Manifesto for a Wellbeing Economy

Scottish Parliament Election 2026



Foreword

Right now, people in Scotland are feeling overlooked and ignored by politicians. Let down by a system that is stacked against them. Too many of us are trapped in poverty, struggling to afford the essentials. **We can and must do better.**

The next parliamentary term is an opportunity for politicians to rebuild trust through their actions, dealing with the issues that matter most to people in Scotland. We can deliver real and lasting change for people that ensures everyone has enough to live with dignity.

In Scotland, we value our beautiful environment that sustains and nurtures us, underpinning our wellbeing. We must use this opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and regenerate our natural environment, protecting it for future generations both here and globally.

It's time for our politicians to invest in a better future for Scotland by getting today's decisions right.

To achieve these goals we must redesign our economy. We need an economy that focuses on producing what matters most for our wellbeing. An economy that uses the wealth we create to care for each other and ensures everyone has what they need.

The Wellbeing Economy presents such a vision for Scotland's economy and is growing in popularity. The Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland (WEAII Scotland) is Scotland's network of organisations and individuals committed to transforming our economy. We are working together to create a Wellbeing Economy in Scotland where people and planet can thrive.

Back in 2022, we joined with over 100 charities, economists, businesses, trade unions and academics to create a joint statement outlining our vision of a Wellbeing Economy. Since then, support for this statement and the Wellbeing Economy movement has grown.

People across Scotland are calling for change, for an economy that delivers good lives for all people in Scotland and protects our natural environment. An economy anchored in dignity, fairness, nature, purpose, and participation.

Using these five Wellbeing Economy needs as a framework, we are please to share our manifesto for the economy. It is not intended as a comprehensive list of all the actions needed to deliver a Wellbeing Economy in Scotland. Instead, we have collaborated with our members to choose a handful of policies which are bold and transformative, and within the power of the Scottish Parliament and Government to deliver over the next parliament.

While the policies outlined here are within the power of the Scottish Government, the transition to a Wellbeing Economy will require similar policies to be enacted across the UK, and not just in Scotland. It will also require further actions by the UK Government in areas that are currently reserved.

Aileen McLeod,

WEAII Scotland Director

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Dignity

Dignity: everyone has enough to live in comfort, safety and happiness.

Poverty becomes a thing of the past.

People in Scotland believe we all should have enough to live with dignity, free from the injustice of poverty, debt and destitution.

But for too many of us, the economy simply isn't working and we are left on shaky ground. Too many of us don't have enough to cover life's essentials and feel frightened of what the future holds. Too many of us are struggling to pay our bills, heat our homes or even buy enough to eat.

And we know that women, disabled people, single parent families and ethnic minorities are all being disproportionately impacted by the ongoing cost of living crisis. We can and must do better.

Policy recommendation: progress the implementation of a Minimum Income Guarantee across Scotland

The Minimum Income Guarantee can provide the sure foundation we all need. Through a combination of good jobs that pay the bills, strong services and better social security, all of us will have the right to an income that never falls below what we need to live with dignity.

There are three parts to the Minimum Income Guarantee:



Good jobs that pay the bills - ensuring paid work provides people with a sustainable income through a real Living Wage, as well as Living Hours that allow people to have certainty about their working week.

Strong services - investment in public services like transport, childcare, social care, healthcare, warm homes, and education ensures people have more freedom in their lives and their daily living costs will be reduced. Such investment should be delivered based on community wealth building principles.

Better social security - for people who are unable to work, are unable to find suitable work or face additional costs due to disability or ill health, the system must be strengthened so that it functions as a protection against poverty and covers life's essentials.

We are calling for the next Scottish Government to commit to following the road map to a Minimum Income Guarantee set out by the expert advisory group. Turning theory into practice and embedding the Minimum Income Guarantee across all its policies.

This includes taking action to:

- Increase the rate of the Scottish Child Payment to £55 by the end of the next Parliament.
- Maximise incomes through full coverage access to advice services to ensure that everyone can access their entitlements.
- Increase the coverage of the Living Wage and Living Hours in the labour market.
- Improve provision and reduce costs of social care and childcare for low income households.
- Introduce multi-year pilots of the Minimum Income Guarantee by 2029 to test the policy in practice, with a focus on unpaid carers and rural and island communities.

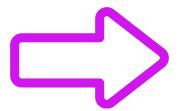


People in Scotland believe we all should have enough to live on. Yet one in five people are held back by the preventable injustice of poverty, with their ability to meet basic needs like food, housing and health being restricted.

