



STRONGER FOR SCOTLAND





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A vote for the SNP on June 8th is a vote for MPs who will always stand up for Scotland's best interests.

Now, more than ever, with the prospect of a re-elected and increasingly hard line Conservative government at Westminster, it is vital that Scotland's voice is heard.

A vote for the SNP will strengthen Scotland's hand against further Tory cuts and ensure that progressive policies, like those pursued by the SNP government in Scotland, are firmly on the agenda at Westminster.

At the heart of this manifesto is a responsible fiscal plan to end austerity and free up resources to invest in public services, protect family budgets and call a halt to cuts in social security support for working families and the disabled.

Tackling rising inequality must be one of the key priorities of the next parliament. This manifesto sets out plans for fair taxation, action to tackle low pay and an end to the freeze on working age benefits.

A vote for the SNP will also strengthen Scotland's hand in the Brexit negotiations.

A majority of people in Scotland voted to remain in the EU - but even many of those who voted to leave have real concerns about the extreme Brexit now being pursued.

Leaving the Single Market could cost 80,000 jobs in Scotland.

The SNP Government published compromise proposals that would keep Scotland in the Single Market.

These proposals were rejected by the UK government, but this election offers people the chance to back them and demand that they become part of the UK's negotiating remit.

A vote for the SNP will also strengthen Scotland's right to choose our own future.

This election won't decide whether or not Scotland will become independent - but a vote for the SNP will reinforce the right of the Scottish Parliament to decide when a referendum should happen. It will make sure that Scotland's future is always in Scotland's hands.

My pledge is to make Scotland stronger at Westminster. With your support, we can secure a better future for you, your family, and Scotland.



Nicola Sturgeon

STRONGER FOR SCOTLAND

SNP MPs have used their influence to deliver positive change. Here's just some of what a strong team of SNP MPs has worked to achieve in the past two years.

Holding the UK government to account on powers

When the Scotland Bill was going through Westminster it was the SNP who forced the UK government to give Scotland more powers. And it was SNP MPs, working with the Scottish Government, who saw off Tory attempts to slash Scotland's budget by £7 billion in the process. The SNP secured a deal that ensures Scotland will not lose billions of pounds in return for new powers.

Opposing Tory austerity

SNP MPs have consistently opposed Tory austerity. Our MPs have been instrumental in forcing UK government budget u-turns on some of the proposed cuts to tax credits and disability benefits.

Fighting to end the Rape Clause

Alison Thewliss has been at the forefront of the campaign against the Tory policy to limit Child Tax Credits to two children and force women to prove they have been raped to claim benefits for third and subsequent children.

Pension justice for women born in the 1950s

SNP MPs have worked with Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) and led calls at Westminster for women born in the 1950s to receive the pensions they are due.

Legislation on ending violence against women

This year Dr Eilidh Whiteford became the first SNP MP to have a Private Member's Bill pass at Westminster. The Bill requires the UK government to ratify the Istanbul Convention and take further action to eradicate domestic violence.

Fighting against the cruel and punitive sanction regime

Mhairi Black has led opposition to the punitive benefit sanctions regime, and proposed a Private Member's Bill to make the system fairer. SNP MPs will continue to press for change in the next Parliament.

Leading opposition to the bombing of Syria

It was the SNP that provided the clear and unified opposition to the UK government's ill-judged decision to bomb Syria. SNP MPs will continue to press the UK government to take meaningful action to bring about a political resolution to end the six-year conflict in Syria, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Clear, consistent and unified opposition to Trident

SNP MPs have been the only effective opposition to the UK government's plan to spend billions on a new generation of nuclear weapons.

Fighting for a fairer immigration policy

Ian Blackford and Alex Salmond successfully lobbied on behalf of the Brain family and secured their right to live in Scotland. We will continue to support a post-study work visa, to help attract and retain the skills and talent Scotland needs.

Demanding action on tax evasion

Roger Mullin has led calls for the UK government to take action on the use of the Scottish Limited Partnership business model that can be used to undertake criminal activity, fraud and tax evasion. As a result of SNP pressure, the UK government has commenced a review into the use of such practices.

Fair compensation for veterans

Kirsten Oswald, alongside the Royal British Legion, successfully campaigned to force the UK government to ensure that veterans are entitled to the same compensation for asbestos-related mesothelioma as civilians who contracted the illness.

BUILDING A BETTER SCOTLAND

In Scotland we are working to protect public services, social protections and family incomes from Tory cuts.

High quality health care

Investment in Scotland's NHS is at a record level and the number of staff working in our NHS has increased by almost 10 per cent since 2007. Health and social care has been integrated and our hospital A&E departments are the best performing in the UK.

Prescription charges abolished, ensuring there's no tax on ill health

We abolished prescription charges in 2011. In England, patients are still forced to pay a Tory tax on health of £8.60 per prescription.

Free, high quality childcare increased

We have increased the availability of free early years education and childcare from 12.5 hours in 2007 to 16 hours a week for all three and four year olds – and also extended it to two year olds from low income households. By 2021 we will increase provision to 30 hours.

Investing in a good education for all

Spending on education and training in Scotland is going up. Total spending rose by almost five per cent in 2015-16, in contrast to the UK as a whole, where it fell.

We are seeing record exam passes in our schools and more young people going into positive destinations.

We have abolished university tuition fees, saving students up to £27,000 compared to the cost of study in England. College students in Scotland are eligible for the best level of non-repayable bursary anywhere in the UK.

Cheaper Council Tax bills

Average Council Tax bills in Scotland, in all property bands, are lower in Scotland than in England.

Free personal care for older people

Around 77,000 people in Scotland enjoy access to a wide range of personal care services without charge. Older people in England are not entitled to free personal care.

The highest house building rate in the UK

Scotland has the highest house building rate in the UK. We have overseen a new generation of council house building and, since 2007, over 60,000 affordable homes have been completed.

Higher youth employment

Youth employment in Scotland is higher and youth unemployment is lower than the rest of the UK.

Fair pay

Scotland has the highest proportion of employees paid the Living Wage of any country in the UK.

More police officers and less crime

In Scotland, under the SNP, police numbers are up, while they've fallen in England. And crime is at a 42-year low.

No Bedroom Tax

No one in Scotland has to pay the Bedroom Tax and we will use new powers to abolish it completely.

OUR KEY PLEDGES

Now more than ever, it is vital to have strong SNP voices standing up for Scotland.

A vote for the SNP will make Scotland's voice heard at Westminster. It will elect MPs who will always work to protect our public services, social protections and family budgets from the impact of Tory cuts. It will be a vote to make sure that Scotland's interests are not sidelined in the Brexit negotiations. And it will send a message to Westminster that Scotland's future should always be in Scotland's hands.

An end to austerity

SNP MPs will demand an end to austerity. We have a responsible plan to repair the public finances while also freeing up additional resources to bring an end to austerity. This will allow us to support a halt to further social security cuts, an end to the freeze on working age benefits, increased investment in public services and protection for family budgets.

Fair tax

Setting rates of income tax is now the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. In the current financial year, we have frozen the basic rate of income tax to help low and middle earners - and we have opted not to cut tax for higher rate taxpayers through an increase in the higher rate threshold.

Until such time as the Scottish Parliament controls the rules on income tax avoidance, there is a risk that an increase in the Additional Rate of income tax in Scotland alone would lead to a loss of revenue.

However, we support an increase in the Additional Rate from 45p to 50p across the UK as a whole from 2018/19.

At a time when household budgets are under increasing pressure, SNP MPs will oppose any proposed increases in Value Added Tax or National Insurance.

We will also support the reversal of the married couple's allowance, the reversal of the reductions to the bank levy and the introduction of a tax on bankers' bonuses.

Protecting the NHS

We are already committed to increasing the budget of NHS Scotland by £2 billion by the end of the current Scottish Parliament.

Our plan to end austerity would enable the UK government to increase investment in the NHS far beyond current plans. We will continue to call for increased health spending, passing on all health revenue consequentials in full for healthcare in Scotland.

SNP MPs will also vote against any further privatisation of the NHS in England and back any moves to restore it to a fully public service.

Improving education

We will expand early years education and childcare to 30 hours a week for all 3 & 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds.

We will continue to invest in and reform school education, with the new National Improvement Framework, the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the £120 million Pupil Equity Fund. However, we will not follow the Tories' market driven education-reforms. There will be no selective grammar schools in Scotland.

We will also guarantee the continuation of tuition free university education.

Tackling poverty and inequality

The Tories have cut taxes for the wealthiest in our society, while cutting support for the disabled and low income working families. According to the Resolution Foundation, the UK is on course for the biggest increase in inequality since the days of Margaret Thatcher. SNP MPs will vote against further cuts to social security. We will also press for the abolition of the two child cap on tax credits and the associated Rape Clause. And we will vote to ensure that benefits increase at least in line with CPI inflation.

Fair pensions

Pensioner poverty is on the rise across the UK. We will vote to protect the Triple Lock, ensuring that pensions continue to rise by inflation, earnings or 2.5 per cent - whatever is the highest.

We will also continue to support the WASPI campaign.

A focus on jobs, growth and productivity

SNP MPs will not support further reductions to Corporation Tax.

However, to support job creation, we will propose a doubling of the Employment Allowance – the National Insurance discount that businesses receive when they increase employment.

To boost productivity, we will also support extension of the Annual Investment Allowance, which encourages firms to invest in plant and machinery.

We will also demand fresh support for our oil and gas sector, and an industrial strategy that works for Scotland.

More powers for the Scottish Parliament

We will seek additional powers for the Scottish Parliament to boost our economy, mitigate the damage of Brexit, and protect the most vulnerable in our society from damaging Tory cuts.

Making work fair and tackling low pay

SNP MPs will support repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016 and a ban on exploitative zero-hours contracts.

Low pay and falling real wages is a driver of increasing inequality and therefore one of the biggest challenges of the next Parliament.

We will support moves over the next Parliament to increase the Minimum Wage to the level of the real Living Wage.

The Scottish Government has supported public sector workers through a difficult time of pay restraint with additional measures to tackle low pay. However, we recognise that at a time of rising inflation, public sector pay caps become unsustainable.

For the NHS, the Scottish Government will work with unions to submit evidence to the independent pay review body on the impact of pay restraint and ask it to make fair recommendations. And we will commit - as we always have done - to implementing the recommendations of the pay review body in full.

For the wider public sector, we will enter into negotiations for next year's pay settlement in good faith and with a view to agreeing a fair outcome that takes account of both the public finances and the cost of living.

SNP MPs will also call for tough new action to close the gender pay gap.

Protecting Scotland's place in the Single Market

We must make sure that our interests are not ignored in the Brexit negotiations - a vote for the SNP will make sure that Scotland's voice is heard.

A majority of people in Scotland voted to remain in the EU - but even many of those who voted to leave have real concerns about the extreme Brexit being pursued by the Prime Minister.

Leaving the Single Market could cost 80,000 jobs in Scotland.

That is why the Scottish Government published proposals that would keep Scotland in the Single Market, even as we left the EU.

These proposals were rejected by the UK government. However, if the SNP wins this election, we will demand a place for Scotland at the Brexit negotiating table and the inclusion of the case for our place in the Single Market in the UK's negotiating remit.

Scotland's choice

At the end of the Brexit process, when the final terms of the deal are known, it is right that Scotland should have a choice about our future.

Brexit must not simply be imposed on Scotland no matter how damaging it turns out to be.

Last year's Holyrood election delivered the democratic mandate for an independence referendum. The recent vote of Scotland's national Parliament has underlined that mandate. If the SNP wins a majority of Scottish seats in this election, that would complete a triple lock, further reinforcing the democratic mandate which already exists. And, in such circumstances, any continued Tory attempts to block the people of Scotland having a choice on their future - when the time is right and the options are clear - would be democratically unsustainable.

Modernising UK democracy

Our democratic institutions should be representative of, and accountable to, the people they represent. We support the replacement of the first-past-the-post system with proportional representation for elections to the House of Commons. SNP MPs will bring forward proposals to extend the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in all elections. We will also support the right to vote of citizens from other EU countries resident here.

