



Public services & a sustainable Scotland

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Manifesto
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UNISON
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Climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face in Scotland and globally. We have world leading climate change legislation, legislation that UNISON Scotland members were important in helping achieve, including through our work with the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition. The targets for carbon reduction adopted in that Act have never been met. What is needed now is for the Scottish Government to convert the intentions outlined in the legislation into action. Austerity must not be allowed to be used as an excuse to drop or downgrade actions to tackle climate change. Tackling climate change is an opportunity not a cost.

Energy efficiency, active travel and green workplaces can all contribute to more efficient as well as more environmentally friendly public services and a better society. The public sector has to lead by example – and the private sector must be prepared to put social necessity ahead of profit. UNISON has long argued for a wide range of environmental initiatives including cutting energy waste and supporting renewable energy sources and more efficient use of water resources.

One way in which public services can help move us towards a more sustainable way of living is through the use of procurement to drive up standards. For example, our “Food for Good” charter aimed at all parts of the public sector states that: “Food should be fresh, prepared locally and sourced locally where possible.” Public bodies should produce annual reports giving clear ‘global footprint’ type information on all aspects of their food use including, for example, percentage of fresh, local food, progress on waste minimisation and recycling.

Public bodies’ procurement strategies should spell out the high standards expected of contractors and public contracts should be required to deliver outcomes consistent with environmental policy aims and benefits. Polluters should not be allowed to benefit at public and environmental expense

We welcome the Scottish Government’s introduction of mandatory reporting by public bodies on their climate change duties. The public sector should have clear, ambitious targets in lowering emissions, contributing to meeting the targets in the Act.

Warm Homes Act

The lack of energy efficiency in Scotland’s housing stock is a social and environmental scandal. It adds massively to our carbon emissions and is a major cause of fuel poverty. It should be tackled by a Warm Homes Act. Part of this would involve designating the energy efficiency of Scotland’s homes a National Infrastructure Project. Establishing energy efficiency as a National Infrastructure Project would bring economic benefits, generating a three-fold return in GDP for every pound invested by government and creating and sustaining local jobs. It would also help to eradicate fuel poverty, which currently stands at 940,000 homes in Scotland, improve health and wellbeing with resulting lower NHS expenditure, improve energy security, and deliver substantial emissions reductions. Action on energy efficiency is a clear win-win. It helps individuals in fuel poverty, boosts the economy and helps tackle climate change. It’s time for action.

The failed energy market across the UK needs urgent reform. As well as investment in renewables as part of a balanced energy policy, emphasis needs to be placed on expanding public and community owned generation which will prioritise sustainability over profit.

A Green Workplace

Tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility in the workplace - unions and employers alike. We are encouraging our branches to nominate green workplace representatives and call upon employers to recognise them. This way, plans to reduce the carbon footprint of workplaces can be devised and implemented with the input and support of the workforce - improving their take-up and relevance. A major source of emissions is transport. Scotland urgently needs a more integrated public transport system to make a meaningful shift away from car use. Re-regulating buses and more public and community ownership would be helpful in doing this. In addition, we advocate green travel plans at work, with incentives for lower energy transport, cycling, car-share, public transport, walking and the use of lower emissions vehicles.

A Just Transition

A key concept in tackling climate change is the idea of 'a just transition' in other words not making people pay an unacceptable price today, to preserve the world for tomorrow. We support the STUC/ Stop Climate Chaos Scotland demand for the setting up of "A Scottish Forum for a Just Transition". While moving to a low-carbon economy offers the potential for thousands of new jobs in areas such as renewables and energy efficiency, we must plan for the necessary economic restructuring to ensure the benefits and costs are shared fairly across society. There must be retraining, help with re-location and other support for those whose jobs change or go. UNISON Scotland is a key part of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and we endorse the recommendations they make in *Securing A Low Carbon Scotland*

Questions for Candidates

- Fuel poverty was meant to be eliminated by this year- it won't be. What will you do to tackle it?
- Do you support a Warm Homes Act? And giving tackling energy efficiency in homes National Infrastructure Project status?
- What will you do to promote local and community electricity generation?
- How will you ensure that future big infrastructure projects support the transition to a low-carbon Scotland?
- What action would you take to ensure public sector food procurement contributes to reducing health inequalities and meeting Scotland's climate targets?

For further information contact

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