That is why we need a Minimum Income Guarantee for Scotland. Through fair work, quality public services and a strong system of social security, the Guarantee would ensure the right to an income that never falls below what's needed for a decent life.

This is an investment in a better society for everyone, where we all have the freedom to build a secure life for ourselves and our households. Ahead of next year's election, the manifestos of all of our political parties should commit to the roadmap to the Guarantee, so we can take practical steps to build a Scotland free from poverty.

Chloe Campbell, Poverty Alliance



To find out more about a Minimum Income Guarantee and other policies that will tackle poverty so everyone can live with dignity, check out the Poverty Alliance manifesto.



At WEAll Scotland, we believe a good home is the foundation for wellbeing and dignity. Currently too many people in Scotland are going without one. Solving the housing crisis is a crucial part of building a Wellbeing Economy. We will therefore publish a separate report that is solely focused on the topic of housing.

Nature

Nature: the economy operates within planetary boundaries, enabling ecosystems to regenerate to provide a restored and safe natural world for all life.

The natural environment around us is vital for our wellbeing. The beautiful diversity of its bustling life inspires, heals and provides for us. It is the foundation of our very existence and our economy. Looking after and restoring our natural world can play an important role in protecting us from the impacts of climate change that are already here.

But, despite decades of commitments by governments, our economy is still breaching several planetary boundaries, undermining the environmental foundation of our economy and wellbeing. We must be more ambitious with our climate targets so we can protect our natural environment for current and future generations and contribute our fair share to global climate mitigation efforts.

Our nature crisis is deepening. Most of our landscape in Scotland is in a poor state and getting worse, depriving many of our wild species of a place to thrive. Scottish sea bird numbers have almost halved between 1986 and 2019.

The pollution of our air and water is rife. The impacts of pollution, climate change and environmental breakdown are increasingly threatening our wellbeing and safety. They are felt disproportionately by those of us who are experiencing poverty, disability or ill health, both in Scotland and around the world.

Right now, our economy and economic policy do not recognise that it requires a healthy climate and natural environment to function. Nature is exploited for short-term profits without consideration for long-term consequences. Time and again, corporations exploit and destroy our natural environment, mainly for the benefit of those who are already wealthy. And governments are not held accountable for failing to deliver on their promises to protect the natural environment and human wellbeing that depends on it.

Policy recommendation: enshrine an enforceable human right to a healthy natural environment in Scottish legislation and explore options for giving nature itself the right to flourish.

We need stronger tools that catalyse change, hold corporations and governments to account for their lack of action to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, and harness the desire to care for our natural environment that many of us feel.

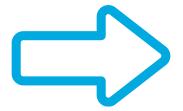
An effective legal framework that enshrines the human right to a healthy natural environment, including a safe climate, can be a powerful tool for change. Even more so if combined with giving nature itself an intrinsic right to flourish.

Doing this would empower individuals and communities to hold public bodies, corporations and the government accountable for the impact they are having on our natural environment. They would open pathways for legal remedies. We must ensure those of us who are most marginalised are put at the centre of this process to realise our ambition for a Just Transition.

Such rights have proven successful in other countries for catalysing change. In 2019 the supreme court of the Netherlands was able to order its government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, forcing it to take immediate action on climate change.

We are calling on the next Scottish Government to:

- Enshrine the human right to a healthy natural environment in Scottish law following the declaration of the UN General Assembly in 2022.
- Ensure that the right incorporates the six substantive features recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, including the right to: clean air; a safe climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably produced food; nontoxic environments in which to live, work, study and play; and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Ensure that the right incorporates the procedural elements to make us compliant with the Aarhus convention, including the right to participate in environmental decision-making and the right to fair and affordable access to justice and effective remedies.
- Convene a commission that is tasked with developing proposals for legislating for the rights of the environment in Scotland itself to exist and flourish and with exploring effective options for enforcing those rights. Such work can draw on existing international examples.



Implementing these recommendations will help to catalyse the urgent policies needed to tackle the climate and nature crisis as outlined by the Environmental Rights
Centre for Scotland, Scotland and Scotland in their manifestos.



For too long, nature and the environment have been taken for granted. A healthy environment is essential for a healthy economy, but a healthy economy alone doesn't guarantee a healthy environment. Giving people the right to a healthy environment and giving rights to nature makes these issues central to decisions and lets us hold those in power accountable. Without these rights, we risk the planet's future. With them, we can achieve a Just Transition to a better future.

