



Alternative Programme For Government

Scottish Labour's Alternative Programme for Government

Foreword by Kezia Dugdale, Scottish Labour leader



The last few years in Scottish and UK politics have been dominated by the constitution. Both the UK and Scottish Governments have taken their eye off the ball as a result. The vote to leave the European Union will only make this situation worse. The consequence is public services starved of investment and young people not getting the support they need to get on in life.

That must change in the next Parliamentary session. It would be a betrayal of Scotland's young people, and future generations, for the SNP to prioritise their desire for another referendum above the bread and butter issues of government.

In this document we present a series of Bills we believe the SNP should include in the upcoming Programme for Government. I hope ministers will take this document in the spirit in which it is intended, as a constructive contribution to the political debate. Over the summer we have highlighted government failings in key areas – including the NHS, childcare and transport – but we have also set out things we would do differently.

All of these proposals must be seen in the context of the current financial situation. Austerity started by the Tories is being passed on by the SNP here in Scotland. That means cuts to education, the loss of local NHS services and young people being denied the chance to get on in life.

To invest in our public services the SNP must stop the cuts. To stop the cuts the government must use the tax powers of the Scottish Parliament – through a 50p top rate of tax on the richest few earning more than £150,000 a year and setting a basic and higher rate of income tax just 1p more than that set by the Tories in the UK Government.

Until the SNP uses the new tax powers to stop the cuts their warm words on austerity will mean nothing. We will again press the SNP Government to use the new tax powers when the Budget for 2017/18 is introduced.

We will work with the government on issues where there is common ground. Manufacturing division does not serve the interests of the Scottish people at all. However, on issues where there are profound differences we will not hesitate to oppose the SNP and set out an alternative course of action.

After several years of our politics being focused on constitutional change, both here in Scotland and right across the whole of the UK, it's time for political leaders to focus on the job of investing in our public services and getting people back to work. That work must begin now.

Kezia Dugdale
Scottish Labour Leader

Education, skills and childcare:

Education Bill

The single most important economic policy a government can pursue is investment in education, so our young people can have the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future. The government must stop the cuts to schools, nurseries, colleges and universities and protect the education budget in real terms for the lifetime of the next Parliament.

An Education Bill should include the following measures:

- A Fair Start Fund to narrow the attainment gap, by giving money direct to heads in every primary school and nursery to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This should be paid for by re-introducing the 50p top rate of tax for those earning more than £150,000 a year.
- Reform of the senior phase of High School with the introduction of a Scottish Graduate Certificate for all young people at 18, accredited and accepted by colleges, universities and employers. This should acknowledge vocational courses, work experience, voluntary achievement and traditional exams.
- Abolish charges for exam appeals, introduced by the SNP, levelling the playing field between pupils from different backgrounds.
- Establishing a breakfast club in each primary school in Scotland to begin the move towards flexible, all-age, wrap-around affordable childcare
- Using the proceeds from the “sugar tax” to give every secondary school £100,000 to invest in after school sport.

Jobs and business:

Work and Trades Unions Bill

- This should be the antithesis of the Tory Trade Union Bill. It should recognise the positive role of trade unions in the economy, in creating better workplaces, in increasing productivity and in building a fair economy.
- This should establish *Skills Scotland*, in partnership with unions and employers, and be co-chaired by a nominee of the STUC. This new agency should bring together employment and skills services, including new powers over the Work Programme that are coming to Holyrood.

Digital Services Bill

- To bring all Scottish Government interactions with business within a single online presence. This would make Scotland a world leader in e-government and revolutionise the relationship between government and business.

Health and inequality:

Health and Social Care Bill

- This should establish a National Guarantee for care workers and implementing Unison’s Ethical Care Charter to provide staff with the professionalised industry that they and patients deserve. That would mean:
 - Every care worker paid the living wage
 - Ensuring they are paid for travel cost and travel time
 - No zero hour contracts
 - Appropriate training for staff
- Only a package of funding and reform can solve the problem of delayed discharge in our NHS – and take the pressure of our hardworking staff to let them deliver for patients.

Transplant Bill

- Moving to a different system of organ donation will save lives across Scotland. It's time for Scotland to reclaim a radical tradition on public health. The government should introduce a Transplant Bill as soon as possible because the faster we change the law the more lives we can save.

Anti-Poverty Bill

- This should implement all 15 recommendations of the Eisenstadt Report, including:

Abolishing the Council Tax and replacing it with a fairer system

Building 60,000 affordable house, including 45,000 for social rent

Commencing the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act 2010

Ensuring all firms awarded public procurement contracts pay the living wage

Environment and climate change:

Ban Fracking Bill

- We know our climate and environment are central to the wellbeing of people. We can't meet our climate change targets and dig yet another fossil fuel from the ground at the same time, so there should be a ban on fracking in Scotland — no ifs, no buts, no fracking.

Community and transport:

Warm Homes Bill

- Half of pensioners live in fuel poverty, with the SNP Government confirming that it is set to miss its target on eradicating this altogether. The government should introduce a Warm Homes Act to bring clean and affordable warmth to thousands of households and businesses in Scotland, supporting the growth of district heating, renewable heating and investment in energy efficiency. This Bill must also help to meet our climate change targets.

Bus Regulation Bill

- We want all bus services to be run for the benefit of communities, not simply the private profit of a few big companies. We want to see democratic control of transport as happens in the Lothians. The government should regulate Scotland's buses to give local communities and councils greater say over the services they need and want.

Justice:

Proposed Football Act (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

- The Football Act is a bad piece of legislation and must be repealed. Sectarianism should be tackled through education and prevention, working with anti-sectarianism charities, churches, football authorities and fans to develop positive measures to stamp out sectarianism in Scotland once and for all.
- James Kelly MSP is currently consulting on such a Bill in the absence of government action.

Refugee Integration Bill

- The rise of worldwide human displacement is a generational challenge. A Refugee Integration (Scotland) Bill should set out refugees' rights to access services, enshrine national standards for integration in law, especially around language and interpretation, and simplify the many provisions in Scots law relevant to refugees.

Democracy:

Budget Accountability Bill

- This Bill would mandate the Scottish Fiscal Commission to independently scrutinise the Scottish Government's accounts and income and spending commitments of the Scottish Government, as part of plans to improve collection and publication of good quality data. The Commission should be required to report on the future economic impact of any spending increases or cuts being made by the Scottish Government, including the impact on local democracy.

Parliamentary Reform Bill

- We need to return to the democratic, pluralist principles of the early Parliament. Scrutiny of government is critical to making good laws and ensuring democracy is transparent. For example, if a party has a majority in the Parliament, then that party should not also hold the majority of committee convenorships and should not nominate a Member for the position of Presiding Officer.
- The decision by the SNP to stack parliamentary committees with government aides was wrong and we welcome that the SNP have reversed this. However, this exemplifies why we need a new Parliamentary Reform Bill.