SNP MPs will vote for the abolition of the House of Lords.

Scrap Trident

SNP MPs will build a cross-party coalition to scrap Trident as quickly and safely as possible. We will vote for the billions other Westminster parties are committing to renewing Trident to be spent on our public services.



Angus Robertson

STANDING UP FOR SCOTLAND

BY ANGUS ROBERTSON

In the last two years your SNP team at Westminster has worked tirelessly to stand up for Scotland.

We've ensured that, at every opportunity, Scotland's interests have been represented.

We've fought unnecessary Tory cuts to public services and immoral policies like the Rape Clause, the Bedroom Tax, and welfare cuts pushing children into poverty.

And we've shown Westminster what hard-working MPs should look like – doing more and costing less than our predecessors.

I'm immensely proud of what we've achieved over these two years. But there's much more to do.

Now, more than ever, it's vital that Scotland continues to have strong voices at Westminster.

We will not allow the Tory government to go unopposed. We will work to protect our schools, hospitals and pensions from more Tory cuts. And we will never allow the Tories to trade away our jobs and industries in Brexit negotiations.

Only a vote for the SNP on 8 June will ensure Scotland has a strong voice at Westminster, standing against Tory cuts.

Kate McCann  Following

SNP's Angus Robertson teetering on the edge of his bench shaking his head as Corbyn speaks. He's Theresa May's real opposition. #pmqs

RETWEETS LIKES 36 55 12:12 PM - 15 Mar 2017 4 38 55

Owen Bennett  Following

@AngusRobertson there proving he's the best opposition leader in the Commons. Skewers May on pension lock #pmqs

RETWEETS LIKES 63 74 12:25 PM - 26 Apr 2017 5 63 74

Will Martin  Following

So Angus Robertson is now the leader of the opposition it would seem. U-turn was "screeching, embarrassing" he says

RETWEETS LIKES 1 1 12:17 PM - 15 Mar 2017 1 127 195

Fraser Nelson  Following

Excellent point by SNP's Angus Robertson about the disgraceful shambles of system for processing EU nationals citizenship claims.

RETWEETS LIKES 142 164 12:17 PM - 8 Mar 2017 33 162 164

Daisy Wyatt  Following

Angus Robertson yet again showing SNP are the real opposition in Parliament now #Article50

RETWEETS LIKES 58 64 1:07 PM - 29 Mar 2017 3 58 64

Chris Deerin  Following

Angus Robertson, the leader of the real opposition. Class act.

RETWEETS LIKES 210 517 12:25 PM - 26 Apr 2017 26 218 517

John Rentoul  Following

Once again Angus Robertson embarrassing Corbyn by doing proper opposition

RETWEETS LIKES 132 264 12:56 PM - 14 Mar 2017 21 132 264

John Rentoul  Following

Victory for Angus Robertson of the SNP within 2 hours of #PMQs

Sky News Newsdesk  Following

Russia's embassy in Spain says that the request for Russian warships to refuel in the Spanish port at Ceuta has been withdrawn

RETWEETS LIKES 36 32 2:06 PM - 26 Oct 2016 2 36 32

Marcus Dysch  Following

If @AngusRobertson was leader of the opposition, #PMQs would be a totally different challenge for May. He's excellent in the chamber.

RETWEETS LIKES 127 195 12:17 PM - 18 Jan 2017 13 127 195

ENDING THE CALLOUS TORY BENEFIT SANCTIONS REGIME

BY MHAI'R BLACK

The Tory obsession with austerity is a political choice, not a necessity. The punitive benefit sanctions regime is one of the worst policies to ever come out of Westminster.

As a new MP I vowed to make some common-sense changes to benefit sanctions. Last year I secured a Private Member's Bill to ensure that a person's mental health, caring responsibilities and risk of homelessness were accounted for before a sanction could be applied.

Disgracefully the Bill was shot down. Very few Labour MPs even showed up and the Tory Minister used Parliamentary tactics to dismiss it.

If I had the power to do so, I'd scrap this cruel and callous regime immediately. That's why I am proud that the SNP government in Scotland has chosen to take a different approach. The SNP puts people

first. We're committed to placing dignity and respect at the heart of the new social security system in Scotland.

No government should be making its own citizens destitute and that is exactly what the Tory government is doing.

Disadvantaged and low income individuals in Scotland must be protected not punished.

Only a strong team of SNP MPs can take the fight to Theresa May and halt the unfair benefit sanctions regime.



Mhairi Black

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE ABHORRENT RAPE CLAUSE

BY ALISON THEWLISS

At the first Budget after the 2015 General Election, the Tories announced they would restrict eligibility for Child Tax Credits to the first two children in a family.

For larger families, the impact of this cut is huge. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated that nearly one million three and four-child families will be worse off by thousands of pounds a year because of this cut.

Poring over the Budget document, I noticed that the Tories two-child policy also contained sinister small print – an exemption if it could be proven that the third or subsequent child being claimed for was conceived as a result of rape.

Putting victims through the trauma of having to prove they were raped to the Department for Work and Pensions, just to receive support for their children, is abhorrent and appalling. This is a new low for the Tories.

Working with women's organisations, the SNP continues to campaign to scrap the regressive two-child policy and the repugnant Rape Clause. We haven't and we won't shy away from taking the Tories to task on their ideological, punitive cuts.

The SNP stands up for all children in Scotland.



Alison Thewliss

STANDING UP FOR OUR OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

BY CALLUM McCAIG

Scotland's oil and gas industry is vital to our economy and jobs. Yet there has been a lack of action from the Tory government at Westminster since the downturn in the sector.

At Westminster, we've consistently stood up for the sector.

Only after pressure from SNP MPs did the Tory Chancellor abolish the petroleum revenue tax and halve the supplementary charge to 10 per cent. That's just a start.

Further measures to support the industry are urgent and cannot continue to be ignored. Time and time again, the Tories have turned down our proposals on further support through late

life transfers, decommissioning and exploration incentives.

We will not let a Tory government at Westminster get away with destroying another vital Scottish industry. Our oil and gas industry can have a bright future, but it needs a UK government that is willing to act. Only strong SNP voices can ensure this happens.



COMBATTING DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

BY DR EILIDH WHITEFORD

Earlier this year my Bill to ensure new action on domestic violence was passed at Westminster with cross-party support.

The reality is that one in four women, and some men and boys, will experience these types of violence over the course of their lives. It impacts us all, not just those directly affected.

Most of us will have a relative, friend or colleague with first-hand experience, and know the toll it takes on families and relationships.

The Istanbul Convention is a comprehensive international treaty aimed at securing minimum standards to prevent and combat domestic and sexual violence. It's recognised as the best framework in the world to tackle gender-based violence.

My new Bill will ensure that the Istanbul Convention is incorporated into UK law. It will make it much more difficult to cut services offering refuge for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault or rape, and will help improve the experiences of victims within the judicial system.

I'm proud that it was the SNP that led the campaign to get the Istanbul Convention on the UK statute book. SNP MPs will now ensure there is a clear timetable for the work towards finally eradicating domestic violence.



FIGHTING THE TORIES' GREAT RURAL ROBBERY

BY CALUM KERR

It's never been more important for our rural communities to have a strong voice at Westminster. With more SNP MPs since 2015 that's what we've been delivering.

As SNP rural affairs spokesperson I've challenged the Tory decision to rob Scottish farmers of £190 million of EU money, which only came to the UK because of Scotland's historically low average farm payments. I will continue to fight for this funding to be passed on to Scotland's farmers.

As the UK leaves the EU, there is still no firm guarantee that EU powers and funding over farming will return to Scotland.

At Westminster, I'll continue to fight any Tory power grab.

Our fishing communities know the consequences of leaving the Tories in charge. They need an unequivocal commitment that

their livelihoods will not be bargaining chips in Brexit negotiations or treated, again, as 'expendable'. SNP MPs will continue to put the concerns of our fishing sector front and centre.

At this election we face an unfettered Tory government ready to grab farming powers for themselves and sell-out our fishing industry. Only the SNP will put Scotland's rural communities first and put more power in Scotland's hands.





WORKING HARDER, COSTING LESS

- SNP MPs spoke in an average **61 debates** in 2015-16, compared to 27 for their predecessors in 2014-15.
- Since 2015, SNP MPs tabled **4,000 written questions** to the UK government.
- SNP MPs cost **£1 million** less in 2015-16 than their predecessors did in 2014-15.

FIGHTING FOR OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS FROM OTHER EU COUNTRIES

BY STEPHEN GETHINS

Leaving the EU will have an impact on every one of us. For EU nationals in particular, Brexit will bring uncertainty about their right to continue living and working in Scotland.

Theresa May has, time and time again, refused to provide any firm answers for our EU neighbours, colleagues and friends. Instead she has made a series of vague commitments to seeking an early resolution to the issue. It's just not good enough.

The Prime Minister cannot speak on one hand of building a fairer and global UK whilst also jeopardising the status and rights of EU citizens who have made the UK their home.

EU nationals contribute immeasurably to our economy, our public services and our culture. By giving straightforward access to permanent residence, we can end the uncertainty about their future.

The SNP will continue to stand up for the rights of EU citizens at Westminster. And if the UK government chooses not to give EU nationals the certainty they deserve, then immigration powers should be devolved so that Scotland can do so.



DEMANDING ACTION ON TAX EVASION

BY ROGER MULLIN

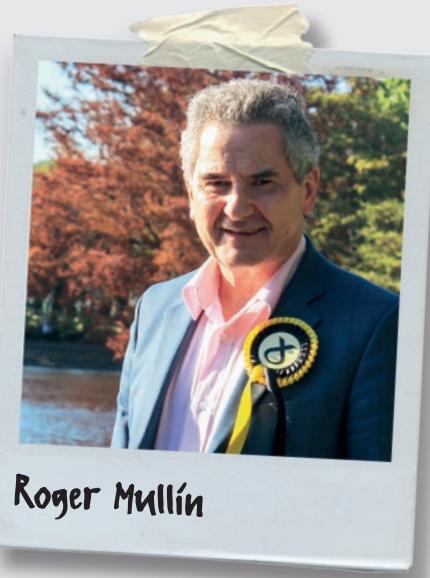
Scottish Limited Partnerships (SLPs) are a way of registering businesses that has existed for over a century.

When it was revealed that SLPs were being used for criminal activity, fraud and tax avoidance, we knew we had to act fast to protect Scotland's reputation as a world class place to do business.

While the Tories at Westminster were happy to do nothing, we pressed them for action. We repeatedly submitted amendments to Bills. We raised the issue in debates and at Prime Minister's Questions. We wrote letters to the UK government, calling for a robust strategy.

After repeatedly disregarding their duty to act, the Tories were eventually forced to do a u-turn and instigate a review into limited partnerships and criminality - in the face of mounting evidence, international scandals, and, of course, the unrelenting efforts of SNP MPs.

It's a step closer to a robust solution to this serious issue, but only the SNP will ensure the Tories aren't let off the hook.



PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

Tackling austerity and securing investment in our public services will be the priority for SNP MPs.

We have a plan to repair the public finances by the end of this Parliament, while freeing up additional resources to end austerity and support investment in our public services.

Ending austerity and investing in public services

SNP MPs will demand an end to austerity. We will demand a new, credible fiscal plan for the UK.

The UK government's current fiscal plans are driven more by ideology and their own political interests than the interests of the country. They intend to build up a financial war-chest ahead of the next election – and they will do it on the back of the poorest in society by slashing welfare. This is neither morally acceptable nor economically necessary.

Our alternative fiscal plan has three key aims:

- Balance the budget by the end of the Parliament

We will propose to achieve a current budget balance by the end of the next Parliament in 2021/22 with net borrowing being used only for investment from that year onwards.

- Return the deficit to its pre-crash long-term average

Under our plans, the UK's net borrowing requirement will fall to 2.3 per cent of GDP – the thirty-year, long-term average for net borrowing prior to the financial crisis. It will reach this level in 2020/21 and remain there in 2021/22.

- Set debt on a downward path from 2019/20

These steps will see debt falling as a percentage of GDP from 2019/20, meeting the current target on public sector net debt.

