

Scottish
Conservative
& Unionist



YOUR LOCAL PRIORITIES

LOCAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2022

OUR PLAN TO DELIVER ON YOUR LOCAL PRIORITIES

1. CUT COUNCIL TAX FOR ALMOST ONE MILLION HOUSEHOLDS

2. FUND TUTORING AND ADDITIONAL CLASSES TO HELP PUPILS CATCH UP

3. OPPOSE THE WORKPLACE PARKING TAX

4. FIX POTHoles AND LOCAL ROADS

5. FIGHT FOR A FAIRER DEAL FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

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Introduction



Scotland is emerging from a two-year pandemic that has done incredible harm to lives and livelihoods across Scotland.

At this point we should be looking to rebuild our public services and deliver our recovery. Pupils need help catching up from two years of disrupted schooling, patients are facing long backlogs for treatment and families are worried about rising costs.

After all that we have been through, we should be looking ahead to the future and coming together to move forward.

Yet instead, we feel stuck. Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP Government are again pushing their number one priority, instead of tackling the real issues that Scotland faces right now.

This is holding us back from our recovery when we should be working with the whole of the UK to rebuild.

We need to break this stalemate. We need to send a strong signal to the SNP Government to park the constitutional debate and get the focus onto your local priorities.

The local election in May is an important opportunity for you to do just that.

I served as a councillor for a decade before entering parliament. I know the incredible work that they can do for their communities, through resolving everyday problems and delivering improvements to local services.

By voting for Scottish Conservative councillors in your local area, you will elect councillors who will be totally focused on your local priorities.

Councillors who will be focused on getting on with the job of fixing potholes and the local roads that you drive on;

investing in tutoring and additional classes to help pupils catch up from the damaging impact of two years of disrupted schooling;

opposing the SNP Government's plans to introduce a workplace parking tax;

and fighting for your community to have the final say over local planning developments, not the SNP Government in Holyrood.

They will do all this while tackling the cost-of-living crisis, by keeping council tax low and cutting bills for almost one million Scottish households.

You will also send a strong signal to the SNP Government that you want Scotland to move on from nationalist politics.

The alternative is an SNP-run council that will centralise local services, hike council tax and put the priorities of the SNP Government first.

The other parties will cut a shady backroom deal that will put the SNP in power.

We know this because we have seen it before. After the last local election, Labour formed a coalition with the SNP in six councils. They will always prefer to work with the SNP than lock them out of power.

The Scottish Conservatives are Scotland's second largest party and in last year's election we won 100,000 more votes to prove that we are the only pro-UK party that is growing in strength and the only party that can challenge the SNP.

With your vote, we can beat the SNP in your local area and get your council focused on your local priorities.

It is time to end this stalemate and put constitutional politics behind us.

It is time to rebuild and recover from the pandemic and move forward together.

It is time to get the focus onto your local priorities.

Douglas Ross
Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Your local priorities - not the SNP's

This year's local elections are about the local services we use every day. They are about the roads we drive on, the schools our children go to, the housing being built in our communities, the frequency of our bin collections and the council tax we pay.

Our councils should be totally focused on these important local issues. This is even more important as we rebuild our public services and deliver our economic recovery from the Covid pandemic. Our local authorities are facing immense challenges. Our housing market is overheating because of a lack of supply, pupils have missed months of schooling over the last two years and local businesses are still seeing footfall down dramatically from what it was before the pandemic.

However, instead of supporting our councils to deal with these difficult issues, Nicola Sturgeon and the

SNP Government are focused on their nationalist priorities. When we should be coming together to move forward from Covid, the SNP and their Green coalition partners are distracted by their obsession with another independence referendum. We believe that this is completely the wrong priority for our country and Scottish Conservative councillors will be totally opposed to a second referendum.

This election is your chance to get the focus of your council onto your local priorities and not those of the SNP.

If an SNP council is elected in your local area, then they will put the priorities of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP Government first. That means local services being cut, as the SNP Government take forward their plans for centralisation without any objection from your council. It also means council tax being

increased, as the SNP take funding away from local services and use it to pay for national projects. In addition, it means a council that will be distracted by their only real priority, independence, instead of working with the UK Government to secure vital investment in your community.

However, **if you elect Scottish Conservative councillors then we pledge to put your local priorities first.** Scottish Conservative councillors will work hard to ensure that pupils get the additional support they need to catch up on months of missed schooling. We will keep council tax low and look to cut the tax for single adult households, to help them with their bills. We will stand up to the SNP Government over its plans to introduce a workplace parking tax and its plans to undertake an expensive reorganisation of social care.



Cllr Ade Aibinu
Candidate for Victoria Park

"I'm standing to oppose the SNP's workplace parking tax and improve local roads."

The Scottish Conservatives are the only party you can trust to say no to a deal with the SNP. Labour are already working with the SNP in six of Scotland's councils and the Greens are in government with the SNP and support them in Glasgow Council. Both Labour and the Greens would prefer to do a deal with the SNP than work with other parties and will put them into power in your local area. Scottish Conservative councillors will not do any deal that puts the SNP into power.

At last year's election, the Scottish Conservatives won over 100,000 more votes while Labour and the Liberal Democrats went backwards again. We are Scotland's second largest party and the only pro-UK party that is moving forward. Over the last year, in local by-elections all over Scotland we were only a few hundred votes behind the SNP. **Together we can beat the SNP in your local area.**

In May's local election, you face a choice between an SNP council that will put Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP Government's priorities first or Scottish Conservative councillors who will put your local priorities first. **Only a vote for the Scottish Conservatives can get your council focused on your local priorities not the SNP's.**



Cllr Angela Doran-Timson
Candidate for Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh

"I used to represent Labour but they can't be trusted to stand up for working people against the SNP anymore."

