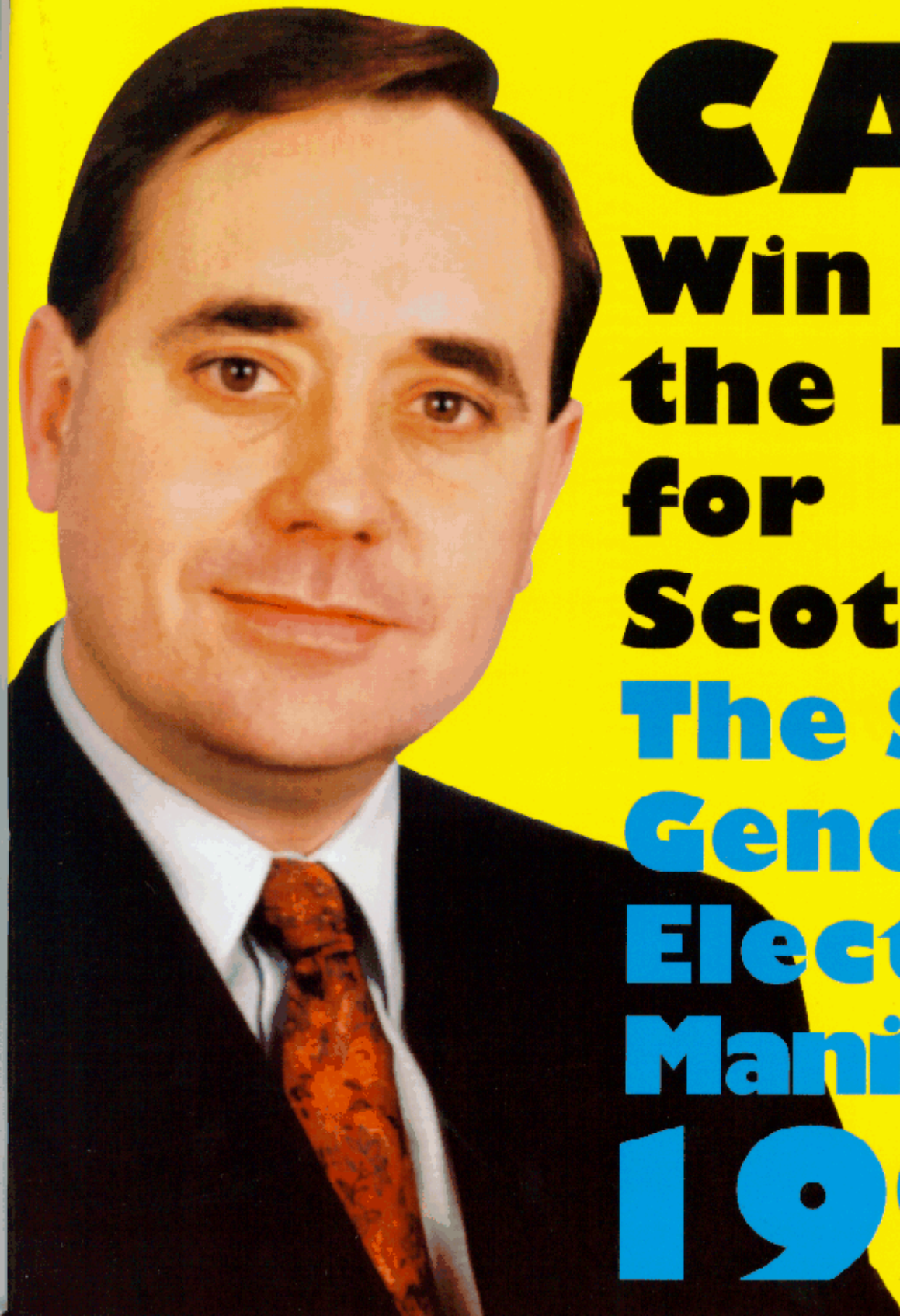




**YES
WE 
CAN**

**Win
the Best
for
Scotland
The SNP
General
Election
Manifesto
1997**



THE SNP MANIFESTO 1997

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THE SNP MANIFESTO 1997

A wealth of information

This Manifesto is published by the Scottish National Party for the General Election of May 1997. During the past two years the SNP has placed in the public domain a wealth of information on Scotland's future, and our manifesto is published alongside a fully costed budget for the first four years of an independent Scotland.

Further detail of SNP policies for those four years can be found in the SNP's "Programme for Government" published in September 1996, which includes an outline of the SNP's proposed structure of government.

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An introduction by Alex Salmond

Yes We Can! That's the confident message from the SNP to the voters of Scotland as we decide the future of our country. It is a message that challenges the sterile, out of date and bankrupt political British system and looks above it to the brighter prospects that await us in Europe and the world.

Yes We Can.....be independent and pay our way in the world.

Yes We Can.....have a first class health service: improve our schools and colleges: create jobs, build homes and look after our elderly and vulnerable.

Yes We Can.....play a full part in Europe and make Scotland one of the best places to do business.

Yes We Can.....afford funding for our public services, both national and local.

Yes We Can.....improve our environment, strengthen our transport links, and make our streets safer.

For the past 18 years the Tories have been telling us that we can afford nothing and can contribute nothing. Now we know that that was a lie, and that Scotland has not been taking subsidies: we've been giving money to London - £27,000 million more than we have received since 1979. And that's the Treasury figures - not ours!

Now New Labour is telling us that nothing can change: that we must go on accepting Tory policies, Tory spending limits and Tory taxes.

Can Tory or New Labour change anything? Can they get Scotland back to work, can they rebuild a truly National Health Service, can they help schools and our young people, can they secure new jobs?

No They Can't. So Scotland needs something different. Scotland needs a return to the virtues of enterprise and compassion, which taken together make a country really great: great to live in, great to work in, great to learn in, and great to grow old in.

I want to see that type of Scotland. A Scotland that doesn't ask where you've come from, but where we are all going together. A Scotland free at last to look after her citizens and play her part in the world.

Can we have that type of Scotland?

Yes We Can! It is now within our grasp. All we have to do is vote for it.

And if the SNP wins, so does Scotland.

It's as simple as that.



Alex Salmond National Convener, Scottish National Party



Alex Salmond

What Scotland needs now!



Alex Neil
Vice Convener
for Policy

“The SNP are proposing a fully-costed manifesto for an independent Scotland that is more detailed and better researched than ever before.

There is a better future for Scotland with Independence - when we start investing in Scotland instead of subsidising London - and this document proves it.”

Scotland Needs BETTER HEALTH - new investment in a true National Health Service to restore standards and provide quality comprehensive care, free at the point of need.

Scotland Needs WELL RESOURCED EDUCATION - funding for teachers, investment in schools, free pre school education and the restoration of decent student grants.

Scotland Needs DECENT HOMES - new houses, a renovation programme, the transfer of housing debt from local government and an end to homelessness.

Scotland Needs MORE JOBS - a business tax regime that encourages growth, a determination to achieve full employment and a fair tax system that encourages employment.

Scotland Needs SOCIAL JUSTICE - a pensioners package, the restoration of benefits to young people, and the abolition of means testing for care of the elderly.

Scotland Needs INDEPENDENCE - the only way in which Scotland can put its wealth to work and care for its people again.

THE SNP MANIFESTO 1997

1: "A Nation Once Again"

"*Now there's an end of an auld sang*" were the words of the Chancellor of Scotland, when he signed the Treaty of Union of 1707 submerging from view for almost three centuries the independent nation of Scotland

But he was wrong. The song of Scotland - the steady rhythm of our past, the energetic bustle of our present, and the heady promise of our future - did not die in 1707. Scotland still exists despite the determined efforts of those who rule us to diminish, dismiss and deride our national aspirations.

Scotland's institutions in the law, education, administration and in sport still have their distinctive national characteristics despite a constant erosion by the Westminster Parliament. What they need to revive and renew them - and what we need to revive and renew us - is the beating heart of an independent Scottish Parliament that expresses the sovereign will of the people who live here.

For two hundred and ninety years Scotland has remained within a United Kingdom which has contributed less and less to our well being. Scotland has the potential to be a rich and vibrant economy yet we export our wealth south of the border: Scotland has a part to play in the building of our continent, and yet we are not permitted to speak for ourselves. Scotland has a home to offer to those from many backgrounds and much to give on the world stage and yet we are living in the shadow of our neighbour, who speaks for us but not of us. And Scotland has the skills and resources to be free, but is denied its democratic right to self government.

Yet Scotland can be a real and independent nation again. All we need is the assent of the people.

At this General Election we can give that assent. We can begin a process that will result in the restoration of self confidence and the creation of a modern democracy in the mainstream of European life.

We can express our dissatisfaction with the stale and sterile politics of the London parties - New Labour and Old Tory alike.

And along with many hundreds of thousands of Scots, we can all vote SNP in the certain knowledge that only the SNP can make any difference to Scotland and to the lives of those who live here.

This manifesto outlines the way in which the SNP wish to set Scotland free, and the promises that the SNP make about our country and how it should be run.

These promises will allow Scotland to win again. For if the SNP wins, so does Scotland

It's as simple as that.



**Dr Winnie Ewing
MEP**
SNP President
and European
Parliamentary
Leader

"There is an enormous bank of goodwill towards Scotland in the rest of Europe, and we have friends in countries far and wide who would welcome our freedom. We are an internationalist people, who look outwards to the rest of the world - in contrast to the insular, Little Englander mentality at Westminster."

2: Scotland – the Facts



John Swinney
Treasury
Spokesperson

“Scotland is a rich country, with a wealth of natural resources. Since 1979, Scotland has sent £27 billion more to the London Treasury than we have received in return. With Independence, we can make Scotland the “lion economy” of Europe - delivering fair tax for individuals, and a competitive edge for Scottish business.”

