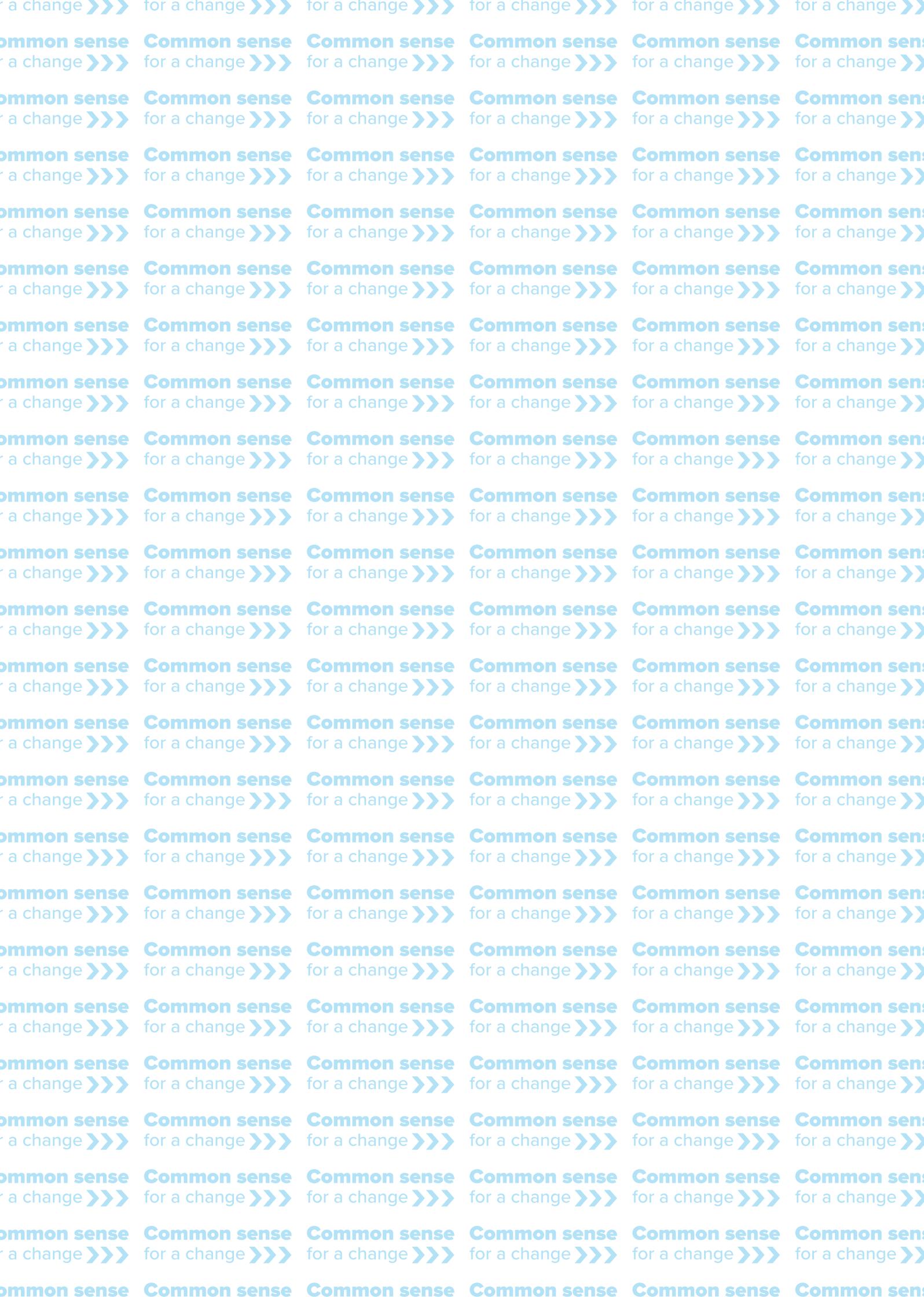


A COMMON SENSE PLAN

Get Scotland Moving

Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party
February 2026





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Introduction

Scotland's transport network has deteriorated under the SNP. Our roads are riddled with potholes and long-promised dualling projects have been repeatedly delayed. Overdue ferries remain unbuilt, while taxpayers foot a ballooning bill for their construction and maintenance, and communities across Scotland struggle to get access to buses.

A strong and resilient transport network is crucial for both economic growth and fostering connectivity between our communities. The SNP Government, however, fail to see this and are content to let vital infrastructure crumble or remain undeveloped. Hardworking Scots, who already pay the highest taxes in the United Kingdom, deserve a transport network that delivers for them. It is simple common sense that key roads like the A9, A1 and the A75 should be upgraded to improve safety, that islanders that should have access to a reliable ferry network, that Scotland's rail network should run on time and deliver value for money, and that pedestrians are put first when it comes to active travel.

