



Who has had  
snack ?

# Be the best again.

Scottish Parliament 2016 Manifesto

# Contents

# Our liberal plan, founded on Scottish liberal values.

Five years focused on making Scotland fit for the future, transforming opportunity for children, and our economy, by additional investment in education, skills and mental health. No second referendum.

4-9

## At our heart we want every individual to achieve their potential.

- A penny for education
- Greater diversity
- A strong, productive economy
- Pupil Premium
- Expanded early education
- Build our colleges back up
- Strong universities and science
- Support for students

10-17

## We stand with the weak against the strong, and will use the power of government to tackle the social and economic injustices that limit freedom.

- Transformed mental health
- More GPs in a safe NHS
- Radical drug reform
- A fair Scottish welfare system
- More homes for rent
- Safe and secure communities

18-23

## We say power is safer when it is shared and will trust communities and individuals with the power to control their own lives, and the right to participate in their democracy.

- Services responding to people
- Communities taking decisions
- Police Scotland reform
- Empowered public sector workers
- Improved rights of the child
- Tolerance and restored liberties
- Safeguarding human rights

24-35

## We are trustees of our world, and our society, and must pass on a sustainable legacy which will benefit future generations.

- Meeting climate obligations
- Warm homes
- Low-carbon transport
- Clean, green renewable energy
- A sustainable society
- An innovative economy
- Protected natural environment
- Fair business practice
- Investing for our priorities
- Fairer tax



Introduction:  
**Willie Rennie**

**This election is an opportunity to make Scotland the best again.**

That's why Liberal Democrats are offering bold, positive change.

Our education was amongst the best in the world, now it's just about average. To be the best again we need to end the cuts to education, an ambitious nursery education expansion, a Pupil Premium, investment in schools and more college places. This investment will give every child a chance to realise their potential and give the economy the skilled workforce it needs.

Our NHS was world leading, now it's under real pressure. To be the best again we need a step change in mental health services, the recruitment of more GPs and better social care.

Scotland set world-leading climate change targets, but has never met them. To be the best again we support action on climate change including warmer homes, better public transport and stopping opencast coal and fracking.

Our civil liberties were once celebrated but they have been neglected with the industrial scale use of stop and search, armed police and an intrusive super ID database. To be the best again we need to guarantee our civil liberties again.

Scotland is a rich and diverse country but power has been stripped from local communities and hoarded in Holyrood. To be the best again we support a reform programme that includes power transferred to local

communities and empowering nurses, doctors, teachers and the police to do their job.

To be the best again we need a strong economy, fair tax and good public services. That's why we support continued membership of the European Union, a reformed tax system that makes work pay and investment in good public services.

And finally, to be the best again, we will move on from the independence debate to bring unity, healing the divisions of the referendum. I am a strong supporter of the UK, and always will be, but we all need to move on to bring the country together.

Liberal Democrats have punched above our weight in Holyrood. On challenging the centralisation of the police, standing up for mental health, opposing cuts to colleges and on expanding nursery education we have been a powerful force for change. With more MSPs we can do so much more.

Liberal Democrats have bold and positive plans for change to be the best again.

Scotland needs strong liberal voices to be the best again.



**Willie Rennie**

Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats

# We want to help every individual to achieve their potential.

## At our heart we want every individual to achieve their potential.

To be a successful country Scotland will need the skills, talents and creativity of everyone who lives here to participate in the economy and society, and to feel they belong.

Diversity and education will be the twin engines that drive invention and creativity to enrich our country and provide a bright, liberal future.

Business needs a Scotland where they can draw on the well-educated and trained talents of people from all backgrounds, with a government that supports education, innovation and science. They need a government which is competitive on business taxes, which will invest in the modern infrastructure needed in a 21st century economy, and that will work to keep us in the EU.

Scotland needs the benefit of the diverse talents of everyone to increase productivity. That means there should be opportunity for everyone whatever their background, rich or poor, and regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion, disability or other aspects of what we look like or where we come from.

Those who work in the public sector should be given more professional freedoms to deliver excellent public services.

**This is the vision for Scotland to which Scottish Liberal Democrats will devote the next five years.**

## How we'll do it

- Expand early education to give every child a good start, and flexibility for parents
- A Pupil Premium for extra support and better attainment in every classroom
- A wider curriculum, with inspiring new online courses and engagement with business
- Build back up our colleges, with new courses to train for the skills we need
- Support for universities and science, including more women in science, technology, engineering and maths
- Business engaged with schools and colleges, and shaping apprentice programmes on a sector skills basis

## Education is the key

Education is the essential investment that allows everyone to achieve their potential.

For centuries Scotland led the world on education. Now our once-proud education system is slipping down the international performance league.

The attainment gap between children from richer and poorer backgrounds is widening. Early learning targets have been missed. College places have been cut.

Action in the next five years can change that.

The benefits that individuals and Scotland as a whole can gain from investment in education are so great that this must be the main priority of the next Scottish Parliament.

Our Scottish Liberal Democrat proposal is to use the powers of the Scottish Parliament to raise half a billion pounds extra every year for education from a 1p increase in income tax across all bands.

This will raise £505 million in 2017-18 and £520 million the year after, according to the latest estimate from HMRC.

The rise in the personal allowance, championed by Liberal Democrats, means this contribution is fair and falls mainly on those with the broadest shoulders.

Our investment in schools will stop the deep and damaging cuts that are on the near horizon. We will not stand back and watch the destruction of education.

The money provided will have a transformative impact on education in Scotland:

- The expansion of early education;
- A Scottish Pupil Premium to give extra support in every classroom;
- Build back up the role of colleges;
- Reversing the cuts to councils.

## Expansion of early education and childcare

Investment in the earliest years of a child's life is proven to have the biggest impact on that child's future development. That's why early education and childcare places are so important.

We will take forward Scottish Government plans to double provision for three and four-year-olds to 1140 hours by the end of the parliamentary term, and use our additional investment to increase flexibility for parents.

We will extend entitlement to all 2-year-olds and take new steps to give extra support to the most vulnerable families from an earlier age, working with health visitors. We will support nurseries to work with parents to improve their skills.

As we expand provision we expect to be able to offer additional access to a graduate-qualified professional, and free meals for all children.

As we invest to support the expansion of early learning we will:

- Incorporate the findings of the independent Commission for Childcare Reform which puts a priority on ensuring it is high quality, flexible and extends beyond the school day if parents need it to be 'wraparound';
- Make sure the new long-term plan addresses the immediate problems many parents have in getting access to their current entitlement for free provision;
- Give local authorities statutory responsibility for mapping the provision of childcare in their areas in order to give a clear picture to parents;
- Use our increased investment in colleges to help train more qualified staff.

## Extra support in every school classroom

Our investment in education will add to the resources in every classroom. Our plans to extend the professional freedoms of teachers will allow the curriculum to be enriched.

Our plan for a Pupil Premium will give every school £1400 for every primary school child from a poorer background and £900 for secondary. It will be paid directly to schools and used by teachers, based on their professional judgement.

The Pupil Premium will also be available for every looked-after child and the children of serving personnel in the armed forces.

A similar Pupil Premium in England closed the attainment gap in primary schools by 5% in three years. Valuable lessons can be learned from that experience.

Examples of the effective use of the Pupil Premium are additional support teachers, one-to-one tuition, extra equipment and homework clubs. All children in the class get the wider benefit.

We will stop the introduction of standardised national tests. These tests open the way to a return to the culture of teaching to the test and school league tables. The tests themselves would cost teachers valuable teaching time in administration and explaining the results to parents.

Teachers will benefit from the new professional freedoms to be enshrined in our Public Service Leadership and Empowerment Act.