This plan will release almost £120 billion for public spending over the next Parliament, while returning the UK's finances to a stable, sustainable path.

The cost of Tory cuts

Over the 10-year period from 2010-11 and 2019-20, the Tories will have cut Scottish Government day-to-day spending by £2.9 billion in real terms.

That is enough to:

- build the new Queensferry Crossing twice, or
- build the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital – Europe's largest – three times, or
- train more than 3,800 consultant doctors

Fair and balanced personal taxation

We will back tax proposals that promote fairness, while raising the revenues required to protect the public services we all rely on.

Setting rates of Income Tax is now the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. In the current financial year, we have frozen the basic rate of Income Tax to help low and middle earners - and we have opted not to cut tax for higher rate taxpayers through an increase in the higher rate threshold.

Until such time as the Scottish Parliament controls the rules on income tax avoidance, there is a risk that an increase in the additional rate of Income Tax in Scotland alone would lead to a loss of revenue.

However, we support an increase in the Additional Rate from 45p to 50p across the UK as a whole from 2018/19.

We will support the reversal of the married couple's allowance, the reversal of the reductions to the bank levy and introduction of a tax on bankers' bonuses.

We will not support further reductions to Corporation Tax.

At a time when household budgets are under pressure and consumer confidence in Scotland is low, SNP MPs will back a freeze on National Insurance contributions and Value Added Tax. We will back the continuation of VAT-exemption on essential items like children's clothes, and will hold the UK government to a commitment to remove VAT from sanitary products. Until VAT is removed from sanitary products, SNP MPs will call for Scotland's population share of the Tampon Tax Fund to be transferred to the Scottish Government so that a fair and proportionate amount can be distributed to organisations working with and for women across Scotland.

Improving tax collection

SNP MPs will back improvements to tax collection and tougher action on tax avoidance, including:

- a moratorium and review of the closure of HMRC offices in Scotland and across the UK;
- beneficial ownership of companies and trusts to be made public;
- measures to improve the transparency of tax paid by major international companies;
- and further action by the UK government to tackle international tax avoidance.

Protecting our health service

We all rely on our NHS – that is why we are committed to making sure it is fit for the future. The SNP Scottish Government is already committed to an increase in the NHS revenue budget of £500 million more than inflation by the end of the current term of the Scottish Parliament. That means the budget will increase by £2 billion in total.

Latest statistics show that overall health spending in Scotland is around 7 per cent per head higher than in England. If the UK government were to match Scotland, England's Health investment would increase by over £11 billion above inflation by the end of this Parliament.

At Westminster, SNP MPs will argue for an increase in frontline health spending – and the Scottish Government will ensure that any consequential funding from this goes to Scotland's health service.

We will always vote to protect the health service in all parts of the UK from privatisation – as any moves to privatise the NHS in England could lead to the erosion of the budget that is available to Scotland. We will work on a cross-party basis to support an NHS Reinstatement Bill that returns the NHS south of the border to its founding principles.

We are committed to an NHS that is free to those who need it. That is why we abolished prescription charges in Scotland in 2011, ensuring there is no tax on ill health. We remain committed to free prescriptions.

Scotland's population is changing and our health service must change with it. To meet the challenge of an ageing population an additional £1.7 billion will be invested in Scotland's health and social care partnerships over this term of the Scottish Parliament. We are also reforming primary care and increasing the share of the total NHS budget that is committed to it - this will support an increase in the numbers of GPs and nurses working in our communities.

In Scotland, we are taking new action to promote health and well-being in children's early years. We are increasing the number of health visitors, introducing the Baby Box for every new-born child, and delivering the Childsmile programme to improve oral health. We are also developing and implementing the Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Obesity is one of the biggest challenges facing our nation's health, but the UK government's strategy falls short on key measures to make meaningful progress.

SNP MPs will press the UK government to re-commit to key policies which can only currently be implemented at Westminster – such as closing the loopholes in the sugary drinks tax, tightening regulation of broadcast and digital junk food advertising seen by children, and introducing clearer food labelling.

We are also taking action to improve mental health services in Scotland. In government, the SNP has appointed the UK's first dedicated Minister for Mental Health and mental health spending is at record levels. We have also significantly increased the number of people working in child and adolescent mental health. One in four of us experience mental health issues in our lifetime, so there is much still to do. Our new ten-year Mental Health Strategy includes 40 different actions – based around improving access to services and supporting earlier intervention. Actions include increasing the mental health workforce and improving delivery of child and adolescent mental health services.

In contrast to the approach of the UK government, the Scottish Government values junior doctors, nurses and our wider NHS workforce. We have committed to enshrining safe NHS staffing levels in law.

The Scottish Government has supported NHS workers through a difficult time of pay restraint with additional measures to tackle low pay and support progression. As a result, many nurses and Agenda for Change staff are better paid than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK. However, we recognise that at a time of rising inflation, public sector pay caps become increasingly unsustainable.

For the NHS, the Scottish Government will work with unions to submit evidence to the independent pay review body on the impact of pay restraint and ask it to make fair recommendations. And we will commit - as we always have done - to implementing the recommendations of the pay review body in full. However, should a UK Government continue to constrain pay in the next parliament, and therefore curtail the independence of the pay review body, we will seek to work with health unions to explore the creation of distinct Scottish pay review arrangements.

The SNP Scottish Government is committed to protecting free tuition and the non-means tested, non-repayable nursing and midwifery student bursary, which was scrapped by the UK government. At Westminster SNP MPs will continue to pursue policy outcomes that will attract and retain talented young people to work in our public services.

NHS workers from across Europe help to staff our GP surgeries, hospitals and our care homes. SNP MPs will continue to press the UK government to immediately protect their right to live and work in Scotland and the UK. We will also press for immigration powers to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, so that Scotland can attract EU and EEA nationals to work in Scotland's NHS and care sector in the years to come.

Losing access to the European Medicines Agency through Brexit means that there may be delays to new medicines becoming available in the UK, or new medicines potentially not being made available here at all. The SNP will call on the UK government to stay part of the EMA so that access to vital drugs is maintained, and so that we can continue to participate in Europe-wide clinical trials and data sharing. We will also call on the UK government to devolve responsibility for medicine and medical product regulation to the Scottish Parliament.

SNP MPs will press the UK government to ensure continuity in cross-border health insurance arrangements – including the European Health Insurance Card. Costs will be increased for UK citizens living in, and travelling to, other parts of the EU if the UK government fails to agree reciprocal insurance arrangements with our European partners.

Scotland is the first of the UK nations to approve the provision of Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) by the NHS to prevent HIV. We will support efforts to have PrEP made available on the NHS in the rest of the UK too.

Victims of contaminated blood products deserve answers. In 2008 the SNP Scottish Government established the Penrose Public Inquiry, which reported in 2015. In government, we have also worked with stakeholder groups to develop a substantially improved compensation scheme, which is now the best in the UK. SNP MPs will support a full public inquiry on this issue in the rest of the UK.

Scotland's NHS: the facts

- We are investing record amounts in health – over £13 billion in 2017, £3.6 billion more than when we took office. And health spending per head in Scotland is higher than in England – to the tune of £152 per person.
- In 2011 the SNP abolished prescription charges. In England patients are forced to pay £8.60 per item.
- The number of nurses, doctors and dentists working in Scotland's NHS has increased. Staffing is at record high levels, up more than 12,200 under the SNP. Per head of population, Scotland has the most GPs of any UK country and there are now almost 50 per cent more qualified nurses and midwives working in our NHS Scotland than in England.
- Scotland's core A&E services are the best performing in the UK – and have been for 2 years.
- Most recent figures show that 90 per cent of NHS Scotland patients rated their care and treatment as good or excellent.
- Nurses in Scotland are better paid than anywhere else in the UK. A nurse in Scotland, at Band 5, is paid up to £309 more than their English counterparts. And, unlike in the NHS in England, we are supporting the lowest paid workers in our NHS by delivering the real Living Wage. As a result the starting salary of NHS support staff in Scotland is over £1,100 higher than in England.

Read more at www.snp.org/record

Protecting our education sector

We will guarantee the continuation of free university education in Scotland.

The Post-Study Work Visa is a vital tool to help attract and retain young talent. The UK government's decision to scrap the scheme, and then run a pilot which does not include a single Scottish university, is unacceptable. SNP MPs will call for the full reinstatement of the Post-Study Work Visa scheme.

Scotland's universities receive vital research funding from the EU, through programmes like Horizon 2020. SNP MPs will continue to work with Scotland's universities and institutions to seek clarity from the UK government on what will replace this funding. The SNP will also call for a Scottish representative to be a standing member of the UK Research and Innovation Board, which decides on allocation of UK research funding to UK universities.

The SNP believes that our students should be able to seamlessly travel to Europe for study and we will support the continuation of programmes like ERASMUS+ and other arrangements such as those being worked on by the AURORA group of universities including Aberdeen.

Supporting our young people

A good education is an investment – not just in our children, but in our society and our economy too.

While the Tories in Westminster are intent on removing support for our young people, the SNP Scottish Government is committed to ensuring our young people are able to get ahead in life.

- Research shows improved childcare is the single policy that will do most to reduce income inequality. Under the SNP the availability of free early years education and childcare has increased from 12.5 hours in 2007 to 16 hours a week for all three and four year olds and it has also been extended to two year olds from low income households. By 2021 we will increase the provision to 30 hours.
- In government we are investing £50 million to ensure all staff working in private nurseries delivering our childcare pledge are paid the real Living Wage.

- We have extended free school meals to all children in Primary 1 to 3 in Scotland, ensuring they get a healthy and nutritious meal every day, improving their concentration, helping them to achieve better results, and saving families around £380 per child per year.

- Free tuition has been maintained, saving students in Scotland up to £27,000 compared to the cost of studying in England.

- We have been reforming vocational education and increasing the number of Modern Apprenticeships, hitting new records every year on the road to our target of 30,000 new starts by the end of this parliament.

- We have expanded the Education Maintenance Allowance – now scrapped for new students south of the border – to support even more school pupils and college students from low income families.

Supporting our emergency services

Despite emergency services in England having tax relief from VAT, the UK government has failed to deliver the same relief for Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This has cost Scottish taxpayers more than £140 million since 2013. SNP MPs will continue to make the case to the UK government to extend a VAT exemption to Scottish emergency services. The money saved will be invested by the Scottish Government in making Scotland safer.

Public Sector Pay

The Scottish Government has supported public sector workers through a difficult time of pay restraint with additional measures to tackle low pay. However, we recognise that at a time of rising inflation, public sector pay caps become increasingly unsustainable.

For the NHS, the Scottish Government will work with unions to submit evidence to the independent pay review body on the impact of pay restraint and ask it to make fair recommendations. And we will commit - as we always have done - to implementing the recommendations of the pay review body in full.

For the wider public sector, we will enter into negotiations for next year's pay settlement in good faith and with a view to agreeing a fair outcome that takes account of both the public finances and the cost of living.

Better rail services

We are committed to improving standards for rail users. Since the SNP took office, we have invested £7.7 billion to maintain and upgrade tracks, stations and trains in Scotland. Scotland's rail passengers benefit from the lowest levels of fare increases since rail powers were devolved in 2005, as well as more seats, services and stations. And we are already using new powers to ensure a public sector operator will be able to bid for a future rail contract.

ScotRail has worked in recent months to improve the punctuality of its services. However, fifty-four per cent of ScotRail delays are caused by issues connected to Network Rail. SNP MPs will make a strong case for the full devolution of Network Rail so that we can deliver a more effective and efficient rail service for Scotland.

Connecting Scotland to HS2 must be a priority, with construction beginning in Scotland as well as England, and a high speed connection between Glasgow, Edinburgh and the north of England as part of any high-speed rail network.

SNP MPs will engage the UK government in discussions on the feasibility of improving cross-border rail links, including linking Carlisle to the Borders Railway.

Championing public service broadcasting and a thriving press

We continue to believe that responsibility for broadcasting in Scotland should transfer from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament. In the meantime we welcome the creation of a new BBC Scotland TV channel and its associated investment. We will continue to push for greater authority and funding to be moved from BBC network to BBC Scotland. We will also continue to push for a fairer share of the TV licence fee raised in Scotland being spent in Scotland.

