

RE-ELECT



SNP  Manifesto 2016

Since 2007 every home in Scotland has benefited in some way from SNP government policies.

We have transformed education, bolstered our health service, reformed policing, taken employment levels to a record high and built thousands of affordable homes.

Our investment has delivered modern learning environments in our schools, colleges and universities, as well as some of the biggest transport improvements the country has ever seen.

Our aim has always been to build a country where strong public services are underpinned by a successful economy. Yes, we are proud of our record, but we know there is still much more to do.

With your support we can build on the achievements of the past nine years.

Together, we can continue to shape a better future for Scotland for everybody who lives and works here.

607 SCHOOLS PROJECTS DELIVERED

Childcare increased, free school meals extended, record exam results, 607 school building projects completed, and free tuition for students.

RECORD NHS FUNDING

A record £13 billion budget for Scotland's NHS, more staff than ever, and patients getting some of the fastest and best treatment anywhere in the UK.

SMALL BUSINESS BONUS

Jobs and businesses protected through the recession – with business rates slashed or abolished for almost 100,000 premises.

SUPERFAST BROADBAND

£400 million to deliver superfast broadband to 95 per cent of properties across Scotland by the end of 2017. And, we'll reach 100 per cent by 2021.

30,133 AFFORDABLE HOMES BUILT

We've exceeded our target for new homes in the last five years, with an investment of £1.7 billion. We'll build at least 50,000 more in the next Parliament.

Check out the full list of our achievements, visit [**www.snp.org/record**](http://www.snp.org/record)

Stronger For Scotland

Standing up for Scotland is what we do. We never shy away from an opportunity to make this country even stronger. The SNP government stepped in to save Scottish steel, Prestwick Airport, and the Ferguson shipyard. And when the Tories tried to cut Scotland's budget by £7 billion, we saw them off.

During the referendum, big promises were made to the people of Scotland by the UK parties.

The promise was made of more powers for Scotland, and that the Barnett Formula – the system used to allocate money to Scotland – would be maintained.

After the referendum, the UK Government set up the Smith Commission to decide which extra powers Scotland should get. People's expectations around the process were extremely high – and rightly so.

The SNP made the case for substantial new powers to boost our economy, tackle inequality and build a fairer society.

The UK parties cut back on the promises they made before the referendum.

In the end the package they were willing to agree to meant that decisions about more than 70 per cent of Scottish taxes and 85 per cent of UK welfare spending in Scotland will continue to be made in Westminster.

But, limited new powers were proposed – powers we want to use for the good of Scotland.

Alongside these new powers a new system of allocating money to Scotland needed agreed. This is called the 'fiscal framework'.

The Smith Agreement, signed by all political parties, outlined a core set of principles for the fiscal framework. The most important of these is the principle of 'no detriment'.

This principle means that Scotland should not suffer financially just because we gain new powers.

The Tory Treasury tried to ignore this.

From day one, they tried to use the process that was supposed to be about delivering new powers to slash Scotland's budget. And not just on a one-off basis, but forever – year after year after year.

It was a shameless attempt to break the Vow they made to the people of Scotland.

At the start of negotiations, they proposed a £7 billion cut.

Then it was £3 billion.

Then it was £2.5 billion.

They were trying to use the referendum to say to Scotland:
'Heads we win, tails you lose.'

Throughout the many months of negotiations the SNP were clear. We would not sign up to a deal that short-changes Scotland. We demanded a fair deal and the powers that were promised to Scotland.

Finally, they caved.

The SNP secured a deal that ensures Scotland will not be a penny worse off and the new powers will be delivered.

It is the SNP's job to stand up for Scotland – and by neutralising a Treasury cash grab on Scotland's budget, that's exactly what we did.

Our guarantee to you in this election is that we will always stand up for Scotland.

My Vision

All of us who live here in Scotland love our country. And we all have a positive and vibrant vision of what Scotland can become.

I have pledged to be First Minister for all of Scotland. Regardless of your politics or your point of view, my job is to serve you.

My vision for Scotland is probably little different from yours. It's one of a fair, equal and prosperous nation with opportunity for us all to grow and thrive.

Set out in this manifesto are the means by which I believe we can bring that vision several steps closer to becoming real.

It is a plan for reform and transformation, providing an ambitious prospectus to fulfill Scotland's massive potential.

For Scotland's children it means a better start in life and more opportunities for the rest of their lives. And for parents it means more jobs, better-paid jobs and greater security in which to bring up your families.

For our health and care services, it means fresh ideas and greater investment, giving the vulnerable in our society an improved quality of life, whatever their age or situation.

Our NHS is precious to all our hearts and we will protect, nurture and grow it for as long as the SNP is in government.

For our economy, it means supporting small businesses, helping all businesses to innovate and grow, and making sure everyone gets a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

For the country as a whole, it means using new powers over tax and social security to expand our economy and lift more people out of poverty.

And it means always trusting the people of Scotland to make the big decisions about the future of our country.

Yes, I am immensely proud of what's been achieved in Scotland over the past nine years. Our country has come a long way, but I am ambitious to do so much more.

The journey to a fairer, more equal and prosperous Scotland is far from over. So, together, let's get going and take the next steps forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nicola Sturgeon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicola" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Sturgeon".

Nicola Sturgeon

The Next Steps

We will increase the NHS revenue budget by £500 million more than inflation by the end of this parliament – which means that it will increase by almost £2 billion in total.

We will reform the NHS to meet the challenge of an ageing population by investing an additional £1.3 billion in our health and social care partnerships, reforming primary care and increasing the numbers of GPs and nurses working in our communities.

We will invest £200 million to expand the Golden Jubilee Hospital and establish five new elective treatment centres in Aberdeen, Inverness, Dundee, Livingston and Edinburgh.

We will put in place a new ten year plan to transform mental health and invest an additional £150 million to improve mental health services.

We will invest £100 million to improve the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

By 2021, we will almost double the number of hours of free early years education and childcare to 30 hours a week for vulnerable 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds.

We will provide free meals to all 2, 3 and 4 year olds who benefit from increased nursery provision.

We will implement our new National Improvement Framework for schools to drive up standards for all and close the attainment gap between young people from the most and those from the least affluent backgrounds.

We will give more power and resources direct to schools, to put teachers, parents and communities in the driving seat of school improvement.

We will increase investment in the Scottish Attainment Fund by £750 million over the course of the next parliament, with more money allocated direct to headteachers.

We will always protect free education. There will be no tuition fees with an SNP government.

We will implement the recommendations of the Widening Access Commission to ensure that, by 2030, at least 20 per cent of university entrants come from our 20 per cent most deprived communities. We will set clear targets to measure progress along the way.

We will increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships to 30,000 a year by 2020.

We will maintain full-time equivalent college places and protect Educational Maintenance Allowances for nearly 60,000 school and college students. We will also retain student bursaries, including for student nurses, and review student funding to make it fairer.

We will introduce a new Jobs Grants for young people aged 16 to 24.

We will invest in our transport infrastructure and reduce Air Passenger Duty by 50 per cent during the course of the next Parliament.

We will deliver 100 per cent superfast broadband coverage for Scotland by the end of the next Parliament.

We will lead a national drive to improve productivity, giving support for business, innovation, infrastructure, skills and fair work. We will expand the Small Business Bonus, increase the number of small businesses that pay no rates and carry out a wider review of business rates to ensure that we maintain Scotland's competitive business rates environment.

We will extend payment of the Living Wage –ensuring that all social care workers receive the Living Wage by October 2016 and doubling the number of accredited employers from 500 to 1,000 by autumn 2017.

We will invest over £3 billion over the next parliament to deliver at least 50,000 new affordable houses, of which at least 35,000 will be houses for social rent.

We will introduce a Warm Homes Bill to help tackle fuel poverty.

We will continue to invest in our Help to Buy and Shared Equity schemes, helping first time buyers onto the housing ladder.

We will increase the Carer's Allowance so that it matches Jobseekers Allowance and maintain the Winter Fuel Payment for pensioners.

We will establish a new Scottish Social Security Agency to administer devolved benefits – and ensure that it has the principles of fairness, dignity and respect at its heart.

We will maintain the level of disability benefits and make the process of assessment fairer.

We will abolish the Bedroom Tax as soon as we have the power to do so.

We will use our new powers to establish a Maternity and Early Years Allowance to help tackle child poverty.

We will protect the police budget in real terms.

We will create a new criminal offence to help tackle all forms of domestic abuse.

We will not allow fracking or underground coal gasification in Scotland unless it can be proved beyond any doubt that it will not harm our environment, communities or public health.

We will bring forward a new Climate Change Bill to implement the Paris Climate Change Agreement and set an ambitious new target for Scotland to reduce emissions by more than 50 per cent by 2020.

We will build on the Land Reform Act to make land ownership more transparent.

We will increase the amount of income exempt from Income Tax to £12,750 by the end of the next parliament, freeze the basic rate of Income Tax to help low and middle income earners, but not implement the tax cut for higher rate earners proposed by the the Tories. Instead, we will freeze the higher rate threshold in 2017/18 and ensure that it will rise by a maximum of inflation until 2021/22.

These measures will generate at least £1.2 billion in additional revenue over the next parliament.

We have frozen the Council Tax for a ninth consecutive year, delivering substantial savings for every household. From next year, we will cap any increase made by councils to a maximum of 3 per cent a year. We will reform local taxation by asking those living in the highest banded houses to pay more and reducing tax for low income families with children. We will increase the financial accountability of local authorities. By assigning a share of Income Tax to councils, they will be less reliant on central government funding, and incentivised to grow their local economies.

We will undertake new work, starting this summer, with the aim of persuading a clear majority of people in Scotland that independence is the best future for our country.



We have always had very positive experiences with the NHS. The last time Dave used the NHS the service was tremendous. He was referred to a specialist and received the medication he needed quickly. The SNP's policy of free prescriptions is the way it should be.

We are aware that our NHS faces pressures, especially with the ageing population here in Scotland, but it performs exceptionally well. We are also reassured that Scotland's NHS will not be privatised under an SNP government. We know the NHS is in safe hands with the SNP.

Dave and Linda Ferris
Dunfermline

A healthier Scotland

The National Health Service is our most cherished public service. The SNP will never waiver in our belief that it must remain a publicly funded service, free at the point of use. And, we will never stop trying to make Scotland's NHS healthier.

As more of us live longer, pressure on our NHS – and in particular our hospitals – will grow. We need to make sure that our hospitals are equipped to cope.

Just as importantly, we need to make sure that as much care as possible is delivered outside of hospitals – in homes and communities. Health and social care services have already been integrated – the biggest health reform since the NHS was established.

Now we have plans to expand primary, community and social care services. Over the last few years, NHS funding has been protected, the number of people working in it has increased, and waiting times have been reduced. But we need to do more. Investment is necessary but not sufficient – we need to fundamentally reshape our NHS to make it fit for the future.

- We will increase the NHS revenue budget by £500 million more than inflation by the end of this parliament – which means that it will increase by almost £2 billion in total.
- We will invest £200 million to expand the Golden Jubilee Hospital in Clydebank and establish five new elective treatment centres in Aberdeen, Inverness, Dundee, Livingston and Edinburgh.
- We will implement our new clinical strategy – to develop specialist services where appropriate and protect local access to care whenever possible.
- We will implement a new £100 million cancer plan to improve prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
- We will build on the integration of health and social care and invest an additional £1.3 billion from the NHS to integrated partnerships to build up social care capacity.
- We will also ensure that social care workers are paid the Living Wage – just as we have already done for NHS staff.
- We will transform primary care, delivering a Community Health Service with a new GP contract, increased GP numbers and new, multi-disciplinary community hubs.
- We will create an extra 1,000 training places for nurses and midwives.

- We will invest an additional £150 million in mental health services and develop a new ten year plan to transform mental health in Scotland.
- We will protect free prescriptions and keep the NHS free at the point of need, and in public hands.
- We will protect free personal and nursing care.



The SNP's action to extend free childcare is an excellent and much needed policy – before my children reached school age I had to reduce my hours beyond what I had hoped to, as once childcare and fuel costs were covered I was actually out of pocket.

Extending free meals to children of pre-school age will be a huge benefit to children and their parents.

It's great to know that younger children will benefit from these alongside their primary school friends.

I feel closing the attainment gap and ensuring university students don't face paying tuition fees are vital to every child getting the best start in life.

Joy Johnston
Montrose

A smarter Scotland

A good education is an investment – not just in our children, but in our society and our economy too. From early years through to adulthood, we want to provide everyone –regardless of their background – with the very best chance of success in life.

We are committed to ensuring that all of Scotland’s children get the best start in life. By investing in high quality childcare and highly trained staff, we can support children during their vital early years and help them reach their full potential.

- By 2021, we will almost double the amount of fully funded, high quality and flexible early years education – for all 3 and 4 year olds and our most vulnerable 2 year olds – from 16 hours a week to 30 hours a week.
- We will ensure that every child in early education in the most deprived communities has access to an additional teacher or childcare graduate by 2018.
- We will replace the Sure Start Maternity Grant with an expanded Maternity and Early Years Allowance. We will increase the payment for the birth of a first child from £500 to £600, restore payments for second and subsequent children – cut by the Coalition Government in 2010 – of £300; and, introduce payments of £250 for low-income families at other stages in children’s lives – when they begin nursery and again when they start school.
- We will recruit an extra 500 health visitors by 2018 and work to ensure that every child benefits from a health development check at 30 months.
- We will develop and implement a new Strategy for Families with Disabled Children so they get the right support at the right time and in the right way, from birth to adulthood.

Scotland has a good education system – with great schools and teachers. We have a new curriculum in place, record exam passes and a record number of young people leaving school to go onto positive destinations. But we need to do more.

- We will deliver £750 million in additional investment through the extended Scottish Attainment Fund, including £500 million raised from local tax reforms delivered direct to schools.
- We will implement the new National Improvement Framework and introduce national standardised assessments in primaries 1, 4 and 7 and s3. These will inform teacher judgment and provide better information to parents about how their children are progressing.
- We will oversee a revolution in transparency about school performance. We will publish information – school by school – on how many children are meeting the required levels of Curriculum for Excellence. This will allow us to measure the attainment gap and set precise targets for closing it. Our mission is to make significant progress in closing the gap within the next parliament and to substantially eliminate it within a decade.
- We will give headteachers, parents and communities more responsibility for schools in their areas, allowing them to take decisions within a strong national policy and inspection framework, and encourage them to work together in clusters where appropriate.
- We will establish a fair and transparent needs-based funding formula for schools and make sure that more money goes direct to headteachers.
- We will review school governance to consider how parents, colleges, universities and local employers can better support efforts to raise attainment and ensure that young people progress into positive destinations.

Helping young people to make the transition to adulthood and the world of work is vital. Whether a young person chooses university, college, vocational training or employment, it is important that they get the best opportunities.

- We will protect free education. There will be no tuition fees as long as the SNP is in government.
- We will set ambitious new targets that will ensure that by 2030, students from the 20 per cent most deprived areas make up 20 per cent of Higher Education entrants.
- We will implement the recommendations of the Widening Access Commission and appoint a Commissioner for Fair Access.
- We will guarantee a place at university for all care leavers who meet basic entry requirements and support them with a full bursary.
- We will maintain at least 116,000 full-time equivalent college places each year, and make it easier for young people to progress from college to university.
- We will reform student support funding to make it fair and equitable to students throughout their learner journey from 16 to 24.
- We will protect the Educational Maintenance Allowance to help young people stay on at school or college.
- We will increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships to 30,000 a year by 2020 and provide free bus travel to all young people under 21 undertaking an apprenticeship.
- We will introduce a new back to work Jobs Grant for young people aged 16 to 24 returning to work after a period of unemployment. It will be set at £100 for young people without children and £250 for young parents.



Running a small business is always a challenge and that's never been more true than over the past few years. However, we've been helped by the SNP government's commitment to small businesses. Since 2007, the SNP has recognised food and drink as a priority sector.

In growing Scotland's reputation as a land of food and drink, small businesses such as Skye Fudge have seen a steady growth in demand for artisan local produce.

The SNP shares the priorities of businesses like mine, such as boosting tourist visitor numbers, protecting jobs and helping small business to work towards a Living Wage which benefits everyone. Under the SNP, Scotland will continue to be an attractive place for business.

Carole Inglis
Isle of Skye

A wealthier Scotland

The SNP are committed to creating a wealthier, more successful Scotland. We want Scotland to flourish, with opportunities for all as part of a fairer economy.

The foundations of Scotland's economy are strong – but there's much more we want to do. We can deliver more and better paid jobs, share the fruits of success amongst our citizens more equally, and create stronger, more sustainable growth.

At the heart of the economic agenda of a re-elected SNP government will be a focus on transforming our productivity as a country. Innovation is key to achieving this ambition and, coupled with our efforts to boost entrepreneurship, will drive our approach to strengthening the economy.

To complement a thriving economy, we will make sure our public services remain strong. Our decisions on tax will provide additional investment for the public services we all rely on, while protecting family incomes, tackling inequality, and offering a clear alternative to Tory austerity.

- We will expand the Small Business Bonus to exempt 100,000 premises from business rates and use the full powers of the parliament to secure the most competitive business rates in the UK.
- We will deliver a major investment in infrastructure, delivering broadband to all of Scotland, building 50,000 new affordable homes and continually improving our transport links.
- We will double the number of Living Wage accredited employers to 1,000 by Autumn 2017.
- We will double the provision of free childcare – helping more parents back into work, and boosting opportunity for business.
- We will deliver 30,000 new Modern Apprenticeships a year by 2020.
- We will review the roles and relationships of our economic development and skills agencies to ensure that they are providing maximum support for innovation and internationalisation.
- We will freeze the Basic Rate of Income Tax for the duration of the next parliament and increase the tax free allowance to £12,750 by 2021/22.
- We will not proceed with the Tories' plans to raise the higher rate of tax threshold to £50,000 – instead the threshold at which people start to pay the 40p upper rate of tax will rise by a maximum of inflation in each year of the next parliament.
- Our Income Tax plans mean that we will have at least £1.2 billion extra to invest in our NHS and public services over the lifetime of the next parliament.



I've bought my first house recently through the SNP government's Low-cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers. The scheme helps people on low to moderate incomes to purchase a property. I thought I wouldn't be able to buy a house for at least five years, and so it's been a fantastic option for me. I also think the improvements the SNP have made to the private rented sector have been very positive and will benefit both tenants and landlords with a safe, secure tenancy.

Along with the work the SNP have been doing on building more council houses, it's great to see so much being done to increase housing options, particularly for young people.

Scott McMurray
Glasgow

A fairer Scotland

Giving everyone the support they need to get on, while protecting the most vulnerable in society and tackling poverty, is crucial to delivering a fairer society.

While the UK Government strips basic support for those who most need it, we will use new social security powers coming to the Scottish Parliament to transform the service people receive.

Delivering the high-quality homes people deserve is also central to our ambitions to create a fairer and more prosperous country. We have a strong track record on housing in government, but we want to go even further.

- We will introduce a Scottish Social Security Bill in the first year of the next parliament and establish a new Social Security Agency.
- We will abolish the Bedroom Tax as soon as we have the power to do so.
- We will support young families on low incomes at the key stages of their children's lives with an expanded Maternity and Early Years Allowance to help tackle child poverty.
- We will protect the Scottish Welfare Fund.

- We will not means test or cut disability benefits and we will raise the allowance paid to carers to the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance.
- We will increase the child allowance within the council tax reduction scheme by 25 per cent, helping nearly 140,000 children across Scotland.
- We will introduce changes to how Universal Credit is paid to ensure that vulnerable people are better supported.
- We will invest £3 billion to build at least 50,000 affordable homes over the next five years. 35,000 of these homes will be in the social rented sector.
- We will help people on to the housing ladder with first-time buyers schemes and shared equity programmes.
- We will tackle fuel poverty by improving energy efficiency, starting with an investment of £103 million in 2016-17 to deliver improvements for 14,000 more homes.



I have made Scotland my home. I came to this country as a refugee from Kurdistan where human rights exist only on paper. It worries me that the Tories want to scrap the Human Rights Act – that's why it's important to have a strong SNP voice standing up for these rights.

I am proud to support a party that is leading the fight against the Tory Trade Union Bill and is standing up for workers' rights. Nicola Sturgeon will continue to defend our interests against a Tory Government at Westminster.

Roza Salih
Glasgow

Moving Scotland Forward

To be in the driving seat of our own destiny and to shape our own future is a natural desire. It is what we all hope for ourselves and it is what the SNP believes is right for Scotland.

We will achieve independence only when a majority of our fellow citizens are persuaded that it offers the best future for our country. Our success will depend on the strength of our arguments and the clarity of our vision.

We believe that the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum if there is clear and sustained evidence that independence has become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish people – or if there is a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will.

- We will undertake new work, starting this summer, to persuade a clear majority of the Scottish people that independence is the best future for our country.
- We will implement the new powers being devolved in the Scotland Act 2016 and make the case for even greater powers over tax, welfare and the economy to be devolved to Scotland.
- We will ensure the UK Government delivers in full on the commitments they made for a more powerful parliament and protection of the Barnett formula for as long as Scotland's funding is determined by Westminster.
- We will work with civic society to establish a set of social and economic rights across devolved areas for all of Scotland's citizens, and embed Scotland's National Action Plan on Human Rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in our National Performance Framework.
- We will campaign for Scotland and the UK to remain in the European Union.
- We will continue to oppose UK Government plans to repeal the Human Rights Act and refuse to consent to its abolition.
- We will defend the rights and freedoms of Trade Unions.
- We will continue our opposition to the unelected House of Lords and argue for its abolition.
- We will oppose plans to waste at least £167 billion on a new Trident nuclear weapons system.



Scotland has benefited from an SNP government that values the role of farming in the rural economy. We have a Cabinet Secretary who uniquely brings together food, farming and the environment into one portfolio.

Under the SNP we have seen exports of Scottish food significantly boosted, and I'm pleased that there is also a focus on our domestic food environment.

The SNP's aspiration is that Scotland is a Good Food Nation, and I support this focus on improving health through food production and farming. The SNP will continue to put a strong focus on agriculture which will benefit the whole of Scotland.

Heather Anderson
West Linton

A sustainable Scotland

We will always support our rural communities, while making Scotland clean and green.

We are committed to creating sustainable rural communities, where people can live, work and prosper. We will encourage communities to be involved in the land they live in, and support community ownership. By continuing to set ourselves ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions we will protect our environment for future generations.

- We will deliver superfast broadband to 100 per cent of premises across Scotland, to bring our most remote communities closer to the markets they need.
- We will invest £25 million in rural housing, supporting more people to live and work in our rural economies.
- We will introduce a new Climate Change Act, with an ambitious new target of reducing emissions by more than 50 per cent by 2020.
- We will ensure that by 2020, at least half of newly consented renewable energy projects will have an element of shared ownership.
- We will fight for a better deal for Scotland in the next CAP negotiations which start in 2017 and for Scotland to chair the EU fisheries council when the UK holds the EU Presidency in the second half of 2017.
- We will empower our island communities through an Islands Bill.

- We will maintain the Road Equivalent Tariff on all current island ferry routes and are committed to reducing ferry fares on services to Orkney and Shetland.
- As part of our Land Reform programme, we will end anonymous ownership of large tracts of Scotland's land by introducing a mandatory, public register of controlling interests in landowners or tenants.
- We will deliver £1.3 billion of funding via the Scottish Rural Development Programme to support the rural economy, rural communities, address the impact of climate change and protect the natural environment.

THE NEXT STEPS TO A BETTER SCOTLAND

SNP 
www.snp.org

CONTENTS

A Healthier Scotland	p2-6
A Smarter Scotland	p7-11
A Wealthier Scotland	p12-18
A Fairer Scotland	p19-22
Scotland's Future	p23-24
A Thriving Rural Scotland	p25-28
A Greener Scotland	p29-32
An Empowered Scotland	p33-36
A Safer Scotland	p37-40
An International Scotland	p41-42
A Creative Scotland	p43-44

A HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Our NHS is our most cherished public service. It is there when we need it, and we must make sure that it is equipped for the future. Protecting investment is vital – and the SNP will always do that – but the shape of our NHS and care services also needs to evolve so they are fit for generations to come.

In everything we do we will remain true to the NHS's founding principles – publicly owned, publicly delivered, and free at the point of need.

Our services will be designed to support people living longer, often with complex conditions. Our aim is to deliver care as close to home as possible. We will build on health and social care integration by ensuring that our NHS develops as a Community Health Service.

Investment and Improvement

We will ensure that the NHS revenue budget rises by £500 million more than inflation by the end of the next parliament – which means that it will increase by almost £2 billion in total.

Thirty-one new local integration bodies have been created to deliver adult

health and social care. Scotland also has 22 health boards – 14 territorial and 8 special boards. In implementing the National Clinical Strategy, we will make sure the existing boundaries between health and integration bodies do not act as barriers to planning local services effectively.

The number, structure and regulation of health boards – and their relationships with local councils – will be reviewed, with a view to reducing unnecessary backroom duplication and removing structural impediments to better care.

We will develop how budgets are allocated, focussing on areas of clinical activity as well as geography and we will continue to shift the balance of care by increasing, in every year of the next parliament, the share of the NHS budget dedicated to mental health and to primary, community, and social care.

Our approach to targets will be outcomes-based to give patients the best possible care according to their needs.

We have delivered record NHS staffing levels, and we will enshrine safe staffing in law – we will put our innovative nursing and midwifery planning tools on a statutory footing, and explore how this model can be extended to cover other parts of the health and social care workforce.

To make sure our NHS has the right skills mix, we will introduce national and regional workforce planning. This will include an increase in the number of consultants and greater use of clinical generalists.

We will invest £3 million to train an additional 500 advanced nurse practitioners to bolster the skills of the profession and equip nurses across Scotland to maximise their leading role in the integrated health care of the future.

We will increase the number of GP training places from 300 to 400 a year.

We will invest over £23 million to increase the number of medical school places.

We will also widen access to medical schools with a new entry level programme for those from deprived backgrounds, and establish the first graduate entry medical school. This will focus on primary care and help expand the Scottish medical workforce

by encouraging students to work in the Scottish NHS after they qualify.

We will retain the nursing and midwifery bursary and protect free tuition for student nurses and midwives to help attract the best people to train for nursing and midwifery roles. We will also work with stakeholders to consider how to provide more support for those in greatest need.

We will also launch a discretionary fund of at least £1 million for nursing and midwifery students experiencing financial hardship to provide a 'safety net' that will help them continue their studies.

We will work to improve recruitment and retention and continue the policy of no compulsory redundancies in the NHS.

Delivering a Community Health Service

Our reforms will bring together a range of professionals in GP surgeries, including practice nurses, district nurses, mental health professionals, pharmacists, and allied health professionals. All GP practices will have access to an enhanced pharmacist, allowing GPs to focus more on the patients who require their assessment.

For this year's GP contract, we have already taken action to remove the out-dated QOF payments system, reduce GP workload and put better support arrangements in place for family doctors. We will continue to work with the BMA to deliver a new 3 year GP contract.

Our extended GP opening hours' programme will be maintained and further extended.

Scotland's most deprived communities need additional support, so we will recruit at least 250 Community Link Workers to work in GP surgeries and direct people to local services and support.

We will increase GP training places from 300 to 400 per year and increase the number of GPs working in our NHS.

Professor Sir Lewis Ritchie's recommendations on out of hours' primary care will be implemented through a National Delivery Plan. And over the next five years another 1,000 paramedics will be trained to work in the community, helping to reduce pressure on A&E services.

Prescriptions and eye tests will remain free of charge. And we will work with stakeholders to deliver enhanced community audiology services

and testing.

We will also continue to support NHS dentistry. Over 4.7 million patients are now registered with an NHS dentist in Scotland – an 82 per cent increase since 2007.

We will sustain the progress that has been made to improve child dental health and continue to deliver the Childsmile programme.

Improving Tertiary, Unscheduled, and Specialist Care

Scotland's population is changing and our health service must change with it. The fact that people are living longer is to be welcomed, but we must ensure that services match their needs both now and in the future.

To help achieve that – and to ensure that the NHS can cope with increased demand for routine procedures like cataract operations and hip and knee replacements – we will invest £200 million in a network of five new elective and diagnostic treatment centres in Edinburgh, Livingston, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness. The Golden Jubilee Hospital will also be expanded.

We will continue to improve the performance of our A&E services. By partnering with the Royal College of Emergency Medicine we have already seen a marked improvement in unscheduled care and we are committed to the 'Six Essential Actions' for A&E.

We will create a major trauma network to reflect our unique geography, utilising sites in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

We will implement the new Cancer Strategy, investing £100 million in over 50 actions to improve cancer prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and aftercare. This will include the continuation and expansion of the Detect Cancer Early programme, investment in radiotherapy equipment and staff, regular cancer patient experience surveys, and continued action to realise our ambition that, by 2050, no-one should die from breast cancer.

New medicines are now more readily available and we will continue to review the appraisal system, to ensure quick, safe and effective access to drugs. We will introduce the option of a pause in the medicines appraisal process to allow for negotiation and potentially avoid the need for reapplication.

A new single national formulary – guidance on drug prescribing – will also be introduced to ensure quick and equitable access to new medicines.

We will work to support research into – and treatment of patients with – neurological conditions. Funding will be made available for three research PhDs in Motor Neurone Disease and a further three in Multiple Sclerosis.

Early in the new parliament we will also consult on ways to further increase organ donation and transplantation, including the development of a workable soft opt-out system for Scotland.

We have improved IVF access, and we will now give consideration to increasing the available number of full cycles to three. We will also change the eligibility criteria so that where one partner has no biological child they will be eligible for IVF.

We do not intend to change the law on abortion.

Improving Child Health

We will develop a new 10-year Child and Adolescent Health and Well-being Strategy, covering both physical and mental well-being. A new Framework for Families with Disabled Children will also be implemented so that all our children get the right support from birth to adulthood.

We will promote children's health and well-being right throughout early years, primary and secondary education, so that all children and young people learn tolerance, respect, human rights, equality and good citizenship to address and prevent prejudice, and about healthy relationships through refreshed, age-appropriate and inclusive strategies and resources.

With new powers over maternity grants we will create a new Maternity and Early Years' Allowance. The grant will provide expectant mothers on low incomes with £600 for their first child. We will also re-introduce a grant of £300 for second and subsequent children. Low-income families will also receive a £250 grant when their child starts nursery, and again when they start school. We will use our powers over welfare foods to support the health of pregnant women and new mothers.

Every new-born in Scotland will be entitled to a 'baby box', offering essential items for a child's first weeks – adapting the successful Finnish model which has helped to improve lives for babies and toddlers.

We will continue to roll-out the family nurse partnership, providing targeted support to every eligible first time, teenage mother by the end of 2018. We will also offer the programme to vulnerable, first time mothers aged 20-24 and extend it to include more children at risk of moving into care.

We will recruit an extra 500 health visitors by 2018 so that every child benefits from a health development check at 30 months.

School food regulations will be reviewed to make sure all primary school children have access to at least 5 of their '5 a Day' each day through school meals or healthy snacks such as fruit.

Our ambition is for Scotland to be the first "Daily Mile" nation with roll out to nurseries, schools, colleges, universities and workplaces across the country. Every school will be offered help to become a Daily Mile school.

Improving Social Care and Support for Carers

We will protect free personal and nursing care for the elderly. We will also examine the introduction of the extension of free personal and nursing care to those under 65 with a diagnosis of dementia.

All Scotland's NHS staff are already paid at least the Living Wage, and from October 2016 this will also apply to social care workers.

We will make charges for social care services fairer. We have already invested £6 million to increase the income threshold at which someone becomes liable for charges, and we will continue to take action to make the system fairer still.

We will exempt War Pension for veterans and Guaranteed Income Payments under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for those injured after April 2005, from consideration in assessments for care charges. And, as part of our strategy to support veterans – Renewing Our Commitments – we will revise existing charging guidelines so that war disablement pensions are fully disregarded from social care means tests.

We will also consult on the introduction of national guidance for care charges and, as part of this, consider the option of a cap that takes account of the costs of disability related expenditure.

As the foundation for a long-term social care plan, we will review care capacity, funding and the structures it's directed through. We will work to end 'time and task' based care, and shift to care which focuses on outcomes.