The choice of how to vote at a General Election can be dictated by tradition, reason or emotion. But whatever the basis for your choice will be, it is important first to know the truth about our country and our prospects as its citizens.

Over the past few years the SNP and Scotland have been subject to a whole range of smears and fears manufactured by political opponents. At the outset of our manifesto it is important to set aside those baseless attacks in a strong and positive manner.

Labour and the Tories attack and attempt to undermine Scottish self confidence because it is a threat to their electoral prospects. They peddle fear, we offer hope. The SNP encourages all who live in Scotland to fulfil their potential.

The facts are these:

SCOTLAND IS A WEALTHY NATION. When our share of North Sea output is taken into account, an Independent Scotland would become the eighth richest nation in the developed world.¹ Scotland saves more, produces more and exports more per head than England.²

SCOTLAND PAYS HER WAY IN THE WORLD. The Treasury has admitted that in the last eighteen years we have sent £27,000,000,000 more to London than we have received. In the next five years we will do the same with £12,500,000,000 of our wealth.³ Scotland can afford many of the things our citizens want, while still reducing the inherited burden of our share of the UK national debt.

SCOTLAND, ON INDEPENDENCE, WILL AUTOMATICALLY BECOME A FULL MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: European legal, political and constitutional opinion on this matter is quite clear.⁴

SCOTLAND WILL HAVE OPEN BORDERS WITH ENGLAND: modern European countries have abolished controlled internal frontiers and our close family and trading ties with England will not be interrupted in any way by Scottish Independence. Only political union will end - our social union will be as strong as ever, and indeed improved by our new equal status as good neighbours.

PENSIONS AND INVESTMENTS WILL BE UNAFFECTED BY INDEPENDENCE: the European Union already legislates for such transfers.

SCOTLAND WILL ESTABLISH A MODERN EFFICIENT AND APPROPRIATE DEFENCE FORCE in keeping with our traditions and best practice throughout our continent. Scotland does not need nuclear weapons.

THERE WILL BE FULL CITIZENSHIP AND A CONTINUING RIGHT OF RESIDENCE FOR EVERYONE WHO CURRENTLY LIVES HERE. An Independent Scotland will protect in its written constitution residency rights for all those living here, or entitled to live here, at the time of independence whether or not they become Scottish Citizens. Citizenship will be established on the basis of residency or birth. Membership of the European Union will also permit residence from citizens from other European Union members.

SCOTLAND WILL BECOME A WEALTHIER, FREER NATION FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS: Scotland today is being kept held back by the Union with England. An independent Scotland will be a magnet for investment and our “Bill of Rights” will protect every citizen from government interference - something that Britain does not do - and establish social justice in our land.

2: Scotland – the Facts

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE is the normal status for wealthy small nations. Over 50 countries have become independent from Britain since 1945 and NONE of them have applied to become colonies or dependencies again. Nearly half the independent nations in the world are smaller than Scotland - 25 out of the 35 most prosperous nations are *small* nations!

SCOTLAND WILL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE ANY GOVERNMENT IT LIKES AFTER INDEPENDENCE: in the first elections after independence the SNP will stand as a political party, but Scots will be able to choose any party they like. Proportional Representation will ensure that Scottish governments are broadly based and that all parts of the country are fairly represented - as will be women and ethnic minorities.



Alasdair Morgan
Cabinet
Secretary

“While the London-based parties hand down their policies from on high, the SNP have developed a detailed set of policies that are best for Scotland by using the democratic structures of the Party. And we have consulted widely with organisations outside our party, in order to ensure that our policies are fully in tune with the needs of the people.”

3: Gaining Independence



Fergus Ewing
Cabinet
Chief Secretary

“Measures to help business, especially small business, are vital.

Small business is the engine of growth and for too long the UK has just ignored the potential and needs of those who contribute so much.”

A vote for the SNP is a vote for Independence - it is also a vote to encourage change, because only when the SNP is strong do the other parties pay any attention to Scotland .

Constitutional Change has been promised to Scotland by the British parties for over 100 years - but nothing has happened. Nothing will happen unless the SNP is strong and determined, and attracting the support of the people of Scotland.

New Labour’s scheme for a Scottish assembly is fatally flawed, and will deliver no real power. The Tories are stuck in the bunker of “no change” whilst virtually the whole of Scotland is now scunnered by their anti-Scottish actions. Only the SNP offers a clear , logical and achievable blueprint for progress.

Scotland can regain its independence at any General Election. After the election of a majority of SNP MPs,the SNP will immediately initiate negotiations for independence with the UK government. In parallel with these negotiations, we will initiate talks with the European Union in order to facilitate the right conditions for independent representation.

At the conclusion of this period (which is likely to take between six and twelve months) the people of Scotland will be asked to approve the “independence settlement” in a simple one question referendum. On achieving the assent of the people of Scotland, independence will be declared and, after the formal establishment of an independent country within Europe, a fresh General Election will be held to elect a new government.

There are many precedents for such a process: indeed during 1996 a committee of respected academics brought forward the final report of a study of Scotland’s route to independence⁵ which clearly set out the steps to be followed. During this study examples from other parts of the world were looked at closely. In the twentieth century the road to Independence is well trodden, and well signposted by those that have gone before.

4: A Scotland for all her People

An independent Scotland will have a written constitution and Bill of Rights. This means that Scots will be citizens, not subjects. They will be protected from the type of arbitrary interference that is the hallmark of Westminster government, and they will be able to force the state to honour its commitments to them.

Almost every country in the world has a written constitution: and virtually every democratic country in the world makes sure that citizens are guaranteed their rights. A modern Scotland must have the same concern for law and liberty

Earlier this year the SNP published its full constitutional proposals⁶ which have been arrived at after lengthy and wide ranging consultation. Amongst the SNP's promises to Scotland are:

The protection of basic human rights, including the right of free expression and assembly, the right to housing, education and free health care and the right to decent working conditions and a minimum wage. The rights of citizens in an independent Scotland will be at least as wide-ranging as those offered under the European Convention on Human Rights, which will be incorporated into the law of Scotland.

The establishment of a single chamber parliament elected by proportional representation which is modern in character and which in gender, ethnic origin and geographical representation accurately mirrors Scottish society as a whole. The franchise will be extended to include all those aged 16 and over. Legislation will require public consultation, may be initiated by public petition as well as by members of the Scottish Parliament, and a system of strong standing committees will supervise and regulate proceedings. Final legislation, having passed the Parliamentary process, will be approved on behalf of the people by the Chancellor of the Parliament, not subject to the mumbo jumbo of Royal assent. The balanced parliament, elected fairly, and a strong investigative committee system will replace the offensive and archaic House of Lords as the mechanisms to ensure properly thought through legislation. Membership of a legislative body secured only by accident of birth or political patronage has no place in a modern democracy.

The SNP propose the reform of the Monarchy which, while allowing the Queen and her successors to remain Head of State, would ensure that their duties and payments were clearly and openly understood. In the absence of the Queen from Scotland the elected Chancellor (Speaker) of the Scottish Parliament will act as Head of State.

The protection of the rights and responsibilities of Local Government will be protected by means of entrenchment in the constitution. Local Authorities will also be elected by proportional representation.

Citizens of Scotland, wherever they have come from, will be full participants in a twenty first century democracy, not subjects of an outmoded and decaying eighteenth century state. That change alone will refresh and invigorate Scottish life.



Margaret Ewing
Cabinet member

“Over many years, I have seen the policies which the people of Scotland support overturned by an unrepresentative Westminster Parliament, which is distant from Scottish concerns. Only by getting a real Parliament of our own in Scotland can we introduce the policies that are best for Scotland.”

5: Working in a Better Scotland

Independence is vital for our future; but independence is not an aim on its own. The purpose of independence is not just to free Scotland but to free Scots - all the people who live in Scotland

The Tory Government has been responsible for a vast increase in the National Debt, and an Independent Scotland would of course inherit a proportion of that debt, estimated to be around £38 billion. An SNP Government would commence a programme of repaying this debt, aiming to reduce the amount spent in interest and to free resources for further investment in the future. The debt repayment will amount to a total of £6.6 billion in the first four years of Independence.

Jobs and Employment

The SNP aims for full employment - an achievable goal that is integral to the growth of the Scottish economy, the delivery of a high standard of living and the development of a secure and inclusive society in which every individual contributes and plays a constructive role.

The SNP's four year budget will result in the creation of an additional 100,000 new jobs; in addition our National Apprenticeship scheme will increase the number of young people going on from school to meaningful training and through that route into useful work.

In addition to the immediate jobs boost that independence will produce, the creation of new jobs will come about as Scottish business is assisted to develop and compete. The key to such development will be the introduction of a sensitive and targeted corporate tax structure, allied to important initiatives to encourage small businesses that do not pay corporation tax.

Business Taxation

The SNP is the only party in a generation to enter a General Election fully committed to a reduction in business taxation.

In government the SNP will

- * Cut the standard rate of corporation tax by approx. 10% from 33p to 30p
- * Cut the small companies rate of corporation tax by 22% from 23p to 18p
- * Limit the increase in the Business Rate Multiplier to the increase in the RPI
- * Phase in banded business rates with benefit targeted at smaller enterprises and with no increase for larger companies.
- * Abolish Class IV National Insurance Contributions.

These proposals will be phased in over a four year period. We have allocated an average of £250 million per year from our budget for the creation of a Business Tax Reduction fund to pay for these measures.

New Investment

In addition to a innovative business tax regime, Government funding will be provided for priority economic projects such as industrial expansion, modernisation, agricultural diversification and the introduction of new technologies. An additional £120 million over four years will be provided to enhance research and development of new products and processes. This will ensure that full advantage is taken of the intellectual capacity and scientific and technological innovation that is to be found in rich abundance in our universities and colleges, and in many of our businesses.

