



Core manifesto for the 2021 Scottish parliament election

WHAT THE SCOTTISH TRADE UNIONIST AND SOCIALIST COALITION STANDS FOR

- For a socialist recovery from the Covid crisis**
- Build a mass working-class movement for indyref2 and an independent socialist Scotland**

The Scottish election, on May 6 2021, will take place against the backdrop of the Covid pandemic, majority support for Scottish independence and a growing confrontation with the Westminster government over a second indyref. These issues will dominate the election. Yet it's clear that a recovery from Covid in the interests of the working-class majority and the struggle for the right to self-determination are inextricably bound together.

We have seen the capitalist establishment and their political representatives prove incapable of protecting the population from the catastrophe of the pandemic. Failure to act quickly enough as the virus approached was magnified by a complete lack of resources for testing and contact tracing, PPE and the funds needed for the health emergency at the start of the crisis.

Not only the woeful Boris Johnson Westminster government but also the SNP Scottish government are complicit. As they are over care home deaths and the fixation with forcing schools back full time in the late summer of 2020 with no social distancing which gave the virus further opportunity to spread in the autumn and winter period.

The colossal death toll from Covid is heartbreaking - but it was also unnecessary. As of early March 2021 approaching 10,000 people had lost their lives in Covid-related deaths in Scotland. Across the UK that figure is well over 120,000. That puts both Scotland and the UK among the very worst levels of fatalities per head of the population in the world.

Working-class communities have seen a death rate at more than double the average - many of them were workers forced to operate in unsafe conditions without proper protection. Health, care workers and frontline staff in general have fought heroically throughout. Yet years of underfunding for NHS, care and public services have left them fighting with too few staff and too little resources.

As usual it was workers who proved essential during the crisis, whether that was delivering care, working in public services, retail, transport, delivery and logistics and in many other sectors. Yet these same workers will be expected to pay the price, in many cases through job losses, pay cuts and attacks on working conditions. Scottish TUSC demands a recovery from Covid in the interests of the working-class majority, not the greedy bosses and the billionaire elite who are even richer than they were at the start of the pandemic.

It's a scandal that the 10 richest billionaires have increased their wealth by \$580 billion in the last year - enough to vaccinate every human being in the world and still have enough left over to begin tackling inequality. The billionaire elite across the world now hold a colossal \$12 trillion in their collective bank accounts. In contrast, by the end of 2021 there will be 500 million more people living in poverty than at the start of the Covid crisis.

Scotland is no exception to that global inequality scandal. Here, the top 1% of the population have more wealth than the poorest 50% of society. Poverty is on the increase while health inequalities are at record levels. The explosion in food banks in Scotland is accelerating and the drug death scandal goes from awful to disastrous.

Never have socialist policies been more important. Policies to redistribute wealth, to invest in job creation, housing, health and public services, a living minimum wage, to bring the main sectors of the economy into public ownership, for socialist change to end the climate catastrophe. None of the main parties in this election are prepared to take the decisive measures against capitalism that are essential.

That recovery from Covid must be based on a clear policy that makes the rich and big business pay - the capitalist elite whose stewardship of society has been shown to be so harmful. Whether that is over Covid, the economy, the environment, or the future for young people.

Scottish TUSC is standing to offer those alternatives, but also to call for the building of a new mass working-class party in Scotland. The trade unions in Scotland, with over 500,000 members, should lead and call a conference to discuss building a new workers' party that will oppose all cuts and all attempts to make us pay for the economic crisis.

We need politicians who will stand and fight any and all new efforts to cut public spending - in other words austerity. It's long past time that councillors and MSPs refused to implement Tory cuts. That they stop being the main delivery mechanism for the systematic destruction of the jobs, incomes and services that millions of us rely on. Neither the SNP nor Scottish Labour have proven themselves capable of being up to that task. That's why we need a new party based on the trade unions and the independence movement to offer that fighting alternative.

INDYREF2 AND SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

Scottish TUSC supports a second independence referendum. We stand unequivocally for the right of the Scottish people to self-determination. Boris Johnson's refusal to agree to an indyref2 is not his just his refusal. It represents the overwhelming position of the capitalist elite throughout Britain.

The break-up of the UK, and it's Scotland that is currently the weakest link in that chain, would be a catastrophe for the ruling class and their economic, strategic and geopolitical interests. The knock-on impact on Northern Ireland and Wales would be dramatic. For these reasons the capitalist class, including the Labour leadership under Keir Starmer, will oppose tooth and nail conceding an indyref2, probably while offering to concede more powers to Scotland as a trade-off.

