

Scottish Green Party

Council Elections Manifesto 2017

POWER IN YOUR HANDS



POWER IN YOUR HANDS

It has never been more important to put power in your hands. This election brings huge opportunities and huge challenges. The Councillors elected in 2017 will be faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of a hugely energised democracy in Scotland. Greens are committed to meeting that challenge by placing power in your hands, by providing the money that councils need to run their services, and by making sure that you, as a citizen and as a community, have the opportunity to play a greater role in the decisions that matter to your life.

We will do this in three ways:

By protecting services

- We'll give you much more say over how council money is spent, by making sure every council has a participatory budget target and plan.
- We'll keep schools in council control but give pupils, parents and teachers a real voice in how schools are run and how money is spent. We believe every council should have a parent, pupil and teacher on its education committee.
- We'll champion those who care for the youngest and oldest in society by introducing a Living Wage Plus for care workers.

By connecting communities

- We'll campaign for cheaper and more frequent bus services; and we'll introduce new, participatory tools for making decisions at local level.
- We'll introduce a broadband action plan for every council within a year of being elected.

By creating homes

- We'll shift the balance between communities and big developers in planning decisions; and protect precious green and open space.
- We'll help community groups own, run or have more say over their area: community buildings, parks, sports facilities, energy and much more. Scotland has already made great progress with community buy-outs in rural areas and with crofting estates, and we will begin to see transformation in urban areas with the urban community right to buy.
- We'll tackle rip-off housing costs – by making rents cheaper and dealing with fuel poverty.

By electing Green councillors to council chambers across Scotland you can change how your council works. For Greens, giving power to people and communities is a core belief. We want to put power in your hands, to protect services, to connect and to build communities. Every Green councillor elected will work tirelessly to make this a reality.



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Protecting services

Councils educate young people, provide care and support services to people, and make our neighbourhoods better places to live. Green councillors will continue to fight to protect and improve these services.



Schools and childcare

Scottish Greens believe in education that offers children and young people much more than qualifications – one that supports their development as adaptable individuals equipped to explore the opportunities and face the challenges that our fast-changing world brings.

Green councillors will:

- Support schools to deliver the fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy for all children.
- Fight to keep school class sizes down and replace teachers and support staff lost to cuts.
- Support creativity and critical thinking in the school curriculum, alongside confidence, resilience, global citizenship, practical life skills and outdoor learning.

- Campaign to protect rural schools from closure and maintain quality library resources in all schools.
- Seek to prevent closures of rural schools.
- Emphasise learning over standardised testing.
- Support pupils at risk of falling behind and support alternative provision for those for whom mainstream provision isn't working, in order to reduce exclusions and children dropping out.
- Campaign for more staff and better support for children with additional support needs – including making this a promoted post – and greater support in schools for any children from marginalised groups, including refugees and asylum seekers and LGBTI+ young people. We support the Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) campaign.
- Work towards the very best early education for children by improving qualifications, wages and conditions for nursery staff.

- Make free childcare hours more flexible, to support parents in shift work or irregular employment to be able to use them.
- Plan for enough nurseries and schools in areas where populations will rise, and ensure buildings are high-quality flexible spaces, built by the public sector to last and with environmental sustainability in mind.
- Create or support schemes like the Edinburgh Guarantee to give every young person leaving school the opportunity to work, train or study.
- Campaign for education committees to include parents, teachers, trades unions, and young people.

Social care, health and independent living

Scottish Greens believe high-quality social care is essential to support people's health and maintain their individual freedom, choice, dignity and control of their lives – and, like NHS healthcare, it should be free at the point of use. Investing in social care helps to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and get people home from hospital quickly. This not only relieves pressure on key NHS services, but keeps people connected to their homes, friends and families. Social care staff and unpaid carers do vital work and we will campaign for better pay, conditions, support and recognition for all carers. Social care in rural areas has particular challenges. The cost of dealing with all these challenges is beyond the capacity of local authorities, and we need a national review of the funding of social care. One particular source of increases to the cost of delivering social care is increasing privatisation of services, and we should seek to reverse this trend.

Green councillors will:

- Campaign to pay social care workers a "Living Wage Plus" of £9.20 per hour, helping local authorities to recruit the best staff and retain those with experience.

- Ensure the living wage is implemented fairly, protecting people's working conditions and pushing for sleepover shifts to be paid at the living wage.
- Support fair working practices by tackling zero-hours contracts, ensuring social care workers are paid for shift handovers, for time spent travelling between jobs, and for travelling expenses.
- Recognise that all social care workers should have better pay and conditions, including personal assistants and staff working in day centres.
- Value social care staff and support their professional recognition by creating more opportunities for staff to develop their skills, gain qualifications and plan their careers in the sector.
- Support and enable locally led social care partnerships and social enterprises to provide good-quality care at home.
- Promote continuity of care, keeping carers and the people they support connected, and tackling loneliness.
- Support the development of "rapid response" care teams, who can provide care quickly in urgent circumstances and help people avoid stressful trips to hospital.
- Provide better local support for unpaid carers. All local authorities have a duty to create an individual support plan for carers, and we will push for all carers to receive high-quality support for their own physical and mental health needs, including access to respite care and counselling.
- Take steps to improve unpaid carers' financial health, such as providing income maximisation advice to all carers and providing concessionary travel for carers on income support.
- Make sure income assessments for care charges don't include Carer's Allowance, while we work to eliminate care charges entirely.
- Support young carers by minimising children's practical caring responsibilities whenever possible, providing access to peer support and developing local forms of financial support.
- Ensure that the development and delivery of health and social care integration and provisioning of services is fully informed by the views and suggestions of disabled people who use those services.
- Investigate ways that more health and social care services can be delivered via publicly owned services and partnerships with local disabled people's organisations.

Crisis and anti-poverty services

Scottish Greens believe councils have a key role to play in tackling child poverty and helping people avoid crisis. Local councils can help tackle inequality, and we will prioritise progressing equalities, working closely with those whose opportunities are reduced owing to class, race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Green councillors will:

- Campaign to secure funding for support services for those who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence.
- Work to prevent homelessness with measures to empower tenants at risk of homelessness through better advice and access to legal aid, and improve the standard of temporary accommodation available.
- Help people to claim the social security benefits they are entitled to by supporting “income maximisation” projects through the NHS and advice services.
- Support social workers to manage workloads

- and focus on prevention, and support the delivery of community sentences for offenders.
- Welcome refugees and asylum seekers into our communities and push to ensure relevant support services are available to meet their specific needs.

Reducing and managing waste

Scottish Greens are actively working for a zero-waste Scotland. Reducing waste with less packaging and more recycling means we can avoid incineration, save the cost of landfill and safeguard natural resources for the future. Council investment in bin collections and street cleaning is vital to make our neighbourhoods more attractive.

Green councillors will:

- Support a zero-waste policy for all councils by 2025.
- Improve bin collection services, extend doorstep recycling, promote composting and provide a “Rapid Response Squad” service to deal with overflowing recycling containers.



- Support local businesses to reduce packaging and to find recyclable and biodegradable alternatives.
- Enhance community warden services and take firm action against fly-tipping and irresponsible dog-waste.
- Work with other councils to maximise the efficiency of waste management and capture the value of recycled waste through the Scottish Materials Brokerage Service.
- Introduce “reverse vending machines” for people to return packaging, starting with plastic bottles, to ensure producers are responsible for their waste and to promote zero-waste designs.
- Oppose the large-scale incineration of waste.
- Encourage rural communities to develop community-based composting, reuse and waste minimisation facilities.

Since 2012 Green Councillors have protected services by:

- Campaigning vigorously against the privatisation of environmental services in the City of Edinburgh.
- Achieving agreement in Midlothian council to explore developing a council-owned energy supply company to raise revenue.
- Introducing Glasgow’s first ever governance and asset management policy for the Common Good Fund’s assets, as well as annual budgeting.
- Persuading Edinburgh council not to sell a sports centre but allow a local community sports organisation, supported by a Housing Association, to take on the lease and run it for the benefit of the community.



Connecting communities

Councils can help build our communities. Green councillors will help to connect people with a thriving local economy, strengthen neighbourhoods with good services and celebrations of local identity, and connect places with better public transport.



Local economy

Scottish Greens believe a thriving local economy is one based on what's good for people not just profit. Our economy should be sustainable, connect people with decent jobs and help to bind our society together.

Green councillors will:

- Support businesses that create decent jobs and care about more than profit.
- Push councils to buy local goods and services wherever possible to benefit the local economy.
- Help businesses with ethical policies, like paying the living wage and environmental responsibility, by making these practices a condition of any council-funded support.
- Support more social enterprises, cooperatives, and employee-owned businesses through public procurement and access to publicly owned property.
- Push for rural and island fuel poverty to be

a high priority for councils, developing local fuel partnerships and encouraging renewable and local woodfuel initiatives.