5: Working in a Better Scotland

Exports and Skills

A Scottish Export Unit will also assist in building our export trade and focusing the attention of Scottish industry on the need to expand its excellent record in this field and will provide a massive boost to the international profile of Scottish business. A Scottish Skills Foundation will be established to bring international best practice in skills and innovation training to bear on Scottish business and industry.

Tourism

The SNP has budgeted for a doubling of the Scottish Tourist Board's advertising and promotions budget and will assist the Tourism industry - which contributes in excess of £2.2 billion to the Scottish economy and employs over 177,000 people - to fulfil its potential.

Business Growth and Fair Trading

With the SNP's commitment to Defence Diversification (see Chapter 9), to a modernised transport and communications infrastructure (See Chapter 8) and with a successful Scottish approach to attracting investment the prospects for job creation and business birth, growth and survival will be better than ever before.

An SNP government will provide a context for business that is fair and flexible: a Merger and Take-overs panel will ensure competitive practices and prevent "asset stripping" which has destroyed many Scottish companies over the past 20 years; a Fair Trading Unit within a Scottish Department of Industry, Technology and Employment will inherit and strengthen the responsibilities of the current utility regulators and legislation will ensure that the practice of delayed payment that damages small businesses is outlawed.

The Social Chapter and Trade Unions

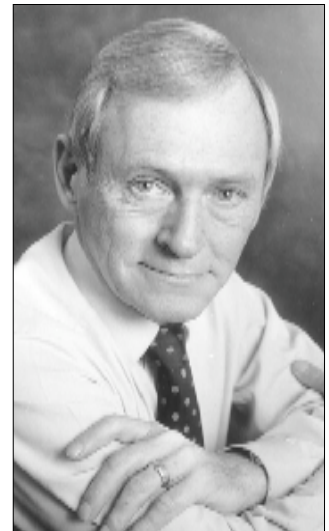
A fair and flexible business environment will flourish if accompanied by active partnership with trade unions: the SNP Charter for Trade Unions will guarantee Trade Union rights whilst ensuring that their responsibilities are enforceable at law. Scottish endorsement of the EU Social Chapter will encourage Unions and employers to observe best practice that enhances constructive and profitable co-operation. The introduction of a minimum wage (after discussion and with consensus) set at half median male earnings will be accompanied by an implementation plan developed in association with employers which assists smaller businesses to take this vital social step forward.

Fair Personal Taxation

For those in work, a fair personal tax system is an essential motivator: the SNP aim to introduce a starter rate of income tax at 15p over the first four years of government. For middle income earners the bands of income at which the basic rate is levied will be expanded by 15 per cent. This means that the top rate will not kick in until earnings exceed £30,000.

In keeping with the belief that those who are best rewarded should contribute slightly more in order to assist delivering a just society, the ceiling on National Insurance contributions will be removed.

Taken together these proposals will mean that there will be a drop in taxation for most, with a marginal increase in taxation for those earning above £26,500 per year. 85% of male employees and 95% of female employees will pay less tax. But all will benefit from a more prosperous country and a fairer society.



George Reid
Industry,
Technology and
Employment
Spokesperson

"Instead of the Tories' fiddled unemployment figures, we need a real Parliament in Scotland to create real jobs, and bring about a real cut in the dole queues. Only with Independence can we develop an economic strategy in line with Scottish conditions, and the SNP will prioritise investment in training and exports. Over four years, we can create 100,000 more jobs."

5: Working in a Better Scotland

These proposals are in keeping with the basic Scottish belief in progressive taxation and the sharing of responsibility according to the ability to pay.

We will also cut VAT on Domestic fuel from 8% to 5% , the minimum allowed under EU regulations but will also negotiate with the EU to seek a new regime to take account of climatic conditions in Northern Europe, thus allowing the eventual abolition of this tax.

The economic and employment priorities of an SNP Government will be to

- * **Move toward full employment**
- * **Achieve sustained growth along with increased investment**
- * **Secure continuing low inflation**
- * **Establish International Economic Credibility**
- * **Introduce a competitive business tax system**
- * **Legislate for a fair personal tax system**
- * **Build exports and inward investment**
- * **Strengthen the infrastructure and skills base**
- * **Adopt the Social Chapter and the Minimum Wage.**
- * **Introduce the SNP Charter for Trade Union Rights**

6: Living in a Better Scotland

Job creation, business growth and economic success at home and abroad are aims that Scotland should aspire to given its wealth of talents and its strong resource base. But those underpinning strengths in the Scottish economy must also give rise to the development of social justice, education for life, health and public services which the Scottish people need and deserve. Scots should be encouraged to take advantage of arts and leisure opportunities and to have their lives enriched by such pursuits.

And all these developments must take place in society that is determined to be free of crime and its effects.

Scotland can afford to look after its citizens.

The Scottish National Party is committed to a socially just Scotland - the type of Scotland which the Tories have systematically tried to destroy for 18 years: A Scotland in which poverty is eradicated and those in need are assisted to the maximum degree possible; the Scotland that all Scots want.

Freedom from Poverty

In our society there will always be a need for supporting those who cannot work, either through incapacity or for a variety of short-term reasons. Government must also use the benefits system to assist those who are vulnerable - the very young, the old and those who are incapacitated - and to eliminate the effects of poverty.

An SNP government will increase Child Benefit to £12.50 per week per child and maintain entitlement until a child has left school. Child Benefit is a powerful means of tackling poverty as it is paid directly to the child's principal carer. The annual cost of this measure will be £132 million by year 4 of an independent government.

Benefit will be restored to 16 and 17 year olds immediately, as the Tory removal of such benefits has been a strong contributory factor in the rise of youth homelessness and youth crime. Education and training - with proper financial support - is the best way to assist young people, but they must not be put in the position of suffering poverty and alienation because society will not assist them.

A Pensioner's Package

The SNP is strongly committed to eradicating the scourge of fuel poverty - particularly so as Scotland is an energy rich nation. Our "Pensioners Package" already forms the basis for action of fuel poverty for SNP councils: we will ensure that the entire package is implemented at a national level - a package that will increase the state retirement pension by £3 a week for a single person and £5 a week for married couples as a first step towards achieving parity with the higher European pension levels; introduce a Cold Climate Allowance of £9.20 for all pensioners and others on benefits; remove standing charges from electricity, gas and telecom services for pensioners; and abolish means testing for the residential care of elderly.

These measures will provide real relief from hardship and enhance social justice. In particular, the removal of standing charges provides a much more efficient and targeted way of making privatised utilities contribute to society than a one-off "windfall tax", while the abolition of means testing will remove a major indignity from old people and allow them to enjoy the fruits of their retirement without undue worry or stress.



Kay Ullrich
Health and
Social Policy
Spokesperson

"In an independent Scotland, economic prosperity and social justice will go hand in hand. We will use our wealth to invest in the health service, deliver a Cold Climate Allowance to pensioners and those on benefits, and abolish means testing for the long-term care of the elderly."

6: Living in a Better Scotland

A Real Scottish National Health Service

Social justice also requires a new approach to the Scottish Health Service.

The SNP will first of all establish an independent Health Commission, chaired by the Health Minister, which will consist of representatives of all political parties in the Scottish Parliament along with health professionals and representatives of local health care delivery agencies. Within the context of the health budget set by government, this commission will plan the strategic delivery of health services. Local Health Commissions will undertake a subsidiary role in local planning of health care.

The SNP believe that free health care at the point of need is a fundamental right and in order to provide such care we must remove the distorting distraction of the Tories' internal market in the health service. By removing the tiers of accountants, administrators and middle managers we will abolish the artificial split between purchasers and providers of health care and will introduce an integrated health system which is administered and planned nationally but delivered locally.

This structural change is important - as is providing additional resources and finding a way in which the broad strategic priorities for health can be taken out of the day to day political arena.

We will provide an additional £35 million per annum for the Scottish Health Service which, coupled with savings on bureaucracy (which consumes a staggering 12% of NHS expenditure) will provide a major and immediate boost for healthcare delivery.

The SNP will establish an on going national audit of health care designed to provide creative feedback and raise local and national standards.

Dentistry will be re-integrated into the NHS and we accept the view of the dental profession that capitation fees must be adjusted to take account of Scotland's dental health needs which are greater than those elsewhere in the UK. This and other measures will encourage dentists to return to the Scottish Health Service.

Prescription charges have increased, under this Tory government, from 20p to the current £5.65. The system can be effectively reformed both by allowing patients to pay the real cost of drugs if these are below the prescription charge levels and by spreading the burden of charges more fairly. The SNP will review the issue of charges and exemptions for those with long term mental illness who are not presently allowed exemptions.

Health care in a modern Scotland must be preventative as well as curative. An SNP Government will ban cigarette advertising and increase tobacco tax both to encourage more to give up, or not to start smoking, and to recover a small proportion of the costs of treatment of tobacco related illnesses by the National Health Service.

We will also prioritise the improvement of nutritional standards in Scotland, using best practice both to encourage healthy eating and to protect the nation's health by enforcing high standards in the production and distribution of food.

Care in the community is a laudable aim but it requires support with resources and with an infrastructure that the Tories have constantly eroded. The SNP will ensure that Local Health Commissions review the local delivery of care in the community, allocating resources to it as required.

6: Living in a Better Scotland

The provision of care in the community has a direct bearing on adequate local government funding, and statutory obligations imposed on local government must be backed up with financial provision. So must any need to increase the involvement of voluntary organisations who are key facilitators in the provision of care.

The cost of democratic control of the Health Service through such Commissions will be considerably less than the present “internal market” which lacks both democracy and efficiency.

Enabling the Disabled

As many as one in 10 of the world’s population suffers some form of disability, but society is still reluctant to legislate to ensure full civil rights for disabled people, and to improve the quality of life so that all disabled people can fulfil their potential and contribute to the society of which they are members.

The SNP will introduce measures, in the Bill of Rights and in other legislation, to secure full rights, to enforce standards of building access and to help disabled people obtain and retain employment as they wish and are able.

The SNP will implement its “Charter for the Disabled” to enable valuable members of society who are presently often excluded from the mainstream, but who have much to contribute.

Protecting Scotland’s People

Whilst food safety is not primarily a health issue, until structures, controls and procedures go wrong, there is a clear need now to restore the reputation of the Scottish food industry and to provide a mechanism for public control of food quality.

The SNP has been in the forefront of the campaign for an independent food safety agency, free of the pressure from the producers and able to take a pro-active stance in securing the highest standards.

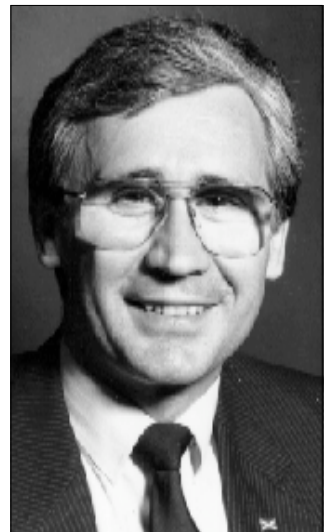
An independent Scottish Food and Consumer Health Agency will have a wide remit: it will supervise public health issues, working through local authorities and through local public health departments; it will regulate food processing and handling and introduce clear controls that will better the European norm; it will consider public nutrition and health issues in their broadest sense and will assist in the process of promoting better eating, recognising that one of the principal barriers to a healthy diet is poverty.

It will also work closely with the producers to instil the best practices and provide a certification of quality that in time will be the passport to domestic and international success for the Scottish food industry.

Freedom from Crime

Freedom from crime is an important freedom for many Scots; and whilst crime levels in Scotland have fallen in recent years many communities are still subject to unacceptable levels of vandalism, burglary and violence.

The SNP has supported initiatives that seek to reduce crime by means of a “zero tolerance” approach: we will encourage such initiatives throughout Scotland and support them with additional resources for Scotland’s police forces. “Zero Tolerance” brings improvement to communities by focusing attention on community crimes such as vandalism, petty burglary and other such anti-social activities. By so doing it increases community confidence and pride. It is an ideal



Andrew Welsh
SNP
Vice President

“An independent Scotland will be a model European democracy, with a written Constitution and Bill of Rights. Proportional representation will ensure that the Parliament represents all of Scotland - and we will have done with unelected Peers in London deciding the laws of our nation.”

6: Living in a Better Scotland

solution for every part of Scotland and particularly for urban areas.

There are many practical steps that can be taken to cut down on petty or organised crime against property. One such scheme, which has been vigorously promoted by the SNP and which has the support of a number of organisations, is one which combats the £1.3 billion used-vehicle fraud that takes place every year. A register of vehicles will be established which will allow purchasers of second hand vehicles to check that their intended purchase is legitimate. The cost added to a purchase will be around £5.00 but the peace of mind afforded will be great.

Much police time is wasted for want of such simple and cost effective solutions: much is also wasted in waiting for court appearances and the court system needs better resourcing. The Procurator Fiscal service needs more lawyers and support staff and a stronger training infrastructure.

The solution to the problem of crime in Scotland does not lie in more prisons and more mandatory sentences: these proposals have been rejected by the judiciary and by most commentators and it is an indictment of government in the last decade that our prison population is at its highest ever level - and still rising.

What is needed is a range of alternatives to prison and a flexible sentencing policy coupled with schemes for education and rehabilitation that actually work. To implement and operate such schemes the justice system must be encouraged to learn from international best practice and the SNP proposes the establishment of a research and development facility within a Scottish University to develop and implement education and rehabilitation schemes.

The basis of community action against crime must lie in the community, and the SNP opposes the establishment of an all Scottish police force, although we endorse the move towards sharing of skills between forces and the establishment of national strategic initiatives where appropriate.

Scotland should never lose sight of the link between poverty, social deprivation and crime. Accordingly, whilst crime must be tackled at source, the creation of a better and fairer society will also have a strong impact on crime levels. An economy that produces more jobs and more meaningful work for the people of Scotland will pay dividends in this area as well.

Drugs and Crime

A major cause of criminal activity lies in the drugs culture that has developed in parts of Scotland. But drug abuse, like crime, is also a symptom of something wrong in our society, that needs to be put right.

Yet there is not one drugs problem, but many. And a variety of tactics are required to deal with them.

What needs to be put right first is the question of demand. If demand for drugs in society is curtailed, then the drug problem will diminish. Tackling demand can vary from better resourced customs and police to more effective rehabilitation programmes in prisons and to drug education in schools. All such measures are supported by the SNP which has been active in the all party campaign "Scotland against Drugs".

Solving Scotland's drug problems also requires the collection of much information about drug use including much better recording of criminal statistics on drug related offences.

6: Living in a Better Scotland

The SNP also supports, and will encourage, local initiatives including Drugs Action Teams

Eradicating the Gun Culture

The whole world was shocked by the Dunblane tragedy; but Scotland's call for action to ban all hand guns and to tighten restrictions on all other weapons was ignored by the Tory government.

The SNP will introduce a total ban on handguns , making Scotland a safer place and taking a major step towards eradicating the "gun culture" which is creeping into our country.

This measure will be accompanied by appropriate compensation for those deprived of their pastime and the SNP will enforce the Cullen recommendations in all other areas of firearms control.

As a nation we must do our utmost to ensure that every step is taken to prevent another Dunblane. These measures, and the more stringent screening of firearm applications along with the establishment of a national register of firearms holders, will be a significant step towards that aim.



**Roseanna
Cunningham**
Justice and
Equality
Spokesperson

"In the fight against crime, the SNP will encourage the extension of "zero tolerance" initiatives throughout Scotland, and will properly resource our over-stretched courts system. A ban on all handguns is supported by the vast majority of Scottish people and politicians, but has been frustrated by the Westminster system. An independent Parliament will deliver."

7: Serving a Better Scotland

Just as crime, social justice and health are priorities for Scotland, so are Education, Housing, Local services and arts and leisure provision. These community services, usually delivered at local level, need to be enhanced and improved if the quality of life in Scotland is to be enhanced and improved.

RESTORING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Labour's so-called "Passion for Education" is a sham when the actual resources that are being offered are examined closely. In contrast the SNP has firmly costed changes that can be made immediately to the Scottish Education system.

Scotland's crisis in Education is the result of under funding; attempts to pin the blame on poor teaching, on the curriculum or on any other factors fail to take account of the constant erosion of morale and physical resources that has taken place in the last 18 years.

An SNP Government will provide the extra resources to immediately employ an additional 700 teachers, and devote new resources to the repair and upgrading of school buildings. Both these actions are priorities, in order that class sizes can be reduced and classes taught in acceptable surroundings.

Local Authorities, as the Education providers, need resourced adequately to undertake their tasks: the SNP in offering additional resources to local authorities across a wide range of fields will ensure that the local authorities also prioritise education and are sensitive to local need; there is no demand for "opting out" in Scotland and consequently the "opting out" legislation will be repealed. However schools will be assisted to control more of their budgets themselves and to involve the school board in financial decision making.

Primary and Secondary schools will be enabled to take advantage of new technology and there will be guaranteed access to the Internet from each school as well as a programme to introduce computers into every classroom with the ultimate aim of all children using a computer terminal every day.

Education is not just about schools: an SNP Government will introduce an entitlement to free nursery education for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish it, and will make certain that such provision is properly funded. The voucher system will be abolished.

At the other end of the educational spectrum an SNP Government will support the Higher Education sector, first of all by replacing the Student Loans system with a return to maintenance grants at the 1990 equivalent, index linked for successive years. Higher Education will have access to the Economic Development and Research Funds earmarked by an SNP Government as well as to the advice and assistance of the Exports Unit. We support the establishment of a Scottish Education and Training Export Group to co-ordinate the overseas marketing of Scottish expertise in this area.

For those who do not go on to Higher Education an SNP Government will improve training and skills development and introduce a Integrated Training and Employment Grant Scheme, providing subsidies to employers taking on new employees in need of training, preferably the unemployed. Training schemes of this nature should not merely rotate the unemployed into temporary positions. We will add £50 million per year to the present youth and adult training budgets presently managed by Scottish Enterprise guaranteeing additional adult and youth training places.

7: Serving a Better Scotland

In keeping with the multi cultural society in which we live education in an independent Scotland will involve learning about the wide range of factors that have created our present society and will look outwards to our European and world partners. Gaelic and Scots have a place to play in this process and will be enhanced by such an approach.

Gaelic medium education is of particular importance to many parents, and an SNP Government will require local authorities to ring fence dedicated funds for Gaelic medium education, as is presently done in Wales for Welsh language education

The SNP is also sensitive to the needs of other communities which are part of the rich tapestry of Scotland. Schools with pupils from Moslem families must offer Islamic studies to such pupils as a matter of course, and the same applies to other communities which wish to take part in Scottish education, but which also wish to retain and develop their distinctive nature. Scottish education will be enriched by such provision.

These policies are all necessary parts of the process of improvement that Scotland needs. There are three final parts which require to be considered: housing, local services and arts and leisure provision.