Helping pupils to catch up

The Covid pandemic has meant that children and young people have faced two years of disrupted education, with school closures lasting for months and widespread absences. This has had a significant impact on pupil's educational performance with the attainment gap at its widest since 2016/17. Our children and young people need additional help to catch up so that the impact of the pandemic on their learning does not become a permanent one.

However, despite the hard work of teachers and staff, the Scottish education system has been plummeting down international rankings ever since the SNP came to power. We cannot continue with this same failed SNP approach. We need a mindset shift in our schooling, which allows pupils and our education system to catch up not just from the pandemic but from the last 15 years.

In 2016, Nicola Sturgeon said that education was her “number one priority”, but the reality is that a generation of Scottish school children have been let down by the SNP Government. We need to restore our school system, so that it delivers the world class education that all Scots used to enjoy. **Unlike the SNP Government, Scottish Conservative councillors will make our schools their number one priority.**

Catching up from the pandemic

The Covid pandemic has had an enormous impact on our children and young people's education. However, as the growing attainment gap has shown, this impact has not been felt

equally across all pupils. Some would have been encouraged to do home schooling and online lessons during the lockdowns while others would not.

We need to take targeted measures to help those pupils who have seen their education suffer the most during Covid. The Scottish Conservatives have called for the SNP Government to set up a national tutoring programme to provide one-to-one or small group tuition for those children and young people who need the most help. **Scottish Conservative councillors will work to set up a local tutoring scheme.** They will also **provide additional funding for after-school classes** and campaign for the SNP Government to allow schools to make payments to teachers who deliver additional revision sessions in the run-up to exams and for pupils who need additional assistance. In addition, they will pressure the SNP Government to **fund a pilot extension to the school day, to further help pupils to catch up on missed learning.**

The future of Scottish education

Scotland's education system has gone from being one of the best in the world to being just internationally average over the last two decades. Our school performance is now not just lower than the UK average but worse than schooling in countries like Estonia and Poland.

The SNP approach to managing our education system is dragging down standards and Curriculum for Excellence is at the heart of that approach. **The Scottish**

Conservatives believe that we need to begin a national conversation around replacing Curriculum for Excellence with a new framework built around returning to strong Scottish education traditions. Scottish Conservative councillors will support that national conversation.

The SNP Government are considering the future of exams. Our view is that traditional exams provide a fair way of assessing pupil performance against standards and should remain an important part of our education system. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support the continued role of exams in our schools.**

We welcome the SNP Government's long overdue decision to scrap the SQA and Education Scotland. However, this cannot simply be a name-change exercise, it must be a substantive shift in the education oversight structure and its culture, and should be led by teaching professionals. At least one of the new bodies should be based outside of the Central Belt, such as in Aberdeen, to better understand the issues faced by schools in all parts of the country.

Empowering schools and teachers

At the heart of our approach to Scotland's education future must be more autonomous schools and empowered teachers. We need to trust our teaching professionals more and build a system which allows them to run classrooms and schools in the best way for their pupils.

Scottish Conservative councillors will

support increased school autonomy through giving headteachers more control over their schools, and teachers more control of the content of lessons in their classrooms. **They will also support greater parental involvement in the management of schools.**

Part of empowering our schools is ensuring that they have the right equipment to deliver a modern education. However, the SNP Government have been slow to deliver on their promise of a free laptop for every pupil. Scottish Conservative councillors will invest in school IT equipment. They will also pressure the SNP Government to ensure that all schools have access to a full fibre broadband connection.

This will allow schools to better support each other through sharing resources and expertise online. However, this is no substitute for schools being able pool resources locally where they are able. Clustering allows schools to build local specialisation while offering pupils access to a larger range of subjects. Scottish Conservative councillors will support the formation of both local and online clusters to widen subject choice.

This will allow our schools to offer the broadest possible experience to pupils. **Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that all pupils in their council area are able to take at least seven subjects in S4.** They will also support school children to learn two additional languages in order to increase the linguistic skills of Scotland's students. Additionally, they will ensure that every child has the opportunity to play an instrument and play a sport.

We also need to ensure that our schools have the best teachers. Since the SNP came to power there are over 800 fewer teachers in Scotland's schools. We need to attract more teachers to work in our schools particularly in remote areas. Scottish Conservative councillors will support alternative pathways into teaching and set up grant schemes to attract good teachers where there are shortages, such as in rural communities. **Scottish Conservative councillors will also pressure the SNP Government to fully fund the placement of dedicated STEM and PE teachers in every primary school.**

Supporting our children's wellbeing

Beyond education, our schools and councils have an important role in ensuring the broader wellbeing of children and young people. The impact of the Covid pandemic has shown us all the importance of good mental health. Scottish Conservative councillors will introduce trained mental health leads with links to the NHS in every school to help improve children's wellbeing.

We also need to encourage children's physical activity to improve physical and mental wellbeing. Scottish Conservative MSPs are bringing forward a bill to give children the opportunity to participate in at least one week of residential outdoor education in their schooling. Scottish Conservative councillors will deliver this opportunity locally to help build children's confidence and self-esteem. They will also reintroduce P5 swimming lessons and will deliver more support for children and youth groups, especially those with a focus on sport and physical activity.