- Encourage shops and post offices in local high streets, rather than chain stores or out-of-town development.
- Support credit unions and local banks which understand the local business community, offer alternatives to high-interest pay-day lending, and are more resilient than the "too-big-to-fail" banks of today.
- Propose that in both procurement and international engagements, such as town or school twinning, councils take full account of ethical considerations in selecting partners who reflect our own ethics and values.
- Support the use of better data by councils, for example to identify households underclaiming their entitlements.
- Support community buy-outs and increase the availability of grants, loans and financial advice for training and equipment to start a small business, and assistance with setting up cooperatives, with a focus on green jobs in insulating homes and council properties, recycling and renewable energy.

Leisure and recreation

People and communities connect through council services such as libraries, swimming pools and sport facilities. Events including festivals and gala days help us celebrate our local area and identity – and many are supported by public funds.

Green councillors will:

- Work to protect libraries. Libraries are more than books, they can be community hubs connecting people to the internet, providing space for community meeting and events, and adult education for lifelong learning.
- Quantify and promote the economic contribution of the creative economy both nationally and locally.
- Improve sport facilities where they are too hard to access, or expensive to use, and support grassroots sporting activities such as running clubs and ensuring provision of low-cost "community-use" sports facilities for hire at affordable rates.
- Oppose the closure of local leisure facilities and the selling off of common-good assets.
- Support festivals and community events.

Better buses, roads and trains

Being able to travel broadens our opportunities. Scottish Greens want to improve our buses, make walking and cycling more attractive, and make our streets safe and healthy for everyone to use.

Green councillors will:

- Connect communities with better bus services. Routes, fares, shelters and information can all help, and we will explore creating a publicly owned bus company in areas without one.
- Push for councils to allocate at least 10% of their transport budget to walking and cycling, to create new and safer routes including paths separated from roads.
- Argue for money to be spent on fixing our existing roads rather than building new ones, which simply encourage more traffic.
- Actively support rural bus services in order to maintain thriving towns and villages.
- Support the roll-out of low-carbon buses and the development of a charging point network for electric cars.



- Support and develop plans to reopen rail lines and stations, including increasing capacity where lines are single-track.
- Seek to introduce low-emission zones in town and city centres, and local authority targets for carbon reductions from transport.
- Review the implications of the likely increase in the use of autonomous vehicles and their impact on transport policy and other road users.

Since 2012 Green Councillors have connected people by:

- Proposing a change to Midlothian’s planning policies that all new housing developments have superfast broadband available to all households, which has been accepted as a requirement.
- Promoting the retention of the Buchanan Street Steps in Glasgow as a public meeting space within the city centre strategy, and supported the development and planning of an artists’ workspace by a local development trust in a gap site within the Woodlands area.
- Leading on setting up Edinburgh’s first community-owned greengrocer.



Creating homes

Councils help create the places and neighbourhoods where we live. Green councillors want them to be safe, green and attractive places.



Housing

Our vision for housing is for good-quality homes that are affordable to buy, affordable to rent and affordable to heat. There should be more social housing, better control of rents, and better management in the private sector.

Green councillors will:

- Help people who rent to create a stable home. We will support making information about good letting agencies and landlords easily available, support action against bad landlords and letting agents, and push for rent controls to limit rent rises that would push people out of their home.
- Continue to campaign to make energy efficiency of existing houses a priority, to create warm homes, reduce fuel bills and tackle fuel poverty.
- Help homeowners to make homes wind- and watertight with a trusted not-for-profit

service to manage major repairs, including to tenements. We will explore more ways to help with the cost of repairs – for example, with grants for low-income households, interest-free loans, or options to defer paying repair costs until the property is sold.

- Work to bring Scotland’s 27,000 empty homes back into use.
- Support new housing cooperatives or initiatives to bring rented property into shared management.
- Support new social rented homes to be built each year – we need at least 12,000 across Scotland each year just to meet population growth and replace older housing. This will need land to be available at low cost through a new council power to buy land for housing at “existing use value”.
- Prioritise new housing that is affordable, low-carbon, built on brownfield sites and connected to local services such as schools and shops. To help deliver housing and reduce land speculation we will support proposals for a local “vacant land levy”.

- We will support action to drive up space standards, designing houses that are easy to adapt for independent living.
- Explore ways of taking into social ownership facilities like care homes and student housing where their owners cannot continue to manage them.

Streets and green spaces

Our streets should be neighbourhoods and communities we can enjoy and be proud to call home. Green spaces within our cities, towns and villages should add value to our lives as well as provide places for wildlife to flourish.

