

A man in a dark suit and striped tie is smiling and standing behind a podium. The background is a solid blue color.

Get

Scotland

Working

Common sense
for a change >>>

**The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party
Manifesto 2026**

OUR FIVE KEY PLEDGES TO GET SCOTLAND WORKING

- 1. Cutting your bills by up to £2,500**
- 2. Raising school standards**
- 3. Delivering faster GP appointments**
- 4. Fixing the roads**
- 5. More police on our streets**

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Russell Findlay

Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Foreword

For almost 20 years, the SNP have failed the people of Scotland.

NHS waiting lists are far too high and it has become increasingly difficult to see a GP. Schools have plummeted down international rankings. Roads are cratered with potholes, and prisoners are routinely freed early. People struggle to secure well-paid jobs as the economy stagnates and the cost of living keeps rising.

The SNP's solution to these growing problems has been to hike taxes on working families, forcing you to pay more for public services that only get worse, while spending your sky-high taxes on more and more state benefits.

The SNP's approach is unfair, unaffordable, and unsustainable.

But no other party is telling the truth about this ticking time bomb. Labour, Reform, the Lib Dems and Greens all agree with the SNP's approach to benefits.

Only the Scottish Conservatives are being honest with the public.

Our party knows that an alternative way is not just possible but

necessary. We have already published a range of detailed policies setting out our vision for Scotland. And this bold, ambitious and credible manifesto builds on those commitments.

Our manifesto – which is fully costed – makes economic growth our number one priority for the next Scottish Parliament. That means delivering more well-paid jobs in communities across all parts of Scotland. It means cutting your taxes because people, not government ministers, know how best to spend their own money.

We want to reduce your energy bills, by backing Scotland's oil and gas industry and using the money raised from renewable energy auctions to directly subsidise household bills. We will fix the roads, invest in frontline services and guarantee that taxpayers' money is primarily used to fund public services, not more benefits and bureaucrats.

Yet none of this can happen if the SNP achieve a majority.

John Swinney has made it crystal clear: If the SNP win a majority in May, it will be used to try and deliver another independence

referendum. We must not let him succeed.

If we unite, we can stop him. In 2016 and 2021, the Scottish Conservatives stopped another independence referendum by securing enough votes to prevent an SNP majority.

The people of Scotland can do this again, but we need to be smart about it.

In this year's Holyrood election on 7 May, you will receive two separate ballot papers. It is critical that you vote for the Scottish Conservatives on the peach-coloured ballot paper, known as the regional list vote.

This peach ballot paper is your secret weapon to stop an SNP majority, no matter where you live in Scotland.

If we do that, we can ensure that the next parliament will focus on what really matters to people in Scotland – growing our economy, cutting your bills and fixing public services.

Russell Findlay

Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Standing up for Scotland's place in the Union

In 2014, two million Scots voted to stay in the United Kingdom. It was a divisive time for our country, but the result of the independence referendum was clear.

The Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party are proud to stand up for our Union. But we want to move on from the independence debate

so we can focus on growing our economy instead.

Sadly, the SNP have refused to accept the result of the referendum. Over the last 12 years, the nationalists have used every opportunity to promote independence.

Since the last Holyrood election in 2021, Nicola Sturgeon, Humza Yousaf and John Swinney have all

instructed civil servants, who are supposed to be politically neutral, to use taxpayers' money to write pro-independence propaganda.

Nicola Sturgeon even spent public money on a court case to force the UK Government to agree to a second independence referendum, costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of pounds in the process.



John Swinney has said on numerous occasions that he wants this Holyrood election to be about independence.

At the SNP's conference in 2025, Swinney got his party to agree that if they win a majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP will deliver an independence referendum.

John Swinney has also said that 'nobody knows the tactics [he's] going to deploy' to achieve independence. He was Nicola Sturgeon's right-hand man whilst she was First Minister, and she has backed his proposals – describing them as a 'secret plan'.

The Scottish Conservatives do not believe the next Scottish Parliament should be focused on a secret plan for independence.

Our country cannot afford this distraction when the cost of living in Scotland is going up and our public services, which have been run by the SNP for nearly two decades, are crumbling.

We want the focus to be on growing our economy, so that we can increase job opportunities and put more money in people's pockets. A growing economy means we can invest more money in our public services.

But we can only do this if the SNP are denied a majority in the Scottish Parliament. In the last election, every vote for the Scottish Conservatives on the peach, party list ballot helped us to stop an SNP majority.

We can do the same again, but only if you use your party list vote on the peach ballot to vote Scottish Conservative in this year's Holyrood election.

Here is what Scottish Conservative MSPs will do in the next session of parliament to ensure politicians are focused on the economy, rather than independence:

- » Oppose any attempt to hold another independence referendum.
- » Propose a new law to ban the Scottish Government from spending taxpayers' money on pro-independence propaganda.
- » Introduce a pledge which all civil servants must sign confirming they will be neutral on the question of independence when carrying out their work for the Scottish Government.
- » Abolish the SNP's role of Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution to save taxpayers' money and put an end to the focus on independence at government level.

Lowering your bills and delivering value for taxpayers

Cutting government bureaucracy and waste

The SNP have put Scotland's finances on an unsustainable footing. In the next session of parliament, tax rises or spending cuts will be required to balance the books.

Any political party that says otherwise is not being honest with the public.

The Auditor General said last year that by the end of the decade, the gap between projected public spending and funding available to the Scottish Government could hit nearly £5 billion.

The Scottish Conservatives understand the urgent need to address this black hole. That is why the first piece of legislation we

would introduce in the next Scottish Parliament would be a Taxpayer Savings Act.

This law would immediately start to clamp down on government bureaucracy and waste by creating the Scottish Agency of Value and Efficiency (SAVE). This body would be led by business leaders and would have the power to make savings recommendations directly to ministers.

SAVE would be tasked with finding £500 million worth of savings. Once it has achieved this, the body would lose its statutory functions but remain as an advisory body to ministers.

Our Taxpayer Savings Act would also tackle Scotland's cluttered quango landscape. The Scottish Government funds over 130 public bodies and far too many of them provide little value for money.

We have already identified a number of quangos that we would scrap, such as the Scottish Land Commission, Community Justice Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland.

But we would go even further and set a target of reducing the number of quangos by at least a quarter by the end of the next parliament and establish a rule that no new quango can be set up unless another is abolished.

The way in which these quangos spend our money is in urgent need of revision too. While scrutinising the SNP Government, Scottish Conservative MSPs have highlighted instances of public bodies using taxpayer funds to buy first-class flights, purchase a course at Harvard Business School in America and even host VIP dinners at Edinburgh Castle.

This is symptomatic of a government that has completely lost control of how its quangos are spending public money. We would urgently overhaul the rules that govern how public bodies can spend taxpayer money.

However, it is not just quangos that need to rein in profligate spending – it is also the Scottish Government itself. There are nearly 80% more civil servants in the Scottish Government today compared to a decade ago.

We must reverse this trend, by cutting down the size of the devolved civil service to 2016 levels. To ensure productivity does not suffer, we would overturn the SNP's cut to civil service working hours and mandate office working, so that civil servants are held to account.

The Scottish Government have committed to reducing the overall size of the devolved public sector, but the headcount continues to rise. We would protect frontline jobs in our public sector but seek to reduce overall headcount by 0.75% a year, going further than the SNP's target of 0.5%.

In particular, we would target the public-sector fat cats who are failing to deliver for taxpayers. As part of this cost-cutting drive, all new taxpayer-funded, six-figure salaries



must be personally approved by Scottish Ministers, who would have to conduct a value for money assessment before signing them off.

When civil servants and public-sector workers are let go, they should not be entitled to extremely generous ‘golden goodbye’ payments that would never be available to workers in the private sector. We would conduct a full review of public-sector policy on exit packages, specifically looking at whether they currently represent value for money and if there are circumstances where such payments are inappropriate, like when an employee leaves following a public scandal.

It is important for ministers to lead from the front when it comes to making efficiency savings, so the Scottish Conservatives would reintroduce the ministerial pay freeze that was ended by John Swinney last year.

However, the biggest savings can be found in the cost of running the government and its various quangos. The Scottish Government estimates that it costs around £5 billion a year to support the ‘back office’ or corporate functions of its public bodies, including the Scottish Government itself.

Last year, ministers announced they would seek to reduce corporate

function costs by £1 billion a year by the end of the decade. After that announcement, we uncovered that the Scottish Government had no specific plan to achieve these savings.

The Scottish Conservatives published plans about where we would make savings on back-office costs last year, emphasising that our main focus would be on bringing down communications and HR spend. Building on these plans, we would set the more ambitious target of cutting £1.5 billion in corporate function and operating costs across all of Scotland’s public bodies, learning lessons from the quangos that currently deliver value for money.

This would be part of wider action to reset how the government spends your money. The Scottish Conservatives would implement zero-based budgeting, whereby every single budget line is reviewed to evaluate whether it delivers value for money, rather than spending being automatically rolled over.

This process would include assessing all government grants paid to campaigning organisations, who often act as another layer of government, lobbying in favour of ministers’ proposals in front of parliamentary committees and in the media.

Another part of our drive to curtail public spending would see us reduce the Scottish Government’s foreign aid budget. At a time of stretched budgets, our priority should be to fix our problems at home, so we would redirect this money towards public services instead.

Collectively, these measures will save taxpayers substantial sums of money, but we must also address the extraordinary levels of public sector bureaucracy if we are to create a more effective state.

In recent years, the Scottish Parliament has passed various pieces of legislation that impose unnecessary reporting requirements on public bodies. For example, NHS Health Boards have been forced to produce biodiversity action plans, Scottish Enterprise has a Gaelic Language Plan and Police Scotland publish an annual Climate Change Update.

We would cut back on this unnecessary paperwork by reviewing all mandatory reporting requirements that have been imposed via Scottish Parliament legislation.

The Scottish Government also needs to stop the creation of unnecessary guidance and strategy documents like the Non-binary Equality Action Plan, New Scots

strategies and the guidance on collecting data on gender identity and trans status, which suggested there are at least 24 genders. The Scottish Conservatives would immediately stop this nonsense.

In addition, we would ban roles in the public sector devoted exclusively to advancing diversity, equality and inclusion. These roles do not provide value for the taxpayer and funding should go towards frontline roles in the public sector instead.

This is how Scottish Conservative MSPs will cut government bureaucracy and waste:

- » Introduce a Taxpayer Savings Act that will establish a Scottish Agency of Value and Efficiency, tasked with saving taxpayers at least half a billion pounds.
- » Slash the cost of running the Scottish Government and its quangos by £1.5 billion per year so that money is going towards frontline public services instead.
- » Cut the number of Scottish Government quangos by at least a quarter to end the culture of important policy decisions being delegated to anonymous bureaucrats.
- » Reduce the Scottish Government's spending on foreign aid and direct it towards our domestic public services.
- » Clamp down on taxpayer money being used to fund unnecessary expenses in the public sector, like first-class flights.
- » Free up time for frontline public sector workers by reducing mandatory reporting requirements that are unrelated to the core purpose of their job.
- » Ban 'woke' roles within the public sector, such as dedicated diversity and inclusion officers, to reduce bureaucracy and save money for taxpayers.
- » Tackle the rising number of public-sector fat cats by requiring ministers to personally approve any new six-figure salaries with a value for money assessment.
- » Cut the size of the Scottish Government civil service to 2016 levels and restore office working to make civil servants more focused on people's priorities.
- » Reintroduce the pay freeze for Scottish Government ministers because the public should not be forced to pay higher taxes ministers who fail to deliver.



Strengthening democracy and accountability in Scotland

To create a state that spends our money more wisely, we must improve transparency and scrutiny in public life, both in parliament and in government.

The SNP love to operate in secrecy. It helps them to avoid accountability for the decisions they make.

They conceal important documents about their own decisions and have created a network of arms-length bodies to make other decisions for them. This allows ministers to shirk responsibility while funding organisations that support government policies, creating an artificial sense of consensus among stakeholders.

This culture must come to an end.

We would start by proposing a Government Transparency Bill. This would improve candour within the public sector and necessitate that where the Scottish Information Commissioner demands the publication of documents, ministers must comply with that instruction.

We believe that the role of the commissioner should be strengthened too. Scottish

Conservative MSPs have unearthed numerous examples of whistleblowers exposing malpractice in the public sector.

There must be a place where whistleblowers feel confident they can disclose the wrongdoing of public sector organisations, so we would give the Scottish Information Commissioner new powers, creating the Scottish Information and Whistleblowers Commission. This would have the power to receive protected disclosures, compel cooperation from public bodies and conduct independent investigations. This body would remain independent from government and be accountable to parliament.

Another nefarious tool used by public bodies to silence whistleblowers is the use of non-disclosure agreements. Non-disclosure agreements are used all too frequently to silence public sector employees who have been subject to wrongdoing. We would issue public-sector-wide guidance to forbid the use of non-disclosure agreements when it comes to matters of employment or conduct and make clear they should only be used to protect commercial confidentiality.

A substantial portion of public funding goes to charities and campaigning organisations. This

may sound good, but some of these bodies are too close to the government. They appear before parliament, or in the media, backing government policy without it always being clear that there is an ulterior motive behind their actions.

We would require all third-sector organisations in receipt of taxpayer funding to declare this fact on their website, social media pages and before parliamentary committees if they are giving evidence, so that the public and parliamentarians alike are aware of these potential conflicts, should an organisation make a public intervention in favour of a government programme.

Furthermore, if third-sector organisations are almost entirely reliant on taxpayer funding in order to survive, that begs the question of whether they should be considered charities.

We would conduct a review of charity legislation to examine whether bodies that are almost entirely supported by public funds should still be classified as charities in law.

When such organisations carry out any lobbying activities, it is important that they are transparent with the public about their actions. If an organisation is lobbying a politician, that must be declared in the Scottish Parliament's public

lobbying register. However, these same rules do not apply to public sector bodies, even if they are responsible for important areas of public policy.

For example, the Scottish Prison Service's Gender Identity and Gender Reassignment Policy was developed in tandem with Scottish Trans, a charity that has received taxpayer funding. This was the policy that resulted in the absurdity of a convicted double rapist being sent to a women's prison.

If there had been more transparency surrounding the development of this policy, it is highly unlikely that it would have been implemented.

These situations must be prevented in the future. The Scottish Conservatives would amend lobbying rules so that taxpayer-funded organisations must declare any lobbying activities they carry out in a public register, even if these are directed towards public bodies rather than government ministers.

SNP ministers are also using their powers of patronage to exert inappropriate influence over government and public bodies. The last Scottish Parliament saw the number of Scottish Ministers and special advisers grow to its largest ever level. Nakedly political appointments were made to public

bodies, such as former SNP minister Mike Russell being appointed chair of the Scottish Land Commission.

The Scottish Conservatives would place strict limits on the number of ministers and special advisers that could be appointed, while putting in place new rules to restrict ministers from appointing former ministers from the same political party to lead public bodies.

Despite the increased number of ministers and special advisers, the quality of legislation produced by the Scottish Government has declined significantly. Last term, the Regulation of Legal Services Bill was almost entirely rewritten due to a poor first draft, National Care Service proposals were dropped because the plans were unworkable and emergency legislation had to be rushed through Holyrood because a drafting error left a tax loophole that could have forced taxpayers to pay a bill worth hundreds of millions of pounds.

We must give the Scottish Parliament more opportunities to scrutinise draft legislation. We would support establishing dedicated Bill Committees in Holyrood, tasked with analysing specific pieces of legislation, rather than leaving it to policy committees. This frees those committees' time to hold the government to account in the relevant portfolio area.

Democracy in Scotland would also be strengthened if a proper recall mechanism existed that allowed the public to sack Holyrood politicians who have broken the rules and failed to do their job. We would introduce legislation that would enable the public to sack MSPs who have broken parliamentary rules, been convicted of a criminal offence or failed to turn up for work.

Reining in Scotland's bloated benefits bill

In the SNP's latest budget, £1 in every £7 spent goes towards the benefits bill.

This year, the social security budget will top £7.4 billion. That is already more money than we spend on the police, GPs and higher education put together. If we do not get control of this budget, it will soon hit nearly £10 billion.

This is unaffordable, unfair and unsustainable for Scotland's hard-pressed taxpayers. Yet every other political party is in denial about this.

Labour, the Lib Dems, Reform and the Greens all back the SNP's approach to benefits spending. Under their plans, money will have to be taken from elsewhere to pay for welfare spending. That means either raising taxes or cutting spending on public services.

The Scottish Conservatives believe in a different approach. We would reduce the benefits bill by introducing new legislation that would overhaul the current approach being taken by the SNP's benefits agency, Social Security Scotland.

Under our proposals, we would end the ridiculous situation whereby Social Security Scotland cannot force people to repay benefits they were not entitled to. This change would form part of a wider package that strengthens the counter-fraud unit within Social Security Scotland and creates a new specific offence of benefits fraud in Scots law.

However, to truly rein in out-of-control benefits spending, we must toughen up eligibility requirements for the SNP's most expensive benefit, Adult Disability Payment (ADP) costs nearly £4 billion a year – over half the total benefits budget. Roughly 40% of claims for ADP are for mental health reasons, with individuals claiming the benefit due to having anxiety, OCD or even 'social phobias'.

The Scottish Conservatives do not believe that people should be able to claim taxpayer-funded benefits for less severe mental health conditions, so we would introduce a new assessment system for anyone claiming ADP for a mental health condition.

To strengthen democracy and accountability, Scottish Conservative MSPs will:

- » Create a Scottish Information and Whistleblowers Commission – giving whistleblowers a place to expose state failings without fear of being punished.
 - » End the SNP's culture of secrecy with a Government Transparency Bill.
 - » Require all third-sector organisations receiving taxpayer money to declare this fact explicitly on their website, social media and in front of parliamentary committees if they are giving evidence.
 - » Improve the transparency of public sector decision making by requiring taxpayer-funded pressure groups to disclose their lobbying efforts.
 - » End the use of non-disclosure agreements in the public sector, except for commercial reasons, so that whistleblowers are no longer silenced when they see wrongdoing.
- » Review charity law to consider whether bodies that receive almost all their funding from government or the public sector should still be classed as charities.
 - » Place new restrictions on political appointments within government and the wider public sector to prevent ministers abusing these powers of patronage.
 - » Introduce a proper Recall Bill that will allow the public to sack MSPs who have broken the rules or are failing to do their job.

This assessment would require a diagnosis of a mental health condition and proof that it imposes unavoidable, necessary costs on an individual's everyday life.

We previously set out that these changes would save more than £1 billion if implemented in 2025-26. However, due to the expected growth in ADP spend as set out by the Scottish Fiscal Commission, we now estimate that these changes would save £2 billion a year by the end of the parliament.