The SNP have been content to let our transport network languish. Since 2021, there have been six Ministers or Cabinet Secretaries with oversight over transport and during this time grandstanding pledges to reduce car use have been scrapped, infrastructure deadlines have been repeatedly missed, and motorists have been subjected to continuous punishment from the SNP, through Low Emission Zones and hefty fines.

A resilient transport network is central not only to Scotland's future economic development, but it also helps to foster connectivity across rural and urban communities. The Scottish Conservatives believe that a functioning transport network should be centred on reliability and affordability, and the commonsense plans that we have set out here outlines our plans to get Scotland moving.

Our plan to get Scotland moving

01

ROADS

Fix Scotland's potholes, through a National Pothole Action Fund, fair funding for local councils, and encouraging the use of kerb-to-kerb resurfacing. We would encourage modern pothole repair systems rather than botched patching and procure state-of-the-art pothole filling equipment that could be rented to local authorities at a discounted rate.

Accelerate the dualling of key roads. We would pass emergency laws to fast track the dualling of roads such as the A9, A96, A1, A75 and the A77. The law would establish a bespoke procurement process that addresses industry concerns about the balance of risk in previous procurement contracts and overrides any legislative hurdles that are currently holding up these projects.

Making space for drivers and pedestrians, by directing councils to ensure that new cycle paths are clearly segregated from existing roads and pavements, and do not encroach on existing road space. We would also introduce a law to compel local authorities to remove all the temporary active travel infrastructure installed using emergency Covid legislation, and prevent local authorities from installing floating bus stops.

02

STANDING UP FOR MOTORISTS

We would end Labour and the SNP's war on motorists. We will oppose any attempt by local authorities to hit motorists with boundary charges, congestion charges or tolls on key pieces of infrastructure like the Clyde Tunnel. We also reject the UK Labour Government's planned imposition of a pay-per-mile tax for EV and hybrid vehicles. In addition, we would drop any targets aiming to reduce car use.

Ban any future Low Emission Zones (LEZs) and review the effectiveness of the current LEZs. This would give local authorities the power to end their LEZs if they wish. We would also reconsider the punitive fines that motorists currently face, to ensure that they are not unduly punished for owning an old car.

Remove free bus passes for passengers who commit anti-social behaviour. The SNP's plan to remove free bus travel from passengers who commit anti-social behaviour is soft-touch, full of loopholes, and does not guarantee that criminals will have their bus passes removed. We would mandate that any passenger who commits criminal or anti-social behaviour would automatically have their pass stripped from them.

Create a new Rural and Small Towns Bus Fund so that routes in more remote communities can be supported if they are under threat. Many bus routes in remote and less well-connected communities across Scotland are facing cancellation, as they are not considered economically viable. By establishing a new Rural and Small Towns Bus Fund, local councils could apply for financial support to keep routes operating.

Merge CalMac and CMAL into one organisation to ensure value for money for taxpayers, and a more streamlined ferry service. We would also implement a ferry procurement strategy to ensure that the equivalent of 1.5 ferries are procured per year and the average age of the merged CalMac and CMAL fleet is kept at 14 years.

Improve Ferguson Marine so that we can end taxpayer subsidies for the yard. We would ensure the shipyard can compete for international orders and end its reliance on the Scottish Government.

Enhance connections speeds on the East Coast railway line, by pushing for the full electrification of the railway line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

Support the scrapping of peak rail fares and deliver an improved railway, by opening closed Beeching line stations where there is an economic case to do so and advocating for the electrification and extension of the Borders Railway to Carlisle.

Privatise the Caledonian Sleeper, as it is a luxury service that is not used by most rail passengers and does not need taxpayer-funded subsidy.





A trunk road network for the future

Scotland's trunk roads form the vital arteries that connect communities across Scotland and drive economic growth. Key routes such as the A9, A96, A1, A75, A77, and A83 are essential not only for travel across the country, but also for transporting goods, exports, and the materials that support Scotland's future development.

