defence industry and transform innovation.

We will ensure we achieve value for money from this investment in defence alongside our procurement reforms. We will improve productivity, along with a new **target to become the largest defence exporter in Europe by 2030.**

Leadership in the world

Since the 2019 election, the Conservative Government has delivered on our promise to make Britain a force for good in the world.

We are proud of our record in defence and diplomacy in an increasingly contested and dangerous world and we celebrate the professionalism of our Armed Forces, diplomats, development experts and intelligence agencies.

Our highest priority remains protecting the British homeland, Crown dependencies and Overseas Territories from risks and threats.

As part of that, we continue to ensure the democratic rights of people in Gibraltar, the Falklands and all our Overseas Territories are protected.

We believe that the United Kingdom needs to be **outward-looking and global in perspective**, seizing opportunities to deepen its economic ties and bolster its prosperity in the most dynamic parts of the world.

We have a record in standing up to those who threaten our security and values, and we are taking new action to protect ourselves, our democracy and our economy at home.

We must be **prepared to tackle the axis of authoritarian states and hostile actors** who are working together to threaten international security. That is why we will include Russia, Iran and China within the enhanced tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme.

- ▶ **We will strengthen our relationships with like-minded partners** around the world. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK has a responsibility to stand up for international peace and security. We will keep investing in our collective security through groups like the G7, Five Eyes and NATO.
- ▶ **We will maintain our special relationship with the United States**, building on the closer trading and national security ties we have built in recent years.
- ▶ **We will seek to strengthen the Commonwealth**, as an organisation that accounts for over a quarter of the membership of the UN and a champion of values. We will deepen cooperation with Commonwealth partners and institutions to enhance the benefits of membership, strengthen intra-Commonwealth trade, support members facing challenges in attracting inward investment and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable members to climate change, nature loss and environmental degradation.
- ▶ **We will build on our post-Brexit relationships in Europe**, including through the **Joint Expeditionary Force and new**

defensive treaties with Germany and Poland, to match the treaty we have with France under Lancaster House.

- 】 In relation to China, we will strengthen our national security protections, align and cooperate with our partners, and engage where it is consistent with our interests. China has disregarded universal human rights and its international commitments, from Tibet and Xinjiang to Hong Kong. We will continue to raise our grave concerns at the UN and other fora and use asset freezes and travel bans on those involved under our human rights sanctions regime.
- 】 We will maintain our close ties in the Indo-Pacific, following our accession to CPTPP, our AUKUS partnership with Australia and ASEAN dialogue partner status. We will bolster the Hiroshima Accord with Japan and expand trade and security ties with South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore. We will finalise a **free trade agreement with India**, alongside a deeper strategic partnership on technology and defence.
- 】 We will continue to seek closer ties with partners in the Gulf and Middle East based on an appreciation of regional perspectives and shared interests.
- 】 We will sign partnership agreements with each of the British Overseas Territories, ensuring we are working together to deliver for their residents and identifying areas for greater cooperation on defence, trade and investment.

To ensure our world-class diplomacy and development expertise is brought together we will **maintain the merger of the Foreign Office and former Department for International Development** – and use this advantage to the maximum benefit in every post overseas.

The UK will remain one of the largest development donors in the world. We will return to spending 0.7% of GNI when fiscal circumstances allow. We will assess every penny of this money with a **strict national interest test**.

- 】 We will continue to ensure that aid and development supports our strategic objectives, with a focus on fragile states. We will work with our partners to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and tackle poverty, as set out in the International Development White Paper.
- 】 We will use our influence to ensure Multilateral Development Banks get more money to the countries who need it and work to deliver debt relief.
- 】 We will expand our international campaigns on girls' education, women's rights and reproductive health. We will stand up for those persecuted for their faith and put the existing role of **Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief on a statutory footing**. We will promote international media freedom and work to end human trafficking and modern slavery.
- 】 We will support marginalised communities in the developing world and protect those persecuted for their ethnicity, political views, faith or sexuality. We will continue our campaigns against child marriage and FGM.
- 】 We will scale up high impact, cost effective global health interventions, including maternal nutrition and antimicrobial resistance, for benefit at home and overseas. We will continue our longstanding support for GAVI and the Global Fund - organisations that have saved millions of lives in the fight against disease.

We will **maintain the leadership on climate change** we achieved at COP26 and our efforts to tackle global warming and biodiversity loss.

We will continue to ring-fence our commitment to International Climate Finance.

We will work with Small Island Development States, including our Commonwealth friends in the Caribbean and the Pacific, to access finance for climate change adaptation and resilience.

We will be confident in spreading British values around the world, publishing a **new Soft Power Strategy** to support the role of our embassies and the British Council overseas. We will support the BBC World Service, **expand the use of the English language worldwide** and champion English learning around the globe.

We will not apologise for standing up for our values and we will work against the global rollback on people's rights and freedoms. We will use all the tools available to us, including travel bans and sanctions, on individuals and entities that warrant it.

We have delivered on our manifesto pledge to introduce 'votes for life' for British citizens living overseas. We will appoint **a Minister for British Citizens Overseas** to represent them across government.

The UK has a strong record of providing world-leading consular support to our citizens overseas and we will ensure British nationals abroad get help when they need it. We will introduce a new model for complex detention cases, with **new Family Advocates** to help provide specialist assistance and give greater confidence to families.

We are proud to be a **problem-solving and burden-sharing nation**. We will use our diplomatic efforts to keep pushing for reconciliation and stability in parts of the world where there is conflict or unresolved territorial disputes.

We staunchly stand behind Israel's right to defend itself and to live with security. We will continue to support access to aid for those affected by the conflict. We will push for a

two-state solution in the Middle East - our long-standing position has been that we will recognise a Palestinian State at a time that is most conducive to the peace process. We will redouble our efforts to help achieve diplomatic breakthroughs in Cyprus, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Myanmar.

We will bring back our Bill to ban public bodies from imposing their own boycott or divestment campaigns against foreign countries and territories.

We will intensify our fight to stop money laundering and dirty money and ensure all British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies adopt open registers of beneficial ownership.

Our plan to control immigration and stop illegal immigration



» Illegal migration is unfair. It is unfair for people to jump the queue in front of people who play by the rules. It is unfair for taxpayers to pay for the hotels and public services. And it is unfair for illegal migrants themselves who risk their lives in the hands of people smugglers.

The Conservatives are the only party with a plan to stop the boats and reduce the strain that illegal migration places on our communities and public services. Labour have no plan and would grant an amnesty to thousands of illegal migrants.

We have made progress. Last year, small boat arrivals to the UK fell by a third. Our work with international partners prevented more than 26,000 crossings last year. Our Albania deal shows that deterrence works, with numbers down 90%.

But the only way to stop the boats entirely is to remove the incentive to come – by making clear that if you come here illegally, you will not be allowed to stay. Only then will the boats stop coming and people stop dying in the Channel. We will:

- › **Establish a deterrent.** We will run a relentless, continual process of permanently removing illegal migrants to Rwanda with a regular rhythm of flights every month, starting this July, until the boats are stopped. If we are forced to choose between our security and the jurisdiction of a foreign court, including the ECtHR, we will always choose our security.
- › **End the legal merry-go-round.** We will stop illegal migrants from bringing spurious challenges to block their removal by bringing our Illegal Migration Act into force and clearing the asylum backlog, with all claims processed in six months and the use of hotels ended.

