

CAVENDISH

Scottish Green Party.

2026 Manifesto Analysis



Why this election matters.

The Scottish Parliament election on 7 May will shape Scotland's political environment for the next five years.

The Scottish Greens are launching their manifesto as the “party of hope”, positioning themselves as a more radical alternative to both the SNP and Labour on issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, climate change, and economic inequality.

Unlike the SNP (governing for 20 years) or Labour (struggling in the opinion polls), the Greens are able to frame themselves as both an outsider and having experience as a junior coalition partner to the SNP. They point to that record of delivery including on free bus travel for under-22s, rent controls, expanded school meals and doubling the Scottish Child Payment. Having left the Scottish Government two years ago, they are also positioning themselves as representing radical change.

The Greens' strategic argument is distinctive: the solutions to the climate crisis and cost of living crisis are one and the same. Free public transport, household energy efficiency, nature restoration, and fair taxation are presented not as environmental luxuries but as economic necessities that will reduce household bills, create jobs, and tackle inequality simultaneously.

For clients, the election matters less because of who governs (SNP majority is likely) and more because of what it signals about the opposition environment. The Greens' leverage and influence will depend on seat count and SNP dependence on coalition or support. Current polling suggests the Greens could return 6-12 MSPs, primarily from urban constituencies (Edinburgh, Glasgow, some Highland seats). This is sufficient for a coherent opposition presence on climate, housing, transport, and fiscal policy but unlikely to deliver the numbers needed to force SNP policy changes through amendments.

The Scottish Greens held two ministerial posts in the previous parliament (Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater). That arrangement collapsed in 2024, and the Greens reverted to opposition. Their strategy now is to return to government - or at minimum, to gain enough seats that the SNP cannot ignore them in post-election negotiations – but with the SNP holding a commanding lead in the polls, the amount of post-election influence that the Greens can actually wield waits to be seen. It is important therefore to read the manifesto in that context; there is little attempt to provide detail of how these proposals would be funded, and they act as more of a list of policy asks to bring to a negotiation.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing:

The manifesto in brief

The Greens' manifesto is built around a central claim: Scotland is wealthy, but wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of a small minority.

Their solutions to the climate crisis and cost of living crisis are one and the same - they require using Scotland's abundant renewable resources, natural assets, and wealth to fund public services, create jobs, and build fairer communities.

The party frames itself as having already delivered real change in government - free bus travel for under-22s, rent controls, expanded school meals, doubled Scottish Child Payment. This manifesto sets out what the Greens will "demand" from government in the next parliament: either through parliamentary pressure as opposition, or as part of any confidence-and-supply arrangement with the SNP.

The Greens' core argument is that redistribution and public ownership are not luxuries but necessities. Free public transport isn't an environmental nice-to-have; it's a cost-of-living measure that saves families money whilst cutting emissions. Nature restoration isn't separate from economic policy; it's central to Scotland's future prosperity. Fair taxation isn't punishment of success; it's the basis of funding public services and tackling inequality.

Unlike Labour's "competent management" pitch or Reform/Conservative "growth through deregulation," the Greens argue that transformation requires systemic change: wealth redistribution, public ownership of key assets and services, worker power and democratic control of the economy, and explicit environmental limits on economic activity.

The manifesto opens with explicit commitments across five areas:

Cost of living and public services

- Expand free bus travel to everyone (not just under-22s)
- Introduce free dental care
- Expand free school meals universally
- Increase Scottish Child Payment to £40 (aiming for £55 by 2030)
- Introduce free walk-in mental health hubs
- Deliver £600 million renewables investment programme

Climate and nature

- Get Scotland back on track to net zero by 2045 through coordinated climate action delivery programme
- Oppose all new oil and gas extraction
- Increase Nature Restoration Fund to £200 million
- Reforest 9,000 hectares of native woodland annually
- Introduce Scottish Environmental Court with powers to enforce environmental accountability and hold corporate executives to account

Housing

- Build 15,700 social homes per year with multi-year funding certainty
- End homelessness by 2040 through Housing First approach
- Strengthen rent controls with inflation caps (maximum 6%)
- End non-residential care charges immediately
- Introduce radical land reform bill limiting individual/corporate ownership to 500 hectares