Another contributing factor to the SNP's bloated benefits bill is how easy it is for people to stay on benefits. When the nationalists were handed powers over welfare spending a decade ago, they deliberately established a system of what they call 'light-touch' reviews.

Light-touch reviews allow people who receive social security from the SNP's benefits agency to stay on ADP by simply ticking a box. The Scottish Conservatives are clear – people should not be able to stay on benefits by ticking a box. We would scrap the SNP's light-touch process in favour of a review system that conducts a thorough check of an individual's benefit claim to examine whether they are still receiving the right level of support, or if they still need the payment at all.

Other parts of the SNP's benefits system are creating a system where work no longer pays. A Scottish Government study of the Scottish Child Payment revealed that around one in eight recipients of this benefit were turning down extra hours at work, or not working altogether, because it was more lucrative to stay on this benefit.

The research detailed one case of a parent turning down a pay rise because it would be more financially beneficial to stay on welfare. A system that encourages people to turn down pay rises is clearly not fit for purpose, so we would conduct a review to explore ways in which the financial cliff edge created by the Scottish Child Payment can be mitigated.

In the meantime, we have to find ways of controlling the cost of this expensive benefit, which is set to cost more than half a billion pounds by next year. The way the Scottish Child Payment works, the more children you have, the greater the disincentive to work for those in receipt of it. We would introduce a two-child limit on the Scottish Child Payment, to encourage work and make the system fairer for taxpayers.

Since social security powers were devolved to the SNP, they have received additional funding from the UK Government to provide

this financial support. For example, the Scottish Government receives funding for ADP in Scotland roughly based on the equivalent spend on Personal Independence Payment (the UK Government-funded counterpart) down south.

Because new benefits like the Scottish Child Payment have no direct equivalent elsewhere in the UK, no additional funding is received by the Scottish Government, meaning funding for this payment has to come from other budgets.

A similar situation occurs with Discretionary Housing Payments. These payments are available in Scotland to those who have spare rooms in a council or housing association house and receive fewer benefits as a result. It can also be paid out to those affected by the UK Government's benefits cap.

This means spending on this payment is much more generous than in other parts of the UK, costing taxpayers more than £100 million each year. We do not believe that it is right to spend public money to hand out even more benefits that are not available elsewhere in the UK, so we would restrict the eligibility criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments in Scotland.



However, to save taxpayers' cash we must also reduce the cost of administering the social security system. Social Security Scotland currently spends millions of pounds paying for expensive translation services for people in receipt of benefits. That is not a good use of taxpayers' money, so we would immediately end taxpayer funding for these costly services.

By simplifying benefits where possible, we can also reduce the cost of bureaucracy within Social Security Scotland. The Scottish Conservatives would merge benefits that have the same eligibility requirements into one payment, making the system easier for claimants and Social Security Scotland officials alike.

One area where this should happen is in benefits for carers. Currently, carers can receive both the Carer

Support Payment and the Scottish Carer Supplement. These benefits have exactly the same eligibility requirements, and although the latter is now paid automatically to those in receipt of Carer Support Payment, the two are still paid separately. We would merge these payments together into one larger payment, in recognition of all the vital work carers put in to look after those in need.

Carers will often need additional employment support given the uncertainty surrounding the time they can dedicate to a job whilst caring for someone around the clock. Therefore, the Scottish Conservatives would ensure that dedicated employment advice is available to carers.

Another group in need of additional support during difficult times are pensioners. The vast majority

had to endure Labour and the SNP's decision to strip Winter Fuel Payments from them almost as soon as Sir Keir Starmer entered Downing Street.

Although this decision has now been partially reversed, the Scottish Conservatives want to ensure support is in place for pensioners impacted by cold weather. When the SNP took on responsibility for the Cold Weather Payment, they scrapped it, and replaced it with the Winter Heating Payment. Not only is this confusing, given the similarity of its name to the separate Winter Fuel Payment, but they stripped away the element of the payment that was paid out when the weather got extremely cold.

The Scottish Conservatives believe extra support should be available to pensioners during cold weather, so we would restore the Cold Weather

This is what Scottish Conservative MSPs will do to make our benefits system fairer:

- » Restore the Cold Weather Payment for pensioners to help them keep the heating on during the toughest winter weeks.
 - » Introduce a new assessment system for those claiming adult mental health benefits so that a medical diagnosis is required in order to be eligible.
 - » Improve incentives to work by introducing a two-child limit on the Scottish Child Payment.
 - » Create a new fraud unit within the SNP's benefits quango to crackdown on fraudsters abusing the benefits system.
 - » Introduce new legislative powers to recover fraudulently claimed benefits for taxpayers.
 - » End the SNP's system of light-touch reviews where people are able to stay on benefits by literally ticking a box.
- » Recognise the invaluable work carried out by our carers by consolidating their benefit payments into one larger payment.
 - » End the use of expensive taxpayer-funded translation services used by Social Security Scotland.
 - » Provide dedicated employability services and support for carers so that they can remain in or return to work as soon as possible.
 - » Restrict top-up benefit payments made by the Scottish Government paid out to those impacted by UK Government benefit decisions.

Payment and make it payable to pensioners who are in receipt of the existing Winter Heating Payment, which we would retain. It would be paid out when the average temperature in your area is recorded as being below zero degrees for seven days.

Lowering your bills

The cost-of-living crisis is hitting everyone hard. Tackling it must be one of the main priorities of the next Scottish Parliament.

But far from improving things for ordinary families in Scotland, the SNP have made the situation worse. Since they were handed increased powers over income tax a decade ago, they have imposed income tax rises worth a collective £9.6 billion.

Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens have consistently voted through these tax rises, while Reform supports the benefits spending that makes these tax rises necessary.

The Scottish Conservatives are on the side of taxpayers who are fed up of paying more in tax while public services deteriorate.

The tough but fair measures we outline in this manifesto will save taxpayers money and protect frontline services, while enabling

us to deliver a fully costed plan to lower your annual bills by up to £2,483. This is how we will do it:

Firstly, we will raise the point at which you start paying income tax in Scotland in line with inflation. In her budget last year, Rachel Reeves announced that the personal allowance would be frozen until 2031, the end of the next session of the Scottish Parliament.

The SNP have the power to reverse this policy in Scotland, but they haven't used it. This means that tens of thousands of people will be drawn into paying income tax even if their pay is only increasing in line with inflation.

We estimate that raising the point at which you pay income tax in line with inflation will create a new tax-free personal allowance of £13,892 by 2031 – providing everyone earning above this threshold with a £251 saving.

As the vast majority of taxpayers in Scotland earn more than this, this measure would make a real difference for lower- and middle-income households.

Thanks to the SNP's complicated six-band income tax system, everyone earning more than £29,527 pays 21p in income tax for every £1 earned above that threshold. This is more than they would pay in the rest of the UK.

We would reverse this situation so that by the end of the next Scottish Parliament, earnings up to the Higher Rate threshold would only be taxed at 19p in the £1 – lower than the rest of the UK. On top of that, we would also uprate the 42p Higher Rate threshold throughout the next session of the Scottish Parliament until it matches the threshold down south – of £50,270.

However, it is not just those in work who have to suffer with the SNP's higher tax rates, it is pensioners too. Despite working hard all their lives to put money into a pension pot, they're still required to pay tax on their pension income. Our proposed tax cuts would go some way to easing the tax burden on pensioners, but because of the measures we have announced to control public spending in our manifesto, we can be even more ambitious for Scotland's pensioners.

To provide pensioners with the extra support they deserve, the Scottish Conservatives would introduce a new pension income tax relief scheme. Pension income is already subject to devolved income tax, so as part of our scheme, we would allow pensioners to claim back the first £500 they pay in tax on their pension income. This £500 would then be 'triple locked', increasing in line with earnings, inflation or 2% – whichever figure is highest.

Throughout the SNP's 19 years in power, ministers have made spending decisions as if public money is their own personal piggy bank – without showing any respect for the taxpayers who are having to cough up more and more cash to foot the bill.

SNP finance ministers proudly boast when announcing their budgets that it is balanced, failing to acknowledge that this a requirement by law under the devolution settlement and the only reason that they have managed to balance the budget is because they've hiked taxes.

But every year, once budgets are spent, there is almost always cash left over in the Scottish Government's coffers. This underspend is then carried forward into the next Scottish Budget, where SNP ministers decide to spend it on their priorities.

The Scottish Conservatives take a different view. If taxpayers' cash is left unspent, it should be returned to them, not hoarded by ministers. We would introduce an annual taxpayer dividend, funded by Scottish Government underspend, that would be paid out to every taxpaying household. Based on last year's underspend, even if we left some cash in reserve, we estimate this dividend would pay out £200 per household.

The rising cost of energy bills is also putting a strain on household finances. The Scottish Conservatives want to see affordability prioritised when it comes to energy policy in this country, instead of ideological net zero targets, but in the short term we must also provide some help to households struggling with heating costs.

The Scottish Government has an ideal source of funding to help support people with energy costs. In 2022, Crown Estate Scotland announced it had successfully auctioned parts of Scotland's seabed for offshore wind projects. This process raised hundreds of millions of pounds for the Scottish Government. Ministers have so far

used these funds to finance their own pet projects.

The Scottish Conservatives believe we should use these funds to provide a direct energy bill discount for households instead. The Scottish Fiscal Commission estimate that by the end of 2027-28, there will be at least £251 million in Crown Estate Revenues available to the Scottish Government. In our first budget, the Scottish Conservatives would use these funds to provide households with a £100 energy bill discount, while we progress the work of making energy cheaper for households in the long term.

The next Scottish Parliament also has a duty not to add to people's already sky-high bills. Over the last

few years, the SNP have added to your cost of living through raising your taxes, making it more expensive for first-time buyers to purchase a home or introducing new taxes like the Visitor Levy, which Scots as well as tourists will have to pay if they wish to stay at a hotel in Scotland.

The Scottish Conservatives pledge not to raise your taxes in the next session of the Scottish Parliament and will oppose the introduction of any new taxes. We would urge parliamentarians of all other parties to do the same thing, because we know that Scotland simply cannot afford it.



HOW MUCH MONEY WILL YOU SAVE UNDER SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVE PLANS?

Annual Income	Savings
£15,000	£551
£25,000	£635
£35,000	£790
£45,000	£1,270
£50,270+	£2,483

*calculations based on current Scottish Government income tax bands. Figures include our energy bill discount and taxpayer dividend, but not our pensioners' tax relief scheme.

Our plan to lower your bills by up to £2,483 a year:

- » Provide a break for all taxpayers by raising the point at which you start paying income tax in Scotland in line with inflation in every year of the next Scottish Parliament.
- » Allow pensioners to claim back the first £500 of tax they pay on pension income.
- » Lower income tax to 19p in the £1 for low- and middle-income households.
- » Cut income tax for middle-earners by raising the Higher Rate income tax threshold to end the gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK, which sees middle-earners pay £1,500 more.
- » Provide households with an annual tax rebate funded by unspent taxes.
- » Oppose tax rises and the imposition of any new taxes.
- » Use funds raised from renewable energy auctions to provide households with a direct energy bill discount.



Growing our economy

Securing well-paid jobs in our communities

Growing our economy means putting more money in the pockets of hard-working Scots. The SNP's inability to achieve any significant economic growth during their time in office is their biggest policy failure.

Since the SNP came to power, household disposable income has fallen when adjusting for inflation. People in Scotland are poorer under the SNP. Only if we grow our economy will we have the funds necessary to support our public services. If the economy continues to stagnate, we will not be able to sustain them at current levels.

The Scottish Conservatives would attract jobs to left-behind areas by introducing tax relief for businesses projected to bring jobs and investment. Under our plans, the Scottish Government would

work together with local councils to identify areas in urgent need of economic regeneration. These locations would then become eligible for relief. Councils would receive funding to provide 100% regeneration relief to businesses operating and offering employment in these areas.

To end the blight of empty shop fronts on our high streets, we would also empower councils to introduce rent auctions for commercial properties that have been purposefully left vacant by their owners. If a property is left empty for 18 months, either in a row or within a 24 month period, councils would be able to start a rent auction for the property where prospective tenants bid against each other for access to the shop. This process would not apply in cases where a landlord has been unable to attract any tenants due to a lack of offers.

But we cannot expect to regenerate left-behind areas if consumers are priced out of visiting our high streets in the first place. Due to SNP

underfunding of local government, councils have been forced to hike car parking charges in recent years to make up for shortfalls in their budgets. To attract people back to our town centres, we would provide local authorities with funding to abolish council car parking charges for stays of two hours or less.

To transform Scotland's economy, the Scottish Conservatives would introduce Scottish Business Zones (SBZ), modelled on the successful approach that led to the development of Canary Wharf, to attract high-skilled jobs and businesses to Scotland. SBZs would be designated and run by ministers, in conjunction with the relevant local authority. They would be granted planning powers and a budget to spend on bringing jobs to the area, with money being used to redevelop the land for commercial use.

All companies would be exempt from paying business rates in the SBZ, and commercial properties would be exempt from paying

Scottish Conservative MSPs will deliver the following policies to bring good jobs to your local area:

- » Make economic growth the number one policy objective across all areas of the Scottish Government.
- » Introduce new tax relief for companies that promise to bring jobs and investment to left-behind communities in Scotland.
- » Launch a new 'Jobs for Life' programme to provide training and resources to help adults learn valuable, future-proof skills needed for the jobs that our economy will require in the long run.
- » Ensure Scotland is well placed to capitalise on the AI revolution, while guaranteeing we take action to protect livelihoods from any negative consequences.
- » Invest in employability schemes to support those who are disabled.

- » Introduce Canary Wharf-style enterprise zones to boost economic growth and create high-skilled jobs.
- » Bring life back to our high streets by allowing councils to start rent auctions for empty properties so that new businesses can get started.
- » Support the rollout of freeports in Cromarty Firth and the Firth of Forth and work with the UK Government to explore whether new freeports can be set up.
- » Give local councils extra funding to abolish car parking charges for stays of two hours or less.

Land and Buildings Transaction Tax. We would also work with the UK Government to explore further incentives like employers' National Insurance Contribution exemptions and more expansive capital expensing allowances to allow businesses to invest in equipment.

Some of these powers are included in the two Green Freeports that were established by the UK Conservative Government. Cromarty Firth and the Firth of Forth were chosen as the two locations for the first freeports and we will negotiate with the UK Government to see if any more freeports can be set up.

We must also ensure that Scotland is well placed to capitalise on the transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the economic opportunities that come from it, while mitigating and preventing any negative consequences.

This can be done by ensuring people have the skills needed to get a job no matter their age. That is why the Scottish Conservatives would launch the most ambitious programme in the history of devolution to help people obtain new skills throughout their adult life.

The 'Jobs for Life' scheme would be backed by government funding and work directly with businesses to provide training to equip our

population with the skills to take on a new job in a different industry. Jobs for Life would be modelled on Singapore's SkillsFuture programme which offers a wide range of initiatives to businesses and individuals alike to help them develop new skills.

The scheme would be open to all ages and primarily targeted at individuals who are looking to enter the labour market or are concerned their long-term job prospects are threatened by technological change. Jobs for Life would offer free careers advice and subsidised training programmes for those not in employment or working in industries at high risk of job losses.

Additional support must also be available to those with disabilities to help them enter or stay in employment. Therefore, as part of our Jobs for Life programme, we would set up a Help to Work scheme for those currently or previously on disability benefits to give them help with skills, work advice and assistance contacting employers.

The Scottish Conservatives are the party of ambition, aspiration and providing opportunities for everyone to get on in life.

Supporting companies to grow their business

Businesses are the engines that drive economic growth in our country, but their needs have been ignored by the SNP Government.

Scotland is bristling with the entrepreneurial spirit needed for a thriving economy, but we need to harness that energy and remove barriers that get in the way of people fulfilling their potential.

One way we can achieve this is by making it easy for businesses to know where to go if they need financial support to get a project off the ground or if they are experiencing regulatory problems that need addressing.

The Scottish Conservatives would create a one-stop shop for businesses to give them a single contact point for funding and regulatory issues, called Growth Scotland. This body would be created via a merger of Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish National Investment Bank.

It would be run independently of ministers and would have one simple objective: to grow Scotland's economy. Business Gateway would also be integrated into Growth

Scotland and would act as the 'front door' of the organisation, where firms are given an account with a unique identifier so they do not have to repeatedly prove who they are to different parts of the system.

Companies would apply for public funding through this single portal which would be distributed by the Scottish Growth Fund. This would be worth half a billion pounds. Funding decisions would be made independent of ministers but the main objective of each decision would be to maximise growth.

Investments from Growth Scotland into businesses would be based on the model currently used by the Scottish National Investment Bank, whereby they can receive returns on their investment, reducing the cost to the taxpayer of running this body and allowing public funds to go directly towards companies.

Growth Scotland would also help identify key sectors that can act as catalysts for major economic growth. These industries would be supported by the establishment of Centres of Excellence for Scottish Industry (CESI). CESI would act as a hub where the Scottish Government, Growth Scotland, businesses, universities and others would collaborate to develop the infrastructure and policies needed to allow these industries to thrive.

This is how Scottish Conservative MSPs will support entrepreneurs:

- » Simplify Scotland's complex business and skills quango landscape by merging existing organisations into one new body, called Growth Scotland.
- » Support businesses by establishing a Scottish Growth Fund, worth at least half a billion pounds a year.
- » Simplify support and advice services by making Business Gateway the one-stop shop for all their needs.
- » Establish Centres of Excellence to help grow important Scottish industries.
- » Unlock billions of pounds worth of potential investment by simplifying our procurement laws, in order to give Scottish businesses a chance to win public contracts.
- » Establish new specialist planning hubs across the country in order to reduce waiting times for planning applications by sharing knowledge on how to deal with different projects.

Another way to unlock investment, especially for smaller businesses, is through procurement reform. It is far too difficult for many businesses to navigate public sector contracts. The Scottish Conservatives would simplify the procurement process to make it easier for small businesses to access. In addition, we would end vague requirements for 'social value' to be included in these contracts and replace them with concrete commitments to supporting jobs and skills locally.

Far too many development proposals by businesses are held up due to the lengthy amount of time Scotland's local authorities take to determine planning applications. This is because of the SNP shortchanging our councils, and the Scottish Conservatives would rectify this by uplifting council budgets.

But we would go further in ensuring that planning applications are dealt with in a timely manner by strengthening national planning hubs. These hubs would provide bespoke advice to councils when dealing with specific types of planning applications. Councils would then be able to make decisions on the basis of that advice, while still being the deciding authority.

Cutting costs for businesses

Business owners are consistently seeing their costs go up for reasons beyond their control.

