

Foreword

The last year has been the hardest most of us have ever experienced.

The Covid pandemic has robbed too many families of loved ones, and thousands of people across Scotland have suffered severe and, in many cases, long lasting illness.

Families and friends have spent months apart. So many of life's basic pleasures - spending time with those we love, socialising in cafes, bars and restaurants, going to the gym, visiting the shops or the cinema, even getting a haircut - have been taken from us.

Children have lost months of normal schooling and missed the company of their friends and classmates.

Young adults have missed out on the rites of passage associated with their first years of freedom.

Along the way, many jobs, businesses and livelihoods have been lost or fundamentally altered.

The impact of Covid on our health, wellbeing and quality of life has been significant and profound.

Over the last year, though, we have also been reminded of what really matters in life - health, family, community, security.

So many people have played a part in getting us through - and I suspect many of us have discovered a resilience we did not even know we had.

The frontline workers in our health and care services obviously fall into this category, but so do the many others who have gone to work every day to deliver other lifeline services; and all

those who have had to adapt to working from home, often home-schooling children at the same time.

We would not have coped either without the thousands who volunteered their help - delivering food and essentials to those shielding or even just checking up on vulnerable friends and neighbours.

We have all discovered this last year how much we rely on each other.

Our scientists have also developed and delivered vaccines faster than we could have dared hope - the debt of gratitude we owe them is incalculable.

So as we now, albeit tentatively, start to look beyond the acute phase of Covid and towards our individual and collective recovery, the values that have guided us so far - love, compassion and solidarity - should continue to light our path.

All that has mattered to me - as your First Minister - has been doing my level best, each and every day, to steer us through the crisis. I know I have made mistakes along the way - the unprecedented nature of the crisis made that inevitable - but I have also learned from those mistakes and I do my best to apply the lessons learned to the decisions the government is still taking.

For all these reasons, this election really does matter - possibly more than any other in our lifetimes.

At this time of crisis, more than ever, the country needs a steady and experienced hand at the wheel.

If I am re-elected as your First Minister, I promise that I and my government - just as we have over the past year - will focus all of our energies on steering the country safely through and out

of this crisis. For me, there is no greater priority, and I believe that I can provide the steady and experienced leadership that the country needs.

However, this election is about so much more than the immediate challenges we face. It is also about recovery and building a fairer country.

That is why the SNP is presenting, at this election, a transformational policy programme that will drive recovery.

Policies to protect our NHS and establish a new National Care Service.

Policies to provide opportunities for our young people, build a stronger and more sustainable economy and deliver greater job and income security.

And policies to tackle climate change and end child poverty.

We also offer an approach - and a choice for you - that will make us an equal partner with our friends in the rest of the UK and across Europe.

We are seeking your permission at this election for an independence referendum to be held after Covid - when the crisis has passed but in time for us to equip our Parliament with the full powers it needs to drive our long term recovery from Covid.

As we set about the task of rebuilding our country, there's a fundamental question that all of us in Scotland must ask ourselves.

The answer to this question will define our country's destiny and determine the life-chances of this and generations to come.

Who do we want to be in the driving seat of shaping Scotland's future?

Should it be Scottish Governments - of whatever party - elected by the people of Scotland and with the priorities and interests of Scotland at heart?

Or Westminster governments that time and again we have rejected?

Will we, the people of Scotland, place trust in ourselves?

Or will we leave our future in the hands of a Westminster system that is so clearly taking us in the wrong direction?

In the depth of crisis, we have looked to and trusted our own government and Parliament to steer us through.

We should do the same now as we look to rebuild for the long term.

If we want to make sure the country we rebuild is the one we want it to be, with kindness, compassion, fairness, equality and enterprise at its heart, then we must work to the right plan, with all the tools we need to do the job.

In summary, what I - and the SNP - offer you at this election is this:

A safe, steady and experienced hand that will continue to steer the country through and out of this unprecedented crisis we face.

A bold and ambitious policy programme to kickstart and drive recovery

And the choice of a better, fairer, more prosperous future for our country.

Let's build that future together.

Thank you.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Increase NHS frontline spending by at least 20% to support and renew our NHS as it recovers from Covid-19. This will increase funding of frontline services by over £2.5 billion.
2. Choose Scotland's Future in an Independence Referendum after the covid crisis is over.
3. Create a National Care Service backed by increasing investment in social care by 25%.
4. Double the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child per week to lift thousands of families and children out of poverty and provide a cash grant of £520 for every family with children in receipt of free school meals until the full rollout of Scottish Child Payment is complete.
5. Deliver a further of 100,000 affordable homes by 2032, backed by investment of £3.5 billion over the parliament, supporting 14,000 jobs a year
6. Invest a further £1 billion over the next parliament to close the school attainment gap and recruit 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants, allowing teachers more time out of the classroom to prepare lessons and improve their skills.
7. Provide free school breakfasts and lunches to every primary school pupil in Scotland, all year round, and for all children in state-funded special schools in Scotland.
8. Freeze Income Tax rates and bands and increase thresholds by a maximum of inflation.
9. Give a fair pay rise to NHS staff, offering a 4% increase on average, not the 1% offered by the Tories.
10. Invest an additional £500 million to support new jobs and reskill people for the jobs of the future over the next parliament.
11. Provide every child in Scotland with a device to get online, including a free internet connection and the support to use it.
12. Deliver a green transport revolution to meet our net zero targets by providing free bikes for all children of school

age who cannot afford them, removing the majority of fossil fuel buses from public transport by 2023 and creating a greener, more affordable railway.

13. Build a wraparound childcare system providing care before and after school, all year round, where the least well-off families will pay nothing.
14. Invest over £33 billion over the next five years in our National Infrastructure Mission, directly supporting 45,000 jobs, and found a new National Infrastructure Company
15. Maintain and strengthen Scotland's relationship with our EU partners with a view to rejoining as soon as possible.
16. Decarbonise the heating of 1 million homes by 2030 with investment of £1.6 billion over the next Parliament to tackle the climate crisis
17. Bring Scotrail into public ownership from next year and decarbonise Scotland's rail services by 2035.

Leading Scotland out of the Covid crisis

Over the last year we have all learned a lot about Covid-19, its impact on our health and our society.

As we begin to rebuild and renew our society and prepare for life after the pandemic, it is essential we continue to protect ourselves and each other from the spread of the virus.

In government we have not got everything right, but we have learned from our mistakes, and we have taken all of our decisions in the interests of saving as many lives as possible.

The first task of the next Scottish Government will be to complete the re-opening of our economy and society whilst continuing to suppress the virus. That is a difficult balancing act, but the SNP has a clear plan and will provide the strong leadership Scotland needs to take the difficult decisions.

Our plan to suppress the virus has four key parts:

test and protect,

the protective measures we all use every day to keep ourselves safe,

controlling importation of the virus and new strains, and

the vaccination programme which has given people so much hope.

If we all stick with it, keep following the guidance and keep looking out for each other, we can move through this critical phase of the pandemic, and back to a world that feels much more normal.

Test and Protect

Our Test and Protect system is an essential part of the fight against Covid, which is why in Scotland, we have made sure it is run by the NHS, not by a private company.

Covid tests are now widely available. We now have more than 100 testing locations across the country - walk-through, drive-through, pick-up and mobile sites – providing tests for anyone with symptoms.

And for those who do test positive, or who are identified as a contact of people who test positive, we have introduced a £500 self-isolation payment for those on low incomes.

Protective Measures

We have all learned to follow FACTS - to wear Face Coverings, Avoid crowded places, Clean our hands and surfaces, keep Two metres distance, and Self isolate and get tested if we have symptoms. While remembering and doing all of this tests our patience, taking these steps has a big impact on reducing the spread of the virus.

These measures - and other proportionate restrictions - will continue to be part of our lives for a little while longer. And as more of our economy and society open up the basic protective measures in FACTS become even more important to stop the spread.

Importation

One of the main challenges in suppressing Covid is to make sure that, as we get it down to low levels again, it is not imported from other countries. This is even more important now

that new variants are emerging. Of course, this is two way - we also have a duty not to spread the virus to other countries.

Last summer, through our collective efforts we nearly eliminated Covid in Scotland - however it was reintroduced through travel.

Parts of Europe are currently experiencing a resurgence of the virus so we must be careful. An SNP Government will keep robust travel restrictions and quarantine measures in place for as long as necessary and we will continue to press the UK Government to close the quarantine loopholes that are allowing new variants to enter the country.

However, we know these measures cannot remain in place permanently. Travel is not just about holidays - for many people in Scotland it is about seeing family and friends. We recognise how important that is, and will take steps to open up and support international travel as soon as it is safe to do so.

Vaccination

The development of effective vaccines against Covid 19 in just a year, has been a huge achievement that has offered many of us renewed hope for the future.

Scotland's vaccination programme has targeted the most vulnerable people first. In line with expert advice we have prioritised those who are oldest, who work in care settings or who have health conditions, because we know that saves the most lives.

We are on target to complete the first phase of the vaccination programme, offering a first dose to all those people in the most vulnerable groups by mid-April, before moving on to younger age groups.

This is the largest mass vaccination programme in Scotland's history and we owe a massive debt of gratitude to all those who have made it possible, from the scientists and manufacturers, to health care workers, security staff, the armed forces and every member of public who has rolled up their sleeve.

We are already preparing to deliver a programme of booster vaccinations later this year, and will continue to follow advice from scientists and clinicians on how to distribute the vaccine in future. We will also work to support vaccine manufacturers in Scotland, supporting the local supply chain.

Learning lessons

The Covid pandemic has been the most difficult time in many of our lives.

As we start to look to the future it is vital that we learn from and reflect on our experience.

To do this, we will commission a statutory, person-centred and human rights based public inquiry into the handling of the Coronavirus pandemic in Scotland. We will make sure the voices of families who have lost loved ones are heard as part of establishing the inquiry and that they have an active role in the process. We will begin to take the necessary steps to establish the public inquiry as soon as possible after the election.

As part of learning lessons, we will also establish a Standing Committee on Pandemics, bringing together scientists and clinicians to advise us on the future risks and to ensure we are as prepared as it is possible to be.

Our journey back

In the coming weeks, if we continue to suppress the virus, our lives will all become a bit more normal with more of our

economy and society opening up again. This will include travel across Scotland, so people can visit family and friends again - and take holidays in Scotland.

We will continue to support those who have struggled financially during the pandemic. We will provide a £130 payment to everyone eligible for council tax reduction and two further £100 payments to low income families.

This means, between December last year and the end of this year, low income families will receive between £400 and £500 to help meet the costs of living through the pandemic.

Many businesses who have had to close during the pandemic, will receive restart grants of between £7,000 and £19,500 at the end of April, to help them prepare for re-opening. Retail, leisure and hospitality firms will also get 100% Business Rates relief this year to help get them back on their feet.

Our ambition is that in June life will become as normal as possible, though face coverings and some other interventions may be necessary for some time to come.

A democratic nation

A vote for the SNP at this election is a vote in favour of these basic democratic principles:

The people of Scotland have the right to decide our own future.

...and...

The people best able to decide how Scotland is governed are the people who live here.

Based on those principles we believe the people of Scotland should have the opportunity in a referendum when the Covid crisis is over to decide whether Scotland should be an independent country.

We are seeking the permission of the Scottish people in this election for an independence referendum to take place after the crisis. This would be within the next Parliamentary term on a specific date to be determined by our democratically elected parliament. If the Covid crisis has passed, the SNP intention is for the referendum to be within the first half of the five year term - once the crisis is over but in time to equip our Parliament with the full powers it needs to drive our long term recovery from Covid and build a better, fairer nation.

Over the course of the next parliament we propose to:

Give people in Scotland the right to choose our own future in an independence referendum. We propose that the referendum should be held once the immediate Covid crisis has passed but in good time to equip our Parliament with the powers it needs to drive our long term recovery from Covid.

Run Citizens' Assemblies annually to look at some of the more complex issues we face as a country.

Establish a Citizens' Assembly for those under the age of 16 to ensure the voices of the future are heard.

Incorporate all UN treaties into Scots law to the maximum extent possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

Independence

Tackling Covid to keep people in Scotland safe has been, and will remain, the top priority of an SNP Government.

However, after the pandemic in Scotland is over, our great national mission – as it will be for all other countries – will be how to recover and rebuild.

The SNP believes that it should be people in Scotland – no matter where they come from - and not Boris Johnson or any Westminster government, who must have the right to decide the sort of country we should become after the pandemic.

The people of Scotland should have the right to build a Scotland based on compassion, equality and love.

That means the right to protect our NHS from Tory governments;

The right to escape Brexit;

The right to be an equal partner in a new and better relationship with our friends in the rest of the UK;

And crucially the right to control our own economic policy, provide security and take advantage of our vast economic potential to create high quality, sustainable jobs.

At present much of that control rests with Westminster. Their experience of austerity cuts in recent years serves as a warning that Westminster governments will all too easily return to old ideological ways after the pandemic.

By contrast, independent western European countries of Scotland's size are among the wealthiest, fairest and happiest in the world. If they can do it, why not Scotland?

After all we've been through, people in Scotland deserve the opportunity of that better future.

We want to give people in Scotland the right to choose their own future through an independence referendum. We propose that the referendum should be held once the Covid crisis has passed but in good time to decide that we want to equip our Parliament with the powers it needs to drive our long term recovery from Covid.

In order to provide that opportunity, the Scottish Government has published a draft bill for an independence referendum.

It sets out the proposed question to be asked, as well as the proposed franchise, and it makes clear that the precise timing of the referendum should be a matter for the Scottish Parliament.

If the SNP is returned to government and there is a simple majority in the Scottish Parliament for that bill after the election there can be no moral or democratic justification for Boris Johnson or any Westminster government to obstruct the right of the people of Scotland to decide their own future.

The SNP is clear the referendum must be capable of bringing about independence and therefore it must be accepted as legitimate and constitutional at home and abroad.

As the Scottish Government, we will discuss with the UK Government the necessary transfer of power to put a referendum beyond legal challenge and in the hands of the Scottish Parliament. For the UK government to refuse to do so would be both undemocratic and unsustainable.

If the democratically elected Scottish Parliament passes the referendum bill and the UK Government then attempts to block it by taking legal action we will vigorously defend the Parliament's will in order to protect the democratic rights of the Scottish people.

Before any referendum takes place we will ensure the people of Scotland have the information they need to make an informed choice about their future.

The fact is Westminster is taking Scotland in the wrong direction.

By taking our future into our own hands, we can build a new Scotland for everyone who lives here based on fairness, equality, compassion, security, happiness and love.

That's why we believe Scotland's future should be in Scotland's hands.

Citizens' Assembly

Following concerns about the polarisation of political debate, exacerbated by the Brexit experience, we set up a Citizens' Assembly to help find consensus on issues where people have sharply divided opinions.

The first assembly looked to answer three questions:

What kind of country are we seeking to build?

How can we best overcome the challenges we face, including those arising from Brexit?

And what further work should be carried out to give people the detail they need to make informed choices about the future of the country?

The outcome of the first Citizens Assembly has shown that involving citizens in the major changes affecting our lives is not only possible, but also delivers results.

We will carefully consider the outcomes of that first Citizens Assembly and respond to them positively.

We welcome the ambitious interim findings of the Climate Assembly and look forward to receiving the final report.

We remain committed to participative democracy and to creating space for genuine public involvement in decision making.

Going forward we will run annual Citizens' Assemblies to look at some of the more complex issues we face as a country. We will bring together a cross section of people from across our country to discuss topics such as reform of Council Tax and the role of local government, assisted dying and decriminalisation of drugs.

Ahead of a referendum on Scotland's future we would also ask a Citizens Assembly to consider some of the key issues about

the kind of country we want Scotland to be - for example, social security, taxation or migration policy.

We will also encourage local citizens' assemblies that consider community issues and propose local solutions.

Create a Citizens Assembly for U16s

Building on the success of the first Citizens Assembly, we will establish an assembly for children and young people under 16 to ensure their better representation.

Incorporate UN treaties into Scots law

In 2016 we committed to further protect human rights, learning from best global practice to determine the guaranteed protections we should seek to enshrine in Scots law.

Legislation has already been passed to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.

In order to make human rights real for every member of society, we will incorporate four more United Nations Human Rights treaties into Scots Law:

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

This world-leading human rights legislation will reduce inequality and advance the rights of everyone and ensure human rights are embedded in every aspect of life in Scotland.

What you get with independence

The right to decide Scotland's future.

Better democracy – empowering Scotland's people to take the country in the direction we all want to go.

Better government – governments people in Scotland vote for, not Westminster governments that we reject.

A free, public NHS – guaranteed.

Control of Scotland's economy and resources.

A fairer social security system.

Escape from Brexit.

An equal partnership with our friends in the rest of the UK and Europe.

Scotland's money spent on Scotland's priorities – not nuclear weapons.

Protection for our Scottish Parliament from a Westminster power grab.

A Caring Society

The pandemic has taught everyone the value of caring, the importance of kindness, and how much each of us relies on the support of others.

Those who provide care, whether in the NHS, our care homes, childcare settings or in our own homes, have been indispensable. As a society we can and should do more to recognise caring as a central part of our lives and our economy.

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Increase frontline NHS spending by at least 20% to support and renew our NHS as it recovers from Covid-19. This will increase funding of frontline services by over £2.5 billion.

Establish a new National Care Service, and increase investment in social care by 25%.

Implement an NHS recovery plan to restore paused services, ensure urgent care is delivered swiftly, catch up on treatments that have had to be delayed, and bring waiting times back within targets.

Implement a fair, negotiated pay rise for Scotland's NHS Agenda for Change staff, offering a 4% increase on average, with the lowest paid staff set to benefit by a minimum of £1000 a year.

Invest £10 billion over the next decade to renew our NHS estate and reshape and replace buildings – including delivering a new Monklands Hospital, renewing the East of Scotland

Cancer centre and enhancing primary care facilities around the country.

