

Manifesto Commitments for the Built Environment in the Scottish Election

BEFS has undertaken an overview of policy commitments found in the manifestos of political parties currently represented in the Scottish Parliament, with some yet to be published, that would have implications for Scotland's built environment. The most significant change to previous manifesto is that most are giving significant attention to the climate emergency.

This selection is no way authoritative and we would recommend you reading the manifestos in their entirety.

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

<https://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Digital-Manifesto-Final.pdf>

- We would amend planning laws, so that the Scottish Government cannot overturn a local planning decision. This would ensure that major developments require engagement with communities and that national infrastructure needs to deliver clear local benefits to those that will be affected by it.
- We would deliver a programme of Community Investment Deals, worth up to £25 million each, to create good local jobs. Our initial £550 million investment in these Deals would be tailored to the existing strengths of a local area and would look to leverage additional investment from the UK Government, councils and local employers, following the existing City and Region Deal model.
- To make them more competitive, we would support our councils to exempt high street and town centres from paying any business rates. We would also provide full funding for councils to scrap parking charges on publicly-owned car parks to encourage more people to support our high streets to recover.
- Closed shutters and 'to let' signs area blight on our town centres and high streets, a reminder of their decline.
To tackle this, we would support communities' 'first right to buy' when local businesses are facing closing their doors. To increase footfall in our town centres and turn them into places where people live, we would also relax planning laws to allow for the re-development of long-term unoccupied business properties into good quality housing.
- We know the positive effect that green spaces can have, not only on the environment but also on people's mental and physical health. This has never been so visible as during lockdown. Therefore, we want to expand communal green spaces so that people who don't have access to private gardens can still enjoy green spaces. To achieve this, we will work with councils to redevelop brownfield sites in the centre of large towns and cities as new park areas, as part of a new national public gardens strategy.
- We would deliver 60,000 new affordable homes, with two thirds of these being new social housing. We will aim to increase overall house building across all sectors to 25,000 per year by the end of the Parliament. To support building and renovations in remote and rural parts of Scotland, we will invest £50 million through the Rural Housing Fund.
- Scotland has an ageing population, so there is an ever-increasing need for housing to be accessible. This issue is compounded by a lack of disabled housing, with the number of people with a disability on council waiting lists doubling in the last two years. We will encourage the future proofing of new-build housing for easier accessibility adaptations. To help older people stay in their homes or longer, we will work with councils to ensure the adequate delivery of care and repair services across Scotland.
- We welcome the report of the cross- party Tenement Maintenance Working Group and will look

to deliver on its recommendations in the next Parliament, to keep tenements safe, energy efficient and well maintained.

- Delivering energy efficiency in homes is an essential part of achieving our net zero target. The Scottish Conservatives amended the Fuel Poverty Act so that the Scottish Government will have to support all fuel-poor households to reach EPC C by 2030. A drive to renovate homes could create thousands of jobs across Scotland, while also ensuring we meet our climate change targets.
- To achieve this ambition, we would spend over £2.5 billion over the next five years on energy efficiency in homes and buildings. We would also create a Help to Renovate scheme, to support owners making their properties more energy efficient and set aside a specific Rural Transition Fund to support energy efficiency in off grid areas.
- We recognise that energy efficiency is being held back in Scotland due to a skills gap, especially in rural areas. We would make delivering the skills necessary to improve energy efficiency a key priority for our skills programmes. To further improve energy efficiency standards, we would review and update the EPC system.
- There are over 47,000 long-term unoccupied properties in Scotland. In many cases these properties are dilapidated and have become a blight on our communities. We would introduce Compulsory Sales Orders for long-term unoccupied properties in Scotland. We will support housing associations and consider new models for meeting Scotland's social housing needs. There are 685 housing associations across the UK but only 11 of these are in Scotland. We would fund a pilot programme for cooperative housing in Scotland.
- To help music venues, heritage sites and festivals recover, we will set up a £50 million Cultural Kick Start Fund. As part of this, we will deliver a half price entry programme for heritage sites for the remainder of 2021.
- We will also bring forward an Arts Bill to ensure local authorities carry out a minimum level of cultural planning and engagement, provide a more sustainable funding model and introduce measures to ensure a fairer geographic spread of resources.

