



Scottish Labour's plan for town centres

Scotland is an amazing country with huge potential, but after 20 years of SNP government too many people see their town centres being hollowed out and feel that our country is being held back.

It's time for change.

Scottish Labour has a plan to fix the mess, get the basics right and build a better future for all our towns and high streets.

Kickstarting the economy

Scottish Labour will create real opportunities for workers and business in partnership with industry by:

- ✔ **Abolishing the unfair business rates system**, replacing it with a new local business levy which is designed with business, and which incentivises local investment, supports thriving town centres, tackles empty properties, and encourages entrepreneurship.
- ✔ **Supporting vibrant high streets and town centres**, ensuring online retailers and large distribution warehouses pay their fair share, and appointing a Chief Assessor so there is true accountability over valuations.
- ✔ **Pushing power out of Holyrood** and granting Scottish regions the opportunity to take control of local skills and employability schemes, transport, and housing, so they can tailor interventions to local needs and encourage cooperation between local authorities to reduce duplication and deliver economic outcomes.
- ✔ **Consulting on giving regions the right to create Regional Mayors** who can work alongside local authorities and act as democratically elected regional champions.
- ✔ **Improving intercity travel**, by planning a high-speed rail corridor linking Scotland's cities.

- ✔ **Overhauling the planning system**, to speed up applications and take account of projects' economic potential.
- ✔ **Reforming infrastructure delivery** to end spiralling costs and delays to public projects, modernising land procurement and delivering stronger central planning.

Making life more affordable

Scottish Labour will help people who are struggling with the cost of living, delivering a financial inclusion and wellbeing strategy that will:

- ✔ **Create Family Network hubs in primary schools**, based on Sure Start principles. These hubs will have family coordinators to help families connect with the support they need, be it advice on money and benefits, housing, childcare, parenting and employment support.
- ✔ **Increase access to free internet spaces**, expanding free mobile SIM programmes and boosting uptake of broadband social tariffs to reduce digital exclusion.
- ✔ **Support the growth of credit unions and building societies**, so there are low-cost options available to those who need to access financial advice and credit.
- ✔ **Properly fund financial inclusion**, redirecting at least £2m of dormant asset funding into money advice services.
- ✔ **Improve access to banking hubs**, working with the banking sector to help anyone who needs reliable access to cash and banking services.
- ✔ **Work to deliver reliable postal services**, so everyone in Scotland can access the affordable delivery services they need.

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Stronger communities

Scottish Labour will work with local people to improve local services and make all our towns great places to live by:

- ✔ **Fixing the state of the roads and filling the potholes**, with a national £350m pothole fund.
- ✔ **Delivering fair funding for local services**, agreeing a new funding formula for local government.
- ✔ **Giving local people a say over service closures**, requiring the council to consult whenever they plan to shut local libraries, sports and leisure facilities.
- ✔ **Fast-tracking bus franchising** so that we can bring bus services back under local control to protect bus routes and improve affordability.
- ✔ **Pausing plans for further cuts to the fire service**, ensuring the service has the resources needed to keep the public safe.
- ✔ **Establishing a community energy fund**, using ScotWind revenues to provide low-cost finance for communities to develop or take equity in local energy projects.
- ✔ **Simplifying Community Right to Buy**, making the legal process easier for local people to buy and own local land and assets for the benefit of communities.
- ✔ **Establishing a Major Events Bureau**, to position Scotland as leading destination for world-class sport, culture, and international conferences.
- ✔ **Designating a creative capital fund**, to deliver financial support to upgrade and protect venues across the country.
- ✔ **Protecting the status of denominational schools in Scotland**, recognising the high-quality education and choice they offer pupils and parents.
- ✔ **Delivering an additional £10m for Changing Places toilets**, renewing the fund for the next Parliamentary term.
- ✔ **Protecting the safety of places of worship**, ensuring our new crime and community policing officers work with local faith groups in their ward.
- ✔ **Creating "digital playgrounds"**, with digital equipment available in public spaces such as schools, libraries and museums where young people can safely engage with technology and innovation.

A safer Scotland

Scottish Labour will restore security and make our neighbourhoods safe again by:

- ✔ **Returning police officers back to the front line** and giving every neighbourhood a named community and crime prevention officer.
- ✔ **Making the police accountable to local people**, restoring the statutory obligation for local police divisions to consult on local policing plans.