By ending the threat of cuts to our schools and stopping the diversion of teachers onto national tests we can use the next five years to enhance school education for all children and close the attainment gap. We will:

- Bring innovation to the curriculum with a new initiative to commission Scottish universities to extend their massive open online courses (MOOCs)

so that they can be used by schools. This will enrich the existing curriculum and offer a broad range of courses, including access to foreign languages and science teaching. This will give every school pupil the option to study a course which inspires them;

- Help schools develop links with local businesses, colleges and universities, echoing the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce which expressed concern that only one third of Scottish businesses have meaningful engagement with schools. This will add to the variety, depth and inspiration offered by the curriculum, especially for those young people at risk of disengagement from education;
- Refresh the enterprise in education programme to help every pupil experience entrepreneurialism and creativity;
- Make sure there is time in the curriculum for good citizenship, including the basics of financial education, practical life skills such as first aid training and a strong commitment to diversity and anti-bullying, including a new initiative to tackle homophobic bullying;
- Give schools, working with parents, the freedom to develop specialisms;
- Allow local authorities to transform P1 in primary schools to a more informal learning environment. If they chose, this would, in effect, move the entry age to more formal education to six years old, in line with good practice across the world; children would remain in nursery-style provision gaining social skills and vocabulary for one year longer;
- Work with employers to assess the skills needed by each business sector and increase the delivery of industry-recognised vocational qualifications alongside academic qualifications to meet that need;
- Invest in language assistants and work with the British Council to increase the number of foreign language assistants available to work in Scottish schools;

- Support the taskforce formed by the seven North East, Highland and Island authorities on teacher recruitment;
- Review the number of supply teachers working in Scotland and take steps to improve their terms and conditions to increase numbers.



**Our Scottish Pupil Premium will give extra support in every classroom.**

### **Build our colleges back up**

We will build back up the role of our colleges for people seeking new skills. The cuts to colleges in the last five years have cost hundreds of college lecturers their jobs and deprived potential students of opportunities.

We will invest money from our Penny for Education to take college funding up to record levels.

Our priorities for new courses will be for part-time provision for those who are in work or have caring commitments, new skills for people wanting to change career, and basic learning skills for those trying to enter the workforce for the first time.

We will provide £30 million of new bursaries and support for students in higher and further education.

This will be used to meet the recommendation from the Commission on Widening Access for the new Commissioner for Fair Access to determine what level of individual bursary support is needed to attract students from poorer backgrounds to higher education.

We will also give young people leaving care a full non-repayable bursary to support their studies and widen

access, as recommended by the commission, and take forward the other recommendations to give all people in our society the opportunity to succeed.

Our additional support will also allow us to protect the bursary paid to nursing and midwifery students, and to recognise that the demands of these courses make it difficult for students to take outside work.

Overall, this new support will reverse the tide of the SNP's policy. They were elected on a promise to "dump the debt" but have all but wiped out the value of grants and replaced them with loans.

We will raise the threshold for repaying student loans from £17,495 to £21,000, cutting the monthly payments for graduates.

For college students we will add £5 million to bursary support for colleges to meet the annual shortfall they are experiencing and make sure more students can access courses.

We will review the position of carers attending colleges to make sure they have the support and flexibility they need.

No tuition fees for students.

### **Strong universities and science**

We will continue to support high levels of investment in Scottish universities and protect their autonomy:

- Champion science funding and support Scottish universities to continue to secure high levels of UK science funding;
- Support more women entering science, technology, engineering and maths, taking seriously the report of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Athena Swan initiative;
- Use Scotland International and the Global Scots network to create a special programme for young women potentially interested in a career in science, using inspiring women scientists from around the world;

- Change the Scottish skills investment plan to make a diverse workforce a key challenge and priority;
- Keep pressure on the UK Government to allow overseas graduates to continue making a contribution in Scotland, to fill skills gaps and benefit our economy;
- Establish a Science & Technology Committee of the Scottish Parliament to raise the profile of science;
- Respect the role of the Chief Scientific Adviser and recruit to fill a vacancy promptly;
- Establish a scientific basis for GM crop policy, using the available evidence on safety, biodiversity and the effectiveness of individual GM technologies before taking decisions.

## A strong, productive economy

We will make sure the investment in education delivers the extra skills that Scottish business needs to improve productivity and succeed. We will:

- Help schools develop links with local businesses and universities, echoing the report of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce;
- Give schools, working with parents, the freedom to develop specialisms;
- Make sure there is time in the curriculum for good citizenship, including the basics of financial education, a strong commitment to diversity and anti-bullying, and practical life skills such as first aid training;
- Work with employers to assess the skills needed by each business sector and increase the delivery of industry-recognised vocational qualifications from schools and colleges alongside academic qualifications;
- Support the current Scottish Government's plan for 30,000 new apprenticeships and work on a sector skills basis with employers to have as many as possible of these at higher levels, with steps taken to increase the range of apprenticeships available for women, and for disabled people.

The Apprenticeship Levy is a proposal by the UK Government to charge bigger businesses a levy on their payroll. The details of the plan remain unclear. Scottish businesses and organisations are expected to pay the levy. We will work to make sure that the revenues that come to the Scottish Government from it are used to provide better skills training, in partnership with business. We will consider using the revenues to cut business taxes for those that are already providing high levels of training.



**By investing half a billion pounds in our nurseries, colleges and schools, we can transform children's futures.**

# We stand with the weak against the strong, and will use the power of government to tackle the social and economic injustices that limit freedom.

**We stand with the weak against the strong, and will use the power of government to tackle the social and economic injustices that limit freedom.**

Poor health limits individual freedom and the opportunity for people to achieve their potential. It is a liberal value that we should stand with the weak against the strong.

It was the reason a Liberal called William Beveridge devised the plan for the National Health Service that has served the UK for almost 70 years.

The NHS faces new challenges in the 21st century as people enjoy longer lives and medical discoveries open up new, life-changing treatments.

To be a success in the future the health service will need solid funding.

**It will need a Scottish Government prepared to tackle issues that have been allowed to drift down the agenda for too long.**

## What we will do

- Transform mental health support so people can get the treatment they need
- Double the mental health budget for children and young people so they can access better services
- Train more mental health professionals and co-locate them with GPs, the police, at A&E and in prisons
- Recruit, retain and train more GPs, increasing the share of health spending on primary care, and trebling the Primary Care Fund
- Give more professional freedoms to health and social care workers to deliver excellent care
- Provide robust real-terms funding of the NHS
- Promote good health and tackle inequalities
- Radical drug reform to focus on supply and not possession, and increase treatment and education for offenders
- A fair welfare system, especially for those with mental health problems
- More homes for affordable rent
- More support for the victims of crime and an effective restorative and rehabilitative approach to stop re-offending

## Transformed mental health

Around one in four people in Scotland will have a mental health problem at some time in their life. Yet, under the SNP, the share of the budget devoted to mental health went down.

We will increase the share of the budget spent on mental health and double support for services for young people. We are committed to ending the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health issues.

Tackling mental ill health is going to be an important part of improving the overall health of the country and relieving the pressure on other public services.

