

More support for hard-pressed households

Using the current powers of devolution, the SNP Scottish Government has taken forward policies designed to support households through the recession. For example, we have frozen the Council Tax, removed prescription charges and road tolls, increased free nursery provision, provided free school meals in the early years of primary school and reintroduced free university education.

Taken together, these measures have saved people across Scotland hundreds of pounds. That includes pensioners saving an average £250 a year from concessionary travel or people with long term illnesses an average of £104 on prescription charges. A vote for the SNP in May is a vote to protect these gains. As well as certainty on Council Tax bills, we have also placed limits on increases in rail fares and water charges. Through tough and effective regulation of Scottish Water we've been able to deliver real-terms cuts in water bills. In the same way we wish to see a more robust approach to energy bills and believe Ofgem should be empowered to enforce price reductions to reflect lower wholesale costs as a result of lower oil prices. Consumers must see the benefit of lower wholesale costs in their bills, with savings of as much as £100 a year. The Scottish Government and UK government should have joint oversight of Ofgem.

A fair deal for older Scots

We will continue to support older Scots, by retaining key policies such as the free bus pass and free personal care and we'll back the continuation of the free TV license.

At Westminster, we will call for the pension triple lock to be retained, ensuring the State Pension increases

each year in line with inflation, wages or by 2.5 per cent, whichever is higher. And, we will support for a Single Tier Pension rate of £160 per week.

We will oppose the abolition of Savings Credit – introduced to reward people for saving for their pension. We believe that there should be a review of plans to increase the state pension age beyond 66. And, given Scotland's colder climate, we will also resist any attempts to end the winter fuel allowance.

We will continue to support the roll out of auto enrolment for occupational pensions and also back, in principle, proposals to give pensioners more flexibility over their pension pots. However, we must ensure adequate levels of advice and support. We will work with pensioner groups to identify and target unfair, hidden pension charges.

Fairness in the welfare system

Westminster has presided over a relentless undermining of our social security system. The SNP is determined to target the worst and most damaging welfare changes introduced by the current government and to address issues such as zero-hour contracts, which create unacceptable levels of uncertainty and financial insecurity for often low paid workers.

We will support efforts in the next parliament to end unfair and exploitative zero-hour contracts, with a time-limited consultation, which fully involves businesses and the trade unions, to agree the most effective way forward.

SNP MPs will vote for the complete abolition of the bedroom tax. This will mean that the £35 million that the Scottish Government spends on mitigating its impact will