



Scottish Liberal Democrats

Manifesto 2011

Jobs and economic growth

A science nation, super-fast broadband, exports and support for small business

Excellence in education

Early intervention, power to head teachers, stronger colleges and world-class universities

Keeping services local

Local police, fairer tax, strong communities and local health and care working together for you

Solutions for Scotland

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Manifesto 2011

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Introduction

We live in tougher times. So I want to set out real ideas for Scotland. Ideas that recognise that Scotland needs long term solutions, not short term political fixes. A Government for the whole country, not a minority party. A Scotland that looks outward and upwards and is not insular, throwing insults over Hadrian's Wall.

That is what this Scottish Liberal Democrat manifesto is about. I know the pressures families and businesses across Scotland face. Rising prices in the shops, and uncertainty in the workplace. Those local services we all depend on, the school, health centre and police officer, under pressure.

So we are setting out ways to tackle these challenges. Solutions that will create the conditions for jobs, restore excellence in our schools and keep your vital services local.

Politicians don't create jobs. But they **can** cut red tape, invest in apprenticeships for young people, colleges and universities, and find new ways to get money to small businesses starved of finance. That's what I want to **do**.

Politicians don't teach in school classrooms. But they **can** give teachers space and freedom to innovate, inspire and encourage Scotland's next generation. Politicians **can** clear away reams of paperwork and give head teachers the room to lead. And they **can** make sure that the best and brightest teachers are in our classrooms, not leaving the profession or working overseas. I want to **do** all that and much more.

Politicians can meddle in public services. They can centralise the local services you rely on. They can set up a National Police Force, a single fire service, a quango in charge of the care your granny gets. They can stop any accountability your local councillor has to you. They can and the others will try. But not me. I want your services to be local and right for you. Only the Scottish Liberal Democrats will stop the centralising power grab that the other parties want.

But there are, in 2011 and in the coming years, things to look forward to. The world's sailing ships will be in Greenock and Lerwick this summer. The Olympics are already inspiring and exciting Scottish sportspeople. For a golfing nation, the Ryder Cup will bring undoubted excitement. And the Commonwealth Games can be great for Glasgow and Scotland. Not just the winning of medals, but also in building Scotland's ties to other countries, helping trade, relationships and therefore Scottish jobs. And can I hope too, that Craig Levein and Andy Robinson will lead our national football and rugby teams to success? Yes I **can**!

So in this tough period my focus for you will be on jobs, education and local services. I want to build a stronger, better Scotland. I offer solutions for Scotland.

Your vote could make that happen. Happen with the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tavish Scott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tavish Scott

Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats

Solutions for Scotland

This Scottish election is unlike any other. Scotland is emerging from the deepest recession in post-war history. Money is tight for families, businesses – and for government too. So in this election you have a right to expect politicians to step up to the plate and provide the leadership, commitment and ideas that we need to rebuild our economy, strengthen our society and shape Scotland's successful future.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats are ready for that challenge. We are providing solutions for Scotland.

This manifesto spells out in detail the solutions that we will bring to every area of government policy. It is a positive, long term plan for a strong Scotland. We set out its costings as well as our ambitious national outcomes for the coming decade.

We will move Scottish Water to a public benefit corporation. This will allow a one-off capital receipt to benefit the Scottish Government which we will turn into an *Investing In Scotland's Future Fund*. We propose to allocate this to five strands: an Early Intervention Revolution, Energy Saving, Digital Economy, Science Nation and Finance Scotland. Each strand will provide long term benefit to Scotland and will generate new income for the future.

At the core of our approach are three overriding priorities. Three key areas in which we will take immediate action. Three challenges to which we will provide solutions for Scotland – from day one.

A growing economy – generating jobs

Scotland – like the rest of the UK – has seen unemployment rise since the recession began. But the rate north of the border is higher than the rate south of it.

We can turn that around. We can create the conditions for growth. We can bring new jobs, of every kind, to every part of Scotland.

This is our number one priority.

Not by government spending money it can no longer afford, but targeting efficiently the resources we do have, and by removing the barriers to private sector prosperity.

Scottish Liberal Democrats believe in quality public services, but to pay for them we need a rebalanced and resurgent private sector to raise revenue and generate jobs.

So, to solve the problems facing our economy, and create the conditions for growth and 100,000 new Scottish jobs, we will start action within 30 days of the new government taking office. We will keep up the pace, with the Cabinet expected to meet throughout the summer. We will:

- Grow thousands of businesses through the lending and expertise of new Regional Development Banks across Scotland.

- Cut business rates in new Scottish Enterprise Zones.

Promote small businesses through wider access to a reformed Small Business Bonus.

Stimulate a generation of new technology jobs by making Scotland the most digitally connected country in Europe.

Help 10,000 small businesses take on extra staff by slashing the burden of regulation.

Increase Scotland's exports by 50 per cent and double the number of companies who trade overseas through our Exports Action Plan.

Deliver 40,000 new green jobs through our commitment to Scottish renewables and energy.

Excellence in education

In the past, Scottish education was the envy of the world: in the future, it will be again.

Businesses across Scotland are worried about the shortage of skills in our economy and parents and pupils are concerned about the quality of education in our country. But the outgoing Scottish Government has proven complacent. That's not good enough.

We need every child, pupil and student to get the opportunities they need – the chance to be the very best at what they do. That's the way to help people reach their personal potential and deliver the skills we need for Scotland's future.

So to solve the problems in our education system and deliver excellence in education, we will:

Give every child a fair start in life with an Early Intervention Revolution so that no child is left behind.

Raise literacy and numeracy standards through the Curriculum for Excellence.

Empower head teachers by devolving power and control from the Minister's desk to theirs, freeing teachers to spend more time in the classroom, not filling in government forms.

Provide a cutting edge education with a Science Nation Action Plan and access to Mandarin teaching, putting Scottish pupils at the forefront of new thinking and competitive skills.

Remove failing teachers and improve support for those doing well through a review of current procedures.

Create a 'flexible spine' for Scottish degrees so that students can, in many subjects, complete their degree in three years, not four.

Offer world leading higher education, with fair access, no tuition fees and no graduate contribution.

Bolster colleges and improve their links to businesses and apprenticeships – recognising that university is not the right route for everyone.

Making services strong and local

We all rely on the schools, hospitals and public transport systems that are the fabric of our national life. But in tight times, with less money to spend, the problem facing our public services is this: how can we get the best from the resources we have?

Scottish Liberal Democrats have a strong record in delivering first class public services in Scotland. So in these tight times we know how to make the money count: to spend appropriately, efficiently – and locally.

Many politicians believe that the best decisions made about public services are those made from behind the ministerial desk. They are wrong. Public services are at their most efficient and effective when they are run locally, by local people, to meet local needs.

So to solve the problems facing public services and make them serve local needs, we will:

- Keep our communities safe with local policing, against attempts to create a single national police force that will drain resources and accountability from Scotland's local communities.

- Cut crime by making offenders pay back the people and communities they have harmed: solutions that have been proven to work, not populist punishments that drive crime up.

- Improve patient care – including cancer detection – through health reforms that respond to local needs.

- Meet local transport needs by making vital investments – a new Forth Bridge, action on the A9, A82, A83, A96 – using the new borrowing powers from the Scotland Bill.

- Taking less well-off pensioners out of local council tax altogether.

- Provide much-needed local housing by bringing Scotland's 70,000 empty homes back into use, giving housing associations more flexibility and helping meet rural needs through community land trusts.

- Protect frontline services by listening to frontline staff and cutting waste.

- Protect local jobs by cutting high pay and bonuses at the top.

These are the first priorities of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

We will grow Scotland's economy, create excellence in education and provide strong and local public services.

We will provide solutions for Scotland.

Solutions for Scotland

Jobs and economic growth

Creating the conditions for 100,000 new jobs, supported by at least £1.5 billion of investment freed up by reform to Scottish Water.

Getting money to small businesses where the greedy banks have failed and bringing them together with colleges to provide the skills our economy needs.

Cutting energy bills and boosting the green economy with new help to pay for insulation in your home or business and new investment in renewable energy.

Helping Scottish business compete internationally by boosting exports, cutting regulation and making Scotland the most digitally connected economy in Europe.

Excellence in education

Raising standards in schools by giving head teachers more power, so that teachers spend more time teaching your children, not filling in government forms.

Giving every child a fair start in life with an Early Intervention Revolution so that no child is left behind.

Supporting colleges and keeping Scotland's universities globally competitive by investing in science and research, modernising the sector and improving student support.

Working with other parties to keep higher education free – no fees and no graduate contribution.

Keeping services local

Cutting crime by keeping the police local, helping them tackle local problems and making offenders pay back to your community for the damage they've done.

Supporting less well-off pensioners by reforming the unfair council tax so they pay nothing at all.

Helping to protect local jobs and services by cutting high pay and bonuses at the very top, listening to frontline staff and driving out waste.

Improving out-of-hours care across Scotland by putting local GPs back at the heart of the service.

Creating the conditions
for 100,000 new jobs
of every kind, in every
part of Scotland

Growth and jobs for Scotland

The priority of the next Scottish Government must be to support the creation of new businesses and jobs, and equip every person with the skills and ambition to reach their potential.

Unemployment in Scotland remains higher than the rest of the UK. Scotland is still way down the list of countries with a strong spirit of enterprise, even though we have a proud history of innovation. We know we can't rely on the public sector alone in Scotland to create growth and jobs.

We have ambitious plans to bring new jobs and a new prosperity to Scotland, focusing every strand of government on boosting economic growth.

The potential prizes are enormous. The Federation of Small Businesses shows how 10,000 new jobs can follow if we help sole traders recruit and manage staff. Scottish Renewables and environmental organisations show that the right action taken now could create over 28,000 jobs in offshore wind power, 5,000 in wave and tidal power and 10,000 from carbon capture and storage technology. Super-fast broadband can produce 20,000 jobs, installing the system and making good use of it to build businesses. The CBI and SCDI's suggested stretching export targets could create at least 8,000 new jobs. And we expect our proposed Regional Development Banks to help create 10,000 jobs. Add in our plans to support energy conservation, adding 10,000 jobs, science, the creative industries and transport infrastructure, and this adds up to more than 100,000 new jobs for Scotland.

The major hurdle is still the lack of support that businesses get from their commercial banks. The legacy of the banking collapse is that Scottish business is left short, even though profits, pay and bonuses at the banks are now rising again. In every part of Scotland, companies, traders and entrepreneurs struggle to get finance and, when they do, the terms and the conditions can be eye-wateringly tough.

The new Scottish Government elected in May, within the first 30 days, should prepare a Growth and Jobs Strategy at ministerial level including:

Radical reforms of the enterprise network, replacing Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland with dynamic Regional Development Banks. These will provide more accessible and personalised support for 1,000 businesses, working with colleges, universities and local authorities to deliver business lending, skills and training and tourism functions shaped around the needs of the area. A white paper will set this in train.

Reforms to business rates to keep the Small Business Bonus, help more businesses access its benefits, examine rates holidays for seasonal tourist businesses to keep Scotland open all year round, and give local councils a real stake in growing the prosperity of their area by giving them a share of business rate growth.

Making transitional relief statutory for the 2015 rates revaluation.

The delivery of Enterprise Zones in Scotland, encouraging economic growth through a package of business support measures. Combined with Regional Development Banks these will provide a real boost to local economies.

A new Science Nation Fund to drive an ambitious jobs and wealth agenda through science, engineering and restoring Scotland's ability to invent and innovate, including an annual Scottish Enlightenment Prize for a world leading example of science research or industrial development taking place in Scotland.