The only power capable of overcoming the entrenched opposition of British and international capitalism to self-determination for Scotland is the mobilisation of the working class in a mass movement for democratic rights. That would involve not only mass demonstrations for the right to indyref2 but also widespread and coordinated strike action by trade unions and occupations of workplaces, schools and colleges by workers and young people.

Only Scottish TUSC is prepared to stand for such a policy. While understandably many will vote SNP at this election, partly in defiance of the Tories and Boris Johnson, the SNP leadership have no intention of leading the type of struggle needed to win self-determination for Scotland. And that is because ultimately the SNP leaders support capitalism. They wish to maintain that system in an independent Scotland as their 2018 growth commission report made clear.

It is very likely that there will be a big majority of pro-indyref2 MSPs elected in May. However, a parliamentary majority will not be enough to force the Tories to retreat. A mass working-class movement is essential, armed with socialist policies not just for the right to decide our relationship with the rest of the UK, but also to fight to end poverty, inequality, racism and exploitation. That means a fight for an independent socialist Scotland.

WHO ARE WE?

Scottish TUSC is a coalition formed in 2010 of trade unionists, community campaigners and socialists, including as affiliated organisations both Socialist Party Scotland and the RMT trade union. We will be standing candidates on a number of regional lists and in some parliamentary constituencies for Holyrood.

Scottish TUSC candidates will stand for election pledging to live on the average wage of a skilled worker. This is our core manifesto setting out some of our key policies. Individual Scottish TUSC candidates can add to these as part of their election campaigns.

Many of the following policies are covered under the current responsibilities of Holyrood and local councils in Scotland. In some cases they would require to be implemented by a socialist government in an independent Scotland or using the current powers at Westminster. Scottish TUSC and our candidates stand for:

A SOCIALIST RECOVERY FROM THE COVID CRISIS

- No return to austerity - Scottish government and Scottish local authorities must refuse to pass on cuts from Westminster and instead use their powers to set no cuts budgets that defend jobs and public services in Scotland.
- Trade unions should actively seek to build a mass campaign of opposition to all cuts. Demand a return of the around £3 billion stolen from public services in Scotland over the last decade to allow for the full funding of services and to reverse the effects of austerity. No to rent and council tax increases
- Cancel historic local authority debt to free up money for urgent investment
- For an immediate 15% pay rise for NHS and care workers. Raise the minimum wage in these sectors to £15 an hour. Scottish government and councils must meet the pay increase demands of trade unions for all public sector workers
- Build coordinated strike action across the public and private sector for a workers' recovery from the Covid crisis
- Increase the minimum wage immediately to £12 an hour and build a mass trade union-led campaign for a £15 an hour minimum wage for all
- Nationalise the care sector now - End the profiteering - For national trade union agreement on pay and conditions for all care workers
- Bring into public ownership under democratic working-class control any company threatening major job losses or closures
- For a massive public programme of job creation paid for by an emergency wealth tax to seize some of the uninvested profits of big business and the billionaire elite
- Build a new mass workers' party in Scotland to fight for socialist change

FOR AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST SCOTLAND

- March, Strike and Occupy for Indyref2 - Build a mass working-class and trade union-led campaign to defy the Tories. Scottish government must organise the indyref if Boris Johnson or the UK Supreme Court refuses a section 30 order
- Bring oil, gas, banks, major industry, retail and services into democratic public ownership under workers' control and management in an independent socialist Scotland. Plan the economy for working-class need instead of bosses' greed
- Build a united struggle of working-class people across Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland for a free and voluntary socialist confederation

- No to rejoining the bosses' EU - Fight for a socialist Europe for workers and young people

END PRIVATISATION

- End all privatisation, including the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Non-Profit Distributing model (NPD). For real public investment into schools, hospitals and community facilities. Bring privatised public services and utilities back into public ownership under democratic control
- Cancellation/Renegotiation/buy-out on terms set by the Scottish parliament of all current PFI/PPP/NPD schemes to help free up billions for public investment
- Bring Royal Mail and all privatised gas and electricity companies into public ownership
- Public ownership of all rail, bus and ferry services to build an integrated, low-pollution public transport system.

