

Highlands and Islands Manifesto 2021

A vote for the SNP is a vote for serious and experienced leadership, a programme to kick-start the recovery and, once the COVID crisis is over, a choice over Scotland's future. Here's what we'll do for Highlands and Islands.

INVEST IN OUR HEALTH SERVICE

- 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**.
- We will ensure that **half of the total budget for frontline NHS services will be invested in community and primary care**.
- We will **ensure every GP practice in the country has access to a dedicated mental wellbeing link worker**.
- We will 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.
- We will roll out **more mobile health services** for direct delivery of care, particularly in rural areas. This will include additional mental health services.
- To help renew our NHS we aim to **invest £10 billion over the next decade** to replace and refurbish health facilities across Scotland. This will include:
 - Renewing or upgrading primary and community facilities, for example the **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**.
 - Renew acute and general hospital facilities to keep them fit for the future, including a new **Belford Hospital in Fort William**.
 - Planning and enabling the refurbishment of hospitals, including **Caithness General Hospital** in Wick and the **Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick**
- An elective **centre in Inverness**.
- We remain committed to the reintroduction of consultant-led maternity services at **Dr Gray's in Elgin** in a safe and sustainable way.
- We will establish a **fast track cancer diagnostic centre in every health board area**.
- We will create a **new centre of excellence for rural and remote medicine and social care**.

BOOST OUR ECONOMY AND CREATE JOBS

We will 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. In the Highlands and Islands, we will invest:

- **£30 million** in delivering the **National Islands Plan**;
 - **£135 million** in the **Inverness and Highland City Region Deal**;
 - **Over £100 million** growth deal investment in the region; **£32.5 million** for Moray, **£25 million** for Argyll and Bute and **£50 million** for Islands.
 - **over £6 million** to Highlands and Islands Enterprise to deliver the **Green Jobs Fund**;
 - **£10 million** to support the reinstatement of the **Cairngorm Funicular**;
 - **Improvements to piers and harbours and support for ferry services** to and from Scotland's islands.
 - **Funding for a new ferry** designed to provide a year round service to **the Uig Triangle**;
 - We will **create a new, £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund**.
 - The SNP will invest **£275 million** to support community-led regeneration and town centre revitalisation with **funding available across the Highlands and Islands**.
 - We will **create a new 'Tech-Scaler' hub in Inverness** and ensure that the commercial education on offer in the hubs is accessible virtually to ensure access for businesses in rural areas.
 - To provide more employment opportunities, we will **deliver islands-focused activity through the Young Person's Guarantee**.
- ### SUPPORT OUR RURAL ECONOMY
- We will transform support for farming and food production so that **by 2025 half of all funding for farmers and crofters comes with "green strings"** and we will **support crofters and their communities to play a bigger role in peatland and woodland creation**.
 - 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**.

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- We will continue to support our fishing industry to recover from the Tories' Brexit betrayal and **press for the £62 million of marine funding Scotland is entitled to**, and do all we can to **regain markets and opportunities** for our fish and seafood sector.
- We will **maintain our doubled investment in the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund at £6.2 million**, and **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.
- 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.

INVEST IN EDUCATION AND SUPPORT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Over the next parliament we will **invest £2 billion - in partnership with local government - in a Learning Estate Investment Programme**, including:
 - Castlebay Campus
 - Tain 3-18 campus
 - Broadford Primary School
 - Nairn Academy
 - Findrassie Primary School
- In the last year alone, the SNP has provided a free school meal to over **13,000 pupils in the Highlands and Islands region**. We will go even further by **providing free school breakfasts and lunches to every primary school pupil, all year round**.
- 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**.
- Child poverty is in every part of Scotland. We want to lift children out of poverty in the Highlands and Islands - that's why we will **double the Scottish Child Payment to £20 per child by the end of parliament and nearly double the planned investment in the Parental Employability Support Fund**.

INVEST IN HOUSING AND SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

- Since taking office, we have **delivered 96,750 affordable homes**, nearly 67,000 of which were for social rent - including **over 27,500 in the Highlands and Islands**. We will deliver a further 100,000 affordable homes by 2032, backed by investment of **£3.5 billion** over the parliament - **supporting 14,000 jobs a year**.
- To **stop depopulation** and support our communities, we will **give local authorities the powers to manage the numbers of second homes in their area**.

- 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**.
- We will work with local authorities to develop a **Rural Visa Pilot** as a rural and remote migration initiative.

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY

- We will **open a new railway station next to Inverness airport**.
- We will continue to call for **connections to be established between the Caledonian Sleeper service and the Eurostar at St Pancras International**, helping join up the two key services linking the Highlands with European cities.
- 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**.
- We've made progress in upgrading the **A82** and will **make further progress in the next Parliament**.
- We remain committed to dualling the **A9 and A96**.
- We are **committed to funding ferry services and maintaining Road Equivalent Tariff** on all current island ferry routes.
- 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.
- We will **invest in more sustainable ferries** - 30% of state-owned ferries being low emission by 2032.
- We remain committed to finding a solution with the UK Government on Air Departure Tax that would **allow for the Highlands and Islands exemption to remain**.
- Our £579 million investment in the expansion of superfast broadband means **every home and business in the Highlands and Islands will have access in the next five years**.
- We will invest **over £20 million** to install at least 39 masts to provide **mobile coverage in remote rural and island communities**.

WORK TOWARDS NET ZERO

- We will work with **at least 3 islands** to enable them to become **fully carbon neutral by 2040**.
- 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**.