Scottish Green Party

<https://greens.scot/ourfuture>

- £3bn in warm and zero-carbon homes and buildings, leveraging £7.5bn in private investment and creating over 75,000 jobs.
- Ensure enterprise and infrastructure funding is targeted at the low carbon economy and green manufacturing and apply strict conditions to ensure that companies support jobs in Scottish supply chains.
- Establish a Scotland-wide programme of ‘people and place centred industrial strategies’ which will have the powers, mandate and finance needed to enable regions and localities to set out their own industrial plans which can connect directly to funding from the Scottish National Investment Bank.
- Set conditions for Scottish content in supply chains where possible, including through the renewables leasing processes.
- Establish a centre of excellence to deliver a technical skills programme for green manufacturing, providing grant funding for manufacturing firms to retrain and upskill their workforce and provide apprenticeships.
- Support the partial replacement of corporation tax at the UK level with a carbon tax that increases over time in line with our climate targets.
- Make 15-minute neighbourhoods a key principle in Scotland’s Planning Policy Framework. Our vision is for everyone in towns and cities to be able to get what they need within a 15-minute walk.
- Create a town and city centre green transformation fund to re-orient these places towards pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users including children, the elderly and disabled people. We will reclaim road space for outdoor leisure and commercial opportunities, and support the use of vacant premises for arts, recreation and other activities that benefit local communities.
- Deliver a reinvigorated national cycling and wheeling network, including active highways through rural areas to link towns and cities, with a rich network of well-planned urban cycling and walking routes.
- Significantly and urgently scale up existing energy efficiency and green heat programmes.
- Retain the interest-free loans and cashback incentives currently in place for private homeowners investing in energy efficiency and zero carbon heat.
- Fund an “energy leap” programme to pioneer and then roll-out deep retrofits at scale. This approach upgrades the most inefficient homes to the highest efficiency rating, taking a cost-effective whole street approach and using offsite manufacturing to improve quality and minimise disruption.
- Establish a Green Rural Homes service, bringing together engagement, enhanced support and advice services for homeowners and landlords in rural areas that are off the gas grid.
- Introduce green heat grants for households to replace fossil fuel boilers with green alternatives, principally heat pumps, with the aim of installing 500,000 by 2030. Grants will be available and will mean that households pay no more than the cost of a gas boiler.
- Support a ban on new fossil fuel boilers from 2025 for buildings off the gas grid, and 2028 for all buildings.
- Establish a £500m heat networks fund to support the expansion of local and district heat networks, connecting 20,000 homes and creating 3,000 jobs.
- Seek agreement with the energy efficiency industry to source a minimum percentage of their products from Scotland.
- Require all new homes to meet passivhaus or other net-zero standards, be connected to the public transport system and be built in areas that are not in flood-risk zones. This will apply

to all homes built from 2022 onwards.

- Require all private sector homes to meet at least EPC C at the point of sale of major refurbishment from 2025.
- Protect consumers by introducing a Scottish Quality Mark in partnership with the energy efficiency and domestic renewables sector, and require projects that benefit from public funding to comply with PAS 2035 standards.
- Support the building of 70,000 homes by 2026 and a further 50,000 homes between 2027 and 2032, 70% of which should be for social rent.
- Ensure that short-term holiday lets are regulated and require planning consent for second homes.
- Tackle empty homes by granting local authorities the power to issue Empty Property Use Orders to bring vacant properties back into use.
- Review the taxation of vacant and derelict land to ensure landowners are incentivised to bring it back into use.
- Require private mass housebuilders to provide a proportion of affordable housing built to the same standards as the rest of each development.
- Support housing co-operatives through providing financing options and targeted relief from Land and Buildings Transaction Tax.
- Introduce a five yearly property condition survey for all tenement buildings.
- Require owners associations for all tenement buildings to handle repairs and maintenance.
- Make it easier to trace absent owners for discussions about repairs by opening up the landlord and land registers.
- Establish a loan fund for owners' associations to carry out essential works.
- Set a universal statutory standard for habitable housing across all tenures.
- Encourage planning authorities to earmark a wide range of different types and sizes of housing on sites for development.
- Engage communities in all stages of local development planning.
- Bring forward a Land Reform Act to tackle monopolies, promote fairer management of land and regulate the sale of land.
- Commission a review of taxation and subsidies relating to land ownership.
- Regulate the sale of land of national or community significance.
- Require significant landholdings to produce a transparent land management plan and be subject to a public interest test.
- Introduce restrictions on overseas ownership of land.
- Give Scotland's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement a statutory footing, requiring large landowners - private, public and third sector - to act responsibly.
- Review take-up of existing Community Rights to Buy and the Community Asset Transfer scheme to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Review the valuation of land so communities are not forced to pay market rates for land to already wealthy landowners.
- Increase support and reduce costs for communities wishing to take charge of land through existing community empowerment legislation.
- Increase the Scottish Land Fund
- Modernise and extend common good law, and ensure that common good funds are properly managed for the benefit of all.
- Reactivate common good law to allow local authorities to designate common land.
- Establish a national common good register based on local authority data.
- Reform the national register of vacant and derelict land to increase its usefulness.
- Ensure land that has been derelict for a long time is a top priority for development.
- Increase funding to local authorities to tackle vacant and derelict land.