- › **Crack down on organised immigration crime,** including through the National Crime Agency and our intelligence services, to disrupt supply chains and tackle people smugglers.
- › **Reform asylum rules,** holding an international summit and working with other countries to reform international laws to make them fit for an age of mass migration. We will restrict visa access from countries that don't work with us on our national priorities, like illegal migration.
- › **Return people with no right to be here to their own country.** We will sign further returns deals like the one we have already agreed with Albania.
- › **With control of our borders, we can do more to help refugees fleeing persecution.** In addition to maintaining visa schemes for people fleeing Hong Kong, Ukraine and our Afghan settlement schemes, we will give parliament control of how many places we offer on safe and legal routes to support those in genuine need from around the world, with a cap based on the capacity of local areas.

Delivering sustainable levels of high-skilled migration

Immigration is too high. We want to attract the **brightest and best** skilled migrants to the UK to contribute to our businesses and public services. We must bring migration numbers down to sustainable levels to reduce the impacts on public services and housing and to restore public confidence in the system.

We have already implemented changes which mean that 300,000 people who were eligible to come to the UK last year now couldn't. We have:

- › **Ended the ability of almost all international students and all care workers to bring dependants.**
- › **Scrapped cut-price shortage labour from overseas, by abolishing the 20% going rate salary discount for shortage occupations.**
- › **Stopped immigration from undercutting British workers, by increasing the salary threshold for Skilled Worker visas by 48% to £38,700.**
- › **Ensured those sponsoring dependants can support them financially, by raising the minimum income for family visas to £38,700.**

Going forward, we will **raise the Skilled Worker threshold and Family income requirement with inflation automatically** to make sure they don't undercut UK workers.

We have taken steps to ensure those coming to the UK do not place a burden on the NHS, by requiring them to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge and increasing this to £1,035. We

Our plan to cut migration

We need to control numbers and give the public confidence they will come down significantly.

- › We will **introduce a binding, legal cap on migration**, set on work and family visas so public services are protected whilst we bring the skills our businesses and the NHS needs.
- › Our cap will be set at a level that explicitly takes into account **the costs and the benefits of migration**.
- › The cap will **fall every year of the next Parliament** and cannot be breached.
- › We will give parliament **an annual vote on the level of the cap** so that the British people can have confidence that immigration numbers will be controlled.
- › Unlike Labour, we won't allow any form of free movement to return.

will go further, in line with other countries, by **requiring migrants to undergo a health check** in advance of travel and increasing their Immigration Health Surcharge or requiring them to buy health insurance if they are likely to be a burden on the NHS.

We will increase all visa fees and remove the student discount to the Immigration Health Surcharge to raise more money for public services.

We will continue to attract the **brightest and best** students to study in our world class institutions. We will ensure those who come here are able to integrate into communities and participate in the economy. We want to make sure our immigration system is fair and will continue delivering the **Windrush Compensation Scheme**. We are committed to the EU Settled Status Scheme and the rights it has guaranteed for EU citizens.

Parts of Scotland, particularly in the north and on our islands, are struggling with depopulation. While the SNP like to pretend this is a Scotland-wide issue, that is not borne out by the data. Edinburgh and Glasgow in particular attract large numbers of migrants while remote and rural parts of Scotland do not, due to a lack of housing, connectivity, schools, hospitals and jobs. The Scottish Conservatives would take forward a regional strategy to reverse depopulation and improve services and opportunities in these parts of the country, so that they retain working age Scots and attract a greater share of the migration that comes to the UK.



Our plan to deliver better health and social care



» Our NHS is our greatest national institution, but it has been left overstretched by this SNP Government. Humza Yousaf promised to bring down waiting lists after the pandemic, yet they are at their highest ever level – with one in seven Scots on an NHS waiting list. We are spending more than ever before on our health service, yet staff are burnt out and patients are left with a worse experience. **Things must change.**

Security of funding is essential for our health service so the Scottish Conservatives will ensure that NHS spending increases are above inflation in each year of the next Parliament.

A modern, efficient, local service

However, we recognise that the pressures on our health service require more than just money, we need to deliver a **new contract between Scotland's NHS and the public** to increase capacity but also for us all to take more personal responsibility to reduce demand. That means increasing efficiency across our service, but it also means living healthier lives and avoid overburdening the system. There are no easy answers but if things carry on the way they are, then the next generation of Scots will have access to poorer healthcare than we have available today.

That is why the Scottish Conservatives have a plan to save our NHS and build a modern, efficient, local service. We are not content with simply managing decline in our health service, we would build a system better able to manage patient demand now and in the future.

Over 840,000 people are on an NHS waiting list in Scotland, a record amount. That is not just a record that should shame the SNP Government but it is also putting an enormous

Delivering a local service

Protecting local health services and investing in GPs is absolutely essential to our vision of a modern, efficient, local service and to reduce demand in hospitals. We would:

- » Increase GP funding to 12% of total NHS spending, to reduce demand at hospitals and the need for costly temporary capacity.
- » **Recruit 1,000 additional GPs**, and grow GP staff numbers comparatively, to increase appointments available across the country.
- » Introduce a national standard of one week waits for appointments, so patients have the confidence that they will be able to see their GP in a timely manner.
- » Ban local healthcare service closures, and review reopening centres to reverse years of centralisation.
- » We would invest in a network of dedicated long Covid treatment centres to help the 175,000 Scots that this condition has affected.

burden on our health service. We need to tackle this backlog as soon as possible through using existing resources at maximum capacity.

We would twin theatres to reduce the time between operations and introduce off-peak scanning to make facilities available at evenings and at weekends. We would also learn from the experience of Covid and use mobile facilities and non-NHS buildings to carry out simple procedures such as ECGs and blood tests. We would also use these facilities to help tackle some of Scotland's biggest killers like lung cancer and heart disease in areas of high deprivation.

In 2015, the SNP promised that they would eradicate delayed discharge but nearly a decade on from that promise the situation has declined. We would reduce delayed discharge as part of our plan to increase capacity across our health service.

NHS dentistry is becoming increasingly difficult to access across Scotland. Patient numbers are increasing while running costs are soaring. The Scottish Conservatives would put NHS dentistry in Scotland back on a financially viable footing.

We will drive efficiency across our health service by reducing the number of NHS Boards and managers to cut bureaucracy and reinvest those savings into the frontline. We would also make it easier for failing NHS management to be sanctioned and, in extreme cases, sacked. In addition, we would review and update the NHS resource allocation formula to ensure that it reflects the demand for healthcare in today's Scotland.

Delivering proper workforce planning is essential to tackling many of the challenges the NHS faces, such as wasteful agency spending. The SNP's cap on university places for Scottish students is having an impact on their ability to study medicine. To increase staff recruitment, we would introduce a system of Scottish preference for medicine, dentistry, nursing, and midwifery courses. We would also introduce a bursary scheme for students willing to work their placements in parts of the country, such as rural areas, experiencing the greatest staffing shortages.

