



***VOTE LIKE  
OUR FUTURE  
DEPENDS ON IT***

***SCOTTISH GREENS***

***General Election Manifesto 2024***

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# Co-leaders' foreword

***This election could not be more important. We are hurtling towards climate hell, and it's plain for all to see.***

Every month for the last year has set a new global temperature record, and extreme and deadly weather events have become the new norm. Scientists are clear that the battle to avoid climate catastrophe will be lost or won over the next five years. A new UK Government could still take the decisive action that is needed to lead the global transition to a clean, green economy. Our future depends on it.

In government, the Scottish Greens have shown we can deliver. Every child and young person can now travel by bus for free and we brought Scotrail into public ownership and scrapped peak fares. Decisive action that is now helping families across Scotland save money and choose low carbon, sustainable transport. This is what the Scottish Greens bring to the table: real change that delivers for people and planet. This manifesto sets out that programme of real change. In it, we lay out Green solutions across areas reserved to the UK Government that Scotland urgently needs if we are to build a greener, fairer and prosperous country and fulfil our commitment to tackle the climate emergency.

At the heart of our future prosperity is Scotland's renewable and green industries of the future. Industries that are growing rapidly, creating green jobs and helping deliver a just transition to net-zero. But action is urgently needed to accelerate that growth and to ensure the benefits are felt by workers and households across the country. Our £28 billion Green New Deal programme and proposal to nationalise the National Grid will do just that. This is the absolute minimum that is required if Scotland and the UK is to remain at the leading edge of this new global green industrial revolution, and only the Greens are committed to delivering it.

After decades of under-investment and austerity, imposed by Labour and Tory governments in Westminster, investment in building a green economy and in our public services is urgent. We are both honest about this, and the need to raise the funds to invest in our common future. Raising funds is not about taxing ordinary households and workers, as other Parties would have you believe. It's about taxing wealth and excessive profits, getting serious about tax evasion among the wealthy, and ending the obscene public subsidies handed out to the climate-wrecking fossil fuel sector. This manifesto puts forward a range of proposals that together could not just raise the funds we need, but tackle the grotesque inequalities that have become so embedded across the UK.



Photo credit: Leckie/Scottish Greens

We know this can be done with political will. In fact, we showed it to be the case. The more progressive income tax structure introduced by the Scottish Greens in Scotland is raising critical funds that are now being invested in our NHS and other public services. If the UK were to follow our lead, an extra £11 billion a year would be available for schools, hospitals and other essential services.

To make Scotland and the UK a fairer, more equal nation we need to redistribute power as well as wealth. That's why we have set out here a real New Deal for Workers that would empower workers, restore Trade Union powers, and improve all of our working lives, as well as proposals to reform political funding and to end the direct and corrosive power that the wealthy are able to exert over our democracy and media.

The Scottish Greens will always champion the interests of the many over the few. Of minorities over their oppressors. We want to build a country where everyone is empowered and supported to prosper, and that celebrates diversity. There can be no doubt that Westminster and its institutions increasingly work against this goal and need radical reform. Greens would deliver this. We would abolish the racist Home Office, repeal the Rwanda Act and other Tory legislation that has embedded racism into Asylum and Immigration policy, and remove the Tory's punitive income requirements for spousal visas.

These changes are all urgent and essential if we are to build a fair, green and prosperous Scotland. But they are also inadequate, because Westminster will never deliver for Scotland's interests, and has shown time and time again that it is willing to ignore and trample over the will of the Scottish people.

The Scottish Greens believe Scotland should be an independent country. That independence is the only way that we can build a fair, green and prosperous Scotland that takes back its place at the heart of the EU. And we believe that it's for the people of Scotland to choose when and how we make this decision. We are therefore asking that the next UK Government respects Scottish democracy, and grants the Scottish Parliament the power to hold constitutional referendums to the Scottish Parliament, so that a second referendum on Scottish Independence can be held at a time chosen by the people of Scotland and their democratically elected parliament.



Photo credit: Erika Stevenson

This is the choice that the people of Scotland face at this election. Decisive action to avert climate catastrophe and build a green and prosperous economy, to invest in public services, to shift power and wealth to workers and households, and to welcome migrants and asylum seekers. Decisive action to secure Scotland's future as an independent country in the EU. This is the future that the Scottish Greens will build, so at this election we hope you will vote like your future depends on it - vote Scottish Greens.

Lorna Slater MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

# ***Tackling the climate emergency***

## **The climate emergency and the continued destruction of our natural world are existential threats to humanity and the single biggest issue facing the next UK Government.**

The transition to net zero is also our opportunity to build a prosperous, fair and green economy. The International Panel on Climate Change has warned that it is “now or never” and that urgent action is needed between now and 2030; action that will require tough decisions, ambition and commitment that the mainstream parties have shown themselves to be incapable of.

### ***Our track record in the Scottish Parliament shows that Greens deliver for the climate and nature emergencies. Our impact includes:***



Photo credit: Gordon Crawford/Scottish Greens

- Record investment in active travel
- Free bus travel for under-22s
- Scrapped peak rail fares
- Banned coal extraction - while the UK Government backed the opening of the first coal mine in 30 years in Cumbria
- Introduced the most generous package of support in the UK for energy efficiency and renewable heat in homes in the UK
- Banned the use of gas boilers in new-build homes from April 2024
- £50 million Just Transition Fund of investment into green jobs in the North East of Scotland
- Record investment in nature, including £30 million for new nature restoration projects
- A new National Planning Framework that puts nature and climate at the heart of Scotland's planning system
- A programme that will create Scotland's first new National Parks in twenty years
- A new £500m fund to support offshore renewables and the supply chain

Yet there are many areas where Scotland has been prevented from going further, faster on tackling climate change and reversing nature's decline because of decisions taken at Westminster by successive governments which have prioritised business-as-usual for global corporations over a livable future for the planet.

At times, the UK Government's decisions have actively undermined Scotland's efforts to reach net zero and protect nature, including issuing new oil and gas extraction licences in the North Sea and threatening to scrap foundational environmental laws. At this election, the Scottish Greens are offering a different path, one which prioritises real and urgent action on the climate emergency.

## 100% renewable energy

The UK and Scotland have extraordinary potential for wind, solar, wave, tidal and other renewable energy. Scotland has led the way, with renewables already delivering the equivalent of 113% of the electricity we consume. This has dramatically cut climate emissions, while creating new green jobs. In December 2023, the Fraser of Allander Institute reported that the number of jobs supported by Scotland's renewables sector grew by over 50% in one year.

We have shown what is possible, and our goal for the next stage of the journey is clear: 100% renewable energy. **Our five-point plan would set us on the path to this critical goal.**

### 1 - Phase out fossil fuels

The science is clear that most oil, gas and coal must be left in the ground if we are to avoid calamitous levels of climate change. The International Energy Agency has advised that investment in new fossil fuel production must end now. Scotland and the UK are no exception to this scientific fact; if anything we bear a responsibility to move faster given our historical responsibility for the climate crisis. The next UK Government must:

- **Drop the anti-climate Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, revoke recently issued licences for new oil and gas extraction in the North Sea, and prohibit licences for new offshore oil, gas and coal exploration and extraction.** Carbon emissions from the new Rosebank oil field alone are estimated to be equivalent to the combined annual emissions of the 28 lowest-income countries in the world.
- Work in partnership with the Scottish Government to **develop a long-term plan for decommissioning existing oil and gas fields.** This should include specific actions to restore the marine environment in decommissioned sites and contribute to a just transition through creating secure, highly-skilled jobs for workers, in consultation with trades unions.
- **Support calls for an international Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty,** which is following in the success of campaigns against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and use of ozone-depleting substances. The European Parliament has called for such a treaty in its resolution on the COP27 climate talks.
- **End fossil fuel subsidies and tax breaks,** and require divestment of public pension funds from the oil and gas industry.



Photo credit: Jane Barlow/PA Images (Alamy)

## **2 - Nationalise and invest in the Grid**

100% renewables will require significant upgrades to the national grid. Action is also needed to correct unfair grid connection rules that discriminate against the Scottish renewable energy producers, who pay much higher transmission costs to connect to the grid than similar projects in other regions of the UK, and to reduce the bills of those in rural communities living closest to large renewables projects.

The National Grid was originally created with the intention of centralising energy generation close to cities and towns with high energy demands. Since privatisation in 1990 it has been operated for the purpose of maximising profit for its multinational owners. Neither of these objectives is fit for purpose when it comes to the 21st century challenge of transitioning to a green electricity grid, where renewable generation is more likely to be found in remote, rural and offshore regions, and where reinvesting profits into grid upgrades in these areas is critical.

- The Scottish Greens would return the National Grid to public ownership in full and make achieving net zero its foundational mission. We would also support devolved nations and regions of England to develop plans for localising and democratising energy generation. This would bring together a network of local, national and international energy grids which support local and micro-generation with lower costs, and facilitate the export of low carbon energy across Europe.

## **3 - Enhance support for renewable energy**

While the price of renewables continues to fall rapidly, the UK Government must still ensure there is adequate long-term support in place to secure the investment that is needed, particularly in offshore renewables and the supply chain. In addition to a publicly owned energy company, further reform is needed to renewables support mechanisms and the electricity market to achieve this fairly. The Scottish Greens would:

- Ensure Contracts for Difference are able to secure deployment at the scale required by our targets, support innovation and emerging technologies like floating wind and wave power.
- Reform connection charging to end unfair charges on renewable energy developers in Scotland.
- Establish an effective support mechanism for electricity storage capacity, which is required at scale to balance a 100% renewable energy grid.

## **4 - Electrify heat and transport**

Ultra-efficient heat pumps provide a zero-carbon and affordable route to decarbonising heating for most buildings in the UK. Already common in much of Europe, they are a proven solution ready to roll out. Similarly, electric cars, bikes and other vehicles now need to be deployed at scale. The UK Government must ensure these technologies are appropriately incentivised, while the outdated and polluting alternatives are phased out. They must also actively support investment in the industry and its supply chain as part of a green industrial strategy, and ensure that the UK Grid is upgraded to manage this transition. Key priorities should include:



- **Reinstate the target for ending the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030.** Car manufacturers have expressed dismay at the UK's backtracking on this, warning that it undermines investment in the broader transition to electrification by slowing the demand for electric vehicles.
- **Recommit to phasing out the installation of gas boilers by 2035 at the latest,** and consider an end date for the use of gas boilers, which are not compatible with our net zero targets.
- Clearly **rule out the use of hydrogen for heating,** giving clarity to industry and consumers.
- Provide adequate funding for boiler and petrol/diesel vehicle **scrappage schemes.**
- **End standing charges** on domestic electricity bills.