Yet under the SNP, these roads have been allowed to deteriorate, and long-promised upgrades or dualling projects have repeatedly stalled. Nowhere is this clearer than with the A9. Despite being a critical national route, progress on dualling this key road has been abysmal. The SNP first pledged to upgrade the road between Perth and Inverness in 2007, confirming that this section would be fully dualled in the 2011 Infrastructure Investment Plan, and setting a completion target of 2025. However, ministers knew as early as 2018 that this deadline would be missed, and in 2023 the completion date was kicked to 2035.ⁱ

Although ministers claim their revised plan will deliver the project by this new target, their decision to scrap the Mutual Investment Model—shifting the entire financial burden to the Scottish Government's capital budget and ruling out private investment—has only increased the uncertainty surrounding the project's delivery. Hard-pressed taxpayers will now have to fork out £3.97 billion to deliver a road that should have been completed last year, and the decision to fund the dualling exclusively from the capital budget means the completion of the dualling is contingent upon the spending decisions of a future Scottish Government.ⁱⁱ SNP dithering

over the completion of the A9 has contributed to unnecessary fatalities with far too many people being killed on this deadly road. Since 2021, more than 300 people have injured in collisions, and 28 people have lost their lives.ⁱⁱⁱ

Any person killed or injured on the A9 is one too many, and the Scottish Conservatives have consistently held the SNP to account for their failure to dual this key road. Road users who rely on the A9 cannot wait until 2035 for this project to be completed, and there is little trust that the SNP will even keep their word and complete the project on time, considering they have already broken this promise once. **That is why the Scottish Conservatives would introduce an emergency law to fast-track the dualling of the A9 to complete it within the lifetime of the next parliament.** To do this, we would pass legislation at Holyrood that would set out a special, fast-tracked process for completing the A9 dualling project. Specifically, the law would establish a bespoke procurement process that addresses industry concerns about the balance of risk in previous A9 procurement contracts and overrides any legislative or regulatory hurdles that are currently holding up the project.

The law would expedite Environmental Impact Assessments and establish Infrastructure Investment Partnerships with private companies to help complete the A9 project faster. The Infrastructure Investment Partnership model would set out a new public-private partnership arrangement between the Scottish Government and companies helping to deliver the A9 procurement project. These partnerships would



be designed to attract more private investors by reducing costs in the procurement process and provide businesses with a greater stake in the project, in order to ensure its completion on time and on budget.

We would also guarantee adequate funding for the project. The recent inquiry into the A9 Dualling Programme by the Citizen Participation and Public Petition Committee found that the Scottish Government's failure to reach an agreement on programme funding significantly contributed to delays.^{iv} **We would therefore guarantee that some of the Scottish Government's capital budget would be set aside for continuous investment into the A9 dualling project.** Guaranteed funding will ensure that progress can keep pace, construction materials can be procured, and that there will be no further stalling in the project.

The SNP's failure to maintain our trunk road network has also extended to other routes that are essential for Scotland's economy. The A75 is a vital economic link in the south-west that connects Scotland and Northern England with Northern Ireland through the port of Cairnryan. Although Fiona Hyslop has announced options for a bypass at Springholm and Crocketford, she has not committed to the full dualling that many believe is required.^v In fact, SNP neglect of the A75 meant that the former UK Conservative Government intervened to commit £8 million to develop options for improving the road.^{vi} **The Scottish Conservatives would end the SNP's neglect of this road once and for all, by replicating the emergency legislation we would use to dual the A9, to ensure that the key sections of the A75 are also dualled within the lifetime of the next parliament.**

Similarly, the A77 has been ignored, without any meaningful progress on improvements. Although the 2022 Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 identified the route – running from Glasgow to Cairnryan – for upgrades, the Scottish Government has yet to publish a delivery plan, years after the strategic review was released.^{vii}

The Scottish Conservatives have also led the way when it comes to championing the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

Since 2021 there have been 164 collisions on the A96, and the road has racked up £64.7 million in repair bills since 2020.^{viii} The SNP's 2011 manifesto pledged full dualling, but no significant construction work has begun.^{ix} This includes the long-promised Nairn bypass, which remains incomplete. And despite £30 million having already been spent on the Inverness–Nairn upgrades, no physical construction has yet taken place.^x The SNP's commitment to the dualling of the A96 was further questioned during their coalition agreement with the anti-motorist Scottish Greens. As part of this agreement, the SNP committed to conduct a review into the A96. It was thanks to Scottish Conservative pressure that the SNP Government finally published the outcome of the A96 Corridor Review which proposed a 'refined package' which would not see all of the road dualled, but instead proposed a combination of junctions, improved rail services, and active travel routes.^{xi} This so-called 'refined package' is an insult to the people who depend on this road and the campaigners who have long called for it to be dualled. Indeed, it was notable the SNP Government's only consultation on the outcome of the A96 Corridor Review resulted in more than 60% of respondents supporting the full dualling of the A96.^{xii}