In addition, **Scottish Conservative councillors will make more local authority-owned attractions and facilities free for children.**

Our schools have an important role in educating our children about sexual health and wellbeing, but this should be age appropriate and undertaken in close consultation with parents, who ultimately should decide what is best for their child. As such, **Scottish Conservative councillors will vote to boycott future SNP Government school sex surveys that ask children intrusive personal questions.**

All of Scotland's children deserve the best start in life and improving access to early years education is an important part of delivering this. We know that the SNP's rollout of 1,140 hours of free childcare is being held back by a lack of funding and staff, so Scottish Conservative councillors will lobby the Government for this programme to be properly funded from national budgets.

Scottish Conservative councillors also want to see parents given the flexibility to choose the setting and hours that work best for their family. We believe the SNP Government must do more to help councils widen choice, make good on funding following the child and better recognise the vital role childminders and the private and voluntary sector play in delivering this policy.

Helping vulnerable children

We need to ensure that appropriate support is in place for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Scottish Conservative councils would support a pilot programme for Family Hubs to bring health, education and social care services together and provide a 'one stop shop' of parenting support.

While we believe that every effort should be made to keep families together, this is not always possible. Scottish Conservative councillors will deliver on local authority commitments made through The Promise in full. They will also support the delivery of the Mockingbird Programme in their local areas to build supportive communities around foster families.

Pupils with additional support needs are being let down by shortages in specialist staff and inadequate services. Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that teachers in their local authority area receive the appropriate training to identify and support children with conditions such as dyslexia and autism. They will also press the government for funding to grow the school support staff workforce for children with additional support needs.



Rebuilding local economies

Our town centres and high streets took a major hit during the pandemic. Local businesses that thrived before Covid have closed or are struggling to pay their bills. Many shops, restaurants, pubs and hotels are concerned about their future, particularly once the SNP Government removes business rates relief in June.

During the pandemic, councils played a major role in supporting businesses by distributing essential grant funding to them. It is important that as we continue to recover from the pandemic, councils remain an important player in driving local growth. They must continue to have the flexibility to support businesses that fall between the cracks in national schemes and support local partnerships as we rebuild. They must also work hard to attract national funding and new opportunities for their local areas.

Consumer habits have shifted because of Covid. Our response must be to distinguish between what are likely to be short and long term changes and realise the benefits while mitigating the challenges. Scottish Conservative councillors will work hard to create jobs and growth in their communities.

Levelling Up our communities

The UK Government has set up substantial funds to deliver growth and opportunity across Scotland. These have already led to transformative investments in communities, such as the £20 million investment in the 'masterplan' regeneration of Aberdeen city centre

and £24 million for the upgrading of the B714 in North Ayrshire through the Levelling Up Fund. The Growth Deals Programme has also seen over £3 billion invested by both of Scotland's governments in every part of our country.

There are huge opportunities at all levels for our communities to work with the UK Government to secure investment, from the billions of pounds available for crucial economic infrastructure through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to hundreds of thousands of pounds available for community hall refurbishments through the Community Ownership Fund. It is essential that Scotland's communities take advantage of this exciting agenda to boost their economies, rather than allowing the narrow nationalism of the SNP Government and SNP councils to hold them back. **Scottish Conservative councillors will work hard to secure access to UK Government investment for their communities.**

However, we know that there is not a level playing field, with some councils being larger and more able to access funding than others. Scottish Conservative councillors in smaller councils will work with enterprise bodies to build capacity in their local authorities, so that they can successfully bid for projects.

In many parts of Scotland, the Growth Deals Programme saw councils come together to form natural partnerships to deliver regional growth. We need to continue to embrace this approach to build on Scotland's regional economic strengths. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support the formation and strengthening of regional**

economic partnerships, to deliver growth across our country.

Supporting local businesses

The pandemic is still having a damaging impact on businesses in our town centres and high streets, with footfall not having returned to previous levels. However, the SNP Government is ending support for businesses in June. It is clear that businesses need to be supported through the recovery and that taxes should be gradually reintroduced. **Scottish Conservative councillors will pressure the SNP Government to keep business rates relief in place for the entire financial year.** They will also look at introducing longer-term discount schemes for businesses in traditional town centres and high streets. Additionally, they will look into creating joined up online systems for businesses for licensing and non-domestic rates.

However, we also need to do more to help businesses to rebuild their customer base and encourage footfall in our town centres. To support local shopping, **Scottish Conservative councillors will remove parking charges in council owned car parks for set times at weekends and will pressure the SNP Government to fully fund their scrapping entirely.**

Local cultural events are an important way of encouraging footfall, yet many will have struggled during the Covid pandemic and will be facing continued uncertainty around their future. Scottish Conservative councillors will establish a grassroots events fund to incentivise the return of

festivals and other cultural events, and provide start-up support for new ones.

Accommodation providers have had their businesses restricted or closed for significant periods over the last two years. We should be supporting those businesses to get back on their feet but instead the SNP Government are imposing new administrative burdens through the short-term lets licensing scheme. **Scottish Conservative councillors will continue to fight for the blanket short-term lets licensing scheme to be scrapped** and for it to be replaced with a scheme that has local choice at its heart.

At the same time, some councils are considering introducing a tourist

tax, which will further increase costs on those businesses. Scottish Conservatives councillors will oppose the introduction of any tourism tax which damages local businesses.

