

Scottish Government programme set out today in Holyrood

Ensuring Scotland's economic, health, and social recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is the focus of this year's Programme for Government, published today.

The full programme is embedded below for you to read at your leisure.

This is what the government will focus on in the next nine months until the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary Elections.

Speaking in Parliament, the First Minister said The Scottish Government would prioritise work to suppress the virus – building on its commitment to Covid-19 testing, contact tracing, and surveillance. The Covid-19 response will be bolstered with the launch of Protect Scotland, a new proximity tracing app, later this month. The app will add an additional means of notifying people that they may have been exposed to the virus and that they should isolate to prevent onward transmission.

The First Minister also set out the government's plans for renewal saying she wants to ensure a green recovery is at the heart of the economic recovery, with job creation, support for

health and wellbeing and work to tackle inequalities all high on the agenda.

20 minute neighbourhoods

Almost hidden in the speech was mention of a 20 minute neighbourhood, which would revolutionise our roads and streets here in the capital.

Lorna Finlayson, Scotland director of shared transport charity CoMoUK, said: "Covid-19 has devastated Scotland's economy and we can't go back to the old ways of doing things.

"This announcement from the First Minister is very welcome and will help to deliver a green recovery for Scotland.

"Shared transport is a key part of active travel, with Scottish towns and cities offering bike hire schemes and car clubs as an alternative to private vehicles, while 20 minute neighbourhoods will also encourage people to walk more – helping to reduce harmful vehicle emissions.

"As we emerge from the pandemic, we need to take bold action to encourage behavioural change and make sure that we promote green alternatives for post-Covid travel."

The 20 minute neighbourhood is already planned in Melbourne, Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning Victoria produced this explanatory video:

A National Transition Training Fund will support up to 10,000 people at risk of redundancy or unemployment. The Scottish Youth Guarantee will ensure every young person has the opportunity of work, education, or training. A new £100 million Green Jobs Fund will be created while a new Inward Investment Plan will create 100,000 high value jobs over the next decade and boost GDP.

The pandemic has also brought to the fore the need for a radical rethink of social care. An independent review of the care system will be established to examine how adult social

care can be most effectively reformed to deliver a national approach to care and support services. This will include consideration of a National Care Service.

Labour response

Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard said: “Over the past six months, no part of our society has been more tragically hit by Covid-19 than our care homes.

“Today’s announcement of a review is a welcome signal of intent. But time is running out.

“Will the First Minister take the opportunity today to confirm not only that she intends to create a National Care Service, but that she will act immediately to level up the terms and conditions of the workforce, and that, as with our National Health Service, the profit motive will be removed from the care of our oldest and most vulnerable citizens? Because we cannot simply be content to go back to how things were in the care sector.”

In order to support families, applications for the Scottish Child Payment will open in November 2020, with the first payments to be made in February 2021. A new £10 million Tenant Hardship Loan Fund will protect people from homelessness by providing interest-free loans for those struggling to pay their rent and there will be a ban on evictions until March 2021.

Other measures include: accelerating the roll-out of Community Treatment and Assessment Centres so more people can receive medical care in their community rather than going to hospital expanding digital access to health care to ensure more people can get the help they need

£1.6 billion low carbon funding to secure a just transition to a net zero economy, including a £100 million Green Jobs Fund,

investment in heat and energy efficiency and industrial decarbonisation a 20 year vision for energy efficient, zero carbon housing, with access to outdoor space, transport links, digital connectivity and community services

£500 million for infrastructure to support active travel bringing 50,000 people into the digital world through the Connecting Scotland programme and creating a world class digital eco-system in Scotland introducing legislation on domestic abuse protection orders and progressing legislation to improve forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual assault.

Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Director Dr Richard Dixon commented: "Today's new focus on creating much needed green jobs is welcome progress from the Scottish Government, but it needs to be followed with rapid action to ensure it becomes more than rhetoric.

"The Scottish Government has shown that they know that the future must be greener, safer and fairer but the economic and climate crises demands that we start that work today. Long term commitments to creating green jobs in areas like energy efficiency are really good news, but we should not wait until the next Parliament to make them a reality.