TACKLING THE HOUSING CRISIS

For many years there has been a deplorable lack of investment in Scotland's housing. The result is a housing crisis with increased levels of homelessness and longer and longer council waiting lists. The Scottish Housing Conditions Survey has shown that too many of our citizens are forced to live in housing that is damp, overcrowded, poorly insulated and often lacking basic amenities. 90,000 Scottish homes are deemed to be below tolerable standard and one third are affected by damp, condensation or mould.

An SNP Government will address this atrocious state of affairs by:

*** Transferring Capital Debt:** 75 percent of local authority housing debt will be transferred to Central Government in the first four years of an independent government, with the remainder being transferred in the following four years. From a public expenditure commitment of £985 million this will release over £1.6 billion for investment over four years to tackle housing problems and housing need as well as other social priorities. This one action should make a substantial start to solving Scotland's housing crisis.

*** Eliminating Homelessness:** Between 1978 and 1994 445,283 households applied to local authorities as "homeless". This is a national disgrace and needs to be attended to as a matter of urgency. So does the situation in which, as Shelter estimate, there are up to 1000 rough sleepers in Scotland on any one night. An SNP Government will strengthen the existing Code of Guidance on Homelessness and ensure that in meeting the demands of the Code no one is left without a home in time of need.

*** Build Homes and Raise Standards** With the money released by the capital debt transfer up to 20,000 socially affordable homes can be built in the first four years, and a further 35,000 homes can be brought back from below tolerable standard. 160,000 homes can be treated for dampness and condensation. By applying higher standards of insulation money spent on upgrading can quickly be recouped in terms of energy expenditure.



Cllr Janet Law
Education
Spokesperson

"Scotland has the oldest education system in the world, and we need to re-equip it for the challenges of the twenty-first century. We need to build on our strengths in Scotland - not make the mistakes that have afflicted education south of the Border. The SNP will invest in more teachers, and invest to repair crumbling school buildings."

7: Serving a Better Scotland



Paul Scott
SNP
Vice President

“Scotland is experience a renaissance in the arts, which the SNP will build on. We will introduce incentives to encourage the developing film industry in Scotland, and reform broadcasting to encourage both diversity and greater opportunities for Scottish-based programme makers. The UK National Lottery will be replaced by a “Scot-Lot”.

Reform Housing Tenure and the “Right to Buy” Some 300,000 houses have been bought under the Tory “right to buy” legislation, usually at a discounted price. This has left a disproportionate number of council houses in poor condition as the best of the stock has been purchased. It would be illogical to increase investment in socially affordable housing if it was then simply to be sold at a discount. New or improved houses coming on stream from the building and renovation programme will be protected from the right to buy at a discounted price.

Those with existing tenancy agreements will however retain the right within the homes they presently occupy. A right to buy at full market value will continue for all tenants.

An SNP Government will replace Scottish Homes with a new accountable housing agency whose remit will be to deal with Scotland’s housing problems, improve Scotland’s housing stock and provide affordable housing. Housing Associations and other bodies have a valuable role to play in these objectives and must be involved in policy formulation and in delivery.

The SNP is the only party which has costed a full programme of action to tackle Scotland’s housing crisis. Such a programme will not only begin to eliminate homelessness, it will also create many new jobs and provide a boost for the Scottish economy. It will reduce housing waiting lists and move Scotland towards the provision of a home for all.

Making Local Government work

Those living in a better Scotland have a right to expect better local services. An SNP Government, having protected the autonomy of Local Government in a written Constitution, will expect local authorities to ensure that local services are efficient, effective and well targeted. As Scottish local authorities will be elected by proportional representation, the monolithic and unresponsive one party states that Labour has created in many parts of Scotland will be consigned to the past.

Local Government will have restored to it many of the powers lost to unelected quangos and there will be a review of the strategy and organisation of local economic development, with the aim of restoring local democratic control. Local Government finance will be reformed during the first term of an independent Scottish government and the introduction of local income tax in a subsequent term will remove the anomalies that presently bedevil local funding. Further adjustments to the support mechanisms for rural and island authorities would even out the support of local government by central government.

An SNP Government would abolish the Water Quangos and return water and sewerage to democratic control.

The arts and leisure

Finally, arts and leisure provision are vital to the well being of society. An SNP Government will encourage a programme of ‘sport for all’ and will back that policy up by the provision of affordable community sports facilities managed by local authorities. There will be ministerial responsibility for sports development and in addition to community participation it will be a policy aim to encourage international competitiveness and success.

Scotland’s cultural life is of enormous importance and must be underpinned by an effective Scottish broadcasting system and a raft of public support that opens

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access to all.

An SNP Government will reform Scottish Broadcasting , building on the tradition of excellence that exists but ensuring that Scottish programme making and Scottish concerns are at the heart of an internationally forward looking service. We will retain a licence fee to support a public sector broadcaster (the Scottish Broadcasting Corporation) but would encourage a diversity of commercial broadcasting on television and radio including at least one Scottish digital multiplex for a commercial service in the short term. Recognising that the age of effective protectionist broadcasting regulation is over, we would seek to ensure that the diversity of broadcasting channels observe the legal requirements of taste and decency while offering a wide range of services, and opportunities for Scottish based programme makers. Such services must include provision in Gaelic and Scots, but such provision must be accessible to wider audiences also.

The SNP wishes to see a strong Scottish media production industry, which also means a strong Scottish film production sector. The introduction of tax incentives for production along the Irish model has been closely examined by the SNP in recent years, as has experience from elsewhere. An SNP government will introduce incentives for production and, through a new "Scottish Screen" (formed as a federation of film supporting, marketing and production orientated bodies) will lay the basis for a renaissance in script and project development, commercial and non commercial production, marketing, distribution, exhibition and export of film.

The work of the Scottish Arts Council requires adequate Government support but we wish to see the refocussing of the priorities of the Arts Council to support people and traditional arts as well as long established institutions. A "Scottish Academy" will be established, encouraging excellence and bringing forward new talent in the arts.

Gaelic and Scots must be given equal status with English, both legally and in broadcasting and the arts.

A Scottish Lottery would be established (under the title "Scot-Lot") with a more accountable system of distributing funds. The jackpot payouts would be smaller but the chances of winning would be considerably higher. Scratch cards would be banned, given the problems of addiction and social disruption they cause.

"Scot-Lot" resources would be available for a wide range of projects, but would not replace government funding for social services. They could be used for health research in addition to sports, charitable and arts purposes.

These many changes to Scottish life would make life in an independent Scotland a better experience for many of our fellow citizens. The fact that all these proposals have been costed and can be afforded by an independent Scotland should indicate to all Scottish voters that our constitutional choice is clear and can be made in confidence.



Maureen Watt
Housing and
Local Government
Spokesperson

"With Independence, the SNP will entrench the rights of local government in a written Constitution - bringing about a genuine partnership between local and central government. The water quangos will be abolished, and water services returned to local democratic control. Extra resources will be generated for housing by transferring councils' housing capital debt to central government."

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A better Scotland in which all our citizens can live and work is the ambition and the intention of the Scottish National Party.

But the benefits of such a Scotland have to reach to every part of our country and in so doing any political party has to address other issues and concerns that arise - issues of traditional industries, special local concerns, the environment and the needs of Scotland's island and rural communities.

Scotland's land

Land is the most valuable resource of a nation: but Scotland's system of land ownership and tenure is amongst the most archaic in the western world.

The SNP has accepted the proposals of the Independent Land Commission⁷ to abolish feudal tenure. The system of feudal overlords has been widely abused and has led to depopulation, massive profits for individuals who care nothing for the land and the people and insecurity for those who thought they had a title to their homes. It has no place in a modern country, and during the period of its abolition we will consult widely, at home and abroad, to create a modern and fair system of land holding that matches the best to be found anywhere.

We will establish a standing Scottish Land Commission to oversee the abolition of the old and the introduction of the new. Its membership will be representative of, and nominated by, local communities, land use interests, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Local Government representatives.

There are also interim and urgent measures that can be taken to outlaw abuse of the feudal system prior to a complete change in the law. One such measure requires only the amendment of two century old Acts of Parliament to prevent ownership of local authority education buildings reverting to those who have speculatively purchased feudal superiorities.

We will also transfer the powers of the Crown Estate Commissioners and other private owners of the sea shore and inshore seabed to local councils and local councils will be empowered to promote balanced land use and local access.

We will also establish an all Scotland Land Register which will give open access to all enquirers and banish forever the mystery of land ownership behind which many have hidden in recent years, to the detriment of local communities.

Healing and building Scotland's Agriculture

Scotland's farmers have been hard hit in recent years by successive Tory failures and by a growing neglect of the importance of the agricultural sector. Scotland, as a sparsely populated country, needs a strong agricultural base and that base can contribute greatly to Scottish exports and to the international reputation of our nation. The agricultural sector already contributes 3% of GDP.

The Scottish farming community will be best represented by a seat at the top table in Europe for the country in which they live and by an independent Scottish government: our farmers and farming communities are presently of minor concern to any UK government, as the BSE crisis has shown. The SNP promoted a Scottish solution to the EU ban from day one, but the British government has refused to countenance such relief for Scottish beef farmers and the Scottish beef industry, even when invited to by the European Union.

A tracability scheme can be introduced into the Scottish herd within a matter of months, giving Scottish beef producers the platform they need for re-entry.

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Ending the ban is the first priority; then we must work to restore our reputation in Europe. No independent Scottish government would ever have allowed BSE to gain such a foothold and our regulatory and animal health regime must become the best in the world again. The Independent Scottish Food Agency will be a partner of the agricultural sector in restoring the domestic and international trade and will also work with producers to instil and enforce the best practices in the world.