Staff retention in our health service is also essential, with many staff experiencing burnout

to the point whereby they are now leaving the NHS altogether. To tackle this, we would increase flexibility in working patterns and improve staff rota designs, including giving six weeks' notice. We would deliver a Scottish Workforce Specialist Service to deliver better support for staff. We would also ensure that safe staffing legislation voted for by the Scottish Parliament in 2019 is introduced in full.

Pharmacy can also play a key role in reducing demand across our health service. We would encourage all pharmacists to become qualified prescribers and work to ensure that this becomes the recognised industry standard.

Over a quarter of all deaths in Scotland are due to preventable diseases, with Scots living in the most deprived parts of Scotland spending 25 years less in good health than those in the least deprived parts of our country. Even if we take all of the action outlined above, our NHS will still struggle to keep up with demand.

We all have a role in looking after our own health and the health of the NHS. We would deliver a new communications campaign focused on helping people to live healthier lives and the importance of doing so.

We would also take action to tackle three of the biggest killers in Scotland – smoking, obesity and drugs and alcohol. We would support the landmark Tobacco and Vapes Bill and ban vaping in indoor public places. We would deliver a legal right to recovery treatment for those struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. We would make it easier to eat healthily.

Women make up more than half of Scotland's population and our NHS must do more to respond to their needs. We would:

- ▶ **Reduce waiting times for conditions like endometriosis, which currently has a waiting time of 8.5 years, and polycystic ovary syndrome.**
- ▶ **Deliver maternity services locally, particularly in rural areas. We would end the postcode lottery in services which sees**

An NHS fit for the future

Our NHS needs to make much better use of technology and digital innovation to manage demand and save staff time. The Scottish Conservatives would:

- ▶ **Deliver a 'My NHS Scotland' app allowing patients to book appointments and see live hospital waiting time data.**
- ▶ **Introduce a single digital medical record for every Scot and make this available to them through the app and for use across the health and social care sector with patient consent.**
- ▶ **Make use of the latest medical equipment where possible – such as greater use of robotics in surgery, AI to speed up diagnostics and wearables at home to improve patient monitoring.**
- ▶ **Embrace innovation and reduce the procurement barriers that are holding our NHS back.**

some women having to travel dozens of miles to give birth safely.

- › Refresh the women’s health plan to take greater account of women’s health needs such as the greater risk of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

Vulnerable young people are being put at risk in Scotland for the sake of gender ideology. While we welcome the pausing of the prescribing of puberty blockers at the Sandyford clinic, we need to go further. The Scottish Conservatives would **ensure that the Cass Review is implemented in Scotland in full.**

Two years ago, the Scottish Conservatives were the only party to vote against the SNP’s gender reforms. We will continue to **oppose any attempt to bring back Nicola Sturgeon’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill.**

The SNP’s proposed National Care Service is expected to cost more than £2 billion to introduce and has been repeatedly delayed. This is a bureaucratic overhaul that our social care sector cannot afford right now and will only take resources away from the frontline. It will also see specialist services, like those for children, rolled into a single system. We are opposed to this change.

The Scottish Conservatives believe in a local service with any additional resources invested directly into the frontline. We would increase resources for preventative community settings and care capacity to reduce delayed discharge in our hospitals.

We would deliver **a patient centred approach** and introduce a local care guarantee so that no one will have to move away from their support network to access care. We would oppose the rolling in of specialist services into social care.

We would introduce an ethical commission and build minimum pay, terms and conditions into commissioning and procuring care. We would increase the powers of the Care Inspectorate to drive up standards across the social care system and develop a clear system for complaints and redress when things go wrong in social care.

Improving mental health support

The importance of mental health has become increasingly apparent following the Covid pandemic. We believe that it deserves parity of esteem with physical health and to deliver this, we would:

- › Increase mental health spending to 10% of the frontline NHS budget.
- › Deliver better community mental health services offering support to people with mild to moderate health problems.
- › Develop dedicated national programmes for serious mental health issues, such as a strategy to reduce and prevent self-harm.
- › Take forward a specific Rural Mental Health strategy, to combat social isolation.
- › Use Scotland’s natural environment to facilitate mental health recovery.

Our single digital patient record would reduce bureaucracy and avoid the need for reassessment if patients move across local authority boundaries.

The UK Government have made a wholehearted and unequivocal apology, on behalf of successive governments of all parties, for the infected blood scandal. As one of the last acts of Parliament, legislation was passed that brings the Infected Blood Compensation Authority into existence and we confirmed Sir Robert Francis as its Interim Chair. We will pay comprehensive compensation to those infected and those affected by this scandal, accepting the principles recommended by the Inquiry. **Whatever it costs to deliver the scheme, we will pay it.** We will also give a further £210,000 interim payment to living infected beneficiaries – those registered with existing infected blood support schemes as well as those who register with a support scheme before the final scheme becomes operational and the estates of those who pass away between now and payments being made. A scandal like this must never be allowed to happen again, so we will study the Inquiry’s wide-ranging recommendations and provide a full response to the Inquiry.

Our plan for safer streets and justice for victims of crime



» Under the SNP, violent crime is at its highest level for at least six years, criminals are often not even prosecuted and, if convicted, are being let off with weak sentences. Police numbers are at their lowest since Police Scotland was created. **The SNP Government are increasingly failing in their basic duty to keep us safe.**

The Scottish Conservatives are the party of law and order in Scotland. **We will always back our police, support victims and be tough on criminals.**

Backing our police

Ensuring that our police have the resources to do their jobs is essential for tackling crime. However, since 2013 there are 140 fewer police buildings across Scotland and 1,140 fewer officers on our streets. The Scottish Conservatives would **put 1,000 additional police officers into our communities to keep the public safe.** In addition, we would introduce a Local Policing Act to boost police patrols and allow for local community input into policing decisions.

We also need to ensure that we protect our police in the job that they do. Every police officer across the UK is protected by body worn cameras, except for here in Scotland. We would roll out body worn cameras to frontline officers without any further delay.

Essential blue light service workers deserve to be protected. **We would double sentencing for attacks on emergency workers,** so they have confidence in our justice system.

Protecting victims and punishing criminals

The SNP's weak approach to sentencing has seen thousands of criminals – including those who commit acts of violence and sex offences – being diverted from prosecution instead of being put in the dock. Many more dangerous criminals avoid prison, while community sentences have become increasingly relaxed. The rights of victims have been steadily eroded in favour of criminals. **The SNP justice system lacks transparency and treats victims with disrespect.**

The **Scottish Conservatives will ensure that our justice system puts victims first.** We would pass a real Victims Law which would:

- » Introduce Suzanne's Law to keep killers behind bars if they refuse to reveal the location of their victims' remains.
- » Introduce Michelle's Law to protect victims and families from offenders by preventing them from returning to the community where they committed the offence.
- » Enable all victims to make a victim's statement to court so that their voice is heard.
- » Enshrine in law the right for all victims to be notified of decisions not to prosecute or discontinue criminal proceedings so they can challenge the decision.
- » Enshrine in law the right of victims to be fully informed when 'plea deals' are struck between prosecutors and defence lawyers.
- » Fix Scotland's dysfunctional system of investigating sudden, suspicious, accidental or unexplained deaths by commissioning a root-and-branch review into the broken Fatal Accident Inquiry system which causes untold misery to families.
- » Restrict the right of the accused to request post-mortems to protect murder victims' families from further trauma.