- Ensure public bodies that own vacant or derelict land have plans to bring sites back into use, and put plans in place to prevent sites from falling into disuse.
- Introduce Compulsory Sale Orders so local authorities can bring chronically disused sites back into public use.
- Bring forward a 21st century version of the Land Settlement Act 1919 to promote repopulation and resettlement in rural areas of Scotland.
- Place a duty on local authorities with a rural development remit to introduce measures to further sustainable rural repopulation.
- Fund communities to lead plans for their local areas. Local Place Plans are a new tier of community-led development planning that need actioned. We will equip communities and councils with the tools and power to investigate their own development needs and plan their futures.
- Deliver 15-minute neighbourhoods. We will ensure that the new national planning framework and alignment of community, spatial and transport planning bring about vibrant 15 minute neighbourhoods.
- Ensure meaningful public engagement in planning. We continue to support communities having appeal rights, but until that happens we will demand improvements to public engagement at every stage.
- Increase investment in culture, and ensure all regions benefit from this by supporting local authorities to develop resourced Cultural Plans in collaboration with local residents, artists and industries.
- Prioritise the protection of libraries and cultural hubs to promote digital inclusion and skills development.
- Contribute to the revival of our town centres by supporting the repurposing of commercial properties into low carbon artists' spaces such as studios, venues, cinemas, workshops and production facilities.
- Amend the Scottish Government Sustainable Procurement Strategy to allow artists, creative freelancers and microbusinesses equal access to procurement opportunities.
- Extend the Scottish Government's Culture Collective scheme, which supports creative practitioners and communities to work together in adapting to the impacts of the pandemic, while providing vital employment for freelance artists.
- Develop an 'embedded artists' scheme that places artists and creative thinkers in local and national government, utilising their unique ways of thinking and working to imagine and co-design new spaces and systems for communities, economies and participatory democracy.
- Encourage collaborative working between the health and cultural sectors, involving arts organisations in the delivery of health and wellbeing in all Health and Social Care Partnership areas, and support initiatives such as A Sense of Belonging in Edinburgh, which promotes positive mental health and wellbeing through participation in the arts.
- Require those in receipt of public funding to demonstrate alignment with national carbon reduction targets

