

Scotland can be an environmental leader

Faodaidh Alba a bhith na ceannard àrainneachdail



#GREENHOLYROOD VOTE GREEN 2016





Scotland has a rich and varied landscape that captivates visitors; enough farmland to feed our population; dynamic marine environments; a tradition of food and drink production that is recognised throughout the world; and some of the most ambitious carbon reduction targets.

The Scottish Greens will push the Government to deliver policies that enable Scotland to care for and enrich its natural assets. Our MSPs will demand Holyrood takes bold and innovative measures to reduce and adapt to climate change.

KEY POLICIES:



A Food, Farming and Health Act

This will establish a framework for action on food security, sustainable agriculture and healthy living at a national and local level.

Community Greenspaces

We will support the development of more community greenspaces throughout the country, reducing environmental inequalities, improving people's health and giving communities greater control over the management of valued open spaces.

Climate-ready neighbourhoods

We will support the transition to 'climate-ready' neighbourhoods that reduce emissions, limit flood risks, and increase resilience to extreme conditions through an expansion to the Climate Challenge Fund.

"The environment is the foundation of our society and economy. We have a responsibility to use our natural resources sustainably to meet both our own needs and the needs of future generations. The Scottish Greens propose policies to revitalise our food systems, protect environmental resources, and support society to respond to the challenges of climate change."

MARK RUSKELL

SGP environment spokesperson, top list candidate for Mid Scotland and Fife





SCOTLAND CAN RESHAPE FOOD SYSTEMS

A Food, Farming and Health Act

Scotland can address food insecurity while providing tasty, nutritious food in environmentally positive ways. Food currently spans a range of policy areas from health and land use to environment. This makes it difficult to coordinate action to reform food systems. This Act will provide a framework to deliver a range of food policies addressing health, environment and social justice concerns. It will:

- provide the basis for a new social contract between citizens, farmers, food producers and the wider industry;
- set a range of targets such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food production;
- address rising food insecurity amongst Scotland's poorest;
- establish a statutory commission to monitor progress and report annually to Parliament;
- incorporate the Right to Food in Scots law, as set out in the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Support for farms that provide public benefit

Common Agricultural Policy reform has recently changed the support available to agriculture but payment systems have failed. Green MSPs will champion a system that supports farmers and is clearly tied to the delivery of public benefits such as rural jobs, water management, biodiversity and carbon sequestration. We will also support the development and implementation of a Scottish Organic Action Plan led by the Scottish Organic Forum, with targets for increasing organic production.

Promote community food hubs

Localising our food system supports local economies. We will support the promotion of community food hubs across Scotland, bringing farmers and consumers together to shorten food chains. These hubs can promote cooking and growing know-how, and build links between communities local farmers and food co-operatives.

Support for new farmers

It is increasingly tough for those from non-farming backgrounds to get access to land, and opportunities to build experience are hard to come by. Green MSPs will push to expand the mentoring schemes currently in place to provide training and in-work placements for young farmers and new entrants. We will urge the Scottish Government to shift its New Entrants to Farming programme to support environmentally and economically sustainable farming while our land reform proposals will improve access to suitable land.



SCOTLAND CAN DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FIT FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE

Sustainable farming methods

We will continue to support research on farming methods that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance biodiversity and increase carbon storage. This should include providing alternatives to the use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers, such as glyphosate. We support measures to enhance Scotland's biodiversity through farming practices, will argue for Scotland's ban on genetically-modified crop to stay, and continue to campaign for a ban on neonicotinoids to protect wild pollinators and bee populations.

Healthy soils

Soil erosion is a growing threat to our agriculture and overall environmental quality that can be reduced through better land management practices. We will support measures to reduce soil erosion, from planting cover crops and strengthening hedgerows to contour ploughing.

SCOTLAND CAN IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE CONDITIONS

Review of animal welfare legislation

Scottish Greens will push for a review of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to support the delivery of a fully resourced enforcement regime for livestock that goes beyond disease prevention to ensuring high welfare standards are being met. We support the phasing out of the intensive indoor 'barn' rearing of poultry and pigs, the use of local or mobile abattoirs to reduce the stress of live animal transport and support calls for the introduction of CCTV in abattoirs for animal welfare monitoring. We will also call for the development of a suite of secondary legislation addressing the trade in exotic pets, the intensification of the animal breeding industry and the welfare of circus animals and racing greyhounds.

End routine antibiotic use

We call for a ban to the routine adding of antibiotics to animal feed, which is required only when animals are caged and stressed, and support extension of the ban on genetically modified food in Scotland to include all animal feed. We recognise these measures will need to be implemented over a period of time.

Increase protection for wildlife

Scottish Greens will support legislation that prosecutes those who harm or kill wildlife, and advocate that protection is extended to all wildlife, not only rare species. We support the strengthening of current laws on hunting, so that no animal is hunted using hounds and that snaring is prohibited.



