



Raising the standard

FOR
OUR SCHOOLS
OUR HOSPITALS
OUR JOBS
FOR SCOTLAND'S FUTURE



Scottish Parliament Manifesto 1999

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"The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity."

Liberal Democrat Values

Introduction by Jim Wallace QC MP Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats

Scotland can be liberated from the intensely confrontational style of politics that shames the House of Commons. Investment in quality public services, responsible citizenship, a nation where enterprise can flourish - these are the key themes of this manifesto.

Liberal Democrats have been campaigning for a Scottish Parliament longer and more consistently than any other party. Liberal Democrats also helped secure a fair voting system which will ensure fair representation of the parties and a parliament which belongs to the whole of Scotland.

A Parliament elected by fair votes ought also to be a very different kind of Parliament from Westminster. Scotland can be liberated from the intensely confrontational style of politics that shames the House of Commons - a style which has turned away so many people from the political process. Instead, success in the Scottish Parliament will go to those politicians who practise the style of politics which Liberal Democrats have been advocating for years - politicians who are good at building up a consensus for their ideas, rather than those who are most skilled at roughing up their opponents.

A Parliament elected by fair votes also makes it very unlikely that any one party will command an overall majority. Politicians should remember that it is the people who will elect the Parliament. We will respect the voters' choice and are committed to making the Parliament work. In the likely event

of no party gaining an overall majority, we will try to secure an agreement for a stable partnership government.

Our strategy therefore is to set our own distinctive policies before the electorate and point out that the more people who vote for us, the better the chance that those policies will be implemented after the election. This manifesto sets out these policies. They are firmly rooted in the Liberal Democrat belief of valuing each individual and building a society where each person is free to fulfil their potential, and where, in turn, each citizen contributes to the life of the community, particularly by showing responsibility to the community's most vulnerable members.

Scottish Liberal Democrats give priority to quality public services. We identify investment in education, from pre-school years to higher education and beyond into lifelong learning, as the key investment our nation must make. It is an investment in our young people and therefore an investment in Scotland's future.

Scottish Liberal Democrats also recognise that Scotland has a regrettably poor health record. We will steadily move towards emphasising the promotion of good health and the prevention of illness as much as treating sickness. The new Parliament also offers an opportunity to look at old problems in new ways, cutting across departmental boundaries. We will want, for example, to tackle poor damp housing and recognise that it is as much a health policy as a housing policy.

Within the funding available we will tackle waste and re-examine priorities, so that more money can be released to improve our public services. However; if necessary, we are prepared to use the Parliament's tax-varying power. We are not a knee-jerk tax and spend party. We shall not require Scottish residents to dip into their pockets if there are adequate resources in the Parliament's purse. But if we cannot identify other means of funding essential investment, particularly targeted on education, we shall ask the Scottish people to pay an extra 1p rate of income tax.

Scottish Liberal Democrats also recognise that Scotland has a proud tradition as inventors and entrepreneurs. We are determined to renew and foster that tradition. We shall therefore support and encourage enterprise and take steps to secure and strengthen our indigenous industrial base. In particular we want to encourage the excellence which exists in our universities, but on which, in the past, we have failed to commercialise and build.

Investment in quality public services, responsible citizenship, a nation where enterprise can flourish - these are the key themes of this manifesto. It is a manifesto to set the people of Scotland free:

- Free from ignorance;
- Free from disease;
- Free from poverty and deprivation;
- Free to fulfil their potential in a free and open society.

These are the real freedoms which can be advanced by voting Scottish Liberal Democrat on 6th May.

Jim Wallace.



Raising the standard

Scotland's education

Key pledges

- **Recruit 2000 extra teachers**
 - **Double spending on school books and equipment in the first year**
 - **Launch a "Schools 2010" capital investment programme to tackle substandard school buildings and temporary classrooms**
 - **Abolish tuition fees for all Scottish students**
 - **Provide high quality early years' education for all three and four year olds whose parents want it**
 - **Quadruple student access funds to £14million to help the poorest students get to university**
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The challenge

Education is the key to Scotland's future

Without high quality education, Scotland will not be able to compete in a world economy, which depends more and more on knowledge and skills. Liberal Democrats want a society in which there is opportunity for everybody to develop their talents to the full throughout their lives. But if we are to succeed in restoring our education system to world class levels, we must recognise how much there is to do.

Too many Scottish schoolchildren have to learn in cramped and crumbling classrooms from tatty, outdated textbooks which they have to share with others. They do not have the facilities which they deserve for science, computing or sport. Worst of all, they do not have enough teachers, and those they do have are undervalued.

Under successive governments, Scotland's education has been underfunded, and undermined by a bewildering succession of reforms and contradictory shifts in policy. With a new Parliament, it is time for a fresh start. Liberal Democrats want Scotland's education system to be among the best in the world. Furthermore, we are honest enough to admit that we cannot achieve our aims without raising and spending more money.

In making education our first priority, we are determined to tackle the problems which have held Scotland's teachers and schools back for so long. These include:

- successive cuts, which have deprived schools of vital books, equipment and teachers;
- a torrent of initiatives and instructions from central government, which has left schools drowning in bureaucracy;
- constant denigration of teachers by ministers and the media;
- pay rates in education falling behind comparable jobs;
- schools in more deprived communities ill-equipped to help children cope with social problems.

Our priorities

It will take time to achieve all our ambitions for Scottish education. We propose three key measures which will nonetheless make a huge difference.

We will:

- **Recruit 2000 extra teachers and more support staff.** This will enable us to cut class sizes and improve the pupil/teacher ratio particularly in primary schools. We shall ensure the extra teachers give priority to making the greatest impact on literacy and numeracy.
 - **Launch a "Schools 2010" capital investment programme.** We will provide at least an extra £100 million over the four years of the Parliament for capital investment in schools as a significant step towards tackling the problem of sub-standard buildings by 2010. This will include replacing hundreds of temporary classrooms which have become far too permanent a feature of our schools. We will require all Councils to carry out a building audit of all schools to identify necessary work, including security, disabled access and energy efficiency, over the period of the Parliament.
 - **Double the spending on books and equipment in the first full budget year of the Parliament.** We will also maintain increased spending levels thereafter.
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Our ambitions for education

Making the right start

The first years of school are the most important of all. The only way to ensure genuine equality of opportunity for all Scotland's children is to guarantee high quality education for infants throughout the country.

We will:

- **Continue the planned expansion of pre-school provision and concentrate resources on early years' education to improve literacy and numeracy.**
- **Provide high quality early years' education for all three and four year olds whose parents want it.**

Higher standards in schools

Liberal Democrats believe that the more diversity there is in Scotland's schools, the more their overall quality will improve. Raising standards in education does not mean imposing a rigid uniform system of teaching from the centre.

We will:

- **Set and achieve ambitious targets for literacy and numeracy, as determined by our Commission on Education.**
- **Increase substantially the supply of specialist music, drama and modern language teachers.** We shall also use some of the additional teaching posts to increase the supply of science and maths teachers in secondary schools.
- **Ensure that all Scottish school children meet a high minimum standard of computer skills.** All schools should be able to make full use of the new technologies, particularly in rural areas.
- **Support children with special needs.** We will improve the arrangements for diagnosis and support for children with special needs and give every local authority a separate Special Educational Needs allocation.
- **Boost investment for new school buildings.**
- **Strengthen discipline in schools.** Recognising the growing problem of classroom indiscipline and that even one disruptive pupil can affect the teaching of an entire class, we will support teachers in maintaining discipline and provide them with the means to do so, for

example through special training. We will also continue to support the initiatives on alternatives to exclusion. We will require every school to develop policies to tackle bullying and truancy.

- **Strengthen the teaching of Scottish history and culture in our schools.**
- **Guarantee teaching and Gaelic and of Gaelic as a second language where there is a demand.**
- **Encourage diversity.** Allow schools to develop their own style and strengths, for example in science and technology, sport or arts. This would widen parent and pupil choice. We will encourage independent schools to work with state schools through local partnership schemes.
- **Establish a dialogue with the churches about their role.** Recognise the valuable role of the churches in education and establish a dialogue with all the major faiths about the role they wish to play in education over the coming decades.

Valuing teachers

Teacher morale in Scotland has suffered enormously under successive governments over the last twenty years. In other countries teachers are highly regarded, well-paid professionals. The success of the new Scotland will depend heavily on the quality of its teachers.

We will:

- **Ensure that pay rates and promotion prospects allow teaching to compete for the best people with other careers.**
- **Review the role and practice of the General Teaching Council.** We want the GTC to help to maintain high professional standards throughout a teacher's career. We will provide more opportunities and reward for continuous professional development.
- **Regularly seek teachers' views.** We will commission genuinely independent research to check on the standards being achieved.
- **Relieve teachers of their burden of paperwork.** We will provide enough administrative staff and IT support in schools, releasing the time of teachers for actual teaching.

Sport and physical education

There are too few Scots who are as fit as they should be. Sport and fitness, particularly for the young, are an important way of developing the full potential of our people, creating more worthwhile leisure activities for young people, reducing social alienation and promoting good healthy lifestyles.

We will:

- **Endorse and support a national strategy for Scottish Sport based on Sport 21.**
- **Maximise the time allocated for sport and physical education in schools.** We will identify where facilities are inadequate.
- **Create a fund to enable good voluntary organisation projects to continue after lottery or other time-limited grants have expired.**

Community education

Further Education should be open to all, whether it is part-time or full-time.

We will:

- **Open up schools to the whole community.** We will encourage an integrated approach to wider community use of schools and other facilities. We will encourage more voluntary after-school, holiday and supported study schemes. Schools, not least in rural areas, should become centres of education networks, accessible to every age group.

- **Guarantee an out of school hours "extra curricular" activity for every secondary pupil in Scotland** - by working in partnership with teachers, sport and drama professionals, voluntary organisations and others.

Higher and further education opportunities

Scotland's economic future will depend on its ability to sustain a highly skilled and flexible workforce. The new Scotland needs to build on its proud traditions in university education and develop a system in which lifelong learning is available to all.

We will:

- **Widen access to further and higher education.**
- **Attack student poverty.** We will quadruple, to around £14million per year, the access funds administered by universities and colleges to tackle financial hardship. Funding would be targeted, allowing maintenance of up to £2,000 a year to be paid to mature students and those in greatest financial difficulty.
- **Abolish tuition fees for all Scottish students at UK universities.**
- **Abolish 4th year tuition fees for English, Welsh and Northern Irish students at Scottish universities.** We will work at Westminster for the abolition of university tuition fees across the UK. We oppose the concept of top-up fees for undergraduates in higher and further education.
- **Support the progress of the University of the Highlands and Islands towards full university status.**
- **Support high quality university research.** We will provide the strongest possible support for the research base in our universities to maintain their competitive position at UK and international levels.
- **Reform and improve the financial support of colleges of further education.** We will enhance the key role played by colleges in education and training, particularly for technological and industrial careers. We will work to improve their funding and create, along with them, a modern, prestigious apprenticeship system combining on-the-job training and study.
- **Use the colleges and the voluntary sector to spearhead the provision of quality adult and youth education and training.** We will encourage the development of a regional strategic frame-work for further education across Scotland, the use of more New Deal funding in this field and the streamlining of quality audit arrangements.
- **Support disadvantaged students at college and university.** We will allocate additional resources to fund the institutions which recruit such students, in recognition of the added costs of recruiting and supporting disadvantaged students with few qualifications.
- **Support an independent UK Pay Review Body for higher and further education.** We will aim to implement its awards in full without staging. We will require a vote of the Scottish Parliament to overturn such recommendations.

Planning to be World Class

In the past, too many Governments have tinkered around with the structures of education. They usually succeeded only in increasing the bureaucracy and demoralising the teaching profession. Liberal Democrats believe that the structure of Scotland's education system does not require yet more fundamental change. At the same time there are steps which could be taken to make the administration more efficient and accountable.

We will:

- **Establish a standing commission on education.** We will give top priority to a thorough stock-taking of Scottish education, involving the specialist Parliamentary committees, to draw on expert opinion and experience here and in other countries. The Commission would be expected to genuinely consult all the interested parties across Scottish civic life, not least

teachers, building a coalition for agreed reform. All the evidence gathered would be used to evaluate the merits of recently introduced reforms as well as to draw up a 10-year programme of coherent reforms to restore Scottish education to its prime position.

- **Aim to enhance civic and environmental education.** We will include the basic concepts of business and enterprise.
 - **Establish a powerful Department of Education and Enterprise.** The Department will be overseen by a Parliamentary Select Committee on Education.
 - **Avoid over-hasty and unwanted initiatives.** We will not make further major reforms in the curriculum and exam system without adequate resources and full consultation with staff.
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Raising the standard

Scotland's health

Key pledges

- **Boost public health by introducing a Health Promotion Fund**
- **Recruit 1,000 extra nurses and 500 extra doctors**
- **Aim to reduce patient waiting times to six months or less**
- **Introduce a health check, starting with the abolition of dental and eye test charges**
- **Give nurses the pay they deserve**

The challenge

Scotland once led the world in medicine. Scots discovered penicillin and chloroform and built our great Victorian hospitals. Now our country has a very different reputation for health care. The death rate from lung cancer and coronary heart disease is far too high. Poor diet and poor housing contribute to making us one of the sick countries of the European Union.

At the same time, we have a crisis in our hospitals. Too many Scots are waiting too long and in too much pain for operations. Resources are not keeping pace with ever-rising demands and escalating costs.

