

DELIVERING HOME RULE FOR SCOTLAND

The SNP believes that decisions about Scotland's future – about our economy and society – are best taken by the people of Scotland: the more powers we have in Scotland the more we can achieve for the people who live here.

That is why we campaigned for a Scottish Parliament and voted for the Scotland Act 1998. It is why we supported the limited extension of devolution in the Scotland Act 2012, and called for a far more substantial package of powers at that point.

The same principle underpins our continued support for independence and was at the heart of our campaign for a Yes vote in September 2014.

During the referendum, the parties campaigning for a No vote promised the people of Scotland substantial new powers for our parliament, amounting to real Home Rule, maximum devolution and as close to federalism as was possible. It is our intention to hold them to that promise and the more SNP MPs elected in May, the greater our ability to deliver the strong package of effective devolution that people in Scotland want and need to build a fairer and more prosperous country.

We welcome the proposals set out in the Smith Commission, as far as they go. The further watering down of the agreed proposals, by the UK government, is unacceptable. There should be no effective veto for UK ministers on the exercise of the various new powers, in particular over the welfare system.

We share the view of many organisations across Scotland that the package, as it stands, does not enable us to deliver fully either the greater social justice or the powerhouse economy that our country demands. As the STUC has said, "there is not enough" in the Smith Commission recommendations "to empower the Scottish Parliament to tackle inequality in Scotland".

And, we agree with the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) "that anything less than wholesale devolution of welfare would be a real missed opportunity to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities".

The Smith Commission proposals were, in many respects, a missed opportunity. Decisions about more than 70 per cent of Scottish taxes and 85 per cent of current UK welfare spending in Scotland will stay at Westminster.

Instead of limited and unambitious proposals on tax powers, we should have a greater ability to generate economic growth, deliver more employment opportunities and support family incomes with the devolution of additional taxes.

Instead of leaving decisions on wages and employment with Westminster, devolving these key areas to Scotland means we could ensure that people in Scotland receive fair pay for a day's work. We could bring together, more effectively, skills development and employment support – enabling us to get more people into well-paid and rewarding employment, closer to home.