We welcome the proposals for the relocation of Channel 4 outwith London, and SNP MPs will make a strong case for as many functions of the Channel 4 operation as possible to be based in Scotland.

As the UK government consults on proposals to reduce the requirement for local content on radio, SNP MPs will seek to protect local news and other content provided by local commercial radio stations, recognising the valuable contribution they make to informing and entertaining listeners.

We remain committed to a vibrant, free press and we will work with other parties, in Scotland and at Westminster, to ensure it is supported.

We will make the case for the Scottish Parliament to have the power to decide which sporting events in Scotland are included in the list of those that are free to view in Scotland.

We will demand that the UK government reinstates its funding for Gaelic broadcasting.

AN OPEN, MODERN ECONOMY

Now more than ever, it is vital to have strong SNP voices standing up for jobs and businesses in Scotland. At Westminster, we will demand fresh support for businesses to grow and to boost productivity.

We will hold the Tories to account, making sure they cannot trade away Scotland's industries in Brexit negotiations. We will fight for Single Market membership. And we will demand new powers, so we can continue to encourage the best and brightest from around the world to make Scotland their home, and contribute to our economy and society.

Supporting business

We will support the targeted reduction in National Insurance to bring down the costs employers face when taking on new workers by the doubling of the Employment Allowance – the National Insurance discount businesses receive when they increase employment – from £3,000 per business per year to £6,000 per business per year, phased in over the Parliament.

Productivity remains a major challenge in the UK economy. We will, therefore, support the Institute of Directors' calls for the further extension of the Annual Investment Allowance, which encourages firms to invest in plant and machinery, from the current £200,000 per year to £1 million per year.

The UK government's Draft Industrial Strategy doesn't deliver for our manufacturing industries. The SNP will work with partners to deliver a strategy that takes account of Scotland's economic challenges. Additionally, there should be clear guidance and a mandate for the Small Business Commissioner to play a role in delivering the Industrial Strategy.

We are standing up for Scottish industry

Standing up for Scotland is what we do. Unlike successive Westminster governments that allowed Scottish industries to wither and die, we never shy away from an opportunity to make Scotland even stronger.

- The SNP Scottish Government secured a future for Scottish Steel, with the transfer of the Dalzell and Clydebridge plants to Liberty Steel.
- We secured a future for the UK's last remaining aluminium smelter in Lochaber, with plans to create up to 600 jobs and invest £120 million at the site.
- The SNP Scottish Government stepped in to save Ferguson's in Inverclyde. The shipyard has since won its biggest order since 2001. The £97 million contract to build two new CalMac ferries will secure 150 jobs.

Find out more at www.snp.org/record

To help small businesses, the Scottish Government is already lifting more than half of all premises out of business rates altogether. Most of the taxes and regulations that impact on small businesses are, however, the responsibility of Westminster. Despite setting up an Office of Tax Simplification, the UK government has ignored the vast majority of its recommendations with just 16 of its 60 'big picture' recommendations and less than half of its other formal recommendations so far adopted. We will push for a formal, independently chaired review of the recommendations to assess which should now be taken forward.

Building a better Scotland: our investment in infrastructure

In government, the SNP has prioritised investment in infrastructure to improve public services, enhance connectivity, create jobs and grow our economy.

In 2017-18 alone almost £6.4 billion of infrastructure projects will be under construction in Scotland.

- We are delivering the £1.4 billion Queensferry Crossing.
- We are transforming Scotland's road network. We are upgrading Scotland's motorways, with improvements to the M8, M73 and M74 network. Work to dual the A9 between Perth and Inverness is well underway, and dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen is in preparation too.
- Over £5 billion has been invested in Scotland's health infrastructure since 2007 and nearly £500 million of new hospitals and healthcare facilities are due to open in Scotland in 2017-18.
- £742 million is being invested in improvements to the Edinburgh to Glasgow railway line, including widespread electrification of the network between the two cities and to Stirling and Dunblane. And the £170 million Aberdeen-Inverness rail upgrade, which is now under construction, will see shorter journey times between the two cities, as well as new stations at Dalcross and Kintore.
- Over the current term of the Scottish Parliament, we are investing over £3 billion to deliver at least 50,000 new affordable homes, at least 35,000 of which will be for social rent.
- In government we have made energy efficiency a national infrastructure priority, and we will support it with more than £500 million of public funding over four years.
- We have invested £400 million to deliver superfast broadband to 95 per cent of properties across Scotland by the end of 2017, and we are on track to deliver this target. We will now go further, ensuring that 100 per cent of premises across Scotland have access to super-fast broadband by 2021.

And to avoid a significant increase in the bureaucratic burden on small businesses, we will press the UK government to phase the introduction of the Quarterly Digital Tax Reporting over a five-year transition period, and consider industry calls for exemptions to those who are not incorporated or VAT-registered.

SNP MPs will work to ensure that UK agencies are working with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support Scottish businesses to export.

The Scottish Government has led the way by paying 99 percent of invoices from small businesses within 10 working days. More should be done to help small businesses with cash flow in the wider economy. SNP MPs will support the introduction of effective legal protections to ensure small businesses – particularly those attempting to scale up – are paid on time. And we will press the UK government to ensure that it is demonstrating best practice on paying small businesses promptly for the services they deliver.

Protecting our place in the European Single Market

The European Single Market represents in excess of 500 million consumers – eight times the size of the UK's market. The Tories' plans to take us out of the Single Market would damage our economy. In Scotland 80,000 Scottish jobs could be lost, wages face a £2,000 per head cut and our economy faces a hit of up to £11 billion a year by 2030. Our public finances are also threatened by the loss of EU funding for research and development, and support for our rural communities.

It is clear that there is no rational case for taking Scotland, or the UK, out of the Single Market. SNP MPs will seek to protect Scotland's economy by working to protect Scotland's place in the Single Market.

Scotland does not have to choose between the Single Market and the UK market. Whatever future the people of Scotland choose, it is in everyone's interests that Scotland and the rest of the UK maintain a smooth trading relationship. After all, the rest of the UK exports over £50 billion a year to Scotland, making Scotland the top destination in Europe for exports from the rest of the UK, and England's second biggest market after the United States of America.

SNP MPs will continue to press the UK government to work with the Scottish Government to support Scotland's businesses in the wake of Brexit, and ensure their voice is heard during negotiations.

Safeguarding the success of our world-class food and drink sector

Scotland's food and drink is a global success story, worth £14.4 billion. The EU – Scotland's biggest overseas regional food and drink export market – is of vital importance to the sector. We will fight to maintain Single Market membership, to protect the future success of the industry.

SNP MPs will also seek to ensure that any future trade deals secure geographical indications for key Scottish food and drink products like Scotch Whisky, Arbroath smokies and Stornoway black pudding.

EU regulation over animal and plant health and environmental and food safety gives Scotland access to export markets around the world. SNP MPs will support the Scottish Government's efforts to maintain all these current standards and regulations.

The loss of freedom of movement has the potential to harm Scotland's rural economy. Around 8,000 EU nationals have come to live in Scotland and work in our food and drink sector. Every year up to 15,000 seasonal migrant workers also help harvest our world class soft fruit and vegetables. SNP MPs will continue to call on the UK government to guarantee EU nationals' right to remain in the UK, and safeguard the success of our food and drink sector.

Scottish dairy farmers have been adversely affected by market volatility in recent years. SNP MPs will press for a review of the Voluntary Code of Practice for the dairy sector and for contract provisions and arrangements to better meet the interests and needs of milk producers.

Successful food production is driven by demand as well as supply. SNP MPs will press for all relevant UK government departments and agencies to apply for and achieve the Food for Life catering award and to purchase more quality Scottish food produced to current farm assurance standards.

We will not allow the UK government to dismantle Scotland's GM-free status and commitment.

Given the Scotch Whisky industry is a key sector of Scotland's economy, SNP MPs will continue to advocate a review of alcohol taxation to better reflect alcohol content, while supporting health benefits through minimum unit pricing.

Tourism and hospitality

Tourism is a growing part of Scotland's economy with Scotland hailed as the second best place to visit in the world this year.

Against the backdrop of Brexit, Scotland's tourism industry has worked hard to ensure we continue to be seen as an open and welcoming nation.

To provide further support to our tourism industry the SNP will call on the UK government to examine a reduction in VAT for the hospitality sector, levelling the playing field with other EU nations and creating new jobs.

The tourism and hospitality sector faces real challenges presented by Brexit. The Tourism Industry Council expects that there will need to be a 200 per cent increase in Border Force resources to deal with post-Brexit EU passengers. SNP MPs will press the UK government to ensure border checks are as seamless as possible after the UK leaves the EU, making it as easy as possible for international tourists to visit Scotland.

THE REAL BENEFIT

A STRONG
VOICE FOR
SCOTLAND,
STANDING
AGAINST
TORY CUTS.

A MANDATE
TO
STRENGEN
HAN

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STRENGTHEN
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PROTECT
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OWN
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Connecting Scotland to the world

International connectivity plays an important role in facilitating trade, tourism and investment. Membership of the EU has helped open up skies across Europe, boosting the number of flights to and from Scotland, creating more choice for businesses and families. SNP MPs will:

- press the UK government to commit to the Open Skies Agreement in Brexit negotiations to ensure there is no loss of flights to or from Scotland and our airports are not disadvantaged;
- work with the Scottish Government, Visit Scotland, Scottish Development International and UK departments to secure an expansion of international flights to and from Scotland, opening up new markets for trade and tourism;
- protect vital Scottish air connections to other parts of the UK;
- continue to work with local partners as part of City and Regional Deals to deliver improved connectivity including an Inverness Airport Rail Hub;
- ensure the UK government continues to work with the Scottish Government to secure an exemption from air passenger taxes on Highlands and Islands flights.

The current system for managing aviation noise is outdated and is in urgent need of reform. In the last Parliament, SNP MPs secured a UK government consultation on a new Independent Aviation Noise Authority to ensure communities are fully engaged in decisions by airports to alter flight paths. We will now push for the establishment of this body, ensuring that airspace changes are delivered with the approval of the community, without having an adverse impact on our environment.

Standing up for Scotland's oil and gas sector

There are encouraging signs Scotland's oil and gas industry is emerging from its recent downturn, thanks to the efforts of the men and women who have made it an international success story. Despite raising £330 billion in tax revenues for the UK Treasury, Westminster has repeatedly failed to provide adequate support for the industry and the families which depend upon it.

SNP MPs will press the UK government to deliver a strong deal for the oil and gas sector. This must include targeted incentives to develop small pool discoveries, as well as further support to stimulate exploration activity and loan guarantees for critical infrastructure – measures which were promised in the UK Government's 2016 Budget but have not been delivered.

SNP MPs will work to ensure the UK government takes appropriate action on the taxation of late life oil and gas assets. They will also urge the UK government to provide incentives for oil and gas companies diversifying into renewables.

Scotland is uniquely well placed to capitalise on the opportunities presented by onshore decommissioning work. But we must have the right infrastructure in the right place. SNP support has already led to major investment at Dales Voe in Shetland. Our MPs will fight to win UK government investment and ensure Scotland is home to the UK's first ultra-deep water decommissioning port and associated facilities.

Building on initiatives such as the Scottish Government's Decommissioning Challenge Fund, and working closely with the industry and regulator, the SNP will seek to ensure our supply chain companies are strongly placed to compete effectively for contracts associated with decommissioning.

The Oil and Gas Institute at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen has estimated that leaving the EU is likely to cost the North Sea oil and gas supply chain £200 million a year in tariffs and export taxes. Yet a leaked UK government document states that oil and gas will be a low priority in Brexit negotiations. The SNP will press the UK government for assurances that the oil and gas industry is always treated as a high priority.

In light of local concerns, SNP MPs and the SNP Scottish Government will continue to demand the UK government devolves control of ship-to-ship oil transfers.

Investing in our cities and regions

SNP MPs will campaign for a UK government funding commitment for an Ayrshire Growth Deal, a Tay City Deal, a Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Deal, an Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Deal, and a Deal for the Islands of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.