- 】 **Bring full transparency to sentencing by ensuring that every decision reached by the parole board is a matter of public record.**
- 】 **Improve access to the Victim Notification Scheme, with a presumption of full transparency.**
- 】 **Expand restorative justice, so that more victims receive an apology from offenders.**

We would also reform the Scottish Sentencing Council (SSC) guidelines against jailing criminals aged under 25. This policy treats adult criminals like children, while having no regard for the impact on victims. We would also radically reform the SSC by giving victims a voice. We would ensure that victims make up half of the SSC and would have a veto to block inappropriate or damaging guidelines.

The Scottish Conservatives will also ensure that criminals properly pay the price for their actions. We would strengthen community sentences, so that they all include unpaid work. We would deploy GPS tracking technology and Remote Alcohol Monitoring. We would ensure full transparency to build public faith in justice. We would also end the SNP's presumption against short sentences and finally end automatic early release. In addition, we would **introduce whole life sentences for the worst offenders who should never be freed, so that life means life**, and a statutory aggravator meaning tougher sentences for those who intentionally target vulnerable people.

Prisons play an important role in keeping the public safe and rehabilitating offenders. This includes learning skills that could help with finding a job after a sentence has been served.

The SNP has failed to build much-needed new prisons. We would ensure that they are finally delivered. We would also clamp down on the widespread use of drugs behind bars. Achieving this would give prisoners the opportunity to beat their addictions and reduce reoffending. We would prioritise the wellbeing of prison officers

who have been subjected to targeted attacks by organised crime groups. We would also ensure that prison officers have the protection of body-worn cameras, which are standard equipment for officers in the rest of the UK.

We would ensure that ensure **that dangerous men are never housed in women's prisons**. We would also ban prisoners from voting in Scotland.

Tackling violence against women and girls

Women and girls deserve to live in a society free from harm and harassment. We would introduce a law to create a domestic abuse register, similar to the sex offenders' register. This would give victims, most of whom are women, the legal right to know about a partner's past abusive behaviour.

Under the SNP, hundreds of registered sex offenders have been allowed to change their names – putting women in increased danger. We would close this dangerous loophole.

One in ten women across the UK have been spiked yet this cowardly and dangerous crime continues to go unpunished, with just seven people convicted between 2018-2021. Victims often feel disbelieved and unsupported. Quick testing is critical but is woefully inadequate and inconsistent.

We would seek to introduce a new law that would introduce clear protocols for Police Scotland, the NHS and others. We would also create a new standalone spiking offence, to ensure a more consistent response and better gather data. In addition, we would also increase public awareness about the prevalence of spiking.

A plan to counter extremism and to protect our streets

We will urgently **introduce Martyn's Law**, in tribute to Martyn Hett, who was tragically killed alongside 21 others in the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in 2017. This will ensure premises are better prepared for terrorist attacks by requiring them to take proportionate steps to mitigate risks.

In recent months we have seen shocking increases in protests being used as a cover for extremist disruption and criminality. We cannot allow a small and vocal minority to destroy our democratic values. That is why we unveiled a **new extremism definition** under which certain groups that promote an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance will be blocked from government funding and meeting officials.

We will take action to curb disruptive protests and will take forward a law to better protect war memorials.

Humza Yousaf's Hate Crime Act, which was supported by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, is an attack on free speech. The Act is unworkable, has placed new burdens on police time when they are more overstretched than ever before, and has been used for vexatious allegations. The **Scottish Conservatives would scrap the Hate Crime Act** and replace it with a law that defends free speech in Scotland.

We will also ensure our **elected representatives get the protection needed** to represent their constituents without fear.

Abuse or discrimination based on religion is unacceptable. We will **not tolerate antisemitic hatred in any form**. We have pledged £54 million for the Community Security Trust to give Jewish schools and synagogues the security measures they need and allocated additional funding to support schools and universities to understand, recognise and tackle antisemitism. We will get the UK Holocaust Memorial built.

We do not tolerate anti-Muslim hatred and will seek to stamp it out wherever it occurs. We have committed to provide £117 million over four years for the Protective Security for Mosques scheme and are proud to support and help fund Tell MAMA's vital work.

Our plan for an affordable and pragmatic transition to net zero



» In the last few years, we have faced the greatest shock to our energy security since the 1970s. Putin’s illegal invasion of Ukraine sent energy prices spiralling. Because of the decisions we had taken to boost domestic energy production and invest in renewables, Britain had little reliance on Russian fuel when the invasion began, unlike some of our European neighbours. But when global energy prices spiked, the Government stepped in to pay around half the typical household bill at the peak, saving families £1,500 on average. Bills are now coming down, and in July will fall to the lowest level in over two years. But the shock has reminded us of the importance of securing our long-term energy supply.

We are proud of our record and remain committed to delivering net zero by 2050 in the UK, and 2045 in Scotland. Today the UK is home to the five largest offshore wind farms in the world. Half of our electricity comes from renewables, compared to just 7% when Labour were last in office. We have reduced emissions further and faster than any of our competitors and the UK is the first major economy to get halfway to net zero. And we have done this while growing our economy by 80%, demonstrating to other countries that there is a positive economic path to tackling climate change.

Delivering energy security

We will boost our energy independence in an increasingly unstable world. We will legislate to ensure **annual licensing rounds for oil and gas production from our own North Sea**

to provide energy to homes and businesses across the country and protect high-skilled and well-paid jobs in the industry.

Labour and the SNP are committed to shutting down the North Sea, rejecting any new licenses. That would put 100,000 Scottish jobs and billions of pounds of tax receipts at risk. It would leave the UK more dependent on foreign powers and mean higher emissions from imported liquefied gas.

The Energy Profits Levy was introduced in 2022 to ensure that oil and gas producers in the UK pay their fair share of tax from extraordinary profits. Gas prices are forecast to remain abnormally high until at least 2028-29. The UK Government will end the Energy Profits Levy from 2028-29 – and have also legislated to put beyond doubt that it will end if oil and gas prices drop below the levels set by the Energy Security Investment Mechanism before then. Scottish Conservatives will continue to campaign for the Levy to be ended as soon as is practical.

It is absolutely essential to both the Scottish economy and our successful transition that jobs in our North Sea industry are protected. **We would deliver a Jobs First transition** and would support the Energy Transition Zone in Aberdeen.

Our first Job Security Council would also be in the Scottish energy sector. These measures will ensure that skills and livelihoods in the North East and across Scotland are protected as we achieve net zero by 2045.

We introduced a windfall tax on oil and gas companies in 2022 to ensure they pay their fair share of tax from extraordinary profits while prices remain abnormally high. We will keep this in place until 2028-29, unless prices fall back to normal sooner. In total, this is expected to raise over £26 billion. We will maintain the investment allowances that provide incentives to invest in our North Sea, which Labour have said they would remove.

We will back up renewables and prevent the prospect of blackouts with **new gas power**

stations to maintain a safe and reliable energy source for days when the weather doesn't power up renewables. Conservatives know that if we are forced to choose between clean energy and keeping citizens safe and warm, we will choose to keep the lights on.

