

Greens look for bold moves at Holyrood



The Scottish Greens said earlier today that in areas such as benefit sanctions, standardised testing in schools and local and national tax policy they expect to push Scottish Ministers to be bolder. The summer recess comes to an end when MSPs return to business later today.

There are 6 Green MSPs at Holyrood now and the SNP no longer has a majority. So the Greens hope that there will be more cross-party working in the months to come.

Green co-convener Patrick Harvie MSP says this session of Parliament is a chance for “fresh ideas” and “progressive change”.

Areas where the Greens say they expect to push the Scottish Government to be bolder include:

Income tax

– The Greens’ manifesto set out radical proposals, making use of Holyrood’s new powers over income tax rates and bands. By introducing new bands, Holyrood could cut income tax for below-average earners and increase tax progressively for higher earners. Overall most people would pay less and additional revenue would be raised for public services.

Local tax

– Scottish ministers have refused to replace the unfair Council Tax, or update the 25-year-old valuations, instead proposing to adjust the top bands and dictate what councils spend the additional revenue on. Greens believe local taxes should be decided at a local level and have put forward proposals to scrap Council Tax with a transition toward a

residential property tax, under which most householders would pay less.

Brexit

– Greens were first with a public campaign to Keep Scotland in Europe in light of the EU referendum vote. Greens continue to support the Scottish Government's effort to explore all options, and have urged Ministers to ensure Scotland's economic and social links to Europe are maintained, for example to protect funding for university research and agriculture. Greens continue to support an independent Scotland and it may be that independence becomes the best way to secure Scotland's international interests.

Sanctions

– Scotland takes responsibility for employment programmes next Spring. The Green MSPs have put forward proposals to prevent 13,000 Scots a year having their benefits sanctioned by the DWP.

Young carers

– Following the election, the First Minister said that she would consider introducing a young carers allowance to support young people with significant caring responsibilities – a proposal from the Scottish Greens' manifesto.

Standardised testing

– Despite concerns expressed by parents, teaching unions and academics, Scottish Ministers are pressing ahead with national testing in P1, 4, 7 and S3. Greens will continue to push for national investment in measures that can close the attainment gap, such as reducing teacher workload, smaller class sizes and promoting Additional Support for Learning.

Land reform

– In June, Parliament voted for a motion, amended by Andy Wightman MSP, calling for "radical and ongoing" reform. Greens are committed to bringing about fairer distribution of land,

and cheaper land for better housing.

Climate change

– The First Minister promised to legislate for tougher emissions targets for 2020. Green MSPs have consistently challenged the Scottish Government over its lack of policy action to deliver a low carbon society. Greens will continue to push for significant investment in energy efficient housing to cut fuel poverty, modern public transport infrastructure and a ban on fracking.

Air Passenger Duty

– SNP policy is to cut then scrap this duty, despite analysis showing it will increase climate change emissions and benefit wealthy frequent fliers. Greens will continue to push for an alternative measure that recognises aviation's huge environmental impact.

Patrick Harvie MSP, Co-convenor of the Scottish Greens, said: "Amid the uncertainty of Brexit, it's vital we have a Scottish Parliament pushing in a clear direction toward a fairer society. On areas ranging from benefit sanctions to standardised testing and from income tax to local democracy, Green MSPs will push Scottish Ministers to be bolder.

"With a minority government, and the Greens now forming the Parliament's fourth party, there's a real chance to bring through fresh ideas and progressive change."