Support the new NHS Centre for Sustainable Delivery to pioneer and deliver new, better and more sustainable ways of working across the NHS and social care, and fully harness the benefits of technology and new treatments.

Develop MyNHS, a safe, simple and secure app that will help people access services directly and own their own health information.

Invest a further £100 million over the course of the next parliament to open a further two elective and diagnostic care centres, on top of the five centres already open or under development.

Scrap all non-residential social care charges for those who need support.

Introduce a new, fair National Wage for Care staff and introduce national pay bargaining for the sector for the first time.

Invest £250 million over the next five years to tackle the drugs death emergency, supporting further investment in a range of community-based interventions quicker access to treatment and an expansion of residential rehabilitation.

Abolish NHS dentistry charges and protect free prescriptions.

Increase the direct investment into mental health services by at least by at least 25% and ensure that, by the end of the parliament, 10% of our frontline NHS budget will be invested in mental health.

Implement a Women's Health Plan to improve care and reduce health inequalities for women and girls.

Create a NHS National Pharmaceutical Agency to ensure secure and sustainable supply chains for vital medicines, and support investment in cutting edge vaccine and medicines research.

Double Scottish Government investment in sport and active living to £100 million by the end of this parliament.

Investing in our NHS

Our health service is our most cherished public service and we will ensure it is sustainable for the future.

The coronavirus pandemic has placed unprecedented pressure on our NHS and we thank everyone who works in the NHS for their efforts over the last year.

Funding Recovery

To fight the pandemic, our NHS has had to pause or go slower on some other treatments to keep everyone safe. We will implement an NHS Recovery Plan, backed by a 20% increase in investment in frontline health services.

This will deliver an above inflation increase in NHS spending over the next Parliament of at least £2.5 billion.

We expect this increase to exceed any Barnett consequentials we receive for frontline health spending, however we renew our commitment that every penny of additional frontline health and care consequentials will be passed to health and care services.

Community health services will receive at least half of our NHS's frontline spending.

To ensure that NHS funding is distributed equitably across the country we will carry out a review of the funding formula.

Capital Investment

To help renew our NHS we aim to invest £10 billion over the next decade to replace and refurbish health facilities across Scotland. The timescales required to progress major projects mean we will see the bulk of the new buildings delivered in the second half of the decade. The UK Government has repeatedly cut out capital budget in recent years and this aim is therefore subject to Scotland not facing further raids on this budget by Westminster.

Our investment programme will include:

Renewing or upgrading primary and community facilities - including, for example, Glenrothes Hospital in Fife, Inch War Memorial Hospital in Grampian, Biggart Hospital in Prestwick, the Cottage Hospital in Castle Douglas, Falkirk Community Hospital, completion of the new St Brendan's Community Hospital in Barra, and the rollout of improved connectivity services to enable greater use of 'NearMe' in Orkney.

Renewing acute and general hospital facilities to keep them fit for the future. This will include completing the Baird Family Hospital and ANCHOR Centre in Aberdeen, and building the new Monklands Hospital at Wester Moffat. Over the next decade of investment it will also mean planning and enabling the refurbishment of hospital including Ninewells Hospital in

Dundee, Caithness General Hospital in Wick, the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley, Vale of Leven Hospital in Alexandria, the Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick, and Borders General in Melrose.

Our elective centre programme of construction and development is under way and includes a centre at the Perth Royal Infirmary, a centre in Aberdeen, one in Inverness, and a centre at St John's Hospital in Livingston. To aid our recovery from the pandemic and ensure that we have the elective capacity we need for the future we will also take forward two additional elective centres in Cumbernauld and Ayrshire.

We will also invest to enable our specialist facilities to help serve the needs of populations that go much wider than the communities that live near them. That will include replacing the east of Scotland regional cancer centre at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh, the Edinburgh Eye Pavilion, and QEUH Institute of Neurosciences.

National Pharmaceutical Agency

We will create a NHS National Pharmaceutical Agency with a mission to secure safe and high quality medicines, at the most cost effective price possible . Where necessary this will include establishing expanded manufacturing capabilities for both generic medicines and 'specials', something already done on a small scale in NHS Tayside.

The National Pharmaceutical Agency will also work with the Scottish National Investment Bank to support investment in cutting edge research and development to bring new medicines and jobs to Scotland.

Fast-track cancer diagnostic centre

We will also establish a fast track cancer diagnostic centre in every health board area. The first three of these - in Ayrshire &

Arran, Fife and Dumfries & Galloway - will be up and running by the end of May. These will help better support patients with non-specific symptoms suspicious of cancer, and each patient will be supported by a 'navigator' at the heart so the patient will have one key contact throughout the process.

NHS Staff and Pay

We fully recognise the demands our NHS staff have been under over the past few months and we will be forever indebted to them.

As an early indication of our gratitude we gave our NHS staff a £500 thank-you bonus, and a commitment to fair pay.

Pay Offer

The SNP Government has now offered our 154,000 NHS Scotland Agenda for Change staff a substantial pay rise, rejecting the 1% proposal made by the Tories.

We have proposed a 4% uplift to all staff in Bands 1 to 7, with a guaranteed increase of £1000 for anyone paid less than £25,000.

Our offer means a nurse at the top of Band 5 in Scotland would be over £1,300 better off after tax and National Insurance than their counterparts in England - taking home over 5% more.

Scotland has the best paid NHS staff in the UK, and over the course of this parliament we will ensure that this continues to be the case.

Increasing staff numbers

We have over 21,500 more staff in Scotland's NHS now than when the SNP came into government. We will recruit at least 1500 more NHS staff to deliver our elective centre programme and increase specialist capacity.

We will further expand medical school training places by at least 100 per year and double the number of places on the Widening Access to Medicine programme to help create a more diverse medical workforce.

We will create a student paramedic bursary to help support the paramedics of the future during their training.

We will expand the occupational health and mental health support for NHS staff, and work with staff to help shape the nature and scope of provision.

Remobilising our NHS

We had made significant progress in reducing waiting times immediately before the pandemic, but that progress has been severely interrupted by Covid-19 and we have seen a significant increase in the numbers of patients waiting for routine appointments and treatment.

Our NHS Recovery Plan

We will implement an NHS Recovery Plan that will shape new, sustainable ways of working and support our frontline to use the latest developments in medical science. It will outline how we will increase the activity of our NHS to help treat those who have had their care interrupted by the pandemic and tackle excessively long waits.

Our plan will include:

Support a 10% increase in inpatient, day case, and outpatient activity to address the delays in treatment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic - including maximizing theatre usage and capacity in sites like East Lothian Community Hospital, and making use of mobile units while new facilities are built,

£10 million for new diagnostic techniques and the rollout of the redesign of urgent care,

accelerated recruitment of staff for our 5 national elective and diagnostic treatment centres, with at least 1,500 more frontline staff for these facilities by 2025,

investing a further £100 million to open two additional national elective care centres to increase our capacity to respond to the needs of an ageing population,

implementing our Cancer Recovery Plan, including the £18 million partnership with Macmillan to ensure everyone with cancer in Scotland gets personalised care.

investing a further £20 million to expand our Detect Cancer Early programme

retaining the existing Cancer targets and reviewing whether there is merit in specific additional targets for different types of cancer and cancer treatments.

Long Covid

The enduring consequence of the pandemic for many people is suffering 'long covid'. The health problem this presents can be varied and are not restricted to respiratory problems. We will support our GPs to help coordinate the multidisciplinary care, including in the acute sector, that people with long covid need.

We will also continue to work with third sector organisations like Chest, Heart, Stroke Scotland to make sure people can access the services currently available to help us to deliver enhanced services as quickly as possible.

Patient Safety Commissioner

We will appoint a Patient Safety Commissioner to be a national advocate for patients and safeguard their rights.

Digital care

Early on in the Covid-19 outbreak the video health consulting service 'Near Me' was scaled up. We increased capacity, trained more than 7,000 people, and supported 650 GP practices in its use.

While video consultations are not suitable for everyone, a re-elected SNP Government will establish Near Me as the default option where that is right for a person and they are happy to use the service.

And, we want to go further than just digital consultation. We will develop MyNHS, a safe, simple and secure app that helps people access services directly and own their own health information.

We have also seen more people use online or digital mental health services. We will establish a new Digital Mental Health programme to enhance the services that are available.

We will move to a digital prescriptions process, where your prescription is electronically sent to the local pharmacy to be organised, making it easier for people to access the medication they need.

Caring in the community

We want to see as much health care as possible provided in the community and closer to people's own homes, because that is what we know patients want.

That means continuing to reform primary care and investing in services. Primary care and GP services will see a greater share of NHS frontline investment over this parliament, with an increase of at least 25% in primary care funding.

We will roll out more mobile health services for direct delivery of care, particularly in rural areas. This will include additional screening services, stroke units and mental health services.

NHS Pharmacy First Scotland helps people access the right care in the right place, without having to go to their GP practice or local Accident and Emergency Department for non-urgent treatment. We will expand Pharmacy First to allow community pharmacies to give people expert advice or treatment for minor illnesses and common conditions, or to make referrals to other healthcare teams if required.

Our emergency Coronavirus legislation allowed community pharmacists to undertake vaccinations, including in the vital Covid-19 vaccination programme and an SNP government will legislate to make this permanent.

Serving Rural & Remote Communities

We will create a new centre of excellence for rural and remote medicine and social care to provide expertise and advice on the delivery of care in different rural, island, and remote settings in Scotland and invest in our rural general hospitals including a new Belford Hospital in Fort William.

We remain committed to the reintroduction of consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's in Elgin in a safe and sustainable way and will take forward the recommendations of the independent review due to report in the summer.

NHS Centre for Sustainable Delivery

We will support the new NHS Centre for Sustainable Delivery to pioneer and deliver new, better and more sustainable ways of working across the NHS and social care, and fully harness the benefits of technology and new treatments.

National Care Service

The importance of our social care services has never been clearer. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our nation's carers for the commitment and compassion we have seen throughout the pandemic.

To ensure our social care system consistently delivers high quality services across Scotland, we will take forward the recommendations of the independent Feeley review and establish a National Care Service in the next parliamentary term.

The National Care Service will oversee the delivery of care, improve standards, ensure enhanced pay and conditions for workers and provide better support for unpaid carers.

It does not mean all care homes will be owned or run by the Scottish Government, but it does mean that we will improve standards, training and pay across the board, and that there will be increased accountability for the provision of social care.

It will allow us to introduce a National Wage for Care staff and enter into national pay bargaining for the sector, based on fair work principles, for the first time.

If re-elected, we will begin the formal legislative process of establishing the new service within the first year of the new Parliament and aim to have the new National Care Service fully functioning by the end of the parliament.

As part of a rights-based approach to care, we will strengthen residents rights in adult residential settings. This will include delivering 'Anne's Law' – giving nominated relatives or friends the same access rights to care homes as staff while following stringent infection control procedures, as called for by Care Home Relatives Scotland.

As we create the National Care Service, we will review the number, structure and regulation of health boards – and other related delivery services – to remove unwarranted duplication of functions and make best use of the public purse.

Funding the new National Care Service

These changes can only be delivered with increased investment. We will therefore increase public investment in social care by 25% over the parliament, delivering over £800 million of increased support for social care.

We believe social care services, just like health care services, should be provided on a truly universal basis, free at the point of use. An SNP government will therefore abolish charges for non-residential care.

Improving Mental Health services

Mental health is one of the most important public health issues facing Scotland today and that is why, even before Covid, the SNP had made it a priority, with a particular focus on investment in and redesign of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

We will increase Scottish Government direct investment in mental health by at least 25%, ensuring that by the end of the parliament, 10% of our frontline NHS budget will be invested in mental health services.

We will build on the success of our community link worker programme, to ensure every GP practice in the country has access to a dedicated mental wellbeing link worker, creating a network of 1,000 additional dedicated staff who can help grow community mental health resilience and help direct social prescribing.

To tackle stigma and raise awareness of mental illness, we will offer mental health first aid training to everyone in the public sector by the end of the parliament.

We will take forward the recommendations of the Independent Review into the Delivery of Forensic Mental Health Services and the recommendations of John Scott QC's forthcoming final report of his review of mental health law and practice on compulsory detention.

Child Mental Health

We will ensure at least 1% of frontline NHS spending is directed to CAMHS support and services by the end of the parliament.

Our mental health strategy is helping to reshape how CAMHS is delivered, underpinned by the principle of 'Ask once, get help fast'. We will introduce a National Transitions Strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people experiencing mental ill health in their transitions to adulthood.

Suicide prevention

Our vision is of a Scotland where suicide is preventable and prevented, and where help and support is available to anyone contemplating suicide and to those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

To help achieve this, we will double suicide prevention spending and support a range of activity, including doubling the number of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training programme and SafeTalk programme trainers, by the end of the parliament.

Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity

While autism and learning disabilities are not mental health conditions, when treatment and care is required they are currently covered by the Mental Health Act.

We will bring forward a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill to delineate support and services from existing mental health legislation and ensure that human rights are protected and promoted.

To help make sure the new legislation is championed when it is implemented we will create a Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodiversity Commissioner through the new law.

We will work with people with lived experience on an inclusive approach to ensure the Commissioner can safeguard their rights.

Free at the point of need

We are absolutely committed to the founding principles of our NHS – publicly owned, publicly delivered, and free at the point of need.

Prescriptions and Eye Exams

We will protect free eye examinations and free prescriptions in Scotland, saving people almost £22 and £9.35 per item respectively, compared to England.

NHS Dentistry

There is still one area of NHS services that can lead to a charge for care – NHS dentistry.

We have made great strides in improving dentistry access, but if re-elected we will now improve access further by abolishing all NHS dentistry charges over the course of the parliament.

We will start the roll out with care experienced people aged between 18 and 26.

Parking Charges

It was the SNP that scrapped parking charges in all NHS owned car parks in Scotland. During the Covid-19 pandemic we've ensured that parking in all hospital car parks is free, including in those that are PFI-owned. We will support NHS boards to take the necessary steps to ensure parking remains free in the long term.

Young Patients Family Fund

Building on the success of our Neonatal Expenses Fund, we will introduce a Young Patients Family Fund to support families visiting children who are receiving inpatient care.

Substance misuse and drug deaths

The number of people who die of a drug-related death in Scotland is unacceptably high. Each one of these deaths is a tragedy, and we cannot underestimate the impact of those losses on individuals, families and communities across the country.

We believe a national mission is needed to tackle the drug death emergency Scotland faces. We must empower more people to seek support; make that support more consistent, flexible and effective, and much faster; and help services stick with the people they support.

We will invest £250 million over the lifetime of the parliament to support a range of community-based interventions, including primary prevention, and an expansion of residential rehabilitation. We will:

support outreach services in every local authority
fully implement the new Medication Assisted Treatment Standards (MAT) in the first year of the parliament, ensuring

same day treatment or same day prescribing for those who need it,
move to a 5 year funding cycle for eligible third sector and grassroots organisations that are at the forefront of saving lives

We remain committed to the introduction of medically supervised safe consumption facilities. These facilities have been demonstrated around the world to save lives. We will explore every legal avenue in an attempt to establish them in Scotland.

Public Health

While much focus has been given to the direct health impacts of Covid-19, we must also work together to shift our focus towards reducing inequalities and preventing ill health.

We will look to introduce restrictions on alcohol advertising in locations where children would be readily exposed to it.

We reaffirm our commitment to the 2034 smoke free Scotland ambition and will publish a new tobacco strategy.

Improving diet and levels of healthy weight is a public health priority and we will aim to halve childhood obesity by 2030, significantly reducing diet-related health inequalities.

We will make Active Schools programmes free for all children by the end of the parliament and continue to improve nutritional standards for food and drink in schools.

We will bring forward legislation to restrict the use of promotions on food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt over the next parliament.

Community pharmacies have delivered contraception services during the pandemic. We will explore options for moving the delivery of longer-term forms of contraceptive to community pharmacy. We will pilot a bridging contraception service, available with the Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC), to provide complete care for patients.

Women's Health

There is a need to improve healthcare for women, particularly around the different stages of a woman's life.

We will develop and implement a Women's Health Plan aiming to improve services and reduce health inequalities for women and girls. It will:

establish a dignified, compassionate miscarriage service tailored to the needs of women, taking forward the findings of the lancet report and supporting the development of individualised care plans after a woman's first miscarriage emulate New Zealand where families who experience miscarriage or stillbirth are entitled to 3 days of paid leave by delivering this within the public sector and calling on the UK Government to make the necessary changes to employment law to make it available for everyone,

review midwifery and health visiting pathways for new families and babies, improve access to practical breastfeeding support, physical therapy advice and increase postpartum and mental wellbeing support,

ensure maternity departments have dedicated facilities for women who are experiencing unexpected pregnancy complications,

reduce waiting times for diagnosing endometriosis from over 8 years to less than 12 months by the end of the parliament and look to improve the experience and diagnosis of women who visit their GPs with other menstrual problems,

ensure women have improved access to specialist services for advice and support on the diagnosis and management of menopause. We will launch a public health campaign to remove stigma and raise awareness of the symptoms of menopause,

ask clinical experts in the National Screening Committee to examine the merits of lowering the current age thresholds and commit to acting on their advice. Alongside this, we will invest in research to improve the accuracy of screening,

support the development of a new Scottish Institute for Women's Health to drive changes to policy, guidance and medial training on the basis of sex and gender medicine as well as provide funding to dedicated research into women's health.

Mesh

The SNP Government halted the implementation of transvaginal mesh in 2018, and we will maintain this position.

We will continue to work to deliver improved services for women who have suffered complications as a result of transvaginal mesh, and support the outcomes that the Scottish Mesh Survivors Charter is seeking.

We will introduce legislation to enable women who paid for mesh removal surgery to be refunded while ensuring that women who may prefer to have mesh removal surgery outside the NHS in future can do so free of charge and with travel costs paid for.

Abortion

Abortion is a legal right in Scotland and we will protect that right. We have no plans to restrict existing abortion legislation.