We are delivering record investment into UK renewables. But we need to go further, unlocking more investment to secure our energy supply in the future. In the next Parliament we will:

- › **Treble our offshore wind capacity, to deliver low-cost, home-grown energy and support the development of vibrant industrial clusters in Scotland.**
- › **Progress the carbon capture and storage cluster in Aberdeenshire.**
- › **Invest £1.1 billion into the Green Industries Growth Accelerator to support British manufacturing capabilities, boost supply chains and ensure our energy transition is made in Britain.**
- › **Where there is local support, we would give planning consent for a new generation of nuclear power stations in Scotland.**

This will help **the UK to become a net exporter of electricity**. And by building more electricity links with neighbouring countries, we can increase exports, make our energy system more efficient and bring additional revenue to the UK. We will ensure offshore cables help reduce the amount of onshore infrastructure, such as substations, that we need to build.

As we achieve this transition to net zero, we will take steps to ensure the technology and infrastructure is made here in the UK. We will provide a bonus, on top of contract payments that support offshore wind, to **reward energy firms that invest in manufacturing in the most disadvantaged places in the UK** or invest in more sustainable supply chains, creating more good jobs as we get more energy from renewables.

We will **implement a new import carbon pricing mechanism by 2027** to ensure that imports of

iron, steel, aluminium, ceramics and cement from countries with a lower or no carbon price will face a comparable carbon price to those goods produced in the UK. This will reduce the risk of industry being displaced to other countries which aren't taking action on climate change.

A pragmatic and proportionate approach to net zero

The UK has led the world on tackling climate change, having cut our emissions more than any other major economy. We will get to net zero on the fairest possible path and in a way that brings people with us.

We will seize the opportunities created by the transition, opening up whole new sectors and creating hundreds of thousands of good jobs in all corners of the country. Our approach leverages the innovation and investment of the private sector to unleash technologies that cut costs for households. This has enabled us to overachieve on our targets, become a powerhouse in clean technologies, and continue to support households. We reject Labour's dogmatic, top-down approach that will burden households with higher bills.

We will **cut the cost of tackling climate change for households and business**, and deliver net zero by 2050 in the UK and 2045 in Scotland, by:

- › **Sticking to our pragmatic, proportionate and realistic approach that eases the burdens on working people. Ensuring that families are given time to make changes that affect their lives and never forcing people to rip out their existing boiler and replace it with a heat pump.**
- › **Guaranteeing a vote in the next Parliament on the next stage of our pathway, with adoption of any new target accompanied by proper consideration of the plans and policies required to meet the target, to maintain democratic consent for the big decisions that net zero will mean for our country.**

- › **Ensuring that green levies on household bills are lower.** The cost of renewables such as wind and solar has fallen dramatically. We will ensure the annual policy costs and levies on household energy bills are lower in each year of the next Parliament than they were in 2023.
- › Reforming the Climate Change Committee, giving it an explicit mandate to consider cost to households and UK energy security in its future climate advice.
- › **Ruling out creating further green levies,** and alongside our commitment not to introduce road pricing schemes, we will also rule out any frequent flyer levy.

Energy bills are falling, down 63% since the peak. We will take further action to ensure they are low as possible for families, by:

- › **Maintaining our energy price cap,** protecting millions of households from being overcharged by their supplier. As the energy market advances, the price cap will need to evolve and we will ensure the regulator has the necessary powers to continue protecting consumers.
- › **Reviewing and reforming standing charges** to keep them as low as possible.
- › **Delivering our Pumpwatch scheme** that will force petrol retailers to share live information on their prices, helping drivers to get a fair price at the pump.
- › **Introducing more efficient local markets for electricity,** which expert analysis estimates would save £20 - £45 per household per year.
- › Giving households the choice of smart energy tariffs, which can save them £900 a year.
- › Implementing the recommendations of the Winser Review, ensuring networks are able to buy forward with confidence **and cutting waiting times to get a grid connection** to deliver an estimated saving of £15 - £25 per household per year out to 2035.

- › Recognising technological developments over the last decade, we will undertake a rapid review into the advantages of alternative network technologies, compared to overhead pylons. The review will consider moving to a presumption in favour of undergrounding where cost competitive. The Scottish Conservatives will ensure that **local consent is placed at the heart of any plans to upgrade the network** and that pylons are only installed where that is present.

The SNP Government has set many targets for delivering net zero but has done little to deliver them. It has even been forced to admit that its legal 2030 targets are now unachievable.

It is expected to cost £33 billion to decarbonise buildings in Scotland. Homeowners should not be expected to pay all of the costs of delivering net zero in Scotland. The Scottish Conservatives would deliver a Help to Renovate Scheme to support homeowners to make their properties more energy efficient. We would also introduce a Rural Transition Fund to help support those in off-grid areas to transition. In addition, we would ensure that the business rates system incentivises energy efficiency upgrades on non-domestic properties.

We will **ensure democratic consent for onshore wind**, striking the right balance between energy security and the views of their local communities. We would ensure local areas that host onshore wind directly benefit, including potentially through energy bill discounts, through a **Community Energy Benefit Law**.

We will **support solar and battery storage systems in the right places, not on our best agricultural land**. We will protect the best agricultural land with a presumption that it is used for food production, while also making it easier for solar to be located on brownfield sites and on rooftops. We are not opposed generally to the rollout of solar and will introduce a national target for the generation of solar energy. We will retain the current moratorium on fracking.

Our plan to deliver
more homes in the
right places



» **Scotland is facing a housing emergency caused by the SNP, which even their government has been forced to acknowledge. Their rent cap has backfired just like we warned it would, leading to rents rising faster than anywhere in the UK. The SNP have also repeatedly failed to build enough homes and have even broken their promise on affordable homebuilding. First time buyers pay more in tax in Scotland than they do anywhere else in the country. Finally, live homelessness applications are at a record high.**

The Scottish Conservatives believe that drastic action is needed now to deliver more homes of all types in Scotland. We will build more homes, while ensuring there is community consent and that the Green Belt is protected.

We would set up a Scottish Housing Delivery Agency to increase builds of all types, especially affordable homes. We would focus building on brownfield sites and where there is **clear community consent**. We would increase the size of the Rural Housing Fund to deliver the incentives needed to encourage more house building in remote and rural areas.

There were 44,601 long-term empty homes across Scotland in 2022. We would make the redevelopment of these properties, where financially viable, a priority for increasing housing and would set up a national fund to support this. We would introduce Compulsory Sales Orders for long-term unoccupied properties.

The rent cap is pushing up rent costs while also leading to landlords leaving the market. The Scottish Conservatives will continue to oppose rent caps, while ensuring that renters get a fair deal.

