

SNP 

**IF  
SCOTLAND  
MATTERS  
TO  
YOU  
MAKE  
IT  
MATTER  
IN  
MAY.**

MANIFESTO 2005



## CONTENTS

1. Our Pledge - to Make Scotland Matter	2	5.3 A Confident Scotland	28
2. Our Record	3	5.3.1 A Citizen's Democracy	28
3. Our Independence	6	5.3.2 Empowering Communities	31
4. Our Values	7	5.3.3 Safer Communities	31
5. Our Scotland	9	5.3.4 Sustainable Communities	32
5.1 A Prosperous Scotland	9	5.3.5 Learning Communities	33
5.1.1 Scotland's Economic Challenge	9	5.4 An Outward Looking Scotland	33
5.1.2 Let Scotland Flourish	10	5.4.1 Foreign Policy	34
5.1.3 Investing in People	14	5.4.2 Defence	35
5.1.4 A Sustainable Scotland	15	5.4.3 Europe	36
5.1.5 Rural Scotland	16	5.4.4 Make Poverty History	37
5.2 A Fair Scotland	18	5.4.5 The Global Environment	38
5.2.1 Health	19	6. Conclusion	39
5.2.2 Education	22		
5.2.3 Affordable Housing	25		
5.2.4 Citizen's Pension	26		
5.2.5 Fair Taxation	27		

# MAKE SCOTLAND

## 1. OUR PLEDGE - TO MAKE SCOTLAND MATTER

The SNP is Scotland's Party. Only the SNP can be trusted always to put the people of Scotland first.

The more SNP MPs elected to Westminster, the more we can do for our country.

A strong SNP means a strong Scotland. It was SNP pressure that led to the setting up of the Scottish Parliament. And it was the prospect of SNP victories that saved the Govan shipyard in 1999.

Now, only a strong SNP will bring home control of Scotland's oil revenues, save our historic regiments, ensure decent pensions for our old folk and stop Labour's plan to build new nuclear power stations in Scotland.

Only the SNP will make Scotland matter in this election.

As long as we are still partly governed by Westminster we need strong SNP voices speaking up for Scotland.

But to build the best Scotland for everyone we need Independence.

Scotland is a better country with the Scottish Parliament than it was without it. But the Scottish Parliament does not yet have the powers it needs to tackle poverty, stimulate our economy or project Scotland and our values on the international stage.

That's why most people in Scotland want the Scottish Parliament to have more powers.

Independence would mean that all the important decisions about our country, from the economy to foreign policy, would be taken in Scotland.

If Scotland's future matters, make it matter at this election.

*Vote for Scotland's Party. Vote SNP.*

# MATTER IN MAY.

## 2. OUR RECORD

SNP MPs were elected on a pledge to stand up for Scotland in Westminster - and that is exactly what they have done.

The same cannot be said of Scottish MPs from other parties.

Labour and Tory MPs have voted against the Scottish interest time and again, while the Liberal Democrats run down Labour at Westminster but prop them up in Scotland.

Only the SNP can be trusted ALWAYS to stand up for Scotland.

The SNP is the hardest-working party in Westminster. According to official House of Commons figures, SNP MPs have been more active than MPs from any other party.

The more SNP MPs there are, the more we can do for Scotland.

### Standing Up for Scotland

Here are just some of the issues on which SNP MPs were active on Scotland's behalf in the last session of Parliament.

**Standing up for democracy** - The SNP believes that Tony Blair took the country to war on the basis of a lie. That is why our MPs made the case for his impeachment in the House of Commons. Failure to hold the Prime Minister to account for his dishonesty over the war in Iraq would set a dangerous precedent. In the interests of democracy and the rule of law, the SNP will continue to demand that Tony Blair is held to account and we will reintroduce a motion of impeachment in the next parliament.

**Standing up against ID cards** - The SNP is leading the opposition to compulsory ID cards in Scotland. ID cards are the wrong answer to Scotland's problems of crime and security. The SNP believes that the money that is to be wasted on introducing ID cards would be better spent putting more police officers on our streets. The SNP is the only party that can be trusted to oppose ID cards in both Westminster and Holyrood.

**Standing up for our regiments** - The SNP has led the political campaign against Labour's plans to scrap our historic regiments. Despite massive opposition to the government's proposals, Scottish Labour MPs supported the Ministry of Defence over Scotland. The Tories' commitment to saving

# MAKE SCOTLAND

our regiments is open to question as well. It was the Tories who presided over six of the last seven mergers of Scottish regiments. Only the SNP can be trusted to fight for the future of our regiments.

**Standing up for our hospitals** - It was the votes of Scottish Labour MPs that let Tony Blair impose foundation hospitals on England against the wishes of most English MPs. By giving Blair a majority, Scottish Labour MPs didn't just interfere in the running of the NHS in England, they damaged the Scottish NHS as well, because privately-financed English foundation hospitals will mean that Scottish public spending is squeezed. Only the SNP can be trusted with the future of our NHS.

**Standing up for higher education** - A majority of Scottish Labour MPs voted to impose top-up tuition fees in England, even though most English MPs voted against. That was not just undemocratic, it was also damaging to Scottish higher education because the legislation will result in a funding shortfall for Scottish universities. Scotland's sole Tory MP also sold out the Scottish interest by abstaining from the vote. The SNP will always support Scottish higher education.

## **Standing up for offshore renewable energy**

- Scotland has 25 per cent of Europe's wind and tidal capacity and 10 per cent of its wave power. There are huge, untapped opportunities for offshore energy production. But the government is undermining the future of the offshore renewable energy industry in Scotland by introducing discriminatory charges that will price Scottish producers out of the market. If Labour gets its way, Scottish generators will pay over six times as much as generators in England and Wales to connect to the National Grid. The SNP is leading the fight to stop this happening and protect the future of the offshore renewable energy industry.

## **Standing up for fishing**

- In government Labour has betrayed the Scottish fishing industry, just as the Tories did before them. SNP leader Alex Salmond is leading the fight to take Scotland out of the Common Fisheries Policy, which has been so disastrous for our fishing industry and marine environment. Only the SNP can be trusted to stand up for the fishing industry.

## **Standing up for our whisky industry**

- Scottish Labour MPs supported the imposition of tax stamps on spirits, despite the fact that the industry, the unions, the Scottish Affairs

# MATTER IN MAY.

Committee in the House of Commons, and Labour MSPs in the Scottish Parliament are opposed. Whisky strip stamps will not counter fraud, but they will threaten many of the jobs that rely on the whisky industry. But when it came to a choice, Scottish Labour MPs chose to put party loyalty before the interests of Scottish workers. Only the SNP can be trusted always to put Scottish interests first.

## **Standing up for a fairer world**

- SNP leader Alex Salmond has pressed the leaders of all parties represented in the House of Commons to commit to spending the UN target of 0.7% of national income on international aid by the end of the next Parliament. If party leaders agree to include this commitment in their manifestos it will ensure that the target is met by the end of this decade.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

## 3. OUR INDEPENDENCE

As individuals, we value our own independence. We accept that it is entirely natural to make our own decisions, to earn and spend our own money, and to take responsibility for our own lives. Why should we settle for anything less for our country?