Building on the Carers Act, we will consider a national or regional approach to supporting carers and cared-for people, including the availability of short breaks for carers and how they can be guaranteed. We recognise the unique needs of Young Carers and will work with them to further improve services. We will also equalise the Carers Allowance with Jobseeker's Allowance.

We will work to increase use of the Carer Positive scheme, so that at least 30 per cent of employers in Scotland are covered.

The publication of a new 3-year dementia strategy will give more focus to palliative care and consider the relocation of post-diagnostic services into primary care so that people can be treated closer to home.

We will ensure everyone who needs

it will have access to palliative care by the end of the Parliament. A newly appointed national co-ordinator will review and advise on steps to improve childhood bereavement services. We will also ensure that public funding for hospices for children have parity with public funding for adult hospices.

Improving Mental Health Services

We will work to transform the support available for people facing mental health issues.

We have made great strides in mental health care in recent years. Funding has been increased by almost 40 per cent since 2006, the number of child psychology posts has more than doubled and we have recently announced a £50 million investment to improve waiting times for treatment.

But demand is also increasing and we must take action over the next Parliament to further improve mental health care in our communities, to support people living with mental health challenges and in particular to help young people who face mental health issues.

We will work with mental health charities, stakeholders and service

users to put in place a ten-year plan to transform mental health care in Scotland including for children and young people.

We will ensure mental health conditions and physical health conditions are treated with parity, re-enforcing existing legislation.

We will shift the balance of funding toward mental health services and invest at least £150 million more over the next five years. We will recruit mental health link workers in GP practices.

We will ensure that the principle of “ask once, get help fast” is in force across the country by the end of the Parliament. No one should be put at risk by a failure to get the help they need when they need it.

As part of our ten-year plan, we will examine innovative ways to deliver better mental health services for children and young people, bringing together healthcare and education, to ensure faster treatment without stigma.

And we will make sure devolved social security services are suitable for people with mental health conditions. Our employment and welfare programmes will be designed to take account of mental health conditions and bring an

end to the difficulties people face with the DWP.

Improving Population Health and Active Living

Public health challenges and health inequalities require a broad response; they cannot be met by treatment alone. We will bring forward a new strategy on diet and obesity to reinforce co-ordinated action on the promotion of unhealthy foods.

There is no room for complacency on communicable diseases such as HIV. As well as implementing the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework, we will support research in the prevention of transmission, including considering the availability of PreP.

We recognise that people affected by infected blood products have suffered serious impacts on their health, life expectancy and quality of life, including financial losses. That's why we will invest an extra £20 million over the next three years to increase the financial assistance they can access.

Our Diabetes Improvement Plan will better support prevention and early detection and improve structured education following diagnosis. We

will create a new national outcome for diabetes to support progress in addressing Type 2 diabetes. We have already made progress in the provision of insulin pumps and in the next Parliament we will increase the provision of insulin pump therapy for adults to 6,000 – over 20 per cent of the Type 1 diabetes population across Scotland.

We will implement the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework which sets out Scotland's ambitions for sport and physical activity and underpins our ambitions to get the nation more active.

Community involvement in sports clubs benefits all local areas. The Spartans FC community model is a good example of how participation, in addition to elite development, can bring positive outcomes. We will give greater recognition and weighting to community involvement and support in making future decisions about investment in community sport facilities.

Having delivered our commitment to 150 Community Sports Hubs by April 2016 we will now go further. Working with Sport Scotland we will increase the number of Community Sports Hubs to 200 by 2020, with greater targeting to areas of deprivation to make a positive impact on inequalities

through sport and physical activity.

Physical activity can bring both physical and mental health benefits. We have provided almost £1 million for the Scottish Association for Mental Health to better promote these benefits and we will examine how this could inform a system of 'social prescribing' in the future.

We will also establish a £300,000 Sporting Equality Fund aimed at increasing the participation, engagement, and promotion of women in sport. We will also continue to work with sports' governing bodies to support efforts to end LGBTI discrimination in sport.

We have improved the supporting infrastructure for sport, through the completion of the National Performance Centre for Sport in Edinburgh and the para-sports facilities at the National Sports Training Centre in Largs. We will deliver a network of regional sports centres around the country with a mixture of facilities for community use and to enable elite athletes to train in Scotland – creating better pathways for more people to reach their sporting potential.

In the last parliament the Glasgow Commonwealth Games showed the benefits that major sporting events can bring in engaging more people

in sport. We will continue to work to bring major events to Scotland, and we will support the 2018 European Championship and the 2019 Solheim Cup to help build on the legacy of the Commonwealth Games.

We will carefully consider the outcome of the consultation on improving supporter involvement in football clubs, and will take the necessary action to give fans more influence.

Building on Quality Improvement

Over the past few years, the Scottish Patient Safety Programme has helped reduce mortality rates in Scottish hospitals by 16 per cent and, since 2008 there have been 17,000 fewer hospital deaths than expected. Infant mortality has fallen in recent years, and over the last 4-years stillbirth mortality in Scotland has fallen by 18 per cent. These improvements have not taken place by chance but by the conscious application of improvement methodology.

These methods harness the energy and creativity of front line staff in testing and implementing small changes across a complex system which add up to significant improvements in outcomes.

We have shown we can apply these methods across health and social care. There is now an interest from external institutions in how they might be applied to deliver wider public benefit such as inclusive growth, enhanced social cohesion and reduced offending.

We will examine ways to apply the lessons of this work in the wider public sector, including exploring the development of a centre of excellence for the use of improvement methodology in public services.

A SMARTER SCOTLAND

A good education is the best gift we can give our young people. It is also the best foundation for a successful, knowledge based economy. Scotland has a good education system, with great schools and teachers. We have expanded childcare and put a new curriculum in place. Our pupils are achieving record exam passes and a record number of young people are leaving school to go onto positive destinations. But we need to do more – it is unacceptable that too many children from less advantaged areas achieve less at school because of their background. That must end. Making sure Scottish education is world class – for all our young people – will be the central mission of the next SNP Government.

Transforming Early Learning and Childcare

In the next parliament, our most transformative infrastructure project will be the expansion of early learning and childcare.

By 2021, we will almost double the availability of free early learning and childcare to 30 hours a week for all 3 and 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds – a policy that will save families

over £3,000 per child per year.

To deliver this expansion, we will invest an additional £500 million a year by 2021 and create 600 new early learning and childcare centres, with 20,000 more qualified staff.

We will also pilot a range of different childcare approaches to determine what works best for children and families, with a view to rolling out best practice around the country to improve the availability of high quality and flexible childcare.

Families want to be reassured that their children get a quality experience in early education. Every nursery already has a teacher or qualified childcare professional. By 2018, every nursery in a deprived community will have an additional teacher or childcare graduate to support children's learning.

Childminders will be central to providing more flexibility and choice for parents, so we will create a new quality standard and induction programme for childminders to deliver best practice in the profession. And we will work with partners to encourage more childminders in communities where currently there are very few. As part of the expansion to 30 hours, we will also provide free lunches for all 2, 3 and 4 year olds in early

education, whether provided by the local authority or a partner provider.

Building on the successful delivery of two hours of PE for children at school, we will also encourage all early learning and childcare providers to give children two hours of age-appropriate physical activity, including one hour a week outside.

Keeping Children Safe

It is everyone's responsibility to protect children's health and well-being and keep them safe. We will roll out Getting It Right for Every Child so the services and professionals that work with children every day can better support children with particular needs or concerns. We will also support the implementation of the Named Person service from August this year.

Play is fundamental to children's learning, helping them to develop relationships, social skills and supporting their health and well-being. We have already invested in activities, facilities and delivery of our Play Strategy. We will work with stakeholders to do more, particularly to ensure that communities have places and green spaces where children can play safely outside.

We will refresh our internet safety action plan, linking it to our strategy on digital participation, so that appropriate frameworks of training, support and information are in place for professionals and families, including children and young people.

We have gone further than any previous administration to address the issue of child sexual abuse. We will implement our Action Plan aimed at eliminating child sexual exploitation and take forward measures to Stop and Listen to children, equipping professionals and agencies with the skills they need to identify and take appropriate action when children tell of being sexually abused.

We will also lead work to improve the child protection system, including reviewing the law to ensure it provides adequate protection against all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and harm.

The role of social workers in protecting children is key. We will consider what more should be done to support the social work profession and encourage more people to train to be social workers. As part of this, we will work with local authorities and other agencies and organisations so that more newly qualified social workers get a guarantee of a full year employment after qualifying.

At the same time, we will work towards every professional working with children being trained on equality, to enable them to address prejudice-based bullying, attachment, child development and child protection.

Some children continue to need our support more than others. We will invest in services to support families whose children are at risk of moving into care. We will implement our Looked After Children strategy and do more to provide support for children who are looked after at home.

We will continue to provide practical and financial support for kinship and foster care families, and introduce a new national allowance for kinship care and foster care. We will continue to invest in services and projects which support children affected by parental substance misuse and/or who are at risk from behaviours and activity which compromise their well-being. And we will invest in activity to make the process of finding safe, secure and permanent homes for children who cannot go back to live with their parents quicker, more effective and efficient, requiring local authorities to use the National Adoption Register.

More needs to be done to support young people who have been in care during their childhoods so that when they reach early adulthood, they

receive the same support, choices and chances as other young people. We will therefore listen to their experiences to ensure that young people have the aftercare support they need and can return to care as young adults if need be.

Supporting Families

We will continue to provide families with books, materials, advice and support through Bookbug and Play Talk Read, and support activity to reach families in our most deprived communities.

We will help more parents to take up more of their parental leave entitlement during children's pre-school years.

And while we are rightly proud of the ground-breaking approach taken to parental rights and responsibilities in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, we recognise that this legislation is now over 20 years old and the shape of families has changed considerably in that time. We will review the legislation to ensure the interests of children and their need to form and maintain relationships with key adults in their lives – parents, step-parents, grandparents and other family members – are at the heart of any new statutory measures.

Investing to Close the Attainment Gap

Ensuring educational excellence for all and closing the gap in attainment between young people from our most and least deprived communities will be the defining mission of the SNP in the next parliament.

We will use information generated through the new National Improvement Framework to set clear, specific and meaningful milestones, with a view to delivering significant progress in closing the attainment gap within the lifetime of the next parliament and substantially eliminating it within a decade.

To support the delivery of this commitment, we will develop a fair and transparent funding formula for schools, to ensure that resources go where they are needed most.

We will also expand our Attainment Fund and invest an additional £750 million in the next Parliament to close the gap in educational attainment.

Our Attainment Challenge – backed by the Attainment Fund – focusses on the key issues of literacy, numeracy, health and well-being. We will continue to target support to over 300 primary schools in our communities – however, we will also expand

the Challenge to involve more local authorities with significant levels of deprivation and extend it to cover secondary schools in those areas. A key focus will be on better supporting young people to make the transition from primary to secondary school.

As well as investing £50 million each year in our established area-based approach to raising attainment, we will allocate the additional £100 million that will be raised each year from our local tax reforms directly to schools. The allocation will be based on the numbers of children in each school who meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals and headteachers will have the freedom to invest the extra resources in the ways they consider will have the biggest impact on raising attainment in their school – for example, additional teachers, classroom assistants, equipment, out of school activities or home link workers.

And in every part of Scotland, we will continue with Read, Write, Count, so every P1 to P3 child has access to books and materials to improve literacy and numeracy. We will Make Maths Count through measures to ensure that more children succeed at maths, particularly in achieving qualifications, and are encouraged to seek related further and higher education, training

and job opportunities.

Libraries have a vital role to play in developing literacy, supporting attainment and encouraging people of all ages to develop and maintain a love of reading. We will continue to invest in the National Libraries Strategy, including initiatives like coding clubs and WWI history projects and we will ensure that every child in Scotland receives a library membership.

We will also roll out the First Minister's Reading Challenge to all P4 to P7 children – and eventually to all children and young people – so that more young people are encouraged to enjoy reading for fun.

Reforming to Raise Standards for All Children

The local community – especially parents and teachers – should be key decision makers in the life of a school. We recognise that not all children are the same – and so our education system should not follow a 'one size fits all' model. We will ensure strong national standards but also empower local schools. We will extend to individual schools responsibilities that currently sit solely with local authorities, allocate more resources directly to headteachers and enable them to take decisions based on local

circumstances. We will encourage school clusters and create new educational regions to decentralise management and support.

International evidence shows that when parents and communities are more involved and engaged with schools, children's attainment improves. So we will review school governance with a view to ensuring that parents, families and communities play a bigger role in their children's education and in the life of their children's school.

The National Improvement Framework will support schools with more consistent and reliable information at local, regional and national level and introducing standardised assessment from 2017 will help parents and teachers chart children's progress at P1, P4, P7 and S3.

A new National Standards and Evaluation Framework will make clear what every school and local authority is expected to deliver to raise attainment and offer guidance on how they can measure their own activity. We will also ensure that school inspections are more focused and frequent.

Investing to Succeed

Teachers are key to our ambitions. We will ensure all children get enough time at school and in class with highly qualified and motivated teaching and support staff.

We will maintain teacher numbers and continue to invest in teachers and headteachers. We will ensure that all our teachers are confident in teaching literacy and numeracy and we will continue to support the Masters qualification for headship.

We will use both traditional and innovative recruitment methods to address particular subject and local shortages and develop new routes into teaching to help attract the brightest and best graduates to train to be a teacher. We will also expect all new, guidance and promoted teachers – and eventually all teachers – to undertake training on equality, providing funding where necessary.

No child should have to learn in a school that is in poor or bad condition. Modern, accessible buildings help create the right environment for children to learn and teachers to work in. In the next Parliament, we will bring forward new proposals to build upon the success of Our Schools for the Future programme which rebuilt or refurbished 607 schools – almost a

quarter of the school estate – between 2007 and 2015. We will also work to ensure that our schools are sustainably built, refurbished and maintained and are world-leading in energy efficiency.

In moving from implementing to delivering Curriculum for Excellence, we will continue to ensure that children get the broad general education they need to succeed. We will maintain the current 2 hours of PE in primary school and 2 periods of PE in S1 to S4. We will continue rolling out the 1+2 languages model in primary schools so that all children benefit by 2021.

We will also implement new legal duties and rights to support Gaelic Medium Education as part of our ongoing commitment to stabilise and increase the number of Gaelic speakers.

We will encourage greater external involvement in key aspects of learning, such as enterprise, STEM, personal and social development and vocational qualifications. We will promote healthy relationships and anti-bullying through refreshed, age-appropriate strategies and resources. We will also work with the Time for Inclusive Education campaign to promote an inclusive approach to sex and relationships education.

We will also focus on embedding Curriculum for Excellence across S1 to S3 and ensure that assessment is proportionate and appropriate from S3 onwards. Our digital learning and teaching strategy will give all children appropriate time and activity to develop digital skills.

Investing in Young People Beyond School

We want all our young people to have equal chances and choices to succeed at school and in life.

We are already committed to giving all young people the chance to study for appropriate qualifications – including vocational qualifications – by better integrating provision in our senior schools and colleges.

We will go further by reviewing education provision for all 16 to 24 year olds so their learning journey is as effective and efficient as possible and provides more stepping stones to success for those needing most support.

We will continue our 2011 commitment to maintain the number of full-time equivalent college places that lead to employment. Our focus will be on ensuring that the sector contributes to boosting productivity,

encourages progression and helps tackle in-work poverty. We will do more to support people to complete courses and to support those who wish to move on to university. And we will ensure better recognition for skills achieved through informal learning and youth-related activities.

We will implement the recommendations for the Scottish Government and its agencies from the Widening Access Commission's "Blueprint for Fairness" so every child, no matter their background, has an equal chance of going to university. By 2030, we want 20 per cent of students entering university to be from Scotland's 20 per cent most deprived backgrounds. We will appoint a Commissioner for Fair Access to report and advise on access. And we will guarantee a university place for every care experienced young person meeting the entry requirements and provide them with a full bursary.

We recognise that vocational education is crucial to the success of our young people and our economy. We will continue to invest in our vocational education strategy, Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, creating better links between schools, skills and the world of work. Our STEM strategy will offer young people qualifications, knowledge and training in key economic sectors with known

skills gaps like engineering, digital technology, science, life sciences and construction.

We will develop and implement a new compact for universities that captures our shared vision for education and the economy, and sets out shared priorities for action.