## 5 - End support for new nuclear power stations

New nuclear is outrageously expensive, unnecessary, dependent on the expertise and assets of foreign governments, and detracts from renewables. It will also leave generations to come with a costly and dangerous responsibility to keep the waste safe. The disastrous Hinkley Point C project has been hit by a string of delays, and is now estimated to be costing an eye watering £46 billion, yet there is still no confidence as to when it will be online, and now Westminster are threatening to impose a new plant on Scotland against the policy of the Scottish Government. We cannot afford to make the mistake of commissioning another new nuclear power plant. **The Scottish Greens will oppose new nuclear power, and the expansion or renewal of Scotland's remaining nuclear power station at Torness.**

## A Green New Deal investment programme

Fundamentally, the challenge of meeting net zero and building a prosperous, modern and green economy requires a significant increase in public investment. This fact is increasingly recognised the world over. The US Inflation Reduction Act, for example, included nearly \$370 billion in climate and energy infrastructure, while the EU Green New Deal aims to mobilise €100 billion to support the transition in the most vulnerable regions and sectors. In the UK, however, already low capital budgets have been cut, with Westminster imposing a 10% real terms cut on the Scottish capital budget over five years.

Without the full powers of an independent country Scotland cannot invest what is needed to transition to a prosperous, green and net zero economy. Instead we are being forced to cut budgets and are falling behind the rest of the world. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Within the first year of the next Parliament **the next UK Government must introduce a £28 billion per year Green New Deal investment programme** to reverse this decline and turbo charge our green industries. This should include:

- **Enhanced public subsidies and tax benefits for uptake of green technologies,** including energy efficiency retrofits and renewables.
- **Conditionality on domestic supply chain investments:** subsidies should only be granted where manufacturers are investing in the UK. This is essential if we are to secure further private investment in, for example, battery and wind turbine component manufacturing in Scotland.

- A new programme of **investment in landscape scale restoration of our degraded natural environment**, including expanding native woodlands and restoring peatlands
- Additional **direct investment into skills and innovation**, supporting colleges and universities to train workers for the economy of the future.
- Environmental taxation, such as a **carbon land tax and an incineration tax**, to both accelerate the transition and help pay for the Green New Deal programme.
- **Taking a more proactive approach to green technology innovation** to drive the green industrial revolution, including reviewing research and development tax credits to ensure companies evidence investment in green innovation.
- **New and innovative low emission interventions for hard-to-abate CO2 producing technologies** like cement-, iron- and steel production must be invested in through research and piloting of emerging technologies. Furthermore, the recycling of used concrete, iron and steel as well as reuse of other valuable resources must be streamlined and incentivised all over the country.

In total the Green New Deal investment programme must increase annual public investment by around 1% of GDP, which is approximately £28 billion, and would bring us in line with the EU and the USA. Experts estimate this is the minimum amount required, and that by leveraging private investment it could raise investment levels to £77 billion.

## Green interest rates

*Increasing interest rates has had a stagnating effect across the UK economy and is undermining our investment into net zero.*

*Greens would instruct the Bank of England to set lower rates of interest for green investment. This would help cut capital costs for major projects such as new wind farms, railway lines and district heating networks. This measure would provide greater certainty for private investors, cut the costs to the public purse, and lead to lower energy bills for households. The New Economics Foundation estimates this could save UK businesses and households £6.2 billion.*

This programme of investment must be supported by ending UK Government subsidies and financial support for the fossil fuel sector, including:

- **Scrap the current system of tax reliefs and incentives to oil and gas companies engaged in North Sea extraction**, currently worth £18.1 billion between 2023 and 2026.
- Introduce a real and effective **windfall tax** on excess profits in the sector, and close the current loophole which provides relief for profits reinvested in drilling for new oil and gas.

- **Divest public sector pensions from fossil fuels.** UK local government pension schemes alone are estimated to have £16 billion invested in fossil fuel assets. This funding leaves pensioners exposed to significant long-term risk and could be harnessed to fund the green transition, including Scotland's renewables sector.
- Act on the UN Secretary-General's call to **ban fossil fuel advertising**, recognising their role in aiding and abetting the corporations most responsible for planetary destruction.
- Bring forward legislation to **require fossil fuel companies to pay a share of the damage caused by climate change**. This should follow the approach taken by the US state of Vermont, which has passed a law requiring Big Oil companies to pay contributions towards the economic damage that the state has suffered due to climate change since the 1990s.

## **Build a modern, zero-carbon transport system**

Transport emissions continue to increase, driven by a long-term and systemic failure to invest in public transport and infrastructure for walking, cycling and wheeling. The Scottish Greens in Holyrood have taken significant steps forward, creating a generation of bus users with free bus travel for under 22s, renationalising Scotland's rail operators, and trialling ways to make train travel more affordable and significantly ramping up investment in active travel.

But we rely on reserved powers and investment levels to make further progress. Powers over aviation, cross-border travel, and many international connections remain reserved to Westminster, along with the ability to borrow and invest more significantly in low carbon transport infrastructure.



## **Act on aviation emissions**

Action on aviation emissions is urgent. The Scottish Greens would:

- Implement a **Frequent Flyer Levy**, targeting the 1% of people who cause 50% of global aviation emissions. This levy would add additional costs to those who fly multiple times within a year, whilst making exceptions for those in remote areas who are using lifeline services.
- Follow France's lead and **ban short-haul flights** where journeys can instead be taken on fast and affordable trains.
- Introduce a new **tax on private jets using UK airports**, driving down demand for these wasteful flights, which have seen a 31% increase in emissions since 2005.
- **Remove the tax breaks on aviation fuel**, which have contributed to air travel being one of the lowest taxed forms of transport, despite its significant environmental costs.
- **Reform the Airspace Change Process**, governed by the Civil Aviation Authority, so that increased demand for domestic and short-haul flights is no longer a justification for new flight paths.

The funding raised from the above measures should be used to create fast and affordable alternatives to short haul and domestic flights.

## **National road-user charging**

Of the 740 billion kilometres travelled in a year by UK passengers, 86% are in cars and vans, and the number of cars on the road keeps growing. The switch to electric vehicles is making a positive contribution in cutting emissions and improving air quality, but this alone is not the answer because of the congestion and other environmental impacts they cause. Without change, the transition to electric cars will leave a £35 billion blackhole in the UK's finances as a result of lost revenue from fuel duty, and car use and congestion will continue to increase.

Working in partnership with the devolved governments, the UK Government should commission a review of options for introducing road-user charging, with a view to introducing a UK-wide framework by the end of this Parliamentary session. Charging should:

- Ensure that road users pay for the costs they impose on the system.
- Deliver modal shift, encouraging more passengers on to public transport and more cycling, walking and wheeling.
- Take into account the mobility needs of different groups, including the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Reflect the current lack of alternative transport options for those living in rural communities.
- Focus on reducing car usage by those living in areas with good existing public transport provision, while directing investment from funds raised to those communities with the lowest access to public transport and active travel options.
- Contribute to the rapid scaling up of the provision of public transport across the four nations.



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## **Zero-carbon cross-border travel and links to Europe**

The cost and reliability of cross-border rail services in the UK at present, contrasted with the cheap and readily available domestic flights by low-cost providers, means in far too many instances people are unable to choose the low-carbon option. We need to make rail travel between Scotland, England and Wales the default option. The Scottish Greens would:

- **Renationalise the West Coast Main Line**, and commit to making both East and West coast services permanently operated by public sector operators, reinvesting profits into service improvements, decarbonisation, and affordability.
- **Make rail cheaper than flying**, using taxation on aviation to subsidise rail tickets on the most popular air routes.
- **Increase the number of direct rail connections** between English and Scottish cities, to reduce the demand for domestic flights.

Creating sustainable transport links to our nearest European neighbours is essential for both our climate and economy. The Scottish Greens would:

- Prioritise support for **electric and green-hydrogen powered ferries** to the continent in future transport strategies, with routes from all four nations of the UK.
- Support the Scottish Government in **re-establishing the ferry link from Rosyth to continental Europe**.
- Collaborate with European rail partners to **develop the continent-wide Metropolitan Network project**, establishing high-speed direct rail links from Scotland to continental Europe, linking all of Europe's major cities and metropolitan regions.



## **Investing in public transport**

In addition to increasing public investment via the Green New Deal investment programme, the next UK Government must enable devolved governments to borrow to invest in capital rail projects. This should include significantly expanding rail freight facilities to take more lorries off the roads, reopening closed passenger stations and the creation of new local and inter-regional lines, as well as speeding up the current plan to decarbonise Scotland's rail network by 2035.

## **Restore our natural environment**

The UK's natural environment is one of the most heavily degraded in the world. Wildlife is in decline, species are at threat of extinction, and the degradation of ecosystem services like flood protection, pollination, carbon sequestration and clear water is a major and growing threat to our society. The Scottish Greens recognise that nature, in Scotland, the UK and around the world, is in crisis and this is an inextricable part of the climate emergency.

In Scotland the Scottish Greens have prioritised tackling the nature emergency, delivering record investment through the Nature and Peatland Restoration Funds, supporting the reintroduction of lost species like beavers, and reforming planning policy. Scottish Greens also led the Edinburgh Declaration process, which saw over 300 sub-nation states committing to greater ambition. Nature protection and restoration must be a key priority for the UK Government, embedded across all departments. The Scottish Greens would:

- Deliver adequate capital investment across the UK to **accelerate the restoration of peatlands and expansion of native forest**, in line with our climate targets.
- Protect funding to **support farmers developing regenerative agricultural practices**, which help restore nature, make room for wildlife, and lock up carbon in our soils

- Protect consumers, manufacturers and farmers by **ensuring post-Brexit trade deals include strong, enforceable quality, health and environmental standards**; and that these deals should be approved by the devolved governments. This would also help protect our food standards and farmers' prices by blocking the import of food products that are produced to lower environmental standards and only reducing tariffs when standards such as animal welfare and environmental protections are met.
- Support progress in **implementing the Human Right to a Healthy Environment**, as declared by the UN General Assembly in July 2022.
- Support the global movement to **recognise Ecocide as an international crime**, and hold individuals, companies and states responsible for actions which are destroying a viable living planet.

Urgent action is also required to tackle the scandal of raw sewage being routinely dumped into our seas and rivers. This has been driven by a lack of investment in our sewage system, which was largely designed in the Victorian era, and has been particularly exacerbated in England by private ownership of the water system. Climate change will only make the issue worse, with increasing frequency and intensity of storms driving ever higher volumes of water into our sewers.