Scottish Labour Party

<https://scottishlabour.org.uk/where-we-stand/national-recovery-plan/>

- Scottish Labour has a plan to upgrade all homes to at least an energy efficiency rating of C or higher by 2030 and, where possible, zero carbon by 2045.
- We would establish a national housing agency to work closely with local
- authorities and coordinate the roll out of measures including insulation, double
- glazing, boiler replacement, forms of renewable heat, and heat networks.
- Our 2030 target will require a significant step change in current activity: at least
- 80,000 homes would need to be renovated annually, more than double the current rate. Long-term, we estimate that at least 90% of homes will need to be fitted with a form of renewable heat such as heat pumps or heat networks.
- Low and middle income households would be awarded grant funding while other households would be offered interest free loans to pay for the upgrades, up to the value of £18,000. Fuel poor and rural homes would be targeted first.
- Through our Better Business Scotland certification we will ensure that every business that wants to work with the public sector has a clear carbon reduction plan and a commitment to achieving net zero.
- Scottish Labour would adopt a local first approach to procurement, reducing carbon emissions by ensuring goods and services are procured locally.
- Where local suppliers don't exist, the Scottish National Investment Bank would be used to invest to help existing companies diversify or support the creation of new local supply chains. Support would be tied to our Good Work criteria and would promote cooperative business models.
- Scottish Labour would adopt a new approach to development that puts public health and the environment first. Our National Housing Agency would be centrally responsible for the acquisition of finance; land and housing; and dealing with derelict and vacant land, and act as a prime mover in driving the delivery of housing. It would ensure the development of well-designed communities with green space as a key consideration.
- Scottish Labour would reinstate the ability of public authorities to acquire land at existing use value for social homes. As a result the public sector would capture the uplift in the value of land that results when planning permission is granted, unlocking significant funds for infrastructure and development.
- Existing communities can't be neglected. We would invest in councils to create urban and rural safe active travel routes, green spaces and food growing places.
- We will prioritise local procurement by having a 'local first' approach to all procurement. We will encourage local authorities to do the same to ensure that local businesses get the best opportunity to bid for local contracts.
- We believe local development organisations should be established to lead local economic development and to identify investment opportunities in communities across Scotland.
- e support building 200,000 zero carbon social homes over ten years, with parity of grant funding between councils, cooperatives and housing associations.
- The pandemic has highlighted the importance of revisiting mandatory minimum space, quality standards and energy performance in new and refurbished homes. We believe these should all be reviewed as part of a long-term housing strategy.
- Land prices lie at the centre of the housing crisis. We believe the law should be reformed to allow for the acquisition of land for social housing at existing use value and use development gain to finance essential infrastructure.

Scottish Liberal Democrats

<https://www.scotlibdems.org.uk/manifesto>

- Overhaul public sector procurement policies to ensure they support local suppliers, micro-bidders, fair employment practices and to take note of the level of state aid in non-Scottish bids.
- Support the development of a "Made in Scotland" quality standard, beyond food and drink, to support consumer choice and aid exports.
- Change planning regulations so that town centres can adapt to new demands with the support of local communities.
- Establish a right for communities to protect threatened community facilities through different ownership or the use of shared premises as hubs. Community groups or cooperatives should be given a fair chance to purchase or acquire these assets.
- Provide transition support and specialist low carbon advice free of charge to businesses on how to minimise the impact of their work on the environment.
- Expand the Scottish Land Fund to help further community ownership across Scotland, empowering sustainable communities to repopulate.
- Prioritise land acquisition for communities by developing a localised service to assist self-builders and communities in securing land to meet housing demand, coordinating with local authorities, landowners and housing associations.
- Institute a First Time Builders Fund, modelled on the Scottish Government's First Home Fund, to support population growth in rural areas where there is no existing housing stock available for purchase.
- Give the Scottish Land Commission the power to legally enforce the voluntary Rights and Responsibilities Protocols that govern the relationship between landowners and communities, like the mandatory codes of practice overseen by the Tenant Farming Commissioner.
- Afford rural communities enhanced consultation rights and consideration by public bodies, similar to the Islands Act, to ensure that the unique challenges facing rural communities in mainland Scotland are addressed.
- Make it easier to integrate chargers into streetlights or other street furniture as technology allows, and require new developments to include charging points as standard.
- Change town planning processes to make sure roads have separate spaces for cyclists, walkers and motorists, to keep them all safe.
- A fully independent environment standards organisation to keep government on the right track.
- Scale up investment in energy efficiency and low carbon heating for Scotland's homes, with an initial five-year programme that will improve 80,000 homes per year.
- Switch a million homes from polluting mains gas to heat pumps by 2030 as part of our major new infrastructure programme.
- Invest in low-carbon heat networks, including the potential for connecting whole towns.
- Set a target for all new social housing, including affordable homes, to be built to Passivhaus standards by 2025, and increase building standards to require all new-build residential properties to meet EPC A ratings by 2025, and Passivhaus standards by 2030.
- Introduce the delayed energy efficiency regulations to require landlords to meet higher energy standards within five years, and make it easier for people in shared buildings to agree to upgrades and improvements.
- Make sure access to green, open spaces, wildlife corridors and woodland is available to every community.
- Protect green belts and gaps between settlements for the long-term benefit of local communities, the climate and nature.

