

#SP2021 – Nicola Sturgeon launches the SNP manifesto

The SNP launched their 2021 manifesto this morning saying they would deliver a job-centred recovery from Covid-19.

The bullet points are:

- 20% increase in frontline NHS spending – £2.5 billion
- national care service, backed by £800 million, to be set up with a 25% increase in social care investment
- NHS staff have already been offered a 4% pay increase
- National Living Wage for care staff
- Investment of £1 billion in the attainment gap in schools
- 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants
- Free school breakfast and lunches for every primary school pupil – all year round
- a device for every child in Scotland to access online teaching and learning
- wrap around childcare system supporting working parents – least well off pay nothing
- Scottish Child Payment already established – now all payments for school age children who receive free school meals and double the payment within five years
- Economic transformation with £500 million to support new jobs and “reskill people for the jobs of the future”
- Young Person’s Guarantee of college or training
- national infrastructure mission – £33 billion of investment supporting 45,000 jobs
- Green transport revolution – a free bike for all school

- age children who cannot afford them
- Remove majority of fossil fuel buses by 2023
- Investment in active travel to increase
- Scotrail into public ownership – decarbonise the rail network by 2035
- SNP commit to a Just Transition with a ministerial post created to take charge of this
- Freeze income tax rates and bands and increase thresholds by a maximum of inflation
- Independence referendum when the Covid crisis has passed

You can read the manifesto in full [here](#).

You can also watch other videos by all government ministers announcing their part of the 2021 manifesto [here](#).

This is what the SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon said: “Welcome to the launch of the SNP manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election.

This election is taking place in the most serious of times.

How people vote on May 6 will determine who will be Scotland’s First Minister and which party will form the Scottish Government during this critical period for our country.

The Holyrood voting system means Scottish Parliament election results are always on a knife-edge.

That’s hard-wired into the system.

So every vote really does matter.

And the outcome has never been more important.

At stake is how we keep Scotland safe, how we recover from the pandemic and, as we look to the future, who will have the right to decide the kind of country Scotland should be.

In this election the SNP’s promise to the people of Scotland

is this:

Experienced leadership to lead us through the pandemic and into recovery.

Practical help in your day to day lives as part of a progressive programme for government to kick-start the economy and build a fairer Scotland.

And when the crisis is over, your right to choose Scotland's future.

Let me take each of those in turn.

This past year has been the most difficult and heart-breaking most of us will ever remember.

As First Minister I have dedicated all of my energy to one over-riding task: keeping people in Scotland as safe possible.

Tackling the pandemic has been my number one duty and for as long as this crisis is ongoing it will remain so.

A year ago, we had to act fast without the knowledge we have now about this virus – and without the benefit of the hindsight we have today.

I know we didn't get every decision right.

But we have done our level best.

And we have learned from experience.

It is that combination of commitment and experience that I believe is so vital for these times.

If you re-elect me as your First Minister that commitment and experience is what I will continue to bring to the job, each and every day.

We have not yet defeated COVID.

But our plan is working:

Collective action to suppress the virus – which is allowing us now, gradually and carefully, to lift restrictions and restore some normality.

A test and protect system run by the NHS – not by a private company.

And a vaccination programme that is giving hope to all of us

To the NHS and everyone involved in the success of the largest mass vaccination programme in Scotland's history, I say thank you.

Indeed, I am heading your way later today for my own jag.

It is because of your work and the sacrifices of people across Scotland that I am so optimistic that better days are now on the near horizon.

So let me turn to that brighter future.

I am proud of the SNP's achievements in government so far.

But the pandemic has turned life as we know it upside down.

As we recover, we have the opportunity to reimagine our country.

Not to return just to how things were – but to build a better nation.

In this manifesto the SNP is setting out a serious programme for serious times.

It is practical but unashamedly optimistic.

And it is transformational in its ambition.

Anyone, and any party, aspiring to govern in these times must rise to the occasion.

They must capture a sense of possibility and build hope for a better country and a better world.

Now is the time, in those famous words popularised by Alasdair Gray, to work as if we are indeed living in the early days of a better nation.

A Scotland founded on compassion and love, where we look out for one another in a spirit of solidarity.

A Scotland where everyone is valued equally and in which we celebrate our rich diversity.