A Social Contract for Students

Scotland currently provides the highest college bursary and best support for university students in the UK. We will maintain the minimum student income guarantee and work to increase the bursary element of it. But student funding is complex and varies between colleges and universities. We will review support so that funding follows individual students rather than places of study.

Students also need practical and pastoral support, so we will explore how students' health and well-being can be better supported to reduce drop-out rates and ease hardship – including consideration of how students are supported over the summer months.

The review will build on the social contract already in place for Scotland's students. We will keep the education maintenance allowance to help more under 19s from low income families

stay in full time education; we will maintain grants and bursaries for the poorest students, strengthen financial and practical support for disabled students and introduce a support package for eligible postgraduate students on key courses; and we will consider what more we can do with new welfare powers to support vulnerable young people and the poorest students.

Currently students in Scotland benefit from lower interest rates on repayment of student loans. But historically, students have started to repay their loans at a lower income threshold than England and Wales and the repayment period has been five years longer. In the next Parliament, we will reform this so that graduates do not start to repay loan debt until they are earning £22,000 and we will reduce the repayment period to 30 years. This will save graduates currently earning below the new threshold at least £180 per year.

We will keep access to university education free of tuition fees. We will not introduce front door tuition fees nor back door graduate taxes.

We will always value our young people: we know they contribute to Scotland's future, so it's vital that we contribute to theirs.

A WEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Our focus is on growing Scotland's economy and creating rewarding opportunities for all the people of our country.

We believe that by harnessing Scotland's many strengths to increase economic productivity, we can deliver more and better paid jobs, share the fruits of success amongst our citizens more equally and create stronger and more sustainable growth.

We will achieve this through a nationwide drive to improve productivity, by supporting businesses to grow, encouraging innovation, enhancing our infrastructure, developing skills and promoting fair work.

Economic Strategy

Scotland's economy rests on the strengths and talent of our people, our natural resources, and our infrastructure. We have made significant progress since 2007 in dealing with the economic downturn and establishing firm foundations for recovery.

Over the next parliament, we will focus firmly on the four key pillars of our economic strategy – maximising investment in infrastructure and skills, driving innovation, boosting exports and promoting more inclusive growth.

Transforming Scotland's productivity

At the heart of the economic agenda of an incoming SNP Government will be a focus on transforming our productivity as a country. Innovation is key to achieving this ambition, and coupled with our efforts to boost entrepreneurship, support for innovation will be one of our top economic priorities.

Scotland already has strong foundations to build on – we are ranked 4th in the OECD in terms of Higher Education Research & Development expenditure as a percentage of GDP and our business R&D expenditure has risen between 2007 and 2014 from £629 million to £905 million.

However, we are determined to do more. We will invite the First Minister's Council of Economic Advisers and the Scotland CAN DO Innovation Forum to develop a range of specific actions as part of a sustained national programme to boost productivity

through innovation. This will involve actions to develop joint research and development initiatives between academic institutions and businesses and to drive the sharing of innovation expertise across different sectors.

We will also direct the Enterprise Agencies to focus on building a scale-up programme for start-up companies. And we will streamline the advice available to business to ensure resources are effectively deployed to support start-up and scale-up ventures.

We will simplify the way in which companies are able to access support for innovation.

We will continue to support our eight Innovation Centres, to assist the commercialisation of world-class research in big data, digital health, industrial biotechnology, sensor technology, construction, stratified medicine, aquaculture and oil and gas.

We will also launch a new Innovation Prize, with an annual award for the collaborative project that produces the optimum commercialisation from investment activity.

Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship goes hand in hand with innovation. Our vision is of Scotland as a world-leading entrepreneurial and innovative nation – a CAN DO place for business.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Funding Council will continue to work with business and universities to implement Scotland CAN DO SCALE – an education programme targeted at developing the entrepreneurial skills of people working in a high growth potential business or with an innovative, emerging business idea.

We will also continue to support the delivery of the ‘Scotland’s Enterprising Schools’ project to enable all schools to develop a values-based entrepreneurial culture amongst Scotland’s young people.

And because we recognise that if the numbers of women-led businesses increased to equal those of men that this would see a £7.6 billion boost to the economy, we will implement the 2014 ‘Women In Enterprise Action Framework’, developed in partnership with ‘Women’s Enterprise Scotland’.

Scotland: A Competitive Place to Do Business

Our support for innovation will be coupled with a belief in the power of small businesses to drive growth. That's why we will support our small businesses – the local employers that are the lifeblood of our economy – through an extension of the Small Business Bonus that will lift 100,000 businesses out of business rates altogether. The Small Business Bonus – first introduced by the SNP Government in 2008 – has already saved small businesses £1 billion.

We will also review the wider business rates system to make sure that it supports economic growth and job creation with an emphasis on ensuring that Scotland remains the most competitive place in the UK to do business.

Digital connectivity is critical to opening up economic opportunity in every part of Scotland. We will ensure that 100 per cent of premises across Scotland have access to super-fast broadband by 2021.

We will also focus our business development interventions to effectively capitalise on the benefits of digital connectivity – crucial to transforming Scotland's productivity and overcoming the challenges of

geography that affect businesses.

We are committed to promoting Scotland on the international stage to boost our trade and investment, influence and networks. We will implement the Global Scotland Trade and Investment Strategy to drive exports, promote Scottish interests globally and build Scotland's profile through a clear identity for the international trade activities of the Scottish Government, its agencies and organisations receiving government funding.

We will treble the number of exporting advisors in Scotland and fund new Innovation and Investment Hubs in London, Dublin and Brussels to attract inward investment and help companies and academia access new markets and investors. We will also strengthen Scottish Development International's High Growth Market Unit to help businesses to enter and grow in China, India and the Middle East.

We recognise that international connections are critical to the economy.

Air Passenger Duty (APD) is one of the most expensive taxes of its kind in the world and hampers Scotland's ability to secure new direct international routes and maintain existing ones.

Indeed, the level of taxation on the tourism sector, taking account of both VAT and APD, is amongst the highest in the world. This relatively high burden of taxation restricts the potential of the sector to grow to attract many more visitors to Scotland.

When the power to do so is devolved, we will reduce the overall burden of APD by 50 per cent, with the reduction beginning in April 2018 and delivered in full by the end of the next Parliament. Air Passenger Duty will be abolished entirely when resources allow.

We recognise that many businesses, particularly SMEs, are unfairly disadvantaged by late payments. The Scottish Government has built prompt payment into the Scottish Business Pledge and has taken the lead by setting a target of paying all invoices within 10 working days. To help business further, we will press the UK Government for a stronger prompt payment code and a Small Business Commissioner with sufficient powers to intervene and resolve late-payment disputes quickly and effectively. And we will consider what further steps we can take within devolved powers to investigate abuse by large businesses of their market strength.

We know that business needs freedom to grow so we will ensure new

regulation is proportionate but also robust and effective.

Our ongoing planning review will ensure that planning enables and facilitates sustainable and appropriate growth and development.

And in recognition of the fact that new UK rules around quarterly reporting for SMEs appear to be neither proportionate nor fair we will press the UK Government to change their approach.

It is vital that Scotland strikes the right balance in the nature and character of business structures. Scotland is now a world leader in social enterprise and the social economy. Substantial growth is being seen in the sector both in the scale and range of organisations and it forms an increasingly important part of our economy. We are already investing in the development of social enterprises and we will strengthen the support available as part of a 10-year social enterprise strategy.

Investing in Modern Infrastructure

Modernising infrastructure is a key part of our economic plan. Just as we will invest in 100 per cent broadband coverage to provide the digital connectivity we need to prosper, so we will invest in the physical connections that are crucial to sustainable growth.

Over the next Parliament almost £20 billion will be invested in a major infrastructure programme designed to help build Scotland's future. We will continually review and update our infrastructure pipeline with projects the length and breadth of the country including road, rail and ferries, early years and childcare, and schools and health facilities. As part of this, the Scottish Futures Trust will continue to review existing PFI/PPP contracts, seeking opportunities to improve value and reduce the cost to the public purse, including ending contracts where possible and appropriate.

Our investment plan will include:-

- £5 billion in rail improvements – including upgrades to the Aberdeen/Inverness line and the Highland Main Line and modernisation of the Glasgow Subway

- £3.6 billion – through Scottish Water – to upgrade water and sewage infrastructure
- £1.4 billion in improvements to the road network – including work on dualling the A9 and A96, bypassing Maybole on the A77 and improving other sections south of Girvan, further improvements to the A75, and exploring how to better connect Dumfries and the M74
- £63.8 million to complete Dundee's Waterfront project including the new V&A museum
- £250 million in waste water facilities on the Clyde

We will also prioritise improvements to the road network that connects the East of Scotland and Scottish Borders with England – the A7, A1 and A68.

We will also examine the feasibility of extending the Borders Railway to Hawick and Carlisle.

All these infrastructure projects help to protect jobs and create new ones. The Queensferry Crossing alone secured 3,000 jobs, and our infrastructure plans will support around 30,000 full time equivalent jobs in the wider economy.

More and Better Paid Jobs

The focus on boosting productivity must extend to investing in our people. There is strong international evidence that tackling inequality, both in society and in the workplace, boosts productivity, makes businesses more successful and the nation more prosperous.

For most businesses, the most important asset they have are the people they employ. That's why we are committed to investing in growth and jobs by investing in people.

Employment opportunities are vital to boosting our economy and tackling inequalities. In our first 100 days we will bring forward a new Labour Market Strategy informed by the work of the independent Fair Work Convention.

We will help businesses improve productivity by supporting them to become Living Wage employers, targeting promotion of the Living Wage at key low pay sectors and doubling the number of accredited Living Wage employers from 500 to 1,000 by autumn 2017. And we will continue to crack down on inappropriate zero hours' contracts.

We will take all possible steps to ensure that our public procurement processes support progressive workplace practices and also that companies engaging in unacceptable practices like blacklisting, exploitative zero hours' contracts or tax evasion, do not benefit from public procurement.

Scotland is acknowledged as leading the way on 'inclusive growth' and we will work with key partners to host an international conference to share our lessons and learn from other countries experience.

We are already delivering more than 25,000 modern apprenticeships a year, up from 15,000 when we took office. By 2020, we will deliver 30,000 apprenticeships each year and target the additional places on higher-level courses, including graduate-level apprenticeships. We will also make sure that the programme addresses gender imbalances and is open to all by increasing the numbers of trainees who are disabled, care experienced, or from a BME background.

We will continue with our successful Opportunities for All programme and offer a place in learning or training to every 16-19-year-old who needs one.

Since 2011, we have invested nearly £40 million through Community Jobs Scotland to support 6,500 unemployed young people aged between 16 and 29 into training posts in the third sector. Employers are also supported to pay CJS employees the Living Wage. In 2016/17 we will continue our support with a further £6 million investment to fund a 700 more CJS places.

We will continue to support the Employability Fund to deliver training places, including 2,500 college places. This fund ensures people gain skills and training that will help them into the workplace and boost employment.

The SNP Government is leading on tackling under representation of women in leadership roles with our pledge to legislate to have 50:50 gender equality in public sector boardrooms by 2020. In the private and third sectors we will continue to encourage organisations to sign up to the Business Pledge, including the commitment to workforce diversity, and to join the Partnership for Change campaign to set a voluntary commitment for gender balance in their boardrooms of 50:50 by 2020.

While the gender pay gap has decreased, there is more to do. We will ensure public authorities gather diversity information and use it to

inform employment practices, and we will compel those with more than 20 employees to publish their pay gap every two years and an equal pay statement every four years.

For young people who have been in care, we will establish a new fund, based on the example of Community Jobs Scotland, to specifically support them into appropriate work, training or educational opportunities.

By 2021, we are determined to have reduced youth unemployment from its 2014 level by 40 per cent.

We will use new powers to provide young people aged 16 to 24 who have been unemployed for six months or more with a Jobs Grant to help them with the costs of getting into or back into work. This will be a one off payment of £100 for young people without children and £250 for young parents. We will also provide all those eligible for the Jobs Grant with free bus travel for three months to help them take up offers of work.

We will invest in and roll-out our Developing the Young Workforce strategy to increase work related and vocational placements for young people and ensure they are work ready.

We will also encourage small and medium enterprises and start-up

companies to offer work placements, modern apprenticeships, and paid internships to our young workforce. To do this we will increase the numbers of Modern Apprenticeships within small employers that support the Developing Young Workforce strategy.

Our Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) scheme has supported over 1,100 young people into a job since 2015. We will continue SERI, focussing support on young people who face the biggest barriers to employment, including those with disabilities.

Research suggests that 65 per cent of children in preschool today will work in jobs or careers that don't yet exist. So we will develop and implement a Scottish STEM strategy to ensure that from the earliest age, children are alive to the opportunities that science, technology, engineering and maths can offer them.

As part of this, we will introduce a new skills qualification that recognises the achievement of a wide range of vocational and other qualifications taken by young people in senior school. And we will examine the feasibility of establishing further skills academies to address key skills shortages, based on the widely-welcomed CodeClan model.

We will also roll out our programme of school STEM clusters and develop a Scottish STEM ambassador network, so that by 2020 every Scottish school is working with a STEM partner from the private public or third sectors. We will focus in particular on encouraging more girls and women to study STEM related subjects.

'Returnships' have played a successful role in the USA in bringing experienced women back into their previous career after a break, helping them update skills and knowledge, and enabling employers to gain from retaining skilled staff. We will work with large employers to pilot Returnships in Scotland, to help women who have had career breaks back into the workplace.

Key Sectors

The future success of our economy depends upon the sustainable growth and competitiveness of Scotland's businesses. We will target our interventions and intensify our activity in sectors and companies where we have a distinct comparative advantage.

Scotland has strengths in a diverse range of sectors including Food and Drink, Financial and Business Services, Life Sciences, Energy and renewable energy, Tourism and Creative Industries, including Digital.

We will continue our focus on these key sectors, while also seeking opportunities to boost growth in sectors such as construction, engineering, aerospace and automotive industries.

To target growth in regional economies, we will also establish Regional Economic Forums, led by the enterprise agencies with strong private sector involvement, to promote and oversee local business support.

Scotland's Oil and Gas Resources

Scotland remains the largest oil producer in the EU, and the second largest gas producer, with oil production increasing.

Even with the beginning of a global transition to a low carbon economy, there remains a continuing demand for oil and gas. It is thus essential that Scotland ensures good stewardship of our oil and gas reserves for the nation.

We have supported the wider North East economy through our substantial support for the Aberdeen City Deal, as well as our plans for £254 million additional investment in the infrastructure of the North East.

We have argued for a more stable and predictable fiscal regime for the industry – in stark contrast to how it has been run by Westminster. And we have offered direct help through the Energy Jobs Taskforce whose initiatives have included practical assistance to help companies, an Apprenticeship Guarantee, and a £12.5 million innovation fund to help the industry seek new opportunities.

We have also set up a £12 million Transition Training Fund to help oil workers retrain to get jobs in other sectors, including the renewables sector.

In the next Parliament, we will continue to work closely with industry and workforce representatives striving for cost reduction without compromising safety.

We will press for tax measures to improve exploration and investment, and we will work to avoid premature cessation of production whilst taking steps to ensure that Scottish businesses benefit from decommissioning when it takes place.

Fair And Balanced Taxation

We have based all our decisions on tax around the principles first set out by Adam Smith – taxes should be proportionate to ability to pay; they should give certainty to taxpayers; they should allow for convenient payment; and they should be efficient in their operation.

These same principles will govern our approach to the new tax powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The decisions we take on tax will promote fairness and ensure that we raise the revenues we need to protect the public services people rely on and safeguard the social contract.

We will never forget, however, that every decision we take on tax has to be paid for by hard working people across the country. All the decisions we take will be reasonable and balanced. They will be fair to all taxpayers, they will be fair to our economy and they will be fair to our public services.

Income Tax

Our income tax policies will raise additional revenue of at least £1.2 billion over the next parliament for investment in public services.

We will freeze the Basic Rate of Income Tax throughout the next Parliament to protect those on low and middle incomes.

We will also ensure that by 2021/22 the amount of income that can be earned without any income tax being paid rises to £12,750 by creating a new zero-rate band.