It is a national scandal that open homelessness cases in Scotland have reached a record high level, when the SNP promised that it would be eradicated by 2026. The Scottish Conservatives would **introduce a national Housing First programme to end homelessness in Scotland.**

Helping first time buyers

First time buyers in Scotland pay £273 more in tax on an average home than their counterparts in the rest of the UK. That is because the threshold for paying Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBTT) on your first home is only £175,000 in Scotland, substantially lower than the rest of the UK. The Scottish Conservatives would:

- » **Increase the threshold for LBTT from £145,000 to £250,000 – saving home buyers up to £2,100.**
- » **Restore funding for the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, when it is financially viable to do so .**
- » **Pilot a rent to own model – which would see the government give renters back a quarter of their rent to help them purchase the property that they live in.**

Our plan to strengthen communities



» Our commitment to levelling up means giving everyone the opportunity to stay local and go far. Conservatives are committed to delivering stronger communities and safer streets, unleashing the power of the private sector to unlock jobs and opportunity for all and boosting local pride. We have already allocated and will ensure we deliver over £15 billion in dedicated levelling up funding across the UK since 2019 and passed our landmark Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. We have saved more than 330 pubs, sports clubs, arts venues and other precious community spaces through our Community Ownership Fund and we have unlocked the promise of thousands of jobs with 12 Freeports. To further strengthen communities, we will:

- › **Provide 11 towns in Scotland with a £20 million endowment fund for local people to change their town's future.** This is funding that they can use on their priorities such as reviving high streets or bringing new housing to town centres.
- › **Extend our Community Ownership Fund** to help more communities across the UK take control of vital community assets like pubs, music venues, libraries, green spaces, leisure centres and more.
- › **Extend the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for three years at the next Spending Review, before using this funding to support UK-wide National Service.** Both schemes will involve funding community groups focused

on increasing life chances, instilling civic pride and boosting people's skills.

- › **Create more Freeports.** There are already two Freeports in Scotland which are set to create thousands of jobs. We will explore extending this opportunity in Scotland to more areas and set out an application round in the next Parliament.
- › Continue backing **Investment Zones** across the country, giving areas £160 million to catalyse local growth and investment.
- › We will suspend the SNP's short-term lets licensing scheme and until a full review can take place and work with councils to develop a new approach to balance local housing needs.
- › We will support community first right to buy when local businesses are closing their doors.
- › We will support councils in using the business rates system to regenerate town centres and high streets and the conversion of non-domestic units into housing.
- › We will empower communities and devolve powers from the Scottish Government and Parliament to Scotland's councils, to reverse SNP centralisation.

The SNP have underfunded Scotland's councils for years, leading to a decline in local services. The **Scottish Conservatives will ensure that councils are given fair funding** by giving them a fixed share of the Scottish Government's budget. We will also ensure that local councils have the final say on planning decisions by ending the calling of appeals to the Scottish Government, to stop the SNP power grab on our communities.

A plan to support the journeys people make every day

Local communities need good, reliable transport links. Yet the SNP Government, through their coalition with the extreme Greens, have dragged their heels on key road improvements that link our country together. They have also made driving more expensive and more difficult through the workplace parking levy and through introducing LEZs in our cities.

The Scottish Conservatives know the importance of our roads to communities right across the country, particularly in rural areas. **We are the only party in Scotland that backs drivers, instead of trying to hit them with higher taxes.**

Backing drivers

Scottish Conservatives will stand up for drivers at Westminster, Holyrood and in council chambers across the country:

- › **Remove parking charges on public car parks to boost local economies.**
- › **Oppose the rollout of the workplace parking tax and campaign against the introduction of the workplace parking tax in councils across Scotland.**
- › **Oppose the rollout of Low Emission Zones, because of the harm they can do to local businesses, while looking at other ways to improve air quality in our cities.**
- › **Ensure that 20mph zones are only introduced in specific areas such as around schools and with clear community consent.**

We will roll out the National Parking Platform this year to simplify paying for parking.

Protecting our heritage and institutions

We will continue to support museums and libraries across the country. Government has the power to leverage philanthropy for good causes and cultural institutions. We will work with individuals, businesses, charities and other networks to find opportunities to unleash this even further. We will complete the review of Gift Aid within the next Parliament.

We will **ensure Royal Mail continues to deliver the universal postal service** in a way which is affordable for customers as well as being efficient and financially sustainable. Saturday deliveries are important, particularly to businesses, which is why we are clear they will not be scrapped. Conservatives are clear we want a continued six-day service, which Labour and the trade unions would put at risk.

It is wrong that communities in the north of Scotland and in the islands pay more for deliveries. This affects the viability of those communities and makes it more expensive for the families who live there. The Scottish Conservatives will campaign for the introduction of **a single national delivery charge** for the whole of the UK, ensuring that remote communities do not have to pay more.

The Scottish Conservatives successfully lobbied the Scottish Government to legislate to **quash the convictions of those affected by the Post Office Horizon scandal**, one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in our nation's history. We will ensure the new redress scheme is in place and ready to make payments to claimants by the end of July. We are clear that the Post Office should be a valuable social and economic asset for communities and businesses for years to come. That requires a change of culture at the top to deliver the scale of change needed across the organisation.

We have legislated to require banks and building societies considering closing a branch to consider the needs of all their customers

and ensure they continue to have appropriate access to cash in their local community. We have already announced over 100 Banking Hubs which enable customers to access free-to-use cash and everyday banking services.

We remain steadfast in our support for the **fundamental principles that underpin the UK's constitutional settlement**. We remain committed to the First Past the Post system for elections, maintaining the direct link with the local voter. We will not change the voting age from 18 for UK elections. We will maintain rules to tackle voting fraud, including the requirement to show ID at UK elections. We will introduce a right of recall at Holyrood so that voters can remove MSPs who have broken the law or committed a gross breach of parliamentary standards, like Derek Mackay or Michael Matheson.

Our plan for greater protections around sex and gender

Biological sex is a reality. The overwhelming majority of people in this country recognise that. It is right that we have in place provisions and protections for those whose sense of self does not match their biological sex. However, we will not allow the safety and privacy of women and girls to be undermined.

It has been more than a decade since the Equality Act was passed by a Labour Government. It has not kept pace with evolving interpretations and is not sufficiently clear on when it means sex and when it means gender. The next Conservative Government will **introduce primary legislation to clarify that the protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act means biological sex**. This will guarantee that single sex services and single sex spaces can be provided, for example in healthcare and sports settings, to ensure women and girls are protected. We are clear that on fundamental matters of personal identity there should be one approach across the country, so we will also legislate so that **an**

individual can only have one sex in the eyes of the law in the United Kingdom.

The Scottish Conservatives would ensure that material and lessons in school are age appropriate and that parents are made aware of what their child will be taught in school. We will take forward statutory guidance to stop schools from sending intrusive questionnaires to young children on sexuality and gender. Parents will have a right to know if their child wants to be treated as the opposite sex and schools will have to involve parents when it comes to decisions about their children.

We will protect single sex spaces in public buildings.

We are clear that no one in this country should be harmed or harassed for who they are. That is why we are proud that the UK has one of the world's strongest legislative frameworks to prevent and tackle discrimination and harassment against those with particular protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Attempts at so-called 'conversion therapy' are abhorrent. But legislation around conversion practices is a very complex issue, with existing criminal law already offering robust protections. The challenges involved can be seen, for example, with the SNP re-consulting for views on their proposals in Scotland and Sweden recently concluding that they will not be pursuing a similar ban. In light of the Cass Review Final Report, it is right that we take more time before reaching a final judgement on additional legislation in this area.

Equality of opportunity

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, not divisive identity politics. We value a society that is inclusive no matter what sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion a person is. **Our United Kingdom is a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-faith success story.** Our Inclusive Britain plan advances opportunity while tackling unfair ethnic disparities across education, employment, health and the

justice system. We are seeing some of the most entrenched disparities in our society narrowing. For example in our justice system and our police forces we now have the highest proportion of ethnic minority officers, judges and magistrates since records began.