As a nation, we accept the independence of other countries as normal. We do not think it strange that the people of Norway and Denmark run their own affairs. We would not expect the people of Ireland or Sweden to ask another nation to take decisions for them because they didn't feel up to the job. Why should the people of Scotland be any different?

There is absolutely no reason why we can't have a real parliament of our own, one with the full powers of Independence.

Independence is not just normal; it is desirable as well. Small independent nations like Norway, Denmark and Finland are much more successful than Scotland in terms of economic prosperity and living standards. Independence gives those nations the powers to change their country for the better. Scotland could do the same.

Independence would give the people of Scotland control over our lives, our communities and our country. It would give us the power to shape the kind of country we want to live in. One where all our citizens are treated equally. One where wealth creation is encouraged and supported and that wealth is shared for the benefit of all.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Independence*

# MATTER IN MAY.

## 4. OUR VALUES

An SNP government will be open and progressive. We will promote economic success, tackle inequality, and give people the support they need to make the most of their lives. We believe that government has a responsibility to provide high quality public services, look after the vulnerable, and foster a spirit of enterprise.

But we also understand that government - even an independent government - can only do so much. Each and every individual in Scotland must also play a part in building a nation we can all be proud of.

These are the values which shape and influence the development of SNP policies and which will guide us in government.

**No one country and no one human being is worth more or less than any other.**

We believe in the right of sovereign peoples to self-determination. We believe that Scotland should be an independent country, equal with other countries in Europe and the world.

We are committed to co-operation and peaceful co-existence with other nations.

We believe nations must be free to decide how they co-operate to create economic prosperity, deliver social justice and protect the environment.

We affirm our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, and its demand that all nations protect and assert the human rights of the individual.

The SNP is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity. That means the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, age, sexuality, faith, belief, ability, status or social background.

The SNP's commitment to equality of opportunity demands an end to poverty and in particular to child poverty, which blights the life-chances of so many young people in Scotland.

**The people of Scotland should be empowered to take control of their lives and communities.**

The SNP believes that decisions affecting the lives of individuals are best taken closest to those who will be affected by them.

We will opt for de-centralist policy solutions that put power in the hands of communities and

# MAKE SCOTLAND

individuals. And we will promote social justice, economic progress and a citizen's democracy.

We believe that public services should be run for the benefit of the communities and individuals they serve. There should at all times be transparency and accountability to local communities in the delivery of these services.

No-one can be truly empowered while feeling unsafe in their home and in their community. The SNP respects and will uphold the right of every citizen to live in peace and without fear from those who abuse the privileges of a democratic society.

**Wealth should be created sustainably and shared in order to give every individual the opportunity to release their full potential.**

The SNP recognises the necessity for Scotland to compete in the global economy and for the creation of wealth to be sustainable. We must steward the natural environment and resources of our country to ensure our economic success is not at the expense of future generations.

We are committed to significantly improving Scotland's economic growth by placing Scotland at a competitive advantage, allowing the talent of the people of Scotland to flourish and for the potential

of our country to be released. We will equip the people of Scotland with the skills and education required to ensure long-term individual and national economic success.

We recognise that it is through economic success that we will earn our aspiration to social democracy, that no-one in the world owes Scotland a living and that we must reap our own harvest and ring our own till.

We believe those who have retired from work should share fairly in the national wealth they have helped to create.

We believe in simplicity, transparency, fairness and honesty in the taxation and benefits system. Tax will be levied and benefits distributed fairly and progressively.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## 5. OUR SCOTLAND

We want to build a Scotland that is confident about itself and its place in the world. A Scotland that is positive about wealth creation. A Scotland that champions equality and looks after the vulnerable, but encourages those with exceptional talent and enterprise to thrive. A Scotland that is clean, green and sustainable. And a Scotland where success is built as much on individual endeavour and responsibility as it is on the actions of government.

This document sets out our principles and priorities for this election. To accompany it, we have published a series of mini-manifestos setting out our policies in more detail. These are available from [www.snp.org](http://www.snp.org)

### 5.1 A PROSPEROUS SCOTLAND

The SNP has big ambitions for social democracy. But we understand the need to fund those ambitions. As well as talking about social democracy, we must earn it.

#### 5.1.1 SCOTLAND'S ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

The national prosperity necessary to sustain social democratic levels of spending is created by economic growth. Yet compared with the rest of the UK and other small European nations, Scotland has suffered from low economic growth for a generation.

And it is getting worse. Under the Tories, the growth gap between Scotland and the UK was 20 per cent; under New Labour it is 30 per cent. That is why, despite our well-educated population and abundant natural resources, our living standards are lower, our poverty levels are higher and our population is shrinking faster than is the case in other small European nations.

Population trends predict that Scotland will lose half a million people over the next 40 years. That is the equivalent of losing a town the size of Carnoustie, Alloa or Galashiels every single year. To turn this around, to grow our economy and provide more opportunities for our citizens, we must become more competitive. Instead of being one of the least competitive nations in Europe, as we are now, we must aim to be one of the most competitive in the world.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

It can be done but, first, we have to choose to change.

The economic status quo is not working. To make Scotland more competitive, the Scottish Parliament needs full control over Scotland's economy and resources. We need the same economic powers as every other country. We also need to know what we would do with those powers.

## 5.1.2 LET SCOTLAND FLOURISH

The SNP wants Scotland to be a competitive, prosperous and aspirational small nation. We believe in the talent and ingenuity of Scotland's people and our ability to participate successfully in the world market.

The SNP will set three targets for our economy:

- To be among the top 15 most competitive countries in the world and the most competitive of the present UK nations.
- To match the average growth rate of other small European nations (4 per cent). Performing like other small European nations

will earn our economy an additional £19bn by 2015. That will amount to £4,000 for every person in Scotland.

- To grow the population by 3 per cent over the next 10 years. Instead of losing people as predicted, we want to gain 150,000. The opportunities that will be created by higher economic growth will mean that fewer Scots will feel the need to leave, more Scots will return, and more new Scots will come to Scotland.

To achieve these targets we are proposing seven specific policy measures:

- We will lower corporation tax to 20 per cent. By decreasing the amount of tax they collect from each individual company, Sweden, Finland, and Ireland have attracted new companies and increased their total tax take. Scotland can do so too.
- We will lower business rates to below the English level. Scottish business rates for 2005-06 are 9 per cent higher than in England. This sends the wrong message to indigenous businesses and those thinking about coming to Scotland and should be immediately remedied.