We will not implement the tax cut proposed by the Tories through the increase in the Higher Rate threshold. Instead, we will freeze the Higher Rate threshold in real terms in 2017/18 and increase it by a maximum of inflation until 2021/22. We will set out the exact level of the Higher Rate threshold each year in the budget process.

While the Scottish Government does not control the rules on income tax avoidance, there is a risk that an increase in the Additional Rate in Scotland could put revenue at risk. Accordingly, we will not raise the Additional Rate in 2017/18. However,

we will ask the Council of Economic Advisers to consider how and to what extent this risk can be mitigated and if we are sufficiently assured that it can be, we will consider raising the additional rate from 45p to 50p from 2018/19 onwards.

Local Tax

We have delivered a Council Tax freeze for eight consecutive years, protecting family budgets. The council tax freeze will continue for a ninth year – until April 2017. From 2017 onwards, we will cap annual increases at 3 per cent.

We will also raise an additional £500 million from reform of local tax over the next Parliament and invest it directly in schools, providing the money to head-teachers to use to improve education locally.

Our plans to reform the council tax will protect household incomes, make local taxation fairer and ensure local authorities continue to be properly funded while becoming more accountable.

We will increase the child allowance within the council tax reduction scheme by 25 per cent, benefiting 77,000 households by an average of £173 per year or around £15 per month. This boost for low-income families will help nearly 140,000 children across Scotland.

We will also make the council tax fairer by changing how the rate for more expensive properties in bands E, F, G and H is calculated and asking people in these bands to pay more. The average increase for Band E will be £105 a year and for bands F, G and H the average increases will be £207, £335 and £517 respectively.

Households living in higher banded houses but with an income less than £25,000 will be exempted from these increases through an extension of the council reduction scheme.

There will be no change for three out of every four Scottish households, with those in Bands A, B, C and D paying no more than they do now as a result of these reforms.

These reforms are also part of our plan to make local government more accountable to its local communities. Local authorities want greater responsibility for their own finances and to be less dependent on grants from central government.

We will therefore formally consult councils on devolving a portion of the revenue raised through income tax. This will ensure the contribution individuals make to the delivery of local services is more closely tied to their earnings and will also incentivise councils further to support economic growth.

A FAIRER SCOTLAND

Our commitment to address the underlying economic and social inequalities in our nation is the foundation stone for our actions in government. While we don't have the full powers and economic levers that we would want to make a difference to people's lives, we will always use the powers we do have to drive the change we want to see in our society.

The UK government's actions on welfare have attacked some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society. The social security powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament are limited, but they do give us the opportunity to take a different approach – one with fairness, respect, and dignity at its heart.

An Equal and Fair Society

Poverty is not inevitable and our focus will be on tackling the root causes of poverty and deprivation – not just on mitigating the cuts imposed by a Westminster government. That is why the actions we will take to double early years education and childcare, close the attainment gap in our schools, ensure fair access to university and further improve the NHS are so important.

We also recognise that while government has the responsibility to lead and drive change, eradicating poverty cannot be done by government alone. We need to harness the efforts of all of society – including the public, private and third sectors – to work towards the common goal of an equal and prosperous country.

That is why, as soon as we have the powers to do so, we will commence the socio-economic duty contained in the Equalities Act 2010 to require all public bodies to evaluate their policies against the duty to reduce inequalities.

We will also publish a Fairer Scotland Action Plan, bringing together all of our actions to tackle poverty and inequalities. The Action Plan will be informed by the recommendations of the Poverty Adviser – which we will implement in full – and the Fair Work Convention.

We will also re-appoint an Independent Adviser on Poverty and Inequality and establish a Poverty and Inequality Commission to provide expert advice to ministers on how to tackle poverty and measure and monitor the progress made across all portfolios and all parts of Scotland.

Preventing Poverty

Tackling poverty and inequalities requires action to increase incomes and to drive down the extra costs that low income families often face.

To increase incomes, we will continue our work to extend payment of the Living Wage, increase the income tax free personal allowance to £12,750 and reduce council tax bills for low income families with children.

To help reduce costs, we will take action to tackle the poverty premium that many people on low incomes face.

We will encourage and support third sector organisations, social enterprises, and credit unions to enter the market place to fill gaps in the provision of services or to offer alternatives to current providers that are not offering services people can access easily or affordably. This includes energy, banking, payday loans, debt management, and funeral planning.

We will develop and implement a national strategy to tackle social isolation backed by a fund of £500,000 in 2016/17 and encourage use of the community empowerment fund for local community projects addressing issues of isolation and loneliness.

We will provide resources for a new programme of financial health check-ups to help pensioners and those on low incomes make the most of their money and to secure the best energy tariffs and access to bank accounts.

We will convene a summit of utility companies to challenge them to do more to provide the best rates available for low income households and reduce the need for prepayment meters which result in the poorest in society paying the most for their energy.

We will also promote the Our Power social enterprise energy model for councils and housing associations to help keep costs down for social rent tenants.

We will publish a food sustainability plan aimed at ensuring everyone can feed themselves and their families and establish a £1 million a year Fair Food Fund to reduce reliance on emergency food provision.

We will publish a Funeral Costs plan to tackle issues relating to the affordability of funerals – this will include the introduction of a funeral bond to help people save for funerals. We will also use our new powers over Funeral Payments to reach more of those in need, and we will bring together funeral directors,

councils and stakeholders to examine ways of reducing funeral costs and encouraging people to better plan for their funeral.

Helping People Back to Work

The DWP's Work Programme and Work Choice Programme have failed unemployed and disabled people. The devolution of these services provides an opportunity to deliver these services in Scotland in a different and better way.

That opportunity has been undermined by the U.K. government's decision to cut funding for employment support services – which means that the money to be transferred to Scotland alongside these new powers will be almost 90 per cent less than had been expected. It is likely that just £7 million will be transferred from the UK government to Scotland to support these services.

However, we are determined that we will not allow those who need help to get into work to pay the price of the U.K. government's decisions.

That is why we will invest an additional £20 million a year – over and above the funding that is transferred from Westminster – to ensure that those who most need support get it.

To ensure continuity, transitional arrangements will be in place for one year from April 2017. We will then deliver new services from 2018 to provide effective support for those who face the most significant barriers to finding and sustaining employment. The services that we put in place will be flexible and responsive and focussed on helping people into suitable and sustainable employment. The services will be nationally designed but delivered locally to reflect local circumstances and meet local need. As with the new powers we will have over social security, we will ensure that the principles of fairness, dignity and respect are at the heart of our new services.

Social Security Founded on Respect

We'll introduce a Scottish Social Security Bill within the first year of the new parliament to take forward our early priorities for using the social security powers that are to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Our priorities, not all of which will require legislation, will include:-

- Establishing a new Social Security Agency to administer and deliver the benefits and payments being devolved
- Setting clear timescales for conducting assessments and making decisions in respect of the benefits being devolved. We will also establish a transparent and accessible appeals process – with guaranteed timescales for decisions – and ensure that all claimants can access information on how to appeal. We will also ensure that accessible information is available for those with special needs.
- Abolition of the Bedroom Tax
- Reform of Universal Credit. We'll enable the housing element of Universal Credit to be paid direct to social housing landlords where a tenant requests it and also consider extending this to private renters. We will also provide the option of having Universal Credit payments made fortnightly instead of monthly, to ensure that people are better supported.
- Increasing Carer's Allowance to the level of Jobseeker's Allowance
- Protection of the Scottish Welfare Fund, which has already supported 178,000 households with grants totalling £81 million since it was established in 2013

- Increasing the Child Allowance for council tax reduction by 25 per cent, benefiting 77,000 households by an average of £173 per year
- Restoration of housing benefit for 18-21 year olds. Investing £2.5 million a year in agencies that provide advice and support to help people access the benefits they are entitled to. We will also ensure that accessible information is available for those with special needs.
- Encouraging benefits take-up through a government led campaign and a programme of work with partners to increase take up by those who are eligible for benefits but not currently making claims
- Making better use of technology to simplify the process of applying for benefits and bring services closer to the people who use them
- Establishing stakeholder forums to inform social security policy on an ongoing basis

Pensions

The SNP will continue to argue for a fairer pensions system at Westminster.

The way in which women born in the 1950s have recently been treated – with repeated acceleration of the extensions of the retirement age – is nothing short of disgraceful. The

Scottish government does not have the power to change the retirement age or to pay a pension to women who have not reached the UK pension age. However, the SNP will continue to fully support the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign in their efforts to secure fairness for women affected by the acceleration in the retirement age.

There is a separate but related issue of the recent introduction of the single-tier pension that could leave approximately 90,000 women at a financial disadvantage compared to men of the same age.

We will assess the impact of these changes and the options open to the Scottish Government, with a view to providing support to these women when we have the power to do so. This would depend on securing guarantees from the DWP that any additional payment made by the Scottish Government would not be clawed back from women in other ways.

Dignity in Disability Benefits

We will protect disability benefits and ensure that they remain non-means tested. We'll reform assessment procedures to ensure they work for service users, and stop the revolving

door of assessments and related stress and anxiety for those with long-term illnesses, disabilities or conditions. We'll also introduce long-term awards for existing long-term conditions that are unlikely to change, and ensure people get the right level of award as time goes on.

To support us in this aim, we'll establish a Disability Benefits Assessment Commission to provide recommendations and guidance on how often assessments should be, what conditions should be given an automatic or lifetime awards, and eligibility criteria.

When disability benefits are transferred, any child in receipt of DLA will be given an automatic award of that DLA to age 18 to allow for continuity for families whilst the transfer of benefits takes place.

We'll extend the eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment to families with children in receipt of the highest care component of DLA. We'll also make payments early for those who are off-grid, so that they can take advantage of lower prices.

We will raise the allowance paid to carers to the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance, increasing carers' incomes by £600 a year. We will also increase the Carer's Allowance for those looking after more than one disabled child, to recognise higher costs.

We will abolish the 84 day-rule, which currently means that severely ill or disabled children needing more than 84 days hospitalisation or medical treatment lose both DLA and Carer's Allowance.

We will also consult on how people on disability benefits can best access adapted vehicles, aids and appliances.

Diverse but Equal

Tolerance, respect, inclusion – these are attitudes and principles we want to encourage and foster in modern, fairer Scotland. Enabling young people to make informed choices about their gender and sexual identity is about supporting them to be themselves so that they might fulfil their potential.

We recognise that Scotland has come a long way on issues such as LGBTI recognition, but that we have further to go. We expect all new guidance and promoted teachers – and eventually all teachers – to undertake training

on equality, so they are confident in tackling prejudice-based bullying. We will provide additional funding where required.

We will work towards every professional working with children being trained on equality, to help address prejudice-based bullying, attachment, child development and child protection.

A distinctive part of our equal marriage law was our more progressive approach to Transgender recognition which allows married transgender people to obtain a full Gender Recognition Certificate, and stay married. We must now build on this to help end discrimination. We will review and reform gender recognition law, so it's in line with international best practice for people who are Transgender or Intersex.

And we will build on and improve the standalone protocol that's been developed in Scotland for people seeking gender reassignment, which has provided a clearer and consistent treatment pathway that is equitable, effective, and patient-focussed.

We will appoint a new Race Framework Adviser to take forward a range of actions to tackle existing inequalities within our ethnic

communities.

Last year marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. We must never stop working to ensure that nothing like the Holocaust ever happens again. We will continue to fund opportunities for post-16 students from every school and college in Scotland to participate in a one-day visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau and attend seminars to learn about the Holocaust, as well as hearing testimony from a survivor.

We will continue to fund Family Sign Language courses, which help increase communication between deaf children and their hearing parents.

As part of our new Disability Action Plan we will produce and implement a National Strategy for Young People with Disabilities to improve the outcomes of young disabled people and ensure they are getting the best provision and support possible.

We will consider a system of penalties for local authorities that haven't settled outstanding equal pay claims, or are still not paying equal pay by April 2017.

We will continue to promote gender balance in all areas of society – and support the 50:50 by 2020 initiative.

We will establish an Advisory Council

on Women and Girls to advise on action to tackle workplace and occupational segregation and other issues relating to gender equality.

Protecting Human Rights

In the next Parliament, we will also seek to use our new powers to establish social and economic rights for Scotland over all matters we have responsibility for and to further embed the European Convention on Human Rights in Scotland.

We will invite a cross party group, including civic society, to establish a collaborative process, engaging with people across Scotland and learning from best global practice in participatory democracy, to advise on the guaranteed protections we should seek to enshrine in law.

We will also embed Scotland's National Action Plan on Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals into our National Performance Framework.

We will work hard to protect human rights across the UK. We have already forced Westminster to rethink plans to abolish the Human Rights Act. We will continue to oppose its repeal and an SNP Government will not consent to its abolition.

We will always defend trade unionists' rights across the UK by opposing the Trade Union Bill and we will continue to make the case for employment law to be transferred to Scotland. We will work with the STUC and trade unions to explore what support can be offered to mitigate the impact of the Bill and help them continue their legitimate activities.

And to support consumer rights – once consumer advice and advocacy powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament – we will develop a Consumer and Competition Strategy and legislate to create a unified consumer body. This body will be given the powers to carry out research and representation and will use evidence, expertise and knowledge to stand up for consumers. We will lead the way to protect Scottish consumers as we have done with parcel delivery. We will convene a summit with business and stakeholders to look at the issue of nuisance calls which are blighting the lives of vulnerable consumers, particularly the elderly. We will seek solutions to protect consumers from such bad practices.

SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

To be in the driving seat of our own destiny, and to shape our own future is a natural desire. It is what we all hope for ourselves and it is what the SNP believes is right for Scotland.

In 2014 we held a referendum that inspired people across the country and created real debate over what kind of nation we want to be and how we want to be governed. That national conversation has changed Scotland for the better: we are more confident in our views, of our position in the world and more engaged in the government of our country.

And while we did not secure independence for our nation, we did secure more powers for the Scottish Parliament, enabling more decisions to be made closer to home.

In fact, since first elected in 2007, we have secured the transfer of over 30 powers from Westminster to Holyrood on taxation, welfare, drink driving, the Crown Estate, air weapons and railways.

Using New Powers

In the next Parliament we will use these powers to better serve the interests of all of Scotland. We will:-

- Use new tax powers to support economic growth, invest in public services and protect people on low incomes
- Abolish the Bedroom Tax
- Establish a Social Security Agency with fairness and dignity at its heart
- Increase Carer's Allowance to the same level as Jobseeker's Allowance
- Introduce flexibility over when and how Universal Credit payments are made
- Restore Housing Benefit for 18 – 21 year olds
- Introduce a Jobs Grant to support young people into work
- Support new mothers and their children with a new Maternity and Early Years Allowance
- Ensure local communities are able to benefit directly from the coastal resources of the Crown Estate
- Enable public sector operators to bid for future rail franchises
- Develop a Consumer Rights policy and establish Consumer Scotland to protect consumers not companies
- Abolish fees for Employment Tribunals

Standing Up for Scotland

The SNP will always stand up for Scotland, both at Holyrood and in Westminster.

While we remain part of the Westminster system SNP MPs will work to support the efforts of the Scottish Government and to protect Scotland from Tory cuts and ideological attacks on welfare, trade unions and public services.

As a government we will always make Scotland's case to the UK government and stand up for Scotland's interests.

We will ensure that Scotland's finances are protected from any attempt by the UK Government to use the devolution of tax and welfare powers as a means to reduce Scotland's budget. For as long as part of the Scottish Parliament's budget continues to be determined by Westminster we will fight to protect the Barnett formula.

The Fiscal Framework which supports the new powers of the Scottish Parliament is just as important as the powers themselves. We will ensure that the UK Government honours the agreement reached with the Scottish Government and that any changes to the fiscal framework are jointly agreed.

And we will represent Scotland's interests, making clear our opposition to the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons. We will take every possible step to prevent £167 billion being spent on a new generation of nuclear weapons and instead seek to have that money invested in public services and in support for jobs and services at Faslane.

We will also continue to oppose the undemocratic House of Lords and argue for its abolition.

Right to a Referendum

We believe that independence offers the best future for Scotland. However, Scotland will only become independent when a majority of people in Scotland choose that future in a democratic referendum – it will not happen just because the SNP wants it to, or because there is an SNP government.

At the same time if there is a clear demand for a referendum no politician has the right to stand in the way of the people of Scotland to choose their own future.