Scotland has far too few doctors and nurses. The present Government has made the problem worse by setting itself the wrong target. It is concentrating on reducing waiting lists. Yet the numbers on the waiting list matter far less than the length of time for which patients have to wait for their operations.

Our priorities

Scotland faces both an immediate and a long-term problem in health care. The immediate concern is underfunding and the unacceptable effects on the sick and vulnerable which it causes. The long-term need is to improve public health and to prevent disease. Our key priorities address these problems.

Improving public health

We will:

- **Give far more priority to promoting public health.** Health is not just a matter for the NHS. If we are to improve health, rather than to simply treat illness, we need measures to improve damp and cold housing, reduce alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, improve nutritional standards and tackle air and water pollution. Scotland needs joined-up government - government departments, local councils, statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as health service bodies, must co-ordinate efforts and work together. We will look to housing policy, in particular our national house insulation strategy, to improve standards of health.
- **Abolish charges for eye and dental checks.** Since these charges were introduced, fewer people have had regular checks, and diseases like glaucoma and oral cancer develop undetected. This will be our first priority in introducing a national scheme of health screening.

We will consult with the medical profession about the most effective way of providing periodic health check-ups for all who want them.

- **Establish a Health Promotion Opportunities Fund.** This will support initiatives in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We will also give local councils more responsibilities for public health and health promotion.

Boosting the NHS

We will:

- **Increase health funding.** We shall pump significant extra resources into the health budget to introduce real improvements in the service, not just keeping pace with rising costs and demand.
- **Establish maximum waiting times.** At the moment there can be months between referral by a GP and the consultant's appointment, and months more before an operation. We will identify firm limits for waiting times in every specialty.
- **Reward NHS staff properly.** We support the principle of common pay and conditions across the UK for NHS staff. We will always seek to implement in full, and without phasing, the recommendations of the independent pay review bodies. We will give nurses more flexible hours to help them with family commitments. We will ensure that agreements to limit junior hospital doctors' hours are adhered to. We will improve staff training.
- **Employ 500 more doctors and 1,000 more nurses.** We will encourage former nurses to return to the profession. It is impossible to cut waiting times and improve patient care without more staff. We will also tackle the chronic shortages in professions like chiropody and speech therapy.

Streamlining the health service

At present, too much money is wasted in the NHS. It is still too bureaucratic and it lacks clear targets and objectives. Without embarking on a further massive reorganisation, which would only disrupt care and damage staff morale, Liberal Democrats believe there are many ways of streamlining the NHS to direct money towards patients instead of bureaucracy.

We will:

- **End the rigid division between the health and social services budgets.** It costs £685 a week to keep an old person in hospital and £305 per week in a residential home. Yet 1,700 Scottish senior citizens are in hospital without needing medical treatment because there is nowhere else for them to go. By transferring resources to residential homes, we will free up hospital beds for those who really need them.
- **Establish a new Ministry of Health and Social Services.** The Ministry will be held to account by a powerful Health Committee of the Scottish Parliament.
- **Establish a Scottish Standing Commission on Health.** Its members will be eminent figures with expertise in health care, independent of the Government. They will advise on NHS strategy and establish priorities based on clinical need, higher standards and length of waiting times.
- **Ensure proper scrutiny of appointments to Health Trust Boards.** The Public Appointments Committee of the Scottish Parliament should vet health board membership. All health board and trust meetings should be open to the public.
- **Link all health buildings to NHSNet within 5 years.** This will give doctors faster access to patients' records and allow long distance consultation with consultants.
- **Build new health facilities where required.**

Community care

The welfare system in Scotland has allowed too many people, especially the old and the mentally ill, to fall through the net. Our plans to tackle welfare and health care together will do much to

alleviate these problems. Many more elderly people would be able to remain in their own homes with a little more support. We would improve services to help them and those who care for them.

We will:

- **Establish a new independent Scottish Inspectorate of Health and Social Care.** This will monitor and publish standards for residential and nursing homes, with the power to close any which proved sub-standard.
- **Review charges for social and long-term care.** We will press for a higher threshold at which older people have to contribute to their own care, so as not to penalise thrift.
- **Support the Incapable Adults Bill.** This will aim to provide simpler arrangements for the financial management for incapable adults.
- **Improve provision for mental health patients.** We will establish 24 hour mental health centres.
- **Promote an early dialogue with all interested parties throughout the UK to establish a common way forward in achieving the recommendations contained in the Royal Commission on Long Term Care.**



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Raising the standard

Scotland's economy

Key pledges

- **Establish a Ministry for Education and Enterprise**
- **Support the development of Enterprise Parks attached to university campuses**
- **Establish a national infrastructure strategy for Scotland, with particular regard to transport and telecommunications links**
- **Re-focus the efforts of Locate in Scotland to pursue inward investment where the business is at the upper end of technology and can support or be supported by local businesses**
- **Give more support to the new start-up scheme for local businesses**
- **Support Scottish exporters by pressurising the Labour Government at Westminster to join the Euro**
- **Boost the rural economy by protecting rural shops, tackling high petrol prices and reforming the Common Agricultural Policy**

The challenge

Scotland has huge natural assets, not least our tradition of enterprise and innovation. Yet our economy has performed far too erratically. We have too many low-skilled operations which make us vulnerable to the vagaries of world markets. There is a lack of long-term planning and we have failed to develop sufficiently our home-based industries.

At present key sections of our economy face crisis. Manufacturing industry has been in recession for over six months. The oil industry has been badly hit by the fall in world oil prices. Many jobs have been lost in agriculture in the past year.

We need to develop long-term solutions to these problems. We must ensure that the Scottish people have the skills to equip them for the 21st century. We must tackle the unemployment blackspots created by the decline of manufacturing, as well as the severe problems facing our rural areas. We must strengthen Scottish-owned enterprises. We must increase sustainable economic development. We must target opportunities for significant tourism development in Scotland. The new Parliament should prove an enormous boost to Scotland's economy. We need to make sure that it co-ordinates its efforts effectively with Westminster, local councils and the EU.

Our priorities

Scotland's Government should look to the long-term needs of the economy and work in partnership with business, not at cross-purposes with it. Our plans for boosting investment in public services and infrastructure, promoting small businesses and encouraging energy conservation, will create thousands of jobs. However the greatest requirement to secure our future prosperity is to increase the skills and innovation of the Scottish people.