**We need a major investment to upgrade the capacity of our sewage system**, to cope with increasing populations and address the maintenance backlog. Future sewage planning should separate domestic sewage and rainwater systems, to reduce the risk of spills during storm events. There also need to be stronger powers for regulators to crack down on water companies, with unlimited fines and a ratcheting effect for repeat offenders. To support this, water companies should be obliged to publish data about spills in real time, which will also ensure communities are informed about local pollution events.



## **Make devolution work for the climate**

Scotland cannot transform its economy and meet its climate commitments without radical action by Westminster. But instead of helping they have been hindering our efforts, prioritising business-as-usual for global corporations over a livable future for the planet, issuing new oil and gas extraction licences in the North Sea

The Tory UK Government has also used its supreme power within the UK to block progress, including the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme for Scotland. The new UK Government must reset relationships and commit to working in partnership with the devolved nations to deliver progress and meet our climate and environmental targets.

- **Establish a Four Nations Climate Response Group**, chaired on rotation by the Prime Minister and the heads of the devolved governments to maintain strategic oversight of the work across the UK to reach net zero targets, and develop and deliver a UK-wide climate plan.
- **Review the fiscal framework** for the devolved nations to ensure that it accounts for public spending requirements to mitigate and adapt to climate change, responding to concerns raised by the Scottish Fiscal Commission.
- **Revoke the Internal Market Act** and replace it with common market rules that allow devolved nations to adopt different environmental standards and remove a Westminster veto over devolved policy making.

## **Supporting global climate justice**

The impacts of climate change are already being felt across the globe, and are most acute in some of the poorest communities in the global south. Droughts are killing millions in East Africa, deadly wildfires are becoming regular occurrences in temperate regions, and entire Pacific Island nations could disappear due to rising sea levels.

The actions laid out in this chapter will ensure that the UK plays its part in reducing global emissions, but more needs to be done to address the historic imbalance in responsibility. The climate crisis has been driven by the wealthiest countries burning fossil fuels, but it is the poorest nations in the world who are now paying the price.

The Scottish Greens support the establishment of a global Loss and Damage fund, through which wealthy countries pay funds to compensate countries and communities vulnerable to damage from climate change. The UK's contribution to this fund should reflect how we have historically benefitted from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, and could be supported by the revenue raised from the introduction of stronger taxation on fossil fuels companies operating in the UK.

Scottish Greens would also significantly ramp up the UK's contribution to global climate finance projects, with government providing direct funding for countries in the global south to enable them to invest more in climate change mitigation and adaptation. This includes grants, loans with low or zero interest, reparations, compensation and other transfer payments whose purpose is to promote climate justice. Importantly, this should be in addition to both Loss and Damage contributions, and should be in addition to our own efforts to reduce UK emissions to net zero, not as an offsetting tool.





Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

***An economy that works  
for people and planet***

## **Austerity has been a political choice forced on Scotland for decades by a UK Government which prioritises concentrating wealth in the hands of a few instead of building an economy which works for everyone. It doesn't have to be this way.**

The most recent Tory budget saw the Chancellor slashing budgets for public services whilst handing out tax cuts to the most wealthy in society. This continued the 14-year long trend of the UK Government using our economy to enrich wealthy individuals and big business supporters, whilst hollowing out the public services we all rely on.

In Scotland, the Greens have fought to ensure we use the full extent of devolved powers to create a fairer economy, one which seeks to lift people out of poverty, ensure fair pay for all, and invests in public services and the green jobs of the future.



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

### ***In recent years the Scottish Greens have:***

- Delivered an extra £1.5 billion every year for public services like our NHS by reforming income tax so that the highest earners pay more whilst those on the lowest incomes pay less than elsewhere in the UK.
- Rolled out an emergency rent freeze to protect renters during the cost of living crisis.
- Delivered record investment in the climate and nature emergencies, creating new jobs in green industries of the future like renewable energy and clean home heating.
- Given councils the power to raise more funds for local services like schools and social care through measures like doubling Council Tax on holiday homes, introducing a local visitor levy and developing plans for a carbon land tax and a cruise ship levy.
- Introduced new requirements for everyone in receipt of public grants and contracts in Scotland to pay the real living wage and launched a trial of the four day working week across a number of public bodies.

Our ability to act in Scotland however remains contained by a piecemeal devolution settlement, which sees major powers over taxation, investment and economic policy retained at Westminster. It has allowed the UK Government to hollow out the Scottish construction budget, which has been cut by 10% in real terms over the past five years, equivalent to around £1.6 billion. Scotland has been left with a fraction of what is needed to build new homes, hospitals and schools fit for the future. And it has allowed the catastrophe of Brexit to press on, severing economic ties with our nearest neighbours in Europe despite the people of Scotland voting to remain in the EU.



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

We need a radically different approach to our economy - one which prioritises the wellbeing of people and planet over individual profit; which creates decent well paid jobs for the future; and which reinvests in our public services and local communities.

## ***Taxing wealth, not workers***

The UK tax system unfairly places a higher tax burden on low income workers, whilst giving the richest in society a wide range of tax breaks and tools to avoid paying tax on their wealth and income. In 2022-23, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made £2.2m, but only paid 22% tax on his income - the same tax rate as nurses or teachers.

Meanwhile our public services are being starved of funding, our schools are crumbling and waiting times in hospitals continue to grow.

A fair tax on wealth in the UK would raise billions of pounds to restore public funding and decrease inequality between rich and poor. It would also generate essential funding to help tackle the climate emergency, create new jobs in the green industries of the future, and protect our communities and environment against the ravages of climate breakdown.

The Scottish Greens would introduce a progressive annual wealth tax on the top 1% of households in the UK, those with £3.4m and above. This would start at a marginal tax rate of 1%, rising to 5% for those with £5.7 million and above (the richest 0.5%), and 10% for those with £18.2 million (the richest 0.15%). ***A wealth tax on this scale would raise at least £70 billion for our public services.***

This should be accompanied by a broad suite of taxation changes which focus on redistributing wealth and shifting the burden from low income workers to businesses and high income individuals. These include:

- Closing the current loopholes on business taxes which has made the offshoring of finances commonplace, so that **all profits earned in the UK are taxed here**.
- **Tackle tax avoidance and evasion** through closer scrutiny on businesses and increased penalties.
- Introducing a real, effective **windfall tax** on profits in the oil and gas sector, and closing the current loophole which provides relief for profits reinvested in drilling for new oil and gas.
- Continuing to **make the income tax system more progressive** by bringing income tax rates across the UK into line with Scotland from the 1st April 2025, which would raise over £11bn for public services
- **Merging national insurance into general income tax** and removing the distinction between earned and unearned income to determine methods and rates and rates of taxation.
- **Reform Inheritance Tax to calculate it based on the circumstances of the recipient**, and to include gifts made during a donor's lifetime, preventing the concentration of wealth in a few hands.
- **Adjust Corporation Tax to promote fairness**, with higher rates for larger corporations and incentives for socially responsible practices.
- **Permanently scrap VAT on products and services which contribute to our journey to net zero**, including installation of domestic renewable energy measures, and zero emissions building materials.

## Opposing mini tax haven freeports

*Freeports are special economic zones which offer various tax breaks, lower tariffs and other incentives to (usually very large) businesses. They are designated areas of up to 45km where normal rules and regulations do not apply and are essentially subnational tax havens.*

*The UK and Scottish Governments have collaborated to impose two freeports on communities in Scotland - in the Forth Estuary and in Inverness and Cromarty Firth. These are now being developed with minimal consultation with local communities and a lack of transparency over their future boundaries and operating procedures.*

*The Scottish Greens have consistently opposed these mini tax havens, and **all plans for free ports should be immediately dropped**. Instead, the government should work with local communities to invest in publicly and community owned port facilities, which guarantee workers rights and high environmental standards, and ensure local communities benefit from the investment that will come from the transition to net zero.*



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

## **Tackling the cost of living crisis**

The disastrous economic policies of the Tory Government have directly contributed to the cost of living crisis, which continues to make day-to-day life a struggle for families up and down the country. **There should have been an emergency response to this crisis 18 months ago**, but it is not too late now to tackle the rising costs of food, energy and other essentials.

The Scottish Greens would roll out a system to **cap the price of food essentials during peaks of inflation**, as was implemented in France in 2023. Measures should be targeted at distribution and retailers, whilst ensuring producers continue to be paid a fair price for essentials.

The next UK Government must urgently follow through on the long standing commitment to **decouple electricity and gas prices**, which would rapidly reduce energy bills, particularly for those using renewable electricity for home heating. It would also help prevent future drastic surges in energy costs caused by the volatile gas market in Europe, and incentivise the switch to renewable heating systems such as heat pumps, which would be cheaper to run.

The Scottish Greens would also **abolish standing charges for domestic electricity customers**, which unfairly penalise households in Scotland, who pay higher than the UK average for daily standing charges. We will ensure that all energy utilities offer fair pricing structures to all customers and offer genuine social tariffs to the most vulnerable. We also support progressive tariffs in which initial units are cheap and prices rise with increased energy use.

## A real New Deal for Workers

The last 14 years have seen a systematic rollback of workers rights in the UK, and increased attempts to limit the powers of trade unions, just at a time when workers need effective representation the most.

Scotland could have taken a different path, but devolution of employment law was blocked by the Labour Party during the post-referendum Smith Commission process. This was a mistake which has led to fewer rights for workers and less money in people's pockets, particularly following Brexit. All employment law should be devolved to Scotland, including the ability to set the living wage, regulation of sick pay and maternity pay, and trade union laws.

Whether delivered by devolved governments or at a UK-wide level, Scottish Greens would:

- **Immediately repeal the anti-trade union laws** brought in by the Tory government, which limit workers' ability to organise and take strike action.
- **Support greater collective bargaining** in areas not traditionally well represented, including low-paid sectors where women form a large part of the workforce, such as the care sector.
- **Remove the two-year qualifying period for protection against unfair dismissal** and introduce stronger protections against termination of employment.
- **Ban zero-hours contracts** and bogus self-employment arrangements that effectively allow businesses to dodge tax and responsibilities to their staff.
- Create a duty of care for employers to **ensure their staff can travel safely to and from work**, which is particularly an issue in the night time economy and for female workers.
- **Raise the minimum wage to establish a real living wage**, and ensure it is effectively pegged against inflation to prevent erosion of its value over time. We would also scrap the current age bands for the minimum wage, ensuring all workers receive a living wage regardless of their age.
- Begin transition to **a four day working week across all sectors**, with no loss of pay.
- Legislate to grant private sector employees **the right to buy the company for which they work**, creating a cooperative, where broad support amongst the affected workforce has been demonstrated.
- **Strengthen equal pay regulation and gender pay gap reporting**, to further drive down the inequality in pay between men and women.