We believe that the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum if there is clear and sustained evidence that

independence has become the preferred option of a majority of the Scottish people – or if there is a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out of the EU against our will.

In the next parliament, we will work hard to persuade a majority of the Scottish people that being an independent country is the best option for our country. We will listen to the concerns of people who voted No in 2014 and seek to address them. The case we make will be relevant to the complex world we live in today.

A THRIVING RURAL SCOTLAND

The SNP will always stand up for the interests of rural Scotland. We want our rural communities to prosper and be well supported by high quality public services. We want more young people to have the opportunity to build careers and successful futures in the areas where they grow up. We want to build rural Scotland's future, investing in homes, infrastructure and connectivity.

Supporting Agriculture

Agriculture plays a highly significant role in the rural economy and we are committed to directly supporting farmers and crofters. We now pay £440 million in direct support to Scotland's 18,500 farmers and crofters and will pay approximately £3 billion over the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) period. In addition, we have used a substantial part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme to support farming.

The next CAP negotiations begin in 2017 and we will fight for its simplification, a fairer share of the budgets for Scotland, and for greater flexibility in how it is delivered.

Our approach to the new CAP will be one that supports productive and sustainable agriculture, targets activity, supports new entrants, protects farming and crofting on our hills and islands and also focuses on the dysfunctional supply chains and markets that currently deny primary producers a fairer return from the wider food and drink industry's success. We will also ensure lessons are learned to improve the payments system.

We will continue to campaign for the UK Government to release the CAP convergence funds to Scottish farmers. Around £190 million should have come to Scottish farming but the vast majority was directed elsewhere by the UK Treasury.

We will continue our work to secure Scotland's fair share of the red meat levy to ensure that the funds raised from the Scottish livestock sector go to promoting Scottish produce.

We will continue the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme.

We will explore mechanisms to make more publicly owned land available to new entrants to farming and we will implement the regulations provided for in the Land Reform Act to create a thriving tenanted sector.

Modernising Crofting

Crofting plays a unique role in Scotland's Highlands and Islands heritage, bringing distinct social, economic and environmental benefits to communities. We will continue to provide public support for the continuation of crofting and to secure thriving crofting communities.

We will also introduce a new entrant's scheme for crofting, explore the creation of new woodland crofts and publish a National Development Plan for Crofting.

Croft housing grants have been increased and we will continue to target support at those most in need. We will also re-introduce the Croft House Loan Scheme.

Crofters have long been concerned at overly complicated and outdated legislation so we will modernise crofting law and make it more transparent, understandable and workable in practice. We will also ensure new community landowners are not left out of pocket due to registering as the new landlord of crofts within their community owned estate.

Sustaining our Fisheries

We have supported the viability and profitability of Scotland's fisheries, sustaining existing markets and developing new markets by allocating £77 million of support to over 1,200 projects.

We will continue to do everything we can to ensure Scottish fishing quota is retained in the hands of active Scottish fishermen, and that quota speculation is ended. We will also work with the industry to phase in the discard ban and we will set up a new entrants' scheme for fishermen.

We will continue to press for Scotland to take the lead in fisheries negotiations where Scotland has the predominant interest, and we will push for further decentralisation of the Common Fisheries Policy. We will also argue for Scotland to chair the EU Fisheries Council in the second half of 2017 when the UK holds the EU Presidency.

We will set a Scottish landings target for all Scottish fishing boats to ensure more fish are landed in Scotland to create jobs and support local businesses in our fishing communities.

We will continue to argue for repatriation of the Seafish Levy to ensure that levy funds paid by the Scottish industry are used to promote Scottish seafood.

We will work to ensure a healthy and productive inshore fisheries sector by implementing our Scottish Inshore Fisheries Strategy. We will also update inshore fisheries legislation through an Inshore Fisheries Bill to support sound fisheries management.

We will designate the Haaf net fishery on the River Annan as a historic fishery.

We will introduce a Wild Fisheries Bill to modernise structures and enable better national and local management of wild fisheries and establish the foundations for a more secure and sustainable future for this vital sector.

Sustainable Seas

We are helping to protect rare, threatened, declining or nationally representative species vital to the marine ecosystem through designation of 30 Marine Protected Areas.

We will implement Scotland's first National Marine Plan to promote the sustainable development of our seas, and meet our international obligations

to ensure healthy seas.

Developing Scotland's Larder

Through our support for the food and drink sector, we have reached the Food & Drink Growth Sector Turnover target 6 years early.

We will build on this success and continue to implement the Scotland Food and Drink Export Plan. This focuses on 15 key markets to extend reach and meet demand while increasing further the value of food and drink to our economy.

We will protect the sector's international reputation by continuing our opt-out of the cultivation of genetically modified crops for the lifetime of the next Parliament. We will bring forward a Good Food Nation Bill to draw together all aspects of the Scottish Government's work on food and drink – including food standards, public procurement and food waste.

We will implement our Good Food Nation policy drawing on the expertise on the Scottish Food Commission and civic society.

We will take forward, in discussion with stakeholders, the recommendations of the Overton report on Deepening Collaboration

on Food and Drink in Scotland. In particular, we will encourage the co-location of the main public sector and industry bodies to improve joint working at a National Food and Drink campus.

We will put in place a joint food industry supply-chain and public sector procurement Taskforce to match demand with supply, ensuring more Scottish produce is procured by local authorities and public bodies.

We will appoint a National Chef to champion good food across Scotland.

We will set up a £5 million fund to promote Island and Regional food and drink brands and we will work to increase the supply and demand of organic food in Scotland, using public procurement to drive demand.

We will revisit our health and nutrition legislative framework for school meals to ensure that our children have more access to healthy, Scottish produce both within and outside the school gates. We will also encourage local authorities and other public agencies to procure Scottish produce.

Through the Community Empowerment Act, we will seek to increase access to land for food growing purposes, as part of our strong commitment to develop

allotments and community gardens.

Extending Land Ownership and Improving Land Management

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act marks the next step in our land reform journey but is by no means the last. In the next Parliament, we will implement the provisions of the Act, including the establishment of a Scottish Land Commission and the publication of a Land Rights and Responsibilities statement.

As part of our Land Reform programme, we will end the practice revealed in the infamous Panama Papers of anonymous ownership of major tracts of Scotland's land by introducing a mandatory, public register of controlling interests in landowners or tenants.

We are committed to a target of 1 million acres of land being in community ownership by 2020. We will take forward recommendations from the strategy developed by the 1 million acres working group and we will also resource community land purchases through the £10 million Scottish Land Fund.

We will bring forward proposals to modernise and improve powers for compulsory sales orders. These

powers need to be effective to tackle the blight of abandoned buildings and small plots of land in town centres and communities but also adequately protect the rights of owners. We will also review small landholding legislation.

To maximise the benefits of publicly owned land to the nation we will establish Land Scotland, a new land agency for Scotland. Based on existing agencies this will help manage Scotland's publicly owned land in the national interest.

Creating Sustainable Rural Communities

We will work with key stakeholders to design and develop a Rural Infrastructure Plan which addresses key economic and social needs and we will pilot local rural infrastructure and development plans in Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders to create sustainable economic, social and community development.

We will continue to apply a presumption against rural school closures, through a clear and focused legislative framework which provides for issues wider than just financial considerations.

We will create a Rural Housing Fund with investment of £25 million over the next three years to build new, affordable houses, enabling the needs of older people to be met more appropriately and young people and families to stay or make their lives in rural communities.

We will set up a Taskforce to explore new ways to help rural households heat their homes affordably.

We also support the campaign to promote and extend hutting and we will develop planning guidance to support an increased number of huts in Scotland.

We will support and promote the Scottish National Trail which links up Scotland's great trails network, to encourage outdoor tourism and benefit the communities connected to the national trail and the trails network.

We are committed to the continuation of the Rural Parliament as a grassroots voice for Rural Scotland.

Connecting Rural Communities

We will maintain the Road Equivalent Tariff discount scheme on Hebrides and lifeline ferry routes, continue the air discount scheme currently in operation for passengers and also protect lifeline air services.

Ferries provide lifeline services to many coastal and island communities in Scotland as well as providing key commercial and tourism links to our neighbours in the rest of Europe.

We have already invested £97 million to replace ferry vessels to be built at Ferguson's shipyard on the Clyde. We will continue to invest in building new ferries and redeveloping ferry facilities, including those at Brodick.

We are committed to maintaining RET on all current island ferry routes and also to reducing ferry fares on services to Orkney and Shetland.

We will look to bring forward planned investment to improve road links to the Cairnryan ferry hub by 2020.

Devolution of Crown Estate

We will keep the Crown Estate as an ongoing entity until further public consultation on its future has taken place and ensure a smooth transition for tenants of the Crown Estates' four rural estates at Glenlivet, Applegirth,

Whitehill and Fochabers.

We will ensure that Scotland's coastal and island communities get to control and decide how to invest 100 per cent of net revenues raised from Crown Estate marine assets out to 12 nautical miles.

Forestry

We are committed to keeping the Forestry Commission as an asset for the nation. We will plant 10,000 hectares of trees every year until 2022 and work to hasten the pace of application and approval of planting. We will also complete the devolution of the Forestry Commission.

Our Forestry repositioning programme has helped generate income to support new planting and community woodlands. We will continue the programme with a focus on maximising forestry provision to tackle climate emissions and help to restore derelict old mining and industrial land. We aim to create at least 2,000 acres of woodland on restored land over the next 4 years.

We will deliver support for woodland creation and improvement through the Forestry Grant Scheme. In particular, we will support the planting of woodland which can help prevent

flooding and assist in water basin management. We will also explore how public sector pension funds can invest in Scotland's forestry and we will increase action on restoration of ancient woodlands.

We have won multiple awards for the Forestry Commission Scotland's Branching Out programme, which uses outdoor education to improve the quality of life for adults experiencing long term mental health problems and common mental health issues. We will ensure the Forestry Commission and NHS work together to protect and extend this scheme and widen its availability.

Tackling Wildlife Crime and Promoting Animal Health

We have introduced new vicarious liability provisions to protect birds of prey from persecution through the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, and strengthened the law on wildlife crime in other areas such as snaring.

We have accepted recommendations from the wildlife crime penalties review group to introduce tough new maximum penalties for those who commit crimes against wildlife.

We will also take forward a number of other recommendations including greater use of alternative penalties such as forfeiture of equipment used to carry out offences, greater use of impact statements in court to better explain the impact a wildlife crime may have, and we will also consider the creation of new sentencing guidelines

In the next Parliament we will undertake a wildlife crime prevention review and set up a Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit as part of Police Scotland.

We will consider the outcome of our consultation on tail-docking to implement the best possible policy from an animal welfare perspective.

We will consider the outcome of Lord Bonyon's review of Scotland's hunting with dogs legislation to ensure legislation is providing the necessary level of protection for foxes and other wild mammals while allowing for the effective and humane control of these animals where required.

We will also ban the use of wild animals in circuses in Scotland and conduct a review of pet welfare which will include the issue of electric dog collars.

A GREENER SCOTLAND

Scotland is a world leader on tackling climate change emissions – both in terms of our ambition and our record. We are considered to be an international exemplar and have made substantial progress in making Scotland cleaner and greener.

Climate Change

In 2009 the SNP Scottish Government set Scotland world leading targets to reduce the nation's greenhouse gas emissions by 42 per cent by 2020. The most recent statistics show that by 2013 Scotland had already achieved a 38.4 per cent reduction in carbon emissions. In response to the historic agreement signed at the UN Climate talks in Paris last year we will bring forward a new Climate Change Bill which will strengthen our ambition further and set a new target to reduce emissions by more than 50 per cent by 2020.

To increase transparency and accountability, we believe Scotland's targets should be based on actual emissions from Scotland. We will work with our independent advisers, the UK Committee on Climate Change, to bring forward plans for a new Bill.

We will continue to deliver global leadership through involvement in the UN Climate talks, and we will also explore the possibility of bringing a future meeting of the annual UN climate talks to Scotland.

Climate Justice at Home and Abroad

We will continue to support Scottish communities to take action to reduce carbon emissions through our Climate Challenge Fund, targeting Scotland's most deprived communities and projects which deliver the greatest reduction in carbon emissions. We will seek to further improve access to quality green space, especially for deprived communities, to maximise health, education and biodiversity benefits.

We established Scotland's Climate Justice Fund and have spent £6 million to date to help some of the world's poorest communities adapt to the challenges of climate change. We will increase the Climate Justice Fund to at least £3 million a year for the next five years. We will also continue our support for the Central Scotland Green Network.

We will support developing countries in the UN Climate talks process and help them minimise greenhouse gas emissions. To help with this, we will

share our expertise and provide help in kind to the Government of Malawi to help them design their renewable energy strategy, deliver green growth and extend access to electricity.

Reducing Waste and Making Things Last

We will continue to progress our ambitious target to recycle 70 per cent of all of Scotland's waste by 2025 and bring an end to municipal biodegradable waste being sent to landfill by 2020.

Food waste collections have now been rolled out to 61 per cent of households across Scotland and we will work towards our new target to cut food waste by a third by 2025.

Deposit and Return schemes can increase the amount of high quality material being brought forward for recycling and help to reduce litter. They attach a value to the materials and help end a throw away culture. We will give further consideration to proposals for a deposit and return scheme.

We will bring forward a Circular Economy and Zero Waste Bill to build the circular economy, promote recycling and take action to meet our food waste targets.

Scotland's New Energy Strategy

The SNP is developing an ambitious and long term Scottish energy strategy which we will implement over the next Parliament and beyond. The strategy will aim to make electricity cleaner, more affordable and more secure for all consumers.

The strategy will take a "whole system view" and encompass demand reduction, energy efficiency, a balanced energy generation mix, a role for storage, and the requirement for a low carbon transition in transport and heat use. We will develop creative approaches – for example, we will examine collective switching models and group buying of energy with an emphasis on those off-grid. As part of our work with stakeholders to develop the strategy we will seriously and carefully consider the proposal from industry body Scottish Renewables for Scotland to set a target of 50 per cent of all energy to come from renewables by 2030.

In developing the strategy, we will undertake fresh analysis and full consideration of electricity generation options, drawing on expert opinion, including from the Scottish Energy Advisory Board.

Renewables Success

We have championed green energy and worked closely with industry, communities and consumers to maximise the benefits of renewable electricity generation.

Since 2007 total output of renewable electricity has more than doubled, and 57.7 per cent of Scotland's electricity needs now comes from renewables – exceeding our target of 50 per cent by 2015.

Between 2010 and 2014, £14.2 billion of investment has been announced in the Scottish renewables sector, driven by our target that 100 percent of Scotland's electricity needs will come from renewables by 2020.

We will continue to support new wave energy technology through Wave Energy Scotland and the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney.

We welcome the fact that oil and gas companies are using their expertise, especially in subsea, to help take forward renewable energy developments. We will work with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to further develop the use of expertise from the oil and gas sector in developing renewable energy.

We will work closely with the Solar Trade Association to advance proposals for expanding solar energy in Scotland. And we will also continue to promote biomass as a good use of our forestry products for energy.

We will also explore the creation of a Scottish Renewable Energy Bond in order to allow savers to invest in and support Scotland's renewable energy sector.

We are working with Scotland's Islands communities to ensure they can release their huge renewable energy potential. We will continue to press the UK Government to progress the necessary EU permissions and bring forward a viable package of support that will facilitate the vital grid connections to the Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles.

Community Benefits and Community Owned Energy

Our Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) has empowered communities throughout Scotland to own and manage renewables projects. We will work to support the further growth of community and locally owned renewable energy projects, with new targets of 1 GW of community and locally-owned energy by 2020, and 2 GW by 2030.

We will ensure that by 2020, at least half of newly consented renewable energy projects will have an element of shared ownership. And we will argue for Scottish control of our share of feed-in tariffs to help promote community ownership schemes.

We will explore the potential to create a government owned energy company to help the growth of local and community energy projects. This will include empowering communities to use the income from energy developments to support other communities develop their energy potential.

We will give communities the opportunity to use some of their income from renewables to support Scotland's Climate Justice Fund if they wish to do so.

Transmissions charges, CCS, thermal and nuclear generation

The SNP – and industry – has repeatedly called on the UK Government to reform its transmission charging regime, which contributed to the early closure of Longannet coal fired power station in March of this year. We will continue to challenge the UK Government and Ofgem to reform the transmission charging regime.