Fair work and jobs

- Deliver 40,000 green energy jobs
- Introduce £15/hour minimum wage for social care
- Ban zero-hours contracts in public-funded work
- Support co-operatives and employee-owned businesses
- Make Fair Work First conditions mandatory for all public procurement
- Implement worker-led green transition plans with proper retraining and income support

Taxation and redistribution

- Scrap Council Tax and introduce Residential Property Tax based on actual property value
- Implement mansion taxes on £1m+ properties (15% Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (LBTT) rate)
- Introduce 20% surcharge on overseas buyers
- Reform LBTT to close exemptions (monarchy, foreign military, agricultural land)
- Introduce surcharges on businesses causing environmental/social harm (Amazon tax, alcohol/tobacco surcharge, betting surcharge)
- Develop proposals for Scottish Wealth Tax (pending Westminster devolution)

**Sector
implications.**

Energy and Net Zero.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- Invest £600 million in renewables (onshore and offshore wind, tidal, solar)
- Deliver at least 1GW of community-owned energy by 2030
- Establish Scottish Community Wealth Fund requiring large renewables developers to contribute percentage of profits distributed to communities
- Bring back Heat in Buildings Bill with clear decarbonisation roadmap; 2035 heat pump phaseout target for most households
- Expand locally-owned district heat networks with increased Scottish Heat Network Fund
- Strongly oppose new nuclear (including small modular reactors)
- Actively oppose new oil and gas extraction (Rosebank, Peterhead)
- Establish a Scottish Environmental Court with enforcement powers for environmental crimes

What it means

The Scottish Greens' energy position is ideologically coherent and radically different from Labour's pragmatism or Reform/Conservative fossil fuel backing. The Greens are explicitly opposed to nuclear (unlike Labour) and to any new oil and gas expansion (more assertively than Labour). This has material implications for clients.

For renewable energy developers, the Greens offer strong political backing for expansion but with significant community ownership requirements built in. The Scottish Community Wealth Fund requirement - forcing large developers to contribute a percentage of profits to community distribution - is operationally demanding. This is not a negotiated benefit scheme but a mandatory wealth-sharing mechanism. For developers planning large offshore or onshore projects, this increases governance complexity and reduces developer control over reinvestment of gains.

The commitment to 1GW of genuinely community-owned energy by 2030 is ambitious and creates both opportunity and constraint. For community energy organisations and co-operatives, this signals substantial government backing and funding. For traditional developers used to owning renewable assets, it signals that community ownership will be prioritised - potentially limiting developer-controlled projects in favour of community-led schemes.

The opposition to new nuclear (including SMRs) is significant because it closes off a technology that Labour supports. For nuclear supply chain companies, this represents a closed market in Scotland. For renewable energy companies, it reinforces competitive advantage.

For oil and gas companies and supply chains, the Greens' position is stark: managed exit, not transition. Continued opposition to new fields would mean supply chains should plan for declining North Sea activity rather than continuity. The Environmental Court commitment signals a hardline approach to corporate environmental damage.



Health and social care.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- Increase investment in general practice; aim for one GP per 1,000 patients with 15-minute appointments once targets reached
- Introduce nurse-to-patient ratios for all health and care settings
- Expand multidisciplinary teams in GP practices (mental health practitioners, welfare rights officers, community link workers)
- End all charges for dental treatment and gradually bring dental practices into NHS ownership
- Establish free walk-in mental health support hubs across Scotland
- Establish national neurodevelopmental pathway for ADHD and autism assessment and diagnosis
- Publish gender-affirming care action plan within six months to reduce waiting times (currently 200+ years)
- Introduce £15/hour minimum wage for social care workers with annual inflationary increases
- End non-residential care charges as an immediate priority
- Gradually transfer failing care homes into public or community ownership
- Introduce collective sectoral bargaining across social care
- Establish national occupational health body for Scotland
- Deliver 24/7 palliative care support including dedicated helpline

What it means

The Scottish Greens' health and social care positioning is built on expansion of public sector capacity and explicit resistance to privatisation. This is materially different from Labour's approach (which proposes restructuring within mixed NHS/private delivery) and represents a more comprehensive public ownership commitment.

For health supply companies, the nurse-to-patient ratio commitment is significant. This requires additional staff recruitment, training, and support infrastructure. For training providers, universities, and nursing colleges delivering training, this signals sustained demand. For IT and practice management companies, this signals demand for systems supporting higher patient throughput.