FOR FREE EDUCATION, QUALITY SERVICES AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- For the Scottish government to ensure a fully-funded, high-quality, free National Health Service under democratic public ownership and control - For a qualitative expansion in mental health services to meet demand
- Nationalise the pharmaceutical companies under democratic control
- For urgent investment into health and rehabilitation services to help reduce the drug deaths scandal. Legislate to allow for the implementation of harm reduction measures for people with addiction issues
- For the Scottish Parliament and councils to ensure the building of 100,000 high-standard, eco-friendly, affordable council and social rented homes over the next five years.
- Scottish government must scrap all student debt and introduce a living grant for all
- Suspend evictions for debt and introduce rent controls now to end profiteering by rip-off landlords

A LIVING WAGE AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS

- Repeal all anti-trade union laws. For councils and the Scottish government to refuse to implement all aspects of the Tories' anti-trade union laws. No to attacks on facility time, defend the right to collect subs by check-off, a simple majority for strike ballots and no prosecution of trade unionists under any aspect of the trade union laws
- For an immediate increase of the minimum wage to £12 an hour as a step to a £15 an hour living wage and for it to then rise in line with inflation or wages, whichever is higher. No exemptions
- Cut the working week to a maximum of 35 hours with no loss of pay
- Scrap zero-hour contracts. Guaranteed hours and full employment rights for all
- Invest to create and protect jobs, including for young people
- Solidarity with workers taking action to defend jobs, conditions, pensions, public services and trade unions

A DECENT INCOME FOR ALL

- A living income that covers the cost of living – reverse all cuts to benefits and end child poverty
- For the Scottish government to use its powers to mitigate the Tory welfare cuts and to top up benefits
- For an immediate increase of 50% in the state pension as a step to a living pension. Campaign for the restoration of the pre-Thatcher real value of pensions. Reinstate the link with average earnings
- Scottish government to use devolved powers over benefits to give a mitigation payment, non-means tested, of £137.60 a week to those women born in the 1950s/60s who have been denied their pension (WASPI campaign)
- For the abolition of the increases imposed on state retirement age, creating jobs for younger people.
- Scrap benefit sanctions. Scottish government to provide 100% mitigation of those who are sanctioned

SCRAP THE COUNCIL TAX AND TAX THE RICH

- Tax the rich. For a Scottish government that uses its new powers to raise the highest rate of tax to 90% for those who earn more than £150,000 a year (TUSC believes this tax band should be changed to kick-in at £90,000)

- For Scotland to have full range of tax raising powers which would allow a Scottish government to tackle issues such as social deprivation and poverty and provide increased funding for the NHS, education etc.
- Scrap the council tax. Replace it with a new graduated wealth tax based on ability to pay (calculated by income) and that will exempt all those on low incomes.

SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

- Deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions - otherwise climate change, caused by capitalism, will destroy the planet
- Invest in publicly owned and controlled renewable energy
- Bring the North Sea oil and gas industry into public ownership to allow the sustainable transition to alternative forms of energy under workers' control. Guaranteed work with no job losses or loss of pay for all workers moving from fossil fuel production
- All major renewable energy projects to be under public ownership and workers' control
- Move to sustainable, low-pollution industry and farming - stop the pollution that is destroying our environment.
- Produce for need, not profit, and design goods for reuse and recycling
- Oppose all forms of fracking

STOP THE ATTACKS ON DISABLED PEOPLE

- Promote policies to enable disabled people to participate in, and have equal access to, education, employment, housing, transport and welfare provision
- Support measures to ensure disabled people receive a level of income according to needs. Equal pay for equal work

NO TO RACISM, OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

- Black Lives Matter - Oppose racism, Islamophobia, anti-semitism and all forms of discrimination. Opposition to the far right and fascism. Defend the right to asylum, repeal the 2014 Immigration Act and all racist immigration controls
- Build a mass, united struggle of workers and young people against racism and capitalism - Fight for jobs, homes and a living wage for all
- No to sexism and all forms of gender oppression. Ensure women have genuinely equal rights, pay and income. End the cuts and closures of women's services in Scotland. Defend a women's right to choose
- No to all forms of homophobia and transphobia - Full equality and rights for LGBT+ people
- Scrap Police Scotland. For full democratic control of the police at a local level. Defend our liberties and make police and security democratically accountable. No to further anti-working class repressive laws and powers
- End the scandal of blacklisting. Full compensation for all workers who have suffered in the past and now
- For the right to vote at 16 in all elections

NO TO WAR

- No to imperialist wars and occupations - Fight for a socialist world to end conflict and oppression
- Scrap Trident. No more spending on a new generation of nuclear weapons and huge aircraft carriers. Convert arms spending to create jobs, public services and socially useful products

SOCIALISM

- Bring into democratic public ownership the major companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned on a socialist basis to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment