



**FOR A *GREENER***  
***FAIRER* COUNCIL**

**OUTER HEBRIDES GREENS MANIFESTO**

**COUNCIL ELECTION 2022**

For a Greener, Fairer Council. Delivering for our communities.



<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>GREEN PRIORITIES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OUTER HEBRIDES GREENS MANIFESTO</b>	<b>4</b>
Green Homes	4
Transport	5
Climate Crisis	6
Circular Economy	6
Planning and Place	7
Community Wealth Building	7
Land use and land reform	8
Tourism	8
Schools and Education, Health and Mental Health	9
Agriculture	10
Energy, Support local business	11
Crofting, The new Green vision	12
The Green Wave	13



# Outer Hebrides Manifesto 2022

## INTRODUCTION

Greens in Government have won Green policies and investments that not only *WILL* happen but are ALREADY happening, eg, free bus travel for the Under 22's. Green councillors in the Western Isles will work to make sure policies are delivered locally where needed most. Eg - Free ferry travel for Under 22's, ferries are our buses!

We will work across party lines for people and the planet, people and place before political parties.

## GREEN PRIORITIES

Green Councillors will work towards:

- **Having Islanders represented on CalMac's Board and other public bodies, to provide vital lived experience in decision making and service provision. Lifelines services are called so for a reason; they provide vital links and services to the Western Isles. Therefore, it is only right that representatives from the communities who depend on them have a say in how the services are run.**
- **Support Local Air Traffic Control operating in the Highlands & Islands. We will continue to support the Trade Unions in their negotiations with HIAL to keep locally based approaches to Air Traffic Control in the Highlands and Islands. We will continue to fight against the downgrading of Benbecula Airport.**
- **Fight for more Affordable Warm Homes for local people, particularly good quality homes for rent.**
- **Improving active travel and public transport including free travel for U22's on our ferry network, ferries are islanders buses!**
- **Policies and projects which address the climate crisis, provide good jobs, and create a people-centred just transition to the new economy.**
- **Going beyond recycling, to build the circular economy.**
- **What you need... where you need it.**

**A new Green vision for Island communities.**

# THE GREEN MANIFESTO

## GREEN HOMES

Young people are being forced out of the islands because of the cost of housing and land. As a recent example, a croft in Harris was recently put up for sale at offers over £1.5m, completely unaffordable to any young people on the island.

The only way to guarantee affordable housing long-term is to build homes for rental. There are now experienced builders, small businesses based in the Highlands and Islands, who have a proven track record in being able to build low carbon, designer built houses, designed to minimise fuel bills.

The Greens' national Co-operation Deal will lead the way with at least £1.8bn invested in making Scotland's homes greener, warmer and more efficient, and Greens will help secure the Western Isles' part of that investment.

Greens in government will deliver rent controls and new rights for tenants. Greens on the Council will campaign to support a more localised look on issues and solutions for the region.

Green Councillors will work;

- To ensure that more publicly-owned high quality property is available for young people and families. We will push for all new publicly-owned housing be built to Passivhaus standards similar to Cnoc Soilleir to reduce fuel poverty, increase quality of life and help the Western Isles meet its climate targets. We should follow Scandinavian standards to build homes future-proofed, rather than have to pay to retrofit insulation.
- To support the control of short-term lets of properties which would otherwise be suitable as homes for local people.
- To support organisations like Tighean Innse Gall to provide more high quality homes.
- To ensure more homes are built in Uist and Benbecula to meet the demands of local people.



## **TRANSPORT**

There is often no choice in the Western Isles but to use a private car due to the geography of the region, but a significant and growing number of people would leave their car behind if the alternatives were more attractive. We need to cater for them, to reduce pollution and make it easier for essential services to get around. Cyclists and pedestrians need to be separated from buses, cars and lorries.

Every driver knows that. Pedestrians and cyclists certainly do!

Green Councillors will work to:

- **Support Local Air Traffic Control operating in the Highlands & Islands.** We will continue to support the Trade Unions in their negotiations with HIAL to keep locally based approaches to Air Traffic Control in the Highlands and Islands. We will continue to fight against the downgrading of Benbecula Airport and protect local jobs.
- **Increase active travel.** We will establish priorities for building safe walking and cycling paths on the islands. (lochdar pathway Project) Thanks to the Greens Co-operation Agreement 10% of the national travel budget will be allocated to active travel – three times the current budget. We will work with Council officials, Sustrans, HiTrans, and Transport Scotland to help create effective plans in order to ensure the islands get best use of this investment.
- **Contribute** to the national Fair Fares Review to ensure the unique issues faced by islanders are represented when considering concessionary schemes for bus, air and ferry. Greens in government have already implemented free bus journeys for under 22s from January 2022, the same **must** apply to ferries, they are islanders buses!
- **Deliver more ‘Safe to School’ initiatives.** The aim is to ensure every child who lives within two miles of any school is able to walk or cycle safely to school should they choose to do so.
- **Expand Electric Vehicle infrastructure.** The Western Isles needs huge infrastructure expansion to make EVs a practical choice.