- ✔ **Increasing the value of Antisocial Behaviour Fines**, meaning those who make communities feel less safe can face fines of up to £500.
- ✔ **Legislating for tougher regulation on the sale of all knives**, to prevent shoplifting and reviewing the sale of domestic knives to under 16s.
- ✔ **Crushing illegal e-bikes**, using drone technology to track and trace unlicensed bikes for seizure.
- ✔ **Prosecuting shoplifting**, expanding the remit of the Retail Crime taskforce beyond the central belt.
- ✔ **Removing free bus passes from those who carry out antisocial behaviour**, punishing those who abuse transport staff and threaten community safety.
- ✔ **Restoring the Cashback for Communities Youth Work Fund**, with £1m dedicated to funding local approaches to youth work.
- ✔ **Including pyrotechnics in football banning orders**, closing a gap in the law and ensuring everyone can enjoy games without disorder.
- ✔ **Legislating to protect workers from assault**, bringing in stronger sentences for those who attack people in the course of their work.

An NHS there when Scots need it

Scottish Labour will make it easier for people to get local treatment and health advice when they need it by:

- ✔ **Ending the 8am rush for a GP appointment** and bringing back the family doctor so everyone can get a GP appointment within 48 hours when they need one.
- ✔ **Creating new neighbourhood health hubs** so people across Scotland can access all their local health services in one place.
- ✔ **Launching an emergency mental health response service**, so that people in mental health crisis get specialist NHS care, not merely a police response.
- ✔ **Expanding the role of community pharmacy, optometry and audiology** so people can get advice and treatment for common conditions more quickly through walk-in facilities.
- ✔ **Protecting services in underserved areas**, working with GPs to secure provision in rural and Deep End practices.
- ✔ **Incentivising newly qualified dentists** to work in underserved and deprived areas as part of a wider review of public service dentistry.
- ✔ **Working with supermarkets to promote healthy food promotions** and reduce sales of food with no nutritional value.
- ✔ **Extending smoke-free zones**, around schools and playgrounds taking similar measures to those applied to hospitals.

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Homes for all

As part of Scottish Labour's plans to build 125,000 homes and end the housing emergency we will:

- ✓ **Fix the broken housing market**, with over 52,000 new affordable homes to drive down housing waiting lists and reduce rents.
- ✓ **Help renters to save for a deposit**, with a quarter of new mid-market rent houses set aside for working families who are saving to buy their own home.
- ✓ **Eradicate rough sleeping** with an Ending Homelessness Unit to drive action across government.
- ✓ **Establish regional Housing Development Trusts** with responsibility for delivering affordable housing targets.
- ✓ **Treat housing as critical national infrastructure**, expanding zonal planning to pre-approve projects and create attractive places for people to live with access to the local facilities and services, such as health and education.
- ✓ **Establish a strategy for the private rented sector**, recognising the role it plays in meeting housing need and working in partnership to drive up standards and experiences for tenants.
- ✓ **Grant homeowners more control over factoring**, with higher penalties when factors breach their obligations and measures to make it easier for residents to end contracts.
- ✓ **Improve tenement maintenance arrangements**, expediting progress on reform recommendations.
- ✓ **Work with rural employers and local authorities** to crowd in funding and fast track developments that build housing to attract and retain rural workforces.
- ✓ **Tackle the scale of empty and second homes** to make the most of existing housing stock by closing tax loopholes, supporting councils to buy neglected and empty homes that blight neighbourhoods, and introducing compulsory sale and rental order powers.

Protecting our natural environment

Scottish Labour will protect Scotland's natural environment for future generations and build a more circular economy by:

- ✓ **Increasing monitoring of sewage overflows**, boosting coverage to match levels elsewhere in the UK.
- ✓ **Tackling littering and waste from drinks' containers**, rolling out the deposit return scheme.
- ✓ **Reducing the destruction of unsold goods**, helping businesses to partner with local charities and distribution services like Multibank so goods help those in need.
- ✓ **Expanding the use of community heat and power networks**, working in partnership with industry to identify potential opportunities.

This election is a straight choice between more of the same with the SNP or a government ready to build a better future with Scottish Labour.

The SNP has had 20 years in charge; they don't deserve another five.

On May 7, vote Scottish Labour on both votes for the change Scotland needs.