The economy

We will:

- **Establish a Ministry for Education and Enterprise.** This will ensure that education and training relate to the needs of business and enterprise and build on Scotland's reputation for inventiveness and innovation. We must ensure that our school pupils are given a basic understanding of business and commerce. We will invest in high quality education and aim in particular to raise the standard of science and engineering in schools and colleges.
- **Build on Scottish Enterprise's Technology Ventures and the Scottish Technology Fund.** This will help to develop the commercial potential of academic research and discoveries. We will support the development of enterprise parks attached to university campuses.
- **Reinforce links between colleges and local firms to develop appropriate training schemes.**
- **Work with colleges to promote a modern apprenticeship system to combine study and on-the-job training.**
- **Establish a prestigious award scheme for scientific and technological achievement.**
- **Establish a Scottish Economic Development Strategy.**
- **Retain Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise to provide the framework for a long term economic strategy.** We will review the operation of local enterprise companies to promote greater openness, accountability and effectiveness. We will ask Audit Scotland to devise appropriate output indicators to measure the effectiveness of local enterprise companies.
- **Establish a national infrastructure strategy for Scotland, with particular regard to transport and telecommunications links.**
- **Boost small business start ups.** In consultation with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, we will set targets for new company start-up and survival rates, investment in transport infrastructure and other key economic developments. We will set up a task force to identify products which could be manufactured in Scotland under licence.
- **Re-focus the efforts of Locate in Scotland.** We want to pursue inward investment where the business is at the upper end of technology and can support or be supported by local businesses.
- **Support small and medium-sized businesses.** The Education and Enterprise Department will have a special focus for small business. We will target assistance on small firms in order meet our objectives for new business start-ups. We will encourage local Business Support Networks and one-stop Business Advice Shops to help businesses obtain advice and funding. We will strive to develop new sources of seed-corn funding. We will ensure that government does not discriminate against small and medium-sized firms in its purchasing policy
- **Cut red tape.** In implementing all Scottish, UK and European legislation, we will work closely with businesses to cut red tape and minimise bureaucracy.

Developing tourism

The creation of the new Parliament will, in itself, promote Scotland and attract more visitors.

We will boost Scottish tourism by protecting and marketing Scotland's natural, built and cultural heritage, with a Minister responsible for tourism in the Education and Enterprise Ministry and with a Tourism Committee of Parliament. In particular we will encourage the off-season, short-break and niche markets.

We want to see responsibility for the international promotion of tourism firmly resting with the Scottish Tourist Board. To ensure better long term planning, funding to area tourist boards should be secured and channelled through the Scottish Tourist Board. We would require area tourist boards, in co-operation with local tourist industries, councils and the local and national enterprise agencies, to bring forward rolling three-year development plans to promote tourism within their area.

Scotland's influence at Westminster

Some key economic issues will continue to be determined at Westminster.

Scottish Liberal Democrats will press for:

- **An early target date for entry into the European Single Currency, subject to a referendum.** A firm commitment to entry would help bring interest rates down, make Sterling more competitive, and thus help Scotland's hard-pressed businesses and exporters.
- **The Bank of England to become a UK Reserve Bank.** We will ensure there is a place on the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee for a member selected by the Scottish Executive and approved by the Scottish Parliament.
- **A simpler and fairer tax system, including higher VAT thresholds.**
- **A stable and fair tax regime for the oil and gas industries.** We want to end the uncertainties created by the present Government.

The rural economy

Our rural areas are in crisis. As farm incomes plummet, the fishing industry continues to undergo a period of considerable uncertainty and returns for the timber industry have fallen. The small local industries and shops which depend on agriculture, forestry and fisheries also suffer. Traditional rural industries like textiles are also under threat. Meanwhile small communities have lost schools, bus services and post offices. A Scottish Parliament, closer to the people of Scotland than Westminster, can and must act decisively to reverse this decline.

We will:

- **Establish a Department of Rural Affairs.** The Department will spearhead the strategy for recovery to develop a vibrant and diverse rural economy. We will ensure that no government policies neglect the needs of rural communities.
- **Insist that the Scottish Rural Affairs Minister, whenever appropriate, takes the lead UK role in European Council meetings.**
- **Protect rural services.** These include village schools, community hospitals, post offices, village shops and bus routes. We will ensure that there is adequate and affordable housing.
- **Review petrol pricing, and tackle overcharging by petrol companies.** We will encourage further rates relief for local petrol stations so as to keep prices down.

Farming and forestry

We will:

- **Recognise the tremendous potential to grow the Scottish food and drink industries.** We shall consult with interested groups to establish a new Scottish food promotion body which can identify opportunities, and realise the potential of the Scottish brand.
- **Use all meat promotion levies currently raised in Scotland to promote Scottish meat produce.**
- **We will support the introduction of a Food Standards Agency, with a developed arm account-able to the Scottish Parlia-ment, to boost confidence in the safety and quality of produce.** We will abolish the flat rate levy on Scottish food premises to fund the Agency.
- **Require new supermarkets to promote local produce.** We will introduce new planning rules which would allow planning authorities to stipulate minimum shelf-space for local produce when granting planning permission to major new retail outlets. Labelling should also identify country of origin.
- **End the ban on beef-on-the-bone.** We will take other steps to support the recovery of the beef industry to restore the reputation of this vital Scottish business.
- **Introduce an independent appeal procedure to deal with disputes over penalties imposed for alleged inaccuracies in official returns and claim forms.**
- **Establish a "Farming Connect" network to provide a one-stop-shop for all farming business advice.**

- **Press for further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.** We want to encourage Countryside Management Contrads and direct support towards sustaining rural communities.
- **Retain public control of forestry and set targets for new planting.**

Fisheries

We will:

- **Work to conserve and rebuild sustainable fish stocks and protect the livelihoods of local fishing communities.** We will work in Europe to scrap the existing Common Fisheries Policy and replace it with a system based on regional management of fish stocks and the involvement of both fishermen and scientists in establishing annual allowable catches.
- **Encourage the development of locally managed fisheries through the use of regulating orders within the six-mile limit.**
- **Encourage investment in the further scientific and technical development of Scotland's aquaculture industries, emphasising environmental considerations.**
- **Continue to press for an end of the Crown Estate's right to levy a production tax on the aquaculture industry.** We will also work to stop farmed salmon being dumped on the European market.

Land reform

We will:

- **Reform land tenure by abolishing the relics of the feudal land system.**
- **Establish a land bank to provide long-term finance for land purchase.**
- **Introduce term tenancies of a minimum of 15 years to replace landlord/tenant partnership agreements.**
- **Give tenants a right of pre-emption if the holding is placed on the market.**
- **Help local councils and community groups to acquire land where it is in the public interest**
- **Protect the rights of crofters and give young people more opportunities to set up crofts.**
- **Legislate to implement the proposals of the Access Forum.**
- **Establish a Standing Commission on Land Use and Ownership to review the progress of our reforms.**



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Raising the standard

Scotland's communities

Key pledges

- **Keep strong local police forces and ensure that every community has its own named beat officer**
 - **Introduce a council tax rebate for all homes built or adapted to meet high barrier-free standards for disabled people**
 - **Tackle the drugs menace by boosting measures to tackle the drug dealers, ensuring better education and investing in more treatment facilities**
 - **Tackle the scandal of fuel poverty and damp homes**
 - **Assist low-income families and disabled people to claim their rightful entitlement to welfare benefits**
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The challenge

Long term unemployment, inadequate support for the chronically sick and disabled and poor housing conditions continue to create unacceptable levels of hardship and insecurity in Scotland.