We are clear that those accessing abortion services should not be targeted for choosing to access this right. We will support any local authority who wishes to use their powers to establish bye-laws to create protest free buffer zones outside clinics that provide abortion services.

Specialist care

Equal access to rehab is vital to people living with long-term conditions or recovering after an accident, operation or illness, in order they can live as well – and as independently – as possible. We will create a right to rehab by the end of the parliament to ensure that no-one is excluded by a 'no rehab potential', as called for by the Right to Rehab Coalition.

The range of specialist care provided by the range of allied health professionals (AHPs) in our NHS is vital to the well-being of many. Ensuring we have the right skills mix to deliver on priorities such as the right to rehab, and that our primary care services are supported by a truly multidisciplinary team. That's why we will review our future needs in order to shape how AHP training is expanded in this parliament.

We will establish a National Low Vision Plan, modelled on the Welsh Low Vision Service, to enable more consistent service provision across Scotland.

We will bolster community audiology provision to help free up capacity in our acute sector. Our ambition is to put community audiology services on par with our free community eye care services.

Scotland has made huge progress in detecting and treating HIV, and people with the virus are now able to live long, happy and healthy lives. We believe we can go further, and will bring forward a new framework to eliminate HIV transmission by 2030.

We will continue with our plans to eradicate Hep C in Scotland by 2024.

Building on the roll out of the successful HIV self-testing service, we will bring forward pilots for at home STI testing to make it easier to access treatment and support.

We are aware of the urgent need to improve access to NHS Gender Identity Services. We will take action by committing to three years of centralised crisis intervention funding to improve care, support and services. We will work with people with lived experience to explore how this is best delivered, including improving community provision.

Palliative Care

Everyone who can benefit from palliative care should have timely access to high quality, seamless care, when and where they need it.

We will appoint a new National Clinical Lead for Palliative and End of Life Care for Scotland, who will be responsible for overseeing a national strategy for palliative and end of life care that takes a whole system, public health approach.

We are committed to ensuring children with palliative care needs receive the highest quality care, equally across Scotland, underpinned by annual public funding of at least £7 million to ensure children's hospice care is sustainably resourced.

Active Lives and Sport

We want a Scotland where everyone can benefit from investment in sport and physical activity.

We will double the Scottish Government's investment in sport and active living to £100 million a year by the end of the Parliament to help Scotland get more active.

We will task SportScotland to work with organisations and individuals across Scotland to devise a new national activity plan. Its focus will be to break down the barriers, financial or otherwise, that keep too many people from leading active lives. A priority will be to support the participation of more women and girls.

We will review our investment in sport, including sponsorship, to ensure it benefits men and women equally and we will work with public broadcasters in Scotland to support them to significantly increase the amount of women's sport shown on Scottish screens, so that we can inspire girls and boys to take part in sports.

Fan Bank

We know that fans care deeply about how their clubs perform both on and off the field of play.

At times when a club is in financial difficulty or is up for sale there are often support and community groups who would want to get directly involved in the running of their club, but who do not have access to the capital to turn this dream into a reality.

That's why we will create a 'Fan Bank' to empower communities and groups and strengthen local decision-making by supporting communities to acquire a share or control of their local sports club.

To be eligible to apply for support from the Fan Bank, groups will require to show clear community focus and support and, in particular, demonstrate how involvement in the running of their club would be used to support women and girls participation in sport.

An equal society

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and continuing impact on our way of life but it is clear that the harms caused by the pandemic are not felt equally across society.

As we recover, we want to build a fairer Scotland where everyone feels valued and our most vulnerable people are properly supported.

Indeed, our plan for an independence referendum once the Covid crisis has passed is about ensuring that our Parliament has all the powers it needs to build a fair recovery for all - and that our recovery is driven by the values and priorities of the people of Scotland, and not those of a Westminster government that Scotland didn't vote for.

Over the course of the next Parliament we will:

Begin work to deliver a Minimum Income Guarantee, ensuring that everyone in Scotland can live healthy fulfilling lives.

Build a wraparound childcare system, providing care before and after school, all year round, where the least well-off families will pay nothing, and expand free early years education to all 1 and 2 year olds from low income households.

Provide a cash grant of £520, paid across four quarterly instalments, for every family with children in receipt of free school meals until the full rollout of Scottish Child Payment is complete.

Double the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child by the end of parliament to lift thousands of families and children out of poverty.

Introduce a new Care Leaver Grant to provide care experienced young people with additional support and security at the time of their transition out of the care system.

Invest an additional £50 million over the next parliamentary term to end homelessness and rough sleeping.

Undertake a review of Scotland's prosecution system to deliver fairer, faster and more effective justice.

Ensure that every child victim/witness will have access to a Scottish version of the European Barnahus Model by 2025, uniting the care and justice response to crimes affecting children.

Appoint a Victims Commissioner to provide an independent voice for victims and witnesses and review the provision of victim services.

Minimum Income Guarantee

We have long been supportive of a citizens' basic income or universal basic income. Over the last parliament we funded four local authorities to explore the feasibility of piloting a citizens' basic income in Scotland.

Despite the local authorities concluding that a citizens' basic income pilot is desirable, it is not feasible within the current powers of the Scottish Parliament. That will obviously change if Scotland becomes independent.

While we cannot bring forward a citizens' basic income until Scotland is independent, we want to do all we can within our current powers to offer safety, security and dignity.

To ensure our recovery delivers a fairer Scotland for everyone no matter their circumstances, we will start work in the next Parliament to provide a Minimum Income Guarantee for all.

This work will also incorporate the idea of Universal Basic Services, which by ensuring people have access to the provision of basic services - such as childcare or the NHS for example, contributes toward ensuring a minimum standard of living.

We know that delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee cannot be done overnight, but we are determined to make step by step changes through our social security system over the next parliament so that everyone in Scotland has enough money to live a dignified life.

Tackling child poverty

Child poverty has been increasing in recent years due to the impact of UK Government welfare cuts and has been further exacerbated by the pandemic.

We cannot allow that to stand.

Our new Scottish Child Payment provides low income families with an additional £40 every four weeks, initially for each child under 6.

We will roll out this benefit for all children under 16 in low income families by the end of 2022.

And, over the course of the parliament we will double the Scottish Child Payment to £20 a week, or £80 per month. This will help up to 450,000 children in 250,000 households.

During the pandemic we have provided additional help to low income families, providing free school meals in holidays, and additional income through £100 pandemic payments.

To bridge the gap until the Scottish Child Payment is fully rolled out to all under 16s we will provide the equivalent of the Scottish Child Payment to all low income families in receipt of free school meals, in the same way as we have made payments during the pandemic.

This will mean payments of £520 per child, paid in quarterly instalments, in both 2021 and 2022. This additional funding will reach up to 170,000 children.

Next year an SNP government will also publish our new four year delivery plan, updating our actions to tackle child poverty. This will be backed again by a £50 million fund to help lift children out of poverty.

A vital element of this plan will be investing in employability support for low-income and disabled parents. We will nearly double the planned investment in the Parental Employability Support Fund to £15 million in the next two years to help

improve employment chances and support parents into good, secure jobs. We will also explore how we can link Parental Employment Support with our national Fair Start employment programmes.

Tackling the motherhood penalty

In addition to providing easily accessible and affordable childcare for all families, we will bring forward a package of measures to tackle the so-called 'motherhood penalty' and encourage more flexible and family friendly working.

We will halt the interest on student loans during maternity leave and continue funding for our Women Returners Programme to help women back into work.

We will ensure that single parents are a priority group in the expansion of Connecting Scotland – our programme of improving connectivity through the provision of tablets and laptops - and access to support.

We will build on our work to create a wellbeing economy, by developing measures of economic performance that take proper account of the contribution and cost of formal and informal care. This will help to ensure that we do not take for granted the care which, though not exclusively, is so often done by women.

Social Security

In the last five years we have built a new social security system, with dignity, fairness and respect at its heart.

In just two years since we began making payments, Scotland's social security system has made a real impact on the lives of hard-working families across the country.

Social Security Scotland currently administers 10 benefits – seven of these are new and unique within the UK:

Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment – one off payment of up to £600 from 24 weeks in pregnancy up until a baby reaches 6 months for families who get certain benefits.

Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment – one off payment of £250 when a child is between two and three years and six months for families who get certain benefits.

Best Start Grant School Age Payment – one off payment of £250 when a child would normally start primary one for families who get certain benefits.

Best Start Foods – a prepaid card from pregnancy up to when a child turns three for families on certain benefits to help buy healthy food.

Carer's Allowance Supplement – an automatic payment made twice a year to carers to increase the value of Carers Allowance by 13%, benefitting around 83,000 of Scotland's unpaid carers.

Funeral Support Payment – money towards the costs of a funeral at a difficult time like this for people on certain benefits who are responsible for paying for a funeral, averaging at £1500 per payment.

Job Start Payment – £250 for 16 to 24 year olds who have been on certain benefits for six months or more to help with the costs of starting a job.

Young Carer Grant – A yearly £300 payment for young carers to improve quality of life, helping them take part in employment, social or leisure opportunities.

Child Winter Heating Assistance - a £200 payment to help families of a child on the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance for Children to heat their homes.

Scottish Child Payment - gives eligible families on low incomes with children under 6 an extra £10 per week for each child. It is planned to be fully rolled out to children under the age of 16 by the end of 2022 and for payments to double to £20 per week by the end of the parliament.

Dignity, Fairness and Respect

We have built Scotland's new social security system with, for and around the people who use it. At its heart are the principles of dignity, fairness and respect and a belief that social security is not a burden, but an investment in our people.

These principles will underpin the disability and carer benefits which will be introduced in the next parliament. Child Disability Payment will start later this year to be followed by Adult Disability Payment.

We will make sure there are long term awards for people with conditions that are unlikely to change and, for those where changes may happen in future, we will review cases as simply and efficiently as possible to ensure people are getting the right level of support.

Supporting Carers

Unpaid carers make an immense contribution to the health and wellbeing of loved ones. We believe it is essential that carers have the support they need to provide care and have a fulfilling life. We will:

pay a double payment (£460) of Carer's Allowance Supplement in December 2021.

introduce Carers Assistance to replace the current Carers Allowance - this will increase the value of the payment, provided we can guarantee UK benefit clawbacks won't leave carers worse off.

pay anyone looking after more than one disabled person an extra £10 per week benefiting around 16,350 carers - this matches the extra support carers of more than one disabled child receive.

We also know that when a carer loses someone they have cared for, they need to be supported, so following the death of a cared-for person, we will pay Carers Assistance for 12 weeks instead of just 8, helping over 4,000 carers.

Until Carers Assistance is introduced, we will continue to pay the Carers Allowance Supplement to ensure carers receive an income that is equivalent to Job seekers Allowance.

We will also use the introduction of Carers Assistance to make sure carers are given information on the support available to them and we will invest in carers centres across the country.

Care Leaver Grant

Too many young people leaving care face significant barriers to achieving a successful transition into adulthood.

A key area of The Promise – the plan to improve our care system - was the need for care experienced young people to have “Scaffolding”. In line with the SNP's commitment to Keep the Promise, we will invest £10m to establish a new Care Experienced Grant. This will be an annual grant of £200 paid to support around 50,000 young care experienced people

between the ages of 16 and 26 - who often don't have access to the 'bank of mum and dad' - with £2000 over a decade as they enter adulthood.

Extend winter fuel payment

We will replace the current UK winter fuel payment with a Winter Heating Payment helping around 1 million households and backed by around £180 million a year. We will maintain its current rates and will not means-test it.

Cold Weather Payments of £25 are too restrictive and pay out too infrequently. We will replace them with a new £50 Winter Heating Payment paid annually to those low-income households currently eligible for the UK Cold Weather Payments. This will be an investment of £20 million every year and support 400,000 households, giving low-income households guaranteed support with energy bills.

Extend Best Start Food

Our Best Start Foods card is a simple and easy to use prepaid card that can be used online and in shops to buy food to support young children and parents. We will increase the amount of Best Start Food payments to £4.50 per week and increase eligibility by around 50% to all in receipt of Universal Credit – backed by £20 million.

Scottish Welfare Fund

We will guarantee the budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund and carry out a review of its purpose and operation to make sure it works as well as possible in all parts of the country.

Benefit Automation

We want to make it as easy as possible for people to get the financial support they are entitled to.

To do that, we believe some benefits should be linked so that if you receive one benefit as a result of having a low income,

other support is automatically made available to you. We will do this wherever we can and support local authorities to do the same, for example using the Scottish Child Payment to trigger free school meals and the school clothing grant.

Improve access to advice services

Whether it is debt or welfare, housing or employment, we know access to advice can prevent people falling into difficulty and help people get the financial support they are entitled to.

We will support frontline and second-tier advice and debt services with more than £12 million of funding next year.

To make it easier to access advice, we will invest over £3 million in innovative Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships in 150 GP Practices over the next two years. We will invest £1.5 million to pilot advice in education settings with a focus on families, helping ensure they are aware of the support available to them.

End homelessness

Our aim is that everyone should have a warm and safe place to live. That is why ending homelessness and rough sleeping is a national priority for us.

The pandemic showed us that when there is a strong enough will we can make rapid change in a very short period of time.

Our aim is that no one should find themselves going back to being homeless or sleeping rough. We will back this with a new Ending Homelessness Together Fund of £50 million.

We will invest in replacing winter night shelters with new rapid-rehousing welcome centres to provide short term emergency accommodation for anyone in immediate need. Our Welcome centres will help people into accommodation including through

Housing First where people with complex needs are provided with wrap around support to maintain tenancies.

The key to ending homelessness is prevention. We will invest in a rapid rehousing approach and will introduce a national programme to increase housing choices for those facing homelessness.

We will also introduce legislation that strengthens people's housing rights and ensure public bodies have a duty to prevent homelessness, building on the recommendations of the Prevention Review Group.

A diverse and inclusive Scotland

Our vision is to make Scotland a global leader in diversity and inclusion to increase fairness and tackle inequality, remove societal disadvantage, and also attract and retain talent, to create more business opportunities, and remove societal disadvantages.

We will introduce an overarching Scottish Diversity and Inclusion Strategy covering the public sector, our educational institutions, justice system, transport and workplaces. This strategy will focus on the removal of institutional, cultural and financial barriers which lead to inequalities in relation to gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and social mobility.

We will increase and improve our data collection so that across all our policies we will have a strong evidence base, and be able to gauge intersectional inequality, measure outcomes, and recommend improvements.

The negative impacts of Covid were disproportionately felt by different groups in society. For our minority ethnic communities,

there were both health and financial impacts. That is why we established the Social Renewal Advisory Board, and also the Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity. Building on their recommendations, we will develop our next race equality action plan with stakeholders and ethnic minority communities to reach the objectives set out in our Race Equality Framework 2016-2030.

We will deliver our Gypsy Traveller Action Plan with a focus on improving accommodation and tackling prejudice.

We will increase the number of minority ethnic people able to benefit from the new Minority Ethnic Leadership and Development Programme that has been established in partnership with the John Smith Centre.

We will also establish a similar scheme for disabled people, to remove the barriers many disabled people face in attaining leadership positions.

We will increase support to projects which are supporting disabled people and those from a minority ethnic background into positions on public boards to increase representation.

We will continue with our Access to Elected Office Fund which offers financial assistance to disabled people contesting the Scottish Parliament and Local Authority elections.

We will introduce a National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy to ensure there is a joined up approach to supporting our disabled young people and improve guidance to all those providing support.

Diverse democracy

Whilst in government, we have made great strides to extend the right to vote. We have extended the voting franchise in Scottish Parliament and local government elections to 16 and

17 year olds, and all foreign nationals with leave to remain, including all those granted refugee status.

We will now go further and extend entitlement to stand for election to all those who are entitled to vote, ensuring a more diverse parliament and local government.

Public Sector Equality Duty

We will expand the specific duties that require a listed public authority to publish gender pay gap information to disability and ethnicity reporting and ensure these are included within Equal Pay Statements. We will develop an ethnicity pay gap strategy to go alongside our existing strategies on disability and gender pay gap.

And through the Public Sector Equality Duty we will place a duty on those public bodies that communicate with the public to ensure they have accessible, inclusive communications. We will develop national guidance for public bodies on inclusive communication.

Gender Recognition Act

We remain firmly committed to improving the lives of trans and non-binary people. Trans people continue to experience stigma and prejudice and suffer poorer health outcomes relative to the wider population. This needs to change.

We are committed to tackling transphobia head on through inclusive education and action to tackle prejudice and hate crime.

In the next parliament we will work with trans people, women, equality groups, legal and human rights experts to identify the best and most effective way to improve and simplify the process by which a trans person can obtain legal recognition, so that the trauma associated with that process is reduced. We remain committed to making necessary changes to the Gender

Recognition Act that arise from this work at the earliest opportunity.

We will ensure that these changes do not affect the rights or protections that women currently have under the Equality Act.

It is important that concerns about reforms to gender recognition law are addressed through informed and respectful discussion. However we must not allow them to be a cover for transphobia or disinformation.

National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

We will continue the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls and continue to progress their recommendations over the course of the next parliament.

End conversion therapy

There is no place for conversion therapy in Scotland. Such practices are discriminatory and harmful to the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people.

The UK Government made a commitment to ban conversion therapy in their LGBT Action Plan, and we fully support this, as we know making a ban fully comprehensive will involve action in reserved areas. However, if the UK Government does not take action, we will bring forward our own legislation insofar as is possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

Changing places toilets

For many people with complex care needs, access to basic sanitation and toilet facilities are not as easy to access as they should be.

For around 25,000 people, Changing Places Toilets are needed, and at present there are just over 200 available across the country.

Over the next parliamentary term, we will invest £10 million to increase the number of Changing Places Toilets across the country and support mobile Changing Places Toilets to allow people to access events or outdoor venues around the country.

Tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence

It is unacceptable that in the second decade of the 21st century, there is still so much to do to tackle violence against women and girls. We remain committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

In government, the SNP introduced Equally Safe, our strategy to combat all forms of violence against women and girls.

A re-elected SNP government will take forward the actions in Equally Safe. We will establish a new multi-year £100 million funding stream over the next three years to support frontline services and focus on prevention of violence against women and girls from school onwards.

We will ring fence part of these funds for frontline support services, to add to those provided by local authorities, so that no survivor of abuse or violence is forced to wait to get the help they need, at the time they need it, in their local area.

We will invest a further £5 million this year to support frontline organisations to deal with outstanding demand that has built up during the pandemic.

We will ensure access for all young people to evidence-based prevention education on consent and healthy relationships and fund work in our schools, colleges and universities.

We will also increase the work undertaken to change attitudes of offenders, for example by ensuring that the Caledonian Project is available nationwide.

The vast majority of people who access support are women, but men also need access to services. We will fund resources for services that support men who are victims of rape and domestic abuse, and we will establish a national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys, which will sit in parallel with and compliment the work of Equally Safe.

To help women and girls be safe on the streets we will work with stakeholders on how to better educate men about the impact of their behaviour. We will explore ways to improve the design of communities, such as Space Safety Audits, to make women not just feel safer, but be safer.

Protecting the anonymity of all people who report sexual crimes is of critical importance and we believe this protection must be strengthened in Scotland. We will enshrine the right to lifelong anonymity for complainers of sexual crimes in Scots law and consider where we have to go further, including giving serious consideration to the recommendations from Lady Dorrian's review to deliver a justice system that survivors of sexual crimes can have confidence in.

We have set up a Working Group on Misogyny and Criminal Justice to independently consider how the Scottish criminal justice system can better deal with misogyny, and if the group recommends a stand-alone criminal offence of misogynistic harassment we will act swiftly on its advice.

We took forward Scotland's first national consultation on prostitution. We will develop a model for Scotland to tackle this form of violence against women and girls, and consider how aspects of international approaches which seek to challenge men's demand for prostitution would best be applied in Scotland. In addition to a focus on challenging men's attitudes towards the purchase of sex, we will engage with those with

direct or lived experience to shape services and design measures which will protect them from harm and provide the support they need, including helping them exit prostitution.

Support for victims

Victims' rights should be at the very heart of the criminal justice system. We set up the Victims Taskforce to improve support, advice and information for victims of crime and remain committed to supporting its work over the next parliament.

We will appoint a Victims Commissioner to provide an independent voice for victims and witnesses, and we will review the provision of victim services.

We will develop a new funding regime for victim support organisations and introduce a justice-specific knowledge and skills framework for trauma informed practice.

The 'Bairns' Hoose'

Involvement in the justice system can be especially difficult and upsetting for children. We want to ensure that the journey from disclosure to recovery respects the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.

Instead of having to go to multiple different services in multiple locations, all the care and support a child and their family needs will be delivered under one roof - at the Barnahus, or 'Bairns' Hoose'.

We will ensure that every child victim/witness will have access to a Bairns' Hoose by 2025.

Restorative Justice

We believe that restorative justice should be available to all who wish to use it, at a time that is appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. If re-elected, we will

ensure that restorative justice services are widely available across Scotland by 2023.

Ensuring safer communities

Supporting the police system in Scotland to protect vulnerable people, tackle crime, and work with communities for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland is one of our key priorities.

We will protect the police resource budget in real terms for the entirety of the next parliament.

We recognise concerns that exist over technologies such as facial recognition. We will build on the recommendations of the Independent Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies and ensure robust scrutiny and oversight is provided at all times.

We will work with leaders and partners in the police and wider society to improve the diversity of Police Scotland and enhance the quality of data across the justice system, to better understand and serve the needs of our communities.

We will support and resource the Sheku Bayoh Public Inquiry and commit to taking forward findings to deliver improvements and strengthen public confidence in policing.

We will implement the remainder of Dame Elish Angiolini's review into complaints against the police and introduce a Police Complaints Bill into Parliament.

We will bring forward legislation to ensure fireworks are used safely and appropriately, so that we can reduce the negative impacts they have on individuals, communities and pets.

While most dog owners are responsible and keep their dogs under control, there is a small minority of dog owners who fail to do so. We will review the Dangerous Dog Act to ensure our

communities are kept safe from dangerous dogs and irresponsible dog owners.

We will support the modernisation of our fire and rescue service so that SFRS can do more to protect communities and deliver positive outcomes for the people of Scotland. We have continued to invest in the modernisation of SFRS with an additional £8.7 million allocated for 2021-22. Central to this modernisation - which must be achieved in partnership with the trade unions - is broadening the role of firefighters in Scotland.

A smarter approach to justice

Building on our progress over the last five years, we will invest in a substantial expansion in diversion from prosecution and of community justice services, including alternatives to remand and custodial sentences.

To accompany this investment we will develop a new National Community Justice Strategy and explore legislative options for a sustainable reduction in the prison population.

As part of our work to keep The Promise to care experienced young people we will expand secure care so that no under 18 year olds who should not be there are held in Polmont Young Offenders Institution and publish and implement a new Youth Justice Strategy for Scotland.

We will invest to modernise our prison estate to ensure it is fit for purpose - including delivering the final stages of our transformative vision for a new female custodial estate and the delivery of improvement works at HMP Barlinnie and planning for pre-construction phases for new HMPs Glasgow and Highland.

We will implement digital solutions to better support and streamline services for those in SPS care and their families such as case management and kiosks services for in-cell

services. We will provide support for Prison Visitor Centres and work to ensure family contact is maintained.

We will introduce and implement a new health and wellbeing strategy for the prison service that recognises the increasing complexities and vulnerability of the prison population.

A reformed justice system

We will undertake a review of Scotland's prosecution system to deliver fairer, faster and more effective justice.

The review will consider reform of corroboration, and the three verdict system, including - in recognition of the strong case that can be made for abolition - a consultation on the removal of the not-proven verdict.

To improve transparency and trust in the justice system, we will create a register of interests for members of the judiciary.

We will also conduct a review of summary justice including sentencing powers, police and fiscal penalties and the future role of sheriff summary and JP courts.

We will expand the availability of mediation and arbitration to ensure alternative dispute resolution is a central part of our legal system.

We will engage with the legal profession and victim support organisations on reform of the legal aid system, ensuring wide access to justice and a focus on early resolution of disputes, restorative justice and the regulation of legal services providers.

We will continue work to progress the devolution of tribunals. Once devolved, we will abolish fees for employment tribunals.

We will consult on whether the dual functions of the Law Officers, as head of the independent prosecution service and

principal legal advisers to the Scottish Government should be separated. SNP governments will continue to ensure that the Law Officers are not party political appointees. They will attend meetings of the Scottish Government cabinet only when required.

We will bring forward legislation to pardon miners convicted during the 1980s strike. This will be a collective pardon and it will apply both posthumously and to those still living. We hope it will bring a degree of closure and a restoration of dignity for miners, their families and communities.

Living Better

In the next five years, communities will be central to many of the changes necessary to deliver on our net zero ambitions, develop our economy, tackle poverty and improve living standards.

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Deliver a further 100,000 affordable homes by 2032.

Invest £1.6 billion over the next Parliament to decarbonise the heating of homes and other buildings.

Bring Scotrail into public ownership next year.

Extend free bus travel to everyone under 22.

Spend 10% of the transport capital budget on walking, cycling and wheeling

Introduce a new Land Reform Bill with a pre-emption in favour of community buy-out.

Double the Scottish Land Fund.

Support our communities to become 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Establish an Islands Bond – offering bonds of up to £50,000 to young people and families to stay on or to move to islands currently threatened by depopulation.

Enshrine the Right to Food in law as a key part of our ambition to be a Good Food Nation.

Safe, warm, affordable homes

Everyone should have a safe, warm, affordable home. We are committed to expanding our social and affordable housing stock.

100,000 affordable homes

Since taking office, we have delivered 96,750 affordable homes, nearly 67,000 of which were for social rent.

We will deliver a further 100,000 affordable homes by 2032. This will be backed by investment of £3.5 billion over the parliament and support 14,000 jobs a year. We will meet this target through a combination of new build homes and bringing existing housing stock back into use.

Energy efficient, connected, green houses

We want all homes to be energy efficient and zero carbon with access to outdoor space, transport links, digital connectivity and community services.

If re-elected, we will invest £1.6 billion over the next Parliament to decarbonise the way we heat our homes and other buildings. This will reduce emissions, tackle fuel poverty and create new jobs.

We will establish a Zero Emissions Social Housing Task Force to advise on requirements in social housing to meet net zero targets and, longer term, inform what is required in the private rented and owner occupier sectors.

We will develop new standards to require new buildings to use renewable or zero emissions heating from 2024 and help improve energy efficiency in existing buildings through loans, grants and equity.

All new homes delivered by registered social landlords and local authorities will be zero emission homes by 2026.

Decarbonising homes and improving standards
Decarbonising our homes will be crucial in the fight against climate change.

In government we published a Heat in Buildings Strategy and we will significantly scale up the pace of our work to meet our targets from 2025.

We will decarbonise the heating of 1 million homes by 2030.

We believe the public sector should lead from the front in our efforts to decarbonise Scotland, and so we will invest £95 million in projects that decarbonise the public sector estate.

We will review energy standards set through building regulations to deliver further improvements in energy efficiency and help remove poor energy efficiency as a driver of fuel poverty.

The energy efficiency of homes all across the country will need to be improved, so whilst work on a planned Publicly Owned Energy Company was halted during the pandemic, we will now re-focus our efforts on a new dedicated national public energy

agency. This will coordinate and accelerate delivery of heat and energy efficiency work, inform and educate the public on the changes required, provide expert advice to national and local government, and work with public, private and third sector partners to deliver this transformative national project. We will consider making this Scotland's first virtual agency.

Standards

We will introduce a new Housing Standard, set in law by 2025. This will cover all homes, new and existing, including agricultural properties, mobile homes and tied accommodation and include aspects such as repairing and safety standards, minimum space standards, digital connectivity, future-proofing of homes, and energy efficiency and heating standards. This will ensure that the quality of existing homes keeps pace with new homes.

We will increase the supply and choice of accessible and adapted homes and introduce a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard which all new homes must achieve.

This new Standard will be placed in law within the parliamentary term.

Cladding

We know that some flat owners have had an anxious and uncertain time selling or re-mortgaging homes due to cladding issues, and have had to pay for what is called an EWS1 Report on their individual property. We will take forward a programme of work to support these homeowners – including a system of single assessment that will let us determine the remedial work needed. This will be backed by an initial £100 million.

First time buyers' fund

For many young people, even those on decent incomes, saving for a deposit to buy a house takes so long it can become a distant dream.

To help struggling first-time buyers get on the property ladder, we introduced the First Home Fund to help boost the deposit needed to purchase a property in Scotland. We have invested a total of £240 million in the Fund and expect to support over 11,000 households to buy their first home.

Rented Sector

We need a rented sector that offers a range of high-quality and affordable homes for those who chose to live in it.

We will develop a new Rented Sector Strategy in 2021, to cover all types of rented home, including agricultural tenancies, providing greater protections from unreasonable rent increases and giving people genuinely affordable choices when renting, and increasing protections for tenants.

We will reform existing Rent Pressure Zone legislation to ensure local authorities can use it to directly address and cap unreasonably high rents in localised areas.

These changes will be incorporated in a new Housing Bill to be introduced early in the next Parliament.

Staying Local, Building Communities

We believe in building the wealth of our local communities. This means keeping resources and wealth in the local economy, with control in the hands of local people, helping communities be more resilient, sustainable and economically secure.

20-minute Neighbourhoods

We will take forward our ambitions for 20-minute neighbourhoods – the creation of liveable, accessible places, with thriving local economies, where people can meet their

daily needs within a 20 minute walk – enabling people to live better, healthier lives and supporting our net zero ambitions.

By changing our approach to transport, housing and public services we can make 20 minute neighbourhoods a reality as we recover from the pandemic.

We will set a national objective to increase the amount of housing within town centres and high streets, both through use of existing stock and new developments.

We will connect communities by making the internet accessible to all and transforming how we travel around our country.

Keeping wealth local

We will build on the recent Scotland Loves Local campaign which encouraged people to think local first by piloting local loyalty schemes alongside a national Scotland Loves Local loyalty scheme.

A new £10 million Scotland Loves Local fund will help revitalise high streets hit by the pandemic.

Keeping power local

To further shift the balance of power to communities, we will bring forward a Community Wealth Building Act to redirect wealth, control and benefits to local economies.

The Act will require local authorities and public bodies to spend in their local communities through increased local procurement, greater use of small businesses and ensuring taxpayers money is reinvested as far as possible in their local communities.

We will review the Community Empowerment Act and consult on ways in which it could be expanded to put more power in the hands of people and communities and increase the amount of

local funding allocated by communities themselves through participatory budgeting.

Tackling loneliness fund

As our society changes, there is increasing recognition of social isolation and loneliness as major public health issues.

We will develop a new five year plan focused on reconnecting people of all ages and tackling loneliness head on, backed by £10 million over five years - with £5 million in the first two years to increase the work organisations already do, fund new ones, and help them provide safe places online and in person.

Local Governance

We want to ensure Scotland has a vibrant, inclusive democracy with more power devolved to local levels.

We have seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, how the cooperation and collaboration between national and local government has been essential in keeping people safe and supported throughout Scotland.

To ensure Scotland's diverse communities and different places have greater control and influence over decisions that affect them most, we launched the Local Governance Review.

The Review looks at how local decisions are made and how democracy is working across national and local spheres of government, and with communities.

We will complete the review, and after considering all recommendations, bring forward a Local Governance/Democracy Bill to further empower local communities and ensure that decisions are taken as close as possible to those they affect most.

Valuing the Third Sector and Social Enterprise

During the pandemic we witnessed the incredible efforts of the third sector in providing lifeline support to people, communities and society.

We know that to enable our voluntary sector to continue it's vital work it needs reliable funding. We will work towards multi-year funding for the sector to ensure a more secure and sustainable future.

Our Community and Third Sector Recovery Programme is backed by £50 million and awards will be completed by this summer. A further £13.5 million will support the third sector to recover and transition from the pandemic.

Social Enterprises are vital in building a wellbeing economy. We will back a new three year Social Enterprise Action Plan with £5 million.

Land Reform

We will improve Scotland's system of land ownership, use, rights and responsibilities, so that our land can contribute to a fair and just society while balancing public and private interests.

Backing community ownership

We will bring forward a new Land Reform Bill. It will ensure that the public interest is considered on any particularly large scale land ownership and introduce a pre-emption in favour of community buy-out where title to land is transferred.

The Scottish Land Fund helps communities take ownership of the land and buildings that matter to them. We will double the fund, increasing it to £20 million per year by the end of the parliament.

Vacant and derelict land

A £50 million Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme will ensure land is utilised for maximum environmental and community benefit with a particular focus in deprived areas where the blight of vacant and derelict land is most prevalent.

We will strengthen compulsory purchase powers for local authorities and introduce new compulsory sale orders.

Land Value Capture

We will also bring forward new legislation to introduce Land Value Capture to make sure changes of land use lead to a proportion of the increase in the price being reinvested in the local community, including in social infrastructure and affordable housing.

Transport revolution

As part of our plans to become a net zero nation by 2045 we will deliver a revolution in transport across all parts of Scotland.

We will phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, two years ahead of our original target.

Active travel

Since the start of the pandemic we have seen a huge increase in cycling and walking. During lockdown people were encouraged to take physical activity and found their local roads were less busy and felt safer. It proved that people will choose to cycle when they feel safe.

We will lock that change in by spending - by the end of the parliament - 10% of the transport capital budget on walking, cycling and wheeling.

We will create, repair and improve a Scotland-wide active travel network to ensure that every town has access to a high quality

and separated walking and cycling network, allowing safe daily commutes and reducing dependence on private motor vehicles.

To encourage our youngest citizens, we will provide free bikes for all children of school age who cannot afford them and ensure every child in Scotland leaves school with the ability to cycle safely. To make owning a bike an option for everyone, and reduce transport poverty, we will make loans and grants available for the purchase of pedal cycles and for their repair.

Switching from cars to buses

We will reduce the use of cars – measured as ‘car kilometres’ - by 20% by 2030, taking car use back to levels last seen in the 1990’s.

To make bus travel a more attractive and reliable option, we will invest over £500 million to improve bus infrastructure and tackle congestion.

We will extend free bus travel to everyone under 22 years old.

We will remove the majority of fossil fuel buses from public transport in Scotland by 2023 and invest £120 million in Zero Emission Buses, driving forward a fully decarbonised future for Scotland’s bus fleet and supporting the Scottish supply chain.

We will establish a Community Bus Fund to help support provision of services in local communities and enable Local Authorities to look at delivering different bus services in their area.

A publicly owned, green railway

We will create a greener, more affordable railway.

We will bring Scotrail into public hands from next year and decarbonise Scotland’s rail services by 2035.

We will work with regional transport partnerships to reinstate or develop new railway branch lines across rural Scotland and commuter lines in urban areas, delivering enormous benefits to communities and the regional economy in terms of sustainable tourism and meeting our green travel objective.

Following the opening of the Kintore to Aberdeen line last year, we will open a new railway station next to Inverness airport.

We will reopen the Levenmouth rail link in Fife.

We will improve links to Carlisle and undertake the necessary feasibility work to allow the Borders railway to be extended for the benefit of local communities and the wider economy.

We are supportive of Edinburgh's decision to extend the city's trams and of Glasgow's development of their Metro.

We will continue to press the UK Government to commit to faster rail connections from Scotland to England, with a high-speed East Coast line to cut journey times to the North of England and London, and extension of the Borders Railway to Carlisle.

Ferries

We will invest in more sustainable ferries, reducing the carbon footprint of our ferry fleet. We are committed to 30% of state-owned ferries being low emission by 2032.