A Scotland where we welcome those who choose to make our country their home.

A nation of fulfilling jobs, financial security, happy homes and healthy families.

A nation optimistic about the future.

At the heart of our plan for government is the National Health Service.

If the SNP is re-elected we will use our experience to lead a full-scale post-pandemic remobilisation of the NHS.

And today I am pledging a transformational increase in frontline health spending.

Investment in the NHS is already at record levels.

But the pandemic has placed exceptional pressures on our NHS – that requires an exceptional response.

So over the next Parliament, we will increase frontline NHS spending by at least 20 per cent.

This will deliver an additional £2.5 billion for frontline health services – almost double what an inflation only increase would amount to.

Of course we cannot remobilise the NHS without the extraordinary commitment of all those who work in it.

To recognise the contribution they have made to keeping all of us safe over the last year, the SNP is offering the biggest single NHS pay increase in the history of devolution.

For patients, we will establish –

A fast track cancer diagnostic centre in every health board area.

10 elective treatment centres.

And at least 1,500 more NHS staff to work in these new elective centres, and increase specialist capacity.

We'll also invest £10 billion over the next decade to replace and refurbish health facilities across Scotland.

We'll ensure that community health services receive at least half of frontline health spending.

And we will continue to invest in and reform mental health services, with a particular focus on child and adolescent services – an even greater priority given the impact of Covid on so many.

Direct Scottish Government investment in mental health will increase by at least 25%.

And we will ensure every GP practice in the country has access to a dedicated mental wellbeing link worker, creating a network of 1,000 additional dedicated staff.

People in Scotland love and cherish the NHS.

We love it for the care we receive but also for what it represents.

An expression of our common humanity where everyone has the

right to be treated equally regardless of individual means.

In government the SNP has demonstrated strong commitment to that core principle.

It's why we abolished prescription charges – taking away the upfront cost of medicines.

But there is still one part of our NHS in which people are still asked to pay charges – sometimes hefty charges – for care and treatment.

I am referring, of course, to NHS dentistry.

It is 70 years ago this month that Nye Bevan, the founder of our NHS, resigned from government in protest at the introduction of NHS dental charges.

The iniquities of these charges are still with us today.

The choice of what treatment to receive – or indeed whether to receive any treatment at all – can depend on how much someone is willing or able to pay.

That is harmful for patients who don't access the treatment they need.

But it also puts pressure on other parts of the NHS.

In the year before the pandemic struck, almost 4000 people attended A&E for dental health reasons.

Many of these attendances – and a great deal of pain besides – would have been prevented with an earlier visit to the dentist.

That pressure is likely to grow as we tackle the backlog of care caused by COVID.

So I can confirm today that, over the course of the next parliament, if the SNP is re-elected, we will abolish all NHS

dentistry charges.

This will ensure that cost is not a barrier to accessing health care.

And it will complete an SNP mission – to restore all of Scotland's NHS to its founding principle.

Universal healthcare, provided free at the point of need.

The importance of the NHS to all of us has never been clearer than it has been over the past year.

Of course, it was out of the trauma of the Second World War that our NHS was born.

We must now show the same vision for social care.

In the next term of parliament, as we recover from the trauma of Covid, we will establish a National Care Service.

It will improve standards, ensure enhanced pay and conditions for workers and provide better support for unpaid carers.

It will also allow us to introduce a National Wage for care staff – to whom we owe so much – and enter into national pay bargaining for the sector for the first time.

This will be a major change and it will require major investment.

That is why we will also increase public investment in social care by 25% over the course of the parliament, delivering over £800 million of additional support.

And because we believe that social care, just like health care, should be provided on a truly universal basis, free at the point of use, we will remove charges for non-residential care.

Fresh thinking is required as we recover our health and care

services and secure them for the future.

Fresh thinking is also required as we rebuild our economy.

This manifesto sets out a range of policies to help business and drive a green recovery.

There are clear immediate needs.

Later this month, we will pay restart grants of between £7,000 and £19,500 to help businesses prepare for re-opening.

Business in the retail, leisure, hospitality and aviation sectors will benefit from 100 per cent rates relief for the whole of this financial year.

And, looking firmly to the future we will, within the first six months of the next parliament, deliver a new 10 year National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

We will bring those with hands-on experience in business and trade unions together with academics to shape this strategy and guide its implementation.