# MATTER IN MAY.

- We will reduce business burdens. We will only introduce regulations once they have been adopted by a majority of our EU neighbours, unless there is a clear benefit to Scotland of early adoption.
- We will refocus the business support network. Since being set up in 1991, Scottish Enterprise has received £5.8bn in funding and yet Scotland still has the lowest business survival rate in the UK. We will reinvigorate the enterprise network by directing its attention to key tasks through a trimmer Scottish Enterprise.
- We will invest in infrastructure through the Scottish Trust for Public Investment. The Trust will channel public and private capital into infrastructure investment. Projects will be prioritised through public debate and public bond issues. Projects that should receive consideration include a train link between all three Central Belt airports, the dualling of the A9 to Inverness and the trunk route network in the South West and North East of Scotland, and a bullet train connecting Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.
- We will invest oil revenues in a Scottish Oil Fund. The fund will be similar to the Norwegian

Petroleum Fund and will ensure that Scotland's oil wealth is used to benefit future generations of Scots. Scotland also has vast renewable energy potential. The strength of the energy sector will allow us to build new expertise and create a new era of energy opportunity, bringing jobs and wealth to the renewables-rich North and Highlands.

- We will develop a proactive immigration policy that welcomes new Scots and encourages people to move back to Scotland. By creating the conditions for growth and gaining control of immigration policy, we can make our country a more welcoming place for talented people. This commonsense approach will not only attract talent from elsewhere, it will also persuade more talented Scots to stay and return.

These measures, learning from our small, successful neighbours, will allow Scotland's ingenuity to re-emerge. They will double our growth rate, create new jobs, encourage thousands of Scots back to the country and create the economic base to build real social democracy.

*Find out more in our manifesto for economic growth – 'Let Scotland Flourish'.*

# MAKE SCOTLAND

## It's Scotland's Oil

More than 90 per cent of the UK's oil revenues come from the Scottish sector of the Continental Shelf. So it really is Scotland's oil.

Since oil was discovered, the UK government has raked in £200 billion in tax revenue - £35 billion of it since Labour came to power. But Scotland has had little to show for it.

Compare devolved Scotland to independent Norway, which this year celebrates its Independence centenary.

Norway controls its own resources and since 1996 has invested a share of its oil revenues in a fund for the future.

Today that fund stands at £85 billion and will provide an income for the people of Norway for the rest of time.

It's not too late for Scotland.

The recent discovery of significant new oil fields in the waters around Scotland underline that there is still a great deal more oil and gas in Scottish waters. With at least 28 billion barrels of oil left in

the waters around Scotland, we stand to benefit from a £600 billion windfall.

The SNP will establish a Scottish Oil Fund, modelled on the Norwegian Petroleum Fund, to invest a share of North Sea revenues for the nation. This money will be used to finance public service investment well into the next century, ensuring that we all share the benefits. £600 billion equals current Scottish health spending for 83 years. It is an asset equivalent to over £100,000 for every person in Scotland.

## A new approach to trade

Overseas trade in the UK is largely centred on established markets. Because of this, Scottish companies have not been encouraged to develop the potential of doing business with emerging markets such as the new EU nations.

Yet there are many historic trading links between Scotland and these countries, and the SNP believes that - with the right support - there are enormous opportunities for Scottish companies to establish new trading relationships with them.

We will develop an international business support network, modelled on the 'Scotland House'

# MATTER IN MAY.

approach. 'Scotland House' gathers together the knowledge and experience of Scottish businesses which are already established in target markets to assist new businesses wishing to enter. Providing access to local information, services and contacts speeds up entry into the market and reduces costs. The overall result is enhanced trading and other opportunities.

Working with partners in the private sector - including 'Scotland House' itself - we will build on this model to develop a co-ordinated and effective international support system. By mobilising the goodwill and knowledge of the expatriate business community we will help Scottish companies increase their trading opportunities and build a stronger economy.

## Tourism

More must also be done to ensure that tourism, as Scotland's biggest industry, thrives. That's why we will refocus the work of VisitScotland, from its current regulatory role, to that of an effective marketing body. More direct air links will also make Scotland a more accessible destination for tourists.

## Connectivity

The SNP wants Scotland to be amongst the best in the world in terms of IT infrastructure and national connectivity. That means complete access to broadband across Scotland and new initiatives to provide wireless access.

In Estonia, for example, the debate is focused on making the whole country a wi-fi hotspot, to make wireless access to the internet available everywhere, let businesses become truly mobile, and open up the marketing opportunities of the world wide web to everyone.

The SNP will support a wi-fi pilot initiative for the North East of Scotland.

We will work with local authorities and the business community to create a series of wi-fi hotspots, starting in Aberdeen and then Dundee and Inverness, with the intention of creating a wireless area between these cities.



# MAKE SCOTLAND

## 5.1.3 INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Scotland's people are the greatest asset we have as a nation. We will invest in the education and skills of our citizens, to allow individuals to reach their full potential and contribute to our national prosperity.

The SNP believes that learning must be life-long and we will develop programmes of work-based learning and short courses to help every Scot develop new skills throughout their careers and into retirement.

We will develop a National Apprenticeship Scheme to promote and enhance vocational qualifications.

We will tackle the skills shortages that exist in many professions – such as engineering and construction – by encouraging more people into the Scottish workforce.

To help achieve this, we will develop a distinctive immigration policy for Scotland.

We will introduce a Scottish Green Card and encourage migrants with the skills we need to apply for it.

We will fund an ambitious international campaign targeted at the Scottish expatriate community and Diaspora. Too many of our brightest people have had to leave Scotland to succeed. We will give them a reason to come back.

We will organise a well-resourced international programme of events to showcase all that is good about living and working in Scotland. Employment fairs and accompanying events will be targeted at communities with Scottish links. People with a previous Scottish connection are much more likely to be receptive to the idea of returning.

We will draw on the experience of Irish initiatives, such as the 'Jobs Ireland' campaign, which was designed to encourage people who had left Ireland to come home. Between 1999 and 2002 the scheme attracted approximately 280,000 new workers to Ireland.

We also believe that we should draw from the well of overseas talent already here. Many asylum seekers living in Scotland are highly educated and skilled individuals, yet they are prevented from working by UK legislation. We believe they should be given the opportunity to work while awaiting decisions on their right to stay in Scotland. This would help our economy; it would help asylum

# MATTER IN MAY.

seekers themselves who desperately want to be self-sufficient; and it would help foster better community relations.

## An inventive nation

Scotland has an outstanding history of innovation and enterprise. Our past economic success was built on it. Today, many Scots at home and abroad carry on this great national tradition.

To harness our national talent the SNP will create a new incentive for innovation - a Scottish Nobel Prize. Instead of rewarding past success and achievement, the Saltire Prize will encourage and promote future innovation and future technological endeavour. Worth £5m, the Saltire Prize will give a national focus to our plans to encourage and harness Scotland's creative energy.

We will also draw together expertise from the academic, business and financial sectors to create an Institute of Inventors. The Institute will help inventors bring their products to commercial realisation here in Scotland, by providing guidance on development, finance and marketing.

## New national holidays

Not only do Scottish employees work longer hours than their EU counterparts, they also have fewer public holidays.

The SNP will ensure that every worker is entitled to public holidays over and above their annual leave entitlement.

We will also introduce two additional national public holidays.

St Andrew's Day (November 30) and the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320 (April 6) will be new national holidays.

## 5.1.4 A SUSTAINABLE SCOTLAND

We recognise the potential impact economic growth has on the planet's finite resources, which is why we aim to make our economic policies as sustainable as possible.