Our councils spend £4.9 billion of public money collectively each year on procurement in Scotland. This level of funding has the potential to be a transformative investment in local businesses. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support a 'Scotland First' procurement policy and buy for quality and to protect local jobs.** They will also increase procurement spend with smaller local firms by 2% every year.

Business Gateway services are essential for businesses to

start up and scale up. Scottish Conservative councillors will support comprehensive Business Gateway Services in their local area.

Broadband infrastructure plays an essential role in helping businesses to develop, particularly with a larger proportion of the workforce continuing to work from home. However, the SNP's R100 programme is not due to be finished until 2027, six years after the originally promised completion date. This slow rollout is holding Scotland back, households and businesses deserve better. **Scottish Conservative councillors will work to support the faster rollout of full fibre broadband to every home and business in their local area** and will ensure that new homes are connected.



Richard Brooks
Candidate for Kincorth, Nigg and Cove

"We are the only party that stands up for the North East economy and Scotland's oil and gas industry."

Building the housing we need

Scotland is facing a housing crisis. Too few houses are coming on the market and there is pent-up demand following the Covid pandemic. This is leading to spiralling prices, with home ownership rapidly becoming an unaffordable ambition for too many Scots. The SNP Government have only increased this problem. Over the last parliament they fell over 8,000 homes short of their affordable house building target and they are continuing to show a lack of ambition in home building in this parliament.

At the same time, monthly bills are increasing at an unaffordable rate. Yearly household energy bills have gone up by £693 since April and council tax by an average of £38. Renters have also faced rising costs, with average monthly rents increasing by £81 from last year. The most recent SNP Government budget has left councils with a £251 million real-terms cut in their funding, leaving them again with the difficult choice to increase council tax or reduce local services.

Scottish Conservative run councils already have lower levels of council tax than SNP or Labour councils.

Our councillors will continue to work to keep your bills low, while helping buyers to get onto the property ladder.

Keeping home bills low

Council tax helps to fund the essential local services we use every day. However, it also leaves many individuals and families facing hundreds of pounds in charges each year just to live in their home. Many of our elderly face having to sell the

home they have lived in for decades because they can no longer afford to pay, while many young adults cannot afford to pay the bills that living alone would entail. While higher council tax can lead to better local services, it will also damage individuals and families at a time when they can least afford it.

It is clear that there needs to be a balance, particularly in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. **Scottish Conservative councillors will keep council tax increases as low as possible, while protecting local services.** They will ensure that every penny of your money is spent as effectively as possible to support local services. When budgets allow, Scottish Conservative councillors will freeze council tax, so that households do not face rising costs.

We know that council tax hits single households hardest. Single parents, young professionals and elderly people living alone face paying higher housing costs because of their personal circumstances. The single persons discount provides 25% relief from council tax for single adult households. **Scottish Conservative councillors will increase the single persons discount to 35%** when funding is available - saving a single person £134 per year on an average Band D property and benefitting almost 1 million Scottish households.

The other Scottish parties have proposed overhauling our system of local taxation, however their alternatives would lead to some households paying hundreds or even thousands of pounds more in tax. **Scottish Conservative councillors will oppose any immediate reform, especially if used as an excuse to**

increase taxes.

Heating bills have increased rapidly following the pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine. In the immediate term, to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis, we need to cut heating costs. Yet, in the long-term, to cut bills and achieve our net zero target, we need to reduce heating demand. However, making our homes more energy efficient will cost thousands of pounds that many homeowners cannot afford. **Scottish Conservative councillors will press the SNP Government to introduce a Help to Renovate scheme,** to support home upgrades that will reduce heating costs and increase energy efficiency. Scottish Conservative councils will also support homeowners and businesses in the removal of combustible cladding.

Cutting the costs of getting a home

House prices in Scotland are increasing at an unaffordable rate, with the average sale price increasing by 30% in the last decade. While the pandemic has increased this problem, the SNP Government have also failed to meet their own house-building targets, leading to a shortage in supply and increased competition.

The best way to slow rapidly increasing prices is to build more homes. Scottish Conservative councils will therefore support increasing the rate of house building, so long as it is matched by an expansion in local services and in transport infrastructure. Where possible these new developments should be placed on brownfield

sites. **We want to see completions across all sectors increase to 25,000 new homes per year**, with a specific focus on the affordable and social rented sectors. Scottish Conservative councillors will also work to increase their local authority's stock of council housing.

The lack of new housing is a particular concern in rural communities.

The Scottish Conservatives have continually called for a doubling of

the government's Rural Housing Fund, to help incentivise construction in remote and rural communities. Scottish Conservative councillors will also fund a serviced self-build plot pilot across local authorities in rural areas

However, increasing house building will take a longer time to have an effect, when buyers need help just now. The SNP Government needs to cut taxes for home buyers and

allow councils to respond to varying prices across Scotland. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support a raising of the national threshold for LBTT from £145,000 to £250,000 to take account of rising house prices, cutting the tax on home purchases by up to £2,100.** We also believe that councils should have the opportunity to raise the threshold further in their local authority area, to take account of higher local prices.



Helping the most vulnerable with their housing

Many elderly people live in dated homes that are inefficient to run and no longer tailored to their needs. However, they may have emotional attachment to the property and their home may also be in close proximity to their support networks.

We should support elderly and disabled people to live independently for as long as they are able to. Scottish Conservative councillors will work to properly support care and repair services to reduce waiting times for adaptations for assisted living. They will also encourage the

future proofing of new-build housing for easier accessibility adaptations. In addition, they will work with the third sector to help develop additional capacity for assisted living schemes.