We will invest an additional £500 million to support new, green jobs and reskill people for the jobs of the future.

Our National Transition Training Fund will support workers whose jobs are at risk and provide opportunities for them to retrain.

We will invest over £33 billion in infrastructure projects over the next five years, supporting around 45,000 jobs.

We will deliver 100,000 more affordable houses over the next decade, providing homes for families and supporting 14,000 jobs a year.

We'll set up a new £20 million rural entrepreneur fund.

We will continue to fund the Small Business Bonus scheme,

which benefits more than 100,000 businesses across the country.

We will also introduce a Community Wealth Building Bill.

It will ensure that local communities benefit more from public investment by requiring councils and public bodies to procure and purchase more of what they need from small businesses and social enterprises.

In the last Parliament – putting our progressive values into practice – the SNP introduced a fairer tax system.

As a result, most people pay less income tax than in other parts of the UK. But those who can afford to pay slightly more.

This has helped us boost investment and keep vital services free of charge – services like university education, prescriptions and personal care, and bus-travel for older people.

If we are re-elected we will maintain that progressive tax system.

And to provide stability to the economy and to household budgets during this period of recovery, I can confirm our intention is to freeze the rates of income tax throughout the next Parliament.

These practical steps are designed to make a difference.

But emerging from a global pandemic that has turned our lives upside down is not a time to take just small steps.

It is a time to be pioneers. To think big for the future.

A whole economy and whole society approach is needed to achieve the national mission of recovery to a fairer, wealthier and more sustainable future.

We must tackle the job and economic insecurity that the pandemic has exposed more clearly than ever.

Greater financial and economic security is not just better for individuals and their families.

It is vital for the strength and diversity of our economy too.

Tackling social exclusion and poverty won't just help those on lower incomes.

It will mean many more people able to fulfil their potential, make the most of their talents and contribute to the economy.

A green recovery is a moral imperative.

But it is also a massive economic opportunity. Done properly, it will create thousands of new, sustainable jobs.

So let me set out four ways in which we will seek pioneer this better future.

Firstly, we will redouble our efforts to tackle and end the scandal of child poverty.

In the last Parliament, we established the new Scottish Child Payment – the only government in the UK with a scheme of its kind.

In the next parliament, if re-elected, we will double the value of the Scottish Child Payment from £10 per week for every child in a low income family, to £20 per week.

This will help up to 450,000 children in Scotland.

It will be a game-changer in our national mission to end child poverty.

Second, we will seek to address the economic insecurity experienced by too many people, even when they are in full time work.

That is about supporting business to create jobs and making sure that work is fair.

But it is also about giving individuals more security and resilience – which, in turn, builds greater national resilience too.

The SNP has long supported of a citizens' basic income, but the current powers of our Parliament make it impossible.

However, we can make a start.

In the next Parliament we intend move towards what is known as a minimum income guarantee.

The first step will be to establish independently assessed minimum income standards.

We will then identify the extent to which we can use our existing powers over social security, as well as our investments in fair work, childcare and public services to ensure that people meet these income standards.

This will lay the foundation for the introduction of a Citizens' Basic Income should Scotland choose to become independent and gain the tax and social security powers that are necessary to make that a reality.

And in the meantime, it will help tackle poverty and inequality and give people dignity and opportunity.

The third pioneering change as we recover from COVID is to reimagine how people work and live.

Before the pandemic struck, many people were already worried about work-life balance.

We want to do more to support people to achieve a better balance and help businesses employ as many people as possible.

As part of that, we will establish a £10 million fund to support willing companies to explore and pilot the benefits of a four day working week.

And fourth, this manifesto sets out in detail the actions we will take to tackle the climate emergency and meet our world leading target to be net zero by 2045.

Bold and ambitious change is needed in every aspect of our lives if we are to safeguard the future of our people and planet.

The transition to net zero will be profound but it must be just and fair.

In the 1980, the Tories deindustrialised Scotland.

In the process, they abandoned coal and steel workers, their families and communities. I saw the effects of that first hand when I was growing up.

The approach we take to the climate transition must be different and better.

We will work with trade unions, businesses and communities on Just Transition plans for different sectors and communities, ensuring fairness is integral to everything we do.