We will develop a green jobs strategy for Scotland, based on the enormous potential of renewable energy and waste management to contribute to our economy.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

Scotland has 25 per cent of Europe's wind and tidal capacity and 10 per cent of its wave power. There are huge, untapped opportunities for offshore energy production.

Indeed, the opportunities offshore for these technologies dwarf the potential for onshore wind development. In many parts of Scotland, large scale onshore projects give rise to understandable public concern. That is why the overwhelming bulk of wind developments should be offshore like the thousand mega-watt development in the Beatrice oil field.

Onshore developments should be community based and have clear community benefits.

We will increase research and development investment in renewable energy technologies to harness Scotland's immense renewables potential and turn it into a profitable and environmentally sustainable industry.

However the UK government wants to impose discriminatory energy charges, which threaten the future of all Scottish energy producers. The Energy Act establishes a new regime for electricity generators who wish to sell their electricity on the

National Grid. The system is based on proximity to population centres rather than generating potential, meaning that generators in remote parts of Scotland are charged more than producers in the south. The SNP will oppose these discriminatory charges - but we need Independence to guarantee a healthy future for Scotland's renewable energy industry.

Because we are committed to producing energy in a cleaner way, the SNP will oppose any new nuclear power stations in Scotland. Although the continued use of nuclear power to produce energy is not sustainable, acceptable or economically viable, Labour seems intent on commissioning new nuclear power stations in Scotland. With Independence, an SNP government will not only ensure that no new nuclear power stations are built in Scotland, but that existing facilities are decommissioned at the end of their economic or technical life.

## 5.1.5 RURAL SCOTLAND

We will ensure that rural industries like agriculture and fishing are supported in a sustainable way and that our rural communities flourish.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## The Agricultural Sector

We rely on a high-quality, high-value reputation in agriculture and we must build on these strengths. To ensure that the interests of our agricultural sector are properly represented, we need a direct voice in the EU.

Agricultural policy shouldn't just be about securing a quality, affordable food supply. We will also tackle issues such as depopulation and rural degradation to ensure that rural farming and crofting communities can prosper.

We believe that reform of the Common Agricultural Policy should redirect money away from support based on production, and towards rural communities.

In government, the SNP will strengthen control of agricultural imports and promote a workable organic farming plan and a fairer rural stewardship scheme. We will introduce single 'country of origin' labelling and a marketing scheme to take advantage of Scotland's high quality reputation. We will promote the interests of small farmers and crofters and the emergence of new markets in the organic sector.

## A GM-Free Scotland

The introduction of genetically-modified (GM) crops to Scotland would undermine the reputation of Scottish farming and fly in the face of public opinion. It would introduce a product that consumers do not want. It would also threaten Scotland's reputation for a high quality natural environment. Once the GM genie is out of the bottle, it cannot be put back. The damage is irreversible. The SNP will therefore respect the precautionary principle and support a moratorium on GM crop trials in Scotland.

## Supporting Scotland's Fishing Industry

Scotland's fishing industry supports tens of thousands of jobs and generates billions of pounds of value in the Scottish economy. It should be buoyant but the white fish sector, in particular, has suffered years of mismanagement by Westminster and Brussels. Famously, it is now known that a UK civil servant described the industry as "expendable" compared with Britain's wider European interests in the negotiations over Common Market entry in the early 1970s. This has been the hallmark of how successive governments in London have treated the fishing industry.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

Fishing will benefit greatly from the level of priority given to it by an SNP administration in the Scottish Parliament or indeed any government of an independent Scotland.

The SNP will continue to campaign for withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy and will not support a European Constitution which claims fishing policy as an "exclusive competence" of the European Union.

We favour national resource control to produce policy which both conserves fish stocks and the livelihoods of fishing communities.

In the short term the SNP believes that quota ownership should be contained within the active fishing community. We will resist any further decommissioning programme, offer a programme of assistance to the onshore service companies and provide increased funding for the promotion and marketing of Scottish fisheries products.

In the medium term, we propose a system of industry management of the fishery, including the appointment of advisers from the industry itself to assist with fisheries negotiations, reporting to Parliament through a cabinet ranked Fisheries Minister.

## Rural transport

Good, affordable transport links are essential for rural, remote and island communities. We will commission a wide-ranging study on how to make remote and island communities more accessible, drawing on the experience of countries like Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This will include a thorough analysis of the effect of introducing a road equivalent tariff scheme on those who live in remote and island communities and on tourism.

*Find out more in our manifesto for rural Scotland*

## 5.2 A FAIR SCOTLAND

The SNP believes in social democracy for a good reason - it works.

In modern Europe, social justice and economic prosperity go hand in hand, and the most successful small nations are those that give equal weight to both. All of the Nordic countries are more competitive than the UK. And they also give greater priority to social justice and equality than the UK. An independent Scotland will follow their example.

# MATTER IN MAY.

Our vision is as much about independence for individuals and families as it is about Independence for the nation. We will help individuals achieve the best they can.

## Delivering high quality public services

As social democrats we believe that one of the most important functions of government is to deliver high quality public services that support all generations. Good public services also help to make us more competitive as a nation.

## Building schools and hospitals

The SNP will not use the expensive private finance initiative to build or refurbish schools and hospitals.

Instead, we will support the use of not-for-profit trusts. Not-for-profit trusts can access cheaper capital and deliver public sector projects more cost-effectively.

And because the assets will be owned by a trust and not by a private consortium, the interests of the public will come first.

## 5.2.1 HEALTH

Since 1999 NHS waiting times and lists have increased to record levels.

Fewer patients are being treated now than when Labour took office.

And hospital services all over Scotland are at risk of being downgraded or closed altogether – which means that many expectant mothers and people needing urgent accident and emergency treatment will have to travel further to get the care they need.

Those who work in the NHS do Scotland proud.

But Labour and their Liberal Democrat partners in government have failed to get to grips with the problems in our health service.

The SNP will take action to address the core problems that are holding the NHS back.

We will take action to tackle staff shortages in the NHS. We will train 100 extra doctors every year. And we will introduce practical measures to encourage doctors who come from other countries to study here, to stay on and work in the Scottish NHS when they graduate. We will target a recruitment campaign at the many thousands of

# MAKE SCOTLAND

qualified nurses in Scotland who do not currently work within the NHS. And we will press for changes to the European Working Time Directive which is currently putting so much pressure on our hospitals.

To get waiting times down faster, we will set up fast-track diagnostic and treatment centres – within the NHS, not hived off to the private sector.

We will keep health services local with a presumption against the centralisation of vital services such as maternity and A&E. To help support local services in the long term, we will train more generalist doctors, make full use of primary care services and support nurses and other health care professionals to reach their full potential.

We particularly recognise the importance of local health services in rural communities and will support the model of rural general hospitals.

The SNP will take a zero tolerance approach to hospital acquired infections. We will insist on better hand washing and hygiene procedures; increased pre-admission screening of patients and the quarantining of those infected; and improved cleaning of hospital wards. We will also ensure that hospitals have adequate staffing levels to implement these procedures.

We will also make health boards more accountable by ensuring that half of their members are directly elected by the public.