Our ambition is to make this country **the most accessible place in the world** for people with disabilities to live, work and thrive. We are delivering on our Disability Action Plan to transform the everyday lives of people with disabilities. We passed the British Sign Language Act to ensure all public services and information are accessible to Deaf people who use BSL. The Down Syndrome Act will improve access to services and the quality of life of people with Down's syndrome. In the next Parliament we will improve support for people who have guide or assistance dogs and explore bidding to host and deliver the 2031 Special Olympics World Summer Games.

We are proud of our record on **delivering for LGBT people** and will continue to do so. We passed the Same Sex Marriage Act to give same-sex couples the opportunity to enjoy the institution of marriage. We have delivered the largest national roll out of PrEP in Europe.



Our plan to back farmers and fisheries to grow our food security



» Our food and farming sectors generate over £120 billion for the UK economy every year. In the last Parliament, we maintained the farming budget to support our food security, while in Scotland, the SNP raided farm budgets to fund other expenditure. **The Scottish Conservatives will always be on the side of Scotland’s farmers.**

To continue backing our farmers, we will:

- » **Increase the UK-wide farming budget by £1 billion over the Parliament**, ensuring it rises by inflation in every year.
- » Continue to **ringfence agricultural funding so it is passed directly on to farming and rural communities in Scotland**. We will deliver this funding on a multi-annual basis and continue to campaign for the £46 million that the SNP took away from the agriculture budget to be given back to Scotland’s farmers. Farmers in Scotland will also benefit from a new UK-wide £20 million Farming Innovation Fund.
- » **Introduce a legally binding target to enhance our food security**. The target will apply UK-wide alongside our UK Food Security Index, the first of its kind, helping us to determine where best to concentrate farming funds.
- » **Use our significant investment in R&D to prioritise cutting-edge technology** in areas such as fertiliser and vertical farming.
- » Stick to our plan to **support the agricultural sector with the labour** it needs to maintain our food security, while moving away from the reliance on seasonal migrant labour with a five-year visa tapered scheme, alongside clear investment in automation and promoting agri-food careers and skills. We welcome the extension of the Seasonal Worker visa scheme to 2029.
- » Always **stand up for farmers when negotiating new trade deals**. At the 2023 UK Farm to Fork Summit, an event which we will continue every year, we set out our commitments to ensure UK farming is at the heart of UK trade. We will always look for the right deal for farmers. We will continue to support UK agri-food and drink attachés in our embassies abroad, pioneering new markets and new opportunities for our domestic food and drink industry.
- » **Deliver a ‘Scotland’s Food Future’ policy**. This would ensure we can all enjoy high-quality Scottish produce, as local food producers must be supported. We would bring forward gene-editing legislation which would allow farmers to produce crops and livestock that would be more resistant to pests and disease and better for the environment. It would also mean Scottish farmers are not held back technologically, allowing them to compete on a level playing field. To do this we will replicate the UK Government’s recent Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act in Scotland.
- » **Introduce a 60/60 target**, supporting local authorities to source 60% of the food they procure from within 60 miles of the authority region. We will use public sector procurement to support Scottish farming.
- » Back rural businesses with a **New Deal for Farmers**. This will cut red tape for farming businesses, such as around land use.
- » Improve farmers access to financial enterprise by setting up a **Rural Investment Bank**. We will also set up a Young Person’s Agri-Enterprise Fund to help new entrants into farming.
- » We will tackle livestock worrying with new legislation and will update the Outdoor Access Code.
- » Tackle rural crime with a **Rural Theft**

Bill that replicates the UK Government's Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act.

This would require all new quad bikes and offroad vehicles to be fitted with immobilisers and forensic markings to prevent theft.

Championing our fishing sector

We have taken back control of our waters post-Brexit and will continue to back our fishing sector to feed the nation, build long-term sustainability, and grow coastal businesses from Shetland to Cornwall. In 2024, we secured quotas worth over £970 million for UK fishermen. We will go further to seek additional opportunities for our inshore fleet in the 2026 negotiations, and ensure inshore voices are better heard by their representative bodies.

We will **replicate the £100 million UK Seafood Fund** to continue to support the sector to thrive. The fund could be used to invest in harbour and fish market upgrades, provide new equipment and technology for fish processing or to support our growing aquaculture sector. We will particularly concentrate funding on small and medium sized businesses and the inshore fishing fleet. Recognising competing pressure on marine space, we will also seek opportunities to back the inshore fleet when making marine planning decisions.

Unlike the SNP, who would take us back into the hated Common Fisheries Policy, the **Scottish Conservatives will always stand up for Scotland's fishermen.** We will:

- 】 Ensure that the interests of Scotland's fishing communities and the UK's status as an independent coastal state are protected in future negotiations.
- 】 **Oppose any attempt to introduce Highly Protected Marine Areas in Scottish waters** and believe that any future expansion Marine Protected Areas must

be with the consent of Scotland's fishing communities and that fishing businesses are appropriately compensated where affected.

- 】 Continue to co-design Fisheries Management Plans with the sector and other stakeholders.
- 】 Campaign to ensure the immigration system works for the fishing sector.



Our plan to support
our rural way of life
and enhance our
environment



» **The Scottish Conservatives are the party of rural Scotland. While the SNP continue to focus on the Central Belt and have actively damaged rural ways of life, through their coalition with the extreme Greens, we will always stand up for rural communities across our country. We will ensure that their interests are always represented in both of Scotland's Parliaments.**

We will **bring forward a Rural Charter** that enshrines the rights of rural and coastal communities and sets out the rights and responsibilities that underpin policy making. This will include a Rural Impact Assessment to be carried out on all Scottish Government legislation to ensure that the impact on rural communities has been considered.

Housing has become an acute problem across rural Scotland. In many communities there is not the housing to provide the workforce to support expanding local businesses. That is why we would **expand the Rural Housing Fund** to incentivise developers to build more homes in these communities. Given the importance of digital connectivity, we would rollout full fibre broadband to every home and business premises in Scotland and ensure that every town and village has access to 5G.

The SNP Government's illogical ban on wood-burning stoves is the thin of end of the wedge and represents an attack on rural housing. The Scottish Conservatives would reverse this ban.

Rural healthcare has been damaged as a result of the SNP's centralisation of the NHS. We would ban further rural healthcare closures and review services to see where we can reopen them. We would expand GP services through recruiting an additional 1,000 GPs. We would take account of the needs of rural communities in reviewing the NHS funding formula and combat social isolation with a Rural Mental Health Strategy.

Rural businesses require access to capital to grow and invest. We would set up a Rural Investment Bank to help create jobs and foster growth by injecting capital into key projects, such as investment into technology and automation in processing facilities across rural Scotland. We will also reverse the closure of Visit Scotland Information centres to protect jobs and promote local tourism.

Communities in the North and South of Scotland have been let down by the SNP's Central Belt bias and coalition with the Greens. We would **ensure that key roads, like the A9, A96, A1, A90, A83, A77 and A75, are upgraded** and that councils are properly funded to maintain local roads.

Island communities have been damaged by an unreliable ferry service under this SNP Government. We would secure a well-equipped modern fleet and ensure that future ferry procurement puts the needs of islanders first.