Already, almost 100% of Scotland's electricity comes from renewables.

We will now invest £1.6 billion to decarbonise the heating of our homes and other buildings.

We will invest £100 million to develop the hydrogen sector, and harness our many natural advantages to become a world leading hydrogen economy.

This is an investment that could truly transform Scotland's energy future.

We will lead a green transport revolution too.

We aim to reduce the use of cars by 20% by 2030.

We will invest over £500 million in our bus network and remove the majority of fossil fuel buses from our roads by 2023.

We will also extend free bus travel to everyone under 22 years old.

And we will seek to build on the lockdown cycling boom. We will ensure that in future 10% of all capital investment in transport supports active travel.

And as we bring our railway back into public ownership – one of our key commitments at this election – we will work to decarbonise it too.

Scotland is already leading the world in tackling climate change.

As we prepare to welcome to the world to COP26 in Glasgow later this year, we must continue to show that leadership.

So we will also introduce a new Land Reform Bill, plant more trees, restore more peatland and invest a total of £500m in tackling the biodiversity crisis.

There is simply no greater responsibility than safeguarding our planet, and we must act with urgency.

I pledge that an SNP government will do so.

The pandemic has affected everyone in Scotland.

But it has not affected everyone equally.

Our young people have made great sacrifices to help those older than them.

They've missed out on school, exams have been disrupted,

they've been separated from friends and family, and now many are entering a difficult labour market.

For teenagers I know it is anything but trivial to miss out on the normal rites of passage – birthdays, proms, graduations – and to be without the simple pleasures of meeting up with friends.

I promise the young people of Scotland that I will do everything I possibly can to make sure you do not carry the legacy of this pandemic into your adult lives.

That is why young people are at the very heart of this manifesto.

We know that a good education is the best way to give everyone a fair start in life.

That starts with the very youngest children.

By August this year, we will have completed the doubling of free, high quality childcare for 3 and 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds.

This was a priority of the last parliament.

In the next Parliament we will go further.

We will invest more than a half-billion pounds in the next stage of the childcare revolution.

We will expand free early years education to all 1 and 2 year olds from low income households.

And we will build a system of 'wraparound' childcare, providing care before and after school, all year round.

Those on the lowest incomes will pay nothing, with others asked to make fair and affordable contributions.

That's about giving our youngest citizens a fair start in

life.

But we must also give older children the chances they deserve.

And that means tearing down the barriers to education that hold too many back.

In the modern age, you cannot learn or do homework if you don't have the right electronic device and access to the internet.

So, for every school-child, we will provide a tablet or laptop, and a free internet connection to use it.

And, you cannot learn if you are sitting in class hungry.

So, we will extend free breakfasts and lunches to all primary school children all year round.

And, when money is tight at home, too often the costs of school are a burden that parents cannot meet.

So we will increase the school clothing grant, linking it to inflation, abolish curriculum charges for classes like music, home economics and art and design, and make sure no child misses out on school trips because their family cannot afford it.

We have already made progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap in education. By tearing down these barriers, we can do more.

And, let me be clear – we know we must do more.

Over the past five years, we invested £750 million in the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

In the next Parliament, we will increase that to £1 billion of investment direct to teachers to help close the attainment gap.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all of Scotland's teachers, who adapted overnight in the most difficult of times.

In the last Parliament, we increased teacher numbers by more than 3,000.

Over the next five years, we will fund the recruitment of an additional 3,500 teachers and classroom assistants.

To help pupils who have fallen behind during Covid, we will implement a package of tailored support, starting with a programme of activities this summer.

For teenagers and young adults we are putting in place the Young Person's Guarantee.

This will ensure that every young person aged between 16 and 24 in Scotland has the opportunity to go to university or college, get a place on an apprenticeship, training or work experience programme, secure a job or participate in a formal volunteering programme.

We are determined that no young person will be left behind by Covid.

Before the pandemic we were on track to meet our target of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts by 2020.

As part of the recovery, we will build back up to 30,000 starts and then, based on an assessment of demand, we will go beyond that.

And we will ensure that access to university continues to be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.

For as long as you entrust the governance of our country to the SNP, there will be no tuition fees in Scotland.