"By taking concrete steps in the coming months to deliver their Green Jobs commitment, the Government will help ensure that we have warmer homes, reductions in climate pollution and new jobs across the country."

Greens say the programme for

government fails to respond to the climate emergency with the necessary urgency and scale.

Nicola Sturgeon's programme for government fails to respond to the climate emergency with the necessary urgency and scale, the Scottish Greens have said.

The Scottish Greens have campaigned for a green jobs fund, as well as for a package of measures to support tenants in the private rented sector and to end homelessness and fuel poverty. The First Minister's statement includes modest moves on both issues, but without the scale of investment needed.

The First Minister's statement contained plans for a Bill for a new independence referendum, which the Greens have welcomed in the face of the UK Government's assault on devolution.

Scottish Greens parliamentary co-leader Alison Johnstone said: "Work to build a fairer and greener Scotland is welcome, but the work to do that must begin now, especially considering the urgency of the climate emergency.

"If a Green jobs fund is to have an impact, it must urgently benefit those communities that are most in need of a just transition. For example, Scottish Greens have worked closely with the communities around the Mossmorran gas plant and the Hunterston Nuclear plant, campaigning for a sustainable future for those communities. They need this support as soon as possible.

"We have questions about whether increased support for oil and gas will come with conditions to reduce extraction too.

"The Scottish Greens have also been calling for more support for tenants. While I welcome the announcement of a tenants hardship fund, £10m in loans is inadequate when half of all

tenants have lost income during this crisis and are struggling.

“If Scotland is to be a fairer, greener more progressive country, the government needs to go further and faster on tackling the climate emergency and our housing crisis.”

The First Minister said: “The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on our health and wellbeing, on business and the economy – indeed, on our whole way of life. That is true here in Scotland, and across the globe.

“Today’s Programme is clear that suppressing Covid is our most immediate priority – and it will remain so for some time. However, it also makes clear that we will not simply hunker down and wait for the storm to pass.

“This Programme for Government sets out plans for a stronger, more resilient and sustainable economy – with a laser focus on creating new, good, green jobs.” It guarantees opportunities for young people – and refuses to accept that their generation will carry the economic scars of Covid into adulthood.

“It sets out plans to strengthen and reform our public services, including our NHS. And it takes the first step on the road to a National Care Service.” It promotes equality and wellbeing, with decisive action to combat child poverty. At its heart is the new, game-changing Scottish Child Payment.

“We must treat the Covid-19 challenge not as a brake on our ambitions but as an accelerant – helping us shape a stronger, greener, fairer future.”

Conservative response

Responding to the First Minister in Holyrood, Ruth Davidson said the Programme for Government does not meet the challenges facing Scotland. She called for the First Minister to back small businesses with a series of sensible measures to

protect them from the damage of localised lockdowns and business rates revaluations.

Scottish Conservative leader, Douglas Ross, said: "This was the moment where the First Minister could have put selfish, narrow interests to one side and united the country.

"Instead, we're told the solution is another Referendum Bill, only this time in the middle of a pandemic.

"The First Minister just doesn't get it. She needs to leave the Holyrood bubble and get back into the real world, where people are fearful of losing their jobs.

"The fundamental difference between our outlook is this: I know Scotland can succeed today, the First Minister thinks we can't until the SNP get their way with separation.

"Civil servants that could be drawing up an Education Bill will instead be drawing up a Referendum Bill. Scotland's future is being wasted on the divisions of the past."

Scottish Conservative Holyrood leader, Ruth Davidson, said: "Many of the moves today are necessary but they lack urgency and remain insufficient to the scale of the task in hand.

"Nicola Sturgeon's statement ran to over six thousand words she missed out two – small business.

"The Scottish National Investment Bank is all well and good. But a bloated national bank backing long-term projects won't help small local shops keep the lights on over the next six months.

"The government must consider a hardship fund for firms hit by localised lockdowns, push back business rates revaluation, and commit to not penalising businesses for Covid-proofing their properties.

“Small businesses will be absolutely key to creating new jobs and protecting Scotland’s recovery. The First Minister needs to back them, not abandon them.”




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