SNP MPs will also demand a commitment from the UK government to match the Scottish Government's investment in Aberdeen and Inverness.

The Scottish Government will establish a new enterprise agency to address the enterprise and skills needs of the South of Scotland. While the UK government has, time and again, failed to match the funding put forward by the Scottish Government to develop Scotland's cities and regions, SNP MPs will demand that the UK government meets the ambition and funding put forward by the Scottish Government to develop the south of Scotland.

Aberdeen and Inverness - the missing millions

The Scottish Government has worked in close partnership with local councils and the UK government to deliver City Deals, boosting jobs and investment in Glasgow Region, Aberdeen region and Inverness & Highland Region.

In total the SNP Government has pledged more than £1 billion but the UK has failed to match this. Their investment in the Aberdeen Region fell short by a mammoth £254 million and in the Inverness Region Deal by £82 million.

SNP MPs will demand the UK government delivers on its responsibilities to these areas and matches the missing millions. And they will demand that in all future deals, the UK does not short-change the people of Scotland.

An immigration policy that works for Scotland

Our vision of Scotland is one of an open country that looks outwards, and encourages the best and brightest from Europe, and around the world, to make Scotland their home.

Scotland needs an immigration policy suited to our specific circumstances and needs. Scotland needs people to want to work here, in our businesses, our universities and in our public services. The current UK one-size-fits-all approach to immigration is failing Scotland.

The SNP will continue to seek devolution of immigration powers so that Scotland can have an immigration policy that works for our economy and society. And we will stand firm against the demonisation of migrants.

Throughout the Brexit process the UK government has treated EU nationals living in the UK as bargaining chips. It is shameful, and it must end. SNP MPs will continue to press the UK government to confirm the rights of EU nationals to remain as a matter of urgency. We expect the rights of UK nationals living in the EU to be guaranteed in the same way.

We will continue to make the case for the reintroduction of a Post-Study Work Visa scheme for Scotland, to enable international students who come here to study to then stay and contribute to our society and economy after they graduate.

The UK government recently introduced a Skills Immigration Charge – a charge for employers, including the public sector, of £1,000 per non-EEA worker per year. This fee will lead to skills shortages, harm our economy and remove funding from frontline public services. We oppose this policy and remain concerned that the UK government will implement a similar charge for workers from the EU post-Brexit. SNP MPs will oppose any such moves, and press for the charge to be scrapped altogether.

SNP MPs will continue to press the UK government to limit immigration detention to 28 days. No other European country has indefinite detention. We continue to oppose the detention of children and vulnerable people, including pregnant women and people with mental illnesses. We will continue to call for the UK government to pursue alternatives to detention.

Access to citizenship has become increasingly expensive. We support a review of the citizenship application process, with a view to bringing down its cost and reducing its complexity.

Reforming the banking sector

The SNP supports the creation of a robust regulatory framework to ensure that the UK economy is not vulnerable to a re-run of the 2008 financial crisis. The SNP will support measures including the reinstatement of the reverse burden of proof which, before being removed by the Tories, required senior bank managers to demonstrate they had done the right thing where wrongdoing had emerged on their watch.

The SNP will support a long overdue and comprehensive investigation into LIBOR rigging.

The SNP will call for protection for whistle-blowers in the banking and financial services sector, to protect the integrity of UK banking and safeguard our economy.

To ensure that taxpayers get their money back, the SNP will press for the public interest to be fully protected in any future disposal of RBS shares, including decisions on how any windfall revenues should be used.

SNP MPs will press the UK government to compel the banking industry and LINK members to sign up to the Universal Cash Deposit Transaction, which means that ATMs which take deposits can be used by customers of any bank. This will protect convenient access to cash deposit and withdrawal facilities, for both the public and businesses.

SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

This election is about the kind of country we want to Scotland to be. More than ever, Scotland needs strong voices in Westminster, standing up for the values we hold dear.

A vote for the SNP is a vote to ensure Scotland's future is in Scotland's hands – not in the hands of Westminster Tories.

We will oppose any attempts by the Tories to water-down the vital rights currently protected by EU membership. We will stand up for Scotland's place in Europe, and we will make sure Scotland's voice is heard in the Brexit negotiations.

Scotland's choice

This election won't decide whether or not Scotland will be independent. But a vote for the SNP is a vote to reinforce the Scottish Parliament's right to decide when an independence referendum should happen.

At the end of the Brexit process, when the final terms of the deal are known, it is right that Scotland should have a real choice about our future.

Brexit must not simply be imposed on Scotland no matter how damaging it turns out to be.

Last year's Holyrood election delivered the democratic mandate for an independence referendum in these circumstances. The recent vote of Scotland's national Parliament has underlined that mandate. If the SNP wins a majority of Scottish seats in this election, that would complete a triple lock, further reinforcing the democratic mandate which already exists. And, in such circumstances, any continued

Tory attempts to block the people of Scotland having a choice on their future, when the options are clear, and on a timescale determined by the Scottish Parliament, would be democratically unsustainable.

Scotland's place in Europe

The SNP believes that if Scotland chooses to become independent, we should be a member state of the EU.

Before asking people to vote in an independence referendum, we will set out the process by which our membership of the EU will be secured in the circumstances that prevail at that time – such as whether or not Scotland has already left the EU as part of the UK.

We will continue, in all circumstances, to demand the scrapping or fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and support Scottish control of Scottish fisheries, as we have done for many years.

We will also oppose any attempt by the UK government to treat the fishing industry as a bargaining chip. Having sold out fishing as 'expendable' on the way in to the EU, a Tory government must not be allowed to betray it again on the way out.

Given that an independence referendum would happen at the end of the Brexit process, this election also presents Scotland with a more immediate opportunity.

In the months ahead, we must make sure that our interests are not ignored in the Brexit negotiations. A vote for the SNP will make sure that Scotland's voice is heard.

A majority of people in Scotland voted to remain in the EU - but even many of those who voted to leave have real concerns about the extreme Brexit being pursued by the UK government.

To be taken out, not just of the EU, but also of the Single Market, poses a real and present danger to Scottish jobs - to our farmers and fisherman, our universities, our food and drink businesses and to almost every sector of our economy. Indeed, it has been estimated that leaving the Single Market could cost 80,000 jobs in Scotland.

That is why the Scottish Government published compromise proposals that would keep Scotland in the Single Market, even as we left the EU.

These proposals were rejected out of hand by the UK government. Despite promising to listen to the devolved administrations, and being prepared to countenance a special deal for the car industry, they refused to consider arrangements that would address the specific needs of Scotland.

However, this election offers people the chance to give the Scottish Government's proposals real democratic legitimacy and make it impossible for the Prime Minister to continue to ignore Scotland's voice.

If the SNP wins the election, it will give us a mandate to demand a place for Scotland at the Brexit negotiating table and the inclusion of the case for our place in the Single Market in the UK's negotiating remit.

Protecting fundamental rights

Brexit threatens the fundamental rights that people in the UK currently enjoy, including workers' rights, as well as vital social and environmental protections. SNP MPs will hold the Tories to account to ensure that the rights and protections currently safeguarded by EU membership are not diminished after the UK leaves.

We will also seek a cast-iron guarantee from the UK government that they will seek the consent of the Scottish Parliament under the Sewel Convention to the terms of the Brexit Bill.

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998, ensuring that human rights are protected by the Scottish Government and all Scottish legislation. The SNP re-affirms its commitment to the Council of Europe, the ECHR and their institutions.

We will fight to protect human rights across the UK. SNP MPs will oppose any attempts by the UK government to scrap the Human Rights Act and withdraw the UK from the ECHR.

So long as Scotland is covered by trade arrangements negotiated by the UK government, the SNP will call for greater transparency in any proposed international trade deals following Brexit, with the UK and Scottish Parliaments being given a say.

The benefits delivered by EU funding for Scotland are significant and wide-ranging - supporting jobs, paying for new infrastructure across the country, funding research at our universities, and providing support for our farming and fishing industries. SNP MPs will demand urgent clarity from the UK government on long-term funding arrangements after the UK leaves the EU, and ensure that current funding levels are matched.

Strengthening the Scottish Parliament

Until such time as Scotland chooses to be independent, SNP MPs will support increased powers for the Scottish Parliament.

Indeed, the implications of Brexit make it both appropriate and essential that the current devolution settlement is fundamentally revisited, to ensure that the interests of Scotland can be protected.

SNP MPs will seek additional powers. These will include:

- powers that will be repatriated from Brussels to the UK that currently sit within the competences of the Scottish Parliament, like agriculture, fisheries and environmental protection;
- powers to be repatriated in reserved areas, such as employment law, which protect fundamental rights currently enjoyed by the people of Scotland;
- new powers, beyond those being repatriated, including, but not limited to immigration; powers to conclude international agreements in areas of the Scottish Parliament's responsibility, and powers that would allow Scotland to meet the regulatory and administrative requirements of continued European Single Market membership.

Protecting Scotland's budget from a Tory cash grab

SNP MPs will support the Scottish Government to ensure that Scotland's finances are protected from any attempt by the UK government to reduce Scotland's budget. As long as part of the Scottish Parliament's budget continues to be determined by Westminster we will fight to protect the Barnett formula.

MAKING WESTMINSTER FAIRER

While handing tax cuts to the wealthiest, the Tories have cut support for the most vulnerable. And the Tories are now openly threatening a race to the bottom in tax, wages and working conditions. That's not the Scotland we seek.

The SNP will fight to end the appalling Tory welfare policies that are punishing the most vulnerable in society – including pensioners, the disabled, vulnerable young adults, and even the bereaved. We will demand that the UK government calls a halt to the cuts that are damaging lives, and we will seek new powers for the Scottish Parliament so we are better able to protect our communities.

Social security powers

Social security should be there for all of us in times of need. It is part of what holds us together as a society. Social security is a safety net that we all pay into when times are good, in the expectation that it is there for us when we find ourselves in difficult financial or personal circumstance. We will protect the principles that have underpinned the social security system since its foundations.

The limited social security powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament give us the opportunity to take a different approach to the Tories in Westminster, one with fairness, respect and dignity at its heart. However, decisions over 85 per cent of UK welfare spending in Scotland will continue to be made in Westminster.

Only with full powers over social security will the Scottish Parliament be able to stop obscenities like the Rape Clause, the Family Cap, cuts to people with disabilities, and the Tory assault on the poor.

SNP MPs will continue to call for the Scottish Parliament to have full control over all social security benefits, so that we can deliver a system based on dignity and respect that is tailored to the needs of all the people of Scotland.

Tackling child poverty

The SNP Scottish Government has introduced a new Child Poverty Bill, following the Tory government's decision to scrap income-based child poverty targets in the last Parliament. The new Bill introduces new Scotland-wide targets to eradicate child poverty. SNP MPs will call on the UK government to match that ambition by reintroducing UK-wide targets to end child poverty.

We will also urge the UK government to follow the lead of the SNP Scottish Government, by working with devolved administrations to establish a Poverty and Inequality Commission that provides expert advice on tackling poverty, and monitors and regularly reports on progress.

Protecting women and girls from gender-based violence

Dr Eilidh Whiteford became the first SNP MP ever to have a Private Member's Bill reach the statute book. She led a campaign to get the UK government to ratify an important international treaty to prevent and combat sexual and domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women and girls. The Bill will commit the UK government to funding essential services such as women's refuges and rape crisis helplines. SNP MPs will ensure there is a clear timetable for that to happen.

Protecting disabled people from Tory cuts

The Tory government is driving disabled people and those with illnesses into poverty by cutting their incomes. Under the Tories, from April this year, disabled and ill people assessed as not fit for work have lost out on £29 per week from their Employment and Support Allowance. SNP MPs will support reversal of this cut.

The current Work Capability Assessment is failing. SNP MPs will call for this to be halted, and a new system to be put in place which treats everyone with fairness and respect, helping people into employment rather than crisis.

SNP MPs will urge the UK government to follow the lead of the Scottish Government to review Personal Independence Payments, ensuring assessments, descriptors and award times are appropriate and rooted in respect and dignity.

Protecting family budgets

The SNP strongly opposes the cap that restricts Child Tax Credits to the first two children and the removal of the family element of Universal Credit. We believe that all children should be treated equally. We oppose the ruthless and inhumane Rape Clause which forces women to relive the ordeal of rape in order to claim tax credits for third or subsequent children. The SNP believes that the UK social security system, paid for by all of us, should provide a safety net for all low income families, to ensure that even in the most difficult times we can all make the best futures for our children.

Protecting people on low incomes

We will call for the end of the cash freeze that the Tories have imposed on many benefits, leaving families struggling as the cost of living rises. Instead, we will support the annual uprating of all benefits by at least CPI inflation.

The SNP Scottish Government will abolish the Bedroom Tax in Scotland completely, when we have the powers to do so. SNP MPs will continue to demand that the Bedroom Tax is scrapped across the UK.

The punitive benefit sanctions regime is causing hardship and pushing people into poverty, debt, crisis and towards foodbanks and emergency aid. The SNP will continue to call for the current sanction regime to be scrapped.

SNP MPs will demand that the UK government follows the lead of the SNP Scottish Government by ruling out the private sector having any involvement in assessments for Scotland's social security benefits.

The roll out of Universal Credit, which has been introduced in the Highlands and Midlothian first, has caused rent arrears, household debt and left families to rely on food banks. SNP MPs will continue to argue for a complete halt to the roll out of Universal Credit until it is designed to treat everyone with fairness and respect, and will continue to call for it to be fully devolved to Scotland.

The Income Tax Personal Allowance is set to increase, boosting the amount of money people can earn before they pay Income Tax. At the same time, the Tories have reduced the work allowance leading to a significant reduction in the support provided by Universal Credit. This acts as a disincentive to working more hours or taking up employment. We will support the re-instatement of the work allowance to all benefit claimants. This will encourage people back into work by reducing the amount the state claws back – making work pay more.

As Home Secretary Theresa May scrapped the socio-economic duty contained in the Equality Act requiring public bodies to evaluate the impact of their policies to reduce inequality. SNP MPs will seek an early opportunity to pursue a Bill at Westminster to ensure the UK government commences this important duty.

The Tory government has introduced new charges for parents seeking support from a former partner through the Child Maintenance Service. The SNP will demand an end to this tax on child support.

SNP MPs will continue to fight for an end to premium-rate telephone charges faced by those seeking advice on or claiming benefits from the DWP.

Protecting vulnerable young people

Vulnerable young people under the age of 21 are no longer entitled to financial support for housing unless they can prove family breakdown or abuse. SNP MPs will support restoration of housing support for 18 to 21 year olds across the UK.

Support for people who have lost loved ones

The Tory government is cutting Bereavement Payments and Widowed Parents' Allowance - making grieving families worse off. According to the UK government's own analysis, 75 per cent of families entitled to Widowed Parents' Allowance will be worse off. SNP MPs will support the reversal of this cut.

Making work fair

SNP MPs will continue to press for full devolution of employment and employability policy – including the Minimum Wage – to enable the Scottish Government to protect and enhance vital workers' rights that are under threat from a hard-line Tory government. Upon devolution of these new powers, an SNP Scottish Government will take advice from a strengthened Fair Work Convention to deliver workplace policy that is fit for the 21st century, including a full review of workplace leave entitlements.

Until employment and employability policy are devolved, SNP MPs will press the UK government to follow the lead of the SNP Scottish Government, by establishing a Fair Work Commission – with representation from trade unions, public sector organisations, and businesses – to ensure workers' rights across the UK are not diminished as a result of Brexit.

We believe people should receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. We support payment of the real Living wage, which ensures people's basic wage continues to meet the real cost of living. We will back a transition over the next parliamentary term towards payment of the real Living wage as a new minimum legal requirement to all adults above the age of 18, creating a new single adult rate. We believe that the rate paid to 16 to 18 year olds and apprentices should increase in line with changes to the rate of the real Living wage. We will call for the UK government to task the Low Pay Commission to deliver this national pay rise, and to put in place appropriate support for employers.

SNP MPs will support the immediate repeal of the Trade Union Act, which represents a direct threat to unions and to the fundamental rights of workers. We will argue for public sector workers across the UK to be able to use check-off facilities and for workplace support for trade union activities in the public sector.

SNP MPs will call for the UK government to follow the lead of the Scottish Government by abolishing fees for Employment Tribunals.

The SNP will press the UK government to ban exploitative zero-hours contracts, and ensure that workers have appropriate rights and protections, including holiday and sick pay. This will help casual and agency workers as well as those now part of the growing gig economy. To tackle maternity and pregnancy discrimination, we back the Women and Equalities Committee's recommendation to strengthen the law to protect women from discriminatory redundancies and practices.

Championing equality in work

It is unacceptable that 47 years after the Equal Pay Act was passed, businesses are still not properly penalised if they break the law by not paying men and women the same rate. We will seek to ensure that any employer who loses an equal pay claim conducts and publishes an equal pay audit and then takes appropriate action on the results.

More action needs to be taken to address the gender, race and disability pay gap and tackle pay inequality and occupational segregation. Equal pay audits should cover gender, race and disability. SNP MPs will support lowering the threshold to 150 employees, from the current level of 250 employees, and the introduction of sanctions, including fines, for employers that fail to comply with the law.

We will also call on the UK government to follow the lead of the SNP Scottish Government by ensuring all public authorities with more than 20 employees provide gender pay gap reports every two years. We will also call for equal pay statements every four years, which provide policies on equal pay and occupational segregation and include reporting on gender, disability and race.

We support efforts to increase gender balance in the private sector but it is important that governments lead by example. The Scottish Government is committed to legislating for gender balance in public sector boardrooms. SNP MPs will call on the UK government to do likewise.

To tackle workplace discrimination and sexist dress codes, SNP MPs will vote for a change in the Equality Act to strengthen and change the law that currently allows employers to have different dress codes for men and women.

The SNP will fight to protect the rights of pregnant women and new mothers afforded under EU laws, ensuring that maternity and workplace rights are not eroded. No-one should face discrimination at work because of pregnancy or childbirth.

The Scottish Government is putting in place support for new parents to ensure they know their rights. SNP MPs will push the UK government to ensure all workplaces provide information to new parents on their rights when they return to work and to enforce those rights.

The UK is one of the few countries in the world not to provide a statutory right to breastfeed on return to work. SNP MPs will press the UK government to introduce a proper legal right to breastfeed in the workplace. All women should have a real choice about how long they breastfeed their babies.

Halt Jobcentre closures

The UK government is proposing the closure of up to 23 Jobcentre Plus sites across Scotland, including half of all Jobcentres in Glasgow. SNP MPs will urge the UK government to abandon their planned closures and work with the Scottish Government to bring forward proposals for joint governance of Jobcentres with the Scottish Government, as recommended by the Smith Commission.

Promoting fair work through procurement

We will support the continued use of procurement processes to ensure the Scottish Government can continue to seek the Living Wage for workers in firms who win contracts from the public sector.

We believe the practice of 'blacklisting' individuals from employment is unacceptable. The SNP Scottish Government has introduced regulations to exclude businesses which have been found to be involved in blacklisting from bidding for public contracts. Similar measures should be introduced to ensure blacklisters do not benefit from UK government procurement.

Fairness in retirement

We will continue to argue for a fairer pensions system. SNP MPs will oppose plans to increase the State Pension Age beyond 66. We will support the establishment of an

Independent Savings and Pension Commission, to ensure pensions and savings policies are fit for purpose. The remit of the Commission should include consideration of the specific demographic needs of different parts of the UK in relation to State Pension Age.

The Triple Lock on the State Pension protects the income of pensioners, many of whom rely on their pension as their only source of income. Age UK has described the Triple Lock as a "vital tool in the fight against pensioner poverty." The SNP will stand up for pensioners against any attempts to remove the Triple Lock on the State Pension.

We'll stand up for the women in Scotland, and across the UK, who have been short-changed by the Tory Government due to the accelerated timetable for increases in the women's State Pension Age. SNP MPs will continue to support the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign in their efforts to secure fairness for the women affected.

The SNP will call for the UK government to take steps to extend auto-enrolment, so that more low paid, and self-employed, workers can benefit from regular pension savings.

We believe that saving for a pension is the best route to a stable retirement. The SNP will seek to ensure that regular, simple, and affordable saving schemes are offered to provide for a secure income in retirement. SNP MPs will call for an end to Tory gimmicks like the Lifetime ISA, which can disincentivise other forms of retirement savings that offer a greater return.

Protecting the most vulnerable in society from Tory cuts

By 2021, the total cumulative loss to people in Scotland as a result of Tory welfare cuts will be over £2 billion per year.

Since 2013, the Scottish Government has spent over £100 million a year to protect people from the worst aspects of Tory welfare cuts.

- We are fully mitigating the Bedroom Tax in Scotland, protecting over 70,000 households, and we will abolish the tax completely when we have the powers.
- Since 2013, the Scottish Welfare Fund has provided a vital lifeline with awards totalling £124 million to over 241,000 households in their time of greatest need, helping them to live independently and buy essentials such as nappies, food and cookers.
- We are safeguarding support for over 2,800 disabled people across Scotland with the new Scottish Independent Living Fund, which was set up in July 2015.
- We have extended the Scottish Welfare Fund on an interim basis to ensure no vulnerable young person is victim to the UK government's decision to remove housing support for 18-21 year olds.
- We have invested over £1 billion in the Council Tax Reduction scheme which helps over a half a million households. We have restored Westminster's cut and extended the child allowance in the Council Tax Reduction scheme by 25 per cent, benefiting 77,000 low-income 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. And we will not apply the two child cap to this or any other Scottish social security scheme.

Read more at www.snp.org/record

How we are using new powers

The social security powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament are limited, but they give us the opportunity to take a different approach – one with fairness, dignity and respect at its heart, shaped by experts and the people of Scotland.

Here are just some of the actions the SNP Scottish Government is taking.

- The SNP will abolish the Bedroom Tax.
- The SNP will increase Carer's Allowance to the level of Jobseekers Allowance.
- We will protect the Winter Fuel Payment, and extend the eligibility to families with severely disabled children.
- We don't believe that profit should ever be a motive in making decisions on, or assessing people's health and eligibility for benefits. So the SNP has ruled out the private sector having any involvement in assessments for Scotland's social security benefits.
- Disability benefits are intended to support people with the additional cost of living with a disability. We will not means-test disability benefits.
- We want to stop the revolving door of disability assessments and reintroduce long term awards for those with long term conditions. That's why we have established a Disability Benefits Assessment Commission to provide recommendations and guidance on eligibility and conditions.
- The SNP Scottish Government will offer a new Best Start Grant worth £1,900 to a two child family - £1,400 more than the UK Sure Start Maternity Grant.

Diverse but equal

The SNP is committed to tackling the challenges of racism and discrimination in society. SNP MPs will press for strengthened provisions relating to Equality Impact Assessments which will ensure that legislation is sensitive to the interests of minority communities.

The SNP Scottish Government is committed to reviewing and reforming gender recognition laws, in line with international best practice. SNP MPs will press the UK government to match the Scottish Government's commitment to legislation within this parliament.

SNP MPs will continue to demand full devolution of equality law to the Scottish Parliament. Until that happens we will seek equality law reforms to ensure same-sex couples have equal pension rights and protected characteristics are expanded to ensure all LGBTI people are fully protected from discrimination and harassment.

At Westminster the SNP successfully pressured the UK government to pass a 'Turing Bill' which pardoned deceased gay men convicted for same-sex sexual activity that is now lawful. SNP MPs will press the UK government to go further and match the Scottish Government's commitment to extend the pardon to gay men who are still alive today and have such records.

The Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the historic British Sign Language (Scotland) Act in 2015, which recognises BSL as a language of Scotland. SNP MPs will support cross-party efforts at Westminster to recognise BSL as a UK language in law and strengthen the rights of BSL users.

Working with disabled people and organisations that represent them, the Scottish Government has produced an action plan for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Scotland. The UN committee responsible for the Convention is currently assessing its implementation in the UK. The UK government should fully engage with the investigation, implement its findings and work towards the incorporation of the Convention in UK law.