Too many of our families live in poverty. Too many of our citizens, and particularly pensioners, live in fear of crime.

As a country we need urgent action at a strategic level to reclaim our inner cities, urban housing estates and isolated rural communities to make them places where people want to live again.

Our priorities

Providing opportunities

The Scottish Parliament must establish a close working relationship with the UK Government to address directly the causes of poverty.

In the past too much priority has been given to schemes that concentrate on development contracts rather than on local people. Regeneration should come from those the initiatives are designed to serve.

We will:

- **Ensure that the Scottish Inclusion Network has its agenda set by the Scottish Parliament.** It must reflect the special needs of Scotland and must have the same priority attached to its work as does the Social Exclusion Unit in England.
- **Recognise the geographical differences between the regional economies within Scotland.** Solutions that are right for the North-east may be inappropriate for the West Coast.
- **Mount an aggressive promotional campaign within Scotland to assist low-income families and disabled people to claim their rightful entitlement to welfare benefits.**

- **Set up our own system of piloting all new UK schemes.** This will apply to schemes as the New Deal and the Single Work-Focused Gateway working with UK Ministries to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in such schemes to take account of the special circumstances in Scotland.
- **Encourage people off benefit and into work.** We believe that the model created in Glasgow by the WISE group is an excellent example of what can be achieved.
- **Oppose the element of work-compulsion.**
- **Divert New Deal money from funding training and job-search to job creation in those areas where there is little or no real prospect of any other available work.**
- **Provide security and dignity in retirement.** We will increase the state pension by £3 a week for the over-75s and £5 for the over-80s on a UK basis, in the short term. In the longer term we will introduce a universal second-tier pension to address the problem of future pensioner poverty.
- **Help and support families.** Most other countries in Europe have an established minimum acceptable income level for families. On a UK basis, we will increase incentives for millions by raising the tax-free personal income tax allowance to £10,000 a year over two parliaments. This would be paid for by restructuring the tax system, phasing out unnecessary allowances, shifting taxes onto pollution and introducing a new 50% income tax rate for those with taxable incomes of over £100,000 a year. We will double child benefit for the youngest child in families with at least one child under five, paying for it by taxing child benefit for upper rate taxpayers. We will provide tax relief for those who share their homes with elderly relatives.
- **Tackle discrimination.** On a UK basis, we will ensure fairness at work for the young by entitling all over 16 in paid employment to the minimum wage, with a lower rate for those in training. We will also protect older workers with legislation against age discrimination. We will guarantee the rights of the disabled and strengthen action against discrimination on grounds of colour race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Our proposed Human Rights Commission will ensure that these basic human rights apply effectively in Scotland.

A fair deal for children & young people

We shall establish a Children and Young Person's Commissioner to oversee the protection of children and young people's rights and promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Commissioner will monitor the activities of persons and organisations exercising functions under the Children (Scotland) Act and within the criminal justice system. The Commissioner will also promote research into and public awareness of matters relating to the welfare of children and young people.

We will tackle youth crime. We will seek to prevent youngsters drifting into crime by supporting families with out-of-school care, offering training in parenting skills and improving work training and leisure opportunities. We will speed up disposals and make them more effective, by ensuring adequate resources for Social Work Departments and for Children's Hearings. We will make sure that there is proper follow-up for young people leaving custody.

We will establish an inter-ministerial committee for children, young people and families chaired by the Minister with responsibility for children's issues.

Support for people with disabilities

Disabled people have much to contribute to the new Scotland, and the new Parliament must enhance their opportunities to do so. Scottish Liberal Democrats believe in the inherent right of each individual to fulfil his or her potential. In seeking to help disabled people realise their potential,

We will:

- **Identify a minister who will have specific responsibility for co-ordinating policies relating to disabled people.**
- **Introduce a council tax rebate system for all homes built or adapted to meet high barrier-free standards.**
- **Give support to advice and advocacy bodies helping disabled people to claim their just rights;**
- **Encourage transport and tourism providers to have specific regard to the needs of disabled people, including the provision of information on accessibility and journey planning.**

Fighting crime

The best way to fight crime is to tackle its root problems in the community and to concentrate on prevention and detection.

We will:

- **Keep the police service up to strength.** We will resist pressures to trim budgets and use new technology to cut bureaucracy and free up police officers' time for other duties. We will ensure that every community has its own named beat officer who can build up local knowledge and trust.
- **Make police forces properly accountable to local communities.** We shall improve the accountability and efficiency of the police by rigorous internal assessment and benchmarking with other forces to ensure prudent financial management. We will retain the present number of police forces in Scotland, but identify Opportunities for joint operations and the procurement of equipment and services.
- **Encourage local crime prevention strategies.** Local councils should set targets for crime reduction. We will back greater use of CCIV cameras, whilst ensuring that the film is not used to infringe individual liberties. We will encourage better home security, better street lighting and a greater police presence in vulnerable areas.
- **Deal with addiction at its roots.** We will set up a Scottish Parliamentary Commission to devise a strategy for drug, alcohol, tobacco and solvent abuse. We will make Drug Action Teams more effective, ensure that more treatment facilities are available and Increase resources for alcohol counselling services. We will take tough action against drug dealers and press for greater UK resources to stop drugs coming into Britain. We will root drugs out of prisons and provide better drug counselling for prisoners. We will tackle the cycle of drug dependency and crime by developing sentences outside prison which include adequate drug treatment programmes.

Reforming our justice system

Scotland's court system operates far too slowly and there are too many people in prison. We need to redirect resources to preventing crime and stop those convicted from re-offending. Liberal Democrats will conduct a radical review of criminal justice in Scotland.

We will:

- **Strengthen the criminal justice system.** Establish a Scottish Ministry of Justice with responsibility for tackling crime, protecting civil liberties and overseeing our legal system. It will take over responsibility for District Courts from local authorities. We will introduce a 'Sentence Report Back' scheme to inform judges of the re-offending rates of people sentenced by them, and allow them to monitor the progress of non-custodial sentences.
- **Establish a Standing Commission on Criminal Justice to monitor the whole criminal justice system.**
- **Ensure a better deal and more practical support for victims of crime.** This will include effective protocols for dealing with vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. We shall improve

facilities for victims and witnesses at court, and provide them with fuller information on the progress and outcome of their case.

- **Create an independent Judicial Appointments Commission for the appointment of all judges, sheriffs and tribunal chairpersons.**

Provide access to justice for all

We will stop the waste of resources in the present court system, by streamlining management, particularly of court time. We will provide better support for the procurator fiscal service. We will give courts greater powers to make speedy informal decisions on family matters. We will ensure that adequate and affordable legal aid is equally available across the country.

Reform prisons

Scotland's prisons must cease to be universities of crime. We will introduce far more training, education and work into prisons. We will cut prison numbers by encouraging greater use of non-custodial sentences, where offenders pose no risk to the public. In the longer term, we will build smaller prison units, particularly for women.