The government cannot mitigate against everything, but for those areas where ministers are responsible, they have a duty to keep costs as low as possible.

The anti-business SNP have failed in this duty. They have repeatedly added costs, rules and regulations that seem designed to make life more difficult for businesses. It is no wonder that more than seven in eight companies in Scotland feel the current Scottish Government does not understand business.

A complete reset in attitude is required at the top of government if things are to change. That starts by listening to business owners across the country. Scottish Conservative candidates have been up and down Scotland hearing their concerns that Scottish Government red tape is holding them back.

Given the thousands of regulations passed by the SNP since they came to power, it is vital we take action to address those that are the most economically damaging. We would introduce a Reduction of Red Tape



Bill that would start the mass repeal of harmful, anti-business legislation passed under the SNP.

We would consult directly with businesses to identify the regulations that are economically damaging and, where ministers agree, would repeal or amend them.

The UK internal market is worth billions of pounds and provides hundreds of thousands of jobs to Scotland's economy. Any regulations that force a divergence between Scotland and the rest of the UK add costs for companies operating across the UK.

Therefore, we would commit to a moratorium on any new regulatory barriers between Scotland and the rest of the UK that add costs for Scottish businesses. We would

also review the existing regulatory barriers identified by the Office for the Internal Market with a view to removing them where possible.

Tax is another significant cost for businesses. Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves have made this situation worse, by immediately imposing a huge jobs tax when they came into power, costing Scottish businesses billions of pounds a year.

But the SNP have also been doing their best to damage small businesses across the country via business rate rises. This year, companies across Scotland have had their business rates revalued, with thousands seeing their bill rise substantially. Some even saw their rateable value rise by more than 1,000%.

The Scottish Conservatives launched a campaign urging the SNP Government to pause the revaluation process, to allow for a fairer methodology to be introduced that was less damaging to businesses. But we were ignored. This means thousands of businesses will now be forced to pay much more in tax.

The relief announced by the Scottish Government in their budget does not go far enough. Businesses need much greater support and that is what the Scottish Conservatives would deliver.

We would start out by ending the cliff-edge tax rises that are part of the business rates system. As business owners will know, if your property is valued at under £12,000, you pay no business rates. If your

Scottish Conservative MSPs will take the following measures to reduce the cost of doing business in Scotland:

- » Introduce a new Bill in consultation with businesses to cut red tape and allow them to thrive.
- » Enact a moratorium on any new regulatory barriers for businesses with the rest of the UK.
- » Permanently reduce taxes for businesses by lowering business rates and restructuring the system to end cliff-edge rises.
- » End extreme business rates revaluations by capping the maximum rise that can occur between revaluation cycles.
- » Support our high streets by reducing taxes for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.
- » Increase fairness for businesses and taxpayers by merging the different assessors for local authority taxation into one national body.

property is then reassessed and valued at over £20,000, you will likely have to pay full business rates on the whole value of your property.

This is different from other taxes, like income tax, where you pay a specific rate of tax for all income earned in each band. For example, someone earning £21,000 only pays tax on income earned above the personal allowance. This is not the case for businesses which, unless they qualify for additional relief schemes, must pay the full amount of tax on the whole value of their property.

The Scottish Conservatives would guarantee that all businesses with a current rateable value of less than £20,000 would pay no business rates with no requirement to apply for business rates relief.

For businesses falling just above this threshold, they would only be taxed on the value of their property above the zero-rate threshold. So a property currently valued at £21,000 would only pay tax on the £1,000 above £20,000. This rule would apply for each subsequent threshold.

The current business rates system also penalises businesses who decide to invest in upgrading their property. This is because their investments are effectively added into the calculations establishing

how much tax they have to pay. Although businesses can currently get a business rates freeze for 12 months for properties that undergo physical improvements, that window is too short for companies to see a return on their investment, so we would extend that period to three years.

The most recent revaluation process for business rates caused significant anxiety for business owners in Scotland and we must avoid this in the future. The Scottish Conservatives would address this by setting out in advance a cap on the maximum possible increase a company could face in its business rates bill ahead of the revaluation process, tied to the RPI measure of inflation. This would provide businesses with the certainty they need to plan investment, staffing and cashflow.

There should also be more consistency and accountability for how revaluations are conducted, with less geographic variation and more transparency around how bills are calculated. Currently, there are 14 different assessors across Scotland, responsible for valuing all non-domestic property. The only route of appeal is through the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland which provides very limited scope for challenge in practice.

We would tackle this problem by merging the separate assessors into a single national body. This body would be led by a Chief Assessor who would issue guidance on valuation practice and provide a formal route for resolving disputes. This would ensure consistency of treatment across the country.

Given the struggles faced by our high streets in recent years it is only fair to provide additional relief for these businesses too. We would introduce lower business rates for small and medium-sized retail, hospitality and leisure companies in Scotland, providing them with the long-term security they need to stay open for business. We would also provide 100% relief for pubs and licensed hospitality businesses with rateable values of up to £100,000.

Our reforms to the current system of business rates would be introduced on a transitional basis given the scale of change proposed.



Promoting Brand Scotland

To have a truly thriving economy, we must be willing to unashamedly promote our country at home and abroad. Unfortunately, the SNP seem intent on damaging the industries that make Scotland stand out.

Our food and drink industry, for example, supports thousands of jobs and provides billions of pounds of investment. It gives not just Scotland, but the UK, world-leading produce like whisky and salmon. Ministers should be working to support the industry, not harm it.

But over the last session of parliament, they have sought to undermine the industry by bungling the introduction of a bottle deposit scheme, consulting on advertising controls for the alcohol industry

and proposing restrictions on the promotion of certain foodstuffs.

The Scottish Conservatives want to support our food and drink industry, so we would promise not to implement harmful regulation on the sector and specifically commit to opposing any restrictions on alcohol advertising, marketing and sponsorship in Scotland.

We would help the industry to grow by establishing a dedicated exports division as part of Growth Scotland, building on the work currently carried out by Scotland Development International to boost the sale of Scottish products to the rest of the UK and the world.

Another world-leading Scottish industry that has been hammered by the SNP Government is our tourism sector. The introduction of the short-term lets licensing regime, the imposition of the Visitor Levy and harmful rates revaluations have all caused significant damage to

tourism businesses. Tourism attracts billions of pounds to our economy every year – we cannot afford to lose the money and jobs it brings.

We would conduct a full review into the regulatory barriers that have threatened jobs within the industry to remove harmful regulations, as part of our Reduction in Red Tape Bill.

One of the culture industry's key demands in the last few years has been the guarantee of multi-year cash settlements so that they have enough funding certainty to make long-term investment decisions. The Scottish Conservatives would guarantee multi-year funding for cultural organisations through a new Culture Act.

This would enshrine the principle of multi-year funding into law, but it would also take the legislative steps necessary to merge some of Scotland's culture quangos in order to reduce the costs of running



them and allow more money to be delivered to the frontline service offered, whether that be a museum, gallery or library.

Creative Scotland is one quango that would remain as a standalone body, but is still in need of reform. In 2024, the body funded a project that was effectively pornographic, so we would forbid this type of spending and instead encourage grants for arts and cultural endeavours that have broad popular appeal. Grants would also be tied to guarantees that free speech is upheld in the institutions that receive them.

Other quangos, such as Historic Environment Scotland, would be retained but given a complete organisational reset. The Scottish Conservatives have uncovered numerous scandals from this quango, including inappropriate use of heritage venues, careless spending of taxpayers' money and poor leadership. We would overhaul their leadership and demand better from the body which is supposed to look after Scotland's most important historic buildings.

To promote Scotland's industry and culture at home and abroad we will:

- » Establish a dedicated exports support division within Growth Scotland to facilitate the sale of Scottish products to the rest of the UK and the world.
- » Support our tourism industry by conducting a review into the regulatory barriers that have threatened jobs within the industry.
- » Oppose any restrictions on alcohol advertising, marketing and sponsorship in Scotland to help protect the jobs in our vital food and drink industry.
- » Support our thriving culture sector with a new Culture Act that guarantees multi-year funding for cultural bodies.
- » Amalgamate some of Scotland's culture quangos so that funds are directed towards the frontline rather than spent on back-office costs.
- » Overhaul the SNP's scandal-ridden heritage quango so that it can do the job it's supposed to – look after our historic buildings.
- » Support access to arts and cultural endeavours for everyone, by targeting public funds towards projects that have broad popular appeal.



Building the right infrastructure

Fixing our roads and pavements

Growing our economy will be the Scottish Conservatives' number one priority in the next Scottish Parliament, but we can only do that if we have the right infrastructure.

The SNP have broken their promise to upgrade key roads like the A9, and have failed to provide local government with the funds they need to fix our roads and pavements.

This means it is more difficult to travel across Scotland and harder for shoppers to visit our town centres and high streets. We must take urgent action to upgrade our roads, make them safer and allow people to get around more easily – which, in turn, helps our economy grow.

We would start by putting pedestrians first. They must be safe

and feel protected when walking our streets, so we would clarify that pedestrian zones signposted across our towns and cities are for pedestrians only, not bikes or scooters.

These fast-moving vehicles can cause serious injuries to pedestrians and despite e-scooters and certain modified e-bikes already being illegal, those using them seemingly drive on our pavements with impunity. Whilst Police Scotland already have the power to confiscate these vehicles, it isn't always used. The Scottish Conservatives would empower the police to automatically confiscate these illegal vehicles on sight.

The safety of pavements and roads would also be improved if we actually invested in their maintenance. Instead, the SNP have diverted funds away from this basic task to fund ideological projects like active travel schemes. We would redirect the active travel budget to fix roads and pavements instead.

Potholes are dangerous for road users and cause damage to vehicles, yet nothing seems to be done about it. When they are filled, the fixes are often short-term and it's not long before potholes appear again.

The Scottish Conservatives would introduce a new National Pothole Action Fund to fix our country's potholes for good. This fund would provide money directly to councils to fix potholes in their area, but it would also be used to buy state-of-the-art equipment that would enable kerb-to-kerb resurfacing of roads so that potholes are fixed comprehensively.

The Scottish Roadworks Commissioner is responsible for overseeing roadworks in Scotland. They can inspect sites and fine companies who fail to comply with the law, but their powers are not being used frequently enough. We would provide the commissioner with increased powers and resources to take action against contractors who miss deadlines or

cause chaos on our roads, including increasing the maximum fine they can issue to rulebreakers.

It's not just roads in our town centres that are neglected, it's those in rural areas too. Driving is the only way you can get around in many remote communities across Scotland, so we would ensure that as part of our plans to upgrade Scotland's roads, rural communities would get their fair share.

One piece of road infrastructure which is frequently neglected in rural communities is bridges. These are vital for connecting communities but are often expensive to maintain and councils cannot afford to fix them due to the cost. The Scottish Conservatives would establish a National Bridge Restoration Fund to fix our bridges, supported by central government funds, with councils applying for the cash needed to fix bridges in their area.

The most important road infrastructure that connects

communities in Scotland is our motorways and trunk roads. Not only do these roads enable people to get around the country, but they also help to grow our economy by allowing goods to be transported around Scotland.

The SNP have completely failed to deliver on their promises to upgrade Scotland's trunk roads. The dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness was supposed to be completed last year, but will now not be finished until 2035. The A96 was supposed to be dualled between Aberdeen and Inverness by 2030, but that deadline has been abandoned, and it's clear it will not be delivered for years. Other crucial roads, like the A75 and A77 have also been denied the upgrades they so desperately need.

We would introduce a new law to fast-track the upgrade of trunk roads by expediting environmental impact assessments, establishing new partnerships with private companies carrying out the works

and guaranteeing funding for the projects in law. Upgrades to the A1, A75, A77, A83, A9, A90 and A96 would be included in our planned law. We would target the full completion of the A9 dualling project between Perth and Inverness by the end of the next Scottish Parliamentary session, as well as key sections of the A75.

To help complete major infrastructure projects on time we would shift coordination and oversight of these projects to one body – Growth Scotland.

This body would be tasked with managing investor engagement across the lifetime of the project, set out procurement routes and support consistent approaches to contract structure to attract investment. While planning decisions would remain with the relevant statutory authority, Growth Scotland would manage the relationships between various stakeholders to ensure the project is delivered.



Ending the war on drivers

Government policy should not penalise car users for their choice of transport. This should be a statement of the obvious, but under the SNP it is not. In fact, they have spent their years in government devising ways to make it more difficult to drive a car.

Until last year, the Scottish Government had an official target in place to reduce car usage by 20% by 2030. Although this has now been reduced to 4%, this target will still have a significant impact on motorists.

The Scottish Conservatives would abolish this target. We respect the public enough to recognise that the mode of transport they use to get around is a decision for them – not the government.

The SNP also introduced a car park tax that would allow councils to charge people for driving to work. While the powers have not yet been used, they remain on the statute books and could be adopted at any time, adding to the cost of living for those using cars. The Scottish Conservatives would block the introduction of such charges.

A policy that has been introduced across Scotland's major cities is

Scottish Conservative MSPs will deliver the following to make our roads and pavements safe:

- » Coordinate major infrastructure projects through one body to reduce delays.
 - » Pass an emergency law to speed up upgrades to key trunk roads like the A1, A75, A77, A83, A9 and A96.
 - » Fix Scotland's potholes, through a National Pothole Action Fund and providing state-of-the-art equipment to enable kerb-to-kerb resurfacing of the roads.
 - » Revitalise Scotland's decaying bridges to improve transport options for small towns and rural areas by establishing a National Bridge Restoration Fund.
 - » Cut the active travel budget and redirect funding towards pavement and road maintenance.
- » Make pedestrians safe by clarifying that pedestrian zones on pavements and in public spaces should be for pedestrians only.
 - » Crack down on e-scooters and illegally modified e-bikes in Scotland by allowing the police to automatically confiscate these vehicles.
 - » Provide the Scottish Roadworks Commissioner with more power to take enforcement action against companies who are failing to complete roadworks properly.

the introduction of Low Emission Zones (LEZ). This scheme punishes drivers simply for having an older car. LEZs have cost people driving in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow millions of pounds so far, yet there is little evidence demonstrating the benefits of the scheme. We would stop the rollout of any new LEZs across Scotland while we conduct a review of the effectiveness of the existing schemes. As part of this work, we would review the current level of fines imposed on drivers and look to lower them to reduce the financial hit drivers face for owning an older car.

The car park tax and LEZs have already been introduced, but there will be even more nasty surprises heading the way of drivers if the SNP stay in power. At a local level, they are considering introducing a boundary charge on any driver coming into Glasgow and a congestion charge for those driving in Edinburgh. We oppose these plans and will vote against any measure that will add costs to drivers in the next session of the Scottish Parliament, including tolls.

Drivers have also been squeezed on the roads by government decisions that have been influenced by anti-motorist groups. To comply with Scottish Government decisions, and acquire extra funding, councils have often

installed cycle lanes that reduce the space available to drivers.

The Scottish Conservatives would end the obsession with cycle lanes and instead encourage councils only to build cycle lanes that do not impede on road space and are clearly segregated from pavements.

Cycle lanes encroaching on road space is one problem, but another is the SNP's tendency to try to meddle with speed limits. In the last session of the Scottish Parliament, the SNP attempted to reduce the national speed limit on single carriageways to 50 miles per hour, despite limited evidence that it would make the roads safer.

After a determined Scottish Conservative campaign, the nationalists dropped their plans but we are clear that we will not support any reduction of speed limits on our trunk roads in the next Scottish Parliament.

On top of this, we will ensure that 20 mile-per-hour speed limits are only introduced in areas where the community agrees to it. The roads surrounding schools are an obvious example where most people agree such speed limits are sensible, but that does not mean they should be extended across whole towns. We would fight any move to impose a Welsh-style 20 mile-per-hour speed limit on urban roads.

This is what Scottish Conservative MSPs will do to stop the government-backed hostility towards using cars:

- » Abolish and oppose any targets that aim to reduce the use of cars in Scotland.
- » Oppose the introduction of additional costs for drivers such as boundary charges, tolls or congestion charges.
- » Make space for drivers and pedestrians by encouraging councils to ensure that new cycle paths are clearly segregated from existing roads and pavements.
- » Ban new Low Emission Zones and review the effectiveness of current schemes.
- » Stop any attempt to reduce the national speed limit on motorways and single/dual carriageways.
- » Ensure that 20 mile-per-hour zones are only introduced in areas where there is clear community consent, such as around schools.

Improving our public transport system

A well-functioning public transport system is pivotal if we are to improve our economic prospects. The list of public transport failures occurring on the SNP's watch is long and it is a record they should be ashamed of.

While bus routes across Scotland are closing due to financial constraints, the SNP think it is a good use of taxpayers' money to fund free bus travel for asylum seekers. Since ministers took control of ScotRail in 2022, millions of pounds have been paid out in compensation due to delayed trains. But most disastrous of all is the SNP's handling of the ferries fiasco.

This scandal has so many twists and turns it is difficult to keep up, so to summarise: John Swinney gave the green light to award Ferguson Marine a contract to build two ferries in 2015 at a cost of £97 million. It was initially promised that these ferries would be delivered at the end of 2017 and the start of 2018 respectively. When Nicola Sturgeon 'launched' the first of these ferries in 2017, it had painted-on windows and was nowhere near ready to set sail.

In 2019, Ferguson Marine had to be nationalised because it was in financial difficulty. The deadline for delivering these ferries kept getting pushed back, while the cost kept escalating. In 2025, the first of the two ferries finally launched, more than seven years late. The second of the two ferries still has not set sail. Meanwhile, the total cost of this scandal has risen to nearly half a billion pounds.

We have to clean up this mess. It has let down island communities and taxpayers alike. We would start by implementing a new ferry procurement strategy that delivers the equivalent of three ferries every two years with an aim of reducing the average age of the fleet down to 14 years. This would provide island communities with more reliable ferries, allowing them to get to and from the mainland without the delays and cancellations they are all too familiar with due to technical faults with the current fleet.

As for Ferguson Marine, we would boost investment in the yard so that private investors would be willing to take ownership of it – allowing taxpayer subsidies to end. Caledonian Marine Assets Limited (CMAL), which currently procures ferries for CalMac, the ferry operator, would be consulted on what upgrades are needed in order for Ferguson Marine to thrive.

However, CMAL and CalMac operating as two separate bodies no longer makes sense. We would merge these organisations into one, saving taxpayers money.

Islanders have suffered immensely due to SNP incompetence in recent years, but so have those living in rural communities. Buses are vital in connecting these areas to town centres, but due to SNP underfunding of local government, councils are not able to keep many of these bus routes open. This leaves those without access to a car effectively stranded and unable to get around. We would open up a new Small Town and Rural Bus Services Fund that would allow councils to apply for additional funding to keep bus routes open, ensuring that rural communities and those living in small towns continue to be served by bus.