Agricultural policy is not, of course, based only on what has gone wrong in the past: Scottish agriculture has tremendous strengths, rooted in the skills and experience of those who passionately care for the land and for the future of their businesses. We need to develop a sustainable agricultural sector in Scotland. We need to reform the Common Agricultural Policy to ensure that support goes to those working the land as opposed simply to products and sectors. We need to develop new techniques, innovate in husbandry and production and widen the access to modern machinery, by supporting machinery rings.

We must also promote sensitive rural diversification (which will be paid for out of a rural development fund amounting to some £10 million per year) and sectors of the industry such as horticulture so that, with fair competition within the EU, we can widen the scope of Scottish agriculture and broaden the financial rewards.

A priority will be to assist Scottish producers to have more and better access to the wholesale market and to retail outlets.

The SNP's commitment to Scottish agriculture is firm and clear. Scottish farmers, producers and all those who work in ancillary industries, can only have their priorities met by an independent Scottish government which places their concerns firmly on the European and domestic agendas.

Scotland's Forests

Forestry is also a considerable national resource, and one which can be better used for the benefit of all.

The SNP will promote the development of a sustainable Forest Industry in Scotland by establishing a National Forest Enterprise Board (replacing the Forestry Commission) to undertake the commercial management and development of Scotland's national forests in accordance with the land use strategy agreed by the Scottish Land Commission. The key priority will be to double forest and woodland cover within 25 years, with a particular emphasis on native woodland. This will not only have economic benefits but will also assist the environment by increasing the absorption of carbon dioxide.

In parallel with this development, the NFEB will work with the private sector to stimulate wood using industries , which deepened upon sustainable production from native tree species.

Private forest ownership can be of great benefit but tax incentives for such ownership must be targeted towards those who intend to build forestry and the forest industries, not just shelter their money for a while.

The SNP is also committed to greater recreational use of forests, and the Land Commission, in enabling better public land access, will be mindful of the need to secure sensible forest access as well.

Crofting

Crofter and tenant farmers have a role to play in forest development, treating



Rob Gibson
Rural Affairs
Spokesperson

“The BSE crisis shows that Scottish agriculture suffers from not having a direct voice in Europe, and Independence will end this dismal and damaging state of affairs. A Scottish government will also make better use of our native forestry resources, and support crofting. Scotland's system of land ownership and tenure is among the most archaic in the Western world, and abolishing the feudal system will be a priority.”

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Fiona Hyslop
Environment
Spokesperson

“The SNP’s concern is to ensure a positive relationship between faster growth and sustainable development, and all policies will be subject to an environmental impact assessment. The SNP will support research and development initiatives in the field of clean technology and engineering, renewable energy, and general waste reprocessing and management.”

(where holdings allow) timber as a common crop.

But this will be suitable for a small minority of crofters only. The SNP wishes to see the Crofters Commission transformed into a National Crofting Development Agency with the power to assist crofting in the Highlands and Islands and small land tenure elsewhere.

The great strength of crofting is its ability to keep populations on the land and to prevent consequent depopulation of vital areas. Crofting is a way of life, but rarely a principal occupation.

Accordingly assisting crofters to purchase crofting estates should be done as part of an overall development scheme for those areas, where new employment can be provided in new enterprises as well as enhanced crofting opportunities.

The crofting estates that currently belong to the Crown should be returned to the people who live on them, but the opportunity to develop vibrant communities on crofting estates should not apply only to those who, by accident of tenure, are tenants of the Crown. Private ownership should also be subject to regulation for purchase under clear conditions.

Scotland’s Fishing Industry

All the evidence in the history of the Common Fisheries Policy points to the harsh reality that the UK has been happy, more often than not, to trade off fishing interests for other goals in European policy. Scottish fishermen have paid the price for that UK hypocrisy.

An SNP Government would use its improved influence as a full Member State in negotiations for a new European fisheries policy to ensure that the founding principles of the original CFP, in particular relative stability, are permanent components of future fisheries agreements.

The processing sector, which provides vital employment and has good opportunities for expansion, must be supported particularly in an environment where rival sectors, for example on the Humber, are being allocated significant public resources. The Scottish Exports Unit will be of particular help to this sector.

The fundamental objective of the SNP fisheries policy is to create a well managed and properly conserved fishery.

The SNP proposes six fundamental reforms which would assist the Scottish fishing industry:

- * A new framework whereby coastal states with the greatest historic interests in specific fisheries would be able to take the key control and management decisions relating to the fisheries in the waters off their coasts in Regional Fisheries Management Councils.
- * New measures for the processing sector seeking to promote continuity, security and stability of supplies, backed by assistance towards infrastructure costs, training packages and maximising the potential to add value to fisheries products.
- * A rigorous but fair policing regime enforceable equally in all EU waters.
- * Greater emphasis on technical measures to conserve fish stocks.
- * Improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of research.
- * Priority to areas with a high degree of fishing dependence, population sparsity and peripherality to be built in to fisheries policy.

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The SNP has allocated an additional £10 million per annum within the Independence Budget to achieve the following strategic objectives:

- * Levering the maximum benefit of EU financial assistance to coastal regions by committing an extra £5 million from government resources to structural support and socio-economic measures.
- * Promoting fisheries products and marketing initiatives, stressing the health value of fish with an additional £800,000 spend co-ordinated by a new processing task force.
- * An additional £1.6 million for harbour and infrastructure improvements which will leverage additional European funds.
- * Improving the effectiveness of research.

The Environment

Scotland's international reputation is as a clean nation, rich in land and water. But in reality Scotland is now threatened by a number of environmental hazards.

We must ensure that Scotland's environment is restored and our people given back a confidence in their surroundings. We must also put in place the best environmental standards, so that we cease to heedlessly waste resources, and instead contribute to the betterment of our planet and those with whom we share it.

The SNP will retain the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and will ensure that it is independent of the Executive and responsible to the Scottish Parliament.

Its expanded task will be to

- * Establish stricter controls on pollution of the atmosphere, sea, inland waters and land.
- * Control, develop and promote the means of environmental rehabilitation
- * Establish codes of practice for industry
- * Ensure that there is full public consultation on, and enquiry into, the environmental impact of major projects and government policies.

An SNP Government will also promote recycling, and contribute to global environmental protection. As part of the overall strategy of government an SNP Government will establish and enshrine National Environmental Targets.

An opportunity for Dounreay

It goes without saying that no SNP Government would permit Nuclear Reprocessing to take place in Scotland. Nuclear reprocessing at Dounreay would end immediately an SNP Government was elected and arrangements would be made for all nuclear material originating furth of Scotland to be returned to their country of origin. Materials originating in Scotland will require to be stored in Scotland for as long as environmentally required.

However, rather than this determination being seen as a threat to the people of Dounreay, it should be seen as a major opportunity. Employment in clean up, storage and decommissioning will be a long term prospect for many people; many others will be employed in a new renewable energy research and development centre which will be established at Dounreay.

An energy rich nation

The vital resource of the 20th century has been energy. And in the 21st century



Anne Lorne Gillies
Transport and Telecommunications Spokesperson

“Scotland needs an integrated transport network which will give good access to all parts of the country, speed the delivery of goods and services, and bring the nation closer together. Priorities for the SNP are bringing Railtrack back into public ownership, ending the Skye Bridge tolls, and abolishing the Airport Tax in the Highlands & Islands.”

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David McCarthy
Marine Resources
Spokesperson

“Marine resources have long been one of Scotland’s key assets, and provide the life-blood for many communities. Support will be provided for the regeneration of the fishing fleet. The promotion of Scottish fisheries products will be enhanced, and resources provided for harbour and infrastructure modernisation.”

energy self sufficiency, still more the ability to export energy or energy sources, will remain of great importance to any nation.

Scotland is an energy rich nation. That fact alone should give us the confidence to face the future in the normal state of independence.

But , as part of the bankrupt and out of date Union, we do not use our energy wealth wisely. In fact our wealth is being squandered by Westminster.

An Independent Scotland will secure a division of North Sea oil assets based upon the latitude of 55° 50’ north or the international legal principle of equidistance.

The Continental Shelf (Jurisdictional) Order already provides such a division, and this order dating from 1968 presently places operations in either an “English” sector (governed by English Law) or a “Scottish” sector (governed by Scottish Law). This division has been operated by successive Labour and Tory Governments and places 90% north sea output under “Scottish” control , a percentage that is growing as the exploitable reserves move north.

All existing obligations to oil and gas operators will be honoured, and the SNP envisages no substantive change in the taxation regime so that there can be a clear, stable and continuing climate for the oil industry.

The policy of an SNP government will be to secure a sustainable and long term oil industry: even present estimates indicate that there is as much oil still to be extracted as has already been extracted, and an SNP government will encourage exploration to increase known reserves and to increase recoverability from existing fields.

An SNP Government will seek to add value to Scotland’s energy resources , for example by ending the discriminatory pricing policies which mean that landing charges from Scottish gas fields can be anything up to 17 times those south of the border, a situation which has led to gas from the North Sea by-passing Scotland: the “Great Gas Robbery”.

Failure to achieve a satisfactory resolution of this problem will result in an SNP government examining ways in which the gas network, instead of being owned by a single private company could be jointly owned by all companies with an interest in Scottish gas production and supply, with a guiding golden share held for the public good.

In addition, development of petro-chemical activity that can build on Scottish land fall of Scottish resources will be encouraged.

Whilst the Scottish coal industry has been decimated in recent years, coal still has a part to play in a balanced energy policy. Whilst the SNP wishes to see tighter controls on open cast mining, and a clearer environmental evaluation of each proposed project, deep mining also needs to be re-examined with a view to accessing rich seams that have been abandoned too early and without reference to modern technology.

The SNP is resolutely opposed to Nuclear Power Generation: at present we have neither the ability to make it totally safe, nor the knowledge to be completely certain about long term effects, and long term problems.