Plans that make Scotland the most digitally connected region in Europe, ensuring every part of Scotland has the opportunity to contribute to the growing economy and to maximise the benefits from 21st century technology,

with a Digital Economy Task Force, bringing together government ministers, service providers, local agencies and business organisations to make it happen. We will use a share of the *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund* to make the capital investment and secure a long term revenue stream back to government.

An ambitious Scottish work programme, offering work experience, internships, apprenticeships or substantial volunteering opportunities for young people struggling to break into the jobs market, helped by convening a group of twenty leading employers in Scotland to seek their support.

The reform of business regulation, freeing businesses to grow and create jobs by bringing together the business community and government to develop the most appropriate balance between protection of the public, employees and the environment with sustainable economic growth.

Measures to help more Scottish businesses access public sector contracts, supporting small businesses and growing the local economy. A draft Reform Bill will start the process.

An ambitious Exports Action Plan to create the conditions to help grow Scotland's exports by 50 per cent and double the number of Scottish companies who trade overseas, including mentoring support for businesses who want to innovate and break into new markets and exploring with the UK Government the benefits of establishing a Scottish export credit scheme.

New action to drive forward Scotland as a world leader in the renewable energy sector, maximising the benefits of Scotland's natural assets and skilled workforce to create thousands of new green jobs, cut emissions and put us on course towards our goal of a zero-carbon Scotland, and recognise Aberdeen as a global energy hub.

Growing 1,000 extra businesses
with help and investment
from dynamic new
Regional Development Banks

Regional Development Banks Action Plan

Our plans for Regional Development Banks to replace the confused, expensive and cluttered enterprise networks will deliver direct business support, shaped around the needs of the business to help companies and social enterprises grow.

We will equip them with the resources they need to build a strong economic future for Scotland. At present, for every £2 spent on direct business investment and support, nearly £1 is spent on administration and staff. We think more should be done for business.

Regional Development Banks will comprise colleges, universities, local authorities and businesses, with representation from business leaders. They are based on international best practice but are designed for Scotland's needs. They will bring together skills, training, businesses and local authorities and for the first time formally recognise the role business leaders should play in the operation of public bodies. One will operate in each of the former Scottish Enterprise local areas together with one for the Highlands and Islands.

Local businesses will find a ready source of advice and tailor-made assistance. Gaps can be identified and filled. The national, tick-box culture has not allowed Scottish business ideas to reach their full potential.

For the first time local businesses will directly elect business leaders in a decision-making capacity on the Development Banks.

Our Action Plan for Regional Development Banks will:

Provide help for 1,000 extra businesses to grow, creating 10,000 jobs and protecting thousands more.

Give Regional Development Banks the responsibility to create a skills and training policy and, through the colleges in the region, deliver it. The current Scottish Enterprise regions will be scrapped.

Give Regional Development Banks the lead responsibility to promote the region in which they operate by constituting a regional tourism policy and delivering it.

Create a Regional Development Bank to cover the Highlands and Islands, attuned to the needs of the area, taking over the social functions of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and promoting small business and tourism development.

Move the industry support functions of Scottish Enterprise into the Scottish Government, allowing Scottish Enterprise to be scrapped, cutting bureaucracy and reinvesting monies in the frontline. We will create an Economic Development, Innovation and Tourism Department with a minister in the Cabinet to drive it forward.

Replace VisitScotland and Scottish Development International with a new body – Scotland International – to promote Scottish industry globally, and promote Scotland around the world for tourism, creativity and research. This will promote Scotland better, helping tourism and exporters to grow.

Establish an agency – Finance Scotland – to manage the national finance products of Scottish Enterprise, such as equity investment in near-to-market proposals. Finance Scotland will be self financing but underwritten by Government. Finance Scotland will also advise and co-ordinate national infrastructure and advise Regional

Development Banks on financing projects or delivery. The Scottish Futures Trust will be scrapped and the Scottish Investment Bank subsumed.

Give the opportunity to the Regional Development Banks to work with partners on regeneration.

Making Scotland
the most digitally connected
region in Europe

Digital Economy Action Plan

We are determined that every part of Scotland should have the opportunity to contribute to the growing economy and to win the benefits from 21st century technology. Super-fast broadband allows people to run businesses from anywhere. New digital technology can break down geographical barriers.

Scotland's current broadband connections lag ten years behind our international competitors. A third of businesses say it is limiting their potential to grow.

We welcome the selection of the Highlands and Islands for the UK Government's delivery of super-fast broadband. The development of technology moves fast. Scotland has the opportunity to develop high speed broadband to all its communities.

A dedicated Minister for Science, Innovation and Digital Economy will be appointed and tasked to win the potential jobs from new technology.

These plans have the capacity to generate 20,000 jobs. They also bring the potential for enormous social benefits. Home working has the potential to increase productivity and motivation, reduce sick leave, create a better work-life balance and enhance recruitment and retention of staff. High speed technology gives new opportunities for teaching and learning, for cultural creativity. New peer support networks can be empowered to help people with long term medical conditions and carers.

Within the first 30 days of government the Minister will convene a High Level Digital Economy Task Force with leading businesses, academics and community groups and this will produce a delivery programme for the five year parliament.

The Digital Economy Action Plan will:

Invest £250 million from our *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund* to deliver super-fast broadband to all parts of Scotland. This will build on the UK Government's pilot but will also prioritise Scottish Government investment. This investment will transform our economy, provide jobs in its construction and new business opportunities when complete. It will generate a long term income stream back to the public benefit.

Use our massive strategic investment to establish super-fast hubs around public services in every part of Scotland to allow every community to benefit from high speed links on the back of government investment, giving people in all parts of Scotland the chance to participate in high technology industries, develop home working, and benefit from telemedicine and distance learning.

Require every public body to make sure that all of their services can be accessed through technology and online, with traditional alternatives retained where requested.

Work with mobile phone operators, local authorities and community partnerships to improve mobile coverage in remote and rural areas, including widening the scope of 'operator partnerships' to spread the costs of building and maintaining new masts in rural locations with inadequate coverage.

Work with the UK Government and Ofcom to set the conditions on the sale of the analogue radio spectrum to promote its use for mobile broadband.

Require future rail franchise agreements to stipulate that the operator is obliged to include the provision of reliable 3G mobile phone coverage and free wi-fi on all key commercial rail routes.

Work with the UK Government to ensure that the auction for the 4G licence supports the development of the digital economy in Scotland.

Make sure our plans for a digital Scottish economy mean that people and businesses in remote and rural areas have the opportunity to participate in Europe's most digitally connected region.

Making Scotland the world leader
in science and research,
turning it into
world-beating business

A Science Nation Action Plan

One of the genuine success stories in the last generation has been the growth in the reputation of Scotland's research and science capacity. Life sciences alone contribute £3 billion to the Scottish economy. In proportion to the size of our country, Scottish scientific research is cited more often than any other in the world. We now compete at the highest levels, but we want to go further.

Publicly funded science and research has been a success in recent times. But Scotland's private industrial research investment is about one third of the UK level at only 0.6 per cent of GDP. We will work with universities and colleges to support companies considering investment in research and development in Scotland.

We will encourage more people to study science. We will encourage more women to make it their career. And we will help to turn great research into world-beating business opportunities.

A Minister for Science, Innovation and Digital Economy will be responsible for driving these ambitious goals.

The Science Nation Action Plan will:

Use £250 million from our *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund* as a Science Nation Fund to maintain the international competitiveness of our university based research and science. Complementary to the excellence achieved through the UK-wide Research Assessment Exercise, our additional support will allow Scottish universities, working with business, to gain a global lead.

Establish an annual Scottish Enlightenment Prize for Science to recognise world leading examples of science research or industrial development taking place in Scotland.

Continue to fund research and development into renewable energy technology, particularly wave and tidal power, in addition to the Saltire Prize, to ensure Scotland becomes the global hub of this potentially huge new industry.

Develop further the links between the Scottish life sciences industries and NHS Scotland to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the development and introduction of new products in Scotland, supported and informed by the clinical and service needs of the NHS. The human medicines and vaccines sector is worth £1.3 billion to Scotland and supports over 11,000 jobs.

Establish a Life Science Venture Fund to help develop and secure a world-beating industry from Scotland's leading position in life sciences research.

Continue to fund successful programmes to help small and medium sized businesses get help and collaboration from expert scientists and researchers at Scotland's universities.

Increase the number of women pursuing careers in science. We will establish a Ministerial Task Group on Women in Science and support the work of the Scottish Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology.

Use Scotland International to create a special programme for young women potentially interested in a career in science using inspiring women scientists from around the world. We will establish bursaries to pay for them to make visits abroad.

Work with schools, colleges and universities to supply a workforce with the 21st century skills needed for priority industries like energy and life sciences and in pace with the growth of knowledge. We will encourage an approach to skills that recognises the continued relevance of the oil and gas sector.

Helping to create the conditions
to grow Scotland's exports
by 50 per cent
and double the number
of companies
who trade overseas

Exports Action Plan

Scotland has a proud record as an exporting nation, but businesses are struggling. Scotland's relative position in exporting has fallen back over the last three years. We will reverse this.

We will take advantage of the growth opportunities that come from favourable exchange rates and a return to growth in the world economy.

We recognise the enormous potential of the emerging growth economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China – the BRIC countries – and will support Scottish companies breaking into these markets.

We are determined to help, identifying new overseas markets, using UK trade assets, building the transport, digital and language links and providing practical advice.

The Exports Action Plan will:

Set a target to grow Scottish exports by 50 per cent by economic value by 2020 and double by 2020 the number of companies engaged in exports.

Ensure there is one body promoting Scotland – Scotland International – ending the proliferation and confusion in public sector bodies in this area.

Work with Scotland Food and Drink to meet their ambitious export target and work with the UK Department of Business to widen the protected status for special Scottish produce, including whisky.

Foster an international outlook throughout education by, for example, increasing the learning of Mandarin in schools.

Focus support on increasing the number of businesses taking the first step into the export market, particularly to the emerging large markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China, by devoting a special strand of funding from our Finance Scotland agency to support Scottish businesses seeking to export innovative and new-to-market products.

Work with the UK Government to use their global network of embassies, high commissions and consulates more effectively, and ensure better coordination of public and private sector export initiatives and a joined-up approach between agencies working in the interests of Scottish companies. We will explore with the UK Government the benefits of establishing a Scottish export credit scheme.

Seek increased access to trade missions for all types of business and encourage 'pump priming' of financial support for overseas travel.

Use a strengthened GlobalScots network of expatriate Scots and other friends of Scotland to open doors and open new business opportunities across the world.

Devote a strand of transport infrastructure planning to support export routes from Scotland, including cross-border roads. We will also make sure that new digital infrastructure such as high speed broadband takes into account the needs of businesses wishing to trade overseas.

Build on the success of the air route development programme which provided new ways to make international business connections.

Make sure that Regional Development Banks can tailor their support to give assistance to regionally significant export opportunities in their area, such as the textiles industry in the Borders.

Help Scottish universities to assist traditional businesses who want to innovate their products, update their marketing pitch and break into new markets. The tweed and cashmere industries are two examples.

Establish a mentoring scheme to allow small businesses to be partnered with already successful exporting firms, following the example of the Danish gazelle growth programme.

Keep Scotland tax competitive.

Supporting and developing
Scotland as a country
that treasures
innovation and creativity
in arts, culture and recreation

The Most Creative Country Action Plan

Arts and culture currently contribute at least £5 billion to the Scottish economy. A thriving creative sector provides jobs and economic benefit in its own right. Yet its wider impact is greater still. A thriving arts and cultural movement improves the quality of life and acts as an attraction for inward economic investment.