Decent and affordable housing

There is far too much poor housing in Scotland. Cold, damp and cramped homes affect health, education and job opportunities. Scottish people also need greater security from bad landlords and more power to make decisions about their homes.

We will:

- **Tackle the scandal of fuel poverty and damp houses.** We shall establish a Healthy Homes Task Force to set targets for the progressive elimination of dampness and condensation from Scotland's urban and rural housing stock in full partnership with the housing agencies. As part of the Government's contribution, we shall establish a National Homes Insulation Programme.
- **Ensure adequate affordable housing.** We will encourage long-term partnerships with the building industry the private sector and housing associations and maintain a high level of investment in social housing. We will encourage the maximum use of brownfield sites for new homes.
- **Support home-buyers and tenants.** We will create a new Housing Tribunal to deal with harassment by landlords, eviction proceedings, unfit conditions and enforcement of repairs. It will also have powers under new rules to refuse repossession orders by banks and building societies. We will insist that sellers provide a survey of dampness, disrepair and energy efficiency
- **Support the transfer of housing estates to companies led by tenants.** We will introduce a single set of rules with improved rights for all tenants of social landlords. We will end the automatic monopoly of council housing departments in the provision of factoring services to former tenanted properties. We will invest in grants to improve tenements.
- **Set 3-year budgets for housing associations to allow for long term planning.** We shall abolish Scottish Homes and split its functions between local councils and the Scottish Housing Ministry

Reduce homelessness

We will require councils to have local homelessness strategies, and to operate rent deposit schemes. We will also give them more powers to bring empty homes back into use. We shall ensure adequate short-stay hostel places as a step towards permanent secure accommodation. We will continue to support the Rough Sleepers Initiative.

Planning Scotland's future

Scotland has many areas where old industries have decayed, leaving landscapes derelict and communities deprived. At the same time, new development threatens to encroach on many of our open spaces and unspoilt countryside.

We will:

- **Set up a Scottish Parliamentary Commission on planning.** This will include eminent planners, architects and community leaders to establish better planning criteria which balance the competing needs to create new jobs, support communities, protect the environment and control development.
- **Boost local economic development.** We will link local training to local jobs and promote community enterprise by encouraging community banks and local credit unions.
- **Reinforce protection of the greenbelt.** We will direct new industrial development to brownfield sites, investing in innovative projects to decontaminate them.
- **Regenerate declining urban areas.** We will target assistance on areas of high unemployment and oblige councils to tackle eyesores, graffiti and vandalism. We will reform urban aid funding to secure long term support for successful projects.

Arts and media

Scotland's culture is one of the richest in Europe. The establishment of the Scottish Parliament will provide a new stimulus for the arts and for the development of a national cultural strategy. Investing in the arts not only enriches the lives of Scottish people, but is an important source of job creation, especially in the tourist industry

We will:

- **Charge a specific minister with responsibility for arts and sport.**
- **Review the Scottish Arts Council to give artists more say in funding decisions and encourage the Council to extend the Community Arts Programme.** We will provide more resources for the teaching of music, drama and arts appreciation in schools. We will support teaching in the Gaelic language and seek to win official status for it.
- **Oppose any new entrance charges for national museums and galleries and scrap admission charges to the National Museums of Scotland by April 2001.** We will develop libraries as a community resource, particularly for new technology. We will commission artists in residence in Parliament to reflect Scottish public life.
- **Support the creative industries such as film, publishing, design and music.** We will remove barriers to film-making in Scotland.
- **Press for the BBC to adopt a less London-oriented approach.** There should be a separate Scottish six o'clock news. We will press Westminster to allocate responsibility for the Scottish media to the Scottish Parliament.



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Raising the standard

Scotland's environment

Key pledges

- **Cut fuel bills and make homes warmer by introducing a National Homes Insulation Programme**
 - **Encourage more use of the railways by opening more lines and stations**
 - **Support a national concessionary fare scheme on all public transport for pensioners and disabled people**
 - **Abolish the tolls on the Skye Bridge**
 - **Seek to ensure affordable air and sea links for island communities**
 - **Establish national parks in Scotland**
 - **Set targets to increase recycling by the public and private sectors**
-

The challenge

Scotland has some of the most beautiful, unspoiled and uncongested countryside in Europe, a precious heritage which we need to protect. We must also counter the growing threats to our environment. Pollution affects our cities and our rivers and seas. With our harsh climate, we need to consume a great deal of energy but we waste far too much of it. Our public transport systems are hopelessly inadequate, leaving many Scots with no alternative to their cars.

Many environmental problems are global. The new Executive and Parliament must ensure that Scotland plays an active role in shaping long-sighted international policies to protect the planet.

Our priorities

The new Scottish Parliament has the opportunity to make Scotland a much more environmentally conscious nation. Liberal Democrats will strive for sustainability in all our policies, recognising that environmentally friendly policies save money and are essential to the long term good of our people.

Energy

We will:

- **Cut fuel bills and make homes warmer by introducing a National Homes Insulation Programme.** We aim to increase provision of high-standard insulation to a level of 50,000 households a year concentrating on those with lower incomes. We would impose a duty on energy suppliers to offer energy savings schemes to their customers and insist that organisations which apply for public funding have energy efficiency plans. We would also require new homes to meet tough insulation standards. Our policies would not only help the poor but also create 5,000 new jobs.
- **Promote renewable energy.** Use the Scottish Renewable Obligation to promote the development of wind power wave power small scale biomass and hydro schemes and waste-to-energy schemes.

Public transport

Work to improve all forms of public transport.

We will:

- **Boost the railways.** We will support the extension of electrified main railway lines and the re-opening of old stations and lines where practical, such as the Waverley link with the Borders. We want to see appropriate forms of light railway or metro systems in Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- **Wish to reduce dependence on cars.** We will reserve more road space for buses and cycles and create a first class travel information service for Scottish public transport. We will support franchising arrangements to create high quality services comprising park-and-ride, terminal facilities and attractive transport options into city centres.
- **Support more pedestrian zones, safe cycling routes and traffic calming schemes.**
- **Work towards ensuring that money raised from traffic fines and charges is earmarked for improving public transport and give the power to local authorities to introduce road-pricing schemes and tax non-residential parking.**
- **Support a national concessionary fare scheme on all public transport for pensioners and disabled people.**
- **Set up regional transport partnerships and passenger transport executives.** These will aim to develop transport strategy in each area. We will give local authorities the power to regulate bus services and end wasteful bus wars between rival companies.

Improve rural and island transport

We recognise that the car is likely to remain an essential part of rural living.