An SNP government will introduce a programme to phase out nuclear generation in Scotland. The length of this phased programme will be planned to take account of new energy sources coming on stream, and on the safe methods of removing nuclear generation from our energy mix. There are a number of sources of power

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in Scotland that are cheaper as well as more environmentally acceptable than Nuclear power and others are developing.

To replace nuclear generation, Scotland requires to develop alternative energy sources that are renewable and sustainable. The SNP Budget contains an allocation of funding for this task, and also funding for schemes of energy conservation, which can reduce our demand significantly by reducing heating bills.

Scotland on the move

Scotland needs an integrated transport network, that gives good access to all parts of the country, speeds goods and services, and brings the nation closer together.

There remains a need for some improvements to the road network, but we must also be mindful of the need to reduce overall car and lorry usage in the years ahead, particularly in our towns and cities. The solution to reduced car usage in particular lies in better public transport, and the SNP will invest in rail services, first of all by returning the Scottish assets of Railtrack into public ownership and then by modernising and electrifying the East Coast Line, commuter routes and branch lines.

Bus and Coach services are also vital and must be integrated with rail services. Effective Bus and Coach transport can assist greatly in easing road congestion and regulation of bus operators should recognise the need to guide service development and delivery to achieve that end as well as to ensure the maintenance of vital links.

The SNP regards the tolls presently levied by the Skye Bridge as an unacceptable imposition on the people of Skye and as a great disincentive to the creation and preservation of employment. The SNP will, in the immediate term, replace the present tolls with "shadow tolls" and will take the bridge into public ownership within the first four years of an SNP government. The SNP will also move towards the removal of all tolls on Scottish bridges, and will not introduce tolls on any new or existing bridges or roads.

Ferries are vital to Scotland's communications infrastructure and the national Ferry company, Caledonian MacBrayne will be resourced to operate effective, economical services within Scottish waters and will be allowed to compete for services from Scotland, including services from a new East of Scotland ferry port.

The SNP will abolish the Air Passenger Duty for the Highlands and Islands, as it unfairly discriminates against Scotland's most remote communities and will modify it for other areas to reflect the cost of the fare rather than imposing a flat rate which works against much needed low cost air transport. In keeping with the need to encourage enterprise and development, we will remove unreasonable restrictions on international freight (the so called "fifth freedom") and bearing in mind Scotland's crucial geographical place for Air Traffic Control we will co-operate with our European partners on developing a pan national approach to air space regulation, whilst developing and modernising our Oceanic Air Traffic Control centre.

Scotland needs more direct air links with the world, and we will work with private operators to make these sustainable, as well as assisting Scottish airports to provide high quality services easily accessible to passengers.

Developing the Telecommunications Network

A final area of opportunity for all of Scotland is the challenge of the global



Nicola Sturgeon
Energy
Spokesperson

"Scotland is one of the most energy rich nations in Europe, and yet many of our people suffer from fuel poverty. With Independence, we will develop our sustainable energy sources, and phase out nuclear power. VAT on fuel will be cut from 8 to 5 per cent."

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Telecommunications can not only connect parts of Scotland that would otherwise be remote, but it can and will also open Scotland up to the world, and the world to Scotland.

An SNP Government will strengthen regulation of monopoly suppliers in the Telecommunications Market whilst facilitating greater competition and embracing the drive towards common European and world standards.

The SNP will support communications developments in rural areas, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, and assist the University of the Highlands and Islands in establishing a world lead in distance learning by the Internet and other means.

Telecrofing and Telecommuting have a much to offer a country like Scotland and an SNP Government will explore tax incentives for individuals and businesses taking this route. Such patterns of working reduce demand on city transport and facilities and should be encouraged.

However, whatever policies an SNP Government follows it will not impact upon use of the Internet and global communications unless it also takes a strongly pro-active stance in encouraging domestic, educational and business access to , and use of ,the information super highway.

The 21st century will be the century of information - information as a resource and as an empowering tool. Scots have spent too long following trends, rather than setting them, and an SNP Government will set as a policy objective the commercial support of the Internet so that Scottish companies can access, present themselves through, and provide service on the net and so that individuals and schools can integrate the world's knowledge base in their own experience, and contribute to it.

The rate of involvement in, and access to, the Internet should be regulated by commerce and competition, but the Government has a role in supporting Scottish endeavours in this field, and enabling educational use.

Scotland as a technology manufacturing base can gain a great deal by seeking always to be part of the cutting edge of technology, and this attitude to the Internet, allied with the encouragement of software manufacture and hardware assembly as core Scottish industries, will be assessed at regular intervals so that Government strategy can lead Scotland's modern potential instead of dragging it down as is the case now.

In keeping with an open and positive philosophy on net use and access, no new regulations on censorship or control will be introduced, but support will be given to a "ratings system" to prevent unwitting access . However Scots Law will require to develop means of combating computer fraud and existing law needs to be examined to see if its scope can deal with abuse of individuals by computer means.

9: Scotland in Europe and the World

Professor Christopher Harvie once called Scotland “The invisible nation of Europe”. It is time for Scotland to become visible again and to resume a place in the world.

The European Union

An SNP Government would wish to make certain that Scotland’s traditional openness to Europe and the World again coloured all our international relations. With a secure independent Parliament at home, the benefits of international co-operation and full and equal membership of international organisations would greatly strengthen Scotland’s ability to defend and promote its interests in a world that shrinks each day.

Scotland will be a full member of the European Union, participating fully in the institutions of the Union. As a small independent country Scotland can have considerable influence in a Europe which is increasingly dominated by small member states.

We will have full voting power in the European Council and the Council of Ministers. These representatives would be in a position to advocate on Scotland’s behalf with the right of veto over any decisions affecting Scotland’s vital national interests. This is a far cry from the present powerlessness we endure, and some considerable distance from the still powerless observer status that Labour proposes under its devolution plans.

An SNP Government will use our influence and voting power to gain the maximum benefits for Scottish industry and the Scottish people. Our priority would be to enter into the negotiations on the new Common Fisheries Policy to get a better deal for Scotland’s fishing industry and to re-orientate the Common Agricultural Policy towards those who work the land.

We will ensure that rural and urban areas of Scotland receive maximum help from the appropriate EU funds.

Scotland’s representation in the European Parliament would double on Independence and the SNP will support the introduction of a Europe wide voting system for this Parliament to strengthen democracy. In the interim we will introduce a proportional system for the first elections after independence. We support extending the Parliament’s powers to include the proper scrutiny of the Council and the Commission.

An Independent Scottish Parliament will elect Scotland’s Commissioner and of course Scotland would take its turn at the European Presidency, bringing substantial benefits to the nation.

Diplomatic Links

Scotland will require a cost effective, efficient and modern diplomatic presence in some of the world’s capitals. Most small nations do not attempt to emulate the imperial pretensions of the United Kingdom, but instead target their diplomatic effort where it will do most good.

Scotland’s embassies and consulates will exist to promote Scottish trade and industry, look after Scottish citizens and represent the best of Scotland to the world.

We already pay our share of the UK diplomatic budget, but receive little in return. An Independent Scotland would get a much better return for this necessary



Dr Allan Macartney MEP
Europe and
External Affairs
Spokesperson

“Scotland needs a direct voice in the European Union, so that we can protect and promote our national interests at the top table - where the real decisions are taken - instead of being left on the sidelines. In the wider world, we have a responsibility to meet the UN’s guideline of 0.7 per cent of GDP devoted to overseas aid, and the SNP will honour this.”

9: Scotland in Europe and the World

expenditure.

International Institutions

Independence means joining in, not staying separate. The real separatists are those who have put us in our present condition, for they do not allow us to take a full part in anything.

Scotland will be a full member of the Commonwealth and will use its membership both to promote international co-operation and to market its expertise, particularly in the educational field where Scottish Universities and Colleges already have a good reputation.

Scotland will be a member of the Council of Europe which unites almost all nations on the continent. The Council is best known for its offshoot, the European Court of Human Rights, and an independent Scotland will fully support the Council and the Court and seek to assist in making its judgements and deliberations effective.

Scotland will be a member of the United Nations. The Scottish UN Mission would be one of the two most important Scottish diplomatic postings (the other being the Scottish Permanent Representative to the EU) and Scotland in membership of the UN will support peacekeeping, the development of aid, cultural and educational programmes and - unlike many members - pay its dues while working for necessary reforms.

Finally Scotland will seek to assist in the establishment of an Association of States of the British Isles which will include England, Wales and Ireland. This grouping will work together on problems and possibilities that exist in our area and which can be helped by joint action.

Defending Scotland

No part of the UK has played such a central role in the defence of the realm as Scotland. Its military and naval traditions are well known, and the professionalism of its service men and women will be an enormous asset to an independent state.

At the date of independence all serving service personnel from Scotland will be given the opportunity to transfer to the Scottish Defence Forces. The same guarantee will apply to all MOD personnel serving in Scotland.

Conscription is neither necessary, desirable nor anticipated. Indeed, as modern defence rejects conscription and as it is more costly in many ways, conscription would be a backward looking cul de sac.

Because of Scotland's geographic position, vital assets and international perspective, a modern, efficient and appropriate defence structure can be established that will be professional, well resourced and well targeted to its tasks.

* The **Scottish Army** will require infantry battalions, a commando battalion, an armoured regiment, and the requisite combat support and combat supply service units. Stationed at existing barracks the Army will require 9000 regulars, 16000 regular reservists, 7000 national reserves and 2000 MOD civilians. Traditional Scottish regiments will be restored wherever possible.

* The **Scottish Navy** will require both surface and submarine craft based at Faslane and Rosyth with a berthing base at Lerwick. It will have 5000 regulars, 2000 regular reserves and 600 national reserves as well as 5000 MoD personnel.