At the moment mental health services are insufficient, difficult to access and involve lengthy waiting times.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats have a practical plan to help. We will:

- Change the law to put mental health on the same statutory footing as physical health;
- Make more therapies available, by training more nurses, counsellors and psychologists, and giving them bursaries to train;
- Double the funding to treat children and young people to end the scandal of waits for mental health treatment of up to a year and the long journeys to access it;
- Create new units for children and adolescents in Aberdeen and Inverness to make sure there are beds available north of Dundee;
- Continue to work on suicide prevention, and increase support for survivors of childhood sexual abuse;
- Fully update the Scottish Mental Health Strategy. This expired at the end of 2015 and has not been replaced by the Scottish Government;
- Make use of the evidence that counselling in many cases is more effective than medication by

increasing access to a range of interventions including 'talking therapies';

- Bring more fully qualified cognitive behavioural therapists into the NHS;
- Make sure that every GP practice has a qualified mental health professional available to support and treat patients;
- Set standards for the training of other professionals for example teachers, police and social workers so that they are better able to identify and address mental health problems with the people they meet;
- Improve mental health support for service veterans;
- Set a standard so that every school has a mental health champion;
- Review school counselling services to make sure that the staff involved have the skills needed to make a difference for young people and are seen to be independent of the disciplinary process;
- Empower teachers to help young people and parents access a wide range of relevant mental health services;
- Establish mental health professionals in every A&E department;
- Provide access to mental health professionals for people in police custody;
- Examine the establishment of Joint Cars – staffed by police officers and mental health nurses - to respond to emergency incidents, learning from the example started in Leicestershire;
- Examine the establishment of 'Crisis Centres' which are safe, staffed places where individuals can go for emergency support either directly or via the emergency services;
- Increase mental health services in prisons with a focus on providing effective rehabilitation and tackling problems associated with addiction and drug abuse.



**We'll get serious about mental health.**

## More GPs working in a safe NHS

There is no doubt that there is a GP crisis in Scotland. There have been stark warnings of a further shortfall of family doctors by 2020. People in every community are already seeing the consequences, with short-staffing at surgeries and long waits for appointments. We will:

- Work with the Royal College of GPs in Scotland to build a sustainable future for local health care, reducing the unproductive and misguided controls and targets imposed by central government;
- Increase the proportion of NHS funding allocated to primary care and treble the allocation to the Primary Care Fund;
- Train, recruit and retain more GPs;
- Increase the number of support staff – nurses, allied health professionals and counsellors working in general practice so that more people can be treated successfully;
- Add to the resources available to GPs in our most deprived areas as a priority to tackle health inequalities.



**We will tackle Scotland's GP crisis.**

## The wider NHS

The independent Audit Scotland has shown funding for the NHS from the Scottish Government has slipped and the gaps are obvious to everyone.

We commit to fund the Scottish NHS so that it stays ahead of inflation and keeps pace with funding in the rest of the UK.

The greatest challenge for the NHS is to deal with the growing pressures on its services.

The formal linking of health and social care has the potential to bring big benefits. We will work hard to make it a success so that people get the care and the treatment that is best for them. We will value the care workforce, enabling them to provide more continuity of care for the people they help. They will be paid at least the Living Wage.

Our investment in mental health services, GPs and primary care, together with the joining up of health and social care will be underpinned by solid funding for the NHS. We will make sure that health funding keeps pace with increases elsewhere in the UK, and increases by at least inflation every year.

These steps will put the Scottish NHS on a strong footing for the future especially when put together with the new professional freedoms from our Public Service Leadership and Empowerment Act.

This will give professionals the right to exercise their skills in public services. Doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and pharmacists will have greater scope to help patients and improve services.

We will work with the Royal Colleges to reduce the burden of detailed targets that get in the way of effective clinical treatment. We will extend this to as many professionals as appropriate, for example giving community pharmacists limited authority to comment and seek changes to prescriptions.

We will improve workforce planning in the Scottish NHS so that we retain and recruit the right number of staff. We will require the health minister to publish an annual report on workforce planning and lead an annual debate on it in the Scottish Parliament to allow MSPs to challenge the plans.

We will retain the present model of seven-day urgent NHS services, whilst not imposing wholesale weekend working for elective procedures, continuing to expand and improve treatment facilities.

We will take forward the recommendations of the new cancer strategy Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action.

Free personal care for the elderly was one of the great success stories of the time of Liberal Democrats in the first Scottish Government, and we will extend it to make sure care services are available free of charge for people with dementia at all ages – Frank’s Law.

We will also support a range of action to improve research and care for those with Motor Neurone Disease, including ending care charges for personal care for people with degenerative illnesses such as dementia and Motor Neurone Disease.

We will support access to pre-exposure PrEP treatment for those most vulnerable to HIV transmission.

---

## Promoting good health

---

We will continue the wide range of action to tackle smoking and poor diet, and encourage exercise. We will continue to raise awareness of the early warning signs of diseases and the preventative approaches available. We will continue to invest in sport and promote healthy lifestyles.

We will extend the rights of GPs to social prescribing, including free access to exercise programmes or home insulation if they judge it will help the health and well-being of an individual.

We will continue to extend the use of technology enabled care and tele-medicine where it can help patients and medical professionals.

We will maintain free prescriptions, and free eye and dental checks.

---

## Radical drug reform

---

For too long misery caused by serious drug abuse has not been tackled. Political leaders in the UK have failed to follow the examples from around the world where a move away from declaring a “war on drugs” has brought real benefits.

The criminal justice system in general, and especially prisons, are filled with people who are involved in criminality because of addiction problems. Too often people convicted of minor drug possession offences find themselves entangled in the criminal justice system, jeopardising their future employment and life chances. Some people are still imprisoned for possession only offences.

We believe that drugs policy should be based on scientific evidence.

We will treat drug use as a health issue.

We will address the mental health, social, housing and employment problems that often accompany drug addiction.

To achieve a complete change in the Scottish approach to drug use and to reduce harm we will:

- Work with the Sentencing Council to change prosecution and sentencing guidelines to refer those arrested for possession of drugs for personal use for treatment, education or civil penalties, ending the use of imprisonment, and allowing more enforcement efforts on supply;
- Explore if the approach adopted in Portugal, to refer all those arrested for personal possession drug offences to an assessment panel, can bring benefits to Scotland;

- Recognise that a large percentage of the current prison population have addiction problems and institute a step-change treatment of their addiction prior to release;
- Provide heroin-assisted treatment where this is judged to be the safest and most effective option;
- Take effective UK-wide action to tackle drug importation, with overseas action where necessary, and take firm action to prosecute domestic drug production.

For the UK as a whole the Liberal Democrats support a change in the law to allow cannabis for personal use. This will remove the drug from the control of criminal gangs, allow for regulation of supply, improve safety and allow more resources to be used to tackle other criminal activity. We will continue to set out clearly the health consequences of the use of cannabis.



**We will completely change Scotland's approach to drug use.**

## A fair Scottish welfare system

New powers over welfare are being transferred to the Scottish Parliament over its next term of office.

This gives the opportunity to build a Scottish welfare system that provides a better link between social security benefits and the services provided by the Scottish Government and local councils.

To be effective a new system will need cross-party support, adopting the principles that it is:

- Underpinned by respect for the dignity of individuals;

- Accessible, fair and commands the full confidence of claimants and the organisations and services that support them;
- Suited to the needs of people in Scotland.

The use of the new powers will be subject to a spending review and we commit to increase Carers' Benefit to bring it into line with the rate for jobseekers' allowance.

We will also implement and adequately resource the new carers' strategy, start a pilot of carers' leave for Scottish Government staff and support the development and provision of special health checks for carers by GPs.

We will make sure the bedroom tax is fully removed from the Scottish system.

When the Scottish Parliament gains the power to create new benefits we will use that power to help people who are at risk of losing their job, or entitlement to other benefits, because of a mental health problem. We will support them financially and give them access to NHS mental health treatment to get them back into their workplace.

We will start a pilot project to give parents of new-born babies a Finnish-style baby box containing essential

## Principles of a fair Scottish welfare system.

- 1 Underpinned by respect for the dignity of individuals
- 2 Accessible, fair and commands the full confidence of claimants and the organisations and services that support them
- 3 Suited to the needs of people in Scotland

items to ensure a healthy baby, proven to cut child mortality rates internationally.

We will make sure any medical assessments take full account of the fluctuating nature of conditions as diverse as mental health or HIV.

We will replace the Work Programme and Work Choice with new employability programmes that work in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, colleges, charities and other local agencies.

We will allow housing benefit to be paid directly to landlords and will retain the entitlement to housing benefit for those aged 18-25.

We will establish an expert group to assess if the present system of funeral payments works to provide assurance and dignity to all, and recommend appropriate changes.