The GP investment (one per 1,000 patients) is resource-intensive and represents substantial expansion. For primary care training providers and colleges, this signals sustained demand. For IT suppliers and practice management companies, this means demand for systems managing higher patient volumes.

The mental health hub commitment - free walk-in services across Scotland - creates demand for community-based mental health infrastructure distinct from traditional NHS services. For mental health charities, community organisations, and training providers delivering mental health support, this represents significant expansion opportunity.



Housing, planning and property.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- End homelessness by 2040 through Housing First approach, and build at least 15,700 social homes per year with multi-year funding certainty
- Strengthen rent controls: cap rents at lowest of inflation or average earnings (maximum 6%), with councils able to freeze or reduce in areas of acute pressure
- Give Registered Social Landlords first right of refusal on right-to-buy properties returning to market
- Give councils power to force sale/rent of derelict land and property
- Support off-the-shelf property purchases by councils for rapid social housing delivery, and support alternative housing models (self-build, co-housing, housing co-operatives)
- Require all new homes to meet net zero standards and be connected to zero-carbon public transport
- Introduce Scottish Accessible Home standard with minimum disability accessibility requirements
- Scrap Council Tax and replace with Residential Property Tax based on actual property value
- Implement mansion tax on properties valued at £1m+ (two new Council Tax bands; 15% LBTT rate)
- Increase Additional Dwelling Supplement to 10%; introduce multiplying ADS where rates increase for each additional property, and introduce higher ADS rates for areas of acute housing pressure

What it means

The Scottish Greens' housing policy is the most radical of all parties' manifestos. The annual social housing build target (15,700) is materially higher than Labour's commitment and represents dramatic scaling-up of current delivery. The multi-year funding certainty is critical - it allows housing associations and councils to plan workforce, land acquisition, and supply chain investment with confidence.

For traditional housebuilders (private developers), the Greens' position creates both opportunity and constraint. Opportunity because construction services demand will increase substantially. Constraint because the Greens are explicitly redirecting public investment away from private developer-led housebuilding toward social housing. The commitment to alternative housing models (co-housing, self-build, co-operatives) explicitly positions community-led housing as preferable to private developer schemes.

The rent control position is more specific than other parties. By capping at inflation or average earnings (maximum 6%), the Greens set a clear ceiling. The discretion for councils to freeze or reduce rents in high-pressure areas means rents could actually fall in some regions, not just grow more slowly. For buy-to-let investors and rental property companies, this represents fundamental margin compression.

The Residential Property Tax replacement for Council Tax is complex operationally but progressive in intent. It requires immediate revaluation of all properties and legislates for revaluations every five years. This means property tax revenue will reflect actual property values. For homeowners, those in higher-value properties pay more; those in lower-value properties pay less.



FMCG and food & drink.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- Treat food and drink as strategic economic asset
- Establish industrial strategy prioritising food and drink sector
- Market Scotland as premium food and drink destination, leveraging whisky and salmon brands
- Support local abattoirs and fish processing facilities; commission strategic review of processing investment
- Put nature-friendly farming at the heart of agriculture through Transition Insurance Fund
- Restore funding to agricultural research institutes
- Pilot direct support to market gardens through rural payments scheme
- Call for UK to devolve Groceries Code Adjudicator for tougher supermarket regulation
- Ensure public sector leads on ethical consumption and plant-based diets through procurement
- Support public and community-led diners and cafes
- Create local food hubs; promote co-operatives and collaborative models for small producers
- Deliver farm-to-fork plan for ending avoidable food waste

What it means

The Scottish Greens' food and drink positioning is supportive and growth-focused whilst explicitly linking agriculture to nature restoration. The party frames food and drink as a strategic economic asset and commits to supporting local processing infrastructure and farmer-led transition.

For whisky and spirits exporters, the Greens' position is explicitly supportive. The party commits to treating food and drink as a strategic sector and to marketing Scotland as a premium destination globally. This signals government backing for export promotion and trade delegation support.

For farmers and food producers, the Transition Insurance Fund is significant. Rather than traditional support payments, the Greens propose funds specifically for farmers transitioning to nature-friendly and regenerative production. This is conditional on environmental outcomes - food production must be balanced with biodiversity restoration. For smaller producers transitioning to sustainable methods, this signals support opportunity. For industrial-scale operators, it signals pressure to adopt nature-friendly practices.