We will:

- **Encourage free long-stay parking at rural transfer points and fast, reliable bus and train links from them.**
- **Abolish the tolls on the Skye Bridge.**
- **Seek to ensure affordable air and sea links for island communities.** We will retain Caledonian MacBrayne in public ownership and develop a long-term investment strategy for it. We favour new purpose built vessels for the lifeline services to the Northern Isles, when the existing franchise ends in 2002.
- **Continue to press the UK Government to seek EU derogations from fuel duty for Scotland's remoter areas.** At a UK level abolish vehicle excise duty for cars up to 1,600 cc. Studies show that most rural motorists with smaller cars will still be better off.
- **Encourage freight onto trains and ships and off the roads.** We also support plans for new passenger and freight rail links from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness airports. We would seek to revive Scotland's maritime businesses by encouraging the development of direct freight links from Scottish ports to Europe.

A framework for a better environment

Liberal Democrats have long practised partnership politics. On environmental issues, which have very long-term consequences and which cross so many geographical and political boundaries, there is a particular need to establish a consensus and to consult as widely as possible. It is also important that the present generation sets itself strict targets to protect future generations.

We will:

- **Establish a Ministry of Environment and Transport under the scrutiny of an Environment Committee of Parliament.**

- **Introduce Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).** This will be for all plans, policies and programmes of governments. We will aim for steadily improving standards for water and air quality. We want to reduce derelict brownfield sites and increase wildlife and fish stocks.
- **Establish national parks in Scotland.** They will aim to protect wildlife and keep a balance between environmental and community needs. Some national park board members would be elected directly by the local community. We will strengthen wildlife protection and fight wildlife crime.
- **Keep Scotland's rivers and beaches clean.** We want all Scotland's beaches to meet clean water standards by 2005 and to establish a Scottish Coasts and Firths Action Plan to keep the coastline and the sea clean. We shall be vigilant against oil pollution. We will press for the establishment of marine environmental high risk areas, from which ships should be re-routed.
- **Set strict targets for water authorities to reduce leaks.**
- **Protect the local environment.** Encourage local environmental task forces run by local authorities to tackle eyesores, litter, graffiti, dog mess and poor rubbish collection systems.
- **Set targets to increase recycling by the public and private sectors.** We aim to eliminate the use of landfill for industrial waste within 40 years.
- **Press the EU for clear labelling regulations.** Consumers should be able to choose eco-friendly and energy efficient products. There should also be clear labelling and rigorous safety testing of genetically modified food. We support a 5 year moratorium on the commercial growing of GM crops to allow for proper evaluation of any dangers.



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Raising the standard

Scotland's parliament

The challenge

Scottish Liberal Democrats have fought for a Scottish Parliament for over a century and played a major part in delivering it. As the party with the longest and deepest commitment to the Parliament, we can best guarantee to make it work effectively. We see it not as an end in itself but as a means to better Government, better public services and to unlocking the full potential of the Scottish people.

We also believe it can be a model for the rest of Britain. Our vision is of a federal United Kingdom in a decentralised Europe where power is exercised at the lowest effective level.

Scotland has the chance to demonstrate modern democracy at its best. There must be an effective executive accountable to a powerful Parliament. We must encourage the participation of the people of Scotland through the use of information technology and an influential Civic Forum. Liberal Democrats will draw particularly on the community values of the voluntary sector in Scotland to build a new ethos of public service.

Scottish local government has not served people well. Much of it is remote from the community unrepresentative inadequately resourced and inefficient.

Our priorities

Making the Scottish Parliament deliver

Liberal Democrats have long believed in a more constructive system of politics, based on partnership and consensus, and committed to delivering long-term benefits for the people rather than short-term fixes. This approach naturally lends itself to a Scottish Parliament elected by fair votes.

We will:

- **Set up powerful and independent Parliamentary committees.** They will be charged with controlling the Executive and involving ordinary people in decision-making. A special Public Services Performance Committee will hold politicians and civil servants to account for their use of public money. This will be reinforced by rigorous auditing by a new body to be called Audit Scotland. To strengthen their powers of scrutiny MSPs should have direct access to civil servants.
- **Locate government agencies throughout Scotland.** We will also ensure that Parliamentary committees regularly meet outside Edinburgh. We shall support the establishment of regional committees within the Parliament.
- **Ensure that Scottish Government consults the voluntary sector.** Recognising that politicians are not the only contributors to civic life, we support the establishment of a Civic Forum which will debate issues before they come before Parliament. We will particularly encourage young people to play a role in the Forum.
- **Promote equal opportunities.** We will ensure that in all the workings of the Scottish Parliament and Executive as well as in their appointments and decision making, the principle

of equal opportunities will be upheld.

Work in partnership with the UK Government

We will:

- **Seek new powers over broadcasting, equal opportunities and the power to refer to the Monopolies Commission monopoly situations occurring within the Scottish economy.** Otherwise we will not press for major changes in the powers of the Parliament, at least for its first term.
- **Insist on retaining the present number of MSPs at 129.**
- **Work to maintain the Barnett Formula as the best initial basis for the allocation of resources to Scotland for the medium term, and actively pursue a long-term agreement amongst the Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and UK Governments on moving to a fair and equitable basis of resourcing for the United Kingdom as a whole, based on transparency a realistic assessment of varying needs and the principle of equalisation.**
- **Protect the interests of island areas.** We will ensure that the executive, Parliament and its committees give proper regard to the special needs and circumstances of the islands, when devising policy and legislation.
- **Safeguard individual liberties by creating a Human Rights Unit within Parliament and setting up a Scottish Human Rights Commission, drawing together the work of the Equal Opportunities and Race Relations Acts and extending protection to gay and other minority groups.**
- **End excessive secrecy by passing a Freedom of Information Act which establishes citizens' rights to all but the most sensitive records.**
- **Raise standards and accountability in public life by drawing up a strong code of conduct for MSPs reviewing the role of quangos and establishing a Public Appointments Committee of Parliament with a system of open nomination and confirmation.**

Reforming local Government

We will:

- **Break up unaccountable one-party fiefdoms by introducing fair votes for local elections, based on the Single Transferable Vote in multi-member wards.**
- **Support local referenda and citizen's juries.** We shall require each local authority to establish a Performance Scrutiny Committee, to be chaired by an opposition councillor
- **Make councillors more effective, reviewing income and conditions to attract higher quality candidates and allowing teachers and other public servants to stand for election.** We will give back-bench councillors and area committees more power. We shall oppose council cabinets and gimmicks like directly elected provosts.
- **Give councils a power of general competence.**
- **Give councils more access to capital investment.** We will work at Westminster to give councils more flexibility over spending and borrowing within prudent guidelines. The current PFI arrangements have many drawbacks; any future scheme should be subject to the approval of the Scottish Parliament.
- **Reform local government finance.** We will establish a Scottish Parliamentary Commission to propose a new system of council finance to ensure that more council revenue is raised locally and that taxes relate more closely to ability to pay. Proportional representation would be required before local business rates could be restored to local determination. In the short-term, we will review the Council tax to make it fairer; give local authorities power to reduce the tax bill on businesses, especially in deprived rural and urban areas, and allow councils to charge full Council Tax for second homes.
- **Support a strong voluntary sector by encouraging councils to involve voluntary bodies where appropriate in providing services and supporting them with long-term**

funding and training.