Ferries provide a truly lifeline service for the islands they serve, and we are committed to funding these services and maintaining Road Equivalent Tariff on all current island ferry routes.

Safer Roads

We were the first Government to commit to dualling both the A9 and A96 and remain committed to completing both programmes, ensuring the road network between all Scottish

cities is of dual carriageway standard. This should be seen within the context of our commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

We will deliver the short, medium and long term solutions required at The Rest and Be Thankful, moving as quickly as possible to deliver the preferred new route.

The A82 is a key artery linking the West Highlands. We've made progress in upgrading the road and will make further progress in the next Parliament based upon the most up to date engineering assessments.

We have a wide range of proposed road building projects as part of a balanced transport policy and will make progress on them in line with our climate change and financial constraints.

We will explore the potential to build more fixed links to island and remote communities, such as the potential for a bridge from Gourock to Dunoon, and work with island communities to reduce reliance on ferries.

Aviation

Globally, the aviation industry faces one of the longest recovery periods from the pandemic. We will work with the aviation sector in Scotland to help it recover and rebuild connectivity for business and tourism once we are able to safely lift travel restrictions.

We will continue our work to pilot low or zero emission planes between Scotland's islands.

Connecting Scotland

We are living in a digital age and the ability to be able to get online supports us to do many things from finding out information, access services, and of course being able to

connect with each other online to tackle loneliness and isolation.

Closing the digital divide

The Connecting Scotland programme was established initially to support 9,000 people who were at clinical risk from Covid-19 to get online by providing them with a device, data, training and support.

Connecting Scotland will now support 60,000 people to get online by the end of this year backed by over £48 million.

Over the next Parliament, we will go further and with £200m of investment will support up to 300,000 households get the devices, data and skills to Connect.

Our £579 million investment in the expansion of superfast broadband means every home and business in South and Central Scotland will have access by 2023, with work in the North of Scotland completed in the next five years.

Through the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme we will provide funding of up to £5,000 to help homes and businesses obtain superfast broadband in areas where providers may not ordinarily go, ensuring that everyone can access and benefit from this world-leading digital capability.

By the end of 2022, 16 new subsea fibre cables will have been laid to Scottish islands. We will use this to support the creation of gigabit islands with full 5G services and connectivity from mobile providers, testing the concept on 8 islands in 4 local authority areas.

We expect Scotland to get its fair share of the UK Government's £5 billion investment for gigabit capability. We

will press for £300 million of this to enable Scotland to reach 85% gigabit capable by 2025.

We will update planning and building regulations and rules so that digital connectivity is treated as an essential utility, like energy and water, and is standard in all new housing developments in the future. We will extend the current 10 year rates relief on new fibre broadband investment for a further 5 years.

Rural and island communities

Not all communities are the same. What works in urban Scotland may not be fit for our rural or island communities and vice versa.

Over the next five years, we will invest at least £30 million in a specific programme to invest in island infrastructure and support a green recovery.

To help stem depopulation, we will establish an Islands Bond – offering 100 bonds of up to £50,000 to young people and families to stay in or to move to islands currently threatened by depopulation. The bonds will support people to buy homes, start businesses and otherwise make their lives for the long term in these communities.

To stop depopulation and support our communities, we will give local authorities the powers to manage the numbers of second homes in their area and will work with Community Land Scotland so we can find the right land to deliver more housing in our rural areas.

We will deliver an Islands Connectivity Plan to replace the current Ferries Plan looking at aviation, ferries and fixed links, and to connecting and onward travel.

In this Parliament, on top of the 11 already built, we will invest £25 million to install at least 39 masts to provide mobile coverage in remote rural and island communities.

To provide more employment opportunities, we will deliver islands-focused activity through the Young Person's Guarantee, green and nature based skills activity to create more nature and land based jobs on islands and support more islands-based small and micro businesses to deliver training.

Right to Food

The right to food is fundamental. We will enshrine that right in law as the cornerstone of being a Good Food Nation. This will form part of our commitment to incorporate UN Human Rights charters into Scots Law.

Scotland has one of the world's best natural larders but we do not always eat well and obesity is a significant problem. We have seen during the pandemic the challenges that can be caused with strong links between diet and severe covid infections and fatalities.

Change starts with our children and so, alongside our commitment to provide health and nutritious free school meals in primary schools we will:

provide more advice on weaning for families and support more families to cook from scratch through ParentClub.

ensure breakfast, out of school and holiday clubs provide local healthy produce such as Scottish berries in season, and

work with local authorities to develop a fully funded free school milk scheme which provides for children's dietary needs.

Eat Healthy; Eat Local

We want to encourage the use of sustainable local produce.
We will therefore:

Produce a local food strategy which supports locally based production and circular supply chains, cutting food miles and enabling more people to enjoy food grown locally

Encourage every local authority to be part of the Food for Life programme so that more of the food they provide for children and older people is locally produced and sourced, and healthy,

Increase the use of healthy Scottish produce and explore how to embed a Food for Life approach in the new National Care Service, in the NHS, in prisons and in the further and higher education sectors

Work with food retailers to offer more Scottish produce and fresh, healthy products and support the growth of local food markets and renovated pop-up and retail outlets, starting in disadvantaged city areas, to bring fresh affordable produce closer to where people live and work

Work with the out of home food industry to make products healthier; revamping the approach to children's menus and moving to better food labelling and information on menus

Work with public agencies to make more land available for community market gardens, orchards and allotments

An economy that works

Scotland faces the twin shocks of Covid and Brexit. These shocks have and will continue to have a huge impact on our economy, jobs and livelihoods.

The challenge – and opportunities – presented by climate change and the changing digital economy remain as large as ever and, through all of this, the need to remain globally competitive is hugely important.

That is why we are committed to a laser-like focus on economic recovery, investing in entrepreneurship, infrastructure and technology and creating good, new and green jobs. This cannot mean simply going back to the way things were. Recovery must have sustainability, wellbeing and fair work built in from the outset.

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Freeze Income Tax rates and bands.

Fund the Young Person's Guarantee of a university, college, apprenticeship, training place or job for every young person who wants it.

Invest an additional £500 million over the next parliament to support new jobs and reskill people for the jobs of the future.

invest £100 million in a Green Jobs fund to support new and increased opportunities for green job creation.

Invest £1 billion in the Scottish National Investment Bank.

Invest over £33 billion over the next five years in our National Infrastructure Mission, supporting an estimated 45,000 jobs and providing benefits across Scottish supply chains.

Establish a new source of arts funding by applying a 'percentage for the arts' to public capital projects.

Explore the transition to a four-day-week with a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and measure its benefits.

Deliver a new 10 year National Strategy for Economic Transformation and launch a National Challenge competition, providing funding of £50 million to the project with the greatest potential to transform Scotland.

Create a Women's Business Centre, backed by £50 million of investment, to help create, grow and develop the next generation of women led businesses.

Invest over £30 million to establish Scotland as one of Europe's leading hubs for tech start-ups.

Create a new, £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund – providing grants of up to £10,000 to support the relocation or creation of 2,000 new businesses.

Increase investment in private sector-led R&D projects by £100 million over the next parliament.

Support the recommendations of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce and create a £25 million fund to help drive a strong tourism recovery.

Create a Scottish Food agency to promote food, drink and horticulture.

Transform support for farming and food production so that by 2025 half of all funding for farmers and crofters comes with “green strings”.

Increase our targets for new woodland creation by 50%, from 12,000 hectares up to 18,000 hectares per year by 2025.

Putting Scotland’s Finances on a firm footing

In the decisions we take about tax, we will always remember that taxes are paid by hard working people across the country. We are committed to progressive taxation that asks the better off to pay their share while helping the less well-off make ends meet. We will aim to deliver fairness for all taxpayers and support for the economy, while ensuring that progressive taxation supports strong public services, available to all.

Fiscal Framework Review

The Fiscal Framework was agreed by the Scottish and UK Governments in 2016 to govern Scotland’s finances. Even before the pandemic, there were concerns that a lack of meaningful borrowing powers limited Scotland’s ability to invest in the way governments around the world are able to.

The pandemic has confirmed that our current borrowing powers are entirely inadequate to support our economy.

A re-elected SNP Government will use the fiscal framework review to push for an urgent increase to Holyrood’s devolved financial powers, including;

Removal of the caps on capital borrowing that limit our ability to invest in schools, hospitals and the economy. These tight caps should be replaced by a prudential borrowing scheme – the same power that Scotland’s councils already enjoy.

Removal of the restriction on borrowing to fund day-to-day costs, an increase in the borrowing cap for forecast errors to £600 million and an increase in the Scotland Reserve drawdown to £700 million per year.

Strengthening of Scotland's tax powers with the devolution of VAT, and full powers over income tax and National Insurance contributions.

Income Tax

Scotland has the most progressive income tax system in the UK, with more than half paying less than they would if they lived in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

By asking those who earn the most to pay a little bit more, we have also been able to invest more in public services and deliver a range of benefits, like free-prescriptions, free university tuition and concessionary bus-travel that are not all available elsewhere in the UK.

Having only introduced this new system in 2018, and with a need now to focus on recovery, we will aim for stability over the next Parliament. While it is important for any government to have flexibility to respond to a change in circumstances, our aim is to maintain current Income Tax rates for the duration of the parliament and increase thresholds by a maximum of inflation.

Land and Building Transaction Tax

We will maintain the current rates and bands for residential LBTT for the full parliamentary term, including our First Time Buyer relief, which ensures that almost 80% of people in Scotland pay no tax on the purchase of their first home.

We will undertake a full scale review of the Additional Dwelling Supplement and give special consideration to the impact of the tax on homes in our remote and rural communities.

Council Tax

We are committed to reforming the Council Tax to make it fairer. Cross party talks on a replacement for the council tax were underway, but had to be postponed due to the pandemic. We will ask a Citizens Assembly to consider the way forward alongside the question of wider powers for local government.

We have funded local government to freeze Council Tax for 2021/22.

Business Rates

Scotland has both the lowest business rates poundage in the UK and the most generous relief schemes.

We will maintain the Small Business Bonus for the lifetime of the parliament – ensuring 100,000 business properties pay no rates.

We will gradually reduce the Large Business Supplement over the course of the Parliament to ensure that the largest businesses pay the same combined poundage in Scotland as in England.

We will explore the possibility of levying a higher poundage on properties where the owner is registered in a tax haven.

We will maintain the Business Growth Accelerator which removes rates liabilities for the first 12 months after occupation of a new build, and the fresh start scheme which removes liabilities for the first 12 months after occupation of a previously empty property.

Air Departure Tax

The Smith Commission paved the way for the devolution of Air Passenger Duty to Scotland, but this was held up as a result of state-aid concerns regarding the Highlands and Islands Exemption.

We remain committed to finding a solution with the UK Government that would allow for the exemption to remain post-devolution. We will undertake a review of APD rates and bands to ensure that once devolution takes place, we have a policy that aligns with our climate change plans. This review will explore the possibility of levying a higher tax on more polluting aircraft.

Wellbeing Budget

We will deliver a wellbeing budget, ensuring that all budget decisions benefit the wellbeing of people across the country.

National Strategy for Economic Transformation

In the first six months of the next parliament we will deliver a new 10 year National Strategy for Economic Transformation, setting out the steps we will take to deliver a green economic recovery and support new, good, green jobs, businesses and industries for the future.

Working with industry, trade unions and economists we will create a new Council for Economic Transformation to shape this strategy and guide its implementation.

We want to encourage pioneers and entrepreneurs to help reshape the Scottish economy. To complement the mission led work of the newly established Scottish National Investment Bank, we will deliver a National Challenge competition, providing funding of up to £50 million to the project or projects with the greatest potential to transform Scotland.

Scotland is already home to the Global Ethical Finance Initiative, combining our reputation as a global financial centre, our fintech expertise and our centring of values at the core of our approach to business. We will seek to build on this success and position Scotland as a world leader in this growing sector, attracting values-driven investment funds and building a centre of expertise in this area.

We will scale-up our successful CivTech initiative which creates opportunities for innovative Scottish businesses while solving real problems faced by our front-line public services – improving service delivery, reducing cost and creating jobs, and we will ensure the skills of Scotland’s tech centre are able to support the delivery of MyNHS.

We will build on the success of CivTech to position Scotland a leader in the global GovTech sector, enabling Scottish businesses to gain a share of this £400 billion market.

With the full powers of independence we would explore a legal duty on businesses to consider a wider range of economic and environmental outcomes - ensuring Scotland's businesses focus on long term sustainable growth.

Creating jobs and boosting skills

Creating new, good and green jobs is central to our Covid recovery. We will work with employers and individuals to build the skills and infrastructure that we need to succeed in the industries of the future.

Young Person’s Guarantee

Our Young Person’s Guarantee will ensure that every young person aged between 16 and 24 in Scotland has the opportunity, based on their own personal circumstances and ambitions, to go to university or college, get a place on an

apprenticeship, training or work experience programme, secure a job or participate in a formal volunteering programme.

We want COP 26 to leave a legacy of green opportunities for the next generation. As part of our Young Person's Guarantee, we will enable school leavers to experience nature based employment or education opportunities that contribute to our world leading targets to combat climate change - this includes planting trees, restoring Scotland's peatlands, developing blue carbon techniques and soil testing among other natural solutions.

Green skills and jobs for the future

We will invest an additional £500 million over the next parliament to support new jobs and reskill people for the jobs of the future.

Our National Transition Training Fund will support workers whose jobs are at risk and provide re-training opportunities for high tech, high skilled jobs and the provision of green skills to support Scotland's transition to net zero. As part of this, we will take action to tackle inequality, supporting those who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid such as women, people from minority ethnic communities and disabled people. We will further promote Fair Work and help tackle occupational segregation.

Over the next five years we will invest £100 million in our Green Jobs fund, investing alongside businesses and organisations to support new and increased opportunities for green job creation across Scotland.

We will also invest £60 million to decarbonise our industrial and manufacturing sectors – helping them grow and diversify, helping deliver net zero by 2045, and creating more new jobs.

Apprenticeships

We were on track to meet our target of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts by 2020 - however, Covid affected new apprenticeship starts as employers had to review, delay and pause recruitment plans. As part of the recovery, we will build back up to 30,000 starts and assess demand to see how much further we can go.

Veterans

To highlight and promote the many positive contributions of veterans and their families, we will lead a public awareness campaign, specifically targeting employers and the business community to help increase employment opportunities. We will also increase the Scottish Veterans Fund to £500,000 and extend its criteria, inviting bids that reflect collaborative working and target early service leavers. We will also create more job opportunities for veterans in the Scottish government.

Fair Work

We want Scotland to be the best place to live, work, invest and do business. We believe that fair work is the foundation for this.

Covid has highlighted that too many people are still stuck on exploitative contracts, often zero-hours, that leave them with little security.

Without the powers of independence, we are limited in what steps we can take, but where we can act to improve employment security and enhance the quality of work, we will.

Four Day Week

Covid-19 changed the way we work almost overnight. As we recover from the pandemic, we want to do more to support people achieve a healthy work-life balance. We also want to

keep the total number of people in employment high. As part of this, we will establish a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and explore the benefits of a four day working week.

We will use the learning from this to consider a more general shift to a four day working week as and when Scotland gains full control of employment rights. We will also identify additional employment opportunities and assess the economic impact of moving to a four day week.

More widely, we will support a review - in partnership with trade unions and businesses - of how working practices could and should be adapted to meet the needs of the future economy.

Fair Work First

Our Fair Work First programme makes adoption of fair work practices part of the criteria for winning public contracts and receiving grants. It uses the financial power of government to make fair work the norm. We will now build flexible and family friendly working into the programme, learning lessons from working practices during the pandemic to make it easier for women, particularly single parents, to return to work and also encourage a more equal share of childcare responsibilities.

The principles of Living Hours are reflected in Fair Work First good practice and promoted through Fair Work First where this applies to grants or procurement. If re-elected, we will go further and support a specific accreditation programme for Living Hours in the same way we have supported Living Wage accreditation.

Devolution of Employment Law

During the pandemic, some companies have used fire and rehire tactics to undermine wages and conditions. This is unacceptable.

The SNP has been pressing the UK government to act but it has so far refused to take the necessary steps to ban these exploitative practices.

We will continue to call for the devolution of employment law to allow us to act, but in the meantime we will do all we can with our limited powers to protect employees from these practices in Scotland.

We will review our Fair Work First criteria for contracts and government support grants to include specific reference to fire and rehire tactics.

Investing in sustainable growth

We are committed to sustainable economic recovery, with investment in growth that is environmentally sustainable, fair to all communities and supports business to thrive in the changing world.

Scottish National Investment Bank

We will invest £1 billion in the Scottish National Investment Bank over the next parliament as part of our £2 billion ten year capitalisation plan.

We will work to secure the opportunities that exist for the Bank to leverage in additional finance to support its mission based lending plans to grow the economy and accelerate the path to net zero.

National Infrastructure Mission

Our National Infrastructure Mission will increase annual investment by £1.5 billion to almost £7 billion by 2025-26.

This will deliver a total investment value of over £33 billion pounds in the next five years, and is estimated to support

45,000 jobs directly over that period, providing benefits across Scottish supply chains.

We will create a National Infrastructure Company to manage and develop public assets for public good, putting fair working conditions at the heart of public infrastructure projects.

Over the next parliament, for example, we will invest:

£180 million in an Emerging Energy Technologies Fund
The capital required to build a new Monklands hospital

Over £1.2 billion in major rail improvements, including £550 million for dedicated rail decarbonisation projects, as well as £3.8 billion on our rail network for passengers and freight.

Over £600 million in digital infrastructure, mainly in rural and island areas

£525 million to deliver the next five years of city region and regional growth deals.

£275 million to support community-led regeneration and town centre revitalisation

Over £200 million in the Baird and Anchor project in Aberdeen.

£2 billion - in partnership with local government - in a Learning Estate Investment Programme.

Up to £6 million for the redevelopment of the Stranraer waterfront.