We want to support and develop Scotland as a country that treasures innovation and creativity in arts, culture and recreation.

The Most Creative Country Action Plan will:

Establish a Creative Industry Fund within Finance Scotland for near-to-market creative companies or products and ask Regional Development Banks to work with the creative industries in their areas to capture the benefits of economic spin-offs of local cultural events.

Continue to support the Edinburgh Festivals Expo during the next parliament to make sure that Scotland gains long-lasting benefit from internationally renowned cultural events.

Maintain free access to Scotland's national museums.

Step up efforts to engage with the 2012 Olympics to make sure that Scotland benefits from an inspiring UK-wide sporting event and cultural Olympiad.

Build the partnerships necessary to ensure that a cultural and sporting benefit comes from Glasgow's staging of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Make the most from the tourism potential of the 2014 Ryder Cup.

Support 2014 as a second year of homecoming for those people around the world with Scottish ancestry.

Make sure that Scottish public agencies are able to support online genealogy to help encourage a global interest in Scotland.

Support Gaelic medium education where there is demand and promote the language in cost effective ways.

Support Scotland's valuable video games industry, with greater emphasis on the development of computing and artistic skills throughout the education system, closer working between the computer science industry and Scotland's schools, colleges and universities and more professional development for lecturers. We will work with business to introduce a new schools competition to engage young people in the industry and support their career choices.

Support the expansion of creative collaborations and initiatives through a super-fast broadband network across Scotland. The opportunities for Gaelic language teaching and learning, online music tuition and community broadcasting are examples.

Encourage greater investment in quality Scottish network productions and regional programming.

Sport

We recognise that sport should be more than just taking pride in elite athletes. It should be something that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy, participate in and gain from. It has the potential to bring young and old, families and communities together.

We will:

Use major sporting events to help promote grassroots sports.

Support the involvement of democratic community organisations and co-operatives in the governance of football and other sports.

Develop a Scotland-wide school Olympics.

Recognise the importance of rugby to Scotland's economy and communities and encourage broadcasters to increase the level of rugby on both terrestrial and satellite television.

Reforming procurement
to ensure Scottish companies
can compete for work

Better Procurement Action Plan

The Scottish Government and public agencies spend £9 billion every year buying goods, services and buildings. Too many of these contracts have been centralised so only big business wins. The size of the contract reduces the number of businesses that can even make a bid, so competition is reduced. This hurts Scottish companies who lose out to much larger English and European companies. Not one of the four largest projects procured by the present Scottish Government is led by a Scottish company, and three do not have any Scottish companies in the consortium at all.

Our Better Procurement Action Plan will help Scottish business, create jobs and champion innovation.

We recognise the costs to individuals, communities and the taxpayer from the loss of Scottish employment and business profitability if contracts are awarded elsewhere. Previous government reforms have not delivered for Scotland's micro, small and medium sized businesses. We will change the rules. Our commitment is to reform procurement to focus on innovation and creativity while attracting new entrants with new ways of doing things.

Our plan will allow new approaches to the provision of buildings, equipment and services and will welcome good ideas from smaller companies.

We will:

Establish in law the principles of better and fairer procurement, based on the idea of the five principles of better regulation: proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted, and to these we will add sustainability.

Review what impact the aggregation of contracts has on businesses, the supply chain and the wider economy and introduce a presumption against bundling multiple projects into a single contract unless it can be shown that this will not disadvantage Scottish business.

Expand the supplier development programme, currently in operation in Glasgow, Tayside and elsewhere, which helps small and medium businesses win public contracts.

Move the emphasis on contracts for services to delivering the outcome that is sought, rather than just details of the means to be used, to unlock creativity and innovation and allow new companies and voluntary groups to find new ways of working for the public benefit.

Require the public sector to produce data on the proportion of their procurement spend at a local level and publish reasons for their decisions about service contracts.

Remove a Scottish disadvantage by making sure that the carbon impact of products is included as a serious factor in contracts. Putting sustainability at the heart of public procurement will help generate new markets and supply chains for low carbon products.

Insist that UK or Scottish standards for animal welfare are set down in specifications.

Establish a presumption in favour of Fair Trade products in public contracts.

Put an emphasis on local food procurement, including by requiring public bodies to make public the provenance of food procured.

Change the focus of Scotland Excel to allow for greater flexibility and move away from a one-size-fits-all approach. We will give it responsibility for advising the public sector on best practice in procurement.

Extend challenging invoice payment targets for all businesses in the supply chain working on public sector projects, and enforce these effectively.

Introduce one national accreditation database or 'kitemark' for organisations or individuals who wish to do business with any public sector contracting organisation. This will remove a bureaucratic barrier that gets in the way of good business.

Support local companies and micro businesses by encouraging greater use of community benefit clauses and social impact bonds.

Cutting regulation
by a quarter
to help businesses grow
and create jobs

Cutting Regulation Action Plan

Too much of the time of business owners and managers is spent on form-filling for different government agencies. This particularly hurts small and new businesses who should be spending as much time as possible developing their business. The paperwork and regulatory regime is too burdensome and bureaucratic in Scotland.

Our plan will transform the way in which regulation impacts on business. We will ensure a service culture is developed within public agencies that shows respect for the role of business in creating wealth and employment as well as protecting the consumer and the environment.

Our ambition is to cut the burden of regulation by a quarter.

Successive governments have promised to reduce the burden, but the need to act is now greater than ever. There will be a stronger role for the Scottish Parliament to review legislation that it has already passed to work out if it is harming business. The Regulatory Review Group has proposed good work. Its recommendations need to be taken seriously and it needs to be given the authority to go much further.

The Cutting Regulation Action Plan will:

Change to a culture where businesses are inspected only in proportion to risk. Businesses which demonstrate high standards will have the right to a lighter touch and less frequent inspection regime.

Give the Scottish business community the right annually to draft the text of a parliamentary motion on a subject of its choosing and with actions that it determines. The motion will be proposed in Government time in the Parliament. Voting will be restricted to MSPs but the terms of the motion will be in the hands of business.

Reform business rates to keep the Small Business Bonus, help more businesses access its benefits, examine rates holidays for seasonal tourist businesses to keep Scotland open all year round, and give local councils a real stake in growing the prosperity of their area by giving them a share of business rate growth.

Make transitional relief statutory for the 2015 rates revaluation.

Support the delivery of Enterprise Zones in Scotland, encouraging economic growth through a package of business support measures. Combined with Regional Development Banks these will provide a real boost to local economies.

Work with business to establish a Host Employer Scheme and other support through Regional Development Banks to help sole-traders handle the bureaucracy of recruiting and managing their first additional member of staff.

Mandate a Scottish Parliament committee to consider a regulation or burden for repeal if the Regulatory Review Group requests it.

Ensure that regulators face parliamentary scrutiny more frequently and more intensively.

Invite the public and the business community to submit suggestions on which regulations could be stripped away on an annual basis.

Review the inspection functions of SEPA and consider if these can be transferred to local government to help combine inspections.

Bring together the boards of Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage and ensure they have clear objectives to support economic growth as part of their remits.

Require ministers to respond formally to the reports of the Regulatory Review Group detailing what action they are taking in response to the recommendations.

Require Business Regulatory Impact Assessments to be carried out on all major policy decisions to ensure Government has a clear understanding of the impact of its legislative proposals.

Extend placement programmes to allow civil servants to see first-hand the practical impact of regulation on business, and allow businesses and regulators to work together to find effective and efficient ways of putting legislation into practice.

Work with Scotland-Europa and the UK Government to reduce the burden of UK and European regulations on Scottish business.

Give business representatives the opportunity to be represented directly on the boards of Scottish regulators.

Support the production of a blueprint for a one-stop-shop for business inspection.

Require public agencies and local government to develop a better service approach by combining their paperwork and the forms associated with different inspections where they can.

Review regulatory and licensing functions to remove all registration schemes that have no other function but to register. The Scottish Government doesn't even hold information on how many there are.

Increase the amount of post-legislative scrutiny conducted by parliamentary committees, starting with those statutes identified by business groups as being disproportionately burdensome.

Require that fees for regulatory services and licensees are only to cover administration costs, not used as a revenue source.

Introduce a moratorium exempting businesses with fewer than ten employees and start-ups from new Scottish regulation for three years.

Support a flexible and well-resourced planning and development regime to help speed up consents, reflect local views and allow quicker decisions for businesses who want to invest in Scotland. We will make economic development a material consideration in the planning process to help get development projects off the ground more quickly.

Giving unemployed young people
the chance
of a work experience place,
internship, apprenticeship
or substantial volunteering
opportunity

Preventing a Lost Generation Action Plan

We are determined to prevent a 'lost generation' of young people becoming the hidden victims of the tough economic times. We have already worked with others and in doing so we have created more college places and increased student support. Our determination to get Scotland creating new jobs will bring new opportunities for people. We will make sure that young people are not left behind by the economic recovery simply because they finished school, college or university in the depths of economic recession.

The evidence is that work placements and work experience help young people into full time, permanent posts. Nearly 70 per cent of graduates say that lack of experience is the most significant barrier to finding employment. Research has shown that 80 per cent of young people given volunteering opportunities go on to positive outcomes, and 85 per cent of young people said these had helped them gain new skills and confidence.

We will continue to make sure college places exist for all those who could benefit from them. For young people leaving school, college or university without a job, our Preventing a Lost Generation Action Plan will get them ready for work. This is good for business too, ensuring a cohort of new workers with good skills for the workplace.

We will:

Within 30 days convene a group of the 20 leading Scottish private sector employers and seek their support for a '2020 Challenge' programme for graduates and others including work experience places, internships, apprenticeships or substantial volunteering opportunities.

Seek the co-operation of every local authority and public body to offer work placements and work experience and volunteering opportunities for every unemployed young person who wants one.

Require all publicly funded bodies to have employment policies to support hard to reach young people who find it difficult to secure long term employment opportunities.

Ask every housing association in Scotland to follow innovative examples to offer young people work experience opportunities.

Work with groups such as Project Scotland to support more young people and offer a wider range of Opportunities, and support third sector employers to provide opportunities for young people to get work placements in the voluntary sector.

Work to extend Training for Work and Get Ready for Work programmes and make sure that these add to the benefits of the UK Government's Work Programme.

Take a strategic approach to all education and training that makes sure that people are ready for work at the end of their studies.

Engage young people in designing new volunteering and experience opportunities.

Examine the possibility of rolling out the Commonwealth Jobs Fund model currently underway in Glasgow to encourage employers to create new jobs for unemployed young people.

Growing a
healthy rural economy
for businesses, communities
and families

Rural and Island Economy Action Plan

More than one million people live in rural and island areas of Scotland. They contribute significantly to the Scottish economy and the diversity of our country. We are determined that all people, all communities achieve their potential. We recognise the importance of post offices, the need for affordable housing and the potential of a digital economy for rural and island areas. We want to develop the diversity of the economy in rural and island Scotland with new industries. We will help people with the cost of living in these areas. And we will take steps to help with traditional agriculture and fisheries which have sustained these areas for centuries and should become more important in a world of increasing concerns about food security.

The Rural and Island Economy Action Plan will:

Promote innovation in rural businesses and support food and drink producers in developing new products, especially those with added value, and securing more exports.

Develop links between Scotland's traditional food production base and advanced manufacturing sectors to add further value to Scottish agriculture and fisheries.

Help deliver our Better Procurement Action Plan that will make changes to government procurement to support local produce and improve the local supply chain.

Retain Scotland's forests in public ownership and seek additional and innovative joint ventures for our great forests.