- Create a Brownfield First policy, under which planning applicants should demonstrate that no brownfield land is available for their proposal before permission can be granted on greenfield sites.
- Set out that the climate emergency and Scotland's 2045 net zero target are material considerations to be afforded significant weight in planning decisions.
- Make district heating the normal choice for new developments, and support the move away from new gas heating installation.
- Encourage the use of living roofs to boost biodiversity and create a new network of habitats for pollinators, provide new green living spaces, reduce flooding and save energy.
- Ensure the ownership of common land, infrastructure and play areas on new housing estates is with local councils, with a thirty year maintenance dowry, to avoid future problems of neglect and unfair charges for homeowners.
- Make sure there are community engagement plans in place at the planning stage of major infrastructure projects to allow local people to have an effective voice.
- Preserve parks and playing fields as important community green space.
- Build 60,000 affordable homes to help address homelessness.
- New Help to Renovate loans to bring derelict homes back into use.
- We will conduct an urgent review of the reasons properties are left vacant, to take the steps needed to bring more of them into use, with the specific aim of increasing the housing supply.
- We will create a new Help to Renovate loan scheme to bring neglected properties back into use with a particular focus on helping first-time buyers onto the housing ladder and achieving low emission properties.
- To help deliver more suitable land for housing we will take forward the recommendation of the Scottish Land Commission to force the sale of derelict sites that blight communities.
- We will conduct an assessment of publicly owned brownfield land and consult on a mechanism for selling such land on a plot-by-plot basis direct to communities for self-building.
- We will make it much simpler, through permitted development rights, for urban derelict land and rural farm buildings to be used for zero emission homes.
- We will give adequate powers to local authorities to manage the numbers of second homes in their area where there is evidence of problems.

Scottish National Party

<https://www.snp.org/manifesto/>

- We will deliver a further 100,000 affordable homes by 2032. This will be backed by investment of £3.5 billion over the parliament and support 14,000 jobs a year. We will meet this target through a combination of new build homes and bringing existing housing stock back into use.
- We want all homes to be energy efficient and zero carbon with access to outdoor space, transport links, digital connectivity and community services.
- If re-elected, we will invest £1.6 billion over the next Parliament to decarbonise the way we heat our homes and other buildings. This will reduce emissions, tackle fuel poverty and create new jobs.
- We will establish a Zero Emissions Social Housing Task Force to advise on requirements in social housing to meet net zero targets and, longer term, inform what is required in the private rented and owner occupier sectors.
- We will develop new standards to require new buildings to use renewable or zero emissions heating from 2024 and help improve energy efficiency in existing buildings through loans, grants and equity.
- All new homes delivered by registered social landlords and local authorities will be zero emission homes by 2026.
- We will decarbonise the heating of 1 million homes by 2030.
- We believe the public sector should lead from the front in our efforts to decarbonise Scotland, and so we will invest £95 million in projects that decarbonise the public sector estate.
- We will review energy standards set through building regulations to deliver further improvements in energy efficiency and help remove poor energy efficiency as a driver of fuel poverty.
- The energy efficiency of homes all across the country will need to be improved, so whilst work on a planned Publicly Owned Energy Company was halted during the pandemic, we will now re-focus our efforts on a new dedicated national public energy agency. This will coordinate and accelerate delivery of heat and energy efficiency work, inform and educate the public on the changes required, provide expert advice to national and local government, and work with public, private and third sector partners to deliver this transformative national project. We will consider making this Scotland's first virtual agency.
- We will introduce a new Housing Standard, set in law by 2025. This will cover all homes, new and existing, including agricultural properties, mobile homes and tied accommodation and include aspects such as repairing and safety standards, minimum space standards, digital connectivity, future-proofing of homes, and energy efficiency and heating standards.
- This will ensure that the quality of existing homes keeps pace with new homes.
- We will increase the supply and choice of accessible and adapted homes and introduce a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard which all new homes must achieve.
- This new Standard will be placed in law within the parliamentary term.
- Staying Local, Building Communities
- We believe in building the wealth of our local communities. This means keeping resources and wealth in the local economy, with control in the hands of local people, helping communities be more resilient, sustainable and economically secure.
- We will take forward our ambitions for 20-minute neighbourhoods: the creation of liveable, accessible places, with thriving local economies, where people can meet their daily needs within a 20 minute walk – enabling people to live better, healthier lives and supporting our net zero ambitions.
- By changing our approach to transport, housing and public services we can make 20 minute neighbourhoods a reality as we recover from the pandemic.

- We will set a national objective to increase the amount of housing within town centres and high streets, both through use of existing stock and new developments.
- We will connect communities by making the internet accessible to all and transforming how we travel around our country.
- We will build on the recent Scotland Loves Local campaign which encouraged people to think local first by piloting local loyalty schemes alongside a national Scotland Loves Local loyalty scheme.
- A new £10 million Scotland Loves Local fund will help revitalise high streets hit by the pandemic.
- To further shift the balance of power to communities, we will bring forward a Community Wealth Building Act to redirect wealth, control and benefits to local economies.
- The Act will require local authorities and public bodies to spend in their local communities through increased local procurement, greater use of small businesses and ensuring taxpayers money is reinvested as far as possible in their local communities.
- We will review the Community Empowerment Act and consult on ways in which it could be expanded to put more power in the hands of people and communities and increase the amount of local funding allocated by communities themselves through participatory budgeting.
- We will bring forward a new Land Reform Bill. It will ensure that the public interest is considered on any particularly large scale land ownership and introduce a pre-emption in favour of community buy-out where title to land is transferred.
- The Scottish Land Fund helps communities take ownership of the land and buildings that matter to them. We will double the fund, increasing it to £20 million per year by the end of the parliament.
- A £50 million Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme will ensure land is utilised for maximum environmental and community benefit with a particular focus in deprived areas where the blight of vacant and derelict land is most prevalent.
- We will strengthen compulsory purchase powers for local authorities and introduce new compulsory sale orders.
- We will also bring forward new legislation to introduce Land Value Capture to make sure changes of land use lead to a proportion of the increase in the price being reinvested in the local community, including social infrastructure and affordable housing.
- Our Green Investment Portfolio will expand from its current value of £1 billion to £3 billion, attracting investment to support our transition to net zero and the growth of innovative environmentally sustainable businesses in Scotland.
- Building on the example of the Clyde Mission, which is kick-starting the regeneration of communities around the River Clyde, we will establish Green Growth Accelerators to unlock £200 million investment by local authorities in meeting our net zero ambitions.
- In planning applications which may have regional or national importance, we shall require the relevant Economic Development body, whether Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, or South of Scotland Enterprise, to provide their assessment of the potential economic benefits of the development concerned.
- We want to create a more sustainable funding model for culture which benefits organisations and freelancers. Learning from countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands, we will establish a “Percentage for the Arts” scheme which will create a requirement for a percentage of the overall cost of a construction project for new public buildings, places or spaces to be spent on community art commissions.
- We will consult on initial percentages of 0.5% for projects under £5 million and 1% for those over £5 million capped at £1 million for any individual project. We estimate this would raise £150 million per year for the arts once fully up and running.
- To aid future planning and recovery, we will agree 3 year funding settlements for Scottish Government core funded cultural organisations.

- We will also continue our culture recovery funding to get support to those who continue to be significantly affected by Covid related restrictions.
- We will support the co-ordination of Scottish commissioning and create a Scotland Touring Fund for Theatre and Music as part of economic recovery, helping to take live performances directly into alternative community venues and revitalising year-round tourism.
- To recognise the role culture and heritage can play in achieving our climate change ambitions, we will increase access to capital funding to help 'green' cultural infrastructure across Scotland.
- We will deliver 'Our Place in Time: the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland' and invest in the sustainable development of Scotland's historic estate to protect and conserve, whilst supporting our pathway to net zero.