The SNP have repeatedly said that they are 'committed' to the full dualling of the A96, but these words have not been met with actions. A final decision on the outcome of the A96 Corridor Review was supposed to be made in January, but it is now likely that the decision will not be announced until just before the Scottish Parliament elections.^{xiii} The SNP Government's most recent budget made only a vague commitment to 'take forward of key sections of the A96'.^{xiv} The A96 was also excluded from the SNP Government's revised Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline, with Shona Robison later claiming that this was an error in the production and that the SNP remain committed to fully dual the A96.^{xv} Rather than playing political games with the lives of motorists, SNP Ministers must finally allocate proper funding for dualling the A96 and get spades in the ground. **The Scottish Conservatives believe that the A96 should be dualled as soon as possible and would commit the funds needed to achieve this.**



Other key trunk roads that the SNP have neglected include the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and the A1 in the Scottish Borders. After years of delay the SNP Government have started to upgrade the A83 Rest and Be Thankful but progress is still slow.^{xvi} This also applies to the A1, which is the main connection from Edinburgh through to the north of England and is dualled at intermittent phases. **The Scottish Conservatives would ensure that the upgrading of these vital roads is accelerated to improve road safety and economic connections.**



Ending the war on motorists

Motorists are essential to Scotland's economy and connectivity. Cars are one of the primary modes of transport for most Scots, and are essential for those who live in rural and remote communities that are poorly served by public transport.^{xvii} However, motorists have been repeatedly punished by this SNP Government through punitive Low Emissions Zones and botched disincentives to car use, as part of the government's unaffordable plan to reach net zero emissions by 2045. It is clear that this target is no longer feasible without imposing excessive costs on the public, and the Scottish Conservatives have already committed to abolishing the SNP's 2045 target.^{xviii}

In 2021, the SNP pledged to reduce car use in Scotland by 20% by 2030.^{xix} Yet despite subsequently publishing a 'route map' outlining a range of actions, it remained unclear as to exactly how the government hoped to reduce car use to this level. And in 2024, SNP Ministers were forced to scrap their plans after Audit Scotland said that there were 'no costed delivery plan or measurable milestones' to achieve the target.^{xx} However, many anti-car policies have nonetheless been brought into force in recent years.

The Scottish Conservatives will stand up for Scotland's motorists. That is why we will never commit to any future targets that pledge to reduce car use and will never impose punitive measures on motorists.

The prime example of the SNP's war on motorists is Low Emission Zones (LEZs). LEZs were introduced in May 2022, with Glasgow the first Scottish city to enforce its zone in June 2023. Aberdeen, Dundee, and Edinburgh's LEZs came into effect a year later.^{xxi} Although LEZs

were designed to improve air quality, Glasgow was already on course to meet its air quality targets before the LEZs came into effect.^{xxii} Since LEZs were introduced, motorists have been hindered, businesses have missed out on trade, and councils have been accused of using them as money-raising schemes to fill gaps in their budgets as a result of SNP cuts.^{xxiii}

Motorists are charged £60 for driving into an LEZ without an up-to-date vehicle, but this can soar to £480 for car drivers and £960 for lorry and truck drivers if they break the rules five times in a month. Figures have revealed that since LEZs were introduced, more than 169,000 fines have been issued, bringing in more than £19 million of revenue. In Glasgow alone, motorists have been issued 72,110 tickets, which equates to over £7 million in fines.^{xxiv} For many motorists in Scotland's cities, having a car is not a luxury, but a necessity – yet they are still targeted at every turn. If SNP Ministers genuinely want people to stop using their cars, they should prioritise delivering reliable and affordable public transport instead of looking at new ways to tax motorists. **That's why the Scottish Conservatives would ban any future Low Emission Zones (LEZs) and review the effectiveness of the current LEZs.** This would include allowing local authorities to end the scheme in their city, should they wish. We would also reconsider the punitive fines that motorists currently face to ensure that they are not punished for owning an older car.

However, motorists across Scotland are now also facing even more additional charges thanks to Labour. In the recent UK Government budget, it was announced that from April 2028 electric car drivers will pay a road charge of 3p per mile, while plug-in hybrid drivers will pay 1.5p



per mile, with the rates going up each year with inflation.^{xxv} This is a disproportionate charge that will profoundly impact EV users in rural areas where that is already a lack of charging infrastructure. **The Scottish Conservatives oppose the introduction of the UK Labour Government EV pay-per-mile tax.**

It is not just the UK Labour Government that is plotting extra charges on motorists. In Glasgow, the SNP administration is considering bringing in a congestion charge that would only apply to drivers who do not live in the city, along with a toll on the Clyde Tunnel.^{xxvi} In Edinburgh, the Labour-run council is also considering introducing congestion charges.^{xxvii} The imposition of congestion charges, or any local authority boundary charges, raises the terrifying prospect that motorists could be fined multiple times while driving through different local authorities. **The Scottish Conservatives will oppose the introduction of any congestion or local authority boundary charges and will oppose the introduction of tolls on key infrastructure like the Clyde Tunnel.**

Not content with punishing motorists with hefty fines however, the SNP are also working to make driving more restrictive. It was thanks to Scottish Conservative pressure that the SNP ditched their plans to reduce the speed limit on single carriageway roads from 60mph to 50mph,^{xxviii} but not before hundreds of thousands of pounds were squandered on this senseless idea.

