

# **Scottish Young Greens Local Authority Manifesto 2017**

## **POWER IN YOUR HANDS**



# POWER IN YOUR HANDS

It has never been more important to put power in your hands. The councillors elected in 2017 will be faced with the challenge of meeting the demands of a hugely energetic democracy in Scotland. The Scottish Young Green candidates are committed to placing the power in your hands and making sure you – as citizens, young people and communities – have the opportunity to play a greater role in the decisions that affect 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.
- We'll tackle rip-off housing costs – by making rents cheaper and dealing with fuel poverty.

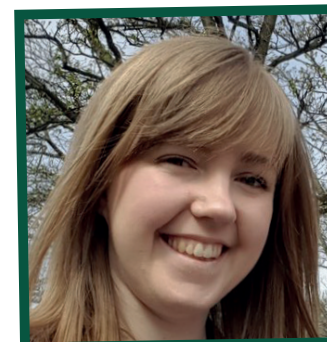
By electing Green councillors to council chambers across Scotland you can change how your council works. For Greens, giving power to people and communities is a core belief. We want to put power in your hands, to protect services, to connect and to build communities. Every Green councillor elected will work tirelessly to make this a reality. Having young people on council and in committees will make sure your voice is not lost.

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

## A word from our Co-Convenors

**On 4th May, people will elect new councillors throughout the whole of Scotland.**

These are historic local authority elections, as for the first time 16- and 17-year olds can also vote on who they want to represent them in their town halls and city chambers. The Scottish Greens are standing 218 candidates in this election, with 36 Young Greens among them, 16% of them. This is a vast improvement on the 3% of councillors elected who were under 30 in 2012.



We have Young Greens not only standing, but organising campaigns and knocking on doors across the country. We want to talk to young people about making local authorities not just entities your gran might phone to complain about bins, but a services that young people are empowered to interact with in a more accessible way. As part of our communities, we should be able to have our say – and be heard – when it comes to issues such as education, green spaces and community amenities.

We are members of our communities who are often overlooked when it comes to inclusivity in decision-making and the choices made from that: Scottish Young Green councillors can reshape the influence that we as young people can have to create inclusive, sustainable and socially-just communities.



**Gillian Mackay and Anthony Carroll**  
**SYG Co-Convenors, 2017-18**

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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 prepares us for the world beyond education institutions, and creates opportunities outside the classroom. For too long, decisions about young people have been taken about us, without us.

### Green councillors will:

- Support creativity and critical thinking in the school curriculum, alongside confidence, resilience, global citizenship, practical life skills and outdoor learning.
- Emphasise learning over standardised testing
- Fight to keep school class sizes down and replace teachers and support staff lost to cuts.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 young people.

## Health and social care

Scottish Greens believe high-quality social care is essential to support people's health and maintaining their individual freedom, choice, dignity and control of their lives. It should be free at the point of use. Social care staff and unpaid carers do vital work and we will campaign for better pay, conditions, support and recognition for all carers. In particular, Green councillors will seek to support young carers by minimising childrens' practical caring responsibilities whenever possible, providing access to peer support and developing local forms of financial support.

## 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 due to age, class, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

### Green councillors will:

- Help people to claim the social security benefits they are entitled to by supporting income-maximisation projects through the NHS and advice services.
- 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.

### 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.



# 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 more social enterprises, co-operatives, and employee-owned businesses through public procurement and access to publicly-owned property.
- Help businesses with ethical policies, like paying the living wage and environmental responsibility, by making these practices a condition of any council-funded support.
- 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 community buy-outs and increase

the availability of grants, loans and financial advice for training, and assistance with setting up co-operatives.

## Leisure and recreation

People and communities connect through council services like libraries, swimming pools and sport facilities. Events like festivals and gala days help us celebrate our local area and identity – 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.
- 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 it.

- 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.
- Support and develop plans to re-open rail lines and stations, including increasing capacity where lines are single-track.
- Actively support rural bus services in order to maintain thriving towns and villages.
- Seek to introduce low emission zones in town and city centres, and local authority targets for carbon reductions from transport.

## Since 2012 Green Councillors have connected people by:

- 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. Fuel poverty is a particular problem for students who rent and we would encourage landlords to make their property more energy efficient.

- Work to bring Scotland's 27,000 empty homes back into use.
- Support new housing co-operatives or initiatives to bring rented property into shared management.
- 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:

- Prioritise pedestrians as the most important

users of roads and pavements, creating attractive communities for people to live and work in.

- 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.

### 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. It should look to engage with young people.

### 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.
- 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:

- 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.
- 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.

## 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.
- 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.





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