Photo credit: Gordon Crawford/Scottish Greens

## **Public services for people, not profit**

Our public services are built on the hard work of generations of workers, and decades of investment from the public purse. They should be run for the benefit of the public, and not the private profit of shareholders and corporations.

The Scottish Greens have successfully fought for the renationalisation of Scotrail and the Caledonian Sleeper. Legislation and investment at a UK level would allow for the **renationalisation of all public transport**, including bus services, cross-border rail travel, and lifelight flights to Scotland's islands.

The Scottish Greens would also use full powers over the energy sector to **create a national energy company which could generate, distribute and retail energy**, and reinvest profits in the transition away from fossil fuels. This would work alongside a renationalised National Grid, as outlined in Chapter 1.

Scotland has benefited from the public ownership of Scottish Water, and this should be rolled out to the rest of the UK, ensuring the basic provisions of clean drinking water and sanitation are delivered for the public good, not for shareholder profit. Other public services such as the Post Office and the National Grid should also be brought permanently into public control, and **domestic broadband connections should be treated as an essential utility and delivered by a publicly owned network and provider**. And we will always defend a publicly owned, free at the point of use, National Health Service.

## ***Learning from the Horizon scandal***

*The Horizon scandal, which led to more than 900 post office workers being wrongly prosecuted for crimes they did not commit, is the single biggest miscarriage of justice in UK history. It also highlights the risks when our essential public services are treated as a money making opportunity for big corporations.*

*We welcome the co-ordinated working across Governments and parties to legislate to quash the Horizon convictions before the general election, but there is still work to be done. The Scottish Greens are calling for the swift introduction of a fair compensation scheme, one which is free of bureaucracy and allows all those eligible to make a claim, including family members.*

*It is essential that there are criminal prosecutions of those at the Post Office and Fujitsu who were responsible for this miscarriage of justice, including under both fraud and malicious damage laws.*

*Scottish Green MPs will also push for a duty of candour law, which would require public authorities and officials to tell the truth and proactively co-operate with official investigations and inquiries. It would also ensure victims of government scandals are entitled to parity of legal representation, including accessing public funding for legal support.*

## ***New economic powers for Scotland***

Despite greater powers over tax and finances coming to Scotland over the last decade, Scotland manages only 40% of its taxes, while it gets to decide on around 60% of spending. And even in these areas, when Scotland makes decisions which differ from the UK Government, it can have significant consequences under the Barnett Formula, meaning Scotland loses out overall.

***With independence, Scotland would have full control over taxation and financial policy, and could use these powers to choose a different economic path***, one which ensures everyone has a good standard of living, whilst our communities and economy benefits from a just transition away from fossil fuels.

Prior to independence, the Scottish Greens are calling for ***full devolution of the remaining taxation powers to Scotland***, including powers over Corporation tax, Inheritance tax, environmental taxes and alcohol and tobacco levies.

We are also calling for ***significantly enhanced borrowing powers for all the devolved nations***, including the ability to borrow for revenue funding, which will allow us to invest in crucial areas like public sector pay and expanding the health care workforce. This will also allow Scotland to take bold and urgent action in response to global economic emergencies like the Covid pandemic and the cost of living crisis, instead of having to wait for the UK Government to act.





Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

# ***Putting wellbeing and dignity at the heart of politics***

## **Scottish people are known the world over for their warmth, friendliness and generosity - and when we have the power over our own affairs, we put these values at the heart of our politics.**

The Scottish Child Payment has been credited as being the single policy intervention creating the largest fall in child poverty anywhere in Europe for at least 40 years. Since it was first rolled out in 2021, the Scottish Child Payment has already been increased by over 150%, with the current rate of £26.70 a week now pulling tens of thousands of children out of poverty. Scots experiencing illness no longer have to pay a tax on ill health thanks to free medical prescriptions, and we are strengthening human rights in Scotland.



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

### ***The Scottish Greens have led the way on many of these changes, including:***

- Changing the law to ban harmful in-person benefits assessments for applicants, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process.
- Protecting job seekers from cruel benefits sanctions and making employment programmes voluntary.
- Establishing legislation to bring in buffer zones around abortion clinics, ensuring women will no longer have to run a gauntlet of hate to access essential healthcare services.
- Progressing a real ban on conversion practices for LGBTQIA+ people, which try to change or suppress someone's sexuality or gender identity.

But the devolution of social security powers have remained minimal, with around 85% of the system remaining reserved to Westminster. Scotland's efforts have been significantly impacted by the UK government taking a fundamentally different approach, based on cruelty and stigmatisation. After over a decade of the Conservatives, the UK social security system does the opposite of what is intended, forcing people into poverty so deep that they have to rely on charity in order to put food on the table.

The overarching veto power on Scottish Parliament legislation has meant that transgender people have had their hopes for a more caring gender recognition process crushed by a UK Government intent on waging culture wars against vulnerable groups. UK control over drug law means that people who struggle with drug problems are criminalised, making it harder for them to get the support they need. Our health system is vulnerable to privatisation as a result of UK laws that have opened the back door to private companies



Photo credit: Scottish Greens

that want to profit off people needing healthcare. And our equalities law isn't protecting all groups, or being properly enforced.

Government should appeal to the best of our nature, not the worst, and bring people together instead of driving them apart. For as long as Scotland remains in the UK, Scottish Greens will push for a reinvestment in a fairer social security system; additional rights to paid leave; for those struggling with drug problems to be treated as someone needing support, not as a criminal; extra protections against privatisation of our NHS; and for improvements to equalities law. And with the powers of an independent country, we could go so much further in putting wellbeing, dignity and equality at the heart of our society.

## **Social security**

Countries can be judged on the way they help those most in need of support. Social security is a powerful symbol of our duty to one another and it is central to a caring, civilised society. The social security system should be there to help us all out with the costs of looking after children, disability, unemployment and old age. However, an unremitting stream of UK Government cuts over recent decades, and particularly under governments since 2010, have meant a failure to provide even the very minimum people need to live in dignity.

According to the independent Joseph Rowntree Foundation, current Universal Credit rates only barely keep people out of destitution, and are hundreds of pounds lower than its Minimum Income Standard benchmark, which calculates the minimum amount people

should be expected to live off. Far from its original aim of fostering security, the UK system now makes people insecure and vulnerable.

Within the limits of devolution, Scotland will always be fighting poverty with one hand tied behind its back. The next UK Government should restore wellbeing and dignity to our system by reversing recent cuts that have left families across Scotland struggling and making the system more humane. This would be a model for social security in an independent Scotland.

Prior to independence, the Scottish Greens are calling for full powers over social security to be devolved to Scotland, along with the fiscal powers which will allow us to deliver the scale of system that is needed and respond to changing circumstances such as the cost of living crisis. We recognise this will take time however, so the next UK Government must immediately review and reinvest in our social security system, including making the following changes:

- **An end to the Benefit Cap**, which has taken an average of £51 a week from almost 28,000 Scots families since its introduction.
- **Scrapping the Bedroom Tax**, which cruelly cuts housing payments if claimants are deemed to have a 'spare' room. This is fully mitigated in Scotland by the Scottish Government, but it would be fairer and more efficient to end it 'at source' by ending it across the UK.
- **Abolition of the Two Child Limit**, which has pushed over 85,000 children in Scotland into poverty, and along with it the heinous so-called 'Rape Clause'
- **Making Child Benefit universal** again by getting rid of Tax Charges, ensuring that everyone can get help with the costs of raising a child.
- **Ensuring refugees and asylum seekers have the same right to social security** as permanent citizens and residents, helping them to thrive in their new country. The UK Government's current 'No Recourse to Public Funds' policy condemns people to poverty and marginalisation.
- **A Minimum Income Guarantee**, whereby the social security system will step in to ensure that everyone can meet a good standard of living. The Minimum Income Guarantee would recognise diverse individual and household circumstances, including levels of debt. An Independent Advisory Group made up of academics and other experts, including those with lived experience - people who are living on low incomes - would recommend the level of Guarantee.



## ***Defending and restoring our pensions***

*The botched rollout by the UK Government of the 'equalisation' of the pension age led to 3.8 million women having their retirement plans shattered at short notice. The UK government ignored official advice to give women at least a decade's notice, and these last minute changes drove many women into poverty, or precarious low income work.*

*We commend the tireless work of the WASPI campaign, to deliver justice for women who had their lives upturned by this change. The UK Government must apologise to all women impacted by the changes to state pension age, and agree to swift and fair compensation.*

*Scottish Green MPs will oppose any further increases to the state pension age, and will press for earlier access to the state pension for people with disabilities. We also support campaigns for a lower pension age for public sector workers in risky and physically demanding jobs, including emergency service workers and prison officers.*

Fairness must be at the heart of our social security system, ensuring we can all access the safety net we are entitled to when changes happen in our lives. The Scottish Greens are calling for the following immediate reforms which could be made to the current UK social security system:

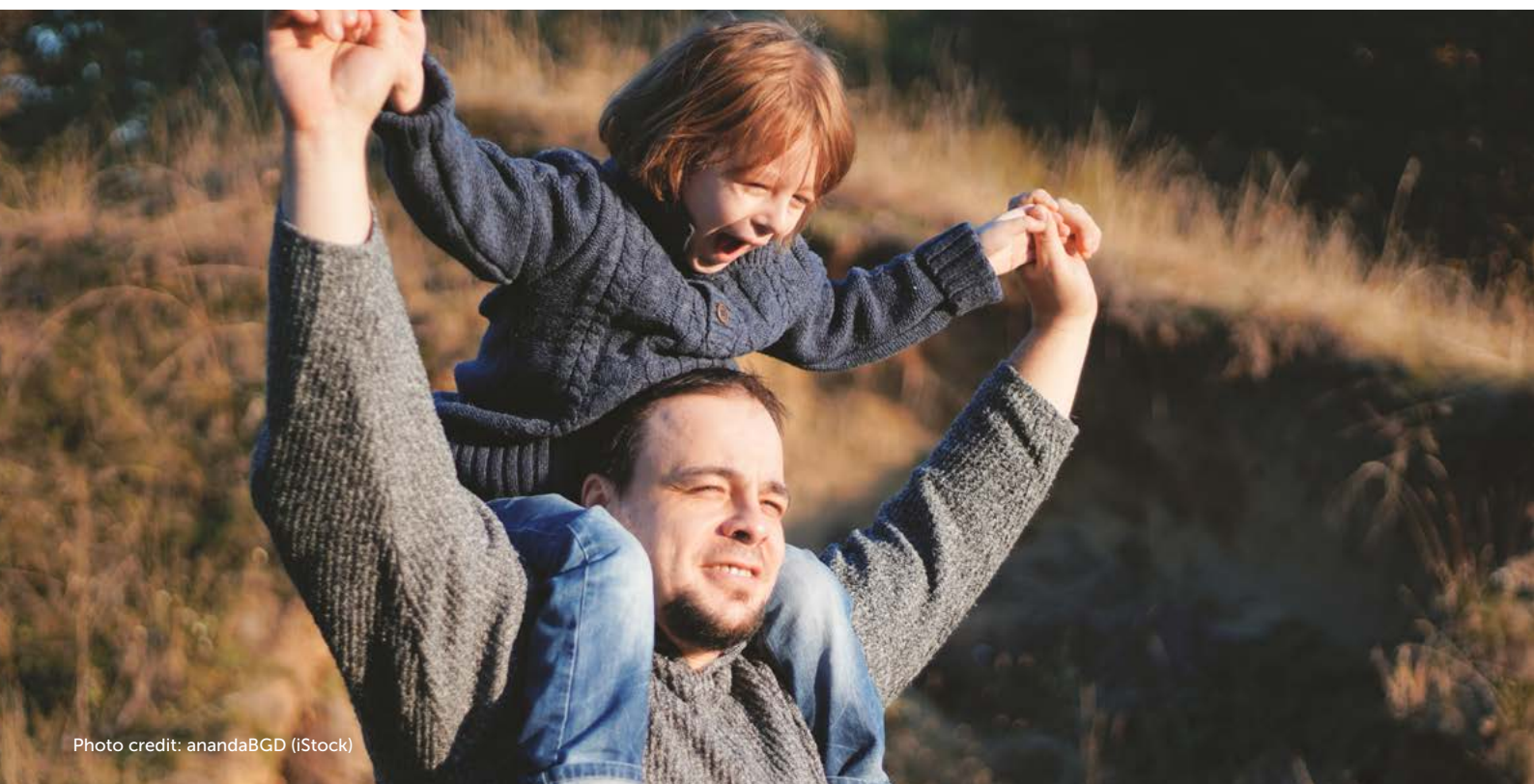
- **A total ban on benefit sanctions**, which cause extreme hardship and can make it harder, not easier, to find employment.
- In advance of scrapping Universal Credit, **ending the 5-week wait** before the first payment, which is creating considerable hardship, instead providing a non-repayable grant on the basis of an estimate of entitlement.
- As is already the case for Scottish Government payments, **end the digital-only requirement** that makes it hard for people without digital skills or internet access to get the support they are entitled to.
- **End the requirement to apply for some payments on a household basis**, which denies women's right to an independent income and enables financially-based domestic abuse.
- Supporting those who wish to challenge unfair benefit decisions by **extending the Scottish Government's Short Term Assistance**, which refunds benefit reductions until the appeals process has been exhausted, to all relevant social security payments.
- **Introduce a mental health impact assessment** for all changes to social security and wider social policy, to understand the impacts government decision making has on mental and physical health and wellbeing.

## ***Fair and meaningful support in the workplace***

Employment law remains reserved to Westminster, and this includes rights over paid leave for illness, parenthood, and other major life events. Thanks to our former membership of the EU, workers in Scotland have benefitted from a guaranteed level of support and protection, and the Scottish Greens will continue to defend these rights post-Brexit. However, we still lag behind many of our European neighbours on issues like maternity and paternity leave. Enhancing these provisions contributes not only to greater wellbeing and improved family life, but also to better outcomes for young people and increased productivity in the workplace.

That's why the Scottish Greens are calling for the biggest ever expansion of rights to paid leave, including:

- ***Increasing statutory paternity, maternity and shared parental leave to cover 52 weeks full pay***, to allow new parents to spend more time with their child should they wish to. This and all other parental leave policies will apply to new adoptive parents, as well as birth parents.
- Adopting the Swedish approach of providing ***additional leave to the fathers***. This will encourage fathers to play a greater role in childcare and make paternity leave, currently the most limited in Europe, more generous. Special arrangements will ensure that other family types, such as gender-non binary couples and same-gender couples also benefit.
- ***Extending the right to paid leave to people who lose their baby at any point during the pregnancy***, not just, as now, for babies lost after 24 weeks.
- A new ***legal entitlement to compassionate leave*** in the event of the death of a close relative or friend.
- Creation of a ***right to paid leave for people who need time off due to the effects of menstruation, perimenopause and menopause***.



## **Providing a guaranteed safety net through Universal Basic Income**

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a simple but powerful idea: pay everyone in the country enough to live a basic but dignified life. Greens have championed UBI since our foundation in 1990, and have been instrumental in moving it up the political agenda, including winning support for a landmark £200,000 study that demonstrated the incredible potential for UBI to substantially reduce and even, set at the right level, eliminate poverty. A much simpler system without complicated means tests, cruel benefits sanctions and confusing rules would reduce the stress and expense involved in the current system whilst tackling poverty and inequality and giving people more flexibility to care, create and study. Everyone would get the same basic amount, tearing down the artificial barriers that years of skewed media reporting have thrown up between groups.

Research from countries which have trialled UBI, such as Finland, show that recipients of UBI experience benefits such as improved wellbeing whilst not discouraging work. Yet efforts to trial UBI in Scotland have been hampered by a lack of cooperation from the UK Government, which continues to control the taxation system and key benefits powers required to allow a trial to go ahead in Scotland.

***The UK Government should end its opposition to trialling UBI by providing the Scottish Government with the co-operation it needs to run small-scale pilots of UBI in parts of the country.*** With the additional powers of independence, we will be able to move beyond trials and replace the greater part of the social security system with Universal Basic Income (UBI). Key features would be:

- UBI to be set at a rate that allows everyone to meet their basic needs, with the rate recommended by an Independent Advisory Group drawing on lived experience, in the same way as the Minimum Income Guarantee, which it would replace.
- When UBI is introduced, nobody will receive less than they received in the previous benefits system.
- UBI will be paid to all permanent residents, regardless of migration status.
- Upon reaching retirement age, the Citizen's Pension will replace the existing state pension schemes at no less than the rate of the State Pension. With about 50% of people not currently receiving the full New State Pension, this will result in a significant increase to pension entitlements for many older Scots.
- Children will be entitled to a reduced amount which will be payable to a parent or legal guardian. Single parents will also receive a supplement.
- UBI would be unconditional, with no requirement to pay National Insurance contributions, and it would not be reduced through sanctions, or any other means.
- Disability Benefits to help with the additional cost of a disability will remain in place alongside a UBI.
- Benefits paid to cover crises, emergencies, unexpected costs and income shocks, such as the Scottish Welfare Fund, will also be retained.

- Initially, Housing Benefit will remain in place alongside UBI. This will subsequently be reviewed to establish whether and how housing benefit could be incorporated into the UBI, taking into account the differences in housing costs between different parts of the country and different types of housing. The UBI will require further controls on rent levels in the private rented sector.

## ***A society that values equality, human rights and non-discrimination***

The most successful societies are almost always those that are also the most equal. Countries that provide, promote and protect everyone's right to live a dignified and full life also tend to have the best outcomes across the board, including higher levels of physical and mental health, social trust, happiness and educational achievement, and lower levels of crime.

Scotland has made positive use of the powers it has to advance equality. The boards of public organisations such as Health Boards are required to have gender balance, and the Fairer Scotland Duty, for which there is no equivalent in England, means that public bodies have a legal responsibility to show that they have considered how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making decisions.

However, most of the legislation that gives people protection from discrimination is not in Scotland's hands. Instead, it is the preserve of the UK Government, which has stoked up ignorance and hate, using its powers to wage culture wars against some of the most discriminated people in our society, including transgender people, refugees and those seeking asylum. It is also threatening to tear up the system that protects the human rights of us all, and remove international checks against UK actions to undermine human rights.

Scottish Greens will therefore call on the next UK Government to improve equalities and human rights law, and work for the same improvements with powers over equality in an independent Scotland. Priorities should be:

- ***cancelling the undemocratic block on Scotland's gender recognition reforms***. A majority of the Scottish Parliament, including MSPs from all parties, supported making it easier and less intrusive for transgender people to get legal recognition of their gender identity, but this has been blocked by the UK Government. Greens will be calling on the new Secretary of State for Scotland to immediately allow the legislation to proceed.
- ***Extending the scope of the Equality Act (2010)***. Adding menstruation, perimenopause and menopause to the list of protected characteristics will benefit women who face discrimination at work due to the health impact of being on their period or experiencing menopausal symptoms. Further expanding the act will help tackle discrimination against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- ***Protecting the long-held rights of trans people***. We will resist the changes to the equality act proposed by the current UK Tory government to water down long-held protections for trans people by redefining sex as 'biological sex'.





Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

- **Ensuring the UK remains a member of the European Convention on Human Rights.** Despite originally stating its commitment to ECHR, the UK Government has subsequently threatened to leave over its inhumane 'stop the boats' policy on migration. Leaving ECHR will threaten a wide range of fundamental human rights we have benefitted from for decades, and the Scottish Greens will continue to defend our membership.
- Incorporate the UN's Convention on the **Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) into UK domestic law.
- **Review the implementation and enforcement of legislation to prevent sexual harassment in the work place**, identifying or establishing a statutory body to be responsible for future enforcement.
- **Amending equalities law to give people more time to bring discrimination cases** than the 3-6 months currently allowed. This will benefit marginalised groups who may face challenges to access legal advice and build a case within current time limits.
- **Protecting the Human Rights Act.** The Human Rights Act is essential in supporting the rights of us all, but the most vulnerable in particular. The next UK Government should guarantee that the Human Rights Act should be preserved and extended, and that our rights will continue to be protected by the European Court of Human Rights. In an independent Scotland, human rights law and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights will have the protection of being part of a written constitution, making it much harder than it is now to undermine people's rights.
- **Scrap the discriminatory Prevent policy**, which is disproportionate in its targeting of Muslims and has a predominantly Islamophobic outlook.
- **Ban the use of facial recognition software in CCTV** and portable recording devices, by both public bodies and corporations, which is an infringement of the human right to privacy and is open to abuse.