Rough sleeping and homelessness are a blight on modern Scotland. Over 5,000 adults sleep rough at least once a year and our homelessness death rate is more than double the rate in England and Wales. The number of children in temporary accommodation is at its highest level since records began. All of this is a national scandal.

The Scottish Conservatives are committed to ending rough sleeping by 2026, by ensuring that everyone has access to safe and

secure accommodation. Scottish Conservative councillors will support the delivery of a Housing First programme in their local area and press the SNP Government to deliver a national programme.

The war in Ukraine has led to a humanitarian crisis, with over one in ten Ukrainians already having been forced to flee their country. It is essential that we do all that we can to support the Ukrainian people at this time and offer a place of safety for those who have had to leave their homes. **Scottish Conservative councillors will press for their local authority to be generous in its support for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.**

Delivering a fair deal for you and your community

While we need to build more housing to meet increased demand, this will put increased pressures on communities if not managed properly. Far too often, housing estates are built without the infrastructure, schools, shops and community facilities to support them. Local roads are not upgraded, leading to increased congestion. All of this results in a worse experience for newcomers and the residents already living in a community.

Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that Scotland's local authorities are not just supporting house-building but are building whole communities instead. That means ensuring that communities benefit from housing developments, with developers encouraged to invest in local services. It also means maintaining proper safeguards in planning rules to ensure that developments do not put undue pressure on communities.

However, our local services will always be overstretched if they continue to be underfunded and undermined by this SNP Government. Local government revenue funding has fallen from 36% to 33% as a proportion of the SNP Government's budget from 2007/8 to 2021/22. Meanwhile, in the last 5 years, 379 local planning decisions were overturned by SNP Ministers. It is clear that the SNP Government are stripping powers and funding away from communities and the services they rely on. **Scottish Conservative councillors will stand up to SNP centralisation and fight for a fairer deal for their communities.**

Fighting for a fair deal for your community

The SNP Government have grabbed powers and cash from our local authorities for years. Right across Scotland, money meant to be used to fund local services, such as business rate revenue, is being distributed through national schemes by SNP ministers. We need to see local taxation being used to fund local services.

Scottish Conservative MSPs are bringing forward a bill to deliver fair funding through a new fiscal framework for local government. Our bill will deliver a fixed proportion of the Scottish Government Budget to councils, so that they cannot be underfunded by the SNP. Due to the UK Government's Spending Review this will also ensure that councils can plan ahead, with the certainty of multi-year spending plans. It will also ensure that taxes raised in a council area are spent in that council area. **Scottish Conservative councillors will fight for a fairer deal for their local communities from this SNP Government by supporting this bill.**

Encouraging responsible development

Scottish Conservatives believe that communities should have the final say over developments in their area, not the government in Holyrood. However, SNP Government Ministers currently have the power to overturn council decision making and local democracy. Scottish Conservative councillors will fight for their local authorities to be able to take the

final decision on planning approvals, to ensure developments, such as wind farms, directly benefit their communities. They will also oppose new incinerators and support a national moratorium, due to the harm they can do to communities and the environment.

We also need to ensure that large developments benefit the people who already live in a community. **Councils should not approve large housing developments without making sure there are services to support them.** Scottish Conservative councillors will work with large property developers to secure more investment in local services, like new schools, expanded roads and upgraded community facilities.

Derelict properties are a blight on our communities. Across Scotland there are around 43,000 long-term unoccupied properties. Scottish Conservative councillors will support the introduction of Compulsory Sales Orders for long-term unoccupied properties to stop the growth of unused buildings in our communities. They will also support a relaxation of planning laws, with regards to derelict properties, so that they can be more easily redeveloped.

Supporting local services

Our local services are what build communities. However, after 15 years of SNP underfunding of our councils they are overstretched, and many facilities have already been forced to close. **Scottish Conservative councillors will make protecting frontline local services a key priority for the next five years.**

Scottish Conservative councillors will keep community facilities, like libraries and sports halls, open. They will also ensure that admissions fares are kept affordable and where there are ALEOs in place they will ensure that they deliver value for money for their communities. Scottish Conservative councillors will also open school facilities to the public in evenings and at weekends. To ensure that services are operating as effectively as possible, Scottish Conservative councillors will support the creation of a separate local government ombudsman to assess and investigate complaints against councils and local services.

Scottish Conservative councillors will also ensure that essential services continue to be available in communities. They will campaign to keep local bank branches open and ensure free access to cash in their communities. They will also support the continued operation of community hubs in their council area and expand their services where they are needed. In addition, they will support the introduction of a community first right to buy when businesses or community facilities close.

Many women have raised legitimate concerns about their rights and safety following the publication of the SNP Government's Gender Reform Bill. We believe that these concerns should be heard and acted upon rather than dismissed. **Scottish Conservative councillors will seek to ensure that there are single-sex spaces available in all council-run facilities, including schools, parks and swimming pools.**

Backing community action

People in our communities came together during the Covid pandemic to support one another on a scale not seen in this country for decades. We need to continue to reward and support volunteering and create new opportunities for people to help.

Scottish Conservative councillors will establish a local community champions award to recognise people who have gone above and beyond for their local area. They will also establish a local database of both council and third sector volunteering opportunities, to make it as easy as possible for people to volunteer. They will also, if given financial certainty from the SNP Government, deliver multi-year funding awards to third sector organisations so that they can better plan ahead.