- **Enhance the role of community councils, particularly in towns which have a long history as burghs, or in areas with distinct community identities.**
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Raising the standard

Scotland in the UK and the World

The challenge

Scotland has a strong tradition of internationalism, and a proud history of diplomatic and trading links around the world. The new Scottish Parliament will have great scope to build on our country's reputation by projecting a strong, confident and positive voice for Scotland and promoting peace, security and prosperity abroad. Scotland should play a full part in United Kingdom affairs and work on matters of common interest to maximise our advantages within the European Union.

The United Kingdom

We will work to:

- **Ensure that Scotland plays a full part in UK affairs.** The relationship between the Scottish and UK Governments needs careful nurturing. Good co-operation is important over a whole range of issues. In particular we must safeguard funding for Scotland's universities, especially their research facilities, and a continuing fair share of UK public sector contracts. In some reserved spheres, such as Welfare to Work, the Scottish Parliament can act as Westminster's agent to make policy more effective.
- **Move towards a federal United Kingdom with a written constitution.**
- **As the next step, we will work to abolish the office of Secretary of State for Scotland.** Unlike the Scottish Parliament, the House of Commons should be reduced in size.
- **Work to ensure the success of the Council of the Isles in improving peace and friendship within these islands.** We will support a Scottish bid to host the Council if it requires a permanent secretariat.

The European Union

We will work to:

- **Use the Scottish Parliament to promote Scotland's interests in Europe.** Scotland must be properly represented in UK delegations to the Council of Ministers, have formal liaison arrangements with the Commission and play a full part in the European Committee of the Regions. We will promote the Scottish Parliament European Bureau in Brussels to match the representation of other European regions. The Bureau must have full access to the UK Representative Office and in particular UKRep's information network.
- **Reform the European Union.** Scottish Liberal Democrats support Europe and its reform. Our commitment to the European cause will enable us both to maximise our national interest and to work with our partners for a Constitution for Europe which sets limits on the EU's powers and makes it more accountable and effective.

The wider world

Within the global community,

We will work to:

- **Ensure that the Scottish Parliament plays a role in UK negotiations over international obligations like environmental protection and World Trade Organisation agreements which impact on the Scottish economy.**
 - **Strengthen Britain's defence and security through NATO and greater European defence co-operation, and give Britain a leading role in reforming and strengthening the UN.**
 - **Promote an enforceable framework for international law, human rights and protection of the environment.**
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Raising the standard

Paying for better services

The challenge

Better public services need to be paid for. Political parties which do not back well-meaning rhetoric with resources cannot be taken seriously.

Our solutions

Many of the policies set out in this manifesto would require no additional money, could be paid for from within existing budgets, or are dependent on resources becoming available in the future from changed budget priorities and from additional money from the annual UK budget settlement. This is true for all of the measures outlined in this manifesto, except for some of those in the education and health chapters.

There is no doubt that if we are to have better education and health services in Scotland, we shall have to find additional resources. Under the present Labour Government in Westminster there is no cash bonanza for public services in Scotland. Spending on Scotland's schools has been cut by over £200 million in real terms since Labour came to power; with cuts in 29 out of 32 education authorities. Total real spending in Scotland in 2001/02 will be little changed from the level in 1994/95, and the real annual increase in the budget for the National Health Service will be about the same as under the Conservatives.

Extra money for health and education

Under our plans for improving standards in education and health, we envisage increasing budgets for these services from the first full budgeting year (2000/01).

For health, we would boost the planned budget by around £80m in 2000/01, and by more than £100m per year for each successive year of the first Scottish Parliament.

For education, we would boost the planned budget by around £170m in 2000/01, and by some £170m for each successive year of the first Scottish Parliament until 2003/04.

Finding the funds

In order to find the funds to increase spending on Education and the National Health Service,

we will:

- **Use the period from the Scottish parliamentary elections in May 1999 to the first Scottish Parliament budget in Spring 2000 to scrutinise the total Scottish budget for savings.** Aim to achieve additional efficiency and other saving from the total Scottish Budget. The Scottish Executive will be required to urgently carry out an audit to scrutinise all areas of expenditure to cut out wasteful or lower priority spending, including on items such as administration, publicity and advertising and consultants. We will eliminate waste with Gladstonian vigour. We envisage that this alteration of spending priorities would allow us to re-allocate into front-line education and health budgets at least £50m per annum in the first full budget year (2000/01) - representing a modest and cautious one third of one per cent of

the total Scottish spending budget. We would increase this figure to £60m per year for future years.

- **Put pressure on the Government at Westminster to make an early announcement on the size of the allocation from the Government's contingency reserve for the year 2000/01 and for future years.** We will press the UK Government to announce allocations from the Contingency Reserve in the November 1999 Pre-Budget Statement. In this way a clear picture of the financial position for 2000/01 would be available well in advance of the first Scottish Parliament budget.
- **If necessary, use 1 penny of the permitted tax varying powers in the spring 2000 budget.** Without additional monies from the UK budget settlement, we anticipate that paying for our plans will require the use of 1p of the variable tax power. But we cannot conclusively take this decision until we know the final budget for 2000/01, including the matter of whether or not the Chancellor is going to allocate extra money. If, and only if, insufficient monies are available from these other revenue sources, we would use the tax varying powers to increase revenues for 2000/01. Provided the UK Government announces the distribution of the contingency reserve in good time - at the time of the November 1999 Pre-Budget Report - then we will expect to make the situation regarding tax varying powers clear by the end of 1999, allowing time for any administrative changes which are necessary. Using 1p or 'one penny' of the tax varying powers would raise over £200m net in the first year and in excess of this amount net for each future year.

Use of tax varying powers

Scottish Liberal Democrats are not afraid of using the tax varying powers of the Scottish Parliament if that proves to be necessary. If we want first class public services, then we must be willing to pay for them. But our fundamental commitment is to better services, not higher taxes. If we can fund the improvements to public services which we seek without recourse to higher taxes, then so much the better

In any case, we do not envisage that the plans which we have set out in the chapters above would require recourse to any more than 1p of the tax varying powers within the period of the first Scottish Parliament.

Community Partnership Trusts

We will seek to invest in capital projects for better hospitals, schools, and house building programmes; water supply infrastructure; and public transport schemes by seeking to establish Community Partnership Trusts to replace the expensive and inefficient Private Finance Initiative agreements. We need a private public partnership which leads to more cost effective public sector investment strategy. We will also seek the appropriate alteration to the current unnecessary restrictive Treasury rules regarding investment. It is vital that the public retain the right to own the assets at the contract period. We will also separate out the maintenance and service contracts and subject them to "Best Value" criteria.



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