## More homes for rent

The lack of affordable housing limits people's ability to get on in life, achieve their potential or provide security for their family. Homelessness destroys people's lives.

Increasing the supply of affordable, rented housing will directly give families and individuals the security and stability to lead their lives. And an increase in the supply of rented housing will help lower the costs of other types of tenure.

We will increase the number of homes constructed for social rent, make sure they are accessible and re-establish social renting as a valid long term option for people.

We will increase the number of affordable homes by 50,000 over the next Parliament. We will make sure that 40,000 of these are for social rent rather than purchase. With private housebuilding returning to pre-recession levels this will mean around 110,000 new homes will have been brought into use by 2021 with one third of those for affordable rent. To do this we will:

- Support the continued innovation that has harnessed new forms of funding for Scottish housing and brought new types of property into use;
- Expand the Housing Fund for Scotland model that has seen investment in rented homes pioneered by a local government pension fund. This expansion to all funds will add 12,000 new homes. We will work with pension fund trustees to give them the confidence of an effective return for their investment;
- Use a proportion of any future Barnett consequential from the UK which are classed as 'financial transactions' to fund new housing association properties as well as help-to-buy schemes;
- Renew the empty homes strategy to bring as many of the 27,000 empty homes back into use as part of the 110,000 total of new homes –including introduction of a Help to Renovate loan;
- Work with the British Business Bank to help direct support to small and medium sized house-builders who struggle to get support from traditional banks;
- Extend existing house-building programmes by using a proportion of investment from our Fit For The Future Investment Plan.



**We will increase the number of affordable homes by 50,000 over the next Parliament.**

We will help tackle youth homelessness through an emphasis on mediation and reconciliation with families. We will support a dozen new centres across Scotland offering supported accommodation for young people, with direct access to advice and training.

We will require local authorities to monitor and account for the outcomes of young homeless people and take their responsibilities as 'corporate parents' seriously for young people leaving local authority care and not permit transfers to B&Bs and temporary accommodation for care leavers.

## Safe and secure communities

Scottish Liberal Democrats want safer communities, and people swiftly brought to justice when they offend.

We also believe that everyone deserves a chance to get back on track.

The social and economic cost of offending and re-offending is immense. We support early intervention with those at high risk of first-time offending, and will support the further transfer of resources from ineffective short prison sentences to robust and effective community justice options.

Too many people still find themselves in the criminal justice system because of poverty, addiction and mental health issues.

We should have a criminal justice system which provides meaningful rehabilitation and support so that people are able to leave prison with the skills they need to be active and constructive members of their community. We will:

- Implement the full range of rights and support for the victims of crime, previously agreed but not yet implemented by the Scottish Government. These include a single point of contact for victims, more information about delayed court cases and more consistent information about the release of offenders;
- Introduce a new offence of domestic abuse;

- Oppose further court closures, centralisation and closure of police control rooms;
- Stop the backfilling of civilian roles by police officers;
- Introduce a new presumption against short prison sentences of less than 12 months. This will maximise the chance of successful rehabilitation if offenders are diverted to robust community sentences. There is good evidence on the impact of this policy on young offenders which can be used to support the same policy in the mainstream prison system;
- Make sure Community Justice Scotland is able to oversee the establishment of many more alternative sentences. Educate sheriffs and judges to use these more effective remedies;
- Support the Angiolini reforms on women offenders and apply the same principles to our response to male offending;
- Reduce overall prisoner numbers;
- Extend throughcare for all prisoners, not just those serving sentences of more than four years, to give all offenders a clear right to support when they are out of prison;
- Promote new partnerships with the third sector to help more prisoners get into successful employment after release.



**By transforming how we  
treat mental health and ending  
the GP crisis, we'll get our NHS  
fit for the future.**

**We say power is safer when it is shared and will trust communities and individuals with the power to control their own lives, and the right to participate in their democracy.**

**We say power is safer when it is shared and will trust communities and individuals with the power to control their own lives, and the right to participate in their democracy.**

Power is safer when it is shared. Governments generally want to hoard power in the centre. It is the job of liberals to challenge that.

Scottish Liberal Democrats want power decentralised. We want communities and individuals to have much more control over their lives and the issues that they face. We aim to disperse power, foster diversity and nurture creativity.

We trust local people to make decisions about their lives and communities. People should have the power, flexibility and resources to change things for the better.

**We trust frontline professional staff to take decisions and will empower them.**



## What we will do

- Give local authorities the powers to respond to demands from local communities
- Bring democracy back into Scottish policing
- Stop the creation of an intrusive ID database
- Extend freedom of information to private companies delivering public services
- Act to tackle bullying and discrimination
- Enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Scottish law
- Get a balance of women and men on every public board

## Services responding to people

The current Scottish Government has centralised the life out of Scotland. Decisions on council spending, enterprise investment, hospital building projects, police and fire services are now all taken at the centre of government.

The problems in Police Scotland have set that out in the starkest of fashions. Local accountability was removed from local areas. Local services were closed down. Highly skilled support staff were replaced by uniformed officers on the diktat of Edinburgh ministers. And in the case of control rooms, the consequences have caused real harm.

Scottish Liberal Democrats want the next five years to reverse the centralisation of Scotland. Liberal Democrats in the next Scottish Parliament will champion a liberating agenda to roll back the top-down, target-driven, one-size-fits-all culture that distorts our public services. We will:

- Give back to councils the powers to set local domestic and business taxation, and remove the financial penalties used by the present government to exert control. This will give local councils control of more than 50 per cent of their revenues and give them a real stake in economic progress;
- Give a full power of general competence to local authorities to allow them to meet the needs of the people they serve;
- Allow local communities to establish a burgh council to serve their area, established by a charter defining its functions. Such new local community-focused authorities would empower communities and give a true local focus to service delivery and the use of public land and assets;
- Give power to public sector workers across Scotland to use their professional skills to the most, and to lead local services;
- Appoint a Minister for Public Workforce Empowerment, working with a taskforce of frontline professionals, charged to lead a drive for the empowerment of public sector workers, changing

the National Performance Framework to make sure it enables empowerment across government;

- Expand the role of the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee to allow it to consider how the pressure to achieve top-down targets may distort the service provided to the public by specific groups of public sector workers, for example police officers, social workers and health professionals;
- Build on our case for a diverse, federal UK as the alternative to divisive nationalism – starting with a citizen led British Constitutional Convention, including reform to the unelected House of Lords;
- Bring back democracy into Police Scotland by making sure local policing plans have to be approved by locally elected people; and removing the sole right of ministers to appoint the Scottish Police Authority.



**We will reverse the SNP's  
centralisation of Scotland.**

## Traditional Scottish policing

Policing by consent has always been the way that our police officers protect our communities. With Police Scotland much of the discretion of the officers, local consensus and accountability has been lost and has been replaced by top down targets. We will restore traditional Scottish policing.

- Include the concerns of rank-and-file police officers in our Public Service Leadership and Empowerment Act to enable them to exercise their professional discretion more effectively;
- Define in statute the powers of the Chief Constable now that the traditional tri-partite system of Scottish policing has been ended;
- Restore power to the Chief Constable and the Scottish Police Authority to determine the exact mix of staff required for effective policing;
- Increase the funding for Police Scotland by £20 million, and protect it in real terms, to make sure that the failure of the Scottish Government's centralisation to generate savings does not hit staff numbers;
- Strengthen the role of the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner to look into serious incidents, addressing the shortcoming in the present power to question police officers immediately after a serious incident;
- Transfer control of the British Transport Police to Police Scotland but seek to retain the ring-fenced expertise of officers on transport related matters;
- Request that the UK Government lifts the VAT obligation on Police Scotland, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, or allocates the proceeds back to the Scottish funding block, given that it has recently exempted a number of other UK bodies from paying VAT.