## **THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Green policies are never more needed and wanted than here and now.

As we all emerge from the Covid pandemic, only to be faced with the looming climate crisis, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Greens in Government offer the power to enact long-overdue changes to tackle our greatest long-term problems.

Social inequality and the breakdown of our environment go hand in hand. To tackle both, we need effort on all levels of government and all levels of society. The people of the Western Isles deserve more engaging local politics - to be listened to, empowered, and given the power and finance to enact the changes they need to see to protect the coastlines and sustainability of the islands.

Green Councillors will work for policies which address the climate crisis and social inequality at the same time – planet and people.

## **CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

The Western Isles has a brilliant opportunity to be amongst the pioneering UK and European councils developing a local **Circular Economy**. We aim to move from a system where resources are dug up, used once and then buried in landfill, to one where materials are constantly re-used and repurposed. This is a priority project for us, with potential zero cost and high benefit for every aspect of our local economy.

Green Councillors will work:

- To build the **Circular Economy** within the Western Isles, collaborating with local businesses and agencies in preparation for the upcoming **Circular Economy Bill from the Cooperation Agreement**.
- To launch an **Outer Hebrides Circular Economy Alliance** brand, to join together and promote local businesses, community projects and individuals who participate in the circular economy. We will encourage ways of using “waste” - such as food scraps and cardboard from restaurants going to composting for local growers, which in turn grow high quality produce for local restaurants.



## **PLANNING AND PLACE**

The planning system should deliver positive benefit for people, wildlife and the natural environment. We need a planning system based on sustainability, climate resilience, carbon restoration and protecting and restoring biodiversity and natural habitats. The planning system must manage development in a way that creates vibrant communities and healthy environments.

Green Councillors will work;

- **to bring vacant and derelict land and property back into productive use**, in cases where there is clear land banking/neglect.
- to support the introduction of **20 minute neighbourhoods** into planning decisions and to liaise with the relevant bodies to ensure their introduction. Our ultimate aim should be to ensure that people can access the services they need.... where they want them.

## **COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING**

The last 10 years of Tory austerity have been devastating PEOPLE. The pandemic has made inequalities worse. We believe that community projects which patch up failings in government policy should be supported and rewarded, rather than being allowed to burn out. We also believe that people in communities know what's best for their community, and so should be at the centre of future decision-making.

Green Councillors will work to;

- **Support community projects which were established in the pandemic, to keep them going and to expand.** The problems created by the pandemic continue, so it's important to keep these groups running. They need support to prevent their volunteers burning out, and to find long-term solutions to keep them viable for as long as they're needed.
- **Prepare the islands for The Co-operation Agreement's Community Wealth Building Bill**, which will prioritise a people-centred approach to local economic development, redirecting wealth back into the local economy, and decentralising control and benefits into the hands of local people.
- **Support local social enterprise**; maximise community benefits through spending; increase fair work practises; grow the social, ecological and economic value from land and property; ensure that flows of investment work for local people.
- **Support and strengthen Community Councils** who do an amazing amount of unpaid work. We will make sure they are properly funded, including having their costs covered, like insurance.



## **LAND USE AND LAND REFORM**

We believe that the people of the islands need more opportunities for access to land. Many of the other changes which we set out in this manifesto can't happen if people don't have even small parcels of land/green space **within 20 minutes** of their homes. Lack of access to land is a fundamental problem where many of our greatest challenges stem from. Because of this, we align with the principles of Scotland's land reform movement.

Green Councillors will;

- **Represent the Comhairle in the wide-ranging consultation on land reform.** We will contribute to and support the **Land Reform Bill**, due to be introduced by the end of 2023, specified in the **Cooperation Agreement**.

## **TOURISM**

Tourism growth in the Outer Hebrides has been steadily growing with many communities feeling overwhelmed due to the lack of infrastructure resulting in little public benefit.