Work with stakeholders to review the current forestry target and agree an ambitious forest planting strategy. We will increase annually the net productive forest cover and support our timber industries. We will, however, avoid disproportionate burdens on communities and protect good agricultural land.

Make sure that forest waste can be used to generate electricity and heat for the local community where appropriate.

Pilot the expansion of timber-framed construction of new buildings by public bodies to support the forestry industries. We will procure wood products only from CPET certified sources.

Continue our successful post office diversification fund to bring new life and sustainability to rural post offices, and work across government to develop new areas of public services that can be delivered through post offices.

Ensure the delivery of super-fast broadband through our Digital Economy Action Plan brings tangible benefits to rural and island communities.

Ensure the new Regional Development Banks develop new local tourism plans that play to local strengths and support the development of tourism and destination management, including online booking.

Back joint ventures between state landowners and commercial or social enterprises such as in tourism and recreation with objectives for our national heritage bodies, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland, to promote our natural and built heritage for economic and social gain.

Make sure that the employment contracts for public workers in rural areas are flexible enough to allow them to work on small-scale businesses and enterprises in addition to their normal paid work.

Work with the UK Government to secure the benefits of its fuel derogation and use every opportunity to lobby our European partners to agree to its implementation and extension.

Explore ways of supporting key rural filling stations to adapt and survive, including the adoption of 24 hour card payment systems and changes associated with new fuels and electric vehicle systems.

Using planning regulations to create an innovative Home On The Farm scheme for more affordable homes from disused and underused farm buildings, giving farmers a new income, ensuring farm succession and providing homes for local people.

Support rural co-operatives and work with them and the Federation of Small Businesses in ways that can help the widest possible number of rural small businesses.

Agriculture

The health of Scotland's rural economy depends on a successful, sustainable farming and crofting industry. Scotland's high quality food and drink are recognised world-wide and Scotland's farmers are the first step in that supply chain. The nation's farmers are also stewards of the countryside, playing a key role in protecting Scotland's wildlife and habitats. The farming and food industries can capitalise on their strengths to the benefit of all who live and work in Scotland, but only within the right operating environment.

We will:

Spread development funds further by reducing the costs of Rural Development Schemes. We will fast track smaller schemes to reduce expensive adviser costs, encourage take-up and cut red tape.

Reform procurement rules to encourage the purchase of local food and help smaller producers and farmers access the large public sector market. We will make it a requirement that public bodies note the provenance of the food they buy.

Give fairer prices for producers by supporting efforts to break the monopoly power of the supermarkets and requiring more transparency in the supply chain.

Encourage action at both a UK and European level to strengthen farmers and crofters in the food chain so they can secure a better return from the market place.

Seek flexibility for Scotland to implement the change from historic to area based payments in a way that best meets the distinct needs of Scotland's farmers and crofters. We will use that flexibility to phase the changes in over a period that gives farmers and crofters time to adapt to the new system.

Seek measures to provide a national reserve of Single Farm Payments for new entrants and developing businesses.

Continue the current Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme. We remain committed to direct payments, which are increasingly important in underpinning Scottish farming and food production. We want to see part of them targeted to reward farmers and crofters for agreeing to carry out additional sustainability and competitiveness measures. We should have the flexibility to top up Less Favoured Area Support from direct payments.

Work with crofters to ensure a secure future for crofting, build a stronger and more democratic Crofters Commission and encourage take up of the Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme.

Press for a fairer distribution of funding from Europe for Scotland's direct payments and rural development.

Work with the UK Government and European Commission to reform the Common Agricultural Policy into a simpler and less bureaucratic model, with a more proportionate penalty system. We seek new measures in the CAP to ensure payments support activity.

Review the need for on-farm burial of livestock, especially in the uplands and hills.

Seafood industries

The seafood industry is worth a huge amount to Scotland's economy. Salmon alone contributes £300 million and is a major Scottish export. We want to assist growth in all sectors, including the inshore fishing industry.

The Common Fisheries Policy has failed. Scottish fishermen, processors and ancillary industries need a new approach. Scotland's internationally-renowned aquaculture industry, which is performing well in tough times, needs support.

We will:

Encourage and assist quality and sustainability accreditation across the Scottish industry.

Work to devolve responsibility for fisheries to the most locally appropriate level, allowing a more flexible and tailored approach in each, diverse fishery and recognising that the current top-down approach has failed.

Ensure decisions about the management of fisheries are based on the best available science, supporting efforts to promote greater collaboration between industry and scientists so that the data gathered is as up to date as possible.

Support measures to address the environmental and economic madness of discards, while recognising the complexity of the problem and engaging the industry fully throughout.

Ensure that the Conservation Credits Scheme for fisheries consults meaningfully with its stakeholders in order to sustain industry confidence.

Reconvene the Fisheries Fuel Taskforce in light of the high and spiralling cost of oil and its impact on all sectors of the seafood industry.

Review the functions of Marine Scotland to establish whether there is a conflict in the functions of scientific adviser to government, fisheries enforcement and management of fisheries regulation.

Deliver a one-stop-shop within local authorities so that the fish farming sector can be assured of consistent, high quality advice and fees are kept to the minimum necessary.

Review the functions of the Crown Estate to ensure that the benefits of our marine resources are retained as far as possible within the communities reliant upon them.

Making Scotland a global leader
on climate change,
a world of opportunity
for a sustainable economy

Climate Change Action Plan

Scotland has a world-leading Climate Change Act and Liberal Democrats are proud of the role we played in making the legislation as far-reaching as possible. Now we need to bring forward the strengthened measures required to meet the ambitious targets we have set for 2020 and beyond.

Action on climate change will not just protect our valuable environment, it will also bring wider benefits. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and moving to a low carbon economy will help Scotland to flourish, increase sustainable economic growth and create tens of thousands of new jobs.

Our first priority is to take substantial action on energy efficiency. Our homes account for more than a quarter of all of Scotland's emissions, and changing the way we use energy is the fastest and most cost-effective way to reduce emissions. Given that 60 per cent of buildings today will still exist in 2050 it makes sense to help them cut their energy use. We all know that the era of cheap energy is over, but with the right investment now we can help hard-pressed households and businesses save money on their fuel bills. We can cut emissions and cut bills at the same time.

Energy efficiency

Heating Scotland's homes is getting more and more expensive. Oil prices have hit a record high and the big power companies are being investigated over their pricing. Sitting back while fuel bills soar for households and businesses is simply not an option.

Ours is a vision of a changed Scotland, powered by clean energy used more efficiently, with more secure energy supplies and more stable energy prices, and benefiting from the jobs and growth that a low carbon economy will bring.

Bringing forward a step change in how well our homes and buildings are insulated and in the use of low carbon energy alternatives, we will:

Allocate £250 million from the *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund* to accelerate massively the insulation of homes and buildings in Scotland, including in the private rented sector and hard-to-treat properties, to set us on the path to achieving our fuel poverty and emissions reduction targets. We will ensure that every Scot, regardless of their income or financial circumstances, can access advice and affordable finance to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and save money on their bills.

Take forward new universal home insulation schemes, to be run by local authorities in partnership with other local organisations, to extend both subsidised and free-for-all energy efficiency measures to more households across the country.

Start a programme for insulation, energy saving and low-carbon energy in every public building to cut future energy spending.

Extend the support available to small and medium sized businesses and private sector landlords who are looking to replace old and inefficient technology or install energy efficiency measures.

Through Scotland's colleges, support a new generation of apprentices to become experts in installing insulation and energy-efficient systems in homes and business premises.

Capitalise on the UK Government's Green Deal scheme, which presents a huge opportunity for Scotland to lever in funding for substantial new action on energy efficiency and has the potential to support 10,000 Scottish jobs.

We will work closely with the UK Government to ensure that Scottish households and businesses pay back the cost of energy efficiency improvements through savings on their energy bills, reducing or removing up-front costs.

Work with the Carbon Trust and the Energy Saving Trust to provide a single streamlined model for the delivery of energy efficiency in Scotland.

Set a requirement for new-build homes and non-domestic buildings to be zero carbon by 2016. We will begin work towards the introduction of minimum energy efficiency standards for existing domestic and non-domestic buildings from 2015.

Maximise the potential of the new Renewable Heat Incentive to help revolutionise the way heat is generated and used in our homes and businesses, supporting a shift away from fossil fuel-based options towards low carbon alternatives. These include air and ground source heat pumps at domestic level, and Combined Heat and Power or a form of network heating in those communities where it makes sense. We will work towards an ambitious target to generate 20 per cent of Scotland's heat requirements from these sources by 2020.

Encourage the use of feed-in tariffs to benefit people who install small-scale renewable electricity generation and change planning regulations to support these and renewable heat measures in homes and businesses.

Clean, green energy

Scotland's green energy potential is well documented. We have 25 per cent of the natural European resources for tidal and wind power and 10 per cent for wave power. It also provides new opportunities to enhance our manufacturing capacity and to provide new employment, not least in rural and island areas. Renewable energy has doubled since 1999. Estimates suggest that green energy could create up to 30,000 jobs by 2020.

As part of a cost-effective, credible and ambitious energy pathway to stimulate low-carbon investment, create jobs and take Scotland towards achieving its emissions reduction targets, we will:

Provide new support to the companies developing marine, hydro and biomass renewable energy technologies and continue to seek investment in Scotland's ports and harbours to support the offshore renewable industry.

Set a target for Scotland to generate the equivalent of 100 per cent of Scotland's electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2025. Scotland will become a net exporter of clean, green energy and create thousands of new jobs. We will work with industry experts to make this vision a reality.

Recognise Aberdeen as a global energy hub in a specific government strategy.

Prepare a pipeline of projects for the Green Investment Bank so that Scotland can be among the first to benefit when the Bank becomes operational. We will continue to campaign for the Bank to be located in Scotland. We will begin to draw down the fossil fuel levy funds accumulated – but unspent – by previous UK governments so that the funds can be put to use on Scottish projects.

Continue to oppose the construction of new nuclear power plants in Scotland.

Support the development of carbon capture and storage technology for use on existing power stations and as a potential avenue for export. We do not see the need for a new coal fired power station at Hunterston.

Work with communities and developers and operators to guarantee fair and meaningful community benefits from commercial renewable energy developments, including allowing communities that host projects to keep the additional business rates they generate. We will seek to combine this with our proposals for community land trusts, so land and housing can be bought and paid for by the energy generated within the development.

Support community ownership of renewable energy to allow groups, co-operatives and local authorities to provide energy services through local energy networks, such as small-scale renewable and district heating schemes.

Encourage innovative behavioural change initiatives within communities by building on the work of the Climate Challenge Fund.

Work with the UK Government to ensure initiatives on transmission charging and electricity market reform reflect the specific needs of Scottish consumers and producers.

Natural environment

Scotland's land and seas are perhaps our most valuable national assets. They are the mainstay of many businesses, they support our communities and they provide some of the world's most celebrated and important natural environments.

To protect and enhance our natural environment, we will:

Strengthen the Land Use Strategy with clear objectives and actions to fight climate change and help manage the competing demands on Scotland's natural environment. This will include action to restore and protect Scotland's valuable peatlands and woodlands and a sensible siting strategy for new renewable energy developments.

Work with stakeholders to review the current forestry target and agree an ambitious forest planting strategy. We will increase annually the net productive forest cover and support our timber industries. We will, however, avoid disproportionate burdens on communities and protect good agricultural land.

Renew efforts to meet the 2020 biodiversity target, including by rewarding environmental protection by the farming industry to achieve a healthy countryside that produces food sustainably, is rich in wildlife and sustains rural businesses.

Ensure the effective implementation of the Marine (Scotland) Act and work with key stakeholders to provide a sustainable future for Scotland's valuable fisheries.