## Restoring liberties

Liberals support the creativity and genius that comes from individual liberty and diversity. We stand for the individual against the state, for the outsider against the establishment.

That means it falls to Liberal Democrats to speak out in protection of individual liberty when it is threatened by an over-mighty state.

In the next five years we will protect liberties and traditional Scottish freedoms wherever we can. We will:

- Stop the creation of the Scottish Government's intrusive ID database;
- Develop the approach taken in Estonia where data is considered to belong to the citizen and where people have the right to know who has accessed their information;
- Take steps to safeguard people from the misuse of their data, CCTV images or biometric information;
- Cut down the number of nuisance calls by stopping publicly-funded bodies sharing the telephone numbers of their clients without express permission;
- Extend Freedom of Information to private and voluntary sector bodies performing public services;
- Retain the need for corroboration in criminal cases;
- Take major action to improve conviction rates for sexual offences, including consideration of legislation to allow research to be undertaken with jury members, the right of juries to be able to ask questions of expert witnesses or the provision of an expert adviser to assist juries with expert evidence, together with suggestions made in the Bonomy review;
- Repeal the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act and instead take forward the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism.

We will support tolerance, diversity and human rights at home and abroad. We will:

- Tackle bullying, act on hate crime and add to the training of frontline professionals so they can always provide equal services for diverse groups of people;
- Support effective training of school staff to support LGBTI young people in schools, and make sure sexual health, parenthood and relationships education is LGBTI inclusive in all schools;
- Condemn any form of ‘gay cure’ therapy in Scotland and consider any further steps that could be taken to make the practice unavailable in Scotland;
- Decriminalise sex work in line with best international practice to reduce harm and the risks to those involved, and consult sex workers on the development of future legislation;
- Introduce a protocol on human rights for Scottish public agencies operating in countries where there is cause for concern;
- Establish a formal protocol for helping refugees in Scottish communities, to build on good practice and make sure refugees and host communities get the support they need;
- Extend the rights of disabled people by empowering them, supporting individual autonomy and overhauling the guardianship system – including introducing staged-guardianship - through an Adults With Incapacity Act review;
- Work with teachers and schools to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and ask local authorities to record such behaviour;
- Reform the Gender Recognition Act to bring it into line with international good practice in recognising the gender identity of trans people, including consideration of the medical requirements placed on applicants, and recognise the gender identity of non-binary people;
- Extend the rights of people in the care home system to cover matters such as access to the outdoors, the use of covert medication and the provision of meaningful activities, and extend help for people with special educational needs to access the services they need;

- End the blood donation ban for gay men, replacing it with risk-based criteria for all potential donors;
- Bring in fresh government legislation to provide for an opt-out system of organ donation in the first legislative programme;
- Retain existing abortion legislation.

## Children in a liberal Scotland

We will promote the rights of children wherever we can. Our proposals on education will give opportunity and life chances to children from all backgrounds. Our increased support for schools will give children more choice about the subjects they study and raise attainment.

To take further the rights, safety and opportunities for children we will:

- Incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law by primary legislation in the Scottish Parliament and encourage the same in the UK Parliament;
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 in line with the minimum recommended by the UN;
- Ensure that the stop and search code of conduct fully recognises the unique vulnerability of children and to listen to the persuasive evidence against the introduction of a potential new search power for children based on the possession of alcohol;
- Legislate to prohibit physical punishment of children;
- Keep the Named Person legislation under review to ensure no local authorities exceed the expectation of the legislation;
- Substantially increase investment in child and adolescent mental health services to enable the step-change in prevention, early detection, range of treatment and recovery that is desperately needed in Scotland;
- Continue to offer free school meals for children in P1 to P3, and consider extending flexibility so that a free breakfast can be available instead of lunch;

- Support a review of the way in which children get access to the justice system and how their experience can be improved, for example by permitting the use of trained intermediaries to help with evidence in court.

We will take steps to help young people who have been in the care of local authorities. We will make sure that local authorities accept their responsibilities as ‘corporate parents’ to those in care, and make sure they settle young people leaving care into good quality housing and decent education, training or employment.

We will consult on changes to family law to enhance the contact rights of fathers and other family members with children.



**We will restore the traditional model of Scottish policing.**

## The right to participate in our democracy

We support a more open and engaged democracy that is more reflective of the people of Scotland and will use new powers to promote equalities in public services in Scotland. We will:

- Use the new powers of the Scottish Parliament to enable political parties to balance lists of candidates for election equally between women and men;
- Ensure that future public appointments move the composition of public boards to balance the number of women and men – with every board expected to have achieved balance by the end of the next cycle

of appointments - and to reflect better the wider diversity in society;

- Use the influence of the Scottish Government to eliminate the gender pay gap;
- Extend, wherever we can, the right to vote to young people aged 16 and 17;
- Make it easier for young people to register to vote, including supplying information and registration forms to schools;
- We will change the code of conduct for MSPs to make sure they declare earnings or future earnings from the moment they sign a contract for external employment;
- Start a project with stakeholder groups to propose new ways to tackle the barriers to fair representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in senior roles in the police and education services;
- Protect free speech, investigative journalism and academic peer-reviewed publishing through reform of the law on defamation to ensure it is suitable for the digital age, has a ‘public interest’ defence, and is available for genuine cases and not used to curtail free expression.



**POLICE**

**We will reverse the SNP's  
centralisation of Scotland  
and put people  
back in control.**

**We are trustees of our world, and our society, and must pass on a sustainable legacy which will benefit future generations.**

**We are trustees of our world, and our society, and must pass on a sustainable legacy which will benefit future generations.**

We are trustees of the physical world. We are trustees of a human society. We must pass on a sustainable legacy for both.

Our belief in the empowerment of individuals is not limited to the current generation. Future generations should have the same rights as we do to live their lives in the ways that they choose.

Climate change, pollution and the degradation of the natural world pose some of the greatest threats to the wellbeing and freedom of present and future generations that modern society has ever seen.

## What we will do

- Tackle fuel poverty and create warmer homes, with catch-up zones in areas worst hit
- Prioritise renewable heat for industry and district heating
- Speed up rail journey times to the North East and Highlands
- Develop contactless payment for all public transport
- Support a diverse range of renewable energy – including geothermal and solar to protect security of supply
- Increase the number of natural conservation areas in Scotland and take tougher action on wildlife crime
- Expand recycling and re-use in a circular economy
- Support fair business practice
- Promote regional deals to bring together councils, business and colleges
- Extend super-fast broadband and mobile phone coverage to all of Scotland
- Create a Fit For The Future Investment Fund for warm homes, rented homes and broadband
- Refuse another referendum on independence



## Meeting climate obligations

Scottish Liberal Democrats have no doubt that climate change threatens our way of life in this country and around the world.

Scotland has missed its statutory annual climate change targets for the last four years. So action in the next five years will have to be strong, committed and cross-party.

Scottish Liberal Democrats support many of the actions of the Scottish Government to address climate change and meet carbon emissions targets. After all, many of their actions, particularly on renewable energy, build on the ambitions and priorities identified when there was a Liberal Democrat environment minister in Scotland.

More needs to be done.

We will continue the work of Scotland's Climate Justice Fund to support international action against climate change.

We will beat Scotland's climate change targets by developing bolder plans in addition to the existing plans. Scottish Liberal Democrats will give a priority to warm homes, renewable heat, low-carbon transport as well as continued support for renewable electricity generation and a move away from high-polluting fossil fuels with action to cut carbon emissions from industry.

## Warm homes and renewable heat for businesses

We will firmly establish improving the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes as a national infrastructure project.

We will expand government actions to address fuel poverty and create warm homes. To abolish fuel poverty will need a variety of new initiatives which will also meet our aims on warm homes and climate change.

We will put the focus on renewable heat, adopting the first ever industrial heat strategy, promoting combined

heat and power, using waste heat more effectively and developing geothermal heat from disused coalmines.