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Dr Deborah Long, Scottish Environment LINK

Fairness

Fairness: the economy is designed to ensure a just distribution of income, wealth, power and time. Inequalities are reduced to a small fraction of today's levels.

Our economy generates enough wealth to ensure everyone can have a good life. But the design of our economy ensures this wealth is unfairly distributed. Our economy is designed to deepen inequality and we know that women, disabled people, single parent families and ethnic minorities are all being disproportionately impacted.

The increasing power of wealth over hard work is creating an uneven playing field, especially for young people today. While most people make money from working, the wealthiest people don't have to work at all - their money does all the work for them.

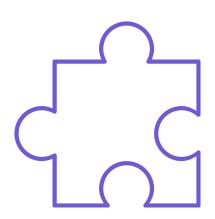
In Britain, the wealthiest family could earn over £4 million in interest every day without lifting a finger. In Scotland, the richest 10% of households own 10 times more wealth than the poorest 40% of households combined.

Inequality is deeply wired into our outdated economic system. Because the ownership of businesses, land and financial assets is concentrated in the hands of a wealthy minority, they have disproportionate control over the economy and can extract wealth, even when they do not contribute to its creation. As a result, a lot of the wealth created in Scotland is extracted for wealthy shareholders and investors in other parts of the world.

Policy recommendation: scale up support for community wealth building and inclusive and democratic business models.

To create a more equal economy we need to increase democratic ownership and control of businesses, land and financial assets. We must ensure that the wealth we produce is distributed in a way that serves everyone's needs, not just those who are already wealthy. We need more businesses that are owned and controlled for the common good, through public ownership or inclusive and democratic business models.

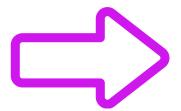
This is especially important in the production of basic necessities, such as housing, care, energy and transport, where too often the extraction of private profits has detrimental effects on those of us that rely on these systems for our basic wellbeing.



A key piece of the puzzle to make our economy more equal by design, is scaling up inclusive and democratic business models to cover a much bigger share of the economy. These include co-operatives, employee owned businesses and social enterprises, operating on community, municipal and national levels. The democratic structures of such businesses are intrinsically set up to produce fairer outcomes. For example, through fairer wages and working conditions, and the profits from their work being reinvested into communities.

As a part of wider community wealth building strategies, such businesses can ensure the wealth that our economy produces is retained in communities and fairly distributed.

The recommendations we have created with our members are only one piece of the puzzle for redesigning our economy to reduce economic inequality.



In addition to the proposals mentioned here, we support the actions outlined in the manifestos developed by Social Enterprise Scotland and Engender. We are calling on the next Scottish Government to:

- Make community wealth building the leading framework for all economic development and ensure that all national strategies are aligned with community wealth building principles, such as plans for housing retrofits or reforms of the care sector.
- Make support for inclusive and democratic business models the central thread that runs through all business support provided by the Scottish Government, the enterprise agencies, local authorities and the Scottish National Investment Bank.
- **Deliver a long term, strategic funding framework** for inclusive and democratic business models providing multi-year, inflation adjusted grants as standard.
- Embed inclusive and democratic business models into the delivery of basic services, ensuring the delivery models are democratic and rooted in local communities.
- Put public and community ownership at the heart of Scotland's energy transition to ensure that the benefits of the transition are fairly shared.
- Fully implement the recommendations made in the recent independent report on the role of inclusive and democratic business models in Scotland.



Scotland's future must be about scaling up support for community wealth building and inclusive, democratic business models. Our economy must be one where ownership is shared, decisions are made democratically and where wealth remains in our communities. By investing in social enterprise and other inclusive business models, we can create lasting, fair prosperity that truly belongs to everyone living in Scotland.

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Andy Paterson, Social Enterprise Scotland

Purpose

Purpose: the collective wellbeing of people and planet is the driving goal behind decision-making. Economic activities and behaviours that contribute to this purpose are valued, our institutions serve the common good.

We can build an economy that delivers good lives for all on a healthy planet, but right now, our economy is heading in the wrong direction. Our relentless pursuit of economic growth is driving greenhouse gas emissions, material use and the destruction of our environment, pushing the planet over the edge. Despite the large material wealth we create, many of us still struggle to afford the essentials for a good life. That is because our economy is currently producing the wrong things.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can change the direction and redesign our economy.

Right now, too many of our resources are being used to produce things that are harmful to people and planet. Things that only serve a small minority of people, such as private jets, fossil fuels, financial speculation, luxury houses or SUVs.

