

Scottish Green Party Council Elections Womanifesto 2017

**POWER IN
YOUR HANDS**



**SCOTTISH
GREENS**

POWER IN YOUR HANDS

Our local councils are responsible for looking after the public services that we all rely on. Women are usually the most active contributors to our local communities, whether that's taking children to the local park, nursery or school, or looking after friends and relatives with care needs. But it often feels that we have little say over how our communities are run and budgets are spent, with big property developers and multinational chains taking priority rather than our schools, care services and the people who live there.

Greens are committed to meeting this 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, can play a greater role in the decisions that matter to your life.

As a party, we are committed to developing women in order to ensure that we lead from the front when it comes to tackling the lack of women in public leadership roles. Not only are we standing more candidates than ever before, with 219 Greens in wards across Scotland's 27 local authorities, but we are standing more women than ever, with 45% of the candidates selected by our local branches being women – more than any other party.

We will work to improve councils and their work 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.

This "mini manifesto" complements the Scottish Greens' national council election manifesto, focusing on policies that have a particular impact upon women.

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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. We also recognise that women are more likely to act as paid or unpaid caregivers, so cuts to these services disproportionately affect women.



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:

- Fight to keep school class sizes down and replace teachers and support staff, who are more likely to be women, 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, which are lifelines for parents and the elderly in isolated communities.
- Emphasise learning over standardised testing.
- 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 to

help more women return to the workplace with work patterns that suit them and their childcare needs.

- 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.
- 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 cause 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.



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 – which are more likely to be led by women – through public procurement and access to publicly owned property.

- Encourage shops and post offices in local high streets, rather than chain stores or out-of-town development.
- Support the use of better data by councils, for example to identify, for example, households under-claiming their entitlements.

Leisure and recreation

People and communities connect through council services like 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.
- 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.
- Improve quality of pavements so it's easier for parents with buggies, small children, and people with mobility issues to get around. Women, as primary caregivers for children are disproportionately affected by poor paving and obstructive car parking, and so we must have a strong presence of women on council to represent this voice.
- Actively support rural bus services in order to maintain thriving towns and villages to help tackle isolation and loneliness in our communities.



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



- with grants for low-income households, interest-free loans, or options to defer paying repair costs until the property is sold.
- 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”.

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:

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,

- 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.

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 accessible meeting spaces, clear information and dedicated staff. This will make it easier for women to have their say in their communities with flexibility around family and caring responsibilities in mind.
- 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.

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:

- Establish significantly more participatory budgeting schemes, where communities are actively involved in deciding on local budget priorities.
- 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.
- Campaign to return tax-raising power to councils by giving them the right to set half the business tax rate for commercial properties. 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.



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