We will give the power to local authorities to tackle fuel poverty in their areas through better planning for district heating, renewable energy technology in new social housing and good energy performance in new buildings.

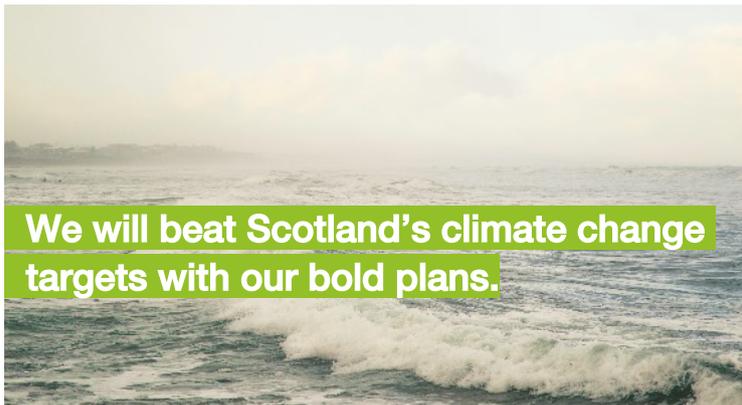
To support renewable heat we will:

- Take forward the recommendations of the Expert Commission on District Heating;
- Support district heating schemes, help businesses convert to renewable heat and seize the potential of local biomass and geothermal energy through new loans and grants from the Fit For The Future Investment Fund;
- Support an expansion of anaerobic digestion – the technology that processes organic waste and creates heat energy for local needs – through a suitable planning framework and potential increased support from the Green Investment Bank;
- Expand into the public sector demand management technologies to reduce overall energy consumption;
- We will give powers to local authorities to create a Municipal Energy Strategy to help them support, through planning and investment, the development of renewable heat networks.

To support warmer homes we will:

- Establish catch-up zones for warmer homes and to tackle fuel poverty in remote and island areas which have fallen behind and need more flexibility in the installation requirements;
- Introduce new building standards for greater energy efficiency, restarting the review cancelled by the Scottish Government in September 2015, with an ongoing plan to reflect the experience in Denmark where standards were increased incrementally over decades, ensuring that future home owners and tenants benefit from substantially warmer and cheaper-to-heat homes;

- Use new powers transferring to the Scottish Parliament to shape the Energy Company Obligation in order to combine support from power companies and the Scottish Government for homeowners and sitting tenants to make their homes warmer through grants;
- Phase in a new regulation to make sure all newly-let properties achieve energy rating C, in order to reflect that landlords have the capital asset and resources to make the investment, whereas tenants do not;
- Make sure new social housing incorporates renewable energy systems as a condition of funding support from public money;
- Use the new power for the Scottish Parliament to hold OFGEM to account, to press for new governance arrangements for renewable heat to make sure people connected to renewable heat networks get a good deal;
- Encourage local authorities to use their extended powers of competence and their Municipal Energy Strategy to investigate using their own renewable energy generation to provide low tariffs for those in fuel poverty;
- Use additional money to create warm homes from a proportion of the Fit For The Future Investment Plan;
- Incorporate these ambitions into a Warm Homes Act to secure the growth of district heating and renewable heat, and help to improve the energy efficiency of buildings.



**We will beat Scotland's climate change targets with our bold plans.**

## Taking the carbon out of business and industry

The Scottish oil and gas industry has had a productive forty years and still has decades left. It has our full support for the rest of its working life. But everyone knows that we cannot continue with fossil fuel industries forever.

It is right to plan for a future beyond fossil fuels. We will:

- Not permit fracking or similar unconventional processes;
- End open-cast coal mining, given the devastating damage done to landscapes with little prospect of restoration;
- Start a new programme to help to plan now the very long-term switch from fossil fuel appliances at home and in business towards other forms of energy;
- Streamline planning and licensing rules for small-scale hydro power schemes;
- Maintain support for the development of carbon capture and storage at Peterhead;
- Put a priority in the Renewable Heat Strategy to help Scotland's food and drink businesses move away from fossil fuels, through grants and loans to make use of the waste materials, hydro power and geothermal energy surrounding many of those businesses.

## Low-carbon transport

We will help build a low-carbon transport system for Scotland through a commitment to public transport, expansion of provision for electric vehicles and active travel. We will:

- Accelerate plans to speed up rail services from the central belt to Aberdeen and Inverness, and improve cross-rail services through Scottish cities;
- Commit to a contactless payment system for travel across Scotland, making public transport easy and giving automatic access to the lowest fares;

- Use the power of the Scottish Government through its contract payments to bus companies, and the potential new power of a public-sector operator for Scotrail, to force the pace on development of the contactless payment system, and for integrated transport;
- Support the continued development of infrastructure for electric vehicles, including shore power for ferries;
- Extend the benefits of electric vehicles into remote areas of Scotland, supporting the pilot project in the Highlands and incentivising island communities to use electric vehicles fed by power generated locally from renewables to cut the import of expensive hydrocarbons. This could include “scrappage” grants to help islanders convert to hybrid vehicles to replace old, polluting cars;
- Continue to make the case for a High Speed Rail network that covers the whole of the UK, with continued progress to a route through to Scotland from London;
- Conduct a feasibility study for extending the Borders’ Railway from Tweedbank to Hawick and Carlisle, along with other potential route re-opening opportunities;
- Retain Air Passenger Duty, with the present lifeline exemptions, given the climate change risks of unlimited expansion in aviation;
- Take forward the Cleaner Air For Scotland strategy and, as a matter of urgency, support weekly monitoring and enforcement action at the ten worst streets for pollution in Scotland to reduce the number of high-polluting vehicles on these roads.

We will make cycling and walking safer and continue to aim to meet the existing target of 10 per cent of journeys to be by bike by 2020. We are attracted to the idea of securing savings in the road-building budget each year to devote to cycling. We will:

- Increase the share of the transport budget that is spent on cycling and active transport by adding £20 million of capital spending;

- Support safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists with more dedicated and segregated cycle lanes;
- Encourage the extension of 20mph speeds in village, town and city centres;
- Revise the current Cycling by Design guidelines to reflect international best practice and increase their authority to make them core national standards, ensuring safe provision for cyclists and pedestrians is built into the road system.

## Broadening and strengthening Scotland’s transport network

Even with the best will in the world Scotland will not be able to have low-carbon transport everywhere straightaway. We will need to continue to invest in other forms of transport to secure safety, regional connections and social equity. We will:

- Make strategic investments to improve roads safety and quality, for example taking forward plans to improve the A82, A9 and A96 amongst others;
- Increase the support for ferry routes serving the Northern Isles, including a cut of 50 per cent in ferry fares between the Northern Isles and the mainland, matching the fare cuts recently enacted on the West Coast and reversing the decline in support for the northern routes;
- Reintroduce the Air Discount Scheme for business travel from the islands;
- Retain the concessionary bus pass.