Community councils play an important role in expanding local democracy and representation, however they are often held back by a lack of support and access to funding. Scottish Conservative councillors will work to support the activities of their local community council and increase the funding available to them for their work.

Tackling anti-social behaviour and community crime

The Scottish Conservatives are the only major party in Scotland that is prepared to be tough on crime and stand up for the victims affected by it. Violence and anti-social behaviour are on the rise in Scotland and Scottish Conservative councillors will

ensure that their council supports the police in tackling them.

Anti-social behaviour can result in possessions and property being vandalised or damaged and can lead to people feeling threatened. Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that local authority officers are properly resourced to take effective action, such as investigating disturbances and issuing fines.

Councils manage Community Payback Orders and, with the SNP Government's presumption against short prison sentences, these will be used even more frequently for offenders in future. Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that these are used as punishment and to carry out work for community benefit, such as litter picking.

Since the creation of Police Scotland by the SNP, 140 police stations have been closed. Scottish Conservative MSPs are bringing forward a Local Policing Act to guarantee a strong police presence in our communities and more regular patrols. **Scottish Conservative councillors will oppose police station closures in their area.**

Cleaning up our communities

Fly-tipping has damaged the environment around many rural communities and is increasingly becoming a problem in our towns and cities. This has led to town centres and community facilities being viewed as run-down and as unpleasant places to visit. The Scottish Conservatives view it as our civic duty to clean up our communities, yet we also need to deal with this problem at its source.

Scottish Conservative MSPs are bringing forward a bill to ensure that local authorities and other agencies can effectively prosecute offenders and make them pay for clean-up costs. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support increased fixed penalties and maximum fines for litter and fly-tipping** and use the increased income to resource council enforcement measures, as well as introduce regular reporting.

Bin collections have reduced in frequency as councils have had to make savings. Scottish Conservative councils across Scotland already have more regular rubbish collections than those run by the SNP and Labour. **Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that regular rubbish and bin collections are a council priority**, to cut down on illegal dumping and littering on our streets.



CLlr Nathan Wilson
Candidate for Motherwell South East
and Ravenscraig

“I’m standing to clean up your community and deliver better local services.”

Connecting communities

In addition to local services, our communities need good transport networks in order to thrive and grow. However, across Scotland there are many villages, towns and even parts of cities that have inadequate public transport networks and poor roads. Meanwhile, the SNP Government and their Green partners are punishing drivers with a workplace parking tax, when so many people rely on their car every day.

We need to ensure that there is a proper balance between active, public and personal transport and recognise that one model will not work for every community. Scottish Conservative councillors will always support the most appropriate travel options for their local areas as they work to better connect their communities.

Supporting drivers

For many parts of Scotland driving a car is not a luxury but a necessity, with public transport being too infrequent, slow, unaffordable or impractical. We should not blame drivers for this, yet that is exactly what this SNP-Green Coalition is doing by introducing the workplace parking tax and considering the reintroduction of road tolls. Conversely, the UK Government is supporting car drivers by cutting fuel duty.

Scottish Conservative councillors will stand up for Scotland's drivers by opposing the introduction of the workplace parking tax. They will also oppose any plans to reintroduce road and bridge tolls in their communities. In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, our councillors will not bring in SNP-led policies that increase the amount

drivers will have to pay.

One of the main criticisms of car travel is the emissions that it causes. However, the Scottish Conservatives believe that this should be a challenge to make driving greener rather than reduce car travel. Scottish Conservative councillors will therefore support the rollout of electric vehicle charging points across their local area. This will include requiring new large housing developments to incorporate charging points, to make electric vehicle ownership more accessible.

The condition of our roads is a serious issue. Across Scotland far too many local roads are plagued with potholes which damage vehicles. **Scottish Conservative councils will set aside local Pothole Action Funds, to give communities the right to request repairs to local roads.**

Many of our major roads are also in need of upgrading, to reduce congestion and speed up journey times across Scotland. Scottish Conservative councillors will pressure the SNP Government to do more to upgrade our major roads including the A77, A75, A82, A90, A96, A1 and the A83 Rest and Be Thankful.

20mph zones have been introduced in many Scottish towns and cities. While these can improve safety, particularly around schools, when introduced on a blanket basis they can also cause unnecessary delays to travel. Scottish Conservative councillors will listen to their communities as to whether they want a 20mph zone introduced in a targeted local area and will oppose blanket zones being enforced.

Ensuring better public transport

Our public transport network is essential for connecting communities and for our tourism sector. However, the Covid pandemic has reduced passenger numbers across all transport types and service reductions have exacerbated this problem by making public transport less frequent and less reliable. We need to encourage people to return to using public transport, by making services as frequent, as affordable and as fast as possible

The nationalisation of ScotRail presents a real opportunity to deliver a better, cheaper service for rail users. However, ScotRail have instead reduced services and raised fares on passengers. The Scottish Conservatives want to see this opportunity used to reconnect communities that have not had access to the rail network for decades. **Scottish Conservative councillors will pressure the SNP Government to reopen the Beeching railway lines and stations in their area.**

Local bus services are an essential way for many people to travel around communities. However, rural bus networks have been in decline for years. To address gaps in services, Scottish Conservative councillors will consider setting up local authority run bus services where necessary. They will also ensure that there is adequate bus provision for pupils traveling to and from school, particularly in rural areas. To match the free travel offer being offered on our bus networks, **Scottish Conservative councillors will lobby the SNP Government to fully**



fund free travel for under-22s and over-60s on the Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Tram.