In the last parliament, the SNP decided to expand the number of people receiving a free bus pass to everyone aged 22 and under. While we support this move, it has unfortunately led to widespread abuse of this privilege, with bus-related antisocial behaviour on the rise.

The Scottish Conservatives have zero tolerance for this behaviour. The SNP attempted to address this by passing regulations that would allow bus passes to be stripped

from those who misbehave on buses. However, they were unable to confirm whether their rules would strip bus passes from those who had previously committed bus-related crimes. We would make it clear that we would strip free bus travel from those partaking in anti-social behaviour AND those who have committed bus-related crimes in the past.

One group who should also not get access to free bus travel under any circumstances is asylum seekers. John Swinney decided that in his first budget as First Minister he would use taxpayers' money to give asylum seekers free bus travel. This is completely the wrong priority. We would end this scheme immediately.

Instead, this money should go towards providing cheaper travel for commuters. The Scottish Conservatives had long called for the scrapping of peak rail fares on ScotRail trains and the Scottish Government eventually caved in and agreed. We would maintain this discount for those who use trains to get to work.

Many railway stations that communities used to rely on in previous generations were shut decades ago, leaving numerous areas without any significant public transport connections. The Scottish Conservatives would conduct a full economic impact assessment

of reopening these shuttered railway stations and would commit to opening all that demonstrate a viable economic case for doing so. We believe that Cove in Aberdeen, Thornhill in Dumfriesshire and Mauchline in East Ayrshire are all examples of stations that should be re-opened.

The Scottish Conservatives would also work with the UK Government to improve rail connections across Scotland. Our first priority would be to see the Borders Railway extended to Carlisle. The feasibility study looking into this project has already been delayed. We would urge all parties to get round the table and resolve these issues so we can get on with upgrading the Borders Railway. Similarly, we would push for the electrification of the East Coast railway line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, as it would improve journey times and make the route more reliable.

Our train companies must deliver value for public money too. While we support ScotRail being taken into public ownership, we would continue to hold them to account for how they spend taxpayers' money to ensure they are delivering a reliable and cost-effective service. However, the SNP also nationalised the Caledonian Sleeper in 2023. This service is a luxury and should not be subsidised by the taxpayers, so we would relinquish state control

over the service and put it back into private hands.

Our rail network, bus system and other modes of public transport should also be working in tandem to get people around more easily. For example, by making sure that bus timetables are synchronised with train timetables. In Edinburgh and Glasgow, this can be taken a step further with the tram and subway networks respectively. We would establish a working group with local authorities and transport companies to coordinate our transport network.

This working group would help improve everyone's access to public transport, including those with disabilities. Disabled people can face additional challenges getting on public transport, so we would work with disability charities to see how these issues can be resolved.

Air travel is often not regarded as public transport, but it is just as important for many people who need to get back and forth from Scotland's more remote communities. These communities should not be taxed for having to rely on air travel more frequently because of where they live, so it is right that there is a Highlands and Islands exemption to the new Air Departure Tax that is set to replace Air Passenger Duty in Scotland

by April 2027. Further to that exemption, we would oppose any attempts to increase the tax on air travel.

Instead, we should look at reducing tax to attract investment. Scotland is ideally placed as a destination for long-haul flights to arrive in and depart from, and this would bring more money and jobs to Scotland. Therefore, the Scottish Conservatives would lower the tax rate on long-haul flights to attract investment and the jobs that would come with it.

Supporting the development of new aviation technology would also help us to bring economic activity to Scotland. To that end, we would facilitate end-to-end trials of hydrogen and battery powered electric aircraft to make us a potential hub for this emergent technology.

Scottish Conservative policies that will improve our transport system:

- » Establish a national Small Town and Rural Bus Services Fund to improve connectivity between Scotland's small towns, rural areas and our major cities.
- » Remove free bus passes from passengers who commit anti-social behaviour or have committed bus-related crimes in the past.
- » Reverse the SNP's policy of giving free bus passes to asylum seekers.
- » Advocate for the extension of the Borders Railway and the re-opening of railway stations that have been previously closed.
- » Oppose any attempts to increase taxes on air travel and attract investment into Scotland by lowering air travel tax for long-haul flights.
- » Support the scrapping of peak rail fares on ScotRail trains.
- » Coordinate with local authorities to better integrate Scotland's public transport systems so that people can get in and out of our towns and cities more easily.
- » Implement a new ferry procurement strategy that modernises our ferry fleet and allows island communities to get around more easily.
- » Invest in the Ferguson Marine shipyard so that it can attract private backing and no longer be reliant on taxpayers' cash.
- » Work with disability charities to explore how public transport access can be improved for disabled passengers.



Reducing the cost of building and buying a home

Too many people in Scotland are currently priced out of getting on the housing ladder. The SNP have missed previous house-building targets and are set to fail to meet their target to build 110,000 affordable homes between 2021 and 2032.

It is their own policies that have contributed to this failure. Their disastrous rent controls, in place between September 2022 and March 2024, actually led to Scotland seeing the highest rent increases out of any region in Great Britain because it led to rents being hiked on new listings. It also forced housing developers to pause new projects because they could no longer be sure about their return on investment.

Yet despite these outcomes, the SNP have ploughed ahead by giving councils the powers to impose rent controls in the future. The Scottish Conservatives would repeal these powers, to give housing developers the confidence they need to start building.

Another cost that is due to be added to building homes in

Scotland is the Building Safety Levy. This tax, which will be introduced in April 2028, will add further costs for developers trying to build the homes Scotland needs. The Scottish Conservatives voted against the introduction of this tax at Holyrood and we would not implement it if given the chance.

It is not just taxes, but regulations from the Scottish Government that raise the cost of building a home. Let us be clear: the more it costs to build a home, the more expensive they will be to sell and the more difficult it is for ordinary Scots to get on the housing ladder.

The Scottish Conservatives would firstly commit to imposing no new costly house-building regulations in the next session of parliament to stop the cost of building a house rising any further. That includes guaranteeing that households will not be forced into making energy efficiency upgrades.

But we would also take an axe to existing or planned regulations that have increased costs in the first place. For example, we would end the requirement that forbids new-build homes from being heated with a boiler. We would ditch the net zero regulations known as Passivhaus Standards that some councils estimate add up to £150,000 to the cost of building a home. And we would scrap the

SNP's planning framework that adds all sorts of restrictions on how and where houses can be built in Scotland.

Instead, councils should be the ones who decide on their planning strategies in consultation with local people. The only guidance the Scottish Government would produce on housing would relate to ensuring developments have enough amenities for the local community to thrive and encouraging developers to build aesthetically pleasing homes that people actually want to live in.

If local residents like the look of proposed developments, they are more likely to approve them and that is why we would look to introduce a new policy called Street Votes to Scotland. Under these plans, you and your neighbours propose a 'street plan' that sets out additional building works that should be allowed on your street and how it should look. The whole street then votes on the proposal and if it passes then everyone on the street has the right to develop their property in line with the plan, including proposals to use space more efficiently to build extra homes.

Ultimately, houses need to be built in the right areas and that means using brownfield sites and derelict land. There is more than enough

land of this kind in Scotland to build the homes we need, but government inaction means we are not taking the steps needed to build on this land. The Scottish Conservatives would establish a Brownfield Development Fund that would target brownfield and vacant land and make them suitable for building homes.

We would also free up government funds for house-building and developing infrastructure by redirecting the SNP's budget, currently spent trying to meet their own net zero targets. Substantial sums of public money are currently being spent on providing loans and grants for heat pumps for example. We would protect funding for energy efficiency upgrades but redirect the cash spent on heat pumps and put it towards building homes and infrastructure instead.

Other savings would be achieved by halting expensive green upgrades that are being planned to public buildings. At a time of stretched budgets we should not be asking the taxpayer to cough up for expensive net zero upgrades to our buildings and instead urge public sector bodies to look at cheaper alternatives so that we can invest the saved cash in infrastructure that needs fixing.

These measures would all help to reduce the cost of building a

home, making houses cheaper and helping people to buy a home. But the best way that governments can provide a boost to getting people on the housing ladder is to directly reduce the cost of buying a home. Currently, everyone in Scotland wishing to buy a home has to pay tax on it if the property is valued above £145,000, or £175,000 for first-time buyers. This is a tax on ambition. It is unfair, and it is not right.

Therefore, in conjunction with Kemi Badenoch's announcement that a Conservative UK Government would scrap stamp duty on primary residences in the rest of the country, the Scottish Conservatives would scrap the Scottish equivalent known as Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBTT). This would save the average buyer of a primary residence almost £900 according to the latest property prices.

Another tax that adds to housing costs in Scotland is known as the Additional Dwelling Supplement (ADS). This tax is paid on top of LBTT, for purchases of additional homes. It means that those who buy these properties to rent them end up having to hike rents in order to cover the increased cost of buying the home in the first place. The SNP have hiked ADS to 8% in recent years. We would reverse these rises and slash it in half to 4%.

We will deliver the following policies to help you buy a home:

- » Abolish the tax on buying a home in Scotland for those purchasing a primary residence.
- » Stop costly housebuilding regulations that make it more expensive to build houses.
- » Make it cheaper to build a home by opposing the introduction of the Building Safety Levy.
- » Ensure that any major housing developments are accompanied with adequate service provision for local residents.
- » Create a purpose-built Brownfield Development Fund so that we can build more homes in the right areas.
- » Scrap the SNP's planning framework, with councils setting their own planning strategies so that they can build the homes they need.
- » Redirect the SNP's budget they spend to meet their net zero targets and put this funding towards building new houses and upgrading our infrastructure instead.
- » Scrap SNP rent controls as they result in reduced house-building and increased rents.

Tackling poverty and homelessness

The best way to tackle poverty and homelessness in Scotland is by having a thriving economy. That way, there are enough well paid jobs going round to lift people out of poverty, and where people do fall through the cracks, there is enough government funding to support those individuals going through hard times.

So the Scottish Conservatives' primary focus on growing our economy would be a key part of our anti-poverty strategy, but there are also specific measures we can take to reduce poverty and homelessness.

We will continue to support the aims of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act

2017 that sets targets for reducing child poverty by 2030. As things stand, the SNP will fail to meet the goals set out in the legislation. The Scottish Conservatives take the view that this is because the SNP see ever more spending on benefits as the only way out of poverty. We completely reject that approach.

Instead, we would seek to get people out of poverty by offering them increased employment support. The first step in this process would be to increase coordination between different agencies and layers of government to identify those in need of help and make them aware of what support packages are available to them.

But on top of that, we would offer individuals identified as being in or at risk of poverty free access to our Jobs for Life scheme that would offer them courses or training provided in partnership with employers, to give them the skills needed to secure a well-paid

job. On top of that, they would be offered free careers advice as part of the service to ensure they can find a job that pays well enough to lift themselves out of poverty.

What we will not do is encourage people to stay on benefits. This may provide short-term relief, but does not help them escape the cycle of poverty in the long run. Our Jobs for Life scheme would offer its employability services to long-term benefits recipients, because we believe someone is much more likely to get on in life if they have a good job and are not reliant on benefits.

We must also provide support to help tackle the root causes of poverty, one of which is individuals who are burdened with debt. Often, people will find themselves in debt because they were hit with a completely unexpected cost that they could not afford, which they ended up borrowing for and haven't been able to get out of since.



Here are the steps Scottish Conservative MSPs will take to reduce poverty and homelessness:

- » Invest in employability services targeted at those living in poverty to help them secure the well-paid jobs they need.
- » End the cycle of families being trapped on benefits which keeps them in poverty.
- » Support the aims of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act that sets targets for reducing child poverty by 2030.
- » Take a preventative approach to homelessness by implementing the 'ask and act' scheme that seeks to stop people becoming homeless in the first place.
- » Reverse SNP policies which make it easier for asylum seekers to access housing.
- » Improve coordination between government agencies to identify individuals who are struggling and make them aware of the financial support that is available to them.

The amount of unsecured debt held by those in Scotland is on the rise, causing many people financial difficulty. We want to help these people, so the Scottish Conservatives will increase funding made available to organisations offering free debt advice and support.

Unsustainable levels of debt is one of the ways in which an individual can end up homeless. The SNP have failed to tackle homelessness and the number of children currently in temporary accommodation is now at its highest-ever level.

We can only reverse this trend if we start putting resources in the right place. The SNP have completely the wrong priorities when it comes to dealing with homelessness. The 'priority needs' test gave pregnant women and other vulnerable groups priority when it came to applying for settled accommodation, but it was abolished by the SNP in 2012.

Then in 2022, the SNP abolished the 'local connection' rule which stripped Scottish councils of their powers to refer applicants for housing to another local authority on the basis of their local connection to another area. In practice, these two reforms have combined to attract thousands of asylum seekers to Scotland, and

Glasgow specifically, meaning there is less accommodation available for local people. The Scottish Conservatives would reverse these changes and put local people first when it comes to assessing homelessness applications.

We would also improve the support available for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Specifically, we would evaluate the results of the £4 million 'ask and act' pilot that seeks to shift the focus of homelessness policy towards a more proactive, preventative approach that would save people from becoming homeless in the first place. If successful, we would aim to implement this approach more widely.

Making energy costs more affordable

The cost of energy is fundamental to our economic future. The more energy we produce as a country, the cheaper it becomes and the faster we can grow the economy.

Of course, climate change is real and has an impact on how we can produce our energy, but we must be realistic. Scotland's energy policy is never going to change the

course of global climate change. We should not pretend otherwise.

Despite this obvious truth, the SNP remain committed to their ideological target to reach net zero emissions by 2045. To meet this target would require that households across Scotland spend much more on expensive heating systems and costly new electric cars. It would be ruinous for our agriculture sector as it requires a culling of animals and far less meat consumption, on top of the premature closure of our oil and gas industry.

The Scottish Conservatives are being honest with the public – we cannot afford these costs. The tax rises and behavioural changes necessary to meet net zero emissions by 2045 would cripple our economy. We would scrap the 2045 target and drop any policies that are imposing costs on households in order to meet it. That does not mean we stop trying to address climate change, but it does mean we stop spending millions trying to meet a legally binding target that will do nothing to prevent climate change.

By contrast, the central theme of the Scottish Conservatives' energy policy will be to lower costs for households and businesses. We would work with the UK Government to achieve this, as a

substantial part of energy policy is reserved.

Regrettably, Sir Keir Starmer's government keeps making our energy bills more expensive through the Emissions Trading Scheme and the Carbon Price Support scheme. Kemi Badenoch has announced that these schemes would be scrapped under a Conservative Government. We support these plans, which would save households £75 per year.

Another Labour policy that adds to our energy bills is known as the Renewable Obligation Certificate scheme. This pays out subsidies for wind and solar firms by adding extra costs to your energy bills. It adds about £22 a year to your energy bills and a UK Conservative Government would scrap the scheme to save you money.

Our renewable industries have enormous potential, especially offshore wind. But they should not need to rely on taxpayer subsidy to keep it alive. They should stand on their own two feet.

Our guiding principle would be that as long as the local community is content with the infrastructure necessary to produce the energy, the project can proceed. This means looking at all forms of energy production fairly and exploring the viability of newer

forms of energy generation, such as green hydrogen. The Scottish Government has already identified 13 hydrogen hubs across Scotland and the Scottish Conservatives would review whether tax reliefs could be provided to companies to get them to invest more in these sites and develop the technology.

For households that are not currently connected to the grid, a different solution is required to keep their energy costs low. In March 2026, the UK and Scottish governments announced that due to rising heating oil costs, financial support would be provided to households using heating oil to warm their homes. But when combining the funding made available by both governments, this amounted to only £10 million. The Scottish Conservatives know that in the face of such significant rises in the price of heating oil, we need to do more to keep costs low for these households, so we would provide enough funding to double the amount of support that has been announced so far for households using heating oil.

We cannot afford to take such measures if taxpayers' money is being spent unwisely, as the SNP so often do. The support they announced for households struggling with heating oil costs was less than half the amount of money they're planning to spend

This is how Scottish Conservative MSPs would reduce your energy costs:

- » Overhaul Scottish Government energy policy so that its main objective is to lower costs for households and businesses, rather than reaching arbitrary net zero targets.
 - » Abolish the SNP's unaffordable target for reaching net zero by 2045.
 - » Support all forms of energy generation, while ensuring that local communities have a final say on each project.
 - » Establish a fund to support households who are off-grid and struggling with the increased energy costs they face.
 - » Explore the introduction of tax relief to encourage new forms of energy production like green hydrogen.
- » Pledge to scrap any new costs imposed on households as a result of net zero targets in the lifetime of the next parliament.
 - » Support the scrapping of the carbon tax and carbon price support schemes that increase the cost of your energy bills.
 - » Back the abolition of renewable energy subsidy schemes that increase your bills.
 - » Close down the SNP's international climate change budget so that we can spend this money on our priorities at home instead.

dealing with 'International Climate Change' next year. The Scottish Conservatives believe this money should be spent dealing with our problems at home, so we would close down this budget and direct funds towards domestic priorities like helping households with the cost of heating oil instead.

Supporting nuclear and our oil and gas industry

We can only reduce household energy costs if we back our own energy industry to succeed, especially our oil and gas sector. It supports tens of thousands of jobs and provides billions of pounds for our economy. If our economy is to succeed, we need the oil and gas industry to thrive.

But one of Sir Keir Starmer's first acts as Prime Minister was to raise the tax, known as the Energy Profits Levy, paid by our oil and gas industry. Now the sector says a thousand jobs a month are being lost due to Labour's hostile environment towards our own oil and gas industry.