Changing direction and redesigning our economy means these resources could be much better spent on basic needs for wellbeing. We can use our resources to invest in a better future for all of us. We can ensure everyone has a safe, affordable home, and access to nutritious food or good healthcare.

The failure of our economy to provide for many of our basic needs is exacerbated by the economic strategies pursued by the UK and Scottish Governments. The current National Strategy for Economic Transformation by the Scottish Government is not fit for purpose.

The strategy is focused on the wrong goals, prioritising pursuit of economic growth rather than good lives for all within planetary boundaries. As a result it disproportionately favours the sectors with the highest potential for GDP growth rather than those sectors that would make the biggest difference to the wellbeing of people and planet. This is not surprising, given that the strategy was developed and is implemented without meaningful input from people across Scotland, especially those of us most in need of a better economy.

Policy recommendation: create a new economic strategy for Scotland that is aligned with the Wellbeing Economy and guided by a citizen's assembly.

We need to develop a new economic strategy for Scotland that is aligned with the values and goals of a Wellbeing Economy. A strategy that is built on a meaningful participatory process and focuses investment on the things that matter most to people and planet, such as paid and unpaid care work.

We are calling on the next Scottish Government to:

- Deliver an in-depth revision process of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation to create a new economic strategy anchored in dignity, fairness, nature, purpose and participation.
- Convene a citizen's assembly that will set the vision and goals for the new economic strategy and identify key sectors and policy areas for the new strategy to prioritise.
- Implement the recommendations of the citizen's assembly.
- **Give the citizen's assembly the power** to reject the strategy and ask for revisions until it is satisfied that the strategy aligns with its vision and recommendations.
- Maintain a smaller version of the citizen's assembly to oversee and scrutinise the implementation of the economic strategy, potentially in collaboration with the Scottish Parliament.

It has never been more important to have an economic strategy that prioritises the needs of the planet and our people. Economic strategies in Scotland since devolution have tried the same old approach of prioritising business interests instead of following the evidence for how the economy should be designed to provide for our needs, improve our health, support our communities, contribute to our cultural flourishing and protect our environment. These strategies have clearly failed. We are off track to meet our climate targets, poverty is too high, our public services are creaking, and the health of our population is no longer improving. I support WEAll Scotland's call for a citizen's assembly to create a new economic strategy for Scotland, based on the best evidence and informed discussion, and designed to put people and planet first.

Professor Gerry McCartney, University of Glasgow



Participation

Participation: the shape of the economy is determined by people's active voices and is locally rooted. People participate in the decisions that affect their lives, whether it is in their countries, communities or workplaces. Participatory processes are designed to hear the voices of marginalised and oppressed groups.

Too many of us feel that we don't have a say in the decisions that shape our economy and communities. Many groups in society are underrepresented in decision-making, right now only 35% of local councillors are women. People are feeling let down and ignored which is leading to political polarisation and very low levels of trust in politicians and political process.

Building a Wellbeing Economy requires healthy and ongoing democratic discussions within communities about the decisions that shape their economic futures. But decades of austerity and lack of investment have hollowed out much of the civic space and community infrastructure that would facilitate this. The lack of physical space for communities to come together pushes many political conversations online leading to increasing political polarisation.

Policy recommendation: invest in multi-purpose spaces in every community in Scotland through a program that is controlled and directed by local communities and builds democratic decision-making capacity.

We believe every community should be able to access a physical space, and the necessary supporting community infrastructure, to form a hub for people to come together. A space where communities can celebrate their local achievements and engage in discussions about their shared economic future.

The local governance review conducted by the Scottish Government has demonstrated a strong desire among citizens to have a greater say over local decision-making and greater resources that can be directed independently. And the success of community initiatives around Scotland (including local place plans, community development trusts, local climate action and community land ownership) demonstrates that communities are best placed to lead local economic development, if properly supported.

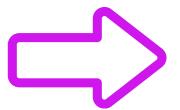
A large investment for community spaces that empowers local communities to independently direct the funding where it is needed can serve as an important step towards democratic decision-making and budgeting capacity for communities. It would also make an important contribution to the scaling up of community wealth building across every community in Scotland.