**We will help build a low-carbon transport system for Scotland.**

## Clean, green, renewable energy for the next generation

Scottish Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland 1999-2007 set the first ever renewable electricity targets. They gave confidence to this new industry to invest and innovate. We maintain our commitment to 100% of Scottish electricity to be from renewable sources and will take steps to make sure that this comes from varied and growing sources through a diverse and expanding energy generation portfolio, to maintain energy security. We will:

- Support diverse technologies for renewable energy, including research into hydrogen technology and energy storage at Scottish universities together with support for solar, micro-hydro, bio-energy and anaerobic digestion;

We will tackle the barriers faced by each renewable energy technology:

- Make it easier to re-power existing wind farms through changes to planning regulations;
- Create a national strategy and prioritise EU funding for floating, offshore wind technology;
- Seek to create a European marine energy zone with an R&D grid connection between Orkney and the mainland to be accessed at no cost to developers;
- Commit to future funding of Wave Energy Scotland;
- Negotiate with the Green Investment Bank to increase support for biomass heating and anaerobic digestion;
- Work with Ofgem to develop a strategy for storage of electrical power which cuts costs and puts Scotland at the forefront of the race to develop;
- Introduce permitted rights for air-sourced heat pumps to bring Scottish regulations into line with the rest of the UK;
- Adopt a similar approach to renewable and district heating as in the “London Plan” which requires developers to justify not installing combined heat and power systems in new developments before

## We will pass on a sustainable legacy to future generations.



planning permission can be considered for alternative heat systems;

- Divert the unused money that is earmarked for the Saltire Prize immediately to prevent further companies from withdrawing from the marine renewable sector;
- Support expansion of the Scottish Government's Community Wind Benefit scheme to make sure that a share of the profits of wind generation are returned to the local community;
- Encourage community ownership of energy generation projects by splitting the existing target for ownership beyond 500MW to make sure the ‘community owned’ part is substantial, recognising that “local owned” too often only benefits large landowners;
- Challenge the UK Government on their withdrawal of support for renewables.

## Scotland's natural environment

We will promote the natural environment in Scotland. We will:

- Establish new national parks or landscape partnership areas, learning from the first two national parks in Scotland, bringing the benefits of improved management, conservation and tourism to other parts of the country;
- Support community involvement in the management of Marine Protected Areas to ensure local benefits from the new designations;
- Ensure that existing powers under the Nature Conservation Act of 2004 and Marine Act of 2010

are used by all government agencies to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity;

- Support whole river catchment management systems to deliver flood attenuation, including increased levels of tree planting and enhanced wildlife habitats;
- Take stronger action on wildlife crime using the recommendations on prosecution and penalties from the recent review group, together with the proposals from Scottish Environment Link in its report Natural Injustice to tackle failings in reporting and investigation of wildlife crime;
- Expand and enhance Scotland's forestry sector and woodland cover, including an ambitious target to double the area of native woodland by 2050, through steps including restoring degraded woodland, extending management best practice amongst landowners, better links between farming and forestry, enhanced practical protection for ancient woodland, and regular updates of the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland;
- Develop a plan for a circular economy, using recycled materials as an economic resource and supporting a zero waste strategy, including taking forward successful pilot projects on reverse vending machines;
- Ensure a prominent role for animal welfare organisations and a proper evidence-based approach when current regulations on snaring are reviewed in December 2016;
- Require the current working group on pet welfare to bring its work to an early conclusion to allow for updating of the laws on pet welfare in order to regulate puppy farms and prevent other animal abuses.

---

## A sustainable society

---

Our ambitions for education will mean we have a Scottish society where everyone has the opportunity to participate, to have a good job and to achieve their potential.

A society is stronger if it is fairer. Evidence from around the world shows that the economy benefits from a society where every person has the opportunity to get on in life and where extremes of wealth and power are being reduced.

Scottish Liberal Democrats will make that our approach at home and our liberal values, not least human rights, LGBTI equality and sustainable development, will guide our work internationally.

We will continue to develop and deepen the relationships between Scotland and Malawi at governmental, community, educational and environmental levels.

We will support fair business practice.

We will pay the Living Wage for all public services. We will continue and expand the Scottish Government's Fair Business Pledge to encourage liberal business practices on decent wages, profit-sharing, workforce engagement, investment in young people, a balanced workforce, with women in senior roles, and prompt payment to suppliers.

We will restrict future business development funding, such as regional selective assistance, to companies that pay the Living Wage.

We will invite the Public Audit Committee to examine all future grants to businesses above £250,000 before they are paid to satisfy us that the recipient company pays a fair level of UK tax.

We will abolish fees for employment tribunals.

---

## An innovative economy

---

As we were clear on the very first page, business and enterprise in Scotland will benefit from our transformation of education in the next five years.

But our support for business goes wider. In essence Scottish Liberal Democrats will provide Scottish business with skilled, healthy and motivated potential employees; with a competitive business tax system; and modern transport and communications infrastructure. We will:

- Encourage entrepreneurship and start-up businesses with new networking opportunities, enterprise education in schools, and the expansion of creativity, innovation and excellence through culture and sport;
- Engage business in the planning and delivery of sector skills through schools and colleges;
- Make sure mental health services reflect the needs of business to retain a healthy workforce;
- Restate support for enterprise education in schools as part of the enhancement of school education and the richer curriculum in the next five years;
- Continue to promote exports through the work of the Scottish Government, Scottish Development International and the UK diplomatic presence around the world;
- Support growth of social enterprises in Scotland, to promote the innovation they can bring, and the wide group of people they draw into the productive economy;
- We will support Scottish regional deals, building on the existing city deal model to bring governments, local business, councils, and colleges together to develop their regional economy. These can champion, for example, the oil and gas industry in the North East, tourism or food and drink.

For the rural economy and businesses two of the biggest things we can do are to restore competence and timeliness to agricultural payment schemes for farmers and crofters, and to extend super-fast broadband and modern mobile phone coverage to business in all parts of Scotland. We will do both.

For the rural economy we will also:

- Complete coverage of super-fast broadband and mobile phone across Scotland, using additional support from our Fit For The Future Investment Fund for innovative ways to do this, for example using unused TV channels where appropriate;

- Guarantee to increase the resources deployed in advance of the future rounds of CAP payments to make sure farmers get their money in a timely way;
- Establish an immediate restitution scheme to compensate farmers who incurred excessive banking costs because of the delay in their CAP payment;
- Continue to reform procurement rules to encourage purchase of local food and help smaller producers and farmers access large public sector markets;
- Press for increased powers for the Grocery Code Adjudicator to allow investigation of unfair practices throughout the supply chain not just from retailer and direct supplier;
- End the one-size-fits-all system operated by the Crofting Commission;
- Use the Smith Commission recommendation on the use of seafood levies to improve the marketing of Scottish seafood;
- Support measures to address the environmental and economic madness of fisheries discards, while recognising the complexity of the problem and engaging the industry fully throughout;
- Campaign against further centralisation of services from rural areas by including protections for local authorities in the Public Service Leadership and Empowerment Act;
- Devolve the functions of the Crown Estate from Edinburgh to local communities to ensure that the benefits of our marine resources are retained as far as possible within the communities reliant on them;



**We will expand coverage of super-fast broadband and mobile phone coverage to all of Scotland.**

- Introduce an Islands Act to island-proof all legislation, to give Scottish ministers the right to issue guidance to public authorities as to the way they can vary national services to make them more suitable for islands, subject to local authority consent;
- Give Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council the same powers over their surrounding waters as offered to Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar;
- Campaign for the principle of a universal service obligation to be extended to energy prices, broadband, postal charges and telecoms to prevent the price discrimination against remote communities;
- Implement the Land Reform Act and establish a review by the end of the parliamentary term to consider further reform;
- Continue the general review of Scottish planning policy and practice to ensure a system of development planning that supports the appropriate delivery of housing and other infrastructure, supports environmental protection and addresses community engagement.

## Culture and sport

Generations of children across Scotland have grown up watching their heroes take to the field at Hampden Park, Murrayfield, in the Commonwealth Pool, on the cycle track and at local clubs right across the country. We need to ensure that the next generation has the chance to take part in sport at all levels.

Liberal Democrats believe everyone should have the chance to realise the benefits of participating in sport and living more active lifestyles. Active lifestyles help improve quality of life in later years, reduce mental health risks, increase health and employability, support stronger communities and develop good personal qualities.

The promotion of sport has links to Scottish culture and tourism.