***Transport Scotland's own consultation on this issue showed that nine out of ten respondents disagreed with the claim that a reduced speed limit would address the number of casualties on the roads. Reduced speed limits will only penalise ordinary drivers without tackling either dangerous behaviour or the state of Scotland's roads. **The Scottish Conservatives will oppose any future attempts to reduce the national speed limit on trunk roads.**

The SNP have pledged introduce 20mph speed limits in areas where they are appropriate. This is to make it more attractive for people to walk, wheel or cycle when they make those everyday short journeys.^{xxix} **We would ensure that 20mph zones are only introduced in specific areas, such as around schools, and with clear**

community consent. We would also reinstate 30mph zones at the request of the community.

Scotland's roads have become blighted with potholes under the SNP. Their failure to address this is a danger to both motorists and pedestrians. Scottish Conservative research has revealed that more than 400,000 potholes have been reported to local authorities since 2021,^{xxx} with Edinburgh alone having more than twice as many potholes as Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee combined, making it the pothole capital of Scotland. More than £452 million has been spent on fixing potholes since 2022.^{xxxi} Councils are already stretched to the limit thanks to years of SNP under-funding and local roads have suffered as a result. Last year, John Swinnney claimed that councils were adequately funded to fix potholes, but the reality is that the state of Scotland's roads has deteriorated further under tight local authority budgets.^{xxxii} In the last year, the RAC reported a 19% increase in callouts related to poor road surfaces, resulting in motorists suffering damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs and distorted wheels.^{xxxiii}

It is possible for councils to address this. The Conservative-run Scottish Borders Council was recently acknowledged as having best record on repairing potholes since 2022 – with 157,545 repairs.^{xxxiv} But people in other parts of Scotland deserve to have good roads too, and the Scottish Conservatives believe that resurfacing, rather than refilling, is the best approach for fixing potholes. That is why **we would fix potholes by investing in a National Pothole Action Fund and through fair funding for local councils.** We would also issue guidance to encourage local authorities to provide kerb-to-kerb resurfacing to fix rather than patch filling. Instead of the familiar botched patching, we would encourage the use of modern pothole repair systems and state-of-the-art machines – these machines would be financed through the National Pothole Action Fund and could be rented to local authorities at a discounted rate.

Cycling is an effective mode of transport, which provides health and cost benefits for people across Scotland. In Scotland, approximately 2.1% of journeys under five miles are made



by cycling.^{xxxv} However, many cycle lanes in Scotland suffer from poor design and lack of maintenance, leading to safety concerns for both cyclists and pedestrians. While there is a strong drive to increase cycling infrastructure, many current solutions are not fit for purpose.^{xxxvi} These include confusing cycle lane layouts, designs that present hazards for people who are visually impaired, and the encroachment of cycle lanes upon pedestrians and motorists.^{xxxvii} **The Scottish Conservatives would issue directions to local authorities to separate new cycle lanes from existing roads, and work to prevent the installation of any new lanes that would reduce existing road space.** Floating bus stops, or bus stop which are separated from the pavement by cycle lanes, would also be banned due to the dangers they present to visually impaired people. In addition, we would require cyclists to use cycling helmets and high-visibility clothing, to improve their safety on the roads.

During the Covid-19 pandemic several local authorities installed temporary infrastructure to facilitate cycling and other forms of active travel. We would introduce a law to compel local authorities to remove any temporary active infrastructure installed during Covid, except where it would not be feasible for them to do so. Councils could still decide to make the temporary infrastructure permanent, but no additional funding will be granted to facilitate this. Where infrastructure is not made permanent, it would have to be removed.



A safe and affordable bus network

Buses are an important part of Scotland's transport network, providing essential connections in areas that do not have a rail route. They are also an essential mode of transport for commuters and allow elderly people to access the shops and local services that they need. Every passenger deserves safe, reliable and affordable bus services, but under the SNP, anti-social behaviour on buses has skyrocketed, large parts of Scotland have been deprived of access to a bus service, and the price of tickets continues to rise.