Green Investment and Just Transition

Our Green Investment Portfolio will expand from its current value of £1 billion to £3 billion, attracting investment to support our transition to net zero and the growth of innovative environmentally sustainable businesses in Scotland.

Building on the example of the Clyde Mission, which is kick-starting the regeneration of communities around the River Clyde, we will establish Green Growth Accelerators to unlock £200 million investment by local authorities in meeting our net zero ambitions.

Supporting business

We will harness Scotland's innovation and ingenuity to create jobs and drive economic recovery.

Manufacturing

We will support our manufacturing industry to grow, innovate and compete internationally with the completion of our £75 million investment in the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland.

Our Low Carbon Infrastructure Challenge Fund will invest £26 million to support the development of robust supply chains in low carbon industries.

The £34 million Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund will support the decarbonisation of heavy industry in Scotland.

With Glasgow a world centre for satellite manufacture, and with five of the UK's seven planned spaceports based here, Scotland is well placed to secure a significant share of the global space industry by 2030. With our focus on 'space for good' - using space data to tackle climate and environmental challenges - we will work with the sector to develop launch sites, grow manufacturing jobs and enhance data analytics capability, building on the support we have already provided.

Oil and Gas

Oil and gas remains an important part of our energy mix. However, we must transition to new, cleaner fuels. While tax and regulation powers over offshore oil and gas are reserved to Westminster, any government support for the oil and gas sector in the North sea will be conditional upon the industry contributing to a sustainable, secure and inclusive energy transition.

With the powers of independence, we are committed to ring fencing any revenues from oil and gas in a Net Zero Fund - helping to accelerate the transition to zero carbon energy, and supporting areas like Aberdeen and the North East to diversify its economy.

We have established a £62 million Energy Transition Fund to support businesses in the oil, gas and energy sectors over the next five years as they grow and diversify, and help attract private sector investment in the region.

In recognition of the difficulties facing the North East as a result of the pandemic and the oil downturn, we will invest £15 million next year to support workers to retrain and learn new skills.

We will not support the development of unconventional oil and gas – often known as ‘fracking’ - in Scotland.

Research & Development

Since 2007 Scotland has made huge strides in R&D in both the private and university sectors. To accelerate that progress we will increase Scottish Government’s investment in private sector-led R&D projects by £100 million.

Working with our enterprise agencies and the Scottish National Investment Bank, this funding will be co-invested with profits recycled for further investment by the Scottish Government.

Investing in small and medium sized businesses

We will continue the Small Business Bonus scheme, which benefits more than 100,000 businesses, and continue to ensure that the majority of ratepayers in Scotland continue to pay a lower poundage than elsewhere in the UK.

We will invest £100 million to help small and medium sized businesses get access to the right digital skills and equipment.

We are committed to increasing the number of employee owned businesses in Scotland to 500 by 2030 - a 500% increase on current numbers. We will create a mechanism for greater financial provision to support more employee buyouts.

Supporting Scotland's Tech Sector

We will implement the recommendations of the Logan Review to raise our tech sector to world-class status including the proposed creation of a national network of world class facilities - backed by £30 million - to develop new tech start-ups that can grow into companies of scale offering high quality, well paid jobs.

Our new 'Tech-Scaler' hubs will be created in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. We will also ensure that the commercial education on offer in these hubs is accessible virtually to ensure access for businesses in rural areas.

We will develop and implement net zero data centres, powered on renewable energy.

We will support the creation of 5G Innovation hubs and 5G innovation districts in Scotland.

Promoting women entrepreneurs

Businesses run by women make a huge contribution to the Scottish economy, but only 20% of the Scottish business base is owned by women. We will create a dedicated Women's Business Centre to provide financial support, advice and training to women looking to start or grow their business. This will be backed by £50 million over the course of the parliament.

As part of this, we will invest £3 million per year to pay the equivalent of a full time salary for 100 female applicants to develop their pioneering business idea.

Backing rural entrepreneurs

We will create opportunities for new businesses to grow and flourish in every part of Scotland. To breathe new life into the economies of rural Scotland we will create a new, £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund – this will provide grants of up to £10,000 to support the creation of 2,000 new businesses.

Retail and support for high streets

Our high streets have been hit by the pandemic and the ever increasing role of online shopping. We will explore the introduction of a new national digital sales tax to level the playing-field between online and digital and use any revenue from this to breathe new life into our town and city centres.

We will publish a Retail Strategy to help the sector in Scotland change, innovate and thrive, and become an exemplar in inclusive growth, supporting a robust, local supply chain and offering people and communities the goods, experiences and services they want.

Rebuilding a thriving tourism sector

We know that the pandemic has been particularly difficult for our tourism industry, but we are committed to rebuilding Scotland's vital tourism and hospitality sectors so that we can share all that Scotland has to offer when the time is right.

To support the sector through the next year, we have committed to 100% rates relief for tourism & hospitality for 2021-22.

When it is safe to do so, we will launch a campaign to encourage people to support local tourism and hospitality in Scotland.

We will develop a global campaign for Scotland, increasing Scotland is Now activity and launching a brand marque for Scotland, to help boost tourism, migration, and investment.

As we look ahead to UEFA Euro 2020 in Glasgow, FestivalUK 2022 and the 2023 UCI World Cycling Championships, we will work to secure more major events for Scotland including a joint UK and Ireland bid for the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

We will maintain investment of £6.2 million per year in the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to alleviate some of the pressure that tourism can have on local rural communities.

We will expand the Islands Passport to encourage more people to visit more of our islands, promoting more off season visiting and creating more equitable benefit for communities.

We will invest a further £1 million in a Seasonal Ranger scheme to help support responsible tourism in our rural and remote areas.

We will also work with the sector to boost efforts to make tourism more environmentally sustainable.

We will support the development of the Eden Project in Dundee, helping establish Dundee as a truly world-class destination.

To support the recommendations of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce, we will create a £25 million fund to help build a strong recovery, including providing thousands of vouchers for short breaks and days out to carers, people with disabilities and families on low incomes, and creating a Net Zero Pathway for industry, focussed on protecting and enhancing our natural assets and delivering a low carbon future for our visitors and communities.

We will also invest £10 million in wider initiatives including the Lossiemouth East Beach footbridge, the Inverness Castle Project, rural hotel infrastructure, and the deployment of Seasonal Rangers to encourage responsible tourism in rural hot-spots.

Planning

In planning applications which may have regional or national importance, we shall require the relevant Economic Development body, whether Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, or South of Scotland Enterprise, to provide their assessment of the potential economic benefits of the development concerned.

Trade, investment and exports

How we trade is as important as what we trade. Scotland's Vision for Trade and its core principles of inclusive growth, wellbeing, sustainability, net zero and good governance will guide how we form and build trading relationships.

We will reinvigorate twinning initiatives with EU regions, states, cities and towns to ensure that cultural, heritage and trade links with European neighbours continue into the future.

Taking action to reduce anti-microbial resistance (AMR) is vital to improving human and public health and trade agreements provide the best way of progressing this. We will press the UK

Government to include action on this as a priority in new trade agreements – and press them to resist trade deals which compromise progress, particularly for developing nations.

Exports

We will assess options for direct links to international markets from Scotland's ports and airports – reducing dependency on the 'short straits' and airports in the South East of England – to provide cost effective options for Scottish exporters. In particular, we will create an inward border post to service Cairnryan, our commercial port linking us to the island of Ireland.

We will implement our proposal for Scottish Green Ports, making public sector support conditional on businesses complying with our Fair Work First agenda - paying the Real Living Wage and implementing the Scottish Business Pledge – and on delivering on concrete plans to reduce carbon emissions.

We will implement Scotland's Global Capital Investment Plan, providing growth capital to support Scotland's start-up and scale-up businesses in key sectors – technology, life science and advanced manufacturing – and to fund the infrastructure and space for them to grow.

Inward Investment

Scotland has one of the strongest records on inward investment in the UK. Our aim now is to use it to create an additional 20,000 jobs, increase Scottish GDP by over £4 billion, boost Scottish exports by over £2 billion and add up to £680 million annually to government revenues.

We will prioritise nine areas where Scotland has demonstrated global competitive advantage and world beating technology:

energy transition

decarbonisation of Transport
software and IT
digital financial services
digital business services
space
healthtech
transformation of chemical industries, and
food and drink innovation.

Culture at the heart of our recovery

Culture is central to who we are as a nation. We have always valued culture and creativity, but the pandemic has demonstrated more than ever how vital it is to our wellbeing, mental health and sense of belonging.

A 'Percentage for the Arts' and fair funding

We want to create a more sustainable funding model for culture which benefits organisations and freelancers. Learning from countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands, we will establish a "Percentage for the Arts" scheme which will create a requirement for a percentage of the overall cost of a construction project for new public buildings, places or spaces to be spent on community art commissions.

We will consult on initial percentages of 0.5% for projects under £5 million and 1% for those over £5 million capped at £1 million for any individual project. We estimate this would raise £150 million per year for the arts once fully up and running.

To aid future planning and recovery, we will agree 3 year funding settlements for Scottish Government core funded cultural organisations.

We will also continue our culture recovery funding to get support to those who continue to be significantly affected by restrictions.

We will support the co-ordination of Scottish commissioning and create a Scotland Touring Fund for Theatre and Music as part of economic recovery, helping to take live performances directly into alternative community venues and revitalising year-round tourism.

To recognise the role culture and heritage can play in achieving our climate change ambitions, we will increase access to capital funding to help 'green' cultural infrastructure across Scotland.

Expanding our programme

We will expand our Culture Collective programme, giving artists and communities the length and breadth of Scotland even more opportunities to collaborate on creative activity, supporting a sustainable creative recovery from the pandemic.

We will establish our first regularly funded Youth National Performing Company, to showcase the creative gifts of Scotland's young people, and help grow the talent of tomorrow.

We will create a new £2 million fund for public artwork which broadens the range of representation in public spaces of Scotland's history and culture, in particular the contribution of women and minority ethnic communities.

Improving support to creative industries

Recognising their vibrancy as well as their potential for domestic and international growth, we will work with Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland to improve the business support available to creative industries to ensure a better breadth of expertise is available for the many different parts of the sector.

We will support tax relief for culture and creative industries including the games sector, high-end and children's TV production, animation, film, theatre and orchestras.

We will also support the digital capabilities of artists and creative businesses with a £1 million programme of workshops, mentoring and courses.

We will call on the UK Government to work with the EU to deliver free movement for performers, artists, musicians and freelancers, and ensure there are no-barriers to those looking to tour and perform in Scotland and the UK.

And we will utilise our international network to better support Scottish-based artists to work internationally, and help to facilitate new cultural connections between Scotland and the rest of the world.

Access

We will protect free access to our National Galleries and Museums and continue to fund non-national museums and galleries through support for Museums & Galleries Scotland.

Historic Environment

We will deliver 'Our Place in Time: the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland' and invest in the sustainable development of Scotland's historic estate to protect and conserve, whilst supporting our pathway to net zero.

Broadcasting and Screen

Our screen sector has gone from strength to strength in recent years, supported by the creation of Screen Scotland and new studio infrastructure. We want to build on this success to make Scotland the go-to destination for production.

We will support studio space in Scotland and double skills provision, boosting training, apprenticeships and skills opportunities.

We will call on the BBC to increase production from Scotland, and appoint more commissioners in Scotland.

National Centre for Design

Dundee is the first UNESCO City of Design in the UK, recognising the huge contribution the city has made to design worldwide. To build on this prestigious award, we will support V&A Dundee to become a National Centre for Design, working in close partnership with organisations from across Scotland.

Supporting festivals and Towns of Culture

We will continue the highly successful EXPO fund for Edinburgh's major festivals, Celtic Connections and Glasgow International, reviewing how it can continue to meet its aims of ensuring the Festivals maintain their global competitive edge, increasing the funding available to Scottish artists and practitioners, and encouraging creative collaborations.

Taking Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town, as a model, we will extend the reach of the arts by launching an open competition for further National Towns of Culture for example, Scotland's National Live Music Town, Folk and Trad Town, or Scotland's Visual Art Town.

Scotland's Rural Economy

Scotland's rural economy is bursting with talent and potential. It is not just crucial to Scotland's national brand, it is crucial to our national prosperity.

Our absolute priority will be to keep people on the land, sustainably.

Food and drink

Food and drink is one of the jewels in Scotland's economic crown, and we will do more to support its sustainable growth in the future.

As part of a Good Food Nation Bill, we will create a single independent Scottish Food agency to promote food, drink and horticulture, attract investment, help increase processing capacity and improve supply chains and infrastructure.

We will develop a single marketing brand for all Scottish produce – Sustainably Scottish – available to all Scottish based producers, manufacturers and suppliers, big or small, that can satisfy stringent criteria on provenance and low carbon operations.

We will seek to use the £1.5 million additional funding from the newly devolved red meat levy to support Scotch beef, lamb and pork to become the first Sustainably Scottish products.

We will create a new £15 million fund to support food processing and manufacture to develop local supply chains and transition to low or zero carbon operations.

Farming and food production

With independence, we would advocate rejoining the EU and therefore return to CAP where we will play our full part as a small nation with huge natural capital and resources to contribute to making farming more sustainable.

We will therefore stay broadly aligned with new EU measures and policy developments, like the Farm to Fork Strategy, while transforming how we support farming and food production in Scotland.

We will support farmers to produce more of our own food needs sustainably and to farm and croft with nature, including through

enhanced animal welfare and health approaches and better adoption and deployment of technology and innovation, as recommended by the recent work of farmer-led groups set up in the last parliament. A single implementation board with representation from all farming sectors and types will be established to drive this work forward.

Farm Payments

We remain committed to supporting active farming and food production with direct payments.

By 2025, however, we will shift half of all funding for farming and crofting from unconditional to conditional support and there will be targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and a drive towards low carbon approaches which improve resilience, efficiency and profitability.

Land-based Education

We need more young people and women to want to be farmers and land managers but the role is changing. We will therefore undertake a root and branch review of land based education from early years to adulthood to provide opportunities and qualifications through school, college, university and apprenticeships for more people, and specifically more women, to work with and on the land, particularly in green skills.

Reform and revitalisation

We need to reform and revitalise farming to create a more diverse, flourishing industry.

We will:

Legislate to ensure equal rights of succession for women in agriculture, and reform trust law that enables avoidance of legal obligations like the pre-emptive right to buy for tenants

Provide more support for women in agriculture and for new and young entrants into farming, including a specific new entrants fund

Work with the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board to ensure that people working in the industry are paid at least the Scottish living wage.

Support crofters and their communities to play a bigger role in peatland restoration and woodland creation

Reform the law and develop crofting to create more active crofts

Seek to remove barriers to tenant farming, including resumption, rent levels, tax treatments and lease lengths

Develop a growth strategy for agri and food tourism, including refreshing the food tourism action plan

Apply an enabling approach to planning to help farm diversification, including tourism initiatives such as camping facilities

Low Carbon farming

We need to innovate and lead the way, making better use of available land to become more food secure and resilient. We will support the development of vertical, low carbon farms, fuelled by renewable energy, to produce more of our own fruit and vegetables.

We will also create a National Protein Strategy that enables the appropriate sustainable production of livestock and more plant based proteins to be cultivated here in Scotland.

We will double the amount of land used for organic farming – and double the amount of organic produce that comes from Scotland, with a focus on more of it being used in public sector food procurement.

Animal welfare

We will adopt the highest possible animal welfare standards, including shifting to entirely free range, woodland or barn chicken and egg production.

We will modernise and update the Animal Welfare Act from 2006 and implement the new livestock worrying legislation.

We will seek to reflect so far as we can, new EU animal welfare labelling to promote food produced to higher than EU welfare standards.

We will create a new Scottish veterinary service to ensure that we have enough people with the right qualifications in veterinary services, animal health and food safety to meet all our needs across the public and private sector for land and marine based animal health issues.

We will ban live exports of animals for fattening and slaughter and only allow live transport of livestock to and from islands and the mainland with stringent welfare standards in place.

We will legislate to close loopholes in the law protecting foxes and other wild mammals and remain committed to implementing the licensing of driven grouse shooting. We will implement the recommendations of the Deer Working Group and modernise deer management legislation.

Marine environment

Scotland has over 60% of the UK's fishing waters and an abundance of marine resources – we will treat these as a

national asset to be protected, nurtured, developed and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

We will develop a maritime strategy and set up a dedicated agency to put our marine assets at the heart of the blue economy, doubling turnover, GVA and international trade in a decade. We will support the sustainable growth of marine tourism to over £0.5 billion turnover by 2025.

Fishing

Our fishing and seafood sectors are currently suffering the very real price of Brexit. As a priority these sectors need access to the EU single market without the barriers the UK Government has put in place through Brexit and an SNP government will do all we can to regain markets and opportunities for our fish and seafood sector.

The UK secured a worse deal for Scotland's fishing sector than we would have had under the Common Fisheries Policy. When we become independent and rejoin the EU, we will through having a seat at the table as one of the richest fisheries nations there, seek to influence policy to benefit our current and future fisheries interests.

We will continue to support our industry to recover from the Tories' Brexit betrayal and press for the £62 million of marine funding Scotland is entitled to, to be fully allocated to Scotland.

We will deliver our framework to manage fisheries, balancing environmental, social and economic interests, adopting an ecosystems approach to fishing which follows the science. We will support local management of inshore fisheries, develop more sustainable fisheries pilots and increase inshore fishing opportunities.

We will create an explicit economic link between catching and landing, incentivising the landing of more fish in Scotland creating more jobs and business opportunities onshore, especially in processing.

Through the blue economy action plan, we will seek to reduce harmful practices and consequences such as marine littering, marine plastics, pollution and reduce carbon emissions from marine activity – in particular, we will explore the potential for low carbon fishing vessels to be deployed on inshore waters.

Fish Farming

Fish farming is something that Scotland is well placed globally to do well in, but it must grow sustainably, in harmony with the marine environment that supports it. We will reform and streamline regulatory processes so that development is more responsive, transparent and efficient. At the heart of our new approach will be a new, single determining authority for farm consents, modelled on the regulatory regime in Norway. This will bring greater clarity, transparency and speed to the process.