Taxing one of our own industries to death would be disastrous for our energy security. We cannot allow that to happen. Kemi Badenoch announced at Scottish Conservative

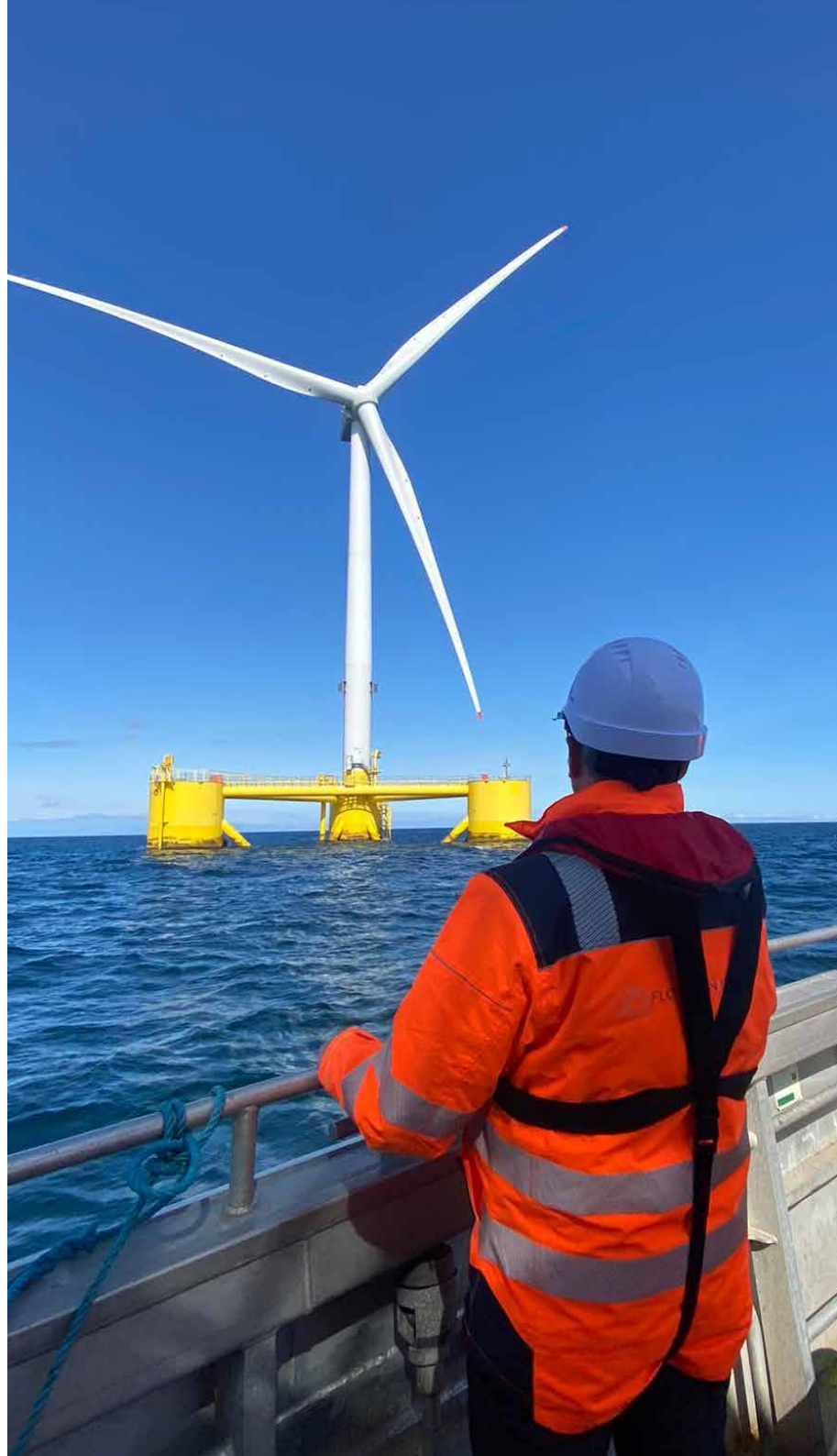
conference in 2025 that she would abolish the Energy Profits Levy as Prime Minister and we will continue to urge the Labour Government to ditch this tax so that we can protect the jobs reliant on our oil and gas industry.

Another damaging Labour policy that threatens our energy security is their opposition to drilling for new oil and gas. It is estimated that there are billions of barrels of oil still in UK waters, yet Labour wants to leave this supply in the ground.

We should be using this enormous supply of oil and gas to support jobs in this country and to boost domestic energy security. Cambo, Rosebank and Jackdaw are just a few examples of potential projects that must be approved. Conservatives across the UK have long called for this supply to be utilised, but Labour aren't listening.

And the SNP are fully on board with Labour's approach. Numerous SNP ministers have repeatedly made clear they oppose drilling for new oil and gas – and the Scottish Government's draft energy strategy says they oppose new oil and gas developments too. The Scottish Conservatives would include in our energy strategy a clear commitment to using all the reserves in the North Sea that we can find so that we can provide a longer-term future for our oil and gas industry.

The SNP's wrongheaded approach does not just apply to our oil and gas sector but our nuclear industry too. Incredibly, they oppose nuclear power despite it being a safe and clean option for producing vast amounts of energy.



In 2022, Hunterston B nuclear power plant in North Ayrshire closed down with nothing replacing the large amounts of power it supplied to our national grid. In 2030, Torness nuclear power station in East Lothian will close too, leaving Scotland with no more nuclear power plants.

We will bring nuclear back to Scotland's energy mix by working with the UK Government and private investors to introduce a new generation of nuclear power plants to replace the nuclear energy lost by the two that have closed or will be closing. Specifically, we would look at using new nuclear technology, like small modular reactors, to replace this lost power and would start this work in the lifetime of the next Scottish Parliament.

Our government should also back training schemes for jobs in our nuclear industry. The SNP launched their 'Energy Skills Passport' in the last parliamentary session designed to support oil and gas workers into renewable and clean energy jobs. The scheme is nowhere near ambitious enough and fails to recognise that the skills possessed by oil and gas workers do not always cross over straight into renewable jobs.

We would take a different approach to this scheme by expanding the

Energy Skills Passport so that it provides proper support to oil and gas workers and allows the funding given to this programme to be used for oil and gas workers to retrain for jobs in the nuclear industry should they wish to.

The Just Transition Fund established by the SNP is another way they're spending taxpayers' money on their political obsession with net zero. The pet projects this fund supports provide little benefit to the public but a large cost to the taxpayer. We believe a better use of this money would be to set up an Affordable Transition Fund that provides workers in the oil and gas industry with support if their job is under threat. In addition, this fund would provide financial backing to smaller companies involved in the oil and gas industry's supply chain whose business is struggling thanks to Labour's hostility to the industry.

The Scottish Conservatives will support our nuclear and oil and gas industries with the following measures:

- » Abolish the damaging tax on Scotland's oil and gas industry.
- » Scrap the SNP's Just Transition Fund and replace it with an Affordable Transition Fund to cut costs for consumers and protect Scottish jobs.
- » Overturn the SNP Government's opposition to new oil and gas developments and lobby the Labour Government to reverse their ban.
- » Support a new generation of nuclear energy in Scotland to replace the capacity lost by power stations that are closing down.
- » Back the inclusion of the nuclear industry in the Energy Skills Passport scheme that provides funds for oil and gas workers to retrain in different sectors.



Caring for our health and wellbeing

Improving our healthcare system

Our NHS is a cherished national institution and we will ensure that it remains free at the point of use.

It is currently under immense strain thanks to 19 years of SNP mismanagement. Despite funding for our NHS increasing in recent years, waiting lists have grown and

crucial targets for cancer treatment and A&E waits have been missed.

The first interaction you will often have with our healthcare system is through your family doctor or GP. Being able to see your GP quickly allows you to get the medical help you need early and potentially stops health problems requiring more serious intervention.

However, the SNP have failed to put in place enough support for GPs, with their overall level of

funding declining as a percentage of the health budget since the SNP came to power. The Scottish Conservatives would change this with a GP Guarantee. This would see general practice double to 12% of the health budget.

This increased funding, that would be delivered by the end of this parliament, would allow us to guarantee that you will be able to get a GP appointment within 48 hours.



The number of patients on an NHS waiting list has grown by hundreds of thousands since the last Scottish Parliament election. To get waiting lists down we need to carry out more procedures.

We would take numerous steps to increase the number of procedures carried out by our NHS to reduce waiting lists, including: ‘Super Saturdays’ where the same procedure is performed multiple times over a weekend, off-peak scanning where NHS facilities are made available at evenings and at weekends for patient scans, and opening the five National Treatment Centres that were promised by the SNP but not delivered.

One of the most common procedures that our NHS has to carry out is hip and knee operations. Due to the SNP’s failure to tackle long waits, thousands of patients are being forced to go private. The Scottish Conservatives would end this scandal by increasing the number of knee and hip operations funded by NHS Scotland. This would include buying capacity in other parts of the UK and paying private providers to carry out operations.

NHS performance has also suffered due to SNP centralisation. Community hospitals and local health centres provide a range of valuable services that free up

capacity but in recent years the nationalists have preferred to take services away from local people. For example, they are downgrading five specialist neonatal intensive care units across Scotland and centralising services in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow instead.

The Scottish Conservatives oppose these centralisation efforts and would prevent the closure of any local health facility or community hospital in Scotland over the lifetime of the next Scottish Parliament.

Our plans to increase treatment capacity within the NHS and boost the number of GP appointments will also allow us to end the scandal of corridor care which has become commonplace thanks to SNP mismanagement. A corridor is never an appropriate place for a patient to receive treatment and we would ensure the resources are there to stop corridor care within a year.

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in Scotland, so improving how we treat it will be enormously beneficial to the health of our nation. The Scottish Government’s cancer strategy is now almost three years old. Many areas of the strategy have not been properly implemented, and there have been substantial developments in health technology since its publication. The Scottish Conservatives would

publish an updated strategy that gives NHS Health Boards a route map towards how these latest technologies can be deployed.

We will improve targeted screening and support for at-risk populations. Where a person’s lifestyle, medical history or family history places them at higher risk of developing conditions such as cancer, we would screen these individuals because early diagnosis and treatment radically improves the chances of recovery.

Another leading cause of death in our country is dementia. Dementia affects thousands of people across Scotland but there is still no cure for it. Scotland has world-leading research facilities in the field of neurological research, so the Scottish Conservatives would boost research funding to help find a cure and ensure that all types of dementia research are supported including childhood dementia.

For those with terminal illnesses, we must do better to care for them as they enter the final stages of their life. We welcome the publication of the Palliative Care Matters for All strategy 2025-2030 but know that strategies alone will not improve care – it is delivery that counts. So we would ensure this strategy is backed up with a new funding model to deliver the palliative care our country deserves.

Mental health is another area of healthcare where the SNP needs to do better. One of the first steps the Scottish Conservatives would take to improve mental healthcare is to roll out walk-in mental health hubs, modelled on the Nook mental health centre provided by Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH). Anyone can walk in to this centre to access support without the need for an appointment. We would work with SAMH to roll out other centres across Scotland.

This is how we will get our NHS delivering for you:

- » Guarantee you can get a GP appointment within 48 hours.
- » Reduce NHS waiting lists by increasing the NHS's capacity for carrying out procedures.
- » Increase the number of knee and hip operations funded by NHS Scotland to avoid the need for patients to go private.
- » Use the latest healthcare technology to improve treatment and diagnostics for patients.
- » Support local NHS services by enacting a nationwide moratorium on closing any community hospitals or health centres.
- » Eliminate the harmful practice of corridor care in our hospitals.
- » Provide targeted screening for at-risk populations to catch serious conditions at an earlier stage so that they can be treated more effectively.
- » Publish an updated Cancer Strategy that includes how we would use the latest medical technology to improve cancer survival rates.
- » Roll-out walk-in mental health hubs to help those with mental health conditions get the support they need.

Scottish Conservative policies to support women's health:

- » Guarantee access to a female GP or women's health specialist.
- » Deliver an urgent independent review into maternity services in Scotland.
- » Improve access to fertility services to support families.
- » Guarantee every woman access to a single-sex ward in hospital.
- » Improve maternity care by opposing the SNP's downgrading of maternity units across Scotland.
- » Improve access to menopause and endometriosis services for women.
- » Guarantee equal treatment to women in our NHS through a Women's Health Charter.

maternity wards. The SNP promised to conduct a review of conditions in these wards, but it has yet to commence. We would urgently start this review based on the work done by Baroness Amos in England.

We must also make our health service better for families more generally. We will work to expand access and provision to fertility and IVF services, ensure equality of access, and target resources at reducing waiting times for these services.

Another health issue where standards need to be improved is for women going through menopause. Far too many women still report difficulties in accessing the right treatment, so we would deliver more reviews to better assess what hormone treatment therapy is available for women going through menopause.

Endometriosis is another women's health issue all too often neglected. We would guarantee that all health boards have access to specialist nurses and clinics to improve training and guidance for the detection of this condition.

To truly ensure that women's health is treated properly in our NHS, we would deliver a Women's Health Charter to replace the SNP's failed Women's Health Strategy. This would guarantee the rights women

have in accessing healthcare and deliver improvements to treatment for female-specific issues across the NHS.

Reducing bureaucracy within our NHS and improving productivity

As our country ages it is inevitable that we will end up spending more money on our health service, making it essential to spend it more productively. The record funding going towards the NHS has not delivered record results, so we need to be bold and better spend the money going towards our health service so that it improves outcomes for patients.

Firstly, the Scottish Conservatives would ensure the NHS budget increases above inflation in every year of the next Scottish Parliament. We can make this promise because we have fully costed plans to make savings elsewhere, especially around reducing benefits spending. Any other party that makes commitments around NHS spend must be equally clear where they are going to find the money from.

Some of this increased funding would be used to invest in a

Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy that will be developed in partnership with staff and patients. This strategy would provide NHS staff with the support they need to improve our NHS, as well as address the high level of consultant vacancies in Scotland.

The workforce plan would improve conditions for NHS staff too, by improving training opportunities, promoting more flexibility, and taking strong action against workplace bullying. The workforce plan would also invest in car parking spaces for NHS staff at their place of work to cut down commuting times.

Increasing investment in our workforce also means improving support for new and returning staff. We would expand opportunities for people to build a career in our NHS and encourage people to return by reaching out to individuals who have recently left and address any concerns they may have.

One group of health professionals we would try and attract back to our health service is recently retired doctors and nurses. We would work with them to see what conditions would facilitate their return so that they can assist with surgical procedures to increase the number of treatments being carried out within our NHS.



We will deliver on the following policies to reduce bureaucracy and improve productivity within our NHS:

- » Increase funding for our NHS by uplifting its annual budget above inflation in every year of the next Scottish Parliament.
 - » Invest in our NHS staff with a new workforce plan that will be developed in consultation with staff and patients.
 - » Bring back recently retired doctors and nurses to deliver procedures.
 - » Deliver a “One NHS” IT platform to reduce the need for patients to repeat their medical history to different parts of our health service.
 - » Fast-track the rollout of a single national NHS app that would allow you to book appointments and prescriptions.
- » Roll out AI across the NHS to cut down on administration costs.
 - » Consolidate back office functions in the NHS to save resources that could be directed to the frontline instead.
 - » Reduce the number of senior managers and put the savings into frontline care.

As well as investing in NHS staff, we would invest in its equipment. England has had an NHS app since 2019, that lets patients book appointments and order repeat prescriptions through it. The SNP say their NHS app will not be fully operational until 2030 – 11 years later. We would invest in the development of this app as a priority and aim to have it operational by 2028.

Another part of our modernisation plans would be to deliver a ‘One NHS’ IT platform. This will allow patient records to be brought together in a confidential manner and prevent patients from being forced to repeat their medical history.

Administration across the NHS can also be reduced if we capitalise on the rollout of AI. The SNP have been slow to adopt this technology, admitting its use is ‘often small in scale’ in our NHS. We would roll out an in-house suite of AI tools for our NHS, modelled on the ‘Humphrey’ platform used by the UK Government, which saved officials 60 minutes of administrative work after an hour-long meeting. By using technology to reduce the amount of time taken to carry out administrative tasks, we can reduce the money being spent on non-clinical roles and spend this money on frontline care instead.

We would set a target of reducing the number of senior management roles and other non-clinical management roles by one-third over time via restructuring and natural turnover of staff. The savings generated would go towards frontline medical roles instead.

Earlier in this manifesto we outlined our plans to reduce the amount of money spent on ‘corporate functions’ of public bodies like HR and communications departments. These plans would apply to the NHS too, so we would merge HR, communications, finance and commercial departments of each local health board and hand them to NHS Delivery. This would unlock millions of pounds of savings to be directed towards the frontline.

These savings would also allow us to keep the benefits Scots currently enjoy as part of our health service such as free prescriptions. All medical drugs and equipment would remain free, but in recent years the free prescriptions list has expanded to include items of food that you can buy at the supermarket. That is not an appropriate use of taxpayer funds, so we would conduct a review of such items and take off things of this type.

Boosting public health

The best form of healthcare is the action we can take to prevent us from needing to go to the doctor in the first place. Becoming healthier as a nation would reduce demand on our NHS, freeing up capacity for those in need of treatment.

As Conservatives, we do not believe in state mandates trying to enforce changes of behaviour. Rather we believe in personal responsibility – trusting people to make the right choices if they are given the opportunity.

Exercise is one of the best ways to keep healthy and fit, but cheap options for exercising are not available to some people. Council-run leisure centres often provided accessible ways for families to exercise, but due to years of SNP underfunding many have been forced to close in recent years. Through our commitment to increase local government funding, we would ensure that councils have enough money to keep open or renovate community leisure centres as they are vital in providing people with an affordable place to exercise.

We would also increase the overall sports budget over the lifetime

of the next parliament, because money spent on sport provides savings due to the health benefits associated with exercising.

Eating well also contributes to a healthier population and while we will not go down the route of trying to ban or stop people from eating unhealthy foods, we will encourage public bodies to buy healthy foods from local farmers to allow people to eat more healthily in public sector settings through a new food and drink procurement strategy.

Developments in technology are also helping to improve people’s health. Weight-loss jags like Ozempic and Mounjaro have helped thousands of people lose weight across Scotland already, but access to such drugs is currently limited. We would ensure that all health boards can prescribe weight-loss drugs to combat obesity.

Dentistry is another important part of public health that has been neglected by the SNP. In large areas across Scotland it is not even possible to sign up to an NHS dentist. There are several contributing factors to this mess, such as a lack of dental staff and current funding arrangements. The Scottish Conservatives would initiate a root and branch review of the Statement of Dental Remuneration which outlines the current funding arrangements in

order to put NHS dentistry on a financially sustainable footing.

The major public health problem that the SNP have failed to tackle on their watch is drug and alcohol related deaths. Scotland has the highest levels of drug deaths in Europe, while the number of alcohol deaths is still far too high. The SNP's approach to tackling these problems simply hasn't worked.

Take their flagship policy to tackle Scotland's drug deaths: setting up a drug consumption room. This allows drug users to take heroin and crack cocaine legally. Since it opened at the start of 2025, drug deaths in the area it's operating in have actually increased.

We would stop this failed experiment by shutting down the drug consumption room and redirect the funding towards increasing the number of rehabilitation beds and support services. This would give people

more support to properly combat their addiction to drugs.

Another part of their plan to reduce drug deaths is funding the Scottish Drugs Forum. This taxpayer-funded charity lobbies in favour of Scottish Government policies and advocated for the decriminalisation of drugs, something which SNP ministers later came out in support of. The most effective way of tackling drug-related issues in Scotland is by funding rehabilitation and support services, not encouraging drug taking, so we would stop sending money to this campaigning organisation and put the money towards rehab beds instead.