## **Tackling Scotland's dentistry crisis**

Scotland has an appalling record of dental health. More than half of five year-olds have dental disease. This will not improve unless more people visit the dentist more regularly. Yet more than half of all adults in Scotland, and one third of all children, are not even registered with a dentist.

Access to NHS dentistry must be improved, not least to deliver the policy of free dental checks.

The SNP will provide better incentives for dentists to undertake preventative work and invest in their practices, in return for a greater commitment to the NHS.

We will also reduce bureaucracy for dentists and simplify the fee scale.

We will increase the number of salaried dentists and expand the dental workforce by increasing the number of dental undergraduates and giving an enhanced role to complementary professionals.

# MATTER IN MAY.

We will also re-establish a third dental school in Scotland.

## **Living healthier lives**

We all know how important it is to take better care of our health. The message is clear, but it is not always easy to make the necessary lifestyle changes. That is why it is so important to encourage youngsters to establish healthy habits that will endure throughout their lives.

The SNP will implement a comprehensive action plan for fit, healthy young Scots. It will include:

- Annual fitness checks for school pupils;
- Healthy foods and drinks in school vending machines;
- Free nutritious meals for all, piloted in P1-P3 and increased entitlement for other age groups;
- Free fruit for all pre and primary school children and pregnant women;
- Nutritious food at breakfast clubs;

- 2 hours guaranteed PE per week for all pupils;
- A sports volunteer programme;
- An end to the sell-off of playing fields and free access to council swimming pools.

The SNP also supports measures to improve and increase sexual health services, in order to reduce teenage pregnancies and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

*Find out more in our manifesto for fit, healthy young Scots.*

## **Smoking in public places**

Smoking is the biggest single preventable cause of premature death in Scotland - and passive smoking damages the health of countless others. Workers in every town and village in Scotland are exposed to the risks of passive smoking every single day. It's time their rights were protected and their health safeguarded.

In order to reduce smoking levels, the SNP supports measures to prohibit smoking in public places, which has achieved a marked reduction in smoking levels in Ireland and elsewhere. However

# MAKE SCOTLAND

this must be backed up with a greater investment in smoking cessation services.

## **Damaging Drugs**

We want to reduce the damage that drugs do to the individual and to society as a whole. But words are not enough; real action is required. We will take firm action against drug dealers but we will also tackle the poverty and exclusion that contribute to the high levels of damaging drug use in some of our communities.

We will also do more to help those who want to come off drugs. Long waiting lists for places on rehabilitation programmes make it much more difficult to tackle the problems drugs cause in our communities. That is why we would give people trapped by the misery of drug addiction access to rehabilitation facilities within 3 months. We would also introduce a programme of financial assistance for community-based groups to provide after-support to reduce the risk of relapse, and practical help and support for the families of recovering addicts.

We also recognise the damage that alcohol misuse can do to the health and well-being of individuals, and society, and would offer more practical support to help tackle this problem.

## **Prescription Charges**

The current system is unfair, inconsistent and a tax on ill health. It is also expensive to administer. We will immediately abolish prescription charges for all those with a chronic health condition; those with cancer; and those in full time education or training. We will also phase out prescription charges for the rest of the population.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Scotland's health.*

## **5.2.2 EDUCATION**

Education is about creating opportunities and life chances.

Education is an end in itself, but provides other benefits as well.

It enables individuals to fulfil their potential; it provides us with the skills to enhance our own career prospects and it provides our economy with the educated workforce it needs to compete in the modern world.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## **Firm Foundations for Learning**

The earlier we learn how to learn, the better we learn for the rest of our lives.

International research supports the fact that the biggest steps in learning to learn are taken when children are very young. The benefits to the individual and society are significant, especially in communities where opportunities have been limited by other factors.

High quality early years education creates a lifelong appetite for learning. The SNP will increase the provision of free nursery education. We will move to a proper half-day of early years education in nursery school. Every 3 and 4 year old will be entitled to more than 16 hours per week of free nursery education - compared to just 11 hours under Labour. That amounts to an extra 200 hours per year - an increase of 50 per cent.

This will be a first step towards the introduction of a comprehensive national early education and childcare system.

We will also promote across Scotland the Nurture Groups that are already successful in Glasgow. Nurture Groups provide support for the most

vulnerable children in our society, to help them in the early years of their primary education.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Scotland's children*

## **Better schools**

To feed the appetite for learning that children acquire in the early years, school pupils and education professionals must get the space and the time they need to learn and to teach.

The SNP will cut class sizes, starting with a reduction in all Primary 1, 2 and 3 classes to eighteen pupils or less, and we will progressively reduce class sizes in later primary and early secondary education.

We will encourage pupils who want to, to pursue vocational education opportunities in S3 and S4. Vocational skills are just as important as academic qualifications and should be valued on an equal basis.

To ensure that all pupils enjoy the right conditions for learning, we will tackle the causes of indiscipline and truancy in schools with a greater emphasis on early intervention to help children.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

To encourage excellence and promote talent we will encourage greater specialisation within our comprehensive system. For example, we will encourage the development of specialist sports academies. Success breeds success and every young Scot should have the chance to share in the ethos and success of their school. Every school will be able to identify a specialism from science to languages and from literature to music.

To ensure adequate local provision of education, we will introduce a legislative presumption against closure of rural schools and tighten the regulations for closing all schools.

Scottish culture and heritage will form part of the curriculum to help produce a confident nation. This will include the teaching of enterprise skills and Scottish history.

The SNP will continue to support Catholic schools for so long as parents wish to send their children to them. We will ensure that our education system meets the distinctive needs and interests of all of our communities, including our ethnic minorities.

SNP pressure on the issue of Gaelic education has ensured the introduction of the Gaelic Language Bill in the Scottish Parliament. SNP

efforts have ensured that councils will be looking at when they can introduce and encourage Gaelic medium education rather than whether they will provide it at all. The SNP will go further and guarantee in law the right to a Gaelic medium education at primary level where demand exists.

The SNP will establish an Education Convention consisting of teachers, parents, pupils, employers and representatives of wider civic Scotland. The Convention will have a statutory right to be consulted on major educational proposals and will be able to bring forward its own ideas for legislation and reform.

## Higher education

Access to higher education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. The SNP opposes tuition fees in all their forms, including the Graduate Endowment.

We will abolish the Graduate Endowment, which increases the debt burden of graduates at a time when record numbers of graduates are becoming bankrupt.

# MATTER IN MAY.

Top-up fees will not be imposed under the SNP, nor will institute-variable fees. Decisions on studying should not be made on financial grounds.

We will also replace student loans with grants.

As well as ensuring that students have the freedom to make the correct decisions on their courses, we will ensure that academics and the institutions they work in have the freedom and the resources to be among the best in the world.

In particular, we will ensure that our universities and colleges have the resources they need to clear the building maintenance backlog and start building the most modern and cutting edge facilities in the world.

We will also ensure that resources are available to employ and retain our share of the world's best academics.