We will expect producers to contribute much more to the communities and local economies which support them so we will also explore how a Norwegian-style auction system for new farm developments might generate significant income to support inspection and welfare services, provide real community benefit on islands and in remote rural areas and support innovation and enterprise.

We will support innovation in aquaculture, for example by exploring the development of closed containment fish production on land and explore the potential to produce more shellfish in warm water, land based farms to cut the amount of unsustainably produced fish and shellfish being imported to Scotland.

Plant health

We will maintain our status of GM free cultivation and continue to adhere to EU standards and rules on pesticides and fertilisers. In particular, we will work to limit their use in domestic and community gardening.

We will ban the sale of peat related gardening products.

We will review and reform urea fertiliser use to minimise it and cut ammonia emissions and encourage more conversion of slurry into biofuel.

We will invest in, trial and promote the use of suitable methane inhibitors, particularly those which harness and use natural resources.

Forestry

We will increase our targets for new woodland creation by 50%, from 12,000 hectares up to 18,000 hectares per year by 2025.

Over five years we will provide an additional £100 million to Scottish Forestry to increase new planting, £30 million to Forestry and Land Scotland to expand Scotland's national forests and land, and a further £20 million will go to increase nursery stocks.

We will create a presumption against hardscaping of garden space in towns and cities and incentivise people to create pollinator friendly gardens and grow small trees in their gardens.

We will ensure that trees, woodlands and natural resources play a key role in flood prevention schemes, in riparian repair activity and to address air pollution.

Land of opportunity

This generation of children and young people have experienced a year unlike anything anyone could have anticipated. Our nurseries, schools, colleges and universities rose to the challenge but the pandemic highlighted the barriers too many still face to learning. We want to remove those barriers. Education must be about giving everyone a fair start in life.

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Continue to remove barriers to learning, by:

providing every pupil with their own laptop or device and a free internet connection.

making sure no child is hungry in the classroom by providing free school breakfasts and lunches to every primary school pupil, all year round.

ending the exclusion of poorer pupils from trips and practical activities by ending charging for less well-off families.

increasing the school uniform grant to at least £120 in primary school and £150 in secondary school.

Recruit at least 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants - over and above the 1400 teachers recruited during the pandemic - allowing teachers more time out of the classroom to prepare lessons and improve their skills.

Invest a further £1 billion to close the school attainment gap.

Invest in children's wellbeing and recovery from Covid through a programme of summer activities to allow them to socialise, play and reconnect.

Take forward the recommendations of the OECD review of the curriculum.

Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child within the first six months of the new parliament.

Establish a National Digital Academy to enable people to study for highers at any time, any place, any age.

Remove council tax for under 22s.

Every child; all the time

Our goal is to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up for every child.
A fair start for all our children, means every child, every time.
Not just when it is easy, or convenient. All the time.

That's why we are determined to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - the global "gold standard" for children's rights - to embed the rights of children and young people in law. It means their rights will be built into decision making. Every child. All the time.

Fair from the very beginning

Baby box

Our Baby Box has already provided tens of thousands of new parents with essential items for a baby's first weeks and months.

The box provides practical help - a package of essentials and a safe space for babies to sleep.

But it also puts into practice the principle that every child should get a fair start in life.

Getting it right for every child means recognising that life chances, and future attainment, start at birth. We're determined that every child, regardless of their circumstances, should get the best start in life - indeed, that is why we introduced Scotland's Baby Box.

We will continue to provide Baby Boxes for all of Scotland's new children, ensuring every baby born in Scotland has an equal start in life, and we will explore ways in which the baby

box can be used to further promote women's health and support parental mental health.

We will seek to apply that same principle - that every child deserves a fair start - throughout their lives.

Education is the best route there is to giving everyone a fair start in life. This must start with the very youngest children.

We will complete the expansion of free, high quality childcare to 1,140 hours - the same time a child spends in primary school - by August 2021.

In the next Parliament we will go further, by building a system of 'wraparound' childcare, providing care before and after school, all year round. Those on the lowest incomes will pay nothing, and others will make fair and affordable contributions.

We will also expand free early years education to all 1 and 2 year olds, starting with children from low income households.

Tearing down barriers to education

No pupil should struggle to learn because of poverty. We know that some families are sacrificing essentials like heating, food and rent payments so that their children can participate fully at school - this is unacceptable. The barriers to education must be removed.

We will build a system to ensure equal access to the full package of education, breaking down financial barriers to make a real difference in the lives of children from low income families.

Digital Access

Covid-19 changed the way education is delivered. With the increased reliance on digital connectivity, the pandemic shone a light on the barriers of digital exclusion.

During the pandemic, we focussed on connecting children most in need, but we will now provide every child in Scotland with a device to get online, including a free internet connection and the support to use it.

Free school meals

School meals boost children's energy, concentration, and behaviour, which leads to improvements in academic attainment.

All children in primaries 1 to 3 already benefit from access to free school meals, saving families around £400 per child per year.

We will now go further. We will provide free school breakfasts and lunches to every primary school pupil in Scotland, all year round, and for all children in state-funded special schools in Scotland.

Looking longer term, we will pilot the provision of free nutritious school breakfasts in secondary schools, and, based on the findings of the pilot project, explore the feasibility of universal breakfast provision in secondary schools.

Curriculum Charges

To ensure equal access to the whole curriculum, we will remove core curriculum charges for all pupils. This will enable children to take the subjects they want without families having to struggle to meet costs of resources and materials for practical lessons, such as home economics, hospitality, art and design, music and design and technology.

Uniforms

We know that uniform can be one of the most significant school costs for parents. We already provide a £100 minimum school clothing grant for families on low incomes across Scotland, but we will go further to ensure the grant meets the cost of school uniform.

If re-elected we will review the real cost of school uniforms for less well-off families, increasing the grant to at least £120 in primary school and £150 in secondary school and ensure it increases each year with inflation.

To ensure consistency across the country, we will develop statutory guidance on school uniform policies - ending expensive insistence on exclusive suppliers - and support automation of school clothing grants in every local authority to remove barriers to application and boost uptake.

School Trips

Learning outside the classroom is an essential part of education. Children should not miss out simply because their parents cannot afford the cost. We will support schools to provide inclusive trips and activities for all and ensure consistent practice across Scotland.

Going forward we will ensure that less-well off families do not face costs for curriculum related trips and activities and that all pupils are able to attend 'rite of passage' trips, such as P7 residential.

We will also introduce a minimum entitlement for all secondary pupils to attend at least one 'optional' trip during their time at school so that all pupils get to benefit from these enriching learning experiences.

Maximising Family Income

We will lead a joined up national campaign between government, local authorities and schools focusing on awareness and uptake of entitlements, to maximise family incomes.

Raising standards and closing the attainment gap

We have made progress in closing the attainment gap but more needs to be done. We have invested over £750 million over the last five years in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. As a result, we are seeing steady, incremental gains in attainment across the broad general education.

The gap between the most and least deprived pupils getting a Level 5 award – for example, National 5s - has shrunk by more than a third. At level 6 – for example, Highers – the gap has shrunk by a fifth.

We will now build on progress to close the poverty-related attainment gap by:

investing £1 billion over the next parliament in measures to recover from Covid, improve attainment and close the attainment gap.

increasing teacher numbers and classroom assistants by a further 3,500 on top of the increase over the last Parliament,

implementing a clear, funded package of support for pupils who have fallen behind or seen their wellbeing suffer as a result of the pandemic, starting with a programme of activities this summer.

devolving more powers and financial control to the people who know the pupils best - teachers, and,

taking forward the recommendations of the OECD review of Curriculum for Excellence.

Support for teachers

We owe a debt of gratitude to our teachers, who had to adapt overnight in the most difficult of times. We have increased the number of teachers by almost two and a half thousand since the start of the last Parliament but will go further.

We will build up the resilience of our education system, giving teachers more time out of the classroom to prepare for lessons, undertake professional development and tackle the challenges of closing the attainment gap.

We will recruit at least 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants and reduce teachers' their daily contact time by an hour and a half to give them the time they need to lift standards.

And, because teachers know the educational needs of pupils best, we will intensify our approach to empowering the teaching profession and ensuring that the decisions that affect the education of our children and young people are taken closest to them.

We will support teachers with materials to teach our young people about the dangers of disinformation, fake news and how to judge sources of information for themselves.

Reform of the Curriculum

In 2010 we introduced the Curriculum for Excellence, a new national curriculum from nursery to secondary school. This represented a significant reform to the curriculum in Scotland and placed learners at the heart of education.

More than a decade has passed since then, and to inform the ongoing development of education policy we commissioned the OECD to conduct an independent review of the curriculum.

The review is considering the design and flexibility of Curriculum for Excellence, how pupils move through school into the senior phase and how teachers are supported.

We will take forward the recommendations of the OECD review of the curriculum to ensure that the benefits of CfE are delivered for all pupils.

The cancellation of exams because of Covid has raised real questions about whether our current system of school examination is properly capturing our young people's success.

The critical question has been asked whether our exams system itself is a barrier for some pupils.

The OECD review is looking at how to transform Scotland's approach to assessment and qualifications, based on global best practice. We will reform the system to ensure the way in which we award certificates does not inherently disadvantage those from more deprived backgrounds.

Supporting young people after Covid
Our schools and teachers have worked tirelessly in the most difficult circumstances to keep teaching and keep pupils learning.

Their efforts have been tremendous but we recognise the impact of Covid on young people's education has been significant.

That's why we will increase investment in closing the attainment gap to £1 billion over the life of this coming parliament.

And we will make sure that schools themselves directly control how more of it is spent because they know best how to help individual pupils, including who needs individual tutoring and extra support with specific subjects.

But children need more than help in school. The impact of Covid has been on their whole development and on wider wellbeing. That is why we will put in place a plan to help our children recover, not just as pupils, but as people. We will:

deliver a programme of activities for children and young people over the summer - backed by £20 million - to help them socialise, play and reconnect

renew every play park in Scotland, so that all children have access to quality play in their own community, backed by £60 million.

abolish fees for music and arts education, including instrumental music tuition in schools. To support this we will accept all recommendations of the Music Education Partnership Group, mainstreaming music as a core subject in Scotland's education system and ensuring Scotland's school-based instrumental music teachers receive GTCS registration and accreditation - creating a professionally-recognised national music teaching force.

expand the successful Youth Music Initiative model across other artforms and we will support children and young people from disadvantaged communities to access music and realise their potential by continuing our annual funding for Sistema Scotland.

A fair start for everyone

A fair start for every means taking on some of the hardest challenges facing young people.

The Promise

We want Scotland to have a care system that improves the outcomes and wellbeing of those it supports - and ensures that they grow up in loving environments.

In 2016, the First Minister announced an independent, root and branch review of the care system to consider how we best give Scotland's most vulnerable children the childhood they deserve, grounded in love.

The review was published in 2020, and we have accepted all of its findings. We remain committed to turning its vision of how we must care for our most vulnerable young people into reality as quickly as possible.

We will fully implement the Independent Care Review findings and recommendations by 2030. As part of this, we will undertake a review of the Children's Hearing System over the next parliament to ensure the principles of Kilbrandon and the Care Review are fully realised.

Additional Support for Learning

Scotland's education system should be accessible to all young people. We want all children and young people to get the support that they need to reach their full potential.

We will fully implement the findings of the Morgan review of additional support for learning and invest in funding for councils to expand on the number of Pupil Support Assistants working in Scotland's classrooms.

Inclusive education

We recognise the importance of having equality and human rights embedded in our education.

The Black Lives Matter movement has shone a powerful spotlight on continuing racial injustice and race-based violence, and the need for countries to face their colonial history.

We will fund the development of an online programme on Scotland and the UK's colonial history throughout the world that can be delivered to schools, and we will encourage Local Authorities to adopt the programme in all schools.

We remain fully committed to progressing delivery of the world-leading recommendations on LGBT Inclusive Education across the curriculum in order to improve the learning environment for all children and young people.

We believe an educational approach to tackling homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying and prejudice in schools is essential.

LGBT history, role models and equalities education should be taught in schools to tackle the prejudice which often leads to the bullying and social exclusion of LGBT young people. To achieve this, we have funded Time For Inclusive Education (TIE) to work with decision makers, produce curriculum resources, and deliver services for teachers and pupils to raise awareness, heighten knowledge, and foster good relations. We are committed to that work and will continue to fund it until the prejudice that has blighted too many young lives is eradicated.

We will provide additional funding to enable local authorities to offer free British Sign Language tuition for deaf children from the age of five.

We will work with the Children and Young People's Commissioner to increase awareness of the UNCRC to ensure that children and young people can exercise their rights.

Establish a National Digital Academy

As part of our drive to ensure everyone gets a fair start, and drawing from the experience of online education during the pandemic, we will expand our digital learning offer to develop a National Digital Academy.

This will form part of a new Community Learning and Development Strategy and will allow learners to access the full higher curriculum, regardless of school or location. This new approach would end the postcode lottery of subject choice, and enable people to study for their Highers later in life, in their own time, fitting it around work or caring commitment.

Strengthening support for Scotland's young people

As our young people move from school into college, university, training and work, we are determined to make sure they get a fair start in their adult lives.

School Leavers' Toolkit

We want all school leavers, regardless of background, to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential in the next chapter of their lives. Learning from New Zealand, we will introduce a School Leavers' Toolkit to equip school leavers with practical skills for life such as financial literacy, budgeting and information on how to exercise their full civic and democratic rights.

Youth Work

Our summer recovery programme will invest in a range of activities for children and young people and their families to help them socialise, play and reconnect after covid. This

funding will include support for community-based youth service services.

We recognise that funding has been an issue at national and local level and, as well as increasing investment, we will review the statutory basis for community learning and development in order to strengthen provision and provide greater financial protection.

Supporting our students

We remain absolutely committed to the principle that access to education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. Scotland is the only country in the UK that offers free university education, saving Scottish students studying in Scotland up to £27,000.

As long as the SNP are in government there will not be tuition fees in Scotland.

This has helped in the drive to widen access - which now sees record numbers of students from the poorest background attend university. In the next Parliament, we will widen access further, implementing the recommendations of the Commissioner for Widening Access.

As part of this goal, we will undertake a review into the funding provision for postgraduate students.

While tuition is free for Scottish-domiciled undergraduate students in Scotland, learning is not. We have increased the financial support on offer to undergraduate students in recent years, but we are determined to go further.

We will expand our total student support package to reach the equivalent of the living wage over the next three years.

No student should lose their benefit entitlements because they are in receipt of student funding. We will introduce a special support payment so that students who are in receipt of benefits do not lose out because they are in receipt of, or entitled to, student support.

We will review the Purpose-Built Student Accommodation sector and bring forward a student accommodation strategy for Scotland.

We will put in place a student mental health action plan which addresses waiting times, ensures equity of access to counsellors and embeds mental health and wellbeing into the curriculum.

We will tackle student digital poverty. The lack of electronic devices and connectivity hinders too many students from less well off backgrounds. We will bridge the divide - backed by £5 million per year.

We will improve the support available to estranged students - those without parental financial support - with a package of support equivalent to the Living Wage. We will explore whether a programme of guarantorship for estranged students, who are disproportionately vulnerable to exploitation within the housing market, can be created in partnership with colleges and universities.

Financial support for young adults

Young adults are disproportionately employed in the sectors most affected by the economic shutdown, and so face heightened exposure to job loss or furlough.

In recognition of the impact Covid has had on the lives and opportunities of young people, particularly those entering the jobs market for the first time, we will increase the age at which young people become eligible for council tax from 18 to 22. For

a young person living in a Band B property that will mean an annual saving of around £750.

Backing Scotland's Colleges and Universities

The financial sustainability and viability of Scotland's colleges and universities is vital for our national mission of social and economic recovery from the pandemic.

We commissioned a Scottish Funding Council review into how best to achieve coherence and sustainability in the delivery of further and higher education.

The first phase of the report recognises the vital role of Scotland's colleges and universities in transforming lives and supporting economic and social development, but it also points to the need for change and for a conversation about their future so that their continued success and sustainability can be secured.

We await the next stage of the review and will respond to the report to ensure that our further and higher education sector is robust for the future.

Due to Brexit, the UK will no longer take part in the Europe-wide Erasmus exchange programme. The Erasmus exchange programme has helped transform the lives of thousands of our students, schoolchildren, teachers, adult learners and young people, from all across the UK.

In Scotland proportionally more participants have gone abroad through Erasmus+ than from anywhere else in the UK, while proportionally more visitors from the rest of Europe have visited Scotland in return.

We remain committed to Erasmus, and will continue to advocate for Scotland's inclusion in the programme. Until then,

we will create a Scottish programme of exchange to provide mobility and cooperation opportunities in higher education, vocational education and training, school education (including early childhood education and care), adult education, youth and sport.

We will produce a new International Education Strategy that will promote education alliances with other countries across Europe and the world.

Supporting Scotland's languages

Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's culture and we remain committed to ensuring it has a sustainable long-term future. In particular we will have a focus on arresting the intensifying language shift in the remaining vernacular communities.

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is a key driver for ensuring that Gaelic continues to thrive and grow in both urban and rural areas. GME education is at its most successful when it is fully immersive for pupils, and when an entire school career can be delivered through the medium of Gaelic.

To ensure that the GME experience is truly immersive we will have a general presumption against co-locating GME schools with English medium schools.

We will encourage the creation of new GME primary and secondary schools across Scotland, backed by investment to increase the number of teachers who can teach in the medium of Gaelic. This will be with a view to strengthening the range of subjects that can be taught in GME for both a broad general education and in the senior phase of secondary school.

We will support the development of additional GME primary schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians as an important step towards the creation of a standalone GME secondary school in

central Edinburgh. A central location is necessary to ensure it is accessible from major public transport hubs to allow the new standalone school to serve the wider Lothian region.