Use of methadone has also been a key part of Scottish Government policy to try and reduce drug deaths. The effectiveness of this policy is questionable given that methadone has been responsible for more drug deaths than heroin for many years in a row now. For individuals currently taking

methadone prescriptions, we would introduce mandatory reassessments after two years if they have failed to get off drugs during that time.

Our approach to tackling drug deaths would be based on the Right to Recovery Bill that we introduced to Holyrood in the last parliamentary session. This legislation would have guaranteed in law an individual's right to treatment for drug and alcohol addiction in Scotland. It was co-authored by those working at drug addiction charities and was backed by 80% of people who responded to our consultation. Regrettably, the SNP and the Greens voted down the legislation, meaning it never became law. The Scottish Conservatives would reintroduce this proposed Bill as part of our plan to reduce drug deaths in Scotland.

For alcohol deaths, we would also change tack from the SNP's failing strategy. Their main policy to try



and reduce alcohol deaths is to make alcohol more expensive for everyone through Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP). In the last Scottish Parliament, the SNP raised the minimum unit price of alcohol from 50p to 65p, adding £1.40 to the price of a typical bottle of wine and just shy of £4 to the cost of a bottle of whisky. Yet, since the introduction of MUP, alcohol deaths have increased. We would scrap Minimum Unit Pricing and instead increase support for alcohol addiction services across the country after the SNP cut drug and alcohol policy funding in real terms in the last Budget.

The numbers of people smoking cigarettes in Scotland and across the UK has decreased in recent years, which has enormous societal benefits and is to be welcomed. People taking up vaping instead of smoking is one of the reasons smoking numbers have been in decline and that is welcome. However, the number of children taking up vaping is of increasing concern and we would work with schools to discourage this behaviour. We also support the ban on disposable vapes and want to see tougher enforcement against those who break the rules regarding the sale of vapes in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative MSPs will improve public health with these policies:

- » Ensure that weight-loss drugs can be more widely accessed.
 - » Improve patient access to NHS dentists by conducting a root and branch review of the current funding model.
 - » Close the SNP's drug consumption room that allows people to legally take heroin and crack cocaine.
 - » Scrap Minimum Unit Pricing on alcohol and target resources towards improving alcohol addiction services instead.
 - » Encourage healthy eating by incentivising public sector bodies to buy locally grown, healthy food for public contracts.
- » Support community leisure centres so that everyone has access to affordable places where they can go to exercise.
 - » Support the ban on disposable vapes and ensure action is taken against those who flout these laws.
 - » Increase funding for sports and activity to tackle obesity.
 - » Implement our Right to Recovery Bill to ensure that those addicted to alcohol or drugs have access to the treatment they need.

Delivering a better social care system

The SNP's record on social care has been disastrous over the last parliamentary session. One of the biggest policies in their 2021 manifesto was about the creation of a National Care Service that would take powers away from local authorities and give them to SNP ministers instead.

They spent more than £30 million developing plans for a National Care Service which were set to cost more than £2 billion if they had been implemented. Thankfully, after dogged campaigning by the Scottish Conservatives and stakeholders, the plans were ditched.

The Scottish Conservatives will oppose any future attempts to centralise social care and take powers away from local authorities. Councils know what's best for people in their local area, so they have to be involved in social care provision.

That is not to say the system is currently working well. Free personal and nursing care are positive parts of our social care system that we would seek to

retain, but their delivery is under threat due to resource shortages. And we need to do much better in tackling the issue of delayed discharges from hospitals, which has a knock-on effect on our social care system.

The SNP promised to eliminate delayed discharges from hospitals in 2015. Delayed discharges occur where someone is medically fit to be discharged from hospital but they cannot be released for some other reason, usually because an adequate care package is not in place for them. Around 2,000 hospital beds a month are occupied by people who are medically fit to be discharged but are still in hospital. The last public estimate of how much delayed discharge costs our NHS is £262 per bed per day. This estimate is from 2021, so the cost will have increased since then, making it all the more important we tackle this issue.

The Scottish Conservatives would reduce bed-blocking in our hospitals by providing our NHS with increased funds to temporarily place patients in a suitable care home within 48 hours of being declared fit for discharge. We would pilot this scheme only in areas where there is capacity within local care homes to take part. While the patient is in the care home, a suitable care package would be prepared for them.

Another contributing factor to delayed discharges is hospitals and patients waiting for guardianship orders to be approved in cases where no Power of Attorney is in place. This legal hurdle is responsible for a significant proportion of delayed discharge cases. We would amend the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 to allow for these patients to be discharged to an appropriate care home as long as a doctor and the family consent.

These policies would reduce bed-blocking, but wouldn't fix the fundamental problems with the care system in Scotland. Costs of delivering care have increased substantially, both for health boards and for local authorities, despite the creation of Integrated Joint Boards over a decade ago that was supposed to better integrate the work carried out by health boards and local authorities when delivering care services. The Scottish Conservatives would carry out a review of this framework to see whether an alternative structure could deliver better outcomes for those who need care. We would also do what the SNP have failed to do, and conduct proper workforce planning to address staff shortages through our Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy.



Improving education at every stage of life

Supporting children in their early years and during school

Everyone in Scotland who wishes to start a family should be supported, and the Scottish Conservatives will ensure there is sufficient funded childcare available to enable this.

Currently, the SNP have failed to fund any childcare support for families with children aged under 3 years, except for some limited schemes for parents with two-year-olds.

We want to expand funded childcare for parents, so that they can return to work, continue with their career and make a good living. That is why we would provide funded childcare from nine months

onwards for working parents, modelled on the 1,140 hours of funded childcare available for three- and four-year-olds.

However, we would change the way government supported childcare is funded to give more options to parents. Currently, Scotland's childcare system is distorted by centralised allocation from local authorities, limiting the options available to parents.

Although guidance states that funding should follow the child, this does not happen in reality, so the Scottish Conservatives would implement a proper funding model, giving parents a real say in where they take their child for childcare.

For care-experienced children, all of Scotland's political parties promised to deliver for them so that they grow up feeling loved, allowing them to realise their full potential.

The Scottish Government aimed to fully implement this promise with the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill. Although it was a step in the right direction, it will not deliver The Promise and all political parties must step up to deliver it by 2030.

When children get to school age, it is important that no child starts the day hungry, which is why we support the Scottish Government's announcement of providing breakfast clubs for all primary school children from April 2027.

Adapting to the school environment can sometimes be difficult for children, and sometimes they require some extra help. However, for some children that's not enough because they have additional support needs (ASN), and we're currently not doing enough to support them.

The SNP failed to deliver a Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill in the last session of parliament, which would have offered increased support for children with ASN. The Scottish Conservatives are clear that any revised proposals must include the redevelopment of pathways for diagnosing children with learning disabilities and what subsequent support is made available following diagnosis.

Children with ASN must also be supported in the classroom, especially as most of them have to learn in mainstream schools. The Scottish Conservatives would invest in 1,000 additional classroom assistants to help teachers and support children with ASN.

But we also need to look at whether the current approach taken towards pupils with ASN is correct. The Scottish Government currently adopts a 'presumption of mainstreaming' approach, which aims to keep pupils with ASN in mainstream schools. However, this approach has resulted in these pupils' learning needs not being met and contributes to disruptive behaviour. The Scottish Conservatives would conduct a full national review of the current approach to mainstreaming.

For rural schools and nurseries that are under threat of closure, we must

This is how Scottish Conservative MSPs will support children in their early years and during school:

- » Increase childcare options available for parents by implementing a true 'funding follows the child' model.
- » Provide additional support to help parents return to work with a new 'extra hours' model of extended childcare for parents of children from age nine months.
- » Support care-experienced children and young people by delivering on the remaining recommendations from the Independent Care Review.
- » Provide additional support in our schools by delivering 1,000 extra classroom assistants.
- » Undertake a national review of the mainstreaming of ASN pupils.
- » Support the introduction of breakfast clubs for all primary pupils.
- » Ensure physical education is supported in schools, including swimming lessons.
- » Ensure free music lessons are available for all school children in Scotland.
- » Support youth work groups by allowing them access to public buildings and developing a National Youth Work Strategy.

do more to ensure they stay open. We would explore options to allow communities in rural areas to take over their local school or nursery to ensure that they can remain open. When a closure is proposed, we would introduce mandatory depopulation impact assessments that would have to be conducted before any closure takes place.

All pupils should get good opportunities to learn a musical instrument but not enough support has been provided by the SNP Government, with only five local authorities able to provide lessons to all interested pupils. We would ensure proper funding is in place as we believe that all children deserve a chance to learn a musical instrument.

Good PE lessons are vital to improving children's health, and swimming lessons are a key part of this, so we would ensure that councils are given enough funding to provide these in all schools where there is demand.

Youth groups also provide a valuable outlet for young people looking to develop skills, build relationships, and increase their confidence. We would support these groups by working with local authorities to allow them free access to public buildings, ensuring fair local agreements for the sector's use of public infrastructure

and commit to the publication of a new National Youth Work Strategy to set out a clear plan for sustaining and growing the youth work sector.

Restoring standards in our schools

Scotland once had one of the world's best education systems, supplemented by our great universities.

It is a national tragedy that our once world-leading schools have plummeted down to levels that are merely average. It is imperative that the next Scottish Government urgently addresses this situation.

We would start by scrapping the SNP's Curriculum for Excellence and replace it with a new Curriculum for Aspiration that puts knowledge acquisition at its heart.

Part of that education has to ensure that literacy and numeracy levels are up to the required standard. In their first years at school, children must know how to read and do their times tables. Far too many children are currently unable to read and write to an acceptable level in our primary schools, so we must address how children are taught these skills.

The use of systematic synthetic phonics has been successful

in improving children's literacy down south. The Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) rated English pupils as best in the western world for reading, which many attribute to the rollout of systematic synthetic phonics. For numeracy, we would ensure that pupils know their times tables, providing them with a solid foundation to learn maths.

To ensure that children are not being left behind in the teaching of these invaluable skills, we would introduce mandatory checks-ins for Primary 1, Primary 4 and Secondary 1 pupils. The check-ins would assess the levels of literacy and numeracy levels, with interventions taking place on pupils who are not at the expected level so that they can improve. Furthermore, we would bring back the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy so that we have a better understanding of our pupils' learning levels.

When it comes to assessing children's academic ability, the Scottish Conservatives support traditional exam-based learning. Schools have been moving away from exam-based learning and some politicians have also pushed for this, but we reject these calls as unfair on the most disadvantaged pupils who do not have access to a support network at home. So while we accept coursework has its

place, especially in less academic subjects, exams must remain the primary method of assessment in schools for most subjects.

Upon Nicola Sturgeon becoming First Minister, she made it her 'defining mission' to close the attainment gap between the pupils from the least and most deprived backgrounds at school, but this will not be met by the 2026 deadline.

The Scottish Conservatives would give extra support for pupils from the poorest backgrounds by increasing Pupil Equity Funding and giving it directly to schools based on the number of disadvantaged pupils enrolled.

When controversial subjects have to be taught at school, this should be done with great sensitivity and respect for the wishes of parents. This approach was shamefully ignored when the SNP Government decided to issue a school sex survey that asked children inappropriate questions about their sexuality. That should never have happened and we would put a stop to any similar surveys being issued in future.

Parents have a right to raise their child as they wish and if they are uncomfortable with some of the things schools are teaching on socially contentious issues, they should be given a voice to say



Scottish Conservative policies to restore Scotland's schools to their world-class standards:

- » Return to knowledge-based learning with a new Curriculum for Aspiration.
- » Protect traditional exam-based learning as the fairest and most objective way to assess a pupil's academic progress.
- » Provide support to pupils from the poorest backgrounds with Pupil Equity Funding that goes directly to schools based on the number of disadvantaged pupils enrolled.
- » Restore discipline to schools, by giving headteachers the explicit authority to exclude pupils as a disciplinary measure.
- » Support a full national ban on mobile phones in schools.

- » Bring back the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy so that we can accurately gather data on our pupils' reading levels and maths skills.
- » Reverse the SNP's introduction of business rates and Labour's imposition of VAT on independent schools.
- » Introduce parent panels to oversee the content their children are taught on socially contentious issues such as sex education.

so. The Scottish Conservatives would establish parent panels in every local authority that would allow parents to oversee the content children are taught on socially contentious issues such as sex education or other issues of personal morality.

We cannot restore standards if we do not get tough on ill discipline within our schools. Despite thousands of incidents of verbal or physical abuse taking place within classrooms in 2024-25 not a single pupil was permanently excluded from a school. The reason for this is that Scottish Government guidance discourages exclusions and makes it very difficult for local authorities and schools to take action against severely disruptive pupils.

The Scottish Conservatives would empower headteachers by giving them exclusive authority to permanently exclude the most disruptive pupils.

Mobile phones are also detrimental to a child's learning and can fuel disruptive behaviour in the classroom too. We support a full national ban on mobile phones in our classrooms, and would pass legislation authorising headteachers to implement a ban in their schools if necessary.

We also want to give parents as much choice as possible about

where to send their child to school. Parents should not be punished for sending their children to an independent school. To reduce pressure on state schools and ensure that middle-income families are not pushed out of sending their children to independent schools, we would reintroduce full business rates relief for independent schools in Scotland that was taken away by the SNP and support the UK Conservative Party's policy of scrapping VAT on school fees that was introduced by Labour.

Backing our teachers

Our schools cannot succeed if teachers are not supported. The Scottish Conservatives believe that teachers should have more of a say when it comes to running our schools.

The SNP are content with the current system that is failing pupils and teachers alike. We want to be more ambitious. We will start by introducing a new national workforce plan to restore Scottish education back to its world-leading reputation. This plan would address any shortages in specific subjects, and explore ways to recruit teachers who may be struggling for employment due to their specialist subject being less in demand.

Teachers should be able to learn from best international practice. We would allow teachers to take sabbaticals from their regular day job in order to visit schools from across the country and the wider world so that they can acquire new skills that they can use in the classroom in Scotland.

Teachers can also develop their skills at after-school clubs. Children can benefit enormously from extra-curricular activities, but all too often they aren't available. We would change that by allowing teachers to be paid extra if they host regularly attended extra-curricular activities.

The workforce plan would address the rising number of teachers who cannot find permanent employment. It is currently estimated that there are over a thousand teachers looking for a full-time teaching role who are stuck relying on temporary work. At the same time, schools in our rural communities are struggling to find teachers. The Scottish Conservatives would establish a working group with teachers looking for full-time work and schools in our rural communities so that solutions can be found that would allow these teachers to find potential employment.

For subjects that appear to have an oversupply of teachers, we would offer already qualified teachers expedited conversion courses,

allowing them to qualify in subjects where there are more vacancies, whilst ensuring they still have the requisite knowledge to teach these subjects.

To properly support teachers, we must also let them get on with teaching rather than having to fill out unrelated paperwork. We would ensure local authorities have enough funding to roll out the latest digital technology that will alleviate the administrative burden placed on teachers so they can spend more time teaching and preparing lessons.

We would fund some of the measures that are part of our workforce plan by abolishing Education Scotland. This quango is responsible for producing vague and conflicting guidance that does little to help with teaching or boost standards in our schools. We would redirect its budget towards measures that will improve schools and support teachers instead.

If we are to truly transform the fortunes of our schools, we must entrust our teachers with greater powers to drive these improvements. We would transfer powers from local authorities to give headteachers greater oversight of school budgets, along with more authority overstaffing within their schools, because we think headteachers are best placed

We will back our teachers to succeed with the following measures:

- » Empower headteachers by giving them more powers to run their own school.
 - » Introduce a new national workforce plan to restore Scottish education to its formerly world-leading state.
 - » Give schools the ability to opt out of local authority control and become grant-aided schools, like Jordanhill School in Glasgow.
 - » Offer already qualified teachers expedited conversion courses to become teachers in subjects with a shortage of supply such as maths and science.
 - » Abolish Education Scotland to prevent the issuing of vague guidance and free up resources that would be better deployed raising school standards.
- » Work with teachers looking for full-time employment to fill vacancies in rural schools.
 - » Provide teachers with greater freedom to teach, by cutting red tape in schools to reduce the amount of paperwork teachers must do.
 - » Improve opportunities for teachers by allowing them to take sabbaticals for professional development.
 - » Pay teachers for holding extra-curricular activities during lunchtime and after school.

to make the decisions that work best for their schools.

As part of this transfer of power, the Scottish Conservatives would also look to expand a model of schooling that is already working well in Scotland. Jordanhill in Glasgow is funded directly by the Scottish Government, rather than via local authorities. It has consistently ranked as one of the best-performing state schools in Scotland and we believe it is a model to be emulated, so we would allow individual schools to apply to become grant-aided schools with local authority agreement.

Expanding educational opportunities for young people and adults

Once a young person has finished school, there should be plenty of further and higher educational placements for them to take up, or job opportunities to pursue should they wish.

The Scottish Conservatives want to be clear with anyone leaving school that there are lots of different exciting options available to them, whether that be college, university or getting a job. It should not be assumed that university is the only path to earning a decent wage.

We would actively encourage young people to choose the pathway that is right for them and lead by example by changing Scottish Government recruitment rules so that no vacancies in the civil service are advertised as requiring a university degree.

For those who do go to university, we would retain free university tuition for Scottish students, but would look at alternative systems that put Scottish students on an even footing when it comes to getting into universities in Scotland. We will consider the findings of the Future Framework for the Sustainability and Success of Scotland's Universities as part of this process.

However, we have to look beyond universities alone if we want to improve educational opportunities for young people. One option would be to take up an apprenticeship. They provide valuable skills and will often lead straight to a full-time job afterwards – so we would boost support for them.

The Apprenticeship Levy which is paid by employers in Scotland is supposed to fund apprenticeship places for businesses, but research suggests the SNP have consistently failed to pass on this money. Their pitiful excuse that they do not control the tax does not stand up to scrutiny when the amount of money

raised by the Apprenticeship Levy by Scottish employers has been reported publicly.

We would ensure that all the revenue raised by the Apprenticeship Levy goes towards supporting a new demand-led apprenticeship model. This would significantly expand the number of apprenticeships available, and we would make these opportunities open to people of all ages.

To facilitate more apprenticeship places we must also boost college funding. College budgets have been raided by SNP ministers in recent years. We would reverse these real-terms cuts and increase college funding so that it matches the levels reached in 2021-22, when adjusted for inflation.

This would be part of a wider reorganisation of the further and higher education landscape that would seek to address skills gaps in our economy. We believe that colleges have a crucial role to play in providing the training needed by employers in Scotland. Therefore, we would introduce a new Skills Bill that would establish a permanent framework for cooperation between businesses and our further and higher educational establishments, so that skills gaps can be swiftly identified by companies. Our colleges and universities can then adapt their courses to meet

demand, meaning these skills gaps are quickly addressed.