Since 2020, anti-social behaviour on buses has become a serious concern for passengers. In Edinburgh, there were more than 1,150 incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded by Lothian Buses in the first half of 2024 alone, with most of the incidents being perpetrated by young people.^{xxxviii} This is the equivalent of six incidents per day. It's a pattern that has been replicated across Scotland, as assaults and threats at bus stations have skyrocketed by 65%. Anti-social behaviour on buses is out of control and has already resulted in the tragic death of a bus driver in Elgin in February 2024.^{xxxix}

This needs to stop, but it is clear that the SNP have no plan to tackle anti-social behaviour. Although secondary legislation was introduced to give Scottish ministers the power to suspend or withdraw concessionary travel for users who breach a new draft 'code of conduct', the rules are full of loopholes, fail to address the problems on Scotland's buses, and don't guarantee that criminals and passengers who commit anti-social behaviour would automatically have their passes removed. In short, SNP inaction and incompetency means that bus drivers and passengers are no safer against anti-social behaviour than they were this time last year.

Furthermore, John Swinney could not answer whether the thug who killed bus driver Keith Rollinson would still have access to his free bus pass under questioning from Russell Findlay. This is not acceptable.

That is why the Scottish Conservatives would introduce stronger secondary legislation and a more robust code of conduct that would mandate the automatic withdrawal of a bus pass for anyone who commits anti-social behaviour or other crimes on buses. We would also empower Police Scotland to work with the bus companies to ban abusive passengers from travelling on bus routes.

Bus franchising in Scotland is enabled by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. This allows local transport authorities to run their own bus services, franchise bus services in their areas, or enter into Bus Services Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs) with bus operators within their area.^{xi} The SNP Government is currently implementing bus franchising mechanisms, most notably through the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, but how it has been pursued is cumbersome.^{xii} It is clear that the left-wing consensus on transport, backed by the SNP and Labour, want to replicate a bus network like the one in Manchester where Andy Burnham's Bee Network costs the taxpayer £225 million every year and has not improved services.^{xiii} **The Scottish Conservatives believe that any future reforms to the bus network must be centred on value for money and reliability, and recognise that competition between providers can lead to a better service for customers.**

Having access to a bus is only possible if communities have a regular bus route. However, many communities across Scotland, particularly



in rural areas, have had vital bus services removed. Last year Stagecoach announced that it will end almost all of its bus services in Dumfries and Galloway because they are “no longer commercially viable”.^{xliii} It’s clear that SNP underfunding of local councils has forced the end of subsidised bus routes that provide vital connections for our rural communities. That is why, as part of our commitment to give fair funding settlement to councils, **the Scottish Conservatives would create a new Rural and Small Towns Bus Fund to ensure that operators can continue to run on less profitable routes.**

Bus operators have recently spoken out about their frustration with roadworks, diversions, and the impacts these are having service provision,^{xliv} with services running late and journey times extended. All of this discourages people from taking the bus. We would work with contractors to ensure any roadworks are conducted expediently, and work carried out efficiently, with sites not sitting idle or work programmed for only short periods of time during the day. We would also look at bus priority measures for junctions and other bottle necks.



Delivering a resilient ferry network

Ferries are key part of Scotland's transport infrastructure. They provide lifeline links to our islands. Without them, communities would be cut off from essential services, such as schools, dentists, hospitals, and, in some cases, even access to a supermarket to do a weekly shop. Under the SNP however, disruption to the ferry network has become the norm rather than the exception. The average age of ships in the nationalised Caledonian MacBrayne fleet is 25 years old, and the cost of maintaining this ageing fleet is extortionate.^{xlv} Over the past eleven years the upkeep of the CalMac fleet has cost more than £260 million – with costs continuing to rise year after year. CalMac's maintenance bill hit an unprecedented £50.1 million in 2024-25, compared with £25 million just two years earlier.^{xlvi} This figure is even more concerning when we look at individual vessels within the fleet. The repair bill for the MV Caledonian Isles alone, which was launched in 1986 and was out of service for eighteenth months between 2024 and 2025, was almost £11 million.^{xlvii} Furthermore, the cost of leasing the MV Alfred, which has been leased by Pentland Ferries to CalMac since 2023, hit £22 million in 2025. This is £8 million more than what Pentland Ferries paid for the vessel in 2019.^{xlviii}

Island and coastal communities have been betrayed at every turn by this SNP Government. Instead of enjoying a reliable and affordable ferry network, passengers are subjected to repeated cancellations and delays. Nowhere is this more evident than in the controversy surrounding the construction of the MV Glen Sannox and the MV Glen Rosa, under the SNP's

chaotic management of Ferguson Marine. The vessels were originally budgeted to cost £97 million together and were due to come into service in 2017 and 2018 respectively. However, the decision to award the contract for these vessels to Ferguson Marine has turned out to be one of the most expensive in the history of devolution. After years of delays, government bailouts and, ultimately, the nationalisation of Ferguson Marine in 2019, the cost for both vessels is now likely to reach around half a billion.^{xlix}