## **Making the Equality and Human Rights Commission fit for purpose**

*The EHRC is a statutory body created to encourage equality and diversity, and protect and promote the human rights of everyone in the UK. The commission is supposed to be an independent body, but it has become politicised in recent years with members being appointed by the UK Government who have criticised feminism and supported hostile environment policies against migrants. It has also had its funding slashed by 70% in real terms in recent years, with further cuts proposed, leaving it unable to adequately deliver its core functions.*

*Meanwhile, a Coalition of charities has written to the United Nations with concerns that the Commission has actively undermined protections for trans people, protections it is tasked with upholding. The Scottish Greens are calling for the commission to be de-politicised, with responsibility for appointments to the Commission to be taken from UK Ministers and given to an independent body; and for the Commission to drop its opposition to progressive gender recognition reforms and its other anti-trans activities. Following these reforms, adequate funding should be restored to the commission to allow it to be a force for good in UK society.*

## **Defending and improving healthcare in Scotland**

Scotland's powers over health are significant, and progress towards a healthier Scotland has been made. The ban on smoking in public places, the introduction of minimum unit pricing for alcohol, and the introduction of NHS Scotland's Patient Safety programme have all reduced hospital admissions, saved public spending, and most importantly saved lives, often in the most deprived communities in Scotland.

But there is still so much more to do. There is no getting away from the fact that, despite some improvements in recent years, Scotland still has one of the highest rates of drug deaths in the developed world. And people in our most deprived communities live in good health for 25 years less than those in our least deprived areas. This is unacceptable, and Scotland can and should do more with its powers over health.

But we are limited by being part of the UK. The system of allocating funding means that cuts to funding in England impact on the money that Scotland receives for its health services. UK Government control over drug laws is a major barrier to a more human, public-health approach to helping people experiencing drug problems. The British Medical Association has warned that post-Brexit, new UK trade deals and the Internal Market Act, neither of which Scotland has any power over, are a major threat to our NHS and public health policy. Having the full powers of an independent nation is vital to tackling health inequalities and protecting our NHS.



Photo credit: sturti (iStock)

***The next UK Government must commit to protecting our health from international predators.*** International trade deals are a potential threat to our NHS and to our public health initiatives. The Scottish Greens are calling for legislation to make it illegal for the UK Government to conclude trade deals which negatively impact UK residents' access to healthcare services; open up the NHS to privatisation; or compromise public health initiatives such as those to tackle smoking.

Prior to independence, the Scottish Greens are calling for ***Scottish control over medicine regulation***. Medicines represent the most frequent healthcare intervention and are the second largest item of expenditure for NHSScotland. Yet, regulation of medicines and medical devices, including their licensing, safety and pricing, are the responsibility of the UK Government. Devolving control over regulation will help ensure Scots have the access they need to vital medicines and medical devices. The Scottish Greens would also modernise the law to ***decriminalise abortion*** and repeal the Abortion Act 1967, to ensure everyone can access essential reproductive health care.

***With independence, Scotland can go further and ensure constitutional protections for our healthcare system,*** creating the powers to protect our right to care from the NHS. Greens will ensure a written constitution provides fundamental legal protections for the right for all residents, regardless of nationality or migration to free healthcare, including all forms of healthcare: hospital treatment, mental health services, dentistry and eyecare. We will also enshrine constitutional protections for our NHS.

## A public health approach to drugs

It is widely accepted within the scientific community that drug use is a medical issue. Criminalising drug users, as UK drug law does at present, makes it harder for people to seek support. **The next UK Government should fundamentally reform the law on the possession of illegal drugs, so that possession of any drug should no longer be an offence**, or devolve the relevant powers to Scotland so the Scottish Government can make the necessary changes. The Scottish Greens would also ensure the cultivation and possession of cannabis for personal use would not be treated as a criminal offence.

We have seen in countries such as Portugal that decriminalisation of personal possession and a change to a health-led approach for drug policy reduces the stigma associated with addiction and encourages people to seek help. Portugal now has some of the lowest drug deaths in Europe, with users referred to a public commission with a remit to reduce drug use and educate on risks.

This is in stark contrast to Scotland, where attempts by charities and local authorities to establish safe consumption rooms have been caught up in lengthy legal challenges at the UK level. **The next UK Government must proactively support the rollout of safe consumption rooms in Scotland's cities** as a first step towards a health based drugs policy, focusing on harm reduction.

A change to drug law will also allow for more widespread drug checking services, which are a proven way to reduce harm from drugs and drug related deaths. The Scottish Government is currently planning pilots in three cities, but requires the Home Office to grant a licence to run these services. Removing this barrier would allow for **provision of drug checking services in communities across Scotland**, as is common across Europe, Canada and Australia, with the NHS and third sector organisations collaborating to provide individualised feedback and counselling to drug users who have submitted samples for testing.



Photo credit: Alex Armitage



Photo credit: Christian Gamauf

# ***Upholding democracy in Scotland***

**The right to participate in a free and fair democracy is a core part of citizenship. It is a right many of us hold dear, and has been built through generations of hard work and sacrifice by campaigners, workers, and ordinary people.**

But democracy is about more than just the process of voting in elections and referendums. It is an opportunity to consider what kind of country we want to be, what values we want to live by and how the people who represent us can reflect those.

Following the 2014 independence referendum, the people of Scotland were promised the most powerful devolved parliament in the world. But before the ink was even dry on the result, political parties were rolling back on their commitments. The Smith Commission, which followed the referendum and was intended to deliver 'home rule' for Scotland, committed to only a patchwork of reforms, with unionist parties blocking devolution of significant powers over workers rights, taxation and immigration policy.

***Scottish Greens have already led the way on upholding democracy in Scotland, including:***

- Establishing a Climate Assembly, where ordinary citizens could participate in decision making over climate action, and ensured the Scottish Government acted on the recommendations.
- Developing a vision for an independent Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Government, through the Building a New Scotland papers.

But progress in Scotland comes in the face of a UK Government increasingly intent on restricting access to democracy through unnecessary voter ID rules, and an antiquated parliamentary structure which disbars too many people from participation. It is time for a radical shift in how we do politics in this country, with the goal being a progressive, inclusive and welcoming independent Scotland.

## ***Scotland should be an independent country***

The Scottish Green Party has supported independence since it was founded in 1990, and we continue to believe that the people of Scotland are best placed to make decisions about how our country is run.

***The power for Scotland to hold constitutional referendums should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament***, so that a second referendum on Scottish Independence can be held at a time chosen by the people of Scotland and their democratically elected parliament.

We recognise, however, that more work needs to be done to persuade the people of Scotland of the benefits of independence. That's why, throughout this manifesto, we've highlighted ways we could go further in an Independent Scotland - decisions which would make people's lives better, reduce poverty and inequality, and ramp up action to protect



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

and defend our precious natural environment. The Scottish Greens will continue to make the case for how Scotland could use the powers of Independence to become a fairer, greener, thriving country which looks after people and planet. We will work with all parties and campaigns which share that collective vision.

## ***A written constitution for an Independent Scottish Republic***

*One of the major flaws in the UK's current constitutional setup is the lack of a written constitution, which means basic rights and democratic processes are constantly open to challenge. It has led to the mis-use of power by politicians, such as when Boris Johnson prorogued parliament in 2019 to avoid parliamentary scrutiny of Brexit, and the increasing erosion of powers for the devolved parliaments. And it creates an environment where the rights of citizens and the basic processes of democracy are continually up for debate.*

*In an Independent Scotland, the Scottish Greens will help deliver a permanent, written constitution, developed through participative means by the people of Scotland, which guarantees the inalienable rights of current and future generations.*

*We will advocate for this constitution to establish Scotland as a democratic republic, abolishing the monarchy and ensuring sovereignty lies with the people of Scotland, not unelected heads of state.*

# ***Upholding the powers of the Scottish Parliament***

Whilst campaigning for independence and greater powers for the Scottish Parliament, we must not lose sight of the fact that increasingly our existing powers are under threat by a UK Government which has shown utter contempt for the devolved settlement.

***The Scotland Act must be amended to remove Section 35***, which grants a veto power to the Secretary of State for Scotland. This was used to block royal assent of the Gender Recognition Reform bill, and the subsequent Court of Session case confirmed that it could be used even when there is agreement that legislation is within the devolved competencies of the Scottish Parliament. This has set a dangerous precedent for future UK Governments hostile to the principles of devolution, and must be addressed to restore full decision making powers to Holyrood.

The post-Brexit Internal Market Act has similarly granted UK ministers the power to block a wide range of policy interventions which could be deemed to undermine a single internal market for goods and services across the UK. This Act was passed despite the devolved parliaments expressly withholding their support, and in practice significantly restricts the abilities of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments to decide on infrastructure priorities and make changes to regulations. It was the Internal Market Act which allowed the UK Government to block the Scottish Government's deposit return scheme for drinks containers, despite the scheme having been in development for several years and regulations having been passed by elected members of the Scottish Parliament.

***The Internal Market Act must be repealed*** and replaced with legislation which takes a genuine four-nations approach to economic and regulatory frameworks, one in which the opinions and priorities of devolved governments are given equal weight to the UK Government.

This should form part of a wider reform of devolution in the United Kingdom, with discussions taking place with the Welsh Senned and Northern Irish Assembly over what further powers their elected representatives would like to see devolved. There should also be a constitutional review of powers for England's cities and regions, led by local representatives and governments, to ensure they are able to play an active and meaningful role in decision making at all levels.







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Further measures which the Scottish Greens would take to revitalise democracy in the UK include:

- Replacing the unelected House of Lords with a **democratically elected second chamber of parliament**.
- Introducing **proportional representation** to all levels of elections in the UK, ensuring our parliaments reflect a range of political parties and ending the long standing two-party dominance of Westminster politics.
- **Develop greater use of participative democracy**, building on the Scottish Parliament's use of citizens' assemblies to build consensus on issues such as the climate emergency.
- Following the lead of the Scottish Parliament to **extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds in all elections**, and basing voting eligibility on residency, not citizenship, including people with refugee status. This will also apply to candidates standing for elections.
- Introduce legislation to bring in **gender quotas for elections at all levels**, to ensure equal representation for women in elected office.
- **Scrap the requirement to provide photo ID to vote in UK elections**, a move which significantly disenfranchises lower income and minority ethnic communities, and which was introduced despite there being minimal evidence of voter fraud in recent elections.
- **Repeal the anti-protest Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act**, which has dangerous implications for upholding the democratic right to peaceful protest across the UK.