The commitment to local food hubs and co-operative models represents a shift toward decentralised food systems. For food processing, distribution, and retail companies, this could create demand for local solutions but also signals reduction of large-scale centralised supply chains. The agricultural research funding and market garden support signal backing for smaller-scale and diversified food production.



Farming and rural affairs.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- Create Transition Insurance Fund for farmers to shift to sustainable, regenerative food production, replacing bulk of current farming subsidies
- Restore funding to Scotland's agricultural research institutes
- Ensure continued rollout of farmer-led skills development supporting transition to regenerative farming
- Pilot direct support scheme for market gardens through rural payments scheme
- Make Scotland a friendlier place for seasonal agricultural workers through housing and employment support
- Call on UK to devolve Groceries Code Adjudicator to introduce tougher supermarket regulation
- Ensure public sector leads on ethical consumption and plant-based diets through procurement
- Support councils to deliver local Good Food Nation plans
- Reduce food miles through local food hubs and co-operative models
- Implement farm-to-fork plan for ending avoidable food waste
- End need for food banks by ensuring access to affordable local food with cash-first approaches

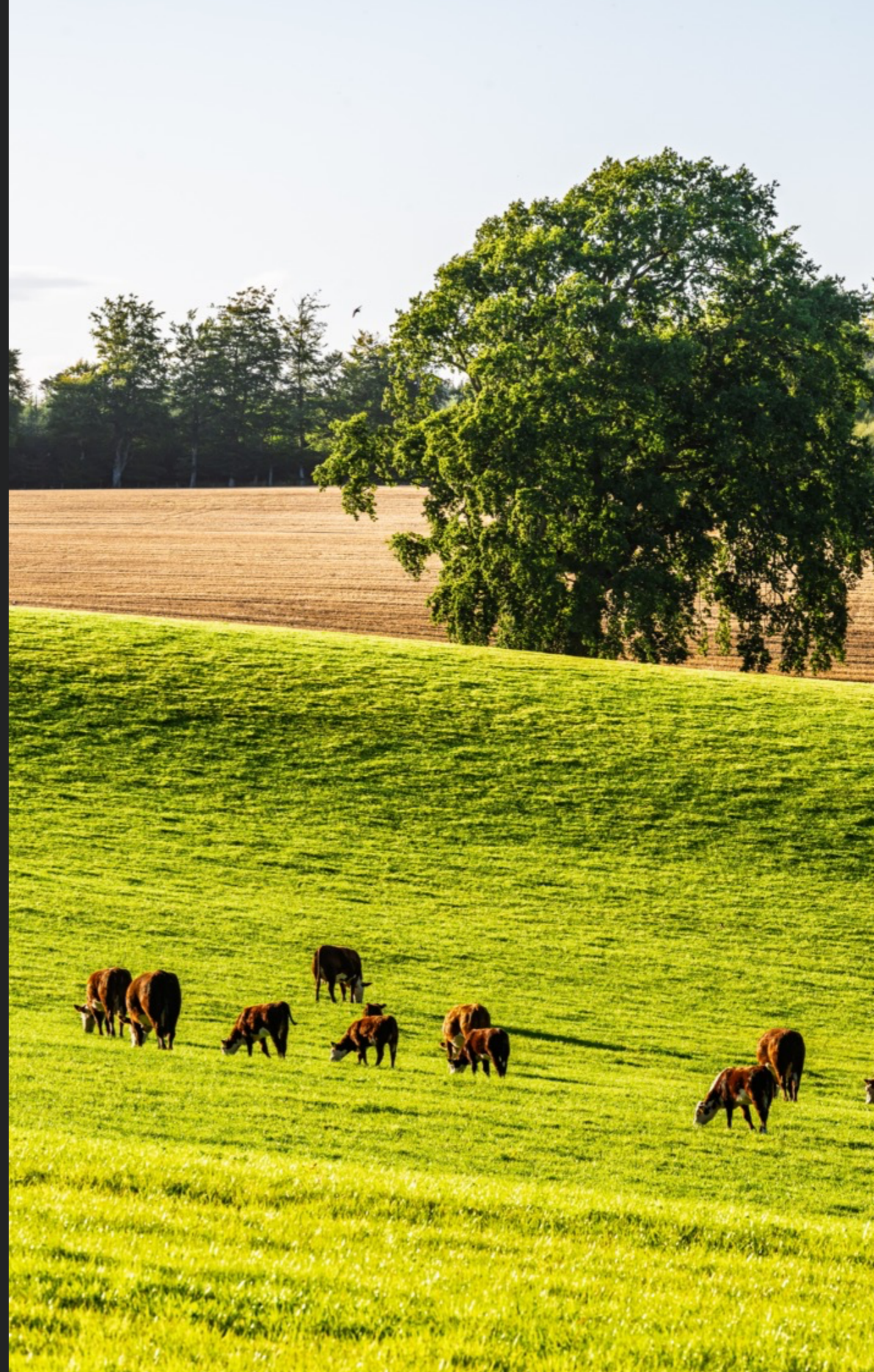
What it means

The Scottish Greens' agricultural positioning is supportive but explicitly conditional on environmental and social outcomes. The party is not reversing climate commitments or environmental criteria; it is rebalancing support toward food production, nature restoration, and smaller producers whilst maintaining environmental outcomes.

For farmers, the Transition Insurance Fund is significant. Rather than traditional support payments based on land area or historical payments, the Greens propose funds specifically for farmers transitioning to nature-friendly and regenerative production. This shifts incentives toward active management for environmental benefit. For farmers willing to transition, this signals support opportunity. For industrial-scale operations, it signals pressure to adopt nature-friendly practices or lose support.

The proposed tier system (higher support for smaller farms and crofters) signals a shift in support allocation away from larger operations. The phasing and transition support are important - Greens commit to avoiding cliff edges, meaning transition support for larger operations being affected.

The agricultural research funding is positive for rural innovation. The Apprenticeship Centres of Excellence and Skills Accelerators signal investment in rural skills development. For training providers and colleges in rural areas, this represents demand signal and potential funding.



Transport.

What the Scottish Greens are proposing