We will support sport at all levels. We will use the additional money coming to Scotland as Barnett consequentials from the proposed Sugar Tax spending to develop a new initiative to increase participation in sport and physical activity in Scotland. For sport and culture we will:

- Use Sugar Tax proceeds to support growth in sport and physical activity;
- Develop a long-term strategy to give access for all to opportunities appropriate for their ability and commitment to sport, whilst recognising that funding should be available for talented individuals to achieve their potential;
- Take steps to increase the opportunities for physical activities for those groups, such as teenage women, who drop out of sport;
- Ensure everyone can access local, inclusive, quality sporting places, by making sure that facilities which receive public investment have a strategy for affordable access for community sports clubs;
- Develop sport, tourism and culture activities around all major sporting and cultural events;
- Support Event Scotland to secure major sporting events;
- Make sure the opportunities exist after major events for people to take up the sport or activity at a grassroots level;
- Encourage public sector organisations to value volunteering by their employees and help with flexible working to support it;
- Establish an islands travel scheme for teams and individuals to compete in national events;
- Continue to develop cultural and economic links with the worldwide Scottish diaspora;
- Continue to support a BBC free from the control of government ministers;
- Include participation and enjoyment of culture in the National Performance Framework to promote wide access.

We support the development of the Scottish film industry. We think that the absorption of Scottish Screen into Creative Scotland has not been beneficial to the industry. We will:

- Support development of a range of Scottish film studio spaces;
- Create a more autonomous, dedicated screen agency either within the umbrella of Creative Scotland or stand-alone to promote the development of film facilities, and oversee the training and mentoring of young filmmakers, technical and creative staff.

---

## Fair taxation at a local level

---

We support a fairer system of local taxation to replace the Council Tax. We participated in the cross-party Commission on Local Tax Reform to try to develop a consensus to build an enduring alternative. The decision by the Scottish Government to ignore the recommendations of the cross-party Commission and to make arbitrary changes to Council Tax has discredited the whole process.

We are attracted by the economic and social benefits that could be brought about by a system of land value tax, which works well in other countries. Such a system does not penalise people who improve their property as the tax is based only on the land value. A land tax encourages derelict land in urban areas to be brought back into productive use.

It will be possible to consider and evaluate further this proposal for domestic properties alongside a review of business rates. There could be many common features that result in a more simplified overall tax system.

This work will take time but it is important to get change of this scale right and to make it enduring for generations. The Commission recommended that further work to support this proposal should take place in the 2016-21 parliamentary session. We agree.

Substantial proposals for change will only be enacted in the 2016-2021 parliamentary session if they enjoy wide cross-party and public support.

To accelerate this as far as we can we will speed up the process to map all of Scotland's land ownership. This will help assess the capability of the system to replace business rates.

We will also make sure robust transition arrangements are in place, alongside measures to protect people with low incomes from adverse changes.

We will recognise the diverse needs of every local authority and will make sure that they each get at least 90 per cent of the average support offered by central government to support their services.

On business taxation, Scottish Liberal Democrats are committed to a competitive system. We support a full-scale review of business rates to consider the fundamentals of the system – such as the current penalties businesses face when they improve their premises or install renewable energy machinery - and the difficulties faced by some start-up companies.

We want businesses to have a strong role in shaping the new system.

---

## Fair taxation at a national level and managing public money

---

Our priorities on Scottish taxes for the next five years will be to strike the balance between investing in public services, protecting those on low and middle incomes and supporting the environment.

We will initiate a full spending review starting in May 2016. This will be the tool we use to align Scottish Government spending with the priorities identified in this manifesto.

The spending review will allow the full implications of the recently agreed fiscal framework agreement to be set out, alongside independent reports on the economy and tax forecasts from an enhanced Scottish Fiscal

Commission, operating in a similar way to the UK Office of Budget Responsibility.

The spending review will allow for the detailed alignment of the workforce planning and training required for our proposals on early education, mental health and GPs.

We will continue the broad direction of current Scottish Government spending, borrowing, efficiency and pay policies, except where explained below.

We will establish the Scottish Fiscal Commission on the same basis as the UK's OBR in order to provide independent forecasts of the economy and public finances.

The Scottish Futures Trust has been given responsibility for managing much of the Scottish Government's capital programme. We support the steps that it has taken to create attractive investment opportunities to add to capital investment in Scotland.

We are concerned that the so-called Hub approach advocated by the Trust bundles too many projects into a single contract. This runs the risk of locking out smaller, more local companies from even submitting a tender. We will examine the case for breaking contracts into smaller parts to help small business.



**With our penny for education, we will transform Scottish schools, colleges and nurseries.**

## A Penny for Education

We will transform Scottish education in the next five years using the proceeds of 1p on each rate of income tax.

We will index the Higher Rate threshold with inflation.

If the opportunity arises to offer future income tax cuts our priority will be to increase the starting point for income tax in Scotland by creating a new zero-rate band, rather than make tax cuts for the well-paid through a more rapid increase in the Higher Rate threshold. We will ask the Scottish Fiscal Commission to carry out the detailed work to assess when this can be done.

Our commitment to a Penny for Education will pay for our commitments on early years education, the Pupil Premium and colleges and students. The Penny for Education will also be used to end local authority cuts to education services wherever possible.

## Fair taxation and fair spending

Our proposals for education are paid for from the Penny for Education.

Our proposals for mental health and primary care will use the growth from health funding within the Scottish Block to increase the share of spending on these two services. This will reduce the pressures on those other parts of the health service.

Our investment programme for socially rented housing will continue to develop innovative ways of leveraging new money into social housing, in particular by taking steps to increase the investment by local authority pension funds.

Our proposals for warm homes, and support for businesses on renewable heat and energy efficiency will use the Fit For The Future Investment Fund drawn largely from the increased borrowing powers under the Scotland Act.

We will use a review of the Infrastructure Investment Plan project pipeline, together with joint work with Network Rail on their RAB investment programme, to advance our

priorities for rail infrastructure investment to the North East and Highlands and in active travel.

We will use the flexibilities in the Scottish Government's non-cash RAB account to raise the threshold for student loan repayment to £21,000.

We are also concerned at the persistent underspending of the Scottish Government's budget. We will institute a more robust procedure for parliamentary scrutiny of the Budget prior to the spring and autumn budget revisions to ensure that emerging underspends are redeployed onto other projects that are waiting for the green light.

These plans for more robust action to prevent underspends will be targeted to generate an additional £100 million of spending power every year.

This will be used for priorities including enhancing the budget of Police Scotland by £20 million in addition to maintaining the rest of its funding in real terms, increasing support for addiction services, and adding to the Fit For The Future Investment Fund.

Our Help To Renovate loans will come from the special financial transaction consequentials in the Scottish budget.

We will roll the £70 million previously retained by the Scottish Government for the council tax freeze into the main local government settlement.

Our commitments on the new social security powers will be funded through the spending review.

We will retain Air Passenger Duty, recognising that it helps make sure aviation is taxed in the same way as other forms of transport and can help fund green initiatives.

We do not propose any substantive change to Land and Buildings Transaction Tax. This is a new tax and should have the chance to become established.

## A Fit For The Future Investment Fund

We propose to create a Fit For The Future Investment Fund. It will draw earmarked resources from half of the Scotland Act borrowing powers, more than £200 million, as well as from action to reduce the Scottish Government's annual underspend.

We will use the fund to support three priorities:

- The National Infrastructure Project to create more warm homes – giving grants and loans to households and businesses to cut their energy bills;
- More rapid expansion of super-fast broadband and modern mobile phone coverage into remote areas by trebling the community broadband fund;
- Increase the amount of affordable housing being constructed in Scotland.

## Summary

Our five years will be focused on making Scotland the best again, transforming opportunity for children, and our economy, by additional investment in education, skills and mental health.

We will not support a second referendum on independence in the next parliamentary term. Full stop.



Scottish Party Leaders'

**CLIMATE CHANGE  
AGREEMENT**

**We will leave a  
sustainable legacy that  
future generations  
can be proud of.**

# Scotlibdems.org.uk