We are calling on the next Scottish Government to:

- Work with local authorities to provide each community council area with the resources to invest in a community space.
- Make resources available without the need to apply and ensure they cover investment into the improvement of physical space and ongoing maintenance and running costs.
- Give community councils control over the direction of the investment so it is invested in spaces most needed in their community, allowing them to use it for new or existing community spaces for different purposes. Partner with local organisations, such as development trusts, local libraries, local climate action groups or church communities.
- Provide training and support to community councils and local organisers, enabling them to build inclusive and democratic local processes to govern the allocation of resources. The process should ensure underrepresented groups are supported to participate, covering childcare, social care needs and ensuring spaces are accessible.
- **Provide training and support for communities** enabling them to effectively run and maintain their community space.
- Build on the progress made through the local place planning process and support communities to implement their local place plans.

These spaces have the potential to become important hubs in their communities and could be combined with local one stop shops for accessing local services, community cafes, coworking spaces, advice or other services.

Our recommendations form part of the actions needed to revive local democracy in Scotland and support local economic development and community wealth building that is genuinely driven by the communities themselves.



In addition to the proposals mentioned here, we support the actions outlined in the manifesto developed by the <u>Scottish Community Alliance</u>.



Scotland's Community Transport movement puts control over local transport back into local hands. Over 200 urban, rural and island communities now run their own buses, dial-a-ride, non-emergency patient transport, car clubs and more. They are testament to the power of community ownership to bring people together and transform lives. It gives people a stake in the success of local services and spaces, a say in how they are delivered and a sense of pride in the place they call home. We need to devolve more power, responsibility and budgets to the community level to breathe new life into our democracy and give everyone greater control and influence over the decisions that affect them most.



David Kelly, Community Transport Association

Financing the transition

Building a Wellbeing Economy, including most of the policies proposed in this manifesto, will require additional public investments by governments and local authorities. This will enable us to improve public services, invest in climate change mitigation, adaption and nature restoration, and support inclusive and democratic business models.

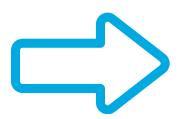
Public investment is crucial for redesigning our economy to deliver the things that matter to the people of Scotland. It will create substantial improvements in the wellbeing of people and planet. And it will reduce failure demands for public spending that the design of our current economy creates. We know that investing in clean air and building a strong social security system will reduce negative health impacts.

As a society we are wealthy enough to fund investments into our collective wellbeing. Even though the powers devolved to the Scottish Government are limited, devolved and local tax systems could do far more to leverage our collective wealth for investments into a Wellbeing Economy that delivers good lives for all of us.

Tax Justice Scotland, a campaign supported by more than 50 civil society organisations, argues that the next Parliament will not be able to deliver transformative policies without tax justice.

The Scottish Government has the ability for tax reform in a number of areas which would raise important funds that can be invested into social priorities and support the environmental transformation of our economy:

- Replace council tax with a proportional property tax that is based on updated valuations and responsive to household circumstances, as proposed by Tax Justice Scotland.
- Bring wealth into the scope of future tax policy to tackle wealth inequality, as proposed by the Poverty and Inequality Commission.
- Use devolved tax powers to make polluters pay and incentivise investments into climate mitigation and natural restoration, for example through a private jet tax as proposed by Oxfam Scotland.
- Reform local business taxes to incentivise fair work and environmental behaviours as suggested by IPPR Scotland.
- Lay the groundwork for introducing a green land value tax in the medium term to capture rising land values for the common good, as proposed by Future Economy Scotland.



For more information on each of these proposals, check out the following reports:

Outdated and unfair: The case for Council Tax Reform

How better tax policy can reduce poverty and inequality

Cleared for take-off: A private jet tax for Scotland

Thinking bigger on tax in Scotland

Land reform for a democratic, sustainable and just Scotland



Fairer taxes are essential to delivering a fairer, greener and more caring Scotland for everyone. Alongside tax reforms at UK and global level, we need all parties in Scotland to commit to reforming devolved taxes so they raise more revenues to invest, shape positive social behaviours, and combat economic inequalities.

Jamie Livingstone, Head of Oxfam Scotland, member of Tax Justice Scotland

Conclusion

We are calling on all political parties to act on the issues that matter most to people in Scotland and invest in a better future for all of us. Decisions taken today can help make sure we all have the freedom to build a more secure life and a better society for everyone.

Getting today's decisions right can shape a better future for our children and our country.



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Support for this manifesto

AdamPiggot











































WEAll Scotland is a member of the global Wellbeing Economy Alliance which has hubs all over the world. Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Organisation: Charity Number SC049174. Principle office: Glasgow Collective, 15 East Campbell Street, Glasgow G1 5DT

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