**Communities must benefit** from tourism rather than it being 'done to' them; therefore, communities must have a lead role in tourism development. Tourism must work within ecological and human/social carrying capacities of the regions/areas. These carrying capacities need to be defined and used to develop reasonable limits to tourism in any locality.

Communities in tourism areas must remain as **living communities** and not just be destinations. **Housing in tourism hotspots** must be protected to ensure availability for **local families**.

Green Councillors will;

- Promote the Outer Hebrides as a high quality "slow tourism" destination.
- Work to **Introduce a Transient Visitor Levy** in the Outer Hebrides. Money raised will be ring-fenced to help alleviate tourist-related infrastructure pressure – i.e. repair of roads and potholes; public toilets; waste disposal facilities. All of this will improve visitor experience while also benefitting communities in tourist hotspots.





## **SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION**

We agree that Scottish education needs to deliver excellence in terms of ensuring children and young people develop a broad range of skills and capacities at the highest levels, while also ensuring equity, so that every child and young person can thrive and have the best opportunity to succeed, regardless of their social circumstances or additional needs. The Greens' Co-operation Agreement will deliver 150 new teachers to the Highlands.

Green Councillors will work to ensure;

- **Additional Support Needs are properly funded**, reversing recent trends. Charities supporting children with additional needs also need support.
- **School buildings are made more energy efficient**, releasing more money to be spent on education.

## **HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH**

The Pandemic has exposed how stretched the NHS is. What we can directly do now to lighten the load, is invest more on preventative health initiatives - making sure everyone has access to good nutrition; access to green spaces; outdoor exercise opportunities; vitamin D supplements, and lower pollution.

We have consulted with local health professionals successfully practicing the NHS' Realistic Medicine ethos to collate these issues and solutions.

Green councillors will work towards;

- **Ensuring the Good Food Nation Bill** works for the interests of islanders, Improve access to good quality food; support local growing initiatives, and help link these to the people who would benefit; increase the number, quality and accessibility of green spaces.
- **Greening the NHS.** Healthcare contributes to 5% of Scotland's CO2 output through inhalers, anaesthetic gases, and the travel of patients to clinics and GP surgeries. There is also a lot of plastic waste and medicine waste. We will work with healthcare professionals to find solutions to reduce these impacts.
- Increasing **Active Travel. Exercise improves health.**
- **Rural Healthcare.** Greens support parity of provision for people living in rural areas, including the right to have a chaperone for hospital visits on the mainland or to Stornoway.
- **Liaising with organisations** like NatureScot and to create Greenspace projects which improve mental health through access to nature.



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## **AGRICULTURE**

We have recently felt the effects of a fragile food supply chain. We believe that the Outer Hebrides can and should be far more self-sustaining than it is. The Outer Hebrides is also well-placed to be a leader in quality sustainable produce, while integrating production with the upcoming **Circular Economy**.

Greens will;

- **Double the area of land under organic management.** This is a Scotland-wide aim, which we will enact in the Outer Hebrides with guidance from the upcoming **Organic Food and Farming Action Plan** from the **Cooperation Agreement**.
- **Represent the Outer Hebrides' interests in the 2023 Agriculture Bill.** This is set out in the Cooperation Agreement to deliver a new support framework that will include delivering climate mitigation and adaptation, nature restoration and high quality food production; integration of enhanced conditionality against public benefits, with targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and low emissions production; increased equality of opportunity, improving business resilience, efficiency and profitability.
- **Climate resilience** – which is achieved through the restoration of the natural environment – will provide landscapes with the necessary protection to withstand the pressures of a changing weather system, while simultaneously enabling efficient carbon sequestration and storage through natural processes. This is as equally important to achieving net zero and cannot be overlooked in measures to offset carbon. Biodiversity restoration and the carbon potential of well-managed habitats, including soils, grasslands and hedgerows, must be balanced carefully with land use strategies for decarbonising.

## ENERGY

The Outer Hebrides is well-placed to be a world leader in renewable energy. With our wealth of skills and natural resources, there is no good reason why we can't maximise benefit for the region in a fair and equal way. We will scrutinise renewable scheme proposals and ensure that they consider communities and the environment.

Green Councillors will work to support;

- **A Just Transition to Green energy.** We will support growth of the renewable energy industry, creating good long-term jobs.
- **The growth of onshore and offshore wind, particularly community-owned, and where appropriately sited.**

The Cooperation Agreement has set an ambitious aim of producing between 8 and 12 GW of installed onshore wind by 2030, subject to consultation. Hydro was the renewable which transformed the Highlands and Islands in the 1950s, wind could do the same for this generation. We will scrutinise environmental impacts and prioritise community ownership. The Outer Hebrides have great potential to be a real powerhouse of renewable energy, and we will work to ensure our communities benefit from this.