For colleges, this would mean providing them with extra support to deliver the courses our economy requires. Currently, colleges receive less funding per place to deliver their courses compared to universities. So where there is a particular economic demand for a college course to be provided, we would uplift college funding so that it matches the equivalent public funding received by a university to deliver a similar degree.

Due to the Office for National Statistics' classification of Scotland's colleges, they currently have very limited powers to borrow money to invest for the future. We would support changes to their current designation so that they have greater options for borrowing money to invest in their estate, allowing them to expand and provide more opportunities to adults and young people.

College and apprenticeship places should also be offered to the young people who are effectively dropping out of school before the age of 16. There is a significant number of children who simply stop attending school and miss opportunities to pick up skills and get into the world of work.

To provide a better pathway for these young people, we would introduce new partnerships between schools and colleges that would allow 14- and 15-year-olds who have effectively stopped attending school to leave and take up a place at a college or start an apprenticeship instead. These partnerships would require that young people are taught English and maths to an acceptable standard as part of their college course or apprenticeship, but it would be in an environment more suited to their needs while being fully compliant with UK employment law.

How Scottish Conservative MSPs will improve educational opportunities for people of all ages:

- » Retain free tuition for Scottish students at university but examine alternative systems so that Scottish students are no longer put at a disadvantage in the admissions process.
 - » Use Apprenticeship Levy funding paid for by businesses in Scotland to set up a new, ring-fenced fund that would increase support for apprenticeships and be demand-led.
 - » Make clear that all educational pathways are available to young people and tackle the default assumption that university is the best option.
 - » Uplift college funding to provide more opportunities for skills development.
 - » Support changes for colleges to have increased borrowing powers so that they can invest in their estate and expand to offer more courses to young people and adults looking to upskill.
- » Pay colleges extra money for courses in areas with skill shortages in the economy.
 - » Introduce a Skills Bill that would provide a permanent framework for using our education system to fill the skills gaps emerging in our economy.
 - » Create new partnerships between schools and colleges to allow pupils who are disengaged from school to go to college or start an apprenticeship aged 14 or 15.



... FOR
... SCOTLAND

FORCED SNP TO U-TURN ON
WOODBURN ... VE BAN

... AGAINST
... FARM TAX



Standing up for our rights, communities and environment

Empowering our local communities

Since the SNP came to power, the proportion of government funding going towards local government has shrunk, leaving less funding available for the basics like bin collections and fixing potholes.

The Scottish Conservatives would increase the amount of funding available to councils so they can deliver these services to a high standard. So in our first budget we would guarantee local government a higher proportion of the Scottish Government's overall budget.

We would fix this proportion over the lifetime of the next Scottish Parliament, so that when the Scottish Government's budget

increases, local government's budget increases by the same proportion, ensuring fair funding.

We would also simplify the funding formula as there are nearly 150 factors that determine how much each council gets from central government. The Scottish Conservatives would substantially reduce these factors to cut bureaucracy for local government. As part of this revised formula, rural councils would be given fairer funding to reflect the increased costs they face in service delivery, while urban councils will also be compensated for increased population growth.

Thanks to Scottish Government policy, councils are increasingly restricted in how much money they have to spend on local priorities, because a vast chunk of their budget is ring-fenced to deliver national policies that they are

required to spend money on.

This means that your local swimming pool or library is under constant threat of closure, if it hasn't been closed already, because councils cannot afford to keep them open when they are being forced to divert their budget towards delivering SNP policy.

To reverse this trend, the Scottish Conservatives would provide councils with a Budgetary Freedom Guarantee. This would guarantee councils a minimum proportion of their budget that they can spend on local priorities. We would set this proportion at a higher level than councils currently have and this would be enshrined in law through a Local Power Bill that would also guarantee councils multi-year funding.

The Scottish Government also undermines local government by

These are the policies Scottish Conservative MSPs will enact to put power back in the hands of local people:

- » Increase funding for local services by providing councils a guaranteed portion of the Scottish Government's budget every year.
 - » Simplify the council funding formula to reduce bureaucracy for councils.
 - » Give rural councils the funding they need to cover their increased costs of delivering services and ensure urban councils are properly funded to deal with population growth.
 - » Introduce a Local Power Bill that gives councils freedom to spend their budget on your local priorities.
 - » Stop Scottish Government ministers from overturning planning decisions made by local people.
- » Deliver savings for taxpayers by removing barriers to councils providing shared services.
 - » Conduct a review of all council quangos and shut down those not delivering value for money to save public money.
 - » Protect elected councillors' right to make decisions by stopping the abuse of the complaints system.

overturning decisions that were made by councils. This isn't right. Councils are better connected to the local communities they serve – and we would end the practice of Scottish Ministers overturning local planning decisions to restore local democracy.

We would also boost efficiency by reviewing the role of council quangos, also known as Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs). ALEOs can be useful, providing services like Edinburgh's trams, but that does not mean they all represent value for money. We would instigate an independent review of every ALEO in Scotland, in partnership with councils. Local authorities would have to conduct a value for money assessment for each ALEO as part of this process. Any ALEO that does not achieve value for money would be recommended for closure.

As Scottish Conservatives, we believe that when services are publicly funded, democratically elected politicians should be responsible for their delivery. This means councillors should be allowed to ask questions of officials tasked with implementing their policy. Most council officials will rightly accept scrutiny but a small minority disagree with councillors challenging their decisions or recommendations. They will then make a baseless complaint against

these councillors, causing severe distress for councillors who are just doing their jobs.

We would amend the Councillors' Code of Conduct to make clear that they cannot be investigated simply for challenging the decisions of council officials. Furthermore, we would create a new Code of Conduct for council officers, with similar principles to the Councillors' Code of Conduct but forbidding officials from making or threatening to make complaints against elected councillors for challenging policy decisions or recommendations.

Championing rural and coastal Scotland

The Scottish Conservatives have relentlessly fought for rural and coastal communities who have been left behind by the SNP.

Rural and coastal communities work hard to put food on our plates and policy must be developed with that in mind. But in the SNP's last budget, the rural affairs portfolio was one of the only departments to receive a cut in its funding.

The Scottish Conservatives would provide an immediate £50 million boost to the rural affairs portfolio in our first budget to support our farmers and fishermen. We would

provide multi-annual funding deals so they have clarity to make the investment choices that will help grow their business.

This financial support would be in stark contrast to the Labour Government's disgraceful attitude towards our farmers. One of Rachel Reeves' first acts as Chancellor was to impose a new tax on farmers who are already struggling. While it is welcome that there has been a partial U-turn on the tax, the Scottish Conservatives support Kemi Badenoch's policy to reverse the tax in full.

Instead of punishing farmers, we should be supporting them to put food on our plates. The Scottish Government now has full control over how agriculture support payments are distributed, so the Scottish Conservatives would conduct a full review of the distribution and delivery of farm payments with a view to increasing support for farming and crofting.

We would also ditch anti-farming policies that harm our agriculture sector, like the 2045 net zero target that requires less meat-eating and widespread culling of farm animals to cut emissions.

Farmers want to spend their time farming, not form-filling, so the Scottish Conservatives would review all agricultural paperwork

requirements, cut bureaucracy, and look at where the financial burden of filling out and submitting this paperwork could be reduced.

We would also attract the next generation of farmers to work in the agriculture sector by establishing a New Entrants' Support Scheme that would provide interest-free loans for people looking to enter the industry and provide succession support for older farmers to allow younger farmers access to their land to prepare for the future. A similar scheme would also be established for people looking to enter the fishing industry.

Criminals operating in rural communities often target farmers due to the expensive equipment they own and the costs involved in protecting their farm. Stealing from a farmer has a devastating impact on their business, so we must target resources towards preventing these crimes from happening and resolving them as soon as possible.

We would introduce a Rural Crime Bill as one of our first acts of parliament that would ensure agricultural equipment is fit with an immobiliser and forensic markings to identify the buyer. We would forbid the sale of equipment without these attachments and require that records are kept of sales to identify where stolen equipment has come from.



Standing up for rural communities doesn't just mean standing up for our farmers. Many of these communities will have experienced their bank closing the only branch in the area, which is unfair on locals and businesses. Although access to cash is controlled by UK legislation, Scottish Conservative MSPs will always fight against bank closures in rural communities.

Too many parts of rural Scotland still don't have access to high speed broadband. We would finally finish the delayed rollout of the 'R100 programme' to bring faster broadband to all communities in Scotland.

Small towns and villages that used to be home to a thriving community are also being hollowed out due to population decline. We would establish re-population zones in areas where the population has significantly declined. These zones would be granted a budget that local authorities could spend to attract more people to the area.

Coastal communities are suffering from population decline while the fishing industry is in a downturn. That is why we must support this industry and the jobs and communities it sustains in coastal areas. That means working with the industry to support aquaculture, with a strong focus on making sure fish farming works for local

These are the policies we would introduce to protect rural and coastal communities:

- » Ensure that farming is properly funded with at least a £50 million uplift to the rural budget and guarantee multi-year settlements for our farmers.
- » Support the UK Conservative Party's plans to fully reverse the Family Farm Tax.
- » Fight against bank closures in rural and remote communities to protect residents who are still reliant on cash.
- » Cut red tape for our farmers so we can free up their time to farm rather than fill forms.
- » Introduce a Bill to tackle rural crime at the beginning of the next Parliament.
- » Review the distribution and delivery of farm payments to ensure farmers get enough financial support to put food on our plates.
- » Protect Scotland's food security by ditching Scottish Government policies that encourage a reduction in meat and dairy products.
- » Establish 're-population zones' to support Scottish communities whose existence is under threat due to population decline.
- » Commit to multi-annual funding for fishing to provide financial certainty for our fishermen.
- » Promise that no policy is introduced that seeks to ban fishing in large parts of our seas like the SNP and Greens proposed with their Highly Protected Marine Areas.

people, other industries and the environment.

What we will not do is propose damaging policies that threaten the entire fishing industry's existence, as happened in the last session of the Scottish Parliament. The SNP, backed up by their Green coalition partners, proposed introducing Highly Protected Marine Areas to Scotland's waters, which would have banned fishing from 10% of our seas. The Scottish Conservatives backed industry calls for these plans to be ditched, and thankfully they were. We pledge not to revive these plans in any form in the next Scottish Parliament.

Protecting our natural environment

The mass industrialisation of our countryside is one of the biggest threats to Scotland's natural environment. The erection of pylons and other infrastructure is happening on a scale that has never been seen before, while locals who have to deal with the consequences are ignored.

Residents must be empowered to say enough is enough. The Scottish Conservatives would introduce a new law that would allow local people to veto energy infrastructure

if enough of them formally object to a proposed development.

We will stop the SNP's chaotic energy transition, which is being done without democratic consent and is damaging our countryside. We will introduce a time-limited pause on major renewable energy infrastructure applications to ensure Scotland delivers this infrastructure in a planned, cost-effective and community focused way. This pause will enable the Scottish Government to finally publish a coherent, standalone National Energy Policy which ensures we have the right kit in the right place, for the right reasons.

During this pause, we will introduce a process of robust Economic Impact Assessments for major renewable energy developments, with specific consideration of impacts on rural communities, tourism, agriculture, local employment and Scotland's food security.

Pylons are particularly damaging to our natural environment, are a blight on our landscape and cause locals to lose an enormous amount of money due to the reduced house prices that result from pylons being erected. Therefore, we would produce guidance that makes clear pylons should only be used for energy infrastructure when no other viable alternatives are available.

We will also establish a time-limited and focused Scotland-wide Planning Inquiry Commission, as provided for in Scots Planning Law, to scrutinise the cumulative and community impacts of all major renewables energy infrastructure developments including transmission, storage and generation on our communities and landscapes, rather than the salami-slice, fragmented approach taken by the SNP so far. This will inform our transition based on evidence not ideology, doing the much-needed homework that the SNP should have done but has so far failed to deliver. If elected, one of our first Ministerial acts will be to instruct such a Commission.

The Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit has repeatedly overruled the objections of local communities when it comes to energy infrastructure and they have lost the confidence of residents impacted by pylons, battery storage and wind turbines. We would abolish this unit and transfer its powers to local authorities.

For energy infrastructure projects that are approved, local residents must be adequately compensated for the financial impact, so we would require developers pay into a compensation fund that would be given directly those who will be impacted.

Energy infrastructure is not the only threat to our natural environment. Wildfires are damaging our landscape but SNP Government policy actively harms our efforts to tackle them. For example, their muirburn licensing scheme will impose restrictions on the burning of heather to manage wildfires. The Scottish Conservatives would pause the implementation of this scheme and prevent this damaging proposal from becoming law.

Rewilding can also be damaging to our natural environment if it is done carelessly. The Scottish Conservatives recognise that rewilding may sometimes be desirable, but it has often been done without the consent of farmers and crofters who have to suffer the consequences.

No more government-backed rewilding projects should occur until thorough assessment of the action is carried out, including consultation with farmers and crofters who would have the right to veto any proposals that will damage their livelihoods.

Rather than more rewilding, we need to manage Scotland's existing wildlife better. Deer overpopulation has caused huge problems for gamekeepers and land managers. Scottish Government legislation often makes gamekeepers' lives more difficult, so the Scottish

Conservatives would take a different approach by developing policy in consultation with land managers so we can achieve wildlife management goals.

Fighting identity politics and upholding our values

The SNP has spent the last five years obsessed with the issue of gender reform. They tried to pass a law that would allow 16-year-olds to legally change their gender, spent taxpayers' money arguing in court that men can get pregnant and most seriously of all, a convicted double rapist was sent to a women's prison because of its policies of gender self-identification.

Far too much time and money has been wasted on this issue. We would reverse the damage caused by the SNP's policies and ensure the Supreme Court's ruling that sex means biological sex is respected.

That starts by ensuring women and girls have access to single-sex spaces throughout the public sector, including hospitals, schools and prisons. In particular, biological men must be removed from women's prisons given the threat they pose to vulnerable female

We will protect our natural environment against pylons and other threats with the following policies:

- » Pause all major energy infrastructure applications whilst we put in place a new policy that gives local communities a clear say in the process.
- » Introduce a new law that would allow communities to say no to new pylons.
- » Abolish the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit.
- » Require energy companies to pay into a compensation fund for residents who will be impacted by pylons and other similar infrastructure.
- » Establish a Scotland-wide Planning Inquiry Commission to examine the national significance of energy generation and transmission charges.

- » Make pylons the option of last resort for energy infrastructure projects.
- » Take action to prevent wildfires including by pausing the rollout of the muirburn licensing scheme.
- » Commit to no more government-backed rewilding projects and establish a fund to mitigate against current failures.

Here is how Scottish Conservative MSPs will uphold our values:

- » Introduce a new Marriage Modernisation Act to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18, ban first-cousin marriage and reduce the administrative costs imposed on couples wishing to get married.
- » Protect women and girls by requiring that all public sector bodies have single sex spaces.
- » Outlaw public bodies from discriminating against charities and businesses for their political views when it comes to funding decisions.
- » Scrap the Scottish Government's guidance that encourages the teaching of gender ideology in our schools.
- » Invest in Men's Sheds across Scotland to support men's wellbeing.
- » Deliver a full and truly independent Scottish grooming gangs inquiry.

prisoners and prison officers.

There have been horrific reports from schools across Scotland of girls being abused in mixed-sex toilets in recent years, so single-sex toilets must be in place across our schools. But we also have to stop harmful ideas being taught to our children in the first place, which is why we would scrap the Scottish Government guidance which encourages the teaching of gender ideology in schools.

We will also ensure a full and truly independent inquiry is held into grooming gangs in Scotland, with victims and survivors having a role in overseeing it.

The networks that represent staff in public sector bodies are supposed to support everyone working within the organisation, but they are increasingly being overtaken by a minority of activists with extreme political views that do not represent the majority of staff. We would require all public bodies' staff networks to respect and represent everyone and not discriminate based on political views.

The Scottish Conservatives would also make clear that no public body would be allowed to discriminate against an individual, charity or business on the basis of their political views when it comes to funding or policy decisions made

by ministers or senior public sector officials alike.

One group of charities that needs more support is Men's Sheds. Men's Sheds provide men with a place where they can openly talk about their health while combating the social isolation and loneliness that many currently feel. We would increase funding going towards grassroots Men's Shed organisations from the Scottish Government so that more men can access the benefits generated by Men's Sheds.

Upholding our values also means supporting couples who would like to get married and preventing the process from being abused. The Scottish Conservatives want to encourage people to get married so we would simplify and reduce the cost of the process which can vary substantially from one local authority to the next, and raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 to protect girls from potential abuse. In addition, we would ban first-cousin marriage as it is a barbaric practice with negative health consequences that should have no place in our society.



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Backing our veterans

Veterans put their lives on the line to defend our country and for that we should be forever grateful. To thank them for their service, we must make Scotland the best part of the UK to be a veteran.

In our first budget, we would double the Scottish Veterans Fund to demonstrate our commitment to our Armed Forces community. The Scottish Veterans Fund supports charities who provide a range of services for those who have served in our Armed Forces. By doubling it, we would guarantee that more financial support is going towards these charities.

On top of providing more financial support to veterans' charities, we would also establish a Veterans Guarantee to ensure every veteran looking for work could get a job, place on a training programme or an educational placement. The Veterans Guarantee would seek to put an end to the appalling situation where we have thousands of veterans who have served our country but are unable to find work.

As part of the Veterans Guarantee, we would establish a Veterans Fast-Track Programme for public sector jobs that would be modelled on the civil service fast stream programme.

This would seek to place veterans into jobs in public sector settings, with support offered to take up the training needed if they wish to work in a certain role.

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner has highlighted that the cost of mortgages and rent is one of the most significant financial pressures facing our veterans, which is why we would take steps to address this. The Ministry of Defence provides Service Family Accommodation for those in active service to live in while on the job, but no such support is provided afterwards. We would work with the UK Government to see if empty Service Family Accommodation, also known as married quarters, could be provided at a discounted rate to veterans to help them with the cost of living as they transition to civilian life.

Shockingly, some veterans don't have a house of any kind to live in. It is estimated that there are hundreds of homeless veterans in Scotland. We would legislate so that veterans are treated as a priority when it comes to assessing homelessness applications and social housing applications.

Veterans often leave service with health problems and it is vital that our NHS is equipped to help address those issues. Health Boards across Scotland have

funded Veterans First Point services to give veterans health support and advice but these services have faced cutbacks in recent years. We would reinstate full funding so that all Health Boards in Scotland can provide bespoke Veterans First Point Services so that they can get the support they need. For veterans struggling with their mental health, we would establish Scotland's first dedicated mental health hub for veterans, staffed by mental health professionals.