Ferries are an essential lifeline for our island communities, yet they have been let down by an SNP Government that has spent over £250 million on two unfinished ferries that have been delayed for years. Scottish Conservative councillors will pressure the SNP Government to deliver a reliable and affordable ferry service.

Encouraging active travel

It is important that we make active travel as safe as possible for children and adults. Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that every major Scottish city has a dedicated cycle network in place. They will also ensure that their local authority invests in cycling proficiency training for children and adults and cycle repair vouchers to encourage more people to take up cycling and increase safety.

Strengthening local environmental protections

People across Scotland want to live in greener, healthier communities. Our lands and waters are host to an iconic and beautiful array of plants and animals, but Scotland, has experienced decades of biodiversity decline. Species abundance has fallen by a quarter since 1994.

And this matters beyond sentimentality, because nature underpins the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. Many efforts in our communities to protect our green spaces and encourage wildlife also have the double benefit of locking up carbon and offsetting pollution, helping us cut emissions and meet international targets to limit global temperature rises to 1.5°C.

That is why Scottish Conservative councillors will be focused on protecting our natural environment, ensuring that growing communities means more parks and green spaces and that we protect and enhance our Green Belt which has become so important during the pandemic. Climate change and nature recovery can and must be twin priorities for local councils.

Protecting our green spaces

During the pandemic, we rediscovered how important our green spaces are for our mental and physical health. They also help create a sense of place and improve the desirability of a neighbourhood. **That's why Scottish Conservative councillors will support the creation of new green spaces in cities and towns on existing brownfield sites, to allow more space for walking,**

cycling and running. This includes developing new and expanding existing playparks for our children.

Scotland needs more high-quality housing for families to live in, but there is more than enough brownfield land to build on rather than erasing our precious green spaces. We believe that local communities should have the final say over developments in their area, rather than the SNP Government in Edinburgh, and this extends to our Green Belt. Where it enjoys community support, **Scottish Conservative councillors will protect and enhance our Green Belt.**

Housing developments themselves can also be greener. Some housebuilders are leading the way with inbuilt nature corridors, wildflower patches and simple measures like green roofs forming part of the fabric of buildings. Scottish Conservative councillors will use the planning process to encourage nature-friendly housebuilding practices to become more widespread.

National Parks protect our beautiful landscapes for future generations. They can support nature tourism, boost local economies, and prevent the erosion of scenic views. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support the designation of new National Parks across Scotland, where they enjoy local support.**

Tree planting is the cornerstone of our efforts to tackle climate change. However, we must avoid and correct the SNP's mistake of over-planting non-native conifers, often against local wishes, which harms rather than strengthens local biodiversity. The right tree must go in the right

place, and **Scottish Conservative councillors will act to protect and enhance ancient woodland while supporting the delivery of tree planting targets.** They will also support nature corridors plantations in every local authority, alongside local woodland expansion and riparian tree planting.

Scotland is also home to the majority of the UK's peatlands, which store more CO2 than all our forests put together. But four-fifths of our peat bogs are degraded. Scottish Conservative councillors will support measures to restore peatlands to their former glory – helping deliver Climate Change Committee targets.

Supporting local farmers

Scotland is home to the world's best food and drink, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the route to a sustainable and climate-friendly food production system requires the consumption of more high-quality, local produce. This should go hand in hand with reducing waste, encouraging healthier diets and lifestyles. That's why **Scottish Conservative councillors will support local food strategies which back Scottish farmers and their high-welfare, environmentally friendly produce, especially in public procurement.** To better educate P4/5 children on local farming and food, Scottish Conservative councillors will also introduce a Countryside Education Day in their local authorities.

Many farm businesses are looking to diversify into other sectors of our economy, such as tourism. This can

have benefits for the development of local green spaces and our environment. Scottish Conservative councillors will support those farms by promoting agritourism and easing planning barriers.

The decline in local abattoirs across Scotland has undermined local food networks and is a hinderance to sustainable farming. To help farmers to find an appropriate abattoir for their produce, Scottish Conservative councillors will support an expansion in the network of local and mobile abattoirs and processing facilities.

Protecting against storms and extreme weather

We saw during the extreme weather of the past few months, such as Storm Arwen, the terrible damage that high winds can do to people and communities. It can lead to households being cut off as roads are blocked and left without power and heating. It can also damage properties and, at its worst, kill. Unfortunately, due to climate change, we can expect extreme weather to be a more common occurrence in the future and all levels of government need to be better able to respond to it.

Despite the best efforts of workers on the ground, our public services were too slow to respond to extreme weather and help households affected. **Scottish Conservative councillors will work to build better local resilience and coordination with emergency response to prepare for future extreme weather.** They will press for the SNP Government to be better prepared to activate the Bellwin Scheme and will set up local Climate Resilience Funds to be deployed in the initial response to a storm or other

extreme weather.

Flooding can also be a significant risk for communities in parts of Scotland and can cause significant damage to property. Scottish Conservative councillors, in the affected areas, will fast track a Catchment Management Assessment, to ensure that flood risk is properly analysed at all points in the river.



Kathleen Robertson
Candidate for Forres

“The SNP have left rural Scotland behind. I’m standing to deliver a fairer deal for our communities.”

A local health and social care service

Our health and social care services are vital to people and communities across Scotland. However far too many local facilities are being closed down and essential services moved elsewhere. This problem is only going to get worse when the SNP undertake a costly reorganisation to centralise social care into a national service.