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

## ***Making politics accessible for all***

*Women, minority ethnic people and disabled people remain significantly underrepresented in UK politics, with the nature of electoral campaigning and the daily life in the UK parliament being a major barrier to participation. Long days, anti-social hours, lack of childcare, and even the parliamentary buildings make life as an MP unfeasible for some groups of people.*

*The Scottish Greens would lead a wholesale review of how the Westminster parliament functions, bringing in changes which make it possible to carry out the role of an MP whilst also holding caring responsibilities or living with a disability. This would include reinstating the Access to Elected Office fund, which supports disabled people running for parliament; limiting sitting hours of Westminster to normal business hours; providing affordable on-site childcare for MPs and staff; and introducing full hybrid parliamentary processes, allowing MPs to participate from home, a regional office, or the parliamentary estate, as is the case with the Scottish Parliament.*

*In an independent Scotland, accessibility should be at the foundation of designing our new parliamentary processes, to ensure those making decisions truly reflect the communities they represent, and no one is barred from participating due to personal circumstances.*

## ***Bringing transparency to how politics is funded***

Crucial investigatory work following the Brexit referendum by organisations like Open Democracy have exposed the extent to which British politics is funded by anonymous donors, creating a route for private companies and foreign regimes to influence democracy in the UK.

Dark money has been shown to have had a significant impact during the Brexit campaign, and in the subsequent political push for a hard-line 'no deal' Brexit. And it has been increasingly linked with funding public campaigns challenging climate action and our transition to net zero.

Bringing greater transparency to how politics is funded in the UK is an essential step to protect a free and open democracy. The next UK Government must fully implement the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life report into regulating election finance, including:

- Increasing transparency requirements for unincorporated associations making donations to political parties, to ***stop secret 'dark money' groups from funding election campaigns***.
- ***Extend disclosure laws*** on unincorporated associations to apply to individual candidates, as well as political parties.
- Place a requirement on political parties to have a procedure in place for ***identifying and disclosing the true source of donations***.
- Ban foreign organisations or individuals from buying campaign advertising in the UK.
- Significantly ***increasing the cost of fines*** for breaking electoral finance rules.

In the long term, the Scottish Greens are calling for public funding of political parties, creating a level playing field and preventing wealthy individuals from disrupting free and open elections. This would include creating upper limits on the amounts an individual or campaign group can donate, and the amount parties and candidates can spend during an election.

## ***Maintaining a free and transparent media***

A free and transparent media is a central part of a healthy, participative democracy. Citizens need reliable information they can trust if they are to play a full role in decision making and hold power to account at all levels. It should have an environment in which to flourish and uphold the highest editorial standards.

However we have seen a seismic shift in recent decades in how people consume media, and the regulation of the sector has failed to keep pace. This has been combined with a concerted effort by the UK Government to defund public service broadcasting and deregulate the wider media landscape.

The Scottish Greens will ***support the continuation of the TV licence fee***, to protect the delivery of high quality, diverse and accessible public broadcasting. However, its role should

be reviewed to ensure it is supporting a sustainable model of broadcasting in an age of increasingly digitised and global platforms, whilst also creating space for local voices and outlets to flourish.

In particular, ensuring scrutiny over matters of local democracy is vital for communities up and down the country in the face of changing media economics, trends, and ownership of media organisations and broadcasters. The Local Democracy Reporting Service, operated by the BBC, is a good example of how public money can help sustain and revive local journalism. This should be expanded to include support for local and community owned media outlets, to stem the ongoing decline in local newspapers.

Further decision making powers over broadcasting should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, allowing us to develop a thriving, diverse and transparent media here in Scotland. The Scottish Greens would use these powers to:

- **Establish a Scottish Media Authority**, with a remit to ensure freedom of speech, uphold editorial standards, and maintain plurality of ownership, avoiding concentration of media at regional or national level.
- **Require social media platforms to have legal responsibility for content published on their site**, and a requirement to monitor and remove content which promotes harmful practices and hate speech. This includes banning advertising from organisations which promote hate speech, or seek to undermine democratic processes.
- **Introduce a levy on paid streaming services**, with incentives for those who reinvest in local content production. Denmark recently introduced a five percent levy on streaming services, which is reduced to two percent for platforms that invest at least five percent of their revenue in local productions.
- Ensure nationally important sporting and cultural events, like international football matches and the Eurovision song contest, are available via free-to-view public broadcasters.



Photo credit: Gordon Crawford/Scottish Greens

# Playing a global role

## **Powers over international affairs remain one of the main areas reserved to the UK Government - and increasingly it is one of the biggest areas of divergence between UK and Scottish policy.**

The Scottish Greens fundamentally believe that being a good global citizen means building alliances for peace and challenging violent and hostile regimes which threaten the safety of citizens and global security; it means showing compassion and humanity to people fleeing war, oppression and natural disasters; it means welcoming people from around the world who want to come to Scotland and contribute to our communities; and it means working across borders to tackle the global challenges we all face, like the climate and nature crises.

Yet successive governments at Westminster have actively stoked a hostile environment, which demonises and penalises migrants, including refugees and people seeking asylum. They have pursued policies which force people into uninhabitable housing, leave people without access to the most basic financial support, and deny skilled and talented people the right to work and contribute to society. And they continue to back regimes around the world actively pursuing genocide against their own people, through military and political support, and the funding of a cruel and indiscriminate arms trade.

***This is not the kind of global leader we want Scotland to be.***

### ***Despite our limited powers, Green MSPs in the Scottish Parliament have already made steps towards ensuring Scotland is a good global citizen, including:***



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- Securing a commitment to roll out free bus travel for people seeking asylum, alleviating poverty, allowing access to services, visit friends and family, and be part of community life.
- Building Scotland's profile on the global stage by opening a new Scottish Government Nordic Office in Copenhagen and leading the Edinburgh Declaration process in support of an ambitious global biodiversity framework.
- Halting public funding going to companies which continued trading with Russia, following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and taking action against companies identified by the UN as complicity in Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian West Bank.

But this is only a drop in the ocean compared to what Scotland could achieve with full powers over immigration, international development and global policy.



Photo credit: Joel Carillet (iStock)

## ***A humanitarian international policy***

In recent years, the UK Government has continued to pursue a morally bankrupt international policy, one which prioritises the profits of arms dealers over upholding fundamental human rights. At the same time as hosting oppressive regimes at international arms fairs, Westminster has cut its international aid budget, a decision described by Save the Children as a “death sentence for children already living in some of the most dangerous parts of the world”.

The Scottish Greens will continue to work for ***an end to all financial and political support for the arms trade***, including through government grants, the sponsorship and hosting of arms trade fairs, and the use of international trips by government representatives to advocate for UK-based arms dealers.

The UK must use our privileged position on the global stage to advocate for a collaborative approach to international policy, which prioritises peace-building and humanitarian responses to global crises, and is founded on feminist and decolonising principles. Our international aid and development budget should reflect these priorities, contribute towards our efforts to deliver climate justice and provide reparations for colonisation and the slave trade.

The Scottish Greens would urgently:

- ***Re-establish the Department for International Development***, independent from the Foreign Office, and provide a specific remit to support peace building, climate justice, reparations and decolonisation programmes.
- Reinstating the commitment to ***spend a minimum of 0.7% of GDP on international aid***, but with the intention of spending significantly more than this, and restore crisis reserves to ensure we can adequately respond to emergency relief when required.
- Work with other nations in the Global North to implement a collective programme of ***debt cancellation for the Global South***.
- ***Actively support the work of human rights defenders worldwide***, including those defending women’s and LGBTQIA+ human rights.



## ***Scotland can lead the way for a nuclear-free Europe***

*The intensification of wars and climate breakdown in recent years has reignited global concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental harm caused by nuclear weapons. Yet the UK remains one of the world's major nuclear-weapon owning countries, possessing 225 weapons, primarily based on the Scottish coast at Faslane.*

*Despite widespread public and government support in Scotland for the eradication of nuclear weapons, in 2021 the UK Government scrapped plans to decrease this nuclear stockpile, and now intends to increase it by 40% by the middle of the decade.*

*An independent Scotland could sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, becoming the first major nuclear-weapon owning state to remove these barbaric weapons from our waters, and bar any other country from storing or transporting nuclear weapons through our territories.*

With its commitment to a 'first strike' nuclear weapons policy and the membership of global human rights abusers such as the United States and Turkey, the Scottish Greens do not believe NATO is compatible with global peace making. We will advocate for an independent Scotland outside of NATO and a new non-nuclear model of mutual security based on the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.



## Scotland's role in the global community

At present, Scotland continues to be represented on the international stage by the UK Government, and has no representation at the United Nations or in negotiating international treaties. The Scottish Government has participated in recent global conferences on Climate Change and Biodiversity along with other sub-national states, but all too often our efforts are undermined by a UK Government which contributes more to causing the crises than to their resolution.

**With independence, Scotland could play a full role in international efforts to tackle the climate and nature emergencies**, as well as participate in global discussions on peace and security. Until then, the UK Government should adopt a four-nations approach to participation in international forums, ensuring that the devolved Governments are meaningfully engaged in and represented at these discussions.

The fatally slow response to the climate crisis has shown the urgent need for early intervention and meaningful international collaboration on issues which affect us globally. Learnings from the climate crisis must be applied to new collective efforts to tackle emerging and potential threats to humanity, including cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, biosecurity and future global pandemics.

The Scottish Greens will ensure the UK **continues to promote and adhere to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** as the globally recognised framework to help focus and shape global efforts to tackle poverty and inequality, promote human rights, and develop an economy that functions within our planetary bounds.

### **An independent Scotland in the EU**

*For more than 60 years, the European Union and its predecessors has proved to be one of the most effective forums for cross-border collaboration on global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, food security and peace-building. Scotland is a poorer country - both economically and culturally - due to the loss of our EU membership.*

*Whilst we respect the democratic right of the people of England and Wales to choose to leave, this was not the choice of the people of Scotland or Northern Ireland. The UK Government has shown a complete disregard for this difference of decision ever since. We have lost our right to travel, live, work and study across the continent; our environmental protections, protections for workers, and enhanced human rights protections; and our ability to trade and collaborate with our closest European neighbours.*

*With no UK-wide party now supporting re-entry to the EU, it is clear that the only way for Scotland to uphold the democratic vote of 2016 is through independence. **The Scottish Greens will continue to fight for Scotland to become an independent country in the EU, and will ensure this option is put to the people of Scotland at a future referendum.***

## Working for peace

**The Scottish Greens recognise the right of self-determination for the people of Palestine** and call on the international community to work collectively to secure an immediate ceasefire, the end of Israel's assault on Gaza and the escalating campaign of ethnic cleansing in the West Bank and Jerusalem; the withdrawal of Israeli settlements and military forces from illegally occupied Palestinian land; and to facilitate a genuine peace process with the objective of securing a just outcome which allows all those who live in the region to do so free of occupation, discrimination and threat.