We have championed Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and the UK Government's decision to withdraw financial support for CCS is unacceptable. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to examine what can be done to revitalise the future of CCS in Scotland.

We recognise that a new CCS fitted gas power station can provide backup and base load and we will press for removal of the transmission charging regime which is a block on investment.

We will maintain a ban on the creation of new nuclear power stations due to their excessive cost. We will continue to support the workforce of Scotland's existing nuclear plants at Torness and Hunterston to generate electricity for as long as the plants are safe to do so.

Green Investment Bank

We have supported the continued presence of the Green Investment Bank in Edinburgh – seeking and securing assurances from the UK Government on the continuation of its work as an investor in new green infrastructure, its green purpose and its Edinburgh base, as they move to privatise the bank.

We will seek reassurances from the new owners on these points and support the internationalisation of the organisation, helping to secure and promote Scotland's role as a global leader in the fast-growing international market for green finance.

A moratorium on unconventional oil and gas and underground coal gasification

We are deeply sceptical about fracking and have ensured that no fracking can take place in Scotland by putting in place a moratorium.

We have also put in place a very thorough research process and plans for a public consultation so that any decision is based on both evidence and public opinion.

Unless it can be proven beyond any doubt that there is no risk to health, communities or the environment, there will be no fracking or UCG extraction in Scotland.

Protecting Scotland's Most Scenic and Wild Areas

We recognise that the benefits of green energy must be balanced with the need to protect our most scenic and wild areas. We have introduced a ban on wind farms in Scotland's National

Parks and National Scenic Areas and increased protection for our wild land areas. This will continue in the next Parliament.

We will also support research and action on biodiversity protection and habitat restoration and we will undertake a review of the current voluntary deer management arrangements.

Cleaner Air for Scotland

We will take forward the actions set out in 'Cleaner Air for Scotland' – Scotland's first distinct air quality strategy – to further reduce air pollution, with the first low emission zone put in place by the end of 2018.

Delivering a Low Carbon Transport System

We are committed to increasing low-carbon transport and travel in Scotland and by 2020 we will deliver a Low Carbon Travel and Transport programme with £62.5 million investment to create low carbon infrastructure.

We will refresh the National Transport Strategy and review national and local guidance to ensure that communities have a say in influencing their transport needs to ensure

people, goods and services can get around their community but also be connected to the rest of Scotland and beyond.

We will refresh the Switched On Scotland Electric Vehicle Roadmap which was first published in 2013.

Early in the next Parliament, we will take steps to ensure that a public sector operator is able to bid for a future rail contract and that there is a public sector body able to do so. We will use our new powers to enable this to happen.

We remain committed to investing in our rail infrastructure. By the end of 2016, we will have electrified the Edinburgh to Glasgow route and redeveloped Queen Street station and created the Edinburgh Gateway rail-tram interchange.

We will also invest in electrifying the Stirling-Dunblane-Alloa line, the Glasgow-Edinburgh-Shotts route, complete the redevelopment of Dundee station, support shorter and more frequent journeys between Aberdeen and Inverness, improve the Highland and Aberdeen mainlines and invest in redeveloped station hubs at Aberdeen, Inverness, Perth, Stirling and Motherwell.

From 2018, as a direct result of increased investment, rail passengers will be able to benefit from more seats, services and faster journey times. We will maintain the rail route to Stranraer, maintaining lower fares on the route, conduct a feasibility study into extending the Waverley route via Hawick to Carlisle and make progress on improvements to the East Coast mainline, including examining the case for a station at Reston in Berwickshire. We will also examine the case for an extension of the Stirling-Alloa rail line to Dunfermline by upgrading the existing Longannet freight line.

We will back local bus services by continuing to provide financial support for services as well as incentives for the take up of greener vehicles. We will bring forward a Transport Bill to improve bus services, enhance and improve the role of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner and wider road works regulation and to enable and enforce responsible parking.

In the first year of the new Parliament, we will introduce a Bill which will require all public vehicles carrying children to and from school to be fitted with seatbelts.

We will support community transport initiatives to train and qualify more minibus drivers.

Through the National Entitlement Card, Scotland's older people and disabled people will continue to be able to travel for free on local or Scottish long distance buses.

Our national smart card plans are being rolled out across ScotRail, with systems ensuring that the same cards can be used on ScotRail and the Glasgow Subway. And we are working with bus and ferry companies to ensure that the Saltire national concessionary travel cards are usable across the entire transport network.

We have put in place record investment in cycling and walking and will continue to do so over the life of the next Parliament. We will implement our national walking strategy and we are determined to meet our vision of 10 per cent of everyday journeys being made by bike by 2020. We will review the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) to explore what more we can do, including on extending cycling training "bikeability" schemes for the young. And we will work to improve the integration between active and public transport.

Making roads and communities less congested but well served is an important balance to achieve. Through the Freight Facilities Grant, we will continue to invest in projects which get goods and services to communities more efficiently. We will work to improve urban deliveries in particular.

AN EMPOWERED SCOTLAND

We believe the best people to decide the future of our communities are the people who live in those communities.

Over the last nine years we have taken forward radical measures in land reform and community land purchase.

Local Governance

We want to re-invigorate local government by reconnecting it with communities. One size does not fit all. The approach taken in Glasgow does not have to be the same as the approach in Galashiels. The principle of local control, not on behalf of a community, but by a community is key.

We will review the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and the relationships between local authorities and health boards. We aim to transform our democratic landscape, protect and renew public services and refresh the relationship between citizens, communities and councils. We will:-

- Consult on and introduce a Bill that will decentralise local authority

functions, budgets and democratic oversight to local communities

- Review and reform the role of Community Planning Partnerships so they are better placed to drive reform, including through use of citizens' panels and town hall meetings
- Continue to grow and develop City Deals, Town Centre Partnerships and Regional Economic Partnerships so that clusters of agencies and shared interests can work together for the benefit of their local economies and communities

Following the report of the independent review of local government ward boundaries we will protect local communities by taking forward changes only where communities have been adequately respected in the new proposed arrangements.

Islands

We have placed the needs and aspirations of our island communities at the very centre of the Government's agenda. The establishment of a dedicated Ministerial post demonstrated our commitment to our island communities. This post will continue in the next government.

We will consult on, and bring forward, an Islands Bill to reflect the unique needs of these communities and implement our ten-point manifesto for our islands.

We will protect the Road Equivalent Tariff to all routes in the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry services network and take action to reduce fares on ferry services to Orkney and Shetland. We will also maintain the existing air discount scheme at 50 per cent.

We will establish a new Islands Strategic Group chaired by the Islands Minister to build on the work of the Islands Areas Working Group and develop a new National Islands Plan.

Island communities will be able to control and determine how to invest 100 per cent of locally raised Crown Estate revenues once these are devolved.

Participation

The Community Empowerment Act delivered new rights for communities and is backed by the Empowering Communities Fund and the Strengthening Communities Programme. We will build on this by:-

- Setting councils a target of having at least 1 per cent of their

budget subject to Community Choices budgeting. This will be backed by the Community Choices Fund to help public bodies and community groups build on examples of best practice.

- Allowing community councils that can demonstrate a strong democratic mandate to deliver some services. We intend that in future community council elections will be held on the same day across the country to increase their profile and recognition.
- Encouraging improved tenant participation in management of their homes. We will use a partner organisation to help tenants become more aware of their rights and encourage tenants to become more involved in the management of properties.

We want to encourage and make it easier for people from all backgrounds to get involved at all levels of decision making. Our elected representatives should better reflect the society we live in.

That is why we will continue to support the Women 50:50 campaign to increase – to 50 per cent – the representation of women in our Parliament, councils and on public boards.

We will also support the One in Five Campaign to increase the participation of disabled people. We will build on the example of the pilot fund for the 2016 elections and establish a £200,000 Elected Office Fund to provide support for disabled people seeking to stand for selection and election in the 2017 local government elections.

Valuing our Third Sector

We have made significant investment in and promoted the role of the third sector, social enterprises and volunteers. The sector plays an important role and we want to increase and encourage it to grow its influence.

We will take steps to consolidate voluntary sector funding into single grant funds to provide greater clarity to applicants. We will also support the extension of core funding.

We will introduce three year rolling funding where possible. We will introduce a system across government that highlights when funding is due to end, to provide greater clarity for the sector and enable better planning for the longer term.

We will provide support to help social enterprises compete for public sector contracts and encourage councils to promote the procurement of services and goods in their local area from the third sector.

The Scottish Government has taken a supportive approach to Supported Businesses, such as Remploy. We use public sector spending, through procurement policy, to assist Supported Businesses and use our influence with leading private sector companies to encourage them to use the sector. We will continue to work with the sector, with BASE and others using public sector spend, to provide practical help for those businesses employing large numbers of people with a disability, so that they have an opportunity to thrive and prosper.

By increasing the number of Modern Apprenticeships in the third sector and social enterprises we will help to diversify skills and training.

Building Homes

We have increased the supply of affordable homes across all tenures and acted to improve energy efficiency. Even in the face of significant cuts to our budget, we exceeded our target to build 30,000 affordable homes in the last five years.

We have also brought an end to right to buy, protecting 15,500 houses in the social rented sector for those who need them.

By targeting our resources, we have helped over 20,000 households into or up the property ladder – three quarters of them under 35. This has helped boost the economy, create jobs and provide homes for people across Scotland.

Over the next parliament, we will invest £3 billion to build at least 50,000 more affordable homes. 35,000 of these will be in the social rented sector. We will also continue to support council house building.

We will also support a further 5,000 households – including 2000 first time buyers on modest incomes – into home ownership through our Help to Buy and Shared Equity schemes. This will be supported by an initial investment of £160 million in 2016/17.

We will also continue to support first time buyers by maintaining the progressive Land & Building Transaction Tax (LBTT) which reduced tax for those at the lower end of the housing market.

While building new homes is important, we also need to make

best use of our existing housing stock. Through flexible grants, loans and guarantees we will help bring empty or derelict properties back into housing use. Through our Empty Homes Partnership, Empty Homes Fund and Town Centre Empty Homes Fund we will encourage councils and individuals to bring empty homes into use for rent or purchase. We will concentrate on rural areas in need of increased housing and town centres that can be rejuvenated and regenerated through such initiatives.

We will encourage communities to buy property and land that is in a state of neglect through our community empowerment legislation and by accessing the Community Empowerment Fund.

By offering housing health checks for all tenants in the social rented sector we will support people to consider the best housing options for them, including the possibility of using our home ownership schemes.

For disabled people, or for those who have developed mobility or other disabilities, affordable and accessible housing with support can help them continue to live independent lives, so we will provide guidance and timescales for installing adaptations where they are needed.

We will consult on a national standard for private rented homes to ensure a good basic standard of accommodation, driving out rogue landlords who exploit tenants in sub-standard accommodation.

We will improve tenant participation in the management of their homes and use a partner organisation to help tenants become more aware of their rights and be more involved in the management of properties. This will include placing a duty on Housing Associations and councils to consult with tenants on the management of homes.

Making Scotland's Housing Stock More Energy Efficient

By making homes more energy efficient we help to cut bills, reduce emissions and improve health.

We will continue our work to tackle fuel poverty and provide energy efficiency measures, starting with investment of £103 million in 2016/17 to install measures in a further 14,000 homes. We will prioritise the development of the district heating system and establish a loan fund for this purpose.

We will work with stakeholders to review the fuel poverty action plan, including the fuel poverty eradication target.

We will also assess whether smaller and rural businesses are able to compete on an even playing field for energy efficient measures.

We will consult on the best way to help owner occupied houses reach energy efficient standards through a mix of grants and low cost loans. We will also consult on regulating energy efficiency in the private rented sector to ensure tenants are getting the best value for the money they spend on bills.

We will raise the profile of fuel poverty schemes that are available and include them in our benefit take up campaign.

We will ensure Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) fuel poverty measures are targeting those people living in poverty, and examine how we can use new flexibilities over the Warm Homes Discount and ECO to help with these aims.

We will introduce a Warm Homes Bill in the next parliament to support our work to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency.

Tackling and Preventing Homelessness

To tackle long-term homelessness, we will continue to develop a joined up approach between local government, health, social services and the third sector.

By the end of the next parliament we will ensure that all temporary accommodation is the same standard as permanent accommodation. We will also introduce a cap of one week for families with children and pregnant women living in B&B accommodation unless there are exceptional circumstances.

We will restore Housing Benefit for 18-21 year olds if the UK government goes ahead with plans to remove it.

For disabled people, we will provide guidance and timescales for installing adaptations where they are needed.

We will refresh our Ages, Homes and Community strategy to take account of changing need, demographics and to help address issues of isolation. We will ask local authorities to ensure that their local development plans take into account the increasing need for housing for older people and for disabled people. We will look at extending the Housing Association Grant available to councils and

housing associations for this purpose.

We will also consider the introduction of a similar scheme to Help to Buy for new build homes to encourage growth in the retirement housing sector to better meet the need for affordable retirement homes, sheltered, and very sheltered housing.

We are committed to using the new Housing and Property Tribunal to encourage access to justice and dispute resolution. To support this, we will ensure that the Tribunal does not charge fees to tenants or landlords.

We will encourage councils to use the landlord registration system as way of providing information to landlords on their responsibilities and as a means of ensuring that legislation is being adhered to and action is being taken if it is not. We will encourage tenants to know their rights under current legislation on housing standards, repairing standards and the new tenancies legislation.

Planning

Planning is important if we want to create the great places we need to live, work and spend our leisure time in. We have instigated a Planning Review that is due to report in the summer.

In the next parliament we will bring forward a Planning Reform Bill based on the recommendations of the Review. This will aim to streamline development planning and management procedures and practices to remove unnecessary blockages and delays. We will also amend Planning Obligations so they work for the benefit of all and do not cause delays to the completion of projects.

As part of the Planning Bill, we will introduce a clean land and building clause to ensure non-domestic property owners cannot leave their properties in a state of neglect or abandonment.

We will also modernise compulsory purchase orders to ensure vacant and derelict land can be brought into use for communities and look at interim measures to achieve this in advance of legislation.

By simplifying local development plans we will ensure they are effective for both local communities and developers.

A SAFER SCOTLAND

Delivering safer and stronger communities is vital for the people of Scotland. Everyone has the right to feel safe and have confidence in their police and fire services.

We are committed to a properly funded police service, a fair and swift justice system, and a clear and effective penal policy.

The number one priority for our justice system is to keep the people of Scotland safe. Crime is at a 41-year low, violent crime is down, knife crime is down and there are more than 1,000 extra police officers working in our police service.

Strengthening the Police

Scotland's police officers and staff work incredibly hard to serve our communities, prevent crime and help bring offenders to justice. We will continue to support Police Scotland and ensure that they have the resources they need to protect the people of Scotland.

We will protect the police revenue budget in real terms for the entirety of the next parliament – delivering an additional £100 million of investment over the next five years.

We strengthened our police service with 1,000 extra officers, helping to reduce crime to a 41-year low. It is vital that we keep frontline policing strong to keep crime low. However, the nature of crime is changing and the police need to reflect this. We will therefore ensure that the police also have more specialists, such as experts in cyber-crime and counter-fraud and that the service has the right mix and numbers of staff for the future.

We will continue to support the range of police services, including community policing, specialist support, training, forensics services, ICT and criminal records, serious and organised crime, drug enforcement and counter terrorism.

We will strengthen the accountability of policing by implementing the conclusions of the governance review being led by the Chair of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). We will also work with the SPA and with Police Scotland to strengthen the local community focus of policing and to refresh the Strategic Policing Priorities. We will continue to make the case to

the UK Government to extend a VAT exemption to Scottish emergency services, potentially releasing £23 million for investment in policing and £10 million for the fire service. Police Scotland is currently the only police authority in the UK that is unable to recover VAT and is now liable to an annual cost of around £23 million, an amount that could pay for 680 police officers. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is in a similar situation and is liable to an annual cost of around £10 million, money that could pay for 350 firefighters.

We will aim to ensure that all police officers receive appropriate training to support the investigation of hate crimes and also work towards all new police and fire service recruits receiving equality training.

Radicalisation and Extremism

Scotland will continue to cooperate closely with partner agencies, both in the UK and further afield, to combat the threat of global terrorism and extremism.