Edinburgh City Council has taken forward important engagement on GME provision, but we will ensure that this is now incorporated within a new national strategic approach. This is essential if we are to see the faster rates of progress we seek for Gaelic.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance and value of e-Sgoil and Stòrlann in making Gaelic education resources available. We will ensure they continue to be supported in order to help in school education, adult learning, teacher support and community learning.

In order to achieve these ambitions we will ensure that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's place as a centre of excellence for provision Gaelic training is both recognised and supported, with dedicated funding to offer FE/HE courses through and for Gaelic. As the nation's leading third level Gaelic education institution Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has a key role in supporting GME at all levels and a wide range of Gaelic community initiatives.

Learning from Ireland, we will also explore the creation of a recognised Gàidhealtachd to raise levels of language competence and the provision of more services through the medium of Gaelic and extend opportunities to use Gaelic in every-day situations and formal settings. In particular, we need to ensure specific support that makes it possible for the Gaelic language to be used more often in the home and community.

We will review the functions and structures of Bòrd na Gàidhlig to ensure Scotland has an effective leadership body and network of organisations for the promotion of Gaelic. This will include considering working with all authorities and bodies that have functions in arts, tourism and heritage to explore what

more they can do to help deliver faster rates of progress for Gaelic.

We will also bring forward a new Scottish Languages Bill which takes further steps to support Gaelic, act on the Scots language and recognises that Scotland is a multilingual society.

A Net Zero Nation

Amid the enormous challenges of the global pandemic, the climate emergency has not gone away – far from it – and the Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to ending Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045 in a just and fair way. Indeed, it is central to our recovery. We have the opportunity to design a better future and, coming out of the pandemic, put things back together differently.

Our work to tackle the climate crisis is spread throughout this manifesto, delivering low and zero emission homes, revolutionising our transport system, greening our agriculture and developing a low carbon economy.

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Increase progress toward becoming a Net Zero nation.

Support a world changing agreement at COP26 in Glasgow.

Double our world-leading Climate Justice Fund to £24 million over four years.

Implement our ambitious Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers next year to improve recycling, reduce litter and achieve our climate change targets.

Invest an additional £500 million in our natural economy to help tackle the biodiversity crisis.

Working towards our world-leading climate change targets

Scotland is leading the world on tackling the twin crises of climate change and ecological decline. We are proud to have the most ambitious legal framework for emissions reduction in the

world, but there is no doubt that these targets are immensely challenging.

We know they will require transformational actions. We will invest record amounts in tackling the climate crisis and in government our updated Climate Change Plan, published last year, contains over 100 new policies, putting Scotland on a pathway to meet its emissions targets over the period to 2032 and will help achieve a just transition to net zero by 2045.

COP 26

Hosting COP26 in Glasgow is a huge opportunity for Scotland to demonstrate our climate leadership on the global stage.

We will use our role at COP - and our role as European co-chair of the Under 2 coalition - to help secure a Glasgow Agreement that sees all countries commit to taking the action needed to tackle the climate crisis.

In this year of COP, if re-elected the First Minister will appoint Environmental Champions, experts from around the world, to advise the government on international best practice and keep us at the forefront of tackling the climate emergency and ecological decline. We will ask the Environmental Champions to report at COP 26 to demonstrate our world leading ambition.

We will publish a document, called 'Scotland's contribution to the Paris Agreement – an indicative NDC', which will centre on Scotland's world-leading target to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030.

Just Transition

Bold and ambitious change is needed in every aspects of our lives if we are to safeguard the future of our people and planet. We are determined to do this in a way that avoids the mistakes

of the past which saw coal and steel workers, their families and communities abandoned during the deindustrialisation of the 80's and 90's.

An SNP government will deliver a Just Transition.

We will implement the recommendations of the Just Transition Commission and will maintain the commission to advise us throughout the next Parliament.

If re-elected, we will appoint a Minister of Just Transition with responsibility for overseeing a 'national mission' of fairness and opportunity as we move to net zero.

To deliver this we will work with trades unions, business and communities, to bring forward sectoral Just Transition plans, charting the transition of sites, industries, regions and communities. We will develop a robust monitoring framework to sit alongside these sectoral plans which will measure our progress towards a truly fair and just transition to net zero, based on wellbeing, sustainability and fair work principles.

There is great international interest in Scotland's unique approach to climate action which embeds fairness. We will use COP26 as an opportunity to increase global ambition both on climate action and transition fairness and as we work to ensure fairness at home, we will cooperate with global partners to help ensure climate justice throughout the world.

Double the Climate Justice Fund

Scotland was the first country in the world to launch a dedicated Climate Justice Fund. Those in the global south have done least to cause climate and ecological change and yet are most likely to be impacted first. This is not fair. That is why, in the year of COP26, and in a critical moment for global climate ambition, we will double our Climate Justice Fund to £24 million over four years.

Climate Education

In Government we have supported education around the twin global climate and ecological crises through the implementation of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan.

We support the inclusion of the climate emergency and ecological crisis in teacher training and a new professional teaching qualification to help the continued upskilling of educators.

We will also further promote and support outdoor learning as a way of increasing awareness and appreciation of nature. We will trial the first outdoor primary learning facilities in Scotland, building on the success of outdoor early learning and forest kindergartens.

Low Emission Zones

We have already committed to introducing Low Emission Zones in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. Work on these was put on hold due to the pandemic. We will now work with cities across Scotland to make progress on the introduction of Low Emission Zones.

Circular Economy Bill

We will bring forward a Circular Economy Bill to advance Scotland's ambitions for the circular economy through measures which will encourage reuse of products and reduce waste. The bill will tackle our reliance on single-use items and include measures to tackle textile pollution/fast fashion.

We will take action to ban single-use plastic cutlery (forks, knives, spoons, stirrers and chopsticks), plates, straws, balloon sticks, food and beverage containers and cups for beverages. These are some of the most environmentally damaging single-use plastics and, bearing in mind equalities interests for

exemptions, we will end their supply and manufacture in Scotland.

We will also create a fund based on the success of the Saltire Tidal Energy Challenge Fund for innovation in tackling textile pollution and throw-away culture.

We will implement our ambitious Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers next year to improve recycling, reduce litter and achieve our climate change targets.

As we build Scotland's circular economy we must concentrate our efforts on reducing, recycling and reusing resources. With this and our world leading climate change targets in mind, we commit to reviewing the role that incineration plays in Scotland's waste hierarchy.

Hydrogen

We are the first country in the UK to publish a Hydrogen Policy Statement that sets out how we can make the most of Scotland's massive potential in this new sector. We have the potential to become a world leading centre for the hydrogen economy - decarbonising our energy system and creating thousands of jobs.

Hydrogen is rapidly emerging across the international community as a sustainable solution for the decarbonisation of the economy and a key element of the energy transition picture.

Scotland is prepared to play its full part together with other European nations – that's why we're investing £100 million of resources to stimulate the sector and its supply chain.

Scotland has, in abundance, all the raw ingredients necessary for the production of low-cost hydrogen as well as one of the largest concentrations of offshore engineering expertise in the world that can harness Scotland's renewable energy potential

in technologies like wind, wave and tidal power, to produce green hydrogen. Indeed, Scotland is one of the best placed nations anywhere in the world to develop competitively priced hydrogen for our own economy's needs and to generate a surplus in supply to export to other European nations with emerging demand, but insufficient supply to meet their own needs.

To support the delivery a hydrogen economy we will:

Set a target to have renewable and low-carbon hydrogen production capacity of at least 5GW by 2030.

Support the Levenmouth demonstration project to deliver a 100% hydrogen heat network, supplying 300 domestic properties with clean, green hydrogen heating.

Explore the use of hydrogen trains as an alternative to diesel and electrification - aiming for at least one pilot service to be in operation by the end of the parliament.

Green energy

By 2030 we aim to generate 50% of Scotland's overall energy consumption from renewable sources, and by 2050 we aim to have decarbonised our energy system almost completely.

To ensure we are on track to do so, we will publish a refreshed Energy Strategy to map out our transition.

With particular focus on Aberdeen and the North East, our Energy Transition Scotland programme will ensure that Scottish industry plays a leading role in the development and deployment of new, low carbon technologies, like marine renewables, hydrogen and CCUS.

Building on Scotland's strength in energy we will develop a new programme of work within our enterprise agencies, working with companies in high carbon industries like oil and gas to develop new technologies or access new low-carbon markets for their products, both nationally and internationally.

We need to harness the power of all our natural resources and also enable rural and island communities to thrive. That means getting the balance right between allowing appropriate development and protecting the environment. We will review and streamline such processes so that non-controversial renewable energy developments can be completed quickly, benefiting locals and visitors.

The current ScotWind offshore wind leasing round could raise up to £860 million for the public purse. This shows the benefits that can come to Scotland from owning and developing our own natural resources to tackle climate change. We will look at options for investing income from offshore wind leases in future projects that will tackle climate change and create a legacy for the future.

We will also continue to work to increase the proportion of any renewables developments that are made in Scotland to ensure we can support jobs onshore as well as offshore.

Carbon Neutral Islands

We will support Carbon Neutral Islands which would be in the vanguard of reaching net zero emissions targets by 2045. This would include pilots for some islands to run on 100% renewable energy, to create circular economies tackling and processing waste and exploring more sustainable transport options. We will work with at least 3 islands over the next Parliament to enable them to become fully carbon neutral by 2040.

Nature based solutions

We will invest an additional £500 million in our natural economy to help tackle the biodiversity crisis.

We have been active on the world stage, leading the Edinburgh Process on biodiversity and publishing the Edinburgh Declaration calling for increased action to tackle biodiversity loss.

We will publish a new biodiversity strategy within 12 months of the biodiversity COP, and remain committed to protecting at least 30% of Scotland's land by 2030. We want to go further still and will review our current targets when we publish our new strategy.

We will ensure that every Local Authority area will have a Nature Network of new, locally driven projects which aim to improve ecological connectivity across Scotland

Restoration of degraded peatland is a vital nature based solution to protecting Scotland's biodiversity and ending our contribution to climate change, as well as creating opportunities for green jobs and skills. We are committed to a ten year investment of more than £250 million to support the restoration of 250,000 hectares of Scottish peatland by 2030.

Scotland has some of the best remaining rainforest sites in Europe. We will support the restoration and expansion of Scotland's rainforest as a nature-based solution to the climate emergency. We will establish a National Register of Ancient Woodlands and work with owners and agencies to maintain and protect them.

Scotland in the world

Over the course of the next parliament we will:

Maintain and strengthen Scotland's relationship with our EU partners - with a view to rejoining as soon as possible.

Increase the International Development Fund from £10 million to £15 million and commit to increases in line with inflation

Create a new global affairs framework, underpinned by Scotland's fundamental values and priorities and adopt a feminist foreign policy.

Bring forward a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill to make it a statutory requirement for all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to consider the long term consequences of their policy decisions on the wellbeing of the people they serve and take full account of the short and long-term sustainable development impact of their decisions.

Establish a Migration Service for Scotland to help people to settle easily into communities across Scotland and access information on rights and services available to them.

Support the establishment of an Institute for Peacekeeping and a Scottish Council for Global Affairs.

Work with local authorities across Scotland - starting with Glasgow - to create the first Scottish Cities of Refuge, ensuring Scotland is a welcoming place for writers and artists fleeing violence and persecution.

Rejoin the EU

The people of Scotland voted decisively to remain within the European Union and we firmly believe that EU membership is the best option for Scotland.

Brexit undoubtedly changes the way that Scotland engages with the EU, but it will not change the EU's importance to Scotland, nor our commitment to rejoining the EU as soon as possible.

By rejoining the EU we will create jobs and regain full access to the European Single Market, which is seven times the size of the UK.

We will prepare to rejoin the EU by keeping a close relationship with Europe. We will strengthen our Brussels base and make Scotland House the hub of our diplomatic representation across Europe.

We will also expand our international network by creating an Innovation and Investment hub in the Nordic and Baltic regions.

Migration

Scotland is a welcoming and inclusive nation and we value everyone, no matter where they were born, who has chosen to make Scotland their home and to live, work, study, raise their families and build their lives.

We rely on migration to grow our population. Scotland needs people to want to work here, in our businesses, our universities and in our public services.

We will continue to fund support for EU Citizens who seek to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme, including after the deadline.

We will work to sustainably build Scotland's population, supporting settlement across Scotland through housing initiatives, flexible working, investigating Repopulation Zones, and developing more family-friendly policies.

To build on our Moving to Scotland initiative, we will establish a Migration Service for Scotland to help people to settle easily into communities across Scotland and access information on rights and services available to them.

We will also work with local authorities to develop a Rural Visa Pilot as a rural and remote migration initiative.

With migration reserved to Westminster, we cannot provide proof of status in Scotland, however we will explore the creation of a physical card for EU citizens with pre/settled status to make it easier to access public services in Scotland.

We will refresh our 'New Scot' strategy and ensure people with lived experience of migration and asylum are at the heart of the development. We will go further than the previous strategy and include a strand for people of all nationalities who make Scotland their home.

We will continue to urge the Tory Government to introduce a fair and humane asylum and refugee system where people have the right to work and to contribute to society.

No-one should be made destitute as a consequence of the Tory policy of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) which stops people getting access to basic essential services. We do not have powers to change these UK-wide rules but we will take forward our strategy to support people to have access to safe accommodation, food and specialist advice.

UK Migration policy doesn't work for Scotland

UK immigration policies do not take into account Scotland's unique circumstances and they are harmful to our communities and future prosperity. Tory immigration proposals would be disastrous for Scotland. They will send our working-age population into decline, threaten tax revenues and cause serious staffing shortages in our NHS, care services and key sectors such as tourism, agriculture and construction.

With independence, and full power over migration policy, we can build asylum and immigration systems geared to meet Scotland's needs and founded on fairness and human rights.

We call on the UK Government to:

introduce a fair and humane asylum and refugee system where people have the right to work and to contribute to society, and to lift the harmful restrictions caused by No Recourse to Public Funds,

review family migration, looking at the definition of family members, costs, and children born here,

extend the rights of EU nationals in the UK automatically, or at the very least to cancel the deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme, and to devolve migration policy to Scotland so we can build a fair system that meets Scotland's needs.

Global Affairs

Scotland has a positive global reputation built on a strong national identity, world-renowned culture and globally recognised products and services.

In the face of increasing international competition in trade, investment and tourism, we will create a brand marque for Scotland, to cement our position as a leading place to visit, and do business.

We will create a new global affairs framework for building our international engagement, underpinned by Scotland's fundamental values and priorities. We will become the first country in the UK, joining a small number of countries across the world, to adopt a feminist foreign policy.

We will support the establishment of a Scottish Council for Global Affairs to develop critical thinking on international issues and Scotland's place in the world.

We will develop a new strategy for engaging with the Scottish diaspora to increase meaningful connections with people from Scotland living elsewhere in the world, and those with Scottish heritage.

Wellbeing Economy Government Network

In government in 2018, the SNP founded the Wellbeing Economy Government network (WeGo) with New Zealand and Iceland. More recently Finland and Wales have joined the network which works with international organisations like the OECD to promote an approach to the economy and to society that is about more than just GDP, but considers the health, environmental and social wellbeing of a country to be as important as economic growth.

With more countries expressing an interest in this work we will continue to build an international network of Wellbeing Economy Governments, with dedicated resources within the Scottish Government, to support its work and expansion to new countries. We will appoint a Wellbeing Economy Ambassador to work across countries to promote this work and we will bring

countries together around COP26 to discuss how focusing on the wellbeing of a country can help meet net zero.

A good global citizen

We place great importance on Scotland being a good global citizen. This means playing our part in tackling global challenges including poverty, injustice and inequality.

It is clear that Covid will remain a threat for some time to come, and we must therefore step up our global contribution.

We will increase the International Development Fund from £10 million to £15 million and commit to increases in line with inflation.

We will continue support for tackling global emergencies through the Humanitarian Emergency Fund.

We will establish a £500,000 International Development Women and Girls Empowerment Fund targeted at helping women and girls, particularly in terms of accessing education, in our partner countries of Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda.

To build on the successful model of the Scottish Global Health Co-ordination Unit we will establish a Global Renewable Centre, working with partner countries in the Global South to exchange knowledge and research in renewable technologies, to support the development of sustainable energy.

We will also create new peer to peer partnerships between Scotland's Centres of Expertise for Climate Change, Waters & Flooding and organisations in the Global South, sharing expertise and data towards tackling these shared challenges.

Sustainable Development

As we recover and rebuild from the pandemic, it is more important than ever to be guided by the vision and values of

Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We will bring forward a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill during the next Parliament. This legislation would make it a statutory requirement for all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to consider the long term consequences of their policy decisions on the wellbeing of the people they serve, including those not yet born, and take full account of the short and long-term sustainable development impact of their decisions, both in Scotland and elsewhere.

Alongside this we will establish a Ministerial Working Group on policy coherence for sustainable development and a public sector Sustainable Development Goals action group which will reaffirm commitment to achieving SDGs across the public sector.

Institute for Peacekeeping

We will support the establishment of a peace institute which builds on Scotland's role in conflict resolution and the promotion of non-violent approaches to resolving disputes between communities and nations.

Starting with Glasgow, we will work with local authorities across Scotland to create the first Scottish Cities of Refuge, ensuring Scotland is a welcoming place for writers and artists fleeing violence and persecution.

We will continue to support UN Security Council Resolution 1325, training women to play crucial roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and expand our work in the year of COP26 to include a fellowship focused on climate change.

Opposition to nuclear weapons

We will maintain our firm and unequivocal opposition to nuclear weapons - both in principle and to their location in Scotland.

This includes opposition to replacement of the Trident nuclear missile system and to the UK Government plans to increase the number of nuclear warheads. We want to see a world free from nuclear weapons, and an independent Scotland will be a strong and principled advocate for nuclear disarmament on the global stage. We will maintain Faslane as a traditional military and naval base.