

SNP Manifesto 2021

What we're doing for business

Scotland's businesses are central to our recovery from the pandemic. We know the last year has been hard, with many businesses having to close their doors during lock down. We will harness Scotland's innovation and ingenuity to create jobs and drive economic recovery.

Re-elect the SNP to:

Support through the pandemic

In Government the SNP has provided over £3 billion of support to businesses to help them through the pandemic. Now as we begin to re-open our economy and society many businesses will receive restart grants of between £7,000 and £19,500 at the end of April, to help them prepare for re-opening.

Retail, leisure and hospitality firms will also get 100% Business Rates relief this year to help get them back on their feet.

Invest in small and medium sized businesses

We will continue the Small Business Bonus scheme, which benefits more than 100,000 businesses.

We will invest £100 million to help small and medium sized businesses get access to the right digital skills and equipment.

We will support an increase in the number of employee owned businesses in Scotland to 500 by 2030 - a 500% increase on current numbers. We will create a mechanism for greater financial provision to support more employee buyouts.

Competitive tax regime

Scotland has both the lowest business rates poundage in the UK and the most generous relief schemes.

We will gradually reduce the Large Business Supplement over the course of the Parliament to ensure that the

largest businesses pay the same combined poundage in Scotland as in England.

We will explore the possibility of levying a higher poundage on properties where the owner is registered in a tax haven.

We will maintain the Business Growth Accelerator which removes rates liabilities for the first 12 months after occupation of a new build, and the fresh start scheme which removes liabilities for the first 12 months after occupation of a previously empty property.

Support new ways of working

Covid-19 changed the way we work almost overnight. As we recover from the pandemic, we want to do more to support people achieve a healthy work-life balance. We also want to keep the total number of people in employment high.

As part of this, we will establish a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and explore the benefits of a four day working week.

We will use the learning from this to consider a more general shift to a four day working week as and when Scotland gains full control of employment rights. We will also identify additional employment opportunities and assess the economic impact of moving to a four day week.

More widely, we will support a review - in partnership with trade unions and businesses - of how working

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practices could and should be adapted to meet the needs of the future economy.

Champion entrepreneurs

Businesses run by women make a huge contribution to the Scottish economy, but only 20% of the Scottish business base is owned by women. We will create a dedicated Women's Business Centre to provide financial support, advice and training to women looking to start or grow their business. This will be backed by £50 million over the course of the parliament.

As part of this, we will invest £3 million per year to pay the equivalent of a full time salary for 100 female applicants to develop their pioneering business idea.

We will create opportunities for new businesses to grow and flourish in every part of Scotland. To breathe new life into the economies of rural Scotland we will create a new, £20 million Rural Entrepreneur Fund – this will provide grants of up to £10,000 to support the creation of 2,000 new businesses.

We want to encourage pioneers and entrepreneurs to help reshape the Scottish economy. To complement the mission led work of the newly established Scottish National Investment Bank, we will deliver a National Challenge competition, providing funding of up to £50 million to the project or projects with the greatest potential to transform Scotland.

Transform our Tech Sector

We will implement the recommendations of the Logan Review to raise our tech sector to world-class status including the proposed creation of a national network of world class facilities – backed by £30 million – to develop new tech start-ups that can grow into companies of scale offering high quality, well paid jobs.

Our new 'Tech-Scaler' hubs will be created in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness. We will also ensure that the commercial education on offer in these hubs is accessible virtually to ensure access for businesses in rural areas.

We will develop and implement net zero data centres, powered on renewable energy.

We will support the creation of 5G Innovation hubs and 5G innovation districts in Scotland.

Invest in infrastructure

We will boost investment in infrastructure with our National Infrastructure Mission set to increase investment to £7 billion by 2025-26 supporting 45,000 jobs.

We will deliver 100,000 new homes over the next ten years, as part of a £16 billion investment. And we will complete improvements to connectivity with our £579 million investment in superfast broadband, and the electrification of our road and rail networks.

Support our high streets

Our high streets have been hit by the pandemic and the ever increasing role of online shopping. We will explore the introduction of a new national digital sales tax to level the playing-field between online and digital and use any revenue from this to breathe new life into our town and city centres.

We will publish a Retail Strategy to help the sector in Scotland change, innovate and thrive, and become an exemplar in inclusive growth, supporting a robust, local supply chain and offering people and communities the goods, experiences and services they want.

We will build on the recent Scotland Loves Local campaign which encouraged people to think local first by piloting local loyalty schemes alongside a national Scotland Loves Local loyalty scheme. We will introduce a new £10 million Scotland Loves Local fund will help revitalise high streets hit by the pandemic.

Grow our exports

Under the SNP, our international exports are up 63 per cent – valued at £33.8 billion in 2018.

However in some sectors, particularly food and drink, we have seen a real decline in exports due to Brexit. As a priority we will push the UK Government to secure access to the European single market for those vital sectors without the barriers that are currently in place.

We will assess options for direct links to international markets from Scotland's ports and airports – reducing dependency on the 'short straits' and airports in the South East of England – to provide cost effective options for Scottish exporters. In particular, we will create an inward border post to service Cairnryan, our commercial port linking us to the island of Ireland.

We will implement our proposal for Scottish Green Ports, making public sector support conditional on businesses complying with our Fair Work First agenda – paying the Real Living Wage and implementing the Scottish Business Pledge – and on delivering on concrete plans to reduce carbon emissions.

We will increase the number of trade and investment hubs we operate in Europe to promote Scottish products and innovation, with a new base in each of the Scandinavian and Baltic regions.