The European Higher Education Area is due to be completed in 2010, and Scotland must be ready to participate and compete in that arena.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Scotland's youth*

## 5.2.3 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The SNP believes that everyone should have a secure, warm home at a cost they can afford. For many in Scotland today, that remains out of reach. Under-investment has left Scotland with a shortage of affordable housing that frustrates individuals, undermines communities and inhibits economic growth.

There has been a sharp decline in the availability of social rented housing in Scotland and there is still a huge shortfall between the number of houses being built and the number required.

The SNP will plan to increase the number of homes being built in the social rented sector to meet current and future needs.

We will also reform the right to buy legislation – while protecting the rights of existing tenants – to ensure that new houses are not lost from the social rented sector.

We will also do more to help first time buyers. In many parts of Scotland the high cost of home ownership is a huge obstacle to young people and families who want to settle down. We welcome measures aimed at supporting home ownership,

# MAKE SCOTLAND

such as shared equity schemes, but we will go further.

We will introduce a first time buyers' grant of £2,000 for every first time buyer – a policy already successful in Australia – to help with the costs and outlays for those buying their first home. Together with our policies to boost the Scottish economy, this will provide a real incentive to keep more of our young people in Scotland.

We will also deal with other constraints on housing development by changing the focus of the planning system, giving local authorities the powers they need to provide more affordable housing, removing the constraints on the supply of land and directing Scottish Water to increase expenditure on new sewerage and drainage systems.

## 5.2.4 A CITIZEN'S PENSION

State pensions in the UK are among the least generous in the developed world. The current pension system, which is based mainly on labour market participation, also discriminates against people with interrupted employment histories such as women and carers.

Although more than half of pensioners are entitled to the means-tested Pension Credit to top up their income, many of the most vulnerable pensioners do not claim it. As a consequence, one in five Scottish pensioners currently live in poverty.

The SNP will introduce a Citizen's Pension of at least £110 per week for a single person and £168 for a couple. The Citizen's Pension will rise in line with earnings. This will provide every pensioner with a secure income in retirement, without the indignity of means-testing, and a decent foundation on which to save. Eligibility will be based simply on residency and age.

We will also increase pension saving by introducing a system of state-matched funding to replace the current system of tax relief on pension contributions, which is highly regressive and favours the highest earners. At present over half the tax relief on pension contributions is paid to the richest 10 per cent of taxpayers. Under our proposals individuals with low or moderate incomes will have their savings, up to an agreed ceiling, matched by the state. This will give those most at risk of poverty greater rewards and incentives for saving than at present.

In addition we will introduce a new state pension savings scheme to replace the current State

# MATTER IN MAY.

Second Pension. The new system will offer a secure alternative to occupational or private pensions to groups such as women, carers and people who are unable to work.

## Better care for our elderly

Those who need residential care in the later stages of their lives must be able to access it. There is a looming crisis in the care home sector. Many care homes in the independent and voluntary sectors are struggling to survive because the fees that are paid to them by local authorities do not cover the cost of care.

For the long term, we will establish an independent review of the cost of care and agree to be bound by its findings.

In the short term, we will demand back the £23m that was taken away by the Westminster government after the introduction of free personal care.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Scotland's pensioners.*

## 5.2.5 FAIR TAXATION

We believe in progressive taxation based on ability to pay. With Independence we will develop a national system of progressive taxation that is honest, fair and easy to understand, efficient to administer, and that restores accountability between those who pay taxes and those who decide how they are spent.

## A Local Income Tax

Since 1997 Council Tax has increased by 55 per cent and now represents a considerable financial burden for many people, particularly those on low or fixed incomes, such as pensioners. It is an inherently unfair system, which takes no account of ability to pay. People on a low income pay a far greater proportion of their income in Council Tax than those who are better off.

The SNP will abolish the Council Tax and introduce a Local Income Tax, which is a progressive system based on the ability to pay. Under our proposal half of pensioners will pay nothing and most people will pay less.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

## **A Citizen's Income**

The UK tax and benefit system creates many poverty and unemployment traps that keep individuals and families in a state of dependency. This is not just bad news for the people affected; it is bad news for the economy and for society as a whole.

The underlying level of dependency and unemployment in Scotland is a lot higher than is suggested by the official figures. On average 17 per cent of the working-age population in Scotland claim benefit and in some areas this figure is much higher.

Many of these people want to work but the operation of the benefit system acts as a disincentive to finding employment. For example, there are many thousands of people claiming Incapacity Benefit in Scotland who would like to look for work but risk ending up worse off as a result.

With Independence, we will work towards a fully integrated tax and benefit system designed to guarantee every citizen a minimum income, remove financial barriers to work, and help people out of poverty.

A Citizen's Income will create a system of social security that provides a safety net for all citizens, without stifling initiative and enterprise.

## **5.3 A CONFIDENT SCOTLAND**

The SNP's ambition for Scotland is to put citizens in control – to give individuals the confidence and the power to change their communities and the country for the better.

### **5.3.1 A CITIZEN'S DEMOCRACY**

Active citizenship is about rights and responsibilities. It's about the responsibilities that governments have to their citizens but also those that individuals owe to each other and to society as a whole.

It goes far beyond voting in elections, and abiding by the law. Active citizenship also requires that we live responsibly, and it implies participation.

We believe that decisions should be taken as close to those they affect as possible, and that every citizen should have the opportunity to participate in and shape the society in which they live.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## **A written constitution**

We believe that an independent Scotland should have a written Constitution that clearly enshrines the rights and responsibilities of all those who choose to live in Scotland.

## **Citizenship**

The SNP has an open and inclusive approach to Scottish citizenship, particularly in the context of the EU. The automatic right of citizenship will be open to all those living in Scotland, all those born in Scotland and all those with a parent born in Scotland. All others will be free to apply for Scottish citizenship.

## **Equality of opportunity**

All of Scotland's citizens have a right to participate fully in society and to share in our nation's prosperity. With Independence, we will introduce a constitutionally enshrined guarantee of equal opportunities for all regardless of race, gender, age, sexuality, faith, belief, ability, status or social background. We will also ensure that all legislation promotes equality of opportunity.

The Act of Settlement 1701, discriminates against Catholics and women and has no place in a modern society. Accordingly, we will repeal it.

The SNP wants all of Scotland to be represented in our national parliament and we take our own responsibility seriously.

The profile of our parliamentary groups will, as far as possible, mirror that of Scotland as a whole. In particular, we are committed to seeking better gender balance and to securing the election of SNP MSPs from Scotland's ethnic minority communities in the 2007 election to the Scottish Parliament.

## **Votes @16**

The SNP will reduce the voting age to 16.

16 and 17 year olds are currently denied the right to vote, despite being expected to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Denying young adults the right to participate in the democratic process and shape the decisions that affect their lives is contradictory, discriminatory and damaging to democracy.



# MAKE SCOTLAND

## Citizenship classes

We will ensure that young people are equipped with life skills as an integral part of their education. From basic information about voting, the political system, paying household bills, and the law, to environmental awareness and broader rights and responsibilities as citizens, our young people should be given skills for life.