The plan for government that we are setting out in this manifesto – a plan for young and old – demonstrates how we can

build, through recovery, a fairer, greener and more prosperous Scotland.

These proposals reflect – I believe – a broad consensus in Scotland about the kind of country we can be and the values and priorities that should underpin our recovery.

There is much common ground.

We must work together to build on that common ground.

And we must resolve our differences in a constructive and respectful manner.

That is what the SNP in government will always seek to do.

But there is a government at Westminster, led by Boris Johnson, which seems determined to take Scotland in a different direction – a direction that people here did not vote for.

The Westminster government – as we know to our great cost – decides our relationship with Europe.

Scotland's social security policy, the taxes we pay and the money we can spend on public services are all still largely dependent on decisions taken at Westminster.

They decide who is, and who isn't, allowed to come to Scotland to work.

Westminster decides what trade deals to strike and what the content of those trade deals will be.

They control defence spending and priorities.

They even decide the powers of the Scottish Parliament – and increasingly, that appears to mean deciding which powers they want to take away.

They are using their powers to take Scotland in the wrong

direction, and they are pressing the accelerator.

This will make recovery more difficult as they hurtle towards a deeply damaging destination that few people in Scotland want.

I've just set out our plans for economic recovery.

But Boris Johnson's hard Brexit is already destroying jobs and will slow down economic growth.

I've just set out our plans for a National Care Service.

But Westminster's hostile immigration policy will make it harder to recruit the people we need to deliver care.

I've set out plans to invest in public services.

But Boris Johnson wants to waste vast sums of money on yet more nuclear warheads.

I've set out plans to lift children out of child poverty.

But the Tories' welfare cuts and two-child limit are plunging thousands of children deeper into poverty.

I've set out our ambitions to protect opportunities for young people.

But the Tories are cutting those opportunities by ending freedom of movement with Europe.

I've set out plans for a remobilisation of the NHS.

But who knows if our NHS will be safe from the Westminster Brexiteers' desperation for a US trade deal.

They've made it clear they will seize any chance they can get to overturn any decisions of the Scottish Parliament that get in their way.

They are even going to court to challenge a law passed

unanimously in the Scottish Parliament to protect children's rights.

Who knows what's next.

So there are two very different futures on offer to us.

And it is vital that we – the people who live here in Scotland – get to choose which future we want.

Let me emphasise this point.

I do not propose holding an independence referendum while we are still grappling with the COVID crisis.

That would be a dereliction of my duty as First Minister to dedicate all of my energies to leading us through the crisis.

But it would also be a dereliction of my duty as First Minister – my duty to this and future generations – to let Westminster take Scotland so far in the wrong direction that we no longer have the option to change course.

So it is my judgment that the people of Scotland should decide Scotland's future through an independence referendum in the next term of Parliament.

It should take place only when the crisis has passed, but in time then to equip our Parliament with the full powers it needs to drive our long term recovery.

And after this election, if there is a simple, democratic majority in the Scottish Parliament for an independence referendum, there will be no democratic, electoral or moral justification whatsoever for Boris Johnson or anyone else to block the right of people in Scotland to decide their own future.

I believe passionately that with the powers of independence we can do so much more for Scotland.

I look around Europe and I see independent countries, of similar size to us, that are among the wealthiest, fairest and happiest in the world.

If Denmark and Norway and Ireland can do it, then with all our resources and talent, why not Scotland?

But whether or not Scotland becomes independent won't be decided by me or by the SNP or even by the Scottish Parliament.

It will happen only when a majority of people who live here in Scotland are persuaded to vote for it.

Scotland's future will always be Scotland's choice.

At this election, we can take a step towards that better future that we all know is possible.

I am asking you to vote SNP to re-elect me as First Minister, so that I can provide the leadership required to guide Scotland through and out of this pandemic.

I am asking you to vote SNP for a bold and transformational programme for government to kick-start our recovery and build a fairer country.

And I am asking you to vote SNP so that people in Scotland – when the crisis has passed – can have the right to decide Scotland's future and choose independence.

The experienced leadership needed for these serious times and all of the opportunities I have set out today will come about only if there is an SNP government.

And that means using both votes for the SNP.

On May 6 for a better Scotland – for this and for generations yet to come – vote SNP."