Waste

Good progress has been made over the last decade in boosting recycling, but not enough on the reuse and reduction of resources used. We share the ambition of a zero waste Scotland.

As part of the practical action needed to make that ambition a reality, we will:

Within a year, set out a comprehensive waste prevention programme to cover household, commercial, packaging and industrial sectors in order to cut waste volumes in half by 2020.

Meet the targets of the EU Landfill Directive to reduce biodegradable municipal waste to landfill. We will support economic opportunities presented by the growing recyclate market.

Bring forward a strategy for on-street recycling across the country, making it easier to use and more consistent across local authority areas, and take further steps to reduce the use of plastic bags.

Support the development of a network of anaerobic digestion facilities to process organic waste and use the gas captured to generate power in the local area.

Ensure that proposals for waste incinerators and large-scale biomass plants are subject to close scrutiny and robust regulation in order to protect local communities.

Transport

Changes to the way in which transport is fuelled are likely to be the most significant contributor to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport. But some of the most cost-effective and immediate ways of reducing transport emissions are the easiest to do.

As part of wider efforts to build an efficient, sustainable transport network, we will:

Bring forward a strategy on electric and low carbon vehicles, working with the UK Government and partners to roll out the supporting infrastructure and make owning an electric car a realistic ambition.

Commit to the public sector procurement of electric or low carbon vehicles as existing vehicles reach end of life, where the demands of the fleet allow it.

Develop a Scotland-wide public transport smart card, covering a range of operators, routes and fare structures, to improve the convenience of using public transport.

Promote smarter travel choices to reduce reliance on the private car. These include supporting public transport and car clubs, providing technology for new working practices such as teleworking and introducing travel plans into schools and workplaces.

Increase the proportion of the transport budget spent on sustainable and active travel measures, to help double the number of short journeys by foot and cycle. We will deliver the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland and ensure that active travel infrastructure is at the heart of all housing and commercial developments.

Building sustainable,
accessible,
efficient transport of
which Scotland can
be proud

Transport Action Plan

Our economy depends on moving people and goods about the country as efficiently as possible. Individuals and families depend on getting around safely and easily.

Creating a sustainable transport system that meets these demands is a challenge, but with the right investment Scotland will benefit environmentally and economically.

Scotland's geography creates frequent barriers. High petrol and diesel costs are putting household budgets and business costs under pressure.

In conjunction with the green transport proposals in our Climate Change Action Plan, and by founding our transport plans on the principles of sustainability, accessibility and efficiency, we will ensure that Scotland gets the transport network our communities want and our economy needs.

For efficiency, we will:

Deliver strategic transport projects, with a clear focus on safety, supporting the economy and improving public transport. We will use the borrowing powers of the new Scotland Act as a way of paying for large-scale infrastructure like the new Forth Crossing without cancelling every other sizeable project.

Ensure the timely delivery of existing transport commitments, including the Borders Railway, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, the Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvements Programme and strategic park & ride.

Develop a fully-costed and timetabled plan to dual the A9 to Inverness.

Make strategic investments to improve road safety and quality, for example taking forward plans to improve the A82, A83 and A96 roads.

Improve commuter transport outside major cities and make public transport a more convenient option even in rural areas, for example by opening a new station at Conon for Inverness and reopening Kintore station as the first step towards the Aberdeen Crossrail.

Make Scotland's trains fit for purpose by ensuring that future franchise agreements for Scotrail include the provision of better rolling stock for the long distance routes from the central belt to Inverness and Aberdeen, improved service and the provision of reliable 3G mobile phone coverage and free wi-fi. We will give the security and stability of longer contracts to help this happen.

Work with the UK Government and its agencies to develop detailed proposals for a high speed rail link to Scotland. We will help achieve this more quickly by carrying out a scoping plan for the Scottish end of the project.

Maintain a flexible Freight Facilities Grant scheme as part of efforts to promote rail freight as an alternative to road haulage.

For accessibility, we will:

Introduce a Fairer Fares Charter to put the interests of rail passengers first. This will require fair and understandable ticket pricing to help customers find the best deal available and exacting standards for quality of service, including better information for passengers when services are disrupted.

Keep the Scottish bus pass. All those with a bus pass will keep it. We propose to raise the age of entitlement progressively to 65. This reform will secure its future for the long term.

Restore the Bus Route Development Scheme with targeted approaches, for example services at major acute hospitals and centres of employment.

Continue to invest in lifeline ferry links serving Scotland's islands and coastal communities and give a fair deal on ferry fares to all of our islands.

Work with the UK Government to introduce the pilot rural fuel discount scheme for the islands at the earliest opportunity.

Improve winter resilience, keep up pressure on airport operators to continue to invest in snow clearing equipment so they can stay open in adverse weather conditions and support partnership agreements between transport authorities and farmers to keep Scotland's roads open during winter weather. We recognise that the severe weather conditions have put pressure on road maintenance budgets and will help local authorities to deal with potholes and damage on local roads and continue to invest in improving the condition of our national roads.

Reintroduce business travel in the Air Discount Scheme for the Highlands and Islands and extend it to cover airport charges.

Explore further steps to build on the success of the Air Route Development programme, which provided new ways to make international business connections.

Reduce congestion and disruption caused by road works by consulting on plans to allow local authorities to charge utility services an hourly rate for highway lane closures that overrun.

Support community transport and demand responsive transport schemes to improve social inclusion in areas where public transport availability is limited.

Reduce the number of road accidents involving young people by learning from innovative international initiatives and supporting more young people to take advanced driver training.

Starting an
Early Intervention Revolution
with measures for children
and their parents that
make sure no child is left behind
even before their first day
of primary school

Early Intervention Revolution Action Plan

There are 600,000 children aged under 10 in Scotland today. In a decade they will form a core part of our economy, society and community. We want to make sure that every child in Scotland can have a good start in life, no matter their background. Every piece of research shows that proper investment in early intervention makes sense.

We will invest more in support for children and their parents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The educational disadvantage caused by poverty starts very young and widens later. By the age of three there is a nine months gap in attainment. By the age of seven, children in poverty are two years behind and never catch up.

Every pound spent today on successful early intervention has the potential to save the public purse seven times that amount.

We propose to establish a substantial £250 million Early Intervention Revolution challenge fund. Children and their parents will be able to get new help from a partnership of councils, health authorities and the voluntary sector.

The challenge fund will champion innovation and new ideas. It will reward successful outcomes.

It is spend-to-save. All the evidence suggests that the targeted spending of a pound can save three, five or even ten pounds in the longer term. It will be a solution that lasts.

The Early Intervention Revolution will:

Set up an Early Intervention Revolution fund with £250 million from the *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund*. This will be structured to provide enduring benefit for the long term.

Ensure that every other part of the Scottish Budget details exactly how spend-to-save and early intervention measures assist in saving money in the long term.

Ensure every Revolution funded programme builds on existing best practice but encourages innovation. Bids will only be successful if they demonstrate cross agency, cross sector joint working.

Ensure the Revolution delivers investment in early years provision and removes impediments to learning.

Help children gain social skills prior to formal education through structured and unstructured play, indoors and outdoors, with a play and communication strategy. Programmes applying to the Revolution fund will be expected to deliver this as part of their plans.

Allow the fund to support work such as family nurse partnerships, successfully developed in places as diverse as New York and West Lothian, family intervention projects, health visitors, breastfeeding, developing parenting skills, and extension of school counselling hubs. If our Revolution is to take hold programmes must demonstrate success.

Devote a small proportion of the Revolution Fund to help early intervention projects for older children, particularly those in care or at risk of offending or drug abuse.

Children who are looked after by the state in residential homes or through fostering have the poorest education outcomes from the earliest age, but have the richest parent – the Government. Our Revolution is shaped to turn this national shame around.

Over 25 per cent of the total adult prison population has been in care at some point, compared with two per cent of the general population. Action to help looked after young people will lift their life chances, boost employment and our economy and prevent the waste and misery caused by crime.

We need this generation of looked after children to flourish and to have a positive future. We will make sure this cohort is different.

For looked after children we will:

Introduce a specific pupil premium for looked after children, starting as soon as they come into care. This will provide extra money given to their head teacher to allow them to invest it in extra help with learning and access to one-to-one tuition, mentoring and literacy and numeracy work.

Promote a national initiative to make sure every looked after child at secondary school has access to a mentor to prepare them for life in work or in further or higher education.

Propose that additional support to help looked after children enter higher education is considered by a student-led review of student support.

Develop a programme to provide supported accommodation for those leaving local authority care at the age of 16 and ensure there is real improvement in post 16 services and support for care leavers.

Aspiring for Scotland to be
among the very best for
education in the world,
raising attainment
for every child,
more powers for head teachers

School Education Action Plan

We want every child to succeed, to achieve their full potential and leave education with the right skills, the best qualifications they can attain and ready for work.

Our approach is based on a truly liberal value of ensuring that every child born or living in Scotland should have the very best opportunity at the start of life, regardless of wealth, privilege or family background.

We will use the Curriculum for Excellence, pioneered by Scottish Liberal Democrat education ministers, as the basis to raise standards for children in schools. We recognise and appreciate the efforts of teachers introducing the large reforms currently underway and our new proposals will make them easier to implement.

We will give more powers to head teachers over their schools, working with parents. Head teachers will be able to plan the development of their school, play to their strengths and meet the needs of their community.

Head teachers will have more time to lead great teaching and good discipline if they are given fewer instructions by government ministers.

They will have more powers to choose the right staff for their school and we will make it easier for them to recruit the brightest and most inspirational new teachers, thousands of whom do not have permanent teaching jobs.

We want to make sure that schools have a transition strategy to help all children – from high fliers to those being left behind by classmates – make progress during the transition into formal education from nursery and from primary to secondary.

Our approach to 16-18 education will make sure that young people continue to reach their full potential after the age of 16.

This is why every child will have a fair chance and better start in life under our Plan.

The School Education Action Plan will:

Use the Curriculum for Excellence as the key to raise attainment and ensure the coherent delivery of literacy and numeracy skills throughout the 3 to 18 curriculum.

Help every child to benefit from a strong start to formal learning in P2 onwards with the P1 year in primary school treated as a more informal start to education, with an emphasis on play, communication and social skills. This follows the successful models elsewhere in the world.

Continue to expand the options available to pupils with the opportunity to attend college to do a course of their choice from the age of 14. Our approach to engage the top 20 private sector employers in new ways of thinking will help promote much greater private company involvement in post 14 vocational opportunities.

Encourage more links between primary schools and secondary schools and universities on science and languages, where the skills exist in depth. Our Science Nation Action Plan will dovetail and provide new energy to this area.

Give Scotland's pupils a global competitive edge and encourage an internationalist outlook in Scottish schools by developing Mandarin opportunities in our language strategies.

Encourage more secondary school style teaching for pupils in P7 to help the transition from P7 to S1.

Allow head teachers greater control over discipline in schools, with off-site education for persistently disruptive or violent pupils.

Encourage greater sharing of facilities between schools, colleges and the local community, supporting the creation of community campuses and sports hubs. This will open up the school estate at evenings and weekends for wider use by the community.

Support a system for individual pupil progress that sets regular goals and targets, developed by teachers in partnership with pupils and parents.

Actively monitor how the new standards body SEQIA operates and ensure it is both efficient and inspirational.

Excellence in leadership. Excellence in education.

Teachers are the biggest resource in education. The quality of teaching is as important in the development of the individual child and young person as buildings, equipment, administration or even resources. We believe teachers should be free to carry out their duties without the burden of unnecessary bureaucracy or restrictive procedures. At the same time, education policy decision-making processes should be more open and transparent, with the ability to give a strategic voice to parents, staff, pupils and the wider community beyond the school.

We will:

Devolve more power and financial control to head teachers and give them the flexibility they need within the Curriculum for Excellence. We trust teachers' professional judgement on the curriculum and method of assessment.

Task the review of the McCrone agreement on teachers' terms and conditions to re-energise the agreement between teachers, councils and the Scottish Government and to examine ways in which head teachers can have more capacity to recruit directly the staff they need at their school, including offering early retirements to open the way for fresh, new staff.

Allow schools to be tailored to meet the needs of local communities, encouraging schools to develop a specialism or style that fits their local circumstances, without central interference, by giving them more control over their own school development plans.

Put a priority on pupil-teacher ratios and allow head teachers and parents the flexibility to work within the existing legal class size limits. This is the best way to achieve the right number of teachers for our pupils.

Review the Education (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 to give more control to head teachers, to help parents hold the head teacher to account and to empower parents to be involved in planning education alongside head teachers in the cluster of local schools.

Ensure head teachers can be properly rewarded for outstanding leadership achievement and given incentives to turn around schools facing real challenges.

Establish through our existing regulatory and standards bodies a Centre of Education Leadership to promote, expand and spread the highest standards of leadership for all levels of education in Scotland.

Develop the profile of the annual awards for innovation in education and exceptional service.

Work with the General Teaching Council for Scotland on the re-accreditation of teachers to secure continual improvement.

Review the effectiveness of existing processes to remove failing or failed teachers with a view to streamlining and accelerating the procedures.

Review the protections afforded to teaching staff accused of mistreating pupils to prevent their careers being wrecked by false allegations.

Pilot school cluster co-operatives, at a size that is reasonable, where head teachers collaborate to develop the 5-18 education priorities for the school cluster.

Accept the recommendations of the Donaldson Review of teacher education. We will support a professional development system for teachers that commands the trust of the profession and ensures that all of Scotland's pupils receive the highest quality of teaching. Within this approach we will adopt a zero tolerance approach on poor teaching. We will support energetically the continual improvement of teachers who need assistance but those who can't teach shouldn't teach and will not teach.

Develop proper career structures for the other professionals involved in the classroom – technicians, classroom assistants, additional support for learning staff and nursery nurses and attendants – who make very significant contributions to the quality of educational provision.

Offering world leading higher education,
fairness of access,
free tuition,
stronger local colleges

Higher and Further Education Action Plan

For more than a decade Scottish students have enjoyed free education at Scottish universities because of Scottish Liberal Democrat ministers and MSPs abolishing Labour's fees. This is one of the touchstone achievements of Scottish Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland and we remain committed to retaining this hard fought gain. We will not introduce tuition fees. Our reforms to the sector will also mean we can avoid a graduate contribution if other parties work with us.

But for Scottish universities to remain internationally competitive, investment needs to increase.

We propose reforms to Scottish higher education. We will make the Scottish degree a more flexible spine and make it easier to move between college and university, allowing many degree courses to become three year courses.

We will also offer new sources of funding, including the bulk of our Science Nation Fund, in order to develop science facilities and lever additional business investment in research. We will examine the ways in which EU students can contribute more. Taken together these reforms will allow Scottish universities to maintain their advantages and remain world leaders in many fields.

One area that is failing, however, is the number of poorer students who have access to higher education.

We will make sure that the brightest children get their fair chance at higher education, whatever their family background and whatever the community they come from. We will not tolerate the continuing low numbers of students from the poorest backgrounds going into higher education.

Our aim is for every young person to be able to achieve their potential. Whether straight to a job, an apprenticeship, college or university, we will help them and make sure they are ready for work.

The Higher and Further Education Plan will:

Build a funding package for higher education, with others, that gives the resources institutions need to compete across the world.

Keep education free, with no tuition fees and no graduate contribution.

Start reforms with a £250 million Science Nation Fund from the *Investing in Scotland's Future Fund* to boost science facilities. The objective will be to use this as a match fund that can secure considerably more investment opportunity for the sector.

Investigate a fair system of payments from EU students.

Bring together local authorities, colleges and universities to improve integration between S5/6, college and the first and second years at universities.

Support modernising reforms to the higher education sector, including the establishment of the Scottish degree on a flexible spine that in many subjects results in a standard three year degree.

Give students the opportunity to move between institutions with greater ease.

Work to increase donations and philanthropic giving to universities, as well as private sector involvement in our Science Nation Fund.

Require colleges and universities to develop partnerships with schools, targeted firstly at areas where there are fewer pupils going on to further or higher education.

Establish a student led review of student support aimed at gaining efficient delivery and fair access. This will include Education Maintenance Allowances, part-time students, college bursaries and support for looked after children.

Accept that university is not the right course for every young person and so we will create stronger local colleges, supporting local businesses, and give strong support to apprenticeships and other routes into work.

Give a radically enhanced role to Scotland's colleges and promote wider entry into higher education through further education.

Entrench school-business-college partnerships to bring more meaningful interaction and collaboration between universities and businesses.

Helping our brilliant health service
and its staff meet
the challenges they face, keeping
health and care local, tackling the
big killers
and preventing ill health

Better Health Action Plan

Our health service has served us brilliantly for more than sixty years. Our plan for health recognises that achievement.

NHS staff are a credit to Scotland's health service, providing dedication and commitment. Substantial progress has been made in the last twelve years in improving health outcomes and patient experience.

The health service faces enormous challenges for the future, most of all from the growing population of elderly people and the extra health care they need.

The majority of spending is currently directed towards acute hospitals and away from primary and community care. That means the current health service can be expensive and inefficient. People are being kept in hospitals, often miles from their homes, when they would receive better, and more cost-effective, care closer to home. A week in an acute hospital waiting for discharge costs thousands, one week of better care at home just a fraction of that.

We will help more people get better care in their home or local community through closer working between health and care staff at a local level.

Our reforms will allow us to make progress on tackling wider health concerns.

Scotland has made good progress on the big three killers – stroke, heart disease and cancer – in the last decade. But cancer detection rates remain low by international standards to detect and treat cancer. Around a quarter of new cancers are only detected for the first time at A&E. We will improve detection and treatment.

We will continue to promote good health with a nationwide plan to tackle obesity. Scotland's obesity crisis comes at a high cost to the individual and the taxpayer, and it is storing up significant health challenges for the future. A quarter of children aged 2-6 already have an unhealthy BMI. We will take forward a wide-ranging obesity strategy, bringing together health, education and care services, to tackle the problem at every stage and prevent it worsening.

One in four adults will experience mental ill-health in their lifetime, and mental health problems place enormous burdens on individuals, their families and the Scottish economy. We will bring forward an ambitious new mental health strategy to tackle the problem across all age groups,

We know that Scotland's health service is about more than targets and statistical inputs. Joined up thinking, cutting out waste, and smart investment in preventative care will improve the long term health of the nation and improve the care that patients need in their community.

Our plan makes sure people can get the services they need in urban or rural communities.

We will deliver our Action Plan for health alongside our plans for drugs and alcohol, carers and the Early Intervention Revolution to secure the best outcomes for Scotland.

The Better Health Action Plan will:

Set a new national objective on obesity. We will work with schools and community groups to increase access to sports facilities and clubs, increase the availability of dieticians in GP practices and provide better help and information for individuals and parents. We will encourage school nurses and health visitors to use the BMI data currently recorded by schools to engage more proactively with parents about their children's diet and exercise.

Set a new target for urgent referral for cancer diagnosis. Every patient should expect to see a specialist within two weeks. We will also work to tackle the unacceptably high number of cancer cases that are only detected for the first time during emergency admission to hospital.

Improve the provision of mental health services, increase access to psychological and emotional support and reduce waiting times for psychological treatments and talking therapies. We will take steps to increase the number of qualified psychologists and psychiatrists and develop more community-based support services.

Drive forward smart investment in preventative care and health, continuing also to make progress on smoking cessation measures.

Retain NHS 24 but improve out-of-hours care across Scotland, with a particular focus on rural and remote areas, and put GPs back at the centre of the service. We will work closely with the BMA to develop their out-of-hours proposals and establish a challenge fund to allow more areas to take forward the out-of-hours options proving more popular with patients. We will explore the benefits of organising the ambulance service on a Health Board area basis and locating control rooms with other blue light services.

Expand telemedicine and eHealth to allow easier access for patients, especially in rural areas, and avoid unnecessary outpatient and inpatient activity. This will save money and improve patient care.

Make Scotland the first country to establish national-scale telehealth services and establish a specific HEAT target for all health boards, to mainstream the use of telehealth in the delivery of patient care.

Make better use of pharmacy services in the community to provide quick and easy access to healthcare out of office hours and at weekends. We will allow pharmacy applications to be handled more fairly and work towards giving pharmacists more patient information to help them improve medicine management.

Guarantee access to an NHS dentist for everyone who wants it, after working with the dental profession.

Learn from innovative international examples of best practice to ensure Scotland's care homes provide world class levels of care and stimulus. We will ensure strict regulation of care home standards with severe penalties for breaches of these standards and explore with the regulators the scrutiny of care home operator finances.

Drive down rates of healthcare associated infection across the whole of the health service and ensure that all of Scotland's hospitals meet scrupulous standards of cleanliness.

We will bring common sense to the delivery of health and social care by requiring effective working between health boards, local authorities and care services. We support the sharing of staff and premises. Simple steps to improve communication and co-operation can make a huge difference to patient outcomes.

We will:

Bridge the gap between health and social care, making sure that individuals have the support they need stay in their own homes where possible. We oppose the centralisation of care into a single, national care service, with little accountability and enormous costs and bureaucracy.

Protect free personal care, a proud achievement of our time in government.

Help individuals with long term conditions or their carers design the best healthcare for their individual needs. We will require local authorities to offer a range of self-directed support options to give people control over their

care and provide them with the information they need to make informed choices. We will develop community initiatives which provide information and support for self-management.

Drive out waste and inefficiency in the health service without impacting on frontline services. We will make health boards more financially transparent, end the system of bonus payments to high-earning consultants and take action to reduce the soaring drugs bill.

Allow communities to design the health services that best meet their local needs. We will help people bring forward their innovative ideas and solutions to change the way their community health services are delivered.

Caring for Scotland's
three quarters of a million
carers

A Caring Nation Action Plan

Scotland has a growing, ageing population and it is in everyone's interest to make sure that resources are used to the maximum and new ways are found to help people who need care. Three quarters of a million people in Scotland act as unpaid carers already, young and old alike.

Across the world, innovations have been developed to bridge the gap between hospital and community care, support self-management and peer support networks.

We will ensure that carers are given better access to information and support services and receive better assistance from local authorities and health boards.

Where appropriate we will change the law to improve support and give carers more control and choice.

A Care for Carers Bill will:

Give individuals and carers the right to access a range of self-directed care options and the information they need to make an informed decision.

Strengthen the Carers' Assessment in order to ensure that the carers' life outside of caring is fully recognised.

Ensure that an assessment for care in one part of the country is "portable" so people can move to be near family without having to go through a lengthy assessment process again.

Work with local authorities and health boards to introduce a short break entitlement for those in greatest need. Carers with significant caring responsibilities will be entitled to a guaranteed minimum number of hours of respite care.

Introduce a statutory minimum kinship care allowance and require all local authorities to provide this.

Introduce a requirement on NHS boards to ensure that information, training and support is provided to all patients and their carers before discharge from hospital and on diagnosis of long term conditions so that carers have all the support they need at the very beginning of their caring role.

There are other non-legislative measures we can take to support carers. We will:

Take forward the 'Caring Together' and 'Getting it Right for Young Carers' strategies.

Build upon the existing emotional and psychological support for carers by developing innovative peer support and mentoring schemes in the community, working with carers' organisations and carers themselves.

Work with schools to develop innovative support for young carers and strengthen their capacity to meet the demand for existing dedicated young carers' services.

Pilot new ways to support carers to take advantage of our plans for super-fast broadband access, developing telecare's role in community care and carer assessments.

Work more closely with the UK Government and local government to tackle benefits issues and ensure people are receiving what they're entitled to.

Tackling the blights of alcohol and drug addiction

Drugs and Alcohol Action Plan

Drug and alcohol misuse matter to the whole of society. We all feel the impact. From damaging public health, through crime in local neighbourhoods, families forced apart by dependency, and to the corrupting effect of international organised crime, drugs and alcohol have a profound and negative effect on communities, families and individuals.

There is no quick fix to Scotland's problem with drugs and alcohol. The enormity and complexity of Scotland's alcohol challenge in particular requires fundamental and lasting social and cultural change. Understanding the root of the problem is as important as effective implementation of the legislation that has been passed.

We know that, to be successful, helping people recover from drug and alcohol abuse will require broad action across society. Our plans to create sustainable employment, boost educational achievement and improve public health will contribute.

By delivering for the long term and implementing the Drugs and Alcohol Action Plan, we will:

Ensure the stringent enforcement of existing alcohol law, ending the low rates of prosecution for selling alcohol to drunk people and underage young people. We will make full use of the substantial – but under-used – powers of licensing boards to address alcohol problems in their local areas.

Continue to support UK-wide measures to tackle the sale of alcohol at unacceptably low cost, avoiding unintended consequences of cross-border sales and without simply boosting the profits of retailers. We will also work with the UK Government on setting challenging responsibility duties for the licensed trade.

Break inter-generational paths to dependency by focusing early intervention measures on families with complex needs and parents with substance misuse problems. We will roll out family nurse partnerships to provide intensive and structured support for vulnerable families.

Recognise the clear association that exists between mental illness and drug and alcohol dependence and reflect this in our comprehensive mental health strategy.

Use increased funds from criminal cashback schemes to invest in quality diversionary activities for young people in the community at evenings and weekends, alleviating the boredom that can lead young people into abusing drugs and alcohol in the first place. We will involve young people in the design and delivery of the activities.

Cut waiting lists for access to rehabilitation and treatment. We will work towards a target that every person seeking treatment for drug or alcohol dependency will wait no longer than three weeks for access to the services they require. We will create a recovery system that focuses not only on getting people into treatment and meeting process-driven targets, but getting them into full recovery and off drugs and alcohol for good.

Develop end-to-end support for people facing drug and alcohol problems, building closer links between community, inpatient and residential treatment and rehabilitation providers. These will, in turn, work closely with aftercare providers so that individuals are not cast adrift when their treatment ends.

Recognise that substitute prescribing continues to have a role to play in the treatment of heroin dependence, both in stabilising drug use and supporting detoxification. We will continue to examine the potential role of diamorphine prescribing for the small number who may benefit.

Encourage local areas to promote a whole family approach to the delivery of recovery services, and to consider the provision of support services for families and carers in their own right.

Give local areas and organisations the freedom to design and jointly commission drug and alcohol services to ensure they meet local needs, including for those in the criminal justice system. We will tender and reward treatment and recovery services competitively, with money following success. Organisations that succeed in getting people off drink and drugs will be rewarded, those that fail to achieve results will not be.

Create a local support network of 'recovery champions' who have conquered their own addiction to spread recovery through peer networks.

Work with the Sentencing Council to encourage more widespread use of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders and alcohol treatment requirements within Community Payback Orders, intervening to catch people with substance misuse problems before they descend into a life of crime. We will ensure that offenders are encouraged to seek treatment and recovery at every opportunity in their contact with the criminal justice system. We will continue to support tough sentencing for drug dealers.

Improve education and rehabilitation services in prisons so that offenders have a chance at a fresh start when they are released. We will pilot prison wing-based, abstinence focused drug-recovery services in prisons and encourage offenders who have recovered from substance abuse problems to become mentors for their peers. We will explore the potential of new technologies to disrupt drugs from entering and being traded within prisons and increase the number of drug-free wings, where increased security measures prevent access to drugs.

Work with the UK Government to expand schemes that help recovering drug addicts and alcoholics to improve their employability and find their way back into the job market. The public sector must play its part through both direct recruitment and procurement contracts. We will explore options to help claimants overcome the issues presented by having a criminal record.

Delivering more homes for people,
bringing empty homes
back into use,
helping people to
buy, sell and rent

Housing Action Plan

Providing decent housing across Scotland is essential if we are to meet our long term ambitions for the economy and our health and social wellbeing. There is a major challenge in tackling the housing shortfall and our Action Plan is focused on helping deliver more homes that are affordable, both in the heart of towns and cities and in rural areas. We will create the right conditions for a healthy, stable and sustainable private sector housing market.

Different communities have different needs and the balance of tenure products required will vary throughout the country. We want to see flexible delivery of local solutions and a spread of spending across all tenures and income groups.

In particular we will expand shared equity programmes and mortgage guarantees to help people make their first house purchase. Under our plans people will be able to build up through shared ownership, with a range of transitional or intermediate tenures.

We recommit to the 2012 homeless target and will put in place a package of measures to help meet demand with supply.

The Housing Action Plan will:

Start a new system of grants to people to bring Scotland's 70,000 empty homes back into use. We will provide grants of up to £10,000 to home-owners who bring homes back into use, provided that they allow a housing association to rent it out for ten years.

Investigate new and more flexible sources of funding for the social housing sector, including the idea of using pension investments and bond funding. We will assess the scope for the National Housing Trust model to provide additional resources with a lower amount of public subsidy input.

Give further priority to shared equity products, including the expansion of New Supply Shared Equity with Developers pilot scheme, and provide the opportunity for underwriting responsible mortgage lending to help eligible first-time buyers.

Develop community land trusts to secure and develop land within remote or rural communities providing affordable local homes to help keep rural areas vibrant.

Pilot a new Home on the Farm initiative to allow conversions of agricultural buildings for housing.

Encourage Regional Development Banks to consider investment in 'foyer' projects to combine supported housing and training opportunities for young people, especially those leaving care.

Review Home Information Packs to evaluate their effectiveness. We will retain the requirement for homes to have an energy performance certificate.

Support early intervention services such as the independent living agenda and the prevention of homelessness. We will target high-risk groups such as those leaving care, those leaving prison and ex-service personnel and create a consistent, national approach to supported accommodation.

Publish a green paper on how new powers over Scottish Stamp Duty from 2015 could be used to incentivise the re-use of empty property, develop brownfield sites, support social housing and tackle climate change.

We will build on reforms and innovations already proposed for the social rented sector, including giving local authorities and housing associations more flexibility.

We will:

Minimise the legislative constraints on landlords' allocation policies, giving them the responsibility to determine their own approach to meeting need, but retaining the requirement to provide settled accommodation for the unintentionally homeless.

Widen the tenancies available for immediate rented housing, including widening the circumstances in which Short Scottish Secure Tenancies can be used.

Encourage practical voluntary incentive schemes to help tenants who reside in accommodation which is larger than they need to think about downsizing. The schemes could also apply to fit and able tenants living in disabled adapted homes.

Ensure that the combined purchasing power of all of Scotland's housing associations can be used to secure savings on energy efficiency and small renewable energy generators for installation into new build. We will encourage individual housing associations to continue to innovate in design to create warmer, lower cost homes.

Making our communities
stronger and safer,
local police tackling local problems
and answerable
to local communities

Crime Reduction Action Plan

We will protect victims and support communities by focusing on what works to cut crime.

We will keep communities safe with a strong visible police presence.

We will keep policing local. Now is the right time for the police and communities to work more closely together to tackle local problems. We will engage the whole community in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour. We will build stronger partnerships between the police and local communities with new legislation to require local police to report on crime and enforcement in their areas and to consult on priorities.

Our new Police Bill will make sure police structures meet modern needs. We will make sure that the police are accountable to local people rather than just to government ministers. The bill will ensure that policing priorities are those of local communities, not central civil servants. We oppose moves to abolish local police forces and create a single National Force, a step that will cost millions and disrupt the work against crime.

We will retain the budget for police numbers for the coming parliament. We support the use of civilian staff for backroom and support functions and will trust chief constables to deploy their staff in ways that cut crime and maintain frontline police numbers.

We will make offenders move away from a life of crime through tough punishments which make them pay back to the community for the harm they have caused, combined with action to tackle their offending behaviour.

We want reformed prisons, with a greater emphasis on preventing re-offending. The voluntary sector will be involved earlier in prisons, accountable for longer after a prisoner is released and rewarded for success in preventing re-offending. We want public money spent on success, not failure.

We will tackle knife crime which overshadows many communities by tackling gang culture and building on the strong anti-violence work in Strathclyde that has cut crime by more than 46 per cent. We recognise that 90 per cent of people jailed for knife crime have already been in prison. It isn't a deterrent to them. We need solutions that last.

The Crime Reduction Plan will:

Bring forward a Police Act to improve community involvement in policing, strengthen local police authorities and free policing from unnecessary national political interference.

Give local communities a right to hear from their local police and to influence the policing of their areas, requiring police forces to produce comprehensive community engagement plans.

Make sure that the public get maximum value and service from blue light services with a comprehensive review. We will consider co-location and shared services but oppose centralisation of police or fire and rescue. Shared blue light control rooms that serve remote areas will be examined as an alternative to further centralisation and closure.

Follow the advice of ACPOS in giving forces flexibility in the way they deploy resources to maintain frontline policing.

Give local people access to regular updates on crime in their community and the action being taken to tackle it, working with police forces to publish online beat level crime statistics.

We will do all we can to end the revolving door of offending and re-offending that causes so much crime. We will promote effective punishments that work to cut crime.

To reform prisons and cut re-offending, we will:

Bring into force the legislation to end automatic early release.

Establish community justice panels as an alternative to court action to divert minor offenders from re-offending and anti-social behaviour by carrying out constructive community work. Such panels already work successfully in parts of England and achieve 96 per cent satisfaction from victims. These will be restorative justice panels for those who accept their guilt, saving police and court time.

Strengthen the amount of regular, structured hours of education and paid work that take place in prisons to create working prisons, investing increased profits in education and rehabilitation of prisoners.

Increase efforts to rid prisons of drugs by piloting wing-based, abstinence focused, drug recovery services in prisons for adults, encouraging more offenders who have recovered from drug and alcohol problems to become mentors, exploring the potential of new technologies to disrupt drugs from entering and being traded within prisons and increase the number of drug-free wings, where increased security measures prevent access to drugs.

Move towards the establishment of a custody and rehabilitation service from the current structure of the Scottish Prison Service. This will bring more involvement from the community and voluntary sectors for rehabilitation work within and outside prison.

Start a new approach to stop re-offending by allowing the voluntary sector to fund programmes with offenders, starting inside prison and accountable for two years after release. The partners will be paid by their success and this approach will encourage innovative new approaches to preventing crime by previous offenders.

Increase mentoring on release from ex-offenders, especially offering young offenders the opportunity to be 'met at the gate' on release.

Help young people receive intensive fostering as an alternative to longer custodial sentences, with appropriate specialist mental health, drug and alcohol treatment as a more effective alternative to custody.

Help offenders eligible for entry onto the UK Government's Work Programme to improve their chances of finding work after their sentence.