Green councillors will:

- Prioritise pedestrians as the most important users of roads and pavements, creating attractive communities for people to live and work in.
- Extend 20mph speed limits in residential areas to improve road safety, reduce air pollution, and give streets back to communities.
- Work with the police and communities to help prevent antisocial behaviour and improve community connections.
- Protect parks and green spaces and manage them to provide places for people to enjoy and wildlife to flourish.
- Support local food production through community gardens, allotments and school growing projects.

Managing land for the future

The way we manage land needs a long-term approach, and councils have an important role to play in ensuring we do this sustainably.

Green councillors will:

- Place councils' duties to conserve biodiversity and tackle climate change at the heart of how they manage land and carry out their work.

- Ensure councils seek opportunities to manage flooding using natural processes, and invest in the expertise needed to do this

Since 2012 Green Councillors have created homes by:

- Campaigning with community groups across Edinburgh to protect precious green space, greenbelt land and access rights, at Craighouse in the southwest, Burdiehouse in the southeast, Astley Ainslie hospital, and many other locations.
- Championing a Green "City Region Deal" – for a future Edinburgh economy which is low carbon, sustainable and backs local business – and secured council backing for national campaigns on Robin Hood tax and against corporate tax-dodging.

Revitalising local democracy

Scottish Greens believe that local government can put power in your hands. Green councillors will listen to community concerns, then work hard to create solutions and make councils open and accountable.



Planning for a green future

Scottish Greens will strive for a planning system that listens to people. It should be transparent, accountable and give people power to shape their communities, resulting in development that is driven by public interest, not just economic growth.

Green councillors will:

- Invest in planning as a public service to empower local groups and individuals to engage, providing meeting spaces, information and dedicated staff.
- Ensure transparency and accountability by pushing to make the voting record for all planning committee votes available promptly online and in offices.
- Campaign with our MSPs to balance the rights of communities with those of developers by giving them an equal right of appeal over planning decisions. At present, only developers have the right to appeal.

- Protect wildlife sites and local green spaces from development, and seek sustainable solutions to managing flooding and public land in ways that benefit people and nature.
- Help local authorities deliver their Climate Change Act commitments by making carbon assessments a requirement of development proposals and transitioning Scotland away from fossil fuel extraction and consumption.
- Support the development of local energy companies.

Fair funding for public services

Scottish Greens believe in progressive taxation and investment in public services. The involvement of the community in financial decision-making is a cornerstone for revitalising our local democracy.

Green councillors will:

- Fight to scrap the regressive Council Tax and replace it with a fairer system of property taxation. Under the present system, we

- believe rates should be set by individual councils to suit local circumstances.
- Establish significantly more participatory budgeting, where communities are actively involved in deciding on local budget priorities.
- Campaign to give council employees a say on how their pensions should be invested – including options to divest from fossil fuels, tobacco and weapons and invest in local housing and renewable energy.
- Push councils to publish annual budget proposals early so that they can be scrutinised by everyone, ensure that budgets are analysed for their impact on groups protected by equality law, and support local authority-wide carbon budgeting to meet climate targets in the most cost-effective way.
- Support the return of the power to set the rate for 50% of the assessed value of non-domestic property. This would devolve more fiscal power to local governments and help make local decisions on rates to fit local circumstances.
- Support a fiscal framework with the Scottish Government that promotes local democracy, devolved decision-making and stability for public services.

Protecting local democracy

Scotland needs a revitalised local democracy where citizens are engaged and active in the important matters affecting their communities, where voters can make real choices about the services they want and how to pay for them.

Green councillors will:

- Fight to keep power and important decisions locally accountable. We will oppose a top-down and forced centralisation of education and other functions, but are open to a bottom-up collaboration between local authorities where this would benefit services mutually.
- Support more powers for community councils, citizens' assemblies, street committees and other community bodies to make decisions about public spending.

- Make it easier to find out and understand what is happening in your council, standardise live webcasting of council meetings, and make all committee votes available for public scrutiny
- Support community-led projects, development plans and buy-outs, financially and by sharing experience.
- Work to provide non-intimidating community discussion spaces that support a diverse array of voices and use emerging technologies to pilot new methods for citizen participation in making council policies, for example using citizen assemblies or citizen juries for decisions on planning or local service provision.

Since 2012 Green Councillors have revitalised local democracy by:

- Championing new forms of budgeting at a local level ("participatory budgeting"), where local people in Edinburgh decide how money is spent.
- Ensuring the financial backing needed in Glasgow to produce websites for local community councils and introduce public information portals in local libraries, giving residents easier access to news, advice and essential information.
- Calling for the introduction on webcasting of Edinburgh council meetings.





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