The UK Government has for decades provided Israel with military, political and economic support, resulting in a direct moral responsibility for the atrocities inflicted on the people of Gaza. The Government's response must now be driven by the rulings of the International Court of Justice, which has called for immediate action to prevent a genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The Scottish Greens support the campaign led by Palestinian civil society for **boycotts, divestment and sanctions** against the state of Israel, including a boycott of Israeli goods and services and an academic, sporting and cultural boycott. This should continue until Israel fulfils its obligations under international law and ends the occupation and siege of Palestine.

**We will oppose any reintroduction of the Tory Government's anti-boycott bill** and would make the necessary changes to areas such as procurement law, and a watertight overhaul of human rights-based due diligence checks, to allow public bodies to fully participate in the BDS campaign and other similar efforts targeted at governments, businesses and institutions which breach international law, abuse human rights or destroy our planet.

The next UK Government must:

- Join the growing number of countries granting **immediate formal recognition to the state of Palestine** and use its position as a United Nations Security Council member to table a motion granting Palestine full UN member status.
- Immediately halt all arm sales to Israel and sanction its political and military leaders, as was done to senior Russian figures after the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.
- Restore funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, who are delivering life saving humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza. Reflecting the devastation wreaked on Gaza, this funding should be far above the levels previously provided.
- Commit to never again inflict collective punishment through the suspension of support for humanitarian aid.
- Oppose related British military action in the wider Middle East, including Yemen, which only spreads further suffering to civilian populations and risks fuelling an escalation of war in the region.
- Introduce a bespoke visa scheme for Palestinian students and academics as part of a wider programme of assisting the reconstruction of Gaza's higher education sector.



Photo credit: Nick Gotts

***Russia's invasion of Ukraine in January 2022 was a brutal and unprovoked attack on an independent nation.*** Two years later it continues to have global implications. The invasion led to an immediate spike in energy and food prices, exacerbating the cost of living crisis and highlighting the fragility of the global economy. The horrific toll it has taken on the people of Ukraine goes far beyond these economic shocks however and the Scottish Greens are proud to continue offering our unwavering support to their struggle for freedom. It is for the people of Ukraine and their elected representatives to decide on the means by which they resist Russian aggression, in line with their obligations under international law.

Scottish Greens will continue to press for:

- Wider and more impactful sanctions against the Russian and Belarussian regimes, including state-backed businesses and organisations linked to Putin and his close associates.
- Tighter trade laws to tackle the means by which companies are currently circumventing sanctions to continue their trade with Russia, such as through the transfer of goods via third countries.
- Strengthened public procurement laws to disqualify those companies who have continued operating in Russia or cooperating with its public institutions since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- Action against UK based companies which continue to enable Russian fossil fuel exports, including the option of their closure.
- International debt relief for Ukraine.

The governing regime in China has developed an all-encompassing surveillance apparatus to suppress ethnic and religious minorities, destroy democracy in Hong Kong and engage in decades of cultural genocide and ethnic cleansing in Tibet and East Turkistan (Xinjiang).

The next UK Government must:

- Impose visa bans and sanctions on Chinese government officials responsible for ongoing atrocities committed against Uyghur Muslims and Tibetans, including those culpable for the detention of around two million Muslims in concentration camps and their use as forced labourers.
- Implement the strongest possible bans on products whose manufacture is credibly connected to these forced labour camps and restrict the UK operations of the companies responsible.
- End overseas police training and support taking place in East Turkistan with the participation of UK police forces.
- Ban the use of CCTV systems manufactured by companies such as Hikvision, Dahua, and Honeywell, which have been flagged as potential security risks due to their links to the Chinese regime.
- Pressure the Hong Kong authorities to release political prisoners from the pro-democracy movement such as Jimmy Lai.
- Recognise the right to self-determination of the Tibetan people and their right to their own identity and autonomy.
- Provide direct financial support to the Central Tibetan Administration, recognising their role as legitimate representatives of the Tibetan people.

## ***A welcoming and compassionate approach to refugees and asylum seekers***

As a wealthy, developed country, it is understandable that the United Kingdom is seen as a refuge for many from persecution, war, intractable poverty and environmental crises. Connections created by family ties, shared language and culture through centuries of colonialism have further strengthened this.

We all have the right to claim asylum from persecution - this is enshrined in international law. Therefore, the UK has a legal and moral duty to support people fleeing persecution and disaster, not least because of our historic role in many of the world's major conflicts; and in recent years driving the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels which is leading to rapid climate breakdown. We should be offering compassion, support and the chance to rebuild lives to all those forced to flee their homes.

Yet the current UK Government is pursuing a cruel and inhumane approach which threatens to destroy the right to seek asylum; it has adopted a 'stop the boats' agenda whilst also closing off any safe and regular routes for people seeking safety in this country. Those who do manage to reach the UK end up stuck in limbo, waiting years for a decision on their asylum claim in temporary accommodation which often breaches basic rights; cut off from family connections, denied the right to work and to contribute their skills to our communities.



Photo credit: Cami Glasgow/Scottish Greens

The UK Government continues to pursue the shameful and racist Rwanda deportation policy, a scheme deemed by the highest court in the land to be illegal. Opposition parties at Westminster have failed to consistently challenge this inhumane policy, with Labour actively considering its own plans for the so-called 'offshoring' of asylum applications.

However, communities in Scotland have consistently shown their willingness to welcome refugees and asylum seekers, opening their hearts and homes to people seeking safety.

We need a fundamental shift in refugee and asylum policy, **one which recognises and respects the right to claim asylum under international law** and focuses on providing a safe haven for people forced to flee their homes.

The next UK Government must:

- Protect the right to claim asylum by **immediately repealing the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act, the Illegal Migration Act and the Nationality and Borders Act**. These must be replaced with legislation which protects the right to claim asylum and adheres to international law and the European Convention on Human Rights
- **Ensure asylum applications are processed in a fair and humane manner**, whilst allowing people to remain in local communities in the UK throughout the processing period
- Increase asylum support payments to be equal to Universal Credit, **grant people the right to work whilst waiting for their claims to be processed**, and provide training and development opportunities, particularly for those already trained in high-demand sectors such as health and social care
- **Ban the use of institutional accommodation** - barracks, hotels, barges - and ensure all people seeking asylum are housed in decent housing in communities

- **Close all detention centres**, replacing them with tried and tested community-based alternatives
- **Remove private companies and profit from the asylum system** in their entirety: redirect funding to local authorities, the third sector and other bodies supporting integration
- Devolve the responsibilities for providing refugee and asylum support to the Scottish
- Actively work with global partners to provide **safe routes to protection for refugees**, including coming to the UK.

In the long term, an independent Scotland could take a radically different approach to develop an asylum policy based on compassion, humanity and recognition of our historic role in global conflicts.

## **Immigration which enhances Scotland's communities**

The Scottish Greens believe our country is fundamentally enriched and enhanced by the people who choose to build their lives here. From doctors and teachers to artists and scientists, Scotland and the UK have been profoundly shaped by immigration throughout our history.

Yet over the last decade, the UK Government has framed the issue as a fight for limited resources, disguising their historic underinvestment in public services as the result of 'uncontrolled immigration'. They have driven forward an ideological opposition to immigration based on racism and xenophobia, whilst starving our public services and communities of the workforce our ageing country desperately needs.

This has been particularly evident in Scotland, where significant workforce issues in education, the NHS, social care and other sectors have been exacerbated by our inability to recruit skilled workers from overseas. Our rural communities too have suffered, as hospitality and agriculture businesses have struggled to recruit the seasonal workers from overseas on which they have long relied.

The next UK Government must **grant the Scottish government the powers to set our own priorities for immigration**, including developing schemes which can respond quickly and flexibly to our specific workforce needs.

The Scottish Greens will also press for an immediate **removal of all income requirements on spousal visas**, allowing families to live together and ensuring we are meeting the requirements under international law to uphold the right to family life.

# Scottish Greens candidates

- Aberdeen North - Esme Houston
- Aberdeen South - Guy Ingerson
- Alloa & Grangemouth - Nariese Whyte
- Ayr, Carrick & Cumnock - Korin Vallance
- Bathgate & Linlithgow - Simon Jay
- Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk - Neil MacKinnon
- Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross - Anne Thomas
- Central Ayrshire - Tom Kerr
- Coatbridge & Bellshill - Patrick McAleer
- Cowdenbeath & Kirkcaldy - Mags Hall
- Cumbernauld & Kirkintilloch - Anne McCrossan
- Dumfries & Galloway - Laura Moodie
- Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale - Dominic Ashmole
- Dunfermline & Dollar - Ryan Blackadder
- East Kilbride & Strathaven - Ann McGuinness
- East Renfrewshire - Karen Sharkey
- Edinburgh East & Musselburgh - Amanda Grimm
- Edinburgh North & Leith - Kayleigh O'Neill
- Edinburgh South - Jo Phillips
- Edinburgh South West - Dan Heap
- Edinburgh West - James Puchowski
- Falkirk - Rachel Kidd
- Glasgow East - Amy Kettyles
- Glasgow North - Iris Duane
- Glasgow North East - Ewan Lewis
- Glasgow South - Niall Christie
- Glasgow South West - John Hamelink
- Glasgow West - Nick Quail
- Inverclyde & Renfrewshire West - Iain Hamilton
- Inverness, Skye & West Ross-shire - Peter Newman
- Kilmarnock & Loudoun - Bex Glen
- Livingston - Cameron Glasgow
- Lothian East - Shona McIntosh
- Mid Dunbartonshire - Carolynn Scrimgeour
- Moray West, Nairn & Strathspey - Draeyk van der Horn
- Motherwell, Wishaw & Carluke - Gordon Miller
- North Ayrshire & Arran - Cara McKee
- North East Fife - Morven Ovenstone-Jones
- Orkney & Shetland - Alex Armitage
- Paisley & Renfrewshire North - Jen Bell
- Paisley & Renfrewshire South - Athol Bond
- Stirling & Strathallan - Andrew Adam
- West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine - William Linegar
- West Dunbartonshire - Paula Baker



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