A better deal for consumers

SNP MPs will call for all powers over consumer protection to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Consumers in the UK pay some of the highest prices for petrol and diesel in Europe. The SNP will call for the introduction of a fuel duty regulator which delivers more stability to the cost of filling up your car.

Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) penalises those who pay more for their insurance. This includes groups such as young drivers and communities in flood risk areas. SNP MPs will call for a freeze in further IPT tax hikes.

SNP MPs will seek to ensure that Scotland does not lose out on the EU commitment to abolish mobile roaming charges.

We strongly object to ticket touting, and secondary agent sites making obscene profits selling tickets, which are often invalid, to unsuspecting customers. SNP MPs, backed by the Scottish Government, will press the UK government for stronger consumer protection against ticket touting, and will seek a ban on software used by ticket touters which instantly purchases large volumes of tickets.

There is no doubt that Fixed Odds Betting Terminals cause harm and hardship in communities across Scotland. That's why the Scottish Government needs legislative powers to control the growth and impact of these machines, and we believe the UK government should devolve these powers in full. The problem of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals is linked to the proliferation of betting shops in some communities and so we will continue to argue for Scotland to have full responsibility for the regulation of gambling.

The SNP Scottish Government is providing resources for financial health check-ups to help pensioners and those on low incomes to make the most of their money and to secure the best energy tariffs. SNP MPs will demand that the UK government follows the lead of the Scottish Government.

Successive Westminster governments have cost consumers billions of pounds by failing to make the energy market work for families. The time for change is long overdue. We want bills reduced and fairness and transparency in the system.

SNP MPs will press the UK government to:

- put in place an energy price cap on standard variable tariffs, ensuring a fair deal for customers and energy suppliers;
- introduce a new duty to be placed on energy companies to set out a clear timetable to reduce the number of people on prepayment meters;
- immediately implement the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendations on metering to reduce costs for households;
- put in place a requirement for energy companies to prioritise the roll-out of smart meters to those households at risk of fuel poverty
- introduce financial health checks to help people switch to the lowest tariffs and provide advice on reducing energy use; and
- take new action, alongside Ofgem, to identify those at risk from fuel poverty, with new legislation to ensure these groups are on the lowest energy tariff possible starting with those eligible for the Cold Weather Payment.

The loss of local post offices threatens the economic well-being of rural communities all over Scotland.

SNP MPs will seek presumptions against the closure of rural post offices – similar to the presumption against closing rural schools delivered by the Scottish Government – and seek to expand the services available, including local banking.

STANDING UP FOR RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES

As the UK government embarks on Brexit negotiations, it's more important than ever that Scotland's farming, fishing, food production and forestry sectors have a strong voice to defend their interests.

The SNP always has and always will champion rural Scotland. We will be a strong voice for our farmers and crofters, our food and drink sector, our fishing and fish processing industries, our billion-pound forestry sector – and all the tens of thousands of jobs, businesses and livelihoods that depend on a strong, sustainable and productive rural economy.

An end to the UK government's great rural robbery

Without Scotland's historically low average farm payments, the UK would not have been eligible for additional EU 'convergence uplift' funding. Not only has the UK government refused to pass on additional funding it has received to Scottish farmers, they have now broken their promise to review how they allocate farm funding in the UK. As a result, farmers in Scotland have been short-changed to the tune of around £190 million. SNP MPs will continue to demand that this vital support to Scotland's farmers is passed on. We will also press for clarity and certainty over existing funding. Forestry grants for 2019 and beyond must be guaranteed now to allow investment and planting decisions to go ahead.

Funding for our Less Favoured Areas grant scheme in 2019 – a vital support for our most fragile farmers and crofters – must be met in full.

Fighting off the Tory power and money grab

Before the EU Referendum, the UK government promised to match current EU funding, which is worth half a billion pounds every year to Scotland's rural and remote communities, "without a shadow of a doubt". Now they refuse to provide any guarantees over funding beyond Brexit, and want a UK wide funding mechanism. With a 16 per cent share of current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funding, there is no doubt that Scotland would lose out.

Just as we will expect all powers over agriculture and rural policy to be repatriated to Scotland, there should be no question that we should have full control of EU agricultural funding following Brexit.

SNP MPs will fight any and all Tory attempts to grab Scotland's powers and funding for Westminster.

A better deal for our fishing industry

The SNP always will stand up for Scottish fishing, demanding a productive and sustainable approach to fisheries management in the future, to ensure a thriving industry both on and offshore, whether we are in or out the EU.

The SNP has been consistent over many years in our criticisms of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and very clear about our intentions to see it scrapped or fundamentally reformed.

And in the SNP Scottish Government's paper on 'Scotland's Place in Europe', our proposals would have meant we would be able to leave the CFP while all of the UK could continue to benefit from the EU Single Market.

The Tories failed our fishing industry in the 1970s, dismissing the livelihoods of our coastal communities as 'expendable'. Under the CFP, the UK government has regularly traded away our interests and put those of fishing communities elsewhere in the UK ahead of those in Scotland.

Now they are gearing up to sell out our fishing interests in Brexit negotiations. SNP MPs will fight against any attempts to sell out Scotland's fishing communities, and we will press for Scottish Ministers to be fully involved in all Brexit negotiations.

Europe is the leading export destination for Scotland's fish and seafood exports – particularly Scottish salmon. SNP MPs will press the UK government to protect Scotland's place in the Single Market. We will also seek guarantees for permanent residence from the UK government for the 3,000 EU nationals working in fish processing.

Fishing is fully devolved and whatever future Scotland chooses, we will expect all powers over policy to be repatriated to Scotland when the UK leaves the EU. SNP MPs will press for EU fisheries funding to be matched and transferred to Scotland in full.

Improving rural connectivity

At Westminster the SNP successfully secured a UK government commitment to a Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband of 10Mbps. In the next parliamentary term SNP MPs will call for the USO to cover up to 30Mbps with an appropriate update mechanism to ensure that rural areas are not left behind.

Some of our more rural areas remain so called mobile "not spots" – where there is little or limited mobile phone signal. SNP MPs will support the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity to host a summit on mobile "not spots", inviting service providers and the UK government to put forward concrete actions for improving mobile connectivity across Scotland

SNP MPs will call on the UK government to ensure that future mobile spectrum licensing meets key tests on geographical and population coverage, with a 'rural areas first' policy for new spectrum deployments.

What the SNP has achieved for rural Scotland

We are committed to creating sustainable rural communities, where young people can live, work and prosper. That means building more homes, delivering broadband to all and supporting our farmers, crofters and fishermen.

Here's are just some of the ways the SNP Scottish Government is supporting rural Scotland.

- We are investing in digital connectivity, with £400 million to deliver superfast broadband to 95 per cent of properties across Scotland by the end of 2017 and we will reach 100 per cent by 2021.
- We have legislated to create a presumption against rural school closures.
- We are building new homes and refurbishing existing properties through the £25 million Rural Housing Fund, and delivering 100 affordable homes in island communities through a dedicated £5 million fund.
- We are supporting around 11,500 farmers and crofters annually to help sustain fragile and remote rural communities.

- We have invested over £100 million in fishing projects, infrastructure and businesses, creating and safeguarding over 8,000 jobs.
- We have invested a record £1 billion in vessels, ports and ferry services since 2007.
- Fares on lifeline ferry services have been frozen until 2017 for passengers, cars and commercial vehicles.
- We have reduced ferry fares on routes in the Clyde and Hebrides through the roll-out of the Road Equivalent Tariff.
- Residents of Caithness and north-west Sutherland, Colonsay, Islay, Jura, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles are eligible for a 50 per cent discount on air fares.
- We have awarded over £100 million grants to food and drink businesses to increase investment and safeguard jobs.

Find out more at www.snp.org/record

We will press the UK government to provide appropriate support and resources for Scotland's Mobile Action Plan and also to ensure that Scotland does not miss out on access to EU wide regulation in future, including plans to improve and increase fixed and mobile connectivity throughout the EU.

Ending unfair delivery charges

Consumers living in the Highlands and Islands, and in some of Scotland's most remote communities, face unfair additional delivery charges. SNP MPs will call on the UK government to step in to regulate for fair delivery charges for rural communities.

MODERNISING UK DEMOCRACY

Our democratic institutions should be representative of and accountable to the people they represent. We support an electoral system where every vote counts equally and where 16 and 17 year olds, and EU citizens resident here, have a vote. And we believe in a fair and level playing field in our elections, for the integrity and health of our democracy.

Making Westminster work for the people

The SNP will oppose the exorbitant cost associated with the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster.

SNP MPs will continue to oppose the undemocratic House of Lords and vote for its abolition.

We will work to ensure that there is as much support as possible for disabled people, and people of all classes, races and gender identities to stand for election to the House of Commons.

Making Westminster more democratic

We will vote for the replacement of the first-past-the-post system with proportional representation. The SNP supports the Single Transferable Vote, a system that makes sure every vote and every part of the country counts.

We trust our young people. That's why, where we have had the powers to do so, the SNP have granted 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote – in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, and in Scottish local authority and Scottish Parliament elections. We will look to introduce our own legislative proposals at Westminster, working with other

parties to give 16 and 17 year olds a vote in all elections. And we will support extending the franchise to citizens of other EU countries, resident in the UK, for elections to the UK Parliament.

The gap between the voting age population and those registered to vote is greater than it has ever been in the post-war era. More must be done to get people to join the electoral register. We support the recommendations of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Democratic Participation to get the 'missing millions' onto the electoral register. SNP MPs will urge the UK government to implement the recommendations, working alongside the Scottish Government and the other devolved administrations of the UK.

A fair and level playing field in our elections

Ensuring a fair and level playing field is essential to the integrity of, and public confidence in, elections and our democracy.

SNP MPs will support new powers for the Electoral Commission, providing them with legal authority to investigate offences under the Representation of the People Act 1983. We will also support the Electoral Commission's call to make higher sanctioning powers available to them, increasing the maximum penalty from £20,000 to £1,500,000.

Lobbying and charities

We support strict rules on lobbying and enhanced registration thresholds for campaigners but we oppose the restrictions on the activities of campaigning charities. We will push for those parts of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 which have been used to gag campaigning organisations to be removed.

DEFENCE, SECURITY AND GLOBAL PEACE-KEEPING

The Tory government has presided over cuts to the defence estate in Scotland, while committing billions to a new generation of Trident nuclear weapons. SNP MPs will oppose the erosion of the defence estate in Scotland. We will stand up for Scottish bases, regiments and our veterans. We will press for investment in conventional defence. And we will oppose the immoral and expensive Trident nuclear weapons system at every opportunity.

Scrapping Trident

SNP MPs will build a cross-party coalition to scrap Trident as quickly and safely as possible.

The Tory Chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Crispin Blunt, has calculated the total cost of the next generation of Trident at £179 billion over its lifetime. CND estimate the cost may even be as high as £205 billion. We will vote for that money to be spent on our public services – like our NHS, schools and expanded free childcare.

At Westminster we will press the UK government to meet their international obligations with regard to multilateral nuclear disarmament.

SNP MPs will support long-term investment in HMNB Faslane as a conventional military base.

Investing in conventional defence

SNP MPs will hold the UK government to its promise on building the new Type-26 Frigates in Scotland.

SNP MPs will continue to campaign to protect Scotland's bases – including Glencorse Barracks in Penicuik, Redford Barracks in Edinburgh, Fort George near Inverness, and MoD Caledonia in Rosyth – from closure. We will press the UK government to engage fully with the Scottish Government, local authorities and local communities as a matter of urgency.

Scotland's distinct defence needs are not being met by the current UK government's defence policy. SNP MPs will support a new Strategic Defence and Security Review, in order to assess the need, as a matter of priority, for permanent basing of ocean-going conventional patrol vessels in Scotland. We will press to ensure that the nine multi-role Maritime Patrol Aircraft on order reach full operational capacity at the earliest possible stage, and support a review into the need for additional aircraft.