SCOTLAND CAN PROTECT OUR LAND AND SEAS

Community greenspaces

Access to greenspace boosts people's health and wellbeing, and gives opportunities to learn about our environment first hand. We will support Forestry Commission Scotland and other organisations to develop more community greenspaces throughout the country, covering woodlands, wetlands and open spaces, so that all can benefit from access to local greenspace and giving communities greater say in the management of these valued spaces. Such projects can also help foster social inclusion, local economic development and conservation activities.

Protecting the greenbelt

Our greenbelts are coming under increasing pressure due to competing needs for new housing developments. Green MSPs will fight to protect greenbelts from further encroachment, which threatens both levels of local biodiversity and communities' sense of place. Through our land reform proposals we would bring Scotland's 11,000 ha of vacant land back into use for new housing developments and safeguard our open spaces.

New national parks

Scotland has many areas of outstanding natural beauty that merit national park status, but currently recognises only two such areas. As a worldwide recognised designation for high quality environments, creating new national parks would bring a range of environmental, social and economic benefits to Scotland by increasing tourism in remote areas. The Scottish Campaign for National Parks has identified seven possible sites including the Isle of Harris, Galloway and the coastal areas of Mull, Coll and Tiree. Green MSPs will champion the creation of new national parks in these areas.

Environmental restoration

Large scale ecological restoration projects of native flora and fauna will be supported, such as the

continued restoration of internationally-important peatlands, coastal machair habitats and the eradication of rhododendron from strategically important sites.

Science-based marine planning

Decisions on legislation for Scotland's new Marine Protected Areas and marine planning system must be based on scientific evidence. We will work to ensure that the decision-making process takes evidence from marine monitoring into account. We also recognise that coastal areas have a dynamic ecology as well as an unique social, economic and architectural character. We will support the introduction of blue belt planning legislation which lends similar protection as green belts to these environments.

Oppose ship to ship oil transfers

We will continue to oppose plans to allow ship to ship transfers of crude oil across the mouth of the Cromarty Firth, which could put thousands of dolphins, whales and other marine and bird life at risk. Scottish Greens successfully campaigned against similar proposals in the Firth of Forth in 2007, and we will build on that success to protect other marine environments across Scotland.

Protected fish stocks

A strengthened Common Fisheries Policy is needed to give regional management bodies greater control over fish stocks and extend powers to limit or prevent exploitation of fish stocks by other nations. Scottish Greens will push for a moratorium on the introduction of any new sea-cage salmon farms around the Scottish coast.

Public controlled water utility

We reaffirm our support for a public controlled water utility which operates with the principles of sustainability at its heart. Scottish Greens oppose the mutualisation of Scottish Water and the further outsourcing of delivery.

SCOTLAND CAN LEAD THE TRANSITION TO A RESILIENT, LOW CARBON SOCIETY

Climate-ready neighbourhoods

Scotland is likely to experience a wetter climate with more frequent extreme weather events due to a changing climate. We will support measures to transition to climate-ready neighbourhoods that reduce emissions, limit flood risks, and increase resilience to extreme conditions. This includes designing more permeable paved surfaces, increasing greenspace and shade cover, as well as better active travel facilities and retrofitted buildings. We will call for the expansion of the Climate Challenge Fund to move beyond mitigation efforts and provide funding for community adaptation projects.

Effective planning for changing conditions

All sectors of society should be supported to effectively plan actions that will reduce the impact of climate change. We will push for the public sector to take a lead role in planning for unpredictable weather conditions and find cost-effective solutions that support communities and individuals to respond.

Protection from flooding

With floods set to be a more common occurrence in coming years, there is an urgent need for increased investment in large-scale flood protection projects and support for individual homeowners to put in place measures to protect their property. Green MSPs will push the Scottish Government to increase investment in flood protection, and support measures to reinstate

natural flood defences, including reintroducing river meanders and regenerating mudflats and saltmarshes. Support will also be given to measures that will increase the resilience of natural coastal defences, such as sand dunes and invest in harbour infrastructure.

Circular economy

Green MSPs will campaign for a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks bottles where a small deposit paid when buying cans or bottles is refunded when empty containers are returned. This will be part of a wider campaign for a 'circular economy' that moves away from the traditional 'make-use-dispose' approach to products and instead keeps resources in use for as long as possible before recycling them back into supply chains.

Investment in low carbon infrastructure

International comparisons suggest that a minimum of 70% of public infrastructure investment must be directed at low carbon infrastructure projects if we are to limit global climate change to below 2°C. Holyrood currently spends only 50% of its infrastructure budget on low carbon projects. Increasing this investment will drive innovation and skills development, while delivering environmental benefit and making behaviour change possible. We will call for a greater portion of Holyrood's infrastructure budget to be spent on low carbon projects.

Support international climate agreements

The Scottish Greens will hold the Scottish and UK Governments to account to ensure they meet their pledges in accordance with the 2015 Paris Agreement. We will energise Scottish society to demand bold action from our governments to play decisive roles in follow-up negotiations.



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