- Expand free bus travel to everyone resident in Scotland; introduce £2 fare cap for rural services
- Bring more of Scotland's buses back under local council control
- Increase financial support for community-designed and community-owned bus services
- Abolish first-class rail on all ScotRail services; convert carriages to standard class seats
- Introduce ScotCard (integrated ticketing with zonal pricing and daily caps)
- Introduce national Scottish Rail Card with discounts for all ineligible for existing railcard schemes
- Expand rail and sail tickets with cheaper combined tickets for rail, bus, and ferry to islands
- Introduce price cap on Caledonian Sleeper tickets
- Develop scheme for designated allocation of island resident ferry tickets
- Invest in new railway stations and reopen closed rail routes (Dumfries-Stranraer, Alloa-Dunfermline, Tweedbank-Carlisle, Aberdeen-Peterhead/Fraserburgh)
- Begin process to deliver Clyde Metro scheme in full
- Complete full electrification of Scotland's rail network (including Highland Main Line)
- Bring all ferry ports running lifeline services into public ownership
- Reinstate Ardrossan to Campbeltown ferry route; reopen Rosyth to Europe ferry route
- Develop long-term green fleet replacement strategy for all ferry services
- Allocate at least 10% of national transport budget to active travel (cycling, walking)
- Support 20mph as default speed limit in urban/built-up areas
- Deliver national blueprint of walking, cycle and wheeling networks
- Establish Scottish Paths Fund to extend core path network and protect right to roam

What it means

The Scottish Greens' transport vision is the most public-ownership-focused of all parties. The commitment to free bus travel for all residents (not means-tested, not time-limited) is the most generous offer on transport costs. This is fiscally substantial but operationally clear: government pays operating costs, fares go to zero.

The ScotCard integrated ticketing is operationally complex but important for multimodal journeys. For transport IT companies and payment processors, this is significant opportunity. For passengers, it simplifies journey planning and potentially reduces costs.

The rail commitments are ambitious. New station openings and line reopenings are politically appealing but operationally complex and expensive. The full electrification commitment is long-term but creates sustained demand for infrastructure investment.



How Cavendish can help.

We advise clients across public affairs and corporate reputation. Our team combines deep knowledge of the Scottish political environment with sector expertise across energy, health, housing, food and drink, and rural affairs.

If you would like a tailored conversation about what the Scottish Parliament election means for your organisation - whether that is updating your stakeholder strategy, assessing policy risk, or building an engagement programme for the new parliament - we would be glad to talk.

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