Violent crime will be tackled firmly, but we will deliver what works, not just what sounds good. We will help to develop the many examples where a real impact has been made by innovative solutions that have been proven to last.

To tackle violent crime with action that works, not just sounds good, we will:

Support the Strathclyde 'No Knives Better Lives' programme which has reduced knife crime by a third and which works with those who have been found with knives or at risk of carrying a knife.

Tackle gang culture as a route to reducing knife crime through supporting the development of targeted intervention strategies, like those used in the Violence Reduction Unit's Community Initiative to Reduce Violence in Glasgow which has seen violence drop by almost half in 18 months.

Encourage use of the Cardiff model to make hospitals share non-confidential information with police so they know where gun and knife crime is happening and when and can target it.

To promote safer communities, we will:

Pilot Vandalism Action Areas. Where there is community demand we will require all public agencies and organisations such as Scotrail to combine to take a zero-tolerance approach to vandalism in an area.

Use creative measures to address offending behaviour and problematic social divisions and sectarianism in communities, such as sports leagues for communities, learning from the pilot in Easterhouse which reduced gang fighting by 73 per cent.

Support early intervention work to divert young people at risk of offending.

Provide resources for Community Payback Orders, including an annual report back to communities.

To take forward reforms to help victims, we will:

Reduce the amount of time it takes to enact summary justice.

Provide new victim support measures, funded through prisoners' earnings, including steps towards higher and more consistent standards.

Change the rules to make sure that victims receive compensation immediately after it is awarded, with the state responsible for recovery from the offender rather than the victim.

Widen the victim notification scheme to notify victims when the offender is eligible for release from prison or is unlawfully at large.

Continue to focus on domestic abuse and fund services such as rape crisis centres.

Making local funding fairer;
no pensioner who lives on
£10,000 income
to pay any council tax

Fairer Local Funding Action Plan

Most people agree with us that council tax is unfair. The new powers in the Scotland Bill will make it easier to reform it. Our preferred alternative is local income tax. We will learn from the introduction of the Scottish income tax power in 2015 to allow us to be in a position to take forward reform from 2016.

For the forthcoming Parliament we will make a single, simple change. We will make sure that no pensioner on less than £10,000 has to pay any council tax. At the moment, even people on modest pensions end up paying hundreds of pounds in unfair council tax. Under our plans they will pay nothing. We will do this using the savings from our proposals to restrict bonuses in the public sector.

This will benefit around 20,000 pensioners in Scotland who need most help, many of them women who have faced huge disadvantages in their pensions due to the way the national insurance system has worked over the last fifty years.

We will provide sufficient central resources to support a council tax freeze for the next two years. We will enter discussions with local authority partners to consider options for the remainder of the parliamentary term.

We have a long commitment to federalism across the UK. The Scotland Bill is part of this. It establishes shared approach and accountability on taxation. We will take the principle further by improving the relationship and accountability between central and local government.

The Action Plan will:

Reject centralisation and centrally-driven reorganisations.

Give local authorities a power of general competence.

Publish a white paper on localism to outline the fuller steps that can be taken to disperse power away from the centre and towards local communities once the Scotland Bill powers are in force.

Promote greater local democratic oversight of public spending in an area to help bring efficiencies in the delivery of public services by eliminating duplication and promoting joint working.

Support and assist those local authorities who want to propose a regional option to public services, but we will not impose a centrally-driven reorganisation of local government.

Recognise that the complex needs that are expected to be met by all authorities across Scotland include demands that cannot be accurately plugged into a formula, however complex. We will review the funding formula for local government to make it simpler, more transparent and fairer to all authorities.

Introduce progressively a new rule to ensure that no authority receives less than 90 per cent of the average revenue support grant per head. The funding change will be introduced as cash increases for local government to ensure that no other authority will lose any cash as a result of the change.

Help local authorities make greater use of alternative funding innovations such as Tax Incremental Finance and the Local Asset Backed Vehicle model in order to leverage investment for development and regeneration.

Consult on plans to allow local authorities to charge utility services an hourly rate for highway lane closures that overrun to encourage greater efficiency.

We will carry out a comprehensive review of local business taxation to make it fairer and improve business sustainability.

We will:

Make transitional relief statutory for businesses at the 2015 revaluation, ending the scandal of 200 per cent increases under the current government.

Give greater parliamentary scrutiny to business rate assessors, their methodology in calculating rateable values and their handling of appeals.

Review the impact of taxation on empty properties.

Allow a proportion of additional revenues generated from economic growth to be retained by local authorities for reinvestment in their areas.

Explore the potential to introduce a business rates holiday for tourism businesses over the winter months.

Develop the small business bonus scheme with a view to extending it to cover small businesses with a high rateable value, such as hotels.

Reforming public services
to deliver for the user,
not the deliverer.

Expanding dramatically the role
of individuals, communities and
charities.

21st century liberalism in action

Liberalism Action Plan

A liberal's first instinct is to trust the individual. This applies to the delivery and quality of a public service as much as the protection of a civil liberty.

It is why we say that giving local service users, communities and frontline staff more control over services will shake out new ways of doing things, find new ways to join together different services and open up opportunities for new providers to offer new ideas.

Our proposals will allow public services to be designed, commissioned and delivered differently.

In the short term, this will help us tackle the financial pressures in public services by making sure we drive out duplication and waste. But in the long term, it will be a foundation for Scotland's response to the changing demand for public services and provide new tools to deliver them. They will help deliver the outcomes we need for our country and they will empower the army of committed public sector workers who want to contribute more.

We will deliver an Early Intervention Revolution, making a serious effort to prevent problems from developing in the first place and starting with the youngest children and their parents, helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds get a fair start in life.

We will extend that approach to diverting people from a life of crime, tackling drug addiction, keeping people out of hospital, reducing rates of obesity – all will improve the lives of individuals, but will also save taxpayers' money in the long term and reduce pressure on public services. We will put early intervention at the heart of government strategy and make a sustained shift in planning and investment to new approaches that manage and reduce demand on services more effectively.

We will:

Require organisations to do more to engage their employees in innovation, especially to consult frontline staff on the best way to drive out waste and reduce duplication in the delivery of services.

Take a holistic approach to the delivery of public services by giving people more control over budgets, putting all of the spending by different public agencies in an area together and giving local communities influence over how the money is spent in their area. This flexible funding will avoid duplication and overlap and will allow communities to determine their own local priorities. Services will be more accountable and responsive to the needs of the area.

Break down the barriers faced by charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises in providing services, and ensure there is sustainable funding and infrastructure support for them, helping organisations to work together.

Reform commissioning to encourage organisations to specify the results they're looking for, not the means to be used. Smarter commissioning opens up the potential for services that are more user-friendly and better value for money.

Introduce payment-by-results in public services, where appropriate. Success in delivering the desired outcomes will be rewarded, failure to deliver will not.

Incentivise public sector procurement which grows the local economy and develops social capital. We will encourage greater use of community benefit clauses and social impact bonds.

Develop robust and objective means of measuring outcomes to allow for better evaluation of results. We will require commissioning bodies to publish the reasons for their decisions about service contracts.

Allow communities to take over public assets and register an interest to acquire private assets of significant value to the community. We will reduce the barriers to transferring local authority assets to community groups and voluntary sector organisations. We will allow public bodies to sell assets below market value if there is demonstrable community benefit.

Place a duty on local authorities to offer a range of self-directed support payment options to give individuals and their carers more control over the services they receive.

Increase public scrutiny by requiring local authorities to publish monthly reports detailing all items of expenditure over £500. Councils will also be required to publish a statement setting out their policy on salaries and bonuses for chief officers, which must be approved by all councillors. We will introduce a salary ceiling of £100,000 above which pay decisions should be approved separately by the full council.

Fairness should start by restraint at the top

Our plans will tackle the growing pay bill for the top earners in the public sector so we can make life easier for those on the lowest incomes. Top pay continues to rise even as families are having to tighten their belts. We will ensure that Government and its quangos take action.

Our first budget will implement these measures and will set the tone for the remainder of the Parliament.

It will:

Require all public agencies and bodies to submit their budget for the number of their employees paid more than £80,000 per year. We will oblige those organisations to cut that pay bill by 10 per cent. This will be done by a letter of direction from the Finance Secretary in a similar manner to efficiency targets.

We will ensure that bonuses are not paid out over the lifetime of the next Parliament and those that are incorporated into terms and conditions will be set to zero.

Making Scotland a fair,
free and socially just
nation

Freedom and Liberty Action Plan

We strongly believe that human rights, applied without distinction and without regard to a person's beliefs, religion, culture or politics, are the basis of social justice. When these rights are breached, we all suffer, but society's poor and powerless suffer most.

Our ambition is for Scotland to be one of the most fair, equal and socially just places in the world.

The Freedom and Liberty Action Plan will:

Give Scottish ministers a defined interest in potentially lethal police equipment such as Tasers.

Limit the use of biometric ID systems in schools, ban fingerprinting of pupils without parental consent and ensure that any existing data is kept secure and destroyed as soon as possible.

Improve and strengthen Freedom of Information legislation and ensure that, as far as possible, the legislation allows scrutiny of organisations that spend public money.

Control the way councils use the serious surveillance powers intended for serious offences and require a Scottish Parliament committee to review annually how these powers are being deployed.

Improve regulation and introduce a code of conduct for public authorities using CCTV and automatic number plate recognition cameras.

Continue to work with the UK Government to ensure an integrated and sensitive approach to the treatment of asylum seekers, particularly in cases where children are involved, and ensure that asylum seekers have access to good legal advice early on and throughout the asylum process.

Work with the Scottish Legal Aid Board and other partners to deliver continued access to publicly funded legal assistance while seeking to reduce the cost of bureaucracy and make efficiency savings.

Maintain the International Development Fund.

Ensure Scotland meets its obligations with the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings, including measures to identify and support victims of trafficking, to bring traffickers to justice, and to protect the victims of trafficking from prosecution.

Work with police, faith groups and football clubs to ensure a co-ordinated approach to addressing the issue of sectarianism, which recognises the related problems of alcohol, knife crime and poverty. We will ensure that the valuable work on anti-sectarianism carried out by local groups is supported.

Extend legal marriage to gay couples and civil partnerships to heterosexual couples.

Tackle lack of awareness about gay issues, equality and bullying through the teaching profession. We will find new ways of challenging homophobia in schools and colleges and underachievement by lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils through mechanisms such as development of the Education for All programme in Scotland.

#Work with the UK Government to review the blanket ban on gay men donating blood.

Increase the number of employers participating in the Workplace Equality Index and provide advice and support to enable employers to do this.

Secure equal legal treatment in areas where it doesn't already exist, such as a single duty on public authorities to promote equality.

Develop one clear disability strategy for Scotland with tangible and measurable outcomes.

Widen opportunities in training, education and apprenticeships to encourage positive participation by disabled people. We will give particular support to disabled school children so that pupils with disabilities feel empowered to make the right decisions about their school education and future study and encourage colleges and universities to make all of their courses and facilities accessible to disabled people.

Recognise the work of Access Panels in Scotland and continue support for them at a local and national level.

Implement the Lord Gill reforms to allow ordinary citizens access to environmental justice in a way that is fair, equitable, timely and inexpensive, ensuring compliance with the Aarhus Convention.

Commit to working with the Ministry of Defence to use the devolved levers of science, education, training and enterprise services to add value to the Scottish defence locations. This will make Scotland good value for the UK taxpayer and help protect defence jobs in Scotland.

Widen and improve services for Scotland's ex-servicemen and women and legislate to give force to the Scottish Veterans Charter in all parts of government, already adopted by many of Scotland's local authorities.