## Immigration, Asylum & Refugees

With Independence, Scotland will have control of policy relating to immigration, asylum and refugees. We will use these powers to create fair and efficient processes for people coming to Scotland as immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. These processes will recognise not only our obligation to offer sanctuary to people in fear of their safety, but also the potential contribution that successful applicants can make to our country. Our vision is of a tolerant and inclusive Scotland, in which everyone who lives here can participate and prosper.

## People power

Confidence in politics and politicians has declined in recent years. However, people are no less interested in political issues – whether it be the

war in Iraq, hospital closures, pensions or the unfair Council Tax, people are willing to stand up for what they believe is right and in the best interests of their communities. We want to reconnect citizens with the democratic process, to make sure their voices are heard and have a real impact on decisions. We will give the Scottish people opportunities to participate in our national Parliament that extend beyond voting in elections.

## The People's Parliament

The Scottish Parliament does not belong to politicians; it belongs to the people of Scotland.

To facilitate active participation, we will hand over the Scottish Parliament to the Scottish people on a regular basis, to allow them to debate the issues of importance to them.

Citizen Debates - we will empower and resource the Scottish Civic Forum to organise 'Citizen Debates' in the Scottish Parliament Chamber. The topics for debate will be determined by members of the public, who will also lead and participate in these debates. We will develop innovative methods of consultation to encourage people to play their part in influencing the topic of debate. Relevant Ministers, Committee Conveners and MSPs will be required to be in attendance, and there will also be

# MATTER IN MAY.

a duty on Ministers or Committee Conveners to make a formal reply to the topic for debate.

Civic Debates - to complement the Citizen Debates, the Scottish Civic Forum will be asked to facilitate quarterly meetings in the Parliament to discuss the major issues of the day. These meetings will bring together parliamentarians, organisations and individual citizens in debate.

People's Business - in addition, we will extend the opportunities for people to directly influence the topics for debate in the Scottish Parliament. We propose the introduction of 'People's Business' to the parliamentary week. Each week, members of the public will be invited to take part in a poll to decide a topic for debate by MSPs, to which Ministers will be required to respond.

*Find out more in our manifesto for a citizen's democracy*

## 5.3.2 EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Local communities should be the focus of active citizenship. We need to reinvigorate local democracy if we are to put people in control of their own communities and the decisions that impact on their daily lives. Community Councils are

the integral building blocks of this democratic renewal. At the moment, they are not functioning as effectively as they could be; they have few responsibilities and no resources. However, we believe they have the potential to engage - and change for the better - the communities they represent.

We will reform the role of Community Councils with a view to making them more responsive, dynamic and representative. This will involve devolving greater responsibilities and budgets to them. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to Community Councils is not appropriate and so reform will be based on local flexibility.

## 5.3.3 SAFER COMMUNITIES

The SNP opposes the introduction of compulsory Identity Cards.

The government claims the introduction of ID cards will protect us against terrorism, organised crime and illegal immigration, and combat benefit fraud. But there is no evidence to support this.

The practical implementation of this scheme will be a bureaucratic and logistical nightmare, as well as expensive and ineffective. ID cards will cost an

# MAKE SCOTLAND

estimated £500 million in Scotland over 10 years. Every individual will have to pay at least £85 to get one.

The SNP will invest instead in more effective security and crime prevention measures, such as more community police officers.

However, combating crime is about more than deterring and catching criminals. We need a firm but fair justice system that makes offenders take responsibility for their actions and tackles re-offending.

There are currently too many people in prison who do not belong there, such as fine defaulters or individuals who would be better dealt with by alternatives to a custodial sentence.

We will introduce a 'unit fine' system, which takes account of ability to pay.

We will work to improve the range of alternatives to custody and we will re-establish the Airborne Initiative for high tariff young offenders.

We will also introduce new sentencing options, such as the weekend prisons that are successful in many parts of Europe. Weekend prisons act as a fine on time, but allow an offender to continue in

employment and maintain contact with their family – two of the most important elements in preventing re-offending.

*Find out more in our manifesto for a safer Scotland*

## 5.3.4 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

From the litter on our streets to the quality of the air that we breathe, the environment affects each and every one of us. It is in all our interests to look after our local environment, and make our contribution to creating a Scotland and wider world that is clean, green and sustainable.

We all have a responsibility to play our part in protecting the environment, to enhance our quality of life and that of our children and grandchildren. A healthy environment contributes to the health of all who live in our communities.

We need to move away from a throwaway society and reduce the amount of waste we produce. We also need to recycle more of the products and packaging we do purchase and do more to become energy efficient. We are committed to making these tasks easier, through, for example, the provision of more recycling services and facilities.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## Changing behaviour

We will draw on best practice from other countries to provide incentives for individuals to take responsibility for the environmental consequences of their behaviour.

In Norway, for example, the government and packaging industry have come together to promote the recycling of drinks cartons through a lottery initiative in which the winner is drawn from recycled cartons containing the contact details of consumers. This has helped Norway to achieve a 60 per cent recycling rate for milk and juice cartons.

We will also look at initiatives such as the Rotterdam NU smart card which awards points for the purchase of certain goods and services, and the recycling of household waste. Points can be redeemed to purchase other sustainable goods and services.

We will work with consumers, producers and communities to develop similar projects for Scotland and turn our aspiration for sustainable communities into reality.

## 5.3.5 LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Knowledge is the key to confident citizenship and a confident nation.

A country that is confident about expressing its unique culture through art, literature and song, is a country more confident in all aspects of life and on the international stage. The SNP will offer more support to Scotland's artists, writers and musicians in order to nurture and promote our distinct culture. We will consider a tax relief system – similar to that in operation in Ireland – to encourage artists, writers and musicians to live and work in Scotland.

Independence will also give Scotland control over broadcasting, and the ability to better reflect Scotland's unique culture and identity.

## 5.4 AN OUTWARD LOOKING SCOTLAND

Scotland is an ancient nation with a long tradition of internationalism. But we have no right of representation in the international arena. As an independent nation state, we would have the power to speak with our own voice in international

# MAKE SCOTLAND

bodies like the United Nations and the European Union.

In today's interdependent world, what it means to be independent has changed. It is about taking decisions for ourselves and being accountable for them. It's about having the tools to build a better country by taking responsibility and deciding how we want to use our sovereignty - when to pool it and when to retain it.

As more and more decisions are taken supra-nationally in a globalised environment, having our own voice to defend our national interests and protect our distinctive culture is more essential than ever.

## 5.4.1 FOREIGN POLICY

The SNP will always uphold the rule of international law.

We support the right of democratic nations to pursue, together, our common belief that terrorism must be defeated. However, the war on terrorism must not be waged at the expense of human rights, or we will be betraying the very values we are fighting to defend.

An independent Scotland will contribute towards international peace-keeping and humanitarian missions. The Indian Ocean tsunami and the humanitarian disaster that followed has affected people from all over the world. The generosity shown by Scots in responding to the disaster demonstrates our aspiration to play a positive role in the world and help others in need.

We will support the efforts of Scots who volunteer their services abroad by setting up a Scottish 'Peace Corps.' This will allow Scots to participate through existing organisations, and provide opportunities where none exist. We will legislate to protect the pension and benefit rights of those who volunteer their services, and will encourage both public and private sector employers to support such activities.