- We recognise the need for **energy storage**, and we will support schemes which use sustainable technologies where they don't have adverse impacts on the environment.

## SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS

**Green Councillors will continue to support and promote local business.**

Our reputation is for a clean air, pure water, high quality visitor experience – and we can capitalise on that to promote sustainable local business but we must also improve the infrastructure to sustain the level of visitors.

The forthcoming Good Food Nation Bill in particular gives opportunities to promote high quality island food businesses, something we certainly don't lack.

**Fight for a decent ferry service to Lochboisdale.** The Greens will use their influence in Scottish Government to push for a quality ferry service, something that is desperately needed in South Uist. These are **lifeline services** not luxuries.



## **CROFTING**

Most land in the Highlands and Islands region is classed as marginal, fit only for rough grazing or improved grassland at best - despite its potential. The contribution from crofting to rural livelihoods and local economy is undervalued. Crofts can contribute to carbon sequestration, environmental protection, production of high-quality food, population retention and the sustainability of local communities. But crofting faces many serious problems, which need to be rectified as quickly as possible.

Future crofting communities could be beacons of sustainability and innovation: growing local food for the local community; using renewable energy sources such as wind and sun to heat glasshouses to produce exotic commodities; growing fruit crops and trees; growing flax for linen manufacture; hemp for rope and medicine; producing wool for local industries; beekeeping; employing hundreds of people who would prefer a life in the country.

Green Councillors will work to support active crofters. We will link up wool producers with potential local users in the Circular Economy. We will encourage and help the community to establish new croft holdings and townships.

## **THE GREEN NEW VISION**

What you need... where you want it. The Green new vision for Island communities will ultimately ensure that almost no-one needs to travel more than 20 minutes to access basic essential services.

There is a postcode lottery in the Islands. As an example, Stornoway has a Dental health centre, hospital, pharmacy, food shops, clothes shops, primary school, secondary school, college, library, sports pitches and pavilion, post office, museum, etc., etc. The further south you go the more the services are diminished.

Our vision is to provide all these services on all main islands, **creating equality across islands**. This can be achieved by councillors, planners, health providers, community councils and businesses working together.

Green Councillors will co-operate with all stakeholders to form alliances to achieve this, wherever possible. Why go to the Western Isles Hospital for a ten-minute consultation when you could just as easily do it over the internet from home, or from the purpose built Uist & Barra Hospital?

The Green vision is to reduce the need for travel. People will generally work from home or in the local community, unless the job requires it. Workshop and small office spaces will be available in the local community, to address issues arising from working from home.

Journeys will be occasional and usually done by reliable, integrated, public transport. Realtime information boards at bus stops will notify of any delays.



## THE GREEN WAVE

The public see Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as a closed council, behind the times, inefficient and not listening. The people are suffering from consultation fatigue and feel very apathetic as they don't feel as if they are being listened to. Young people feel especially left out and ignored, and do not engage with local politics.

We want to change this.

The Scottish Green Party is truly democratic, participatory, and inclusive. Every single member gets a say in every aspect of the party. Behind every Green councillor is an organised group of active members.

We have no time for shouting-at-each-other politics. We will oppose where needed – but we prefer to co-operate where we can. It is crucial to work together, for the benefit of all islanders.

Thanks to this co-operation, we have achieved a disproportionately large amount with just one Green minded councillor. If the Green wave in Scotland's recent parliamentary elections is repeated in the Islands, we hold a real hope of putting in the work necessary to make a huge positive impact.

**GREEN COUNCILLORS WORK.** They work for you, the people, not the party.

Roddy MacKay has been the epitome of openness and transparency since he was elected in 2016. He is the ONLY Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Councillor to continually keep the public up to speed on Council developments by posting almost daily on his dedicated social media page as well as attending various public meetings. He has also been appointed a Trustee of Volunteer Western Isles as well as serving on the board of the Hebridean Housing Partnership and Tighean Innse Gall.

If re-elected Roddy will continue to work hard for the constituents of Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula.

**VOTE RODDY MACKAY** with your 1st vote to ensure you have a strong voice for Benbecula, South Uist and Eriskay retained within Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

## VOTE RODDY MACKAY GREEN 1 TO WIN

**MACKAY, RODDY  
SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY**

**1**