Fighting international crime and terrorism

International co-operation is essential to keep Scotland and the rest of the UK safe from the threats of organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism. SNP MPs will call for continued co-operation on detecting, disrupting and detaining criminals across borders through Europol. We will seek assurances that our law enforcement agencies will continue to have the same level of access to Europol as they currently enjoy.

We will oppose any moves that would seek to use security co-operation as a bargaining chip in Brexit or trade negotiations with our European friends and neighbours.

Supporting our veterans

Far too often, the UK government has let down our service personnel and veterans. The SNP will act to ensure the UK government prioritises the duty of care to service personnel, veterans and their families, especially in the event of a loss of a serving relative, and we will press the UK government to put the Armed Forces representative body on a statutory footing.

To provide practical support for veterans requiring social care, the Scottish Government changed the rules to ensure the War Disablement Pension is exempt from the assessment of income – meaning our veterans get the help they need and keep the full value of this pension. We believe this approach

should be taken to all social security benefits, so that those who have been injured in the service of our country get the full value of their War Disablement Pension and we will press the UK government to adopt this approach.

Getting a better deal for the taxpayer

The UK government's own report says that the Royal Navy's fleet is being depleted because of a "vicious cycle" of poor planning and cost overruns that is wasting taxpayer money and undermining the viability of the shipbuilding industry. SNP MPs will continue to call for the publication of the long-overdue National Shipbuilding Strategy.

The SNP will call for greater transparency in UK defence spending with a full breakdown of spending by nation and region in the UK, including all procurement and small and medium sized enterprise (SME) expenditure and a full breakdown of component costs of all major projects by location.

SNP MPs will press for more Scottish SMEs in Scotland to benefit from the manufacturing supply chain for major defence projects.

Arms exports

SNP MPs have led the calls for resolution of the destructive conflict in South Yemen. Given the clear evidence that munitions supplied by the United Kingdom have been used in breach of international law, there should be an immediate ban on arms sales to Saudi Arabia pending proper investigation.

And we will urge the UK government to immediately halt all military support and arms sales to regimes suspected of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Our place in the world

Building on the experience of the Scottish Government's partnership with the United Nations to empower the women of Syria and promote Scotland as a centre for training of female peacemakers, the SNP will continue to support UN Security Council Resolution 1325 reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Use of banned weapons against civilian populations should be investigated by the United Nations. If the Security Council is unable to act, we believe the General Assembly should take the initiative and if the evidence supports it those responsible – including state actors – should be brought before the International Criminal Court.

SNP MPs will continue to argue that the struggle against Daesh must be pursued by more than military means and must include the battle of ideas which demonstrate that international justice and civic tolerance can be achieved without recourse to violence and barbarity. SNP MPs will urge the UK government to redouble its efforts to bring about a political resolution, through the UN Security Council in accordance with its Resolution 2254, to end the six year conflict in Syria.

The SNP will uphold the international agreement which led to the end of the Republic of Iran's nuclear weapons programme. Any attempt to renege on the agreement in terms of the reintegration of Iran into the international community and the relaxation of sanctions would be to undo one of the greatest achievements in peace building of recent years.

The SNP will continue to work with international partners to progress a lasting peace settlement in the Middle East, pursuing a two state solution for Israel and Palestine.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Renewable energy is a Scottish success story. We are determined to build on that success. We will fight climate change, while keeping energy bills down and creating jobs, by continuing to champion low cost renewable energy.

Standing up for Scotland's renewables industry

Scotland has a wealth of onshore and offshore renewable energy potential which, if unlocked, can support thousands more jobs and further economic growth.

However, this has been undermined by the UK government's ideologically-driven cuts to support for renewables. SNP MPs will work to ensure low cost green energy schemes get the long term certainty needed to support further development and reductions in cost.

SNP MPs will press the Westminster government to include onshore wind, the lowest cost renewable energy technology, in its industrial strategy. They will also demand an increased focus on offshore wind, tidal energy and wave power.

Our MPs will support the development of wind and other renewable energy projects in the Northern and Western Isles – and a clear timescale for the delivery of the electricity interconnectors needed in the islands.

The SNP will champion the interests of island and mainland communities to ensure they benefit financially from renewable energy projects and Scotland's outstanding natural resources.

SNP MPs will work to protect Scotland's place in Europe's energy markets and funding programmes – ensuring continued funding and cooperation with the EU for Scotland's renewable energy sector. The European Union is set to establish a €320 million investment fund to support wave and tidal power, in which Scotland is a world leader.

We will also seek to build a regulatory environment which supports investment in new energy storage schemes, including pumped hydro and batteries, allowing Scotland to maximise the benefits of our outstanding resources and build an energy system for the 21st century.

Carbon Capture and Storage

We want Scotland to be a leader in the development of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology, which has the potential to create thousands of jobs in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and beyond, while fighting climate change.

Scotland's oil and gas sector remains uniquely well placed to develop CCS on an industrial scale – despite the UK government reneging on its commitment to a £1 billion project set to benefit Peterhead Power Station. We will work to ensure Scotland is not denied this opportunity by working to secure the funding needed to develop this vital technology here in Scotland.

Transmission charges

The UK's punitive transmission charging regime forces renewable and conventional energy generators in Scotland to pay huge fees to connect to the electricity grid, while power stations in the south of England receive subsidies.

This unfair system contributed to the early closure of the power stations at Longannet in Fife and Cockenzie in East Lothian, with the loss of hundreds of local jobs, and must be overhauled.

The SNP will continue to demand the reform of the punitive transmission charging regime, which has come to symbolise the UK government's repeated failure to deliver energy policies which meet Scotland's needs.

Nuclear power

The UK government is determined to push ahead with the Hinkley Point C nuclear plant in the south of England, which will cost at least £18 billion to build and will result in huge costs for taxpayers and consumers. We are opposed to these plans, which have already come close to collapse. If built, electricity generated by Hinkley C will be sold for more than twice the current retail price. SNP MPs will hold the UK government to account over its support for the Hinkley white elephant.

Working with our neighbours to fight climate change

Scotland has already exceeded a world-leading target to reduce emissions by 42 per cent by 2020. The Scottish Government has now produced a draft Climate Change Plan, with tougher targets for future years, ensuring Scotland continues to set an example for other countries to follow. SNP MPs will press the UK government to match Scotland's commitment and ambition.

SNP MPs will work to prevent the threat of Brexit being used by the UK to reduce commitments to tackle climate change or to undermine the European Union's efforts to fight climate change and protect the environment. Scotland has played an important role in these areas, and has also directly benefited from the EU's work. We are determined to safeguard the advances which have already been made, while continuing to protect and enhance our environment in the years ahead. We will defend the interests of environmental scientists from across the EU who contribute so much to the success of Scotland's research institutes.

Animal welfare

We will oppose any relaxation of the laws on fox-hunting.

Protecting Scotland's environment and tackling climate change

Scotland is a world leader in tackling climate change – and the SNP Scottish Government is taking important steps to protect our natural environment for generations to come.

- We have exceeded our world-leading target of reducing emissions by 42 per cent by 2020 – six years early. We have already produced a draft Climate Change Plan, with tougher targets for future years.
- We have blocked underground coal gasification and a moratorium means fracking cannot take place in Scotland.
- Scotland has exceeded its target to produce 50 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2015 – helping to fight climate change and create jobs too.
- With the support of the SNP Scottish Government, the low carbon and renewables sector in Scotland supported 58,500 jobs in 2015 – up by a third since 2014.
- Scotland's household recycling rate was 44.2 per cent in 2015 – up from around 32 per cent for municipal waste in 2007.
- Scotland is showing international leadership on moving to a more circular economy, where we keep valuable resources in circulation for as long as possible. The Scottish Government has won the Award for Circular Economy Governments, Cities and Regions at the World Economic Forum summit at Davos.

Find out more at www.snp.org/record

A COMPASSIONATE COUNTRY

Extreme poverty, inequality, climate change, the plight of refugees fleeing war and repression, and the humanitarian impact of disasters and emergencies are global issues on which we have a moral duty to act. A strong team of SNP MPs at Westminster will make sure that when it comes to their humanitarian and moral obligations, the UK government will not be let off the hook.

International development

SNP MPs will hold the UK government to its commitment of spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income on international development. We will seek to ensure overseas aid funding meets the internationally-recognised Development Assistance Criteria and does not undermine public services in developing countries.

We believe that overseas aid funding must not be used for defence or intelligence related expenditure. We will urge the UK government to ensure development programmes have human rights and the rights of women at their heart.

The world's poorest and most vulnerable countries are the least responsible for climate change, yet face its biggest impacts. We will maintain the position of a Climate Justice Spokesperson, and call on the UK government to match the approach of the Scottish Government with a dedicated Climate Justice Fund.

In 2015, Scotland's First Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government would be one of the first anywhere in the world

to commit to meeting the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development, both at home and overseas. The Global Goals should be a key focus for international development policy and spending, and the particular role of women and girls in development must be recognised. The Department for International Development should be maintained as a stand-alone department of Government with its own Secretary of State.

SNP MPs will continue to support the EU in the pursuit of the objectives outlined in the EU Global Strategy, particularly in the cross-cutting themes of Human Rights, Women, Peace and Security and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

As new trading relationships are formed, the SNP will back policies which support development and ensure that the UK's trade arrangements with developing countries prioritise poverty reduction. Given Scotland's long and enduring relationship with Malawi, the SNP will continue to call for the UK government to renegotiate a new, fair tax treaty with Malawi.

Ethical trade

As the UK sets its own trade policy, it must be done responsibly and ethically. ActionAid has ranked the UK joint worst in the world for having the largest number of treaties with developing countries which most restrict the rights of poor countries to tax UK companies operating there. The SNP will urge the UK government to develop a trade and development policy that outlines how the UK will support development as part of its trade with developing countries.

The SNP Scottish Government has committed to "always consider the human rights implications of its engagement with countries and business" and to ensure that "investment agreements should only be signed where appropriate due diligence, including on the human rights record of companies involved, has been undertaken." The SNP Scottish Government is now engaging with Amnesty International to put these commitments into practice. SNP MPs will demand that the UK government follows the lead of the Scottish Government.

Championing LGBTI rights globally

SNP MPs will support the establishment of a special envoy to promote the rights of LGBTI people throughout the world, as an integral part of UK foreign policy - helping to alleviate the discrimination and persecution faced by LGBTI people in Chechnya and across the world.

Meeting our humanitarian and moral obligations

We believe that the UK government has a responsibility – through action and leadership – to 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.

The UK government's response to the refugee and migration crisis has fallen far short of their humanitarian and moral duty. The decision to close the Dubs Scheme for unaccompanied children – putting them at risk of exploitation – is shameful. SNP MPs will back an immediate reversal to ensure safe and legal routes are open. In addition, the Dublin Regulation process needs to be simplified, reformed, and properly implemented so that those with family in the UK can be more easily reunited with them.

SNP MPs will urge the UK government to take action on the recommendations of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees including implementing a National Refugee Integration Strategy that ensures all agencies coordinate support for refugees and helps refugees take part in, and contribute to, our society.

There has been a worrying trend in the rhetoric coming from the current UK government as it relates to those seeking protection. The SNP will always defend the system of international protection of refugees that provides a place of safety for those facing serious harm or persecution. We need to ensure that the system of assessing asylum claims is thorough and fair and treats all passing through it with dignity. Those who have waited six months for an asylum decision should be able to use their skills and to support themselves by

taking up work – as most EU countries allow. We will continue to oppose the continued cuts to support that have led to asylum seekers becoming destitute.

We need to fundamentally change the UK government's system for housing asylum seekers. The disgraceful condition of the housing provided and the contracts the UK government has with providers have been roundly criticised by all parties. The Scottish Government's work to resettle Syrian refugees has shown how people can be supported and welcomed into communities and should be used as basis for settling asylum seekers in the future. We will urge the UK government to work with the devolved administrations, local authorities and local communities to provide services for asylum seekers rather than use private contractors who have profit rather than people as their prime motive.

There needs to be reform to the detention and asylum system for LGBTI individuals escaping countries where homosexuality is still criminalised, removing unfair and invasive demands for 'proof' of sexuality or gender identity.



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