People across Scotland deserve to have good local health and care facilities. They should not have to travel for hours for routine operations and treatment or to access maternity services. They should also expect to get a residential care place close to their family and support network - not moved across the country by a national service.

Scottish Conservatives believe that health and social care services should be delivered as locally as possible. **Our councillors will campaign hard against any centralisation of services by this SNP Government.**

Fighting for a community health service

The SNP's centralisation agenda has removed local health and social care facilities from communities across Scotland. All over the country, departments at local hospitals have closed or moved miles away with patients facing lengthy journeys just to get essential treatment. The downgrading of maternity services at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin and Caithness General Hospital in Wick are prime examples of the SNP riding roughshod over local clinicians.

Scottish Conservative councillors will fight for the retention of local services

by supporting a Local Healthcare Guarantee. We will campaign for a presumption against centralisation and to protect local services like GPs and community hospitals.

Keeping care local

As we emerge from the pandemic, we do so with a renewed appreciation for the role that social care and carers play in our national life and a determination to build a care system founded on dignity, human rights and individual freedom of choice and control.

We agree that social care must change and improve but this can be done without further centralisation. The SNP's proposed National Care Service would merge a budget four times greater than Police Scotland. This will lead to a costly reorganisation that will take funding away from the frontline where it is needed most.

Backed by SNP councillors, the SNP Government will centralise social care services just as they have health services. Every Scottish Conservative Councillor elected in May will fight to retain local services and quality local care partnerships – acting on your local priorities, not the SNP's. **We will support the creation of a Local Care Service, run by local communities for local communities.**

Scottish Conservative plans for a Local Care Service would provide a guarantee against out-of-area care, where a person is moved miles away from their community, family and support networks. This risks becoming more widespread under the SNP's centralised service, which prizes

uniform consistency above quality. **We will ensure care and support is delivered as close as possible to those who need it, especially in rural or island communities.**

It will also see our care system move towards ethical commissioning of care, including investing in staff and fair terms and conditions for the workforce. In addition, our councillors will support the building of minimum pay and conditions into the commissioning and procurement of local authority delivered care, often called 'ethical commissioning' and work to make care a rewarding career. Scottish Conservative councillors will also support supported breaks from caring for unpaid carers and call for this to be appropriately legislated for and funded by the SNP Government.

It has been nearly a decade since the Social Care (Self-directed Support) Act 2013 was introduced, which was supposed to revolutionise our approach to care. But people still describe accessing support as a 'battle' and less than half of people report that all four SDS options were discussed with them during their needs assessment. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support a renewed push to embed Self-Directed Support into local practice and call for the necessary funding to be provided by the SNP Government.**

Any proposals to fix social care must start with fair funding after years of SNP cuts to local government settlements. The UK Government's announced increase in national insurance contributions will provide an estimated additional £1.1 billion to Scotland by 2024/25. This is a rare

opportunity to put the adult social care system on a sustainable path. It is also an opportunity to invest and create capacity in the system, reducing the money currently squandered on delayed discharge while people wait for care packages. **Scottish Conservative councillors will ensure that every penny of funding delivered through the Health and Social Care Levy is used to support the frontline and to put social care on a sustainable footing, through increasing capacity and reducing delayed discharge.**

Scottish Conservatives are proud of our record in leading the campaign in the Scottish Parliament for Frank's Law to extend free personal care to under 65s, however the rollout of this has stalled. **Scottish Conservative councillors will fully implement Frank's Law and ensure that everyone who has a legal right to free personal care will receive it.**

Improving access to mental health treatment

Our mental health services were already struggling before the pandemic and now they are facing even higher demand. People need to be able to get timely mental health treatment in their local area when they need it.

Scottish Conservative councillors will seek to increase funding for council mental health services. They will also adopt a 'mental health in all policies' approach to working at local councils, and invest to support community based mental health groups.

Fixing the SNP's drug death crisis

On Nicola Sturgeon's watch, drug deaths have doubled. Local services have been shut down. Rehabilitation centres across the country have closed.

The Scottish Conservatives are the only party with a credible plan to end Scotland's drug death crisis. Our Right to Recovery is backed by recovery groups and frontline experts. It would invest in local recovery services and partnerships and cut through the SNP's broken treatment system.

In the Scottish Parliament, we are progressing our Right to Recovery Bill to ensure that drug and alcohol users can access treatment and support, backed by investment after more than a decade of SNP cuts. **Scottish Conservative councillors will support the delivery of this Right to Recovery on the ground, by ensuring that people with addiction problems can get the help they need quickly.**



Putting your priorities first

This election is about your local priorities. By electing Scottish Conservative councillors in May, you can ensure that your council is focused on the everyday issues that matter to you.

After the election, every Scottish Conservative councillor will be totally focused on helping pupils to catch up in school, fixing local roads and protecting local services - all while keeping council tax increases low. They will work hard for you and your community rather than getting

distracted by constitutional politics.

However, if the SNP win control of your council, they will put Nicola Sturgeon's nationalist priorities first. Your council won't stand up to the SNP Government's plans to centralise services and will be distracted by their campaign for independence. A vote for any other party will risk a backroom deal that will just lead to the same outcome of an SNP-led council.

That is why we are asking you to vote for the Scottish Conservatives

on the 5th of May, to get your council focused on your priorities - not the SNP's.

If voters come together behind the Scottish Conservatives, just like we did last year, then we can beat the SNP in your local area and ensure that your local council is focused on your priorities.

You can only put your local priorities first by voting Scottish Conservative in this election.



**Scottish
Conservative
& Unionist**



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