The MV Glen Sannox, which was famously launched by Nicola Sturgeon with painted-on windows in 2017, only entered service in January 2025, and has since been removed from service three times to fix faults.¹ Worse still, the MV Glen Rosa recently had its completion date pushed back further to the end of 2026, with taxpayers being told they'll have to fork out another £12.5 million to complete the vessel.ⁱⁱ This will bring the total cost of this one vessel to £197.5 million.^{lii}

Hard-pressed taxpayers are *still* being forced to pay the price for the SNP's never-ending ferries fiasco. **Islanders have been let down at every turn by this shameful SNP Government, but not one SNP Minister has been held accountable.**

However, this fiasco has not only exposed SNP incompetence, it has also revealed numerous flaws in our ferry procurement process, which are long overdue for reform. The current landscape is opaque and confusing, with



ferry services provided by CalMac, while the ferries themselves are procured and owned by Caledonian Marine Assets Limited (CMAL), another SNP Government quango. **The Scottish Conservatives would therefore merge CalMac and CMAL into one organisation, to ensure value for money for taxpayers, and provide a more streamlined ferry service.** The Scottish Conservatives have already outlined our plans to set up a temporary Scottish Agency for Value and Efficiency (SAVE) to deliver savings of £500 million in the public sector.^{liii} As part of its remit, SAVE will be tasked with merging CMAL and CalMac to deliver efficiencies for passengers and taxpayers.

A resilient ferry fleet also means ensuring our ships are in good working order. Right now, the average age of CalMac's fleet is 25 years – it's vital that comes down.^{liv} Although the average age of our fleet will inevitably fall once the four vessels currently under construction in a Turkish shipyard have been handed over, progress to reduce the fleet's age has been good enough. The first of the four vessels being built by the Cemre yard in Turkey was only handed over to CMAL in January 2026, almost of sixteen months after it was originally due.^{lv} CalMac and CMAL have also spent over £1 million on staff working to oversee the construction of these vessels.^{lvi}

To help reduce disruption and ensure the CalMac fleet remains in top condition, **the Scottish Conservatives would implement a ferry procurement strategy to procure the equivalent of 1.5 ferries per year** and mandate that the average age of the merged CalMac and CMAL fleet is kept at 14 years or below. We would also ensure that there is always one ferry on standby to respond to breakdowns and build daily maintenance time into each shift, so that repairs can be managed on a rolling basis.

Tackling the problems with Scotland's ferry network also means considering what should be done with Ferguson Marine. Since the yard was nationalised in 2019, it has been reliant on the MV Glen Sannox and MV Glen Rosa to maintain its workflow. Although the yard procured some work to build components for BAE Frigates,

it has yet to secure any new orders to build vessels.^{lvii} The SNP Government promised £14.2 million to help the yard upgrade to secure new orders, but only around £600,000 has been handed over, on the grounds that yard needs to make a "robust business case" for each investment.^{lviii}

It is clear that Ferguson Marine is unable to compete for orders on the open market – a fact that was made apparent in March 2025 when CMAL awarded the first phase of the Small Vessel Replacement Programme to a yard in Poland.^{lix} This, in turn, has led to calls that the SNP should make another direct award to Ferguson Marine to build the replacement vessel for the MV Lord of the Isles.^{lx} It should be a given that a nationalised shipyard can win a Scottish Government contract, yet it's a measure of how badly the SNP have mismanaged Ferguson Shipyard that ferries which should be built on the west coast of Scotland are instead set to be made in eastern Europe. Ultimately, it is neither realistic nor sustainable for Ferguson Marine to remain reliant on SNP Government contracts for work. The yard should be actively competing to secure international orders and become competitive. In its current state, the yard is simply not strong enough to be returned to the private sector. **We would therefore work to improve the Ferguson Marine shipyard to ensure that it can compete for international orders and be returned to the private sector.**

Railways that are reliable and deliver value for money

Trains are one of the most popular modes of transport in Scotland, providing an essential link between urban and rural areas. However, many areas across Scotland do not enjoy the benefit of railway links, while others experience increasingly poor services and reduced connection speeds.

Over the course of this parliamentary session that SNP have taken most of Scotland's rail services into public ownership. ScotRail was nationalised in April 2022, and in June 2023 the Caledonian Sleeper transferred into public control.^{lxi} The transfer of most of Scotland's railways into public ownership has not, however, led to an improved service. Since ScotRail came into public ownership it has paid almost £2.5 million in delay repay compensation,^{lxii} and the Caledonian Sleeper had paid out almost £3 million in compensation.^{lxiii} The Caledonian Sleeper is a luxury service that does not benefit most rail users in Scotland, and we do not believe it is a good use of taxpayers' money to keep subsidising it. We would therefore return to Caledonian Sleeper to private ownership.