We will continue to strengthen the already robust measures that are in place to help safeguard people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation or at risk from any form of extremism.

Armed Police

Scotland's police are not and will not be routinely armed. The Scottish Government is working closely with all of Scotland's emergency services to ensure that Scotland is appropriately and proportionately protected against all forms of threat, including terrorism. This includes consideration of Police Scotland's armed policing capacity and capability.

The Chief Constable has made clear that he keeps this under review based on our understanding of the evolving threat, and we will continue to support him in doing so.

Supporting our Fire Service

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is adapting to new challenges, as well as playing a vital role in keeping our communities safe in often challenging circumstances.

A focus on prevention and improving the safety of communities is at the heart of new plans for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). People are being asked for their views on a new Fire Framework which sets out ten priorities for the Service from 2016.

This framework will support SFRS to keep making improvements by promoting the broader safety and well-being of individuals and communities, improving fire safety and promoting fire prevention. We are consulting widely on the draft framework and want to hear from as many people as possible to help shape the document, which will set out the main priorities for the SFRS.

A Smarter Approach to Justice

Our criminal justice system has firm foundations, and we will build on these to ensure we deliver justice for victims while effectively reducing crime and reoffending. Our aim is to develop a smarter, more progressive approach to criminal justice that tackles the underlying causes of crime and improves public safety.

We will establish Community Justice Scotland to provide leadership and strategic direction in the planning and delivery of community sentences. This will support the rehabilitation of offenders and reduce reoffending.

We will improve community-based alternatives to short-term prison sentences, including restricting liberty through the increased use of electronic monitoring, combined with support in the community.

We will support new efforts to deliver effective alternatives to custody – the national roll out of Fiscal Work Orders provides an efficient response to relatively minor offending, while Community Payback Orders provide the court with a robust and flexible community-sentencing tool.

We will continue to improve the administration of justice creating a modern, user-focussed justice system through the greater use of digital technology to deliver simple, fast and effective justice.

Female Offending

Working with the Scottish Prison Service and other key stakeholders, we will work to ensure an effective response to female offending. This will include enhanced access to community sentencing and support and the development of a new model for the female custodial estate, with a smaller national women's prison and local community-based custody units.

These units will provide accommodation as women serve out their sentence, with access to intensive support to help overcome issues such as alcohol, drugs, mental health and domestic abuse trauma which evidence shows can often be a driver of offending behaviour.

The units will be located in areas close to the communities of female offenders so that family contact can be maintained and to aid rehabilitation.

We will improve the effective rehabilitation and re-integration of people who have committed offences and complete the implementation of the parole reform project to modernise and improve support for the vital work of the Parole Board.

Automatic Early Release

Long-term prisoners who pose an unacceptable risk to public safety will now serve more of their sentence in custody. This is a huge step in the right direction to end a system introduced by the then Tory Government in 1993. Prison will always be the right place for serious and dangerous offenders.

Ending automatic early release for our most serious offenders is part of our action to achieve a more balanced justice system in Scotland. This will protect our communities from serious offenders, while those at the lower end of the scale receive community-based alternatives with targeted support to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour.

Review of Evidence

We will consider the Evidence and Procedure Review by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service. It makes a compelling case for further reforms in our justice system, particularly in relation to how child and vulnerable witnesses give evidence. We will explore the potential of introducing pre-recorded evidence to better protect child and other vulnerable witnesses, whilst maintaining the necessary rights of accused persons.

And we will publish a Family Justice Modernisation Strategy looking at how to improve the way cases are dealt with and how to make sure the voice of the child is best heard. We are engaging with key stakeholders to get their views on what should be included in the strategy.

We will conduct Jury research ahead of any further proposals to reform the criminal justice system.

Tackling Organised Crime

The Proceeds of Crime Act has already achieved much but we believe more can be done to make sure criminals can't stash their ill-gotten gains in ways that put them beyond the reach of the authorities.

As the legislation is reserved to Westminster, we are pressing the UK government to strengthen the Proceeds of Crime legislation to make it more difficult for criminals to avoid paying up.

We will argue for changes in the law at Westminster to enable the police to seize items of monetary value from criminals, such as high value betting slips and casino chips.

Money seized through the Proceeds of Crime Act is reinvested in the CashBack for Communities programme, a unique Scottish Government initiative which reclaims cash to fund activities and opportunities in local communities. Since 2008/09 CashBack has committed over £75 million to projects and organisations that work with young people, delivering more than 1.8 million activities and opportunities throughout the country.

Supporting Victims

We will take further steps to improve the way victims are treated by the justice system. We will implement the remaining provisions of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014, including establishing a Scottish Victims Surcharge Fund, paid for by offenders, which will provide more than a million pounds a year of

funding for practical help for victims of crime.

By supporting the work of the Scottish Sentencing Council we will ensure the public has confidence that sentencing decisions are consistent, transparent and take account of evidence of what works to reduce crime and re-offending.

And we will ask the Sentencing Commission to monitor and evaluate the approach to sentencing of sexual offences, particularly those against children, to ensure it is consistent, proportionate and appropriate. We will look at what more can be done to provide appropriate financial, legal and practical support for women victims of sexual and domestic abuse including reviewing the way forensic examinations are undertaken to ensure they are done appropriately and sensitively.

We will put in place sustainable arrangements to protect the interests of individuals when sensitive records and documents are requested by the court.

In line with the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015, we will work with key stakeholders to develop Scotland's first Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy, to improve measures to address the

causes of trafficking and exploitation, bring offenders to justice and better identify and support both child and adult victims.

We will invest £14.5 million over five years to support survivors of all ages to recover from the trauma of historic, recent and current abuse. We will lift the time bar on the right of survivors to bring forward civil claims against those who abused them, in circumstances where they were abused after 1964. Human rights law prevents this approach for claims arising before 1964 so we will consider what more can be done to provide these older survivors with urgent financial and practical support. We will work with care providers to ensure that they play an appropriate role in this.

And we will ensure that the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is progressed and completed in the next Parliament.

Tackling Domestic Abuse

In the last session of the Parliament, we passed the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act to tackle the way modern technology can be used to perpetrate abuse, creating a new offence of sharing private intimate images without consent, or so-called 'revenge porn'.

A new statutory domestic abuse aggravator will also be introduced to ensure courts take domestic abuse into account when sentencing an offender.

We will also legislate to create a new specific offence to help tackle domestic abuse. Scotland will be one of only a handful of countries across the world to introduce dedicated legislation that will cover not just physical abuse, but also other forms of psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour which cannot easily be prosecuted under the existing criminal law.

Civil Justice

Judicial, legislative and administrative responsibility for currently reserved tribunals will be transferred to Scotland, bringing them into the Scottish Tribunals – starting with employment tribunals. Once devolved, we will abolish fees for employment tribunals.

By reforming and modernising the law of succession in Scotland, we will ensure a clear and fair legal framework for the law of inheritance, relevant to modern Scottish society and the rights of individuals and families.

We will reform and modernise Scotland's system of Legal Aid, to continue to maintain wide access to public funding for legal advice and representation in both civil and criminal cases alongside measures to expand access to alternatives methods of resolving disputes.

In implementing the recommendations of Sheriff Principal Taylor's review of the Costs and Funding of Civil Litigation in Scotland we will make Scotland's civil justice system more accessible.

We will take forward a consultation to review the regulation of the legal profession in Scotland and to support a modern and effective legal sector, including new forms of business model.

Making our Roads Safer

Making our roads safer for all is a priority. We have refreshed the Strategic Road Safety Plan and will produce annual progress reports on making our roads safer. We will continue to invest in an annual road safety programme. Since introducing the average speed camera programme on the A77, the number of accidents, injuries and fatalities has reduced considerably. We will refresh this programme and continue

to consider rolling out programmes in communities blighted by accidents and unsafe driving. We will report on performance of the A9 in particular four times a year.

AN INTERNATIONAL SCOTLAND

Scotland is a diverse, welcoming and outward-looking nation, with compassion and a drive for fairness sitting at the very heart of our values.

The SNP has demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to international engagement.

Our relationships and engagement with the international community are important – they benefit trade, investment, travel, education and knowledge exchange, and help to promote our values, including human rights.

We aim to create an environment within Scotland that supports a better understanding of international opportunities and a greater ability to seize them and to influence the world around us on the issues that matter most in helping Scotland prosper.

The SNP believes that Scotland must play its part – through action and leadership – in helping tackle global issues such as extreme poverty, the impact of climate change, the plight of refugees fleeing war and repression and the humanitarian impact of disasters and emergencies.

We will continue to provide support to Syrians who have arrived in Scotland through the Resettlement Programme and who wish to take up college or university courses. We will also examine a change in the rules on providing support for students who are seeking asylum or refugee status, including enabling them to qualify for free tuition.

Benefits of EU Membership

Scotland's place in Europe matters to us as a nation and being part of a wider European family of nations has brought us benefits.

The SNP always has and always will fight strongly for a fair deal for Scotland in Europe – not least on matters like the Common Fisheries Policy and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The EU has led on improving workers' fundamental rights and conditions, including hours worked, holiday and sickness pay and parental leave.

Being part of the EU also gives Scotland direct access to the world's biggest single market for goods and services: trade with the other 27 member states accounts for 42 per cent of our international exports, supporting over 300,000 Scottish jobs.

And it is an essential ingredient in our inward investment success story.

Membership is also about being part of a family of nations founded on the principles of peace, democracy and human rights, promoting and fostering co-operation to tackle complex international problems. It enables us to play a positive part in resolving those problems.

We hope and believe that people in Scotland and across the UK will vote decisively to stay part of the EU. But we take nothing for granted. So we will campaign passionately and positively for an “in” vote, to remain in the EU.

Our International Outlook

A key element of our approach to Europe is developing strong partnerships with like-minded European partners – however, we will also continue to work with countries around the globe.

Achieving success depends on Scotland acting as a team: that is at the heart of our One Scotland approach. We will work with the wider public sector, institutions, business and communities – as well as overseas partners – to secure our international objectives.

We will continue to prioritise our engagement with the USA and Canada to build on our historic and economic links. This engagement will be part of a wider effort to develop stronger relationships throughout the Americas. We will continue to develop relationships with other European countries and will take forward the Nordic/Baltic strategy. And we are committed to a long-term relationship with Japan, China and India focused on education, business and culture.

Importantly, while our international approach supports Scotland’s Economic Strategy, it also recognises our commitment to human rights. Our relationship and partnership with Malawi will remain important. Global economic development has helped lift millions of people around the world out of poverty and improve equality. However, high levels of deprivation and inequality remain and that is why Scotland will use its international engagement to continue to act as a good global citizen.

International Development

For generations, Scots have travelled the globe and settled abroad. We will look at new ways to engage with our Diaspora and support them as they develop and shape the identity of our country on the world stage.

Since 2007, we have provided over £5.8 million in humanitarian aid for crises in Pakistan, Gaza, DRC, East Africa, Philippines, West Africa, Malawi, Nepal and of course, Syria while also supporting Syrian refugees in Greece. We've doubled our International Development Fund to £9 million per annum, and launched the Climate Justice Fund, bringing our total spend on international development work since 2007 to over £86 million. We have also highlighted Scotland's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

As well as increasing the Climate Justice Fund to £3 million per annum, we will increase the International Development Fund to £10 million per annum.

We will also continue our Small Grants Scheme that has allowed many smaller agencies to contribute to our poverty reduction goals.

Refugee families and individuals who currently move to Scotland to be with

their family under Family Reunion laws are entitled to crisis grants whilst they get settled. However, settling in a new country, with a new culture and language and getting to know your family again after many years of separation, is a difficult process that we want to make easier. We will therefore set up a fast track crisis grant fund for refugee families who settle here under Family Reunion rules.

We will put human rights and the rights of women at the heart of our international relations work. We're proud that the UN asked Scotland to lead on a women's peace-making initiative for Syria. Every year we will fund training and capacity building for at least fifty women from affected countries, ensuring they have the skills and confidence to maximise their contribution to building a safer world.

We will establish a £1 million a year fund to respond to future humanitarian emergencies, and help provide emergency aid to refugees and displaced people fleeing war and persecution.

We will continue our £300,000 a year support for Scotland's network of Development Education Centres to help deliver global citizenship education.

We will produce an annual report on the impact of our international development and other government policies on global poverty to ensure that their impact is fully assessed.

We support efforts for a more coordinated European response on Syrian refugees, with all states playing a fair role as set out by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and championed by Amnesty International.

We will renew our historic partnership agreement with the Government of Malawi.

We also support calls for the UK Government to update the UK-Malawi bilateral treaty.

We will conduct a review of Fairtrade in Scotland in order to inform action to further grow sales of Fairtrade goods.

Debt relief

Many developing countries are forced to spend a huge amount of their resources repaying debt incurred to the UK decades ago. In some cases, this debt has been repaid, but crippling interest rates mean payments continue.

Scotland doesn't have the power to cancel unjust debts, but we will fund research into unjust debt held by the UK, how new unjust debt can be avoided and Scotland's potential role in debt arbitration.

A CREATIVE SCOTLAND

Culture is important in and of itself and participation in culture is a force for good for individuals and society. Our culture and heritage has and continues to shape our experience of and about our nation and the world. It inspires us to question, challenge and see the world in different ways and to learn about ours and others' experiences.

We will continue to create the conditions for a confident cultural sector to develop and be successful and for our artists to be nurtured, developed and supported in their work.

We want to foster a Scotland where people are confident to express their creativity, and a nation that is confident in participating on the world stage.

A Creative Future

We will develop Scotland's first ever culture strategy based on the principles of access, equity and excellence. And in order to support our flourishing creative industries, we will establish a Creative Industries Advisory Board to advise Ministers directly on the support that the sector needs.

2018 is our Year of Young People which provides a platform to drive forward the national youth arts strategy 'Time to Shine'. We will refresh the Youth Music Initiative, provide support to young musicians and ensure that all young people have the opportunity to play an instrument by the time they leave primary school.

We will provide support to give children greater access to cultural opportunities – as evidenced by the recent announcement of an additional £2.5 million of funding for Sistema Scotland.

We will create a Cultural Experience Fund to ensure that every primary school has the opportunity to visit Scotland's historic estates, theatres, museums and galleries.

We will protect free access to our National Galleries and Museums. We will look to widen the touring of our National Collections – looking beyond traditional settings and going directly into communities and schools.

We support the central role of Gaelic arts in engaging people with the language, and enhancing the relevance of the language to Scottish society. We will also provide support for the Scots language.

Supporting Access and Production

We are committed to funding and supporting Creative Scotland and our National Companies, and we will continue the International Touring Fund and increase flexibility to assist with future planning. We will develop a National Touring Fund for Theatre to help more theatre productions tour more often, providing more work for the theatre sector and more opportunities for more people to see productions across Scotland.

We will enhance the Edinburgh Festival Expo Fund, particularly ahead of the International Festival's 70th anniversary, and examine how we can support performances to tour more widely across Scotland.

We will work to create a single library card to be used at any council library in Scotland.

We have delivered record screen sector support and we are committed to delivering permanent flexible studio space.

We will create a new dedicated unit for film and TV, based within Creative Scotland, to streamline public sector support for the screen sector. It will combine expertise from our creative and enterprise partners, and oversee support from development to production to distribution, prioritising input and advice from the industry itself.

We will continue to press for new TV and radio services for Scotland through the BBC charter renewal process. Should these not be delivered we will push for a new Scottish Production Fund to be established from a small share of TV licence revenue raised in Scotland. This would be open to any audio-visual production being broadcast on any free to air broadcaster.

We will maintain our investment in BBC Alba as a vital part of Scottish broadcasting output, and in recognition of its contribution to the development of the Gaelic language.

Protecting and Shaping Places

2016 is our Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design and we will explore how Architecture and Design Scotland can support the development of high quality social housing, and examine how space standards in Scotland compare with the rest of the EU.

2017 is our Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology and we will work with Historic Environment Scotland and partners to create a long-term Infrastructure Investment Plan for restoring, enhancing and conserving our built heritage environment. We will support Historic Environment Scotland, as it takes forward the nation's first Historic Environment Strategy.

We will work with partners to promote the South of Scotland as a visitor destination; particularly for heritage, culture and creative arts, wildlife and green tourism, and local food and drink.