To guarantee that veterans are treated with the respect they deserve, their rights must be upheld in law. That is why the Scottish Conservatives would enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant into law for devolved areas of responsibility. The covenant is a promise that those who have served in our Armed Forces should be treated with respect and not be placed at a disadvantage when it comes to the provision of public and commercial services.

Our law would also enshrine into law tougher punishments for the vile individuals who vandalise war memorials and protect defence companies from being discriminated against when it comes to receiving public funding as has happened under the SNP Government.

Our plan to support the Armed Forces and our veterans:

- » Prioritise veterans when it comes to assessing homelessness or social housing applications.
- » Double the Scottish Veterans Fund to boost support available to those who have served in our Armed Forces.
- » Give veterans discounted rent for empty married quarters to reduce their cost of living.
- » Set up a Veterans Guarantee that would guarantee jobless veterans a job, a place on a training programme or an educational placement.
- » Reinstate Veterans First Point Services across Scottish health boards to give them the healthcare they need.
- » Establish Scotland's first dedicated nationwide mental health hub for veterans.
- » Introduce a Bill to support our veterans, toughen up punishments for war memorial vandals and protect our defence industry.



Protecting the public from crime

Backing our police and fire services

In 2013, the SNP centralised Scotland's local police and fire services into one, creating Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) respectively.

Since then, local policing has suffered, with fewer people seeing police patrols on their streets and less scrutiny of how officers police your local area. We want that to change, but we can only do so if we give police the time and resources to do so.

To give our police more time to fight crime, we would implement the successful 'Right Care, Right Person' model to stop the police being the default first responder to mental health incidents.

On top of this, we would repeal Humza Yousaf's Hate Crime Act that forces officers to spend time

policing people's speech rather than fighting real crime. Crimes motivated by prejudice would be punished via statutory aggravators instead. Another waste of police time is the recording of non-crime hate incidents. As the name suggests, these incidents can be recorded against an individual for simply posting a joke that some people found offensive. We would require that Police Scotland stop recording non-crime hate incidents.

By doing this, police will have more time to patrol our streets. Street patrols are an effective way of deterring crime, and should be a key part of our crime-fighting strategy. We would work with Police Scotland to set targets for increased patrols on our streets, with a particular emphasis on crime hotspots to reduce overall crime levels.

Police Scotland must also be adequately resourced, so we would ensure that the police budget rises at least in line with inflation in every year of the next Scottish Parliament.

As part of our commitment to put more resources to the frontline across the public sector, we would also urge that any budgetary uplifts go towards funding more police officers.

Thanks to SNP underfunding, almost two hundred police stations have closed since 2013. We must not let this continue, so we will prevent the closure of operational police stations in the next five years.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service are in dire need of support given the SNP's neglect of the organisation, so we would also guarantee that their budget at the very least rises with inflation in the next five years. That way, we can stop the closure of functional fire stations which have been threatened in areas such as Hawick.

Given the increasing threat of wildfires, it is vital that the fire service maintains a truly national presence. We would also work with SFRS to increase the resources it dedicates to tackling wildfires.

This is what we will do to support our police and fire services:

- » Set targets that would increase police patrols on Scotland's streets.
- » Prevent the closure of local police stations.
- » Free up police officers' time to fight crime by stopping them from policing speech and being the default responder to mental health incidents.
- » Protect police and fire service budgets so that they at least rise with inflation.
- » Halt the closure of fire stations to ensure our local communities are protected.
- » End Police Scotland's use of non-crime hate incidents that threatens the freedom of speech of law-abiding citizens in Scotland.
- » Introduce mandatory fire safety checks for all vape shops.

The potential fire hazard presented by vape shops has recently become apparent. Lots of vapes contain electric batteries that are packed into vape shops, increasing the likelihood of a major fire. While it is not known if this was the cause of the March 2026 fire on Union Street in Glasgow, we would introduce mandatory fire safety checks for all vape shops, with fire officers able to intervene if they see a potential fire hazard with the storage of these batteries.

Toughening up sentences for criminals

The SNP's soft-touch approach to justice completely lets down victims of crime and undermines the public's confidence in the justice system. The Scottish Conservatives are on the side of the law-abiding majority who want to see criminals punished for their crimes.

We would scrap SNP policies that let criminals off the hook. In 2019, the nationalists passed the presumption against short prison sentences which aims to stop criminals from going to jail for less than 12 months. Then in 2022, the SNP's sentencing quango passed rules that aim to either stop under-

25s from going to jail or give them more lenient sentences. Both of these rules would be ditched under the Scottish Conservatives.

Furthermore, we would clamp down on antisocial behaviour, by increasing maximum fines and raise unpaid work requirements to deal with the rise in antisocial behaviour. Included in this clampdown would be a three strikes approach where those who commit antisocial behaviour on three separate occasions would be locked up.

Because the SNP want to avoid locking criminals up, they have let crimes such as shoplifting become effectively decriminalised. This is extremely damaging for small businesses. We would end the current practice of dealing with the majority of serial shoplifters through fines, as this has not deterred reoffending. Instead, a shoplifter who is convicted of three separate offences will go to prison unless exceptional circumstances apply.

For criminals who receive a community sentence as part of their punishment, victims and the public alike deserve to know that justice is still being done. But the Scottish Conservatives have exposed examples of criminals doing knitting classes or making hedgehog dens as part of their community sentence. We believe that offenders should be required

to perform visible work that actually improves our communities instead, like tidying our streets.

Businesses also need to comply with our laws. Whilst the overwhelming majority of companies comply with the law, there are vape shops that appear not to be sticking to the rules but get away with it. We would ensure the resources are in place to enforce these laws and would introduce tougher punishments for those found to have broken the law.

Criminals that commit sexual crimes need to be punished more harshly too. Most convicted sex offenders will avoid jail and those who do go to prison often don't receive a sentence that fits the crime. That is because the legislation that sets out sentences for most sexual crimes has not been updated in years. We would introduce a new law that would increase the maximum sentences that can be handed out for sexual crimes. As part of that new law, we would introduce mandatory life sentences for child rapists.

Indeed, those who have committed the very worst crimes should never be let out of jail. Yet in Scotland, judges have no power to issue whole life orders so that those who have committed the most heinous crimes will remain behind bars for good. The Scottish Conservatives

would introduce these orders in Scotland so that the most dangerous criminals are never released back onto our streets.

Cracking down on crime

Getting tough on crime doesn't just mean increasing prison sentences but ensuring that police and prosecutors have the powers available to them to arrest and prosecute criminals. For those who are convicted, there must also be enough space in our jails so that they can be kept off our streets.

Knife crime is one of the most dangerous forms of crime on Scotland's streets. One of the most effective methods in tackling it is through giving police adequate stop-and-search powers, but the Scottish Police Federation say that current legislation doesn't give them sufficient authority to use these powers against young offenders. We would give the police enhanced 'stop-and-search' powers, that would apply to under-18s, in order to prevent knife crime. Those caught in repeated possession of knives would get a mandatory minimum sentence of six months in prison.

Scottish Conservative MSPs will toughen up criminal sentences in the following ways:

- » Scrap failed SNP policies like their soft-touch under-25 sentencing guidelines and effective ban on short-term prison sentences.
- » Hand out mandatory life sentences for child rapists and give tougher sentences to sex offenders across the board.
- » Ensure dangerous murderers can never be released by introducing whole life sentences in Scotland.
- » Make criminals carry out proper community work as punishment for their crimes.
- » Toughen up punishments for a range of antisocial behaviour offences including a 'three strikes' approach where frequent offenders are jailed.
- » Protect small businesses by locking up shoplifters.
- » Bring in tougher punishments for vape shop owners who fail to comply with rules and regulations including jail time.



Organised crime gangs fuel all sorts of criminal activity across Scotland, including knife crime, and we won't reduce levels of crime without taking on those involved with these gangs. The Scottish Conservatives would legislate to treat organised crime groups like terrorists, whereby proven members could be imprisoned for up to 14 years.

To tackle the dirty money that is associated with organised crime, we would toughen up Proceeds of Crime legislation so that more money can be recovered from criminals who have made money through illicit means.

Crime is also committed by individuals in positions of power. Those who enjoy privileged positions in public office should be held to higher standards for their conduct, yet in Scotland there is no specific criminal offence of committing misconduct in public office. The Scottish Conservatives would introduce this new criminal offence so that those who abuse their position of power for personal gain would face jail time.

Combating violence against women and girls should be a key priority for the next Scottish Parliament. We want to see perpetrators punished more harshly, to send a clear message to abusers that this behaviour is unacceptable. But we must go further if we are to give

women and girls the protection they deserve.

The Scottish Conservatives attempted to pass legislation in the last session of the Scottish Parliament that would have put the perpetrators of domestic abuse on a register, similar to the sex offenders register. It would allow authorities to monitor domestic abusers and prevent future abuse occurring. However, the proposal was blocked by the SNP. We would bring back a revised version of this legislation, taking on board the legitimate feedback from domestic abuse charities and justice agencies.

One woman who was the victim of horrific violence at the hands of her partner was Claire Inglis. She was killed by her partner who had a lengthy criminal record of violence, yet he was still released on bail to Claire's home multiple times, which ended with tragic consequences.

This should never have happened, and it must never happen again. That is why we would introduce Claire's law.

This would place restrictions on repeat offenders being granted bail by repealing the SNP's changes to bail law, and improve information sharing across justice agencies to prevent situations where an abusive partner is bailed to their partner's

home rather than remanded in custody.

We would also consult on introducing a law to tackle non-fatal strangulation. There is no specific piece of legislation criminalising non-fatal strangulation in Scotland, despite it being frequently used as a method of abuse against women and girls. Although the Scottish Government has published a consultation on violence against women and girls which outlines the current law in relation to non-fatal strangulation, it does not include a specific question on whether it should be a standalone offence.

When a prison sentence is issued to a criminal, the length of sentence should be served. This should not be a controversial statement, but the SNP disagree with it. They decided to lower the automatic early release point that short-term prisoners are released from their sentence to just 30%. This means that someone sentenced to three years in prison won't even serve a year before being released automatically.

The Scottish Conservatives would end this approach by abolishing automatic early-release schemes for all prisoners. Instead, they would serve their sentences in full. This would mean that criminals who break the rules whilst in prison would be ineligible for early release.

This is how we will crack down on crime in Scotland:

- » Implement honest sentencing to end the SNP's soft-touch early-release schemes and require criminals to serve prison sentences in full instead.
- » Introduce 'Claire's Law' to restrict the use of bail and increase information sharing between the authorities to prevent horrific crimes like the murder of Claire Inglis.
- » Tackle the scourge of knife crime through increased punishments and 'stop-and-search' powers.
- » Introduce a new offence of misconduct in public office for Scotland.
- » Crack down on organised crime gangs by treating them like terrorists.
- » Expand the number of prison places so that dangerous offenders are locked up.

- » Introduce a domestic abuse register so that the authorities can monitor abusers and deter future crimes being committed.
- » Develop legislation to allow Scotland to send prisoners abroad to prevent the need for the early release of prisoners.
- » Introduce alcohol tags and a pilot of drug monitoring patches to boost rehabilitation for offenders.

Introducing new crimes, increasing sentences and ensuring they are served in full will require more prison spaces. We would achieve this by cutting out unnecessary features in new prisons, in order to fast-track their construction and free up space for more prison cells. We would also launch a review to determine where new prison wings could be opened and capacity boosted on existing estates.

In the last few years, thousands of prisoners have been released early by the SNP Government due to their failure to get control of the prison population. Rather than releasing prisoners early, the Scottish Conservatives would develop legislation so Scotland can send prisoners to jails abroad. Our plan would be modelled on Sweden's agreement with Estonia to rent out up to 600 prison places for up to five years.

Whilst prisoners are in jail, we must ensure that as well as being punished, they are given a chance to rehabilitate themselves by learning skills that will be useful upon their release. We would ensure that the resources are in place to deliver such programmes.

Alcohol tags can help offenders to rehabilitate themselves. These have been used successfully in other parts of the UK to prevent offenders from drinking alcohol, but they still

haven't been rolled out in Scotland. We would commence the rollout of alcohol tags in Scotland for criminals released on licence. New technology being developed would allow offenders to be monitored for drug use too, in the form of sweat patches. We would pilot a scheme that compels offenders at risk of drug abuse to wear these sweat patches when they are released on licence from prison.

Rebalancing our legal system to support victims of crime

A strong, independent legal system is an integral part of a well-functioning democracy, so it is of paramount importance that we maintain it. It should work to ensure that victims of crime get the justice they deserve in a timely manner while also guaranteeing that everyone has a right to a fair trial. The SNP are failing to uphold these principles.

A key component of Scotland's legal system is the unique role of our chief prosecutor, the Lord Advocate. She currently heads Scotland's prosecution service and is therefore responsible for all

prosecutorial decisions. But she is also the Scottish Government's chief legal adviser who sits in cabinet and is appointed by Scottish Ministers. This creates a clear perceived conflict of interest. The Scottish Conservatives would work with UK colleagues to end this dual role of the Lord Advocate, so that the roles of the Scottish Government chief legal adviser and head of the prosecution service are held by separate individuals.

Perceived conflicts of interest can be damaging if they are seen to impact on the course of justice, which is why we would consider the introduction of a register of interests for the judiciary. This would allow them to declare any relevant conflicts in cases they're working on, following a detailed review of the present situation and assessing the effectiveness of reforms implemented during the previous Parliament.

Our legal system relies on more than just the Lord Advocate and the judiciary. It needs prosecutors who can pursue cases on behalf of victims, and defence lawyers who provide accused criminals with their right to a fair trial. This system currently relies on legal aid to ensure that an accused person is fairly represented.

There have been repeated warnings about the state of

Scotland's legal aid system under the management of the Scottish Government. The Scottish Conservatives would conduct a holistic review into legal aid provision in Scotland, involving all relevant parties, to examine whether the current system is fit for purpose and where it is falling short.

Jury trials are a fundamental part of our legal system in Scotland. The SNP have twice tried to abolish it for some crimes in Scotland, but the Scottish Conservatives stopped them. We will always fight to protect jury trials in Scotland.

Abolishing jury trials – as Labour are trying to do down south – is the wrong way to reduce court backlogs. After the Covid pandemic, it was initially promised that court backlogs would be restored to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the previous session of the Scottish Parliament. However, this has not happened and the backlog has risen for the most serious cases. The Scottish Conservatives would invest in the latest technology and conduct a review with stakeholders around criminal court procedures to help clear these backlogs.

When a criminal is convicted in court, the sentence they receive is rightly a matter of public record. However, that is usually where the transparency ends. For example,



the public are not allowed to know how long a criminal actually served in jail. We would change this.

Victims are often left in the dark about information relevant to their own case and there is a general lack of transparency around parole decisions. We would introduce a Victim Rights Act that would overhaul Scotland's justice system to improve transparency for victims and give them more information about their case. Specifically, we would switch the current Victim Notification Scheme from an opt-in to an opt-out model, making it easier for victims to know when the criminal in their case is due for release.

Our proposals would also give victims formal powers to appeal sentences they consider to be too soft directly to the Lord Advocate, who would then be required to make a decision on whether to appeal the sentence of the court.

The Victim Rights Act would also include a true Suzanne's Law, named after Suzanne Pilley, who was murdered in Edinburgh, but whose body has never been discovered. Her killer will be eligible for parole within the next five years, despite never revealing the location of her remains. We would empower parole boards to block the release of killers who refuse to disclose this information.

Murderers and killers who hide or mutilate the body of their victim deserve additional punishment for causing further pain to the family and friends of the victim. So on top of strengthening Suzanne's Law, we would empower judges to issue harsher punishments for killers who conceal or mutilate their victim's body.

Criminals locked up in jail should lose certain rights and privileges that the rest of us enjoy, including the right to vote. Unbelievably, the SNP, backed up by Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens, all voted to allow certain prisoners still serving their sentence the right to vote in Scottish Parliament and local government elections. We would reverse these changes as soon as possible, because no prisoner still serving the punishment for their crime should be allowed to vote in our elections.

These are our plans to reform our legal system and put victims of crime first:

- » Overhaul our justice system with a new Victim Rights Act.
- » Allow soft sentences to be appealed by victims.
- » Abolish the dual functions of the Lord Advocate so that the Scottish Government's chief legal adviser is no longer our country's top prosecutor.
- » Ban prisoners from voting in Holyrood elections.
- » Launch a holistic review into legal aid provision in Scotland involving legal experts, criminal justice agencies and victims.
- » Consider the introduction of a register of interests for the judiciary.
- » Allow the public to see when prisoners were released and how long they actually served in prison.

- » Protect jury trials in Scotland and guarantee they remain a part of our justice process.
- » Reduce court backlogs and trial delays for victims by utilising technology and reviewing criminal court procedures.

Conclusion

This manifesto sets out the Scottish Conservatives' most comprehensive vision for Scotland since devolution.

While the SNP in Scotland and Labour in Westminster are raising taxes and hammering businesses, we want to bring down household bills and boost our economy.

Working together with Kemi Badenoch, we are holding these two failing governments to account, and we have a plan to get Scotland working again.

The policies outlined in this manifesto would cut bills for families across the country, deliver faster GP appointments, fix the roads, boost police presence in our communities and cut your taxes.

We will take more people out of paying income tax altogether and reduce the rate of tax for lower- and middle-income families. We will double funding for family doctors so that you can see your GP within 48 hours. We will set up a National Pothole Action Fund and pass an emergency law to speed up the upgrade of key trunk roads like the A1, A75, A9 and A96. We will free up police resources so that they can spend more time patrolling our streets and preventing crime.

And we will cut down on the SNP's bloated benefits bill that will allow us to pay for all this.

The Scottish Conservatives are the only party with a credible, fully costed plan to deliver on all our policy commitments.

Every other political party is making spending plans without saying where the funding will come from. That's because they know the money will have to come through higher taxes or cuts to public spending.

After 20 years of SNP-led decline, the next Scottish Parliament must be focused on growing the economy, lowering household bills and fixing public services.

But we can only achieve this if we prevent an SNP majority. Because if John Swinney wins a majority of seats at the Holyrood election in May, he will immediately get to work on his plan to hold another independence referendum.

That means another five years of distraction and division. Five years of the SNP prioritising their relentless push for independence over the things that really matter to people across Scotland.

Scotland can't afford that.

There is a tried and tested method to stopping an SNP majority – voting Scottish Conservative on your peach, party list ballot paper.

Ruth Davidson won enough seats in 2016 to prevent the SNP winning a majority, Douglas Ross did the same again in 2021. Russell Findlay can do it too in 2026.

Wherever you live in Scotland, the smart way to stop an SNP majority is to vote for the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party on your peach party ballot on 7 May.

Let's Get Scotland Working.





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