Storms Babet, Gerrit and Arwen have shown what can happen when our flood defences fail. We need to see a sustained investment in natural flood defences to mitigate serious damage and loss of life from adverse weather. We would **set up a Natural Flood Management Fund** and would also review the compensation system for farmers and crofters who suffer damage from extreme flooding.

We will introduce a law to **crack down on fly-tipping** by increasing fines and fixed penalties and using the proceeds to fund council enforcement measures.

We would improve the awareness of Scotland's young people about rural Scotland by mandating a countryside education day into the national curriculum in our schools.

Enhancing nature and protecting our environment

Our beautiful countryside, coastline, woods and rivers are a crucial part of what makes our country so special. We are committed to leaving the environment in a better state for future generations. We led international efforts to protect our oceans and seas, building on the success of the Blue Belt programme which protects an area of ocean the size of India. We will **consult UK overseas territories on opportunities to expand it further.**

We will continue with our **moratorium on deep sea mining** and **will ratify the Global Ocean Treaty** early in the next Parliament. We will establish a Cleaner Seas Fund to take rubbish out of Scotland's waters. We will strengthen the protections for Green Belts and expand ranger services.

We have prioritised animal welfare across the UK, passing legislation to protect pets from harm whilst ensuring owners are responsible and successfully pressured the SNP Government to crack down on dangerous dogs such as XL Bullies, after they initially dithered and failed to follow the UK Government's ban. We remain committed to banning the import of hunting trophies and tackling puppy smuggling and livestock worrying. We will continue to strengthen animal welfare in Scotland, such as through banning shock collars including in transportation, and better protecting dogs against theft.

We will continue to develop a UK-wide Deposit Return Scheme, while working to minimise the impact on businesses and consumers. We support the moratorium on new waste incinerators being built in Scotland.



Our plan to support sport and the creative sector



» At the core of our national and local identities is culture and sport. The Scottish Conservatives will support Scotland's culture sector and seek to reopen heritage sites that have remained closed since the pandemic. We will also reverse SNP cuts to Visit Scotland Information centres to promote local tourism. In addition, we will oppose the rollout of the SNP's tourism tax, as it is damaging to Scotland's hospitality sector and will lead to Scots paying more for overnight stays.

We will increase support for Sportscotland to back both elite and grassroots sport and will campaign for more Scottish sporting fixtures to be made available to watch for free.

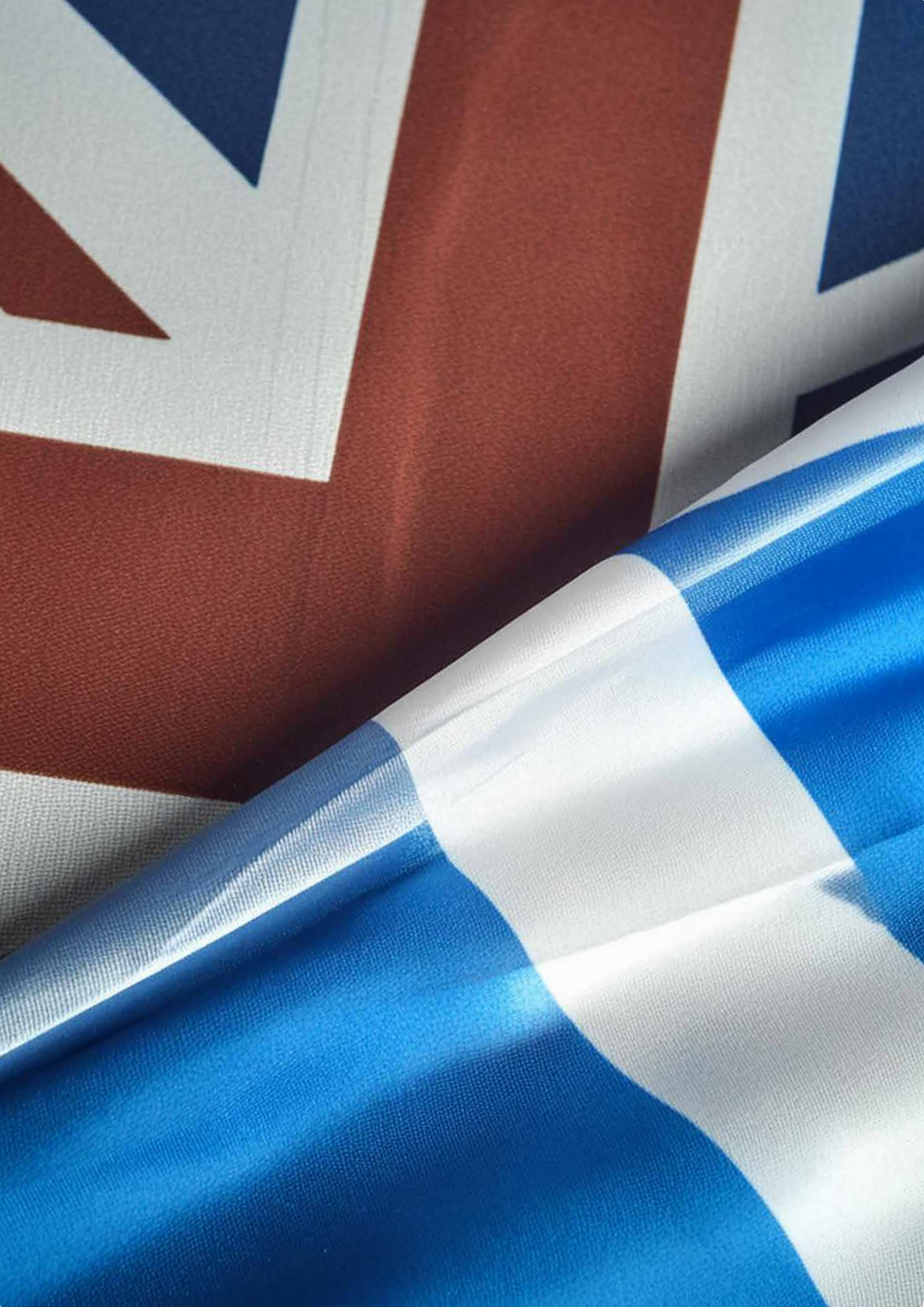
Supporting our world-leading creative industries

We will **ensure our creative sector tax incentives remain competitive**. The UK is now the second most popular place in the world to make films and high-end TV. That's a direct result of Conservatives taking action: there have been one million new jobs since 2010 and the economic value of the creative industries has doubled. We provided an unprecedented £1.57 billion support package during Covid. We will ensure creators are properly protected and remunerated for their work, whilst also making the most of the opportunities of AI and its applications for creativity in the future.

The SNP's attack on short-term lets is damaging for Scotland's creative sector. We will suspend the SNP's short-term lets licensing scheme and until a full review can take place and work with councils to develop a new approach to balance local housing needs.

The BBC should represent the perspectives of the entire nation with diversity of thought, accuracy and impartiality as its guiding principles. We will carefully consider the findings of the Funding Review ahead of the next Royal Charter and ensure it upholds these principles. We will introduce a new complaints process for the BBC, so the BBC does not mark its own homework.

The Conservative Party is a strong defender of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We oppose state regulation and control of the press, including any attempt to bring forward Leveson 2 or re-open the Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press. We were proud to deliver the Freedom of Speech Act to protect free speech and open debate in our universities.





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