* The **Scottish Air Force** will have both fixed wing and helicopter capability.

9: Scotland in Europe and the World

The main bases will be Leuchars, Kinloss, and Lossiemouth. There will be 6000 regulars , 3650 regular reservists, 400 national reserves and 2850 MoD civilians.

The Scottish Defence Forces will prioritise joint services training, and support and command structures will be developed to avoid needless and costly duplication of effort. A culture of inter service co-operation will be central to the Force's philosophy.

The traditions of Scottish units, built up over many years, will be fostered and maintained in the Defence Forces.

An Independent Scotland will contribute to, and benefit from, international co-operation especially in peace keeping, training, and conflict resolution. In addition to the SNP's support for an EU Common Security and Defence Policy we would participate in the Western European Union, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the North Atlantic Co-operation Council and the Partnership for Peace.

A Peacekeeping college will be established in Scotland to instruct SDF and foreign personnel in the theory and practice of peace keeping and seek to place Scotland in the forefront of international peacekeeping efforts.

The SNP have a long standing objection to nuclear weapons. We will negotiate a phased but complete withdrawal of Trident from the Clyde and invest our savings from this costly , deadly and unnecessary nuclear deterrent in conventional defence as well as in other priorities including health and education.

An independent Scotland will inherit a treaty obligation to NATO. However our opposition to nuclear defence will make our continued participation in nuclear alliances difficult. We therefore propose to negotiate a phased withdrawal from NATO but will retain military co-operation with NATO nations as a result of our other proposed international involvements already mentioned above.

Defence Industries in Scotland will be free to carry on their businesses in co-operation with firms outside Scotland. Their end user certifications will be subject to stringent scrutiny, but at the same time Scottish firms will have priority in tendering for SDF contracts within the constraints of EU legislation. Refit of the SDF navy will take place at Rosyth, and the rolling programme of equipment replacement should enhance the position of Scottish defence contractors who will, at last, have a national force to attend to without being totally dependent on the lottery of UK defence procurement procedures run from distant and often deaf Whitehall.

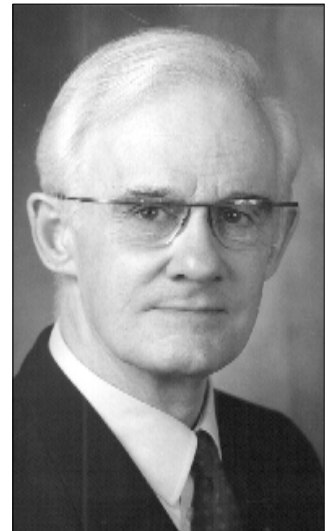
The SNP will also promote Defence Diversification , with funding already allocated in the SNP Budget. The highly skilled Scottish defence manufacturing companies, and their workers, will have a brighter future both in supplying the SDF and in being encouraged and assisted to expand their abilities and markets.

Scotland helping the world.

It has been, and remains, a matter of shame that the UK, one of the richer nations of the world, is so miserly when it comes to international aid.

The UK presently falls far short of the agreed international target of 0.7% of GDP to be spent on international aid. Indeed further recent cuts have taken the UK's GDP share to below 0.3%.

The SNP has budgeted for a steady growth from this low point (which we shall inherit), with the aim of reaching 0.7% in six years. This period will allow the



Colin Campbell
Defence
Spokesperson

“An independent Scotland will benefit from strong conventional forces, and will have no place for expensive and useless Trident nuclear weapons. Like other small nations, we will participate in European defence structures, and invest in defence diversification.”

9: Scotland in Europe and the World



Kenny MacAskill
SNP National
Treasurer

“Only the SNP stand up for the mainstream Scottish values of enterprise and compassion - and that is reflected throughout this manifesto document. We are the only real Scottish party standing in this election. We don't take our orders from London. We put Scotland first - every time.”

development of the necessary infrastructure, both governmental and voluntary, to meet the challenge of overseas aid and relief work.

Small countries in Europe lead the way in aid, relief and international assistance. Sweden, Norway and Denmark are good examples of different models that work well. Scotland can be amongst them and with independence it will be.

10: Paying for Scotland's Future

This manifesto has laid out the main proposals of the SNP for the creation of an independent nation once again and the sensitive, compassionate and forward looking governance of that nation which the SNP believe can be delivered.

But plans would be worthless without the resources to pay for them. And because the SNP aspire to govern Scotland, we also plan in detail for our country.

That is why we publish with this manifesto a fully costed budget for the first four years of independence.

That budget takes account of the riches of Scotland and of the extra resources we can generate by a new approach to business and individual taxation. It lays out those areas in which we can re-order spending, switching resources from needless projects like Trident, to needed projects like new schools and hospitals.

Whilst the accompanying document explains the budget measures in detail, the chart opposite gives the basic financial information and answers the questions:

Where is the money coming from?

and

Where is the money going?

It also gives that strong affirmation that Alex Salmond used in his introduction.

For it says

YES WE CAN!

10: Paying for Scotland's Future

Estimated Cost / Yield - £million

	Year 1 1997/8	Year 2 1998/9	Year 3 1999/00	Year 4 2000/01	Total
Additional Expenditure Measures					
FAIR TAXATION					
Lower 20p rate of income tax to 15p	100.0	210.0	280.0	350.0	940.0
Abolish ceiling on employees NICs	-280.0	-280.0	-280.0	-280.0	-1120.0
Expand basic rate ceiling by 15% from £26,100 to £30,015	60.0	120.0	120.0	120.0	420.0
Reduce Spirits Duty (10%) taking 62p off 70cl bottle	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Increase tobacco duties by 15% adding 34p per pack	-130.0	-130.0	-130.0	-130.0	-520.0
Cut VAT on fuel from 8% to 5%	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	160.0
Fair Taxation Sub-Total	-200.0	-30.0	40.0	110.0	-80.0
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT MEASURES					
Enterprise Development	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	80.0
Scottish Exports Unit	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	60.0
Railtrack into public ownership	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
Defence Diversification Fund	20.0	20.0	15.0	15.0	70.0
Increase in Tourism Marketing Budget	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Transfer 75% Housing Debt - extra revenue to Local Councils	100.0	195.0	295.0	395.0	985.0
Transport Projects	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	160.0
Rural Development	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Marine Resources Development	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Sustainable Development Fund	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Research and Development Funding	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	120.0
Enterprise Development Sub-Total	265.0	360.0	455.0	655.0	1735.0
COMPETITIVE BUSINESS TAXATION					
Reduce main rate Corporation Tax by 10%(3p) to 30p	30.0	90.0	150.0	210.0	480.0
Reduce Small Coys Rate Corporation tax by 23% (5p) to 18p	12.5	25.0	37.5	50.0	125.0
Abolish Class IV NICs (tax on self-employed)	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	200.0
Banded Business Rates with targetted benefits	20.0	40.0	60.0	80.0	200.0
Business Tax Sub-Total	112.5	205.0	297.5	390.0	1005.0
EDUCATION AND TRAINING					
Nursery place for all 3 and 4 year olds	18.0	37.0	55.0	75.0	185.0
Expanded Childcare	10.0	15.0	20.0	25.0	70.0
Primary and Secondary Education	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	80.0
Education capital spending	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	200.0
National Apprenticeship Scheme and Adult Training	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	200.0
Student grants restored to 1990 levels in real terms	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	200.0
Student benefit entitlement restored	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	80.0
Education and Training Sub Total	218.0	242.0	265.0	290.0	1015.0
SOCIAL JUSTICE MEASURES					
Child Benefit up to a flat rate of £12.50 per week	33.0	66.0	99.0	132.0	330.0
Benefit protection restored for 16/17 year olds	22.0	18.0	16.0	12.0	68.0
Better retirement pensions (£3 and £5 increase per week)	110.0	110.0	110.0	110.0	440.0
Cold Climate Allowance	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0	640.0
Abolition of means testing on residential care for the elderly	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0	180.0
Additional Health Spending	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	140.0
Crime and Justice measures	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	40.0
Social Justice Sub-Total	415.0	444.0	475.0	504.0	1838.0
OVERSEAS AID (meet UN target in 6 years)	48.0	96.0	144.0	192.0	480.0
BALANCE OF ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE MEASURES	858.5	1317.0	1676.5	2141.0	5993.0
Additional Income Measures					
Relative fiscal surplus with the UK	-1100.0	-1800.0	-2400.0	-5400.0	-10700.0
Modelled savings from employment growth	-95.0	-280.0	-435.0	-520.0	-1330.0
Modelled increase in corporation tax revenues from growth	0.0	-10.0	-45.0	-80.0	-135.0
Savings from changes in defence programme	-55.0	-55.0	-55.0	-55.0	-220.0
Interest Savings from National Debt reduction	0.0	-21.2	-65.2	-135.0	-221.5
TOTAL ADDITIONAL INCOME	-1250.0	-2166.2	-3000.2	-6190.0	-12606.5
Final Balance (Debt Repayment)	-391.5	-849.2	-1323.7	-4049.0	-6613.5

Using your vote

On the 1st of May you will have the opportunity of using your vote to choose Scotland's future.

The SNP has laid out in this manifesto its plans and proposals, and - alone amongst the political parties - has clearly costed them .

Also alone amongst the political parties, the Scottish National Party is offering a programme made for Scotland in Scotland: a programme that uses Scottish resources and Scottish principles to solve Scottish problems.

Independence is the normal status for nations. More than half of the nations of the world are smaller than Scotland, and most are much poorer.

Yet they have chosen independence, and not one would wish to give it up.

We can do so too - together.

We can answer the questions about our future with the confident statement

-

"YES WE CAN"

Yes We Can be free: **Yes We Can** be independent: **Yes We Can** pay our way in the world.

And yes, we must!

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