We will join the world community where necessary to preserve peace and security and develop a Scottish Centre for Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution, to promote peaceful alternatives to armed conflict.

An SNP government will guarantee that Scottish soldiers are never again dragged into an illegal war, waged against the wishes of the Scottish people. In an independent Scotland, the Scottish

# MATTER IN MAY.

Parliament will always have the final say on whether our servicemen and women take part in any military conflict.

*Find out more in our manifesto for Scotland in the world*

## 5.4.2 DEFENCE

The SNP wants Scotland to be a normal country making its own decisions about defence and peacekeeping. Only when priorities are set in Scotland can we prevent our brave servicemen and women being ordered into illegal conflicts. The historic regiments of Scotland are being destroyed through amalgamation and downsizing; an independent Scotland will redress this.

The priority of the Scottish Defence Services (SDS), in partnership with Scotland's neighbours and allies, will be to safeguard our land, sea and air space. The SDS will initially be equipped with Scotland's negotiated share of UK defence resources. Service and pension conditions will be at least equal to those of the UK forces. The SDS will be a professional force supported by reserve forces with employment opportunities open to everyone meeting the appropriate standard. MoD civilian support personnel employed in Scotland at

Independence will have the opportunity to remain in the Scottish MoD or Scottish civil service.

Scotland will maintain active defence commitments with its friends and allies through the United Nations, European Union and Partnership for Peace.

The SNP reaffirms that no nuclear weapons will be based on independent Scottish soil. An SNP government will not be part of a nuclear-based commitment such as NATO.

SNP priorities in defence are that:

- Defence policy should be made in Scotland's national Parliament.
- Scotland's armed services should be well-remunerated, equipped and trained.
- Historic regiments will be protected and, if abolished, re-established as part of the SDS.
- Military facilities, including strategic airforce stations, should not be downsized at the present time.
- Nuclear weapons will be banished from Scotland forever.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

- Counter terrorism provision will be enhanced, and plans will include elements of the regular and reserve SDS as part of a co-ordinated strategy.

Military practice will be reviewed to balance the necessity of training against the disturbance to communities.

## The future of the regiments

The SNP has been at the forefront of the political campaign to retain Scotland's historic regiments. The regimental structure is the most effective and efficient way of organising our armed forces, as well as being part of our heritage.

In Scotland, most people who join up prefer to join a unit that has a distinct local identity. That identity is rooted not in cap badges, but in the communities that soldiers come from. When that link is cut, the local connection is lost.

In government the SNP will restore the regimental structure to the Scottish Defence Services. The regimental tradition, with its emphasis on local connections often going back for generations is the best vehicle for that sense of community which is so vital for our troops' morale.

## 5.4.3 EUROPE

The SNP believes in a confederal Europe.

In today's interdependent world there are many issues that are best dealt with collectively, as well as many issues best dealt with at national level.

In order to get the most out of Europe, we must be able to make political decisions on our own behalf, rather than letting London decide for us. We must be free to pursue our national interests, just as the other nations of Europe pursue theirs. That is what Independence is all about.

The cost of not being independent in Europe has been high, as our fishermen know only too well. Many matters are hugely important to Scotland but of little relevance to London, so our interests will never be properly represented as long as we have no direct say.

# MATTER IN MAY.

## The European Constitution

The SNP campaigned for a referendum on the constitution because it represents a significant development in the way Europe is governed. We want to help encourage people to get involved in the debate on how we can make the EU work better for everyone. The referendum debate will also provide an opportunity for the SNP to share our vision of Scotland's place in the new Europe.

However the constitution, as it stands, is not acceptable. The SNP will not support a constitution that claims exclusive competence over fisheries resources. In the event that the EU constitution is not ratified by one or more countries, we will support a recalled convention to redraft the constitution.

## 5.4.4 MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

The SNP believes that, if we are to leave our children a fairer and more peaceful world, we must take action at international, as well as a national level to close the gap between rich and poor.

We support the campaign to Make Poverty History.

We believe that all developed nations should meet their commitments to international development aid. With Independence, an SNP government will meet the UN recommended aid contributions level of 0.7% of national income. Prior to Independence we are urging the leaders of all political parties represented in the House of Commons to make a manifesto commitment that the UK will achieve the UN target by the end of the next Parliament.

At the same time, we recognise that increasing levels of aid is only part of a long-term solution to the problem of global poverty. Increased globalisation has opened up many new opportunities for trade between states, but international trade rules, enforced by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), are making it increasingly difficult for poorer countries to compete. That is why we support the radical reform of international trade bodies, particularly the WTO, to create a more level playing field between rich and poor.

The G8 summit at Gleneagles this year gives us the opportunity to remind the G8 countries of their responsibilities to the rest of the world and to demand that they take action on debt repayments, trade agreements and aid assistance to prevent people dying because of starvation and poverty.

# MAKE SCOTLAND

We also believe that the EU has a crucial role to play in helping developing countries grow their economies, through progressive debt relief and the opening of our markets to their products. An independent Scotland will work with like-minded countries within the EU to help achieve this.

It is essential that trade agreements should not be made at the expense of development and poverty reduction. It is also essential that public policy issues such as health, education, culture, workers' rights, food and water security be protected wherever commercial trade agreements are made.

The SNP believes that access to water should be internationally recognised as a basic human right, which means opposing any privatisation of water distribution. We will also continue the campaign to improve access to medicines for developing countries, affirming the right of all peoples to have access to whatever medicines they require.

We will also help tackle the arms trade. Currently, the UK is the second biggest arms exporter in the world, with an appalling record of unethical sales. This was graphically illustrated by the arms trade fair that took place in London on September 11th 2001, at which both sides in the Congo civil war were represented. With Independence, the SNP would work with like-minded countries in the EU

and international community to combat the proliferation of weapons and strengthen controls on this immoral trade.

## 5.4.5 THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

In Scotland, we should be playing our part in tackling environmental problems like global warming. Yet Scotland's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are the fourth highest in Europe. And, despite our potential to become Europe's renewables powerhouse, emissions from electricity generation have increased by 18 per cent since 1990.

The SNP is committed to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. We will adopt targets agreed as part of the Kyoto Protocol and invest in our enormous renewable energy potential.

We will implement a national energy efficiency strategy, which will include ambitious domestic and commercial energy efficiency targets.

We will introduce higher standards of building construction and insulation methods in all sectors. And we will ensure that all major public construction projects incorporate energy efficient design elements.

# MATTER IN MAY.

With Independence we will also use our voice on the international stage to urge other nations to play their part in a truly global challenge.

*Find out more in our manifesto for the environment*

## 6. CONCLUSION

In our manifesto, we have set out our key campaigning issues for the election campaign and into the new session of Parliament.

We have detailed a range of policies, for the NHS, education and our justice system that can be delivered within the existing powers of the Scottish Parliament.

And we have presented our vision and ambitions for an Independent Scotland.

On May 5, we are asking the people of Scotland to make Scotland matter by voting SNP.

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