We must also ensure that regular ScotRail services provide value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer. After temporarily U-turning on the policy, the SNP have once again committed to scrapping peak rail fares. The Scottish Conservatives fully support this measure, having previously forced a vote to demand the SNP Government get rid of peak rail fares after they reinstated them in 2024.^{lxiv} **The Scottish Conservatives remain committed to getting rid of peak rail fares, but we will**

continue to push for the railway to deliver maximum value for passengers and taxpayers.

The quality of the trains in the ScotRail fleet must also be improved. Diesel trains will continue to operate in Scotland until 2045, after SNP Ministers admitted that their 2035 target to remove diesel trains can no longer be met.^{lxv} Furthermore, the Managing Director of ScotRail recently admitted that the group faced a 'challenge with ageing', saying, "We have one of the oldest fleets in Britain".^{lxvi} ScotRail's Inter7City also continues to operate with dated high speed trains, which have been known to catch fire, putting passengers at risk.^{lxvii} Although a procurement process for new ScotRail trains is currently underway, **the Scottish Conservatives would accelerate the acquisition of battery powered trains to ensure that the ScotRail fleet remains fit for purpose.** We would also support increasing the number of carriages on key routes and for special events, for instance when passengers need to travel to sporting events or concerts at Hampden or Murrayfield.^{lxviii}

In 2016, the SNP promised to reduce journey times for rail passengers from the North East heading towards Glasgow and Edinburgh by around 20 minutes. This commitment was key to the Aberdeen City Region Deal and due for completion by 2026.^{lxix} However, in January 2024, Mairi McAllan told the Net Zero, Energy and Transport committee, that the timeframe for the SNP's delivery of this commitment was under review. This remains the SNP Government's position.^{lxx} The electrification of the East Coast line has progressed at a snail's



pace and the only section that has recently been completed runs from Edinburgh Haymarket to South Queensferry, at the southern end of the Forth Bridge – around 10 miles. The Scottish Conservatives believe that this route should be upgraded as soon as possible and that's why **we would support fully electrifying the East Coast line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen.** This would lead to improved journey times and the consistent use of battery electric trains.

The Scottish Conservatives are fully committed to ensuring rural areas and growing urban communities can enjoy the benefit of rail travel. We have advocated for a new station at Winchburgh, near Edinburgh, and it is thanks to our pressure that funding for this project was approved in the recent Scottish budget.^{lxxi}

We will also push for the reopening of Beeching lines and stations, where there is an economic case for doing so. This is evidently the case in Cove and Newtonhill, where we have long advocated for the reopening of closed stations.^{lxxii} We would also prioritise the reopening of the South Suburban Railway for Edinburgh rather than wasting more money on the city's loss-making tram service.^{lxxiii}

The Borders Railway has carried around 13 million passengers since it opened in 2015.^{lxxiv} It is therefore common sense that the Borders Railway be extended to Carlisle, so that passengers across the south of Scotland can benefit from this service, along with the electrification of the line. Although the UK Labour Government and the SNP Government agreed to conduct a feasibility study to extend the railway, this study is yet to commence almost a year after being commissioned.^{lxxv} The Scottish Conservatives will continue to push for the extension of the Borders Railway to Carlisle. We will also urge the UK Labour Government to revise the changes made to London Northern Eastern Railways services from Berwick-upon-Tweed, which have recently seen stops reduced, so that people in the Borders are not forced to travel to Edinburgh or Newcastle to access transport to London.^{lxxvi}



Conclusion

These proposals present a common-sense vision for strengthening Scotland's transport system and ensuring it delivers for people across the country. By accelerating long-overdue road upgrades, defending motorists from additional charges, and prioritising fair, reliable public transport, this plan seeks to reverse years of stagnation under the SNP and restore confidence in the nation's infrastructure.

The measures outlined here aim to streamline ferry and rail procurement, modernise key routes, and ensure that investment is directed where it will have the greatest impact.

By focusing on value for money, greater accountability, and efficient delivery, this plan supports Scottish taxpayers while improving everyday journeys for people across the country.

The Scottish Conservatives want to deliver a transport system that works: One that is modern, resilient, and responsive to the needs of the people who rely on it. By taking forward these common-sense reforms, Scotland can build a network that supports economic growth, connects communities more effectively, and lays the foundations for a stronger, more accessible future.



Endnotes

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Common sense
for a change The logo symbol for the Common Sense campaign, consisting of three stylized arrows pointing to the right. The first arrow is red, and the second and third are blue.