

SCPO Briefing Paper 9/6

Briefings from Manifestos – 5

EDUCATION

This is one of a series of SCPO Briefing Papers in which we are taking the topics identified by the churches as key election issues and summarising the Manifesto commitments on these themes of the parties now represented in Parliament. In the new situation, all of these are significant background to coming policy.

Carbon emissions

- The SNP would introduce mandatory carbon reduction targets of 3% per annum, and set a long-term target of cutting emissions by at least 80% by 2050 – above the UK target of 60%. Labour would also introduce a Climate Change Bill, in parallel with the forthcoming UK legislation, cut CO² emissions by 60% by 2050 and introduce annual reports on progress. The Lib Dems would introduce an overall carbon reduction target of 12.5% by 2010 and 60% by 2050 (including individual targets by sector), with an annual report on progress. The Greens would introduce a law requiring an Executive action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 4.5% year-on-year, with targets of a 30% reduction on 1990 levels by 2010, a 70% reduction by 2030 and a 90% reduction by 2050, and allocate enough funding to deliver them.
- Lib Dems want renewable energy supplying all Scotland's electricity by 2050, starting by raising the existing 40% target to 60% by 2020. They would also consult on a new target to reduce electricity use by 20% by 2050. Greens want 70% of electricity needs generated from renewable energy by 2020, and 100% by 2050. This would require a coherent national strategy for renewables and guidance for on-shore and off-shore wind energy development.
- The SNP would consult on the most effective target for the use of bio-fuels and hydrogen powered vehicles, and suggest a target of 100% use of alternative fuels by public sector vehicles by 2020, combined with a national target of 30% for other road users. As part of this, they would examine incentives for industry to develop bio-fuels and for motorists to use these.
- Labour would encourage public sector bodies to set up carbon committees to drive reductions in CO² emissions at all levels, again with annual reporting.
- Labour would introduce carbon budgeting to ensure emissions are reducing year on year and would make personal carbon calculators available.
- The Lib Dems would establish a Carbon Challenge Demonstration Fund to support innovative developments. Greens would establish a Climate Challenge Fund (£100m over four years) to support community initiatives to reduce carbon emissions.
- The Lib Dems would also to develop an overseas climate change team to assist developing countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and adopt low carbon technologies. They would double the current provision for overseas aid.
- The Greens said that the Executive would be required to produce a sustainable energy plan for Scotland, and appoint a cabinet-level Minister for Sustainable Development and Climate Change.

Community

- The SNP would take forward the creation of Community Energy Plans to allow local communities to identify and set their own local renewable needs and then contract with energy suppliers to deliver community based energy generation and energy saving solutions; alongside that initiative they would encourage the establishment of community energy companies and trusts, Labour also said local authorities would be encouraged to develop decentralised energy companies and schemes; and that greater use would be made of Combined Heat and Power. A key element of the Lib Dems' Energy Bill would be to develop plans for more decentralised energy. They would consult on a new requirement for all new power stations to include cogeneration of electricity and heat, unless they can show that heat capture is not possible.
- The SNP would begin an early review of planning, including proposals requiring Local Authorities to take account of renewable energy as part of their planning process. They would expect each council to assess suitable and appropriate sites for renewable generation in their area, with full engagement with communities in this process. They said that a one year consultation would allow them to produce a clear national strategy on the approach to renewable generation. The Greens said local authorities would be obliged to prepare Local Renewable Energy Strategies to include audits of potential capacity for wind energy developments, and locational guidance for wind, biomass and hydro schemes.
- Labour would introduce new planning regulations to make it easier for people to install wind-turbines and solar panels and would ensure that new public sector buildings include micro-renewable energy wherever possible.
- The Lib Dems want to create local power in every community in Scotland, including combined heat and power, district heating systems, air and ground heat pumps, microrenewables, biomass, storage cells, smart grid technology, a network of hydrogen fuel pumps, and support for innovative hydrogen storage systems such as the PURE centre in Shetland.
- The Greens would give priority to community-owned renewable energy generation schemes, encourage communities across Scotland to develop renewable projects and involve local people more meaningfully in decisions on corporate renewable schemes.
- The Greens would ensure that every local authority has an Energy Advice Centre employing Green Energy Officers to provide independent advice on installing renewable and energy efficiency measures in homes.

Energy

- The SNP would bring together stakeholders on a cross-party and non-party basis to agree a joint approach to clean energy legislation and introduce a Bill that can attract a consensus in parliament. They would take forward a distinct Scottish Energy Policy.
- The SNP and the Lib Dems support the development of carbon capture and clean coal technology, and of hydrogen technologies and fuel cell storage.
- The SNP, the Conservatives and the Lib Dems all gave their backing to the Peterhead Hydrogen Power Project.
- The SNP would press for creation of an EU Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Research Centre, based in Scotland. Labour would work to attract the UK's proposed Energy Technology Institute to Aberdeen.

- The Conservatives would call for an urgent review of building standards to incorporate world-class energy saving design. They were concerned that the current subsidy regime for renewable energy is leading to the over-development of on-shore windfarms and would seek to adapt the renewables obligation system to incentivise other renewables like wave energy and biomass.
- The Conservatives would place a moratorium on all locally-opposed wind farm developments pending a National Location Strategy for such developments.
- Labour would examine further incentives to encourage marine renewables.
- The Lib Dems said that energy use reduction needs to be at the heart of energy policy with a clear strategy to reduce demand across society.
- The Lib Dems would press the UK Government to reform VAT and guarantee that microgenerated electricity can be sold back to the grid at market rate. The Greens said that electricity suppliers would be required to install meters in all new houses by 2009 that enable householders to sell excess electricity back into the national grid, as well as smart metering technology in schools and homes..
- A long term objective of the Lib Dems is for renewable energy to be generated on-site in every building; to achieve that, every part of the public sector would have to develop an action plan to generate at least a fifth of their own energy on-site by 2020.
- The Lib Dems want a new renewable heat strategy for Scotland, with a target for 10% of Scotland's heat needs to come from renewable and microgeneration sources by 2020. A Biomass Action Plan would encourage production by farmers and provide the resources for a major expansion in combined heat and power. The Greens would meet 15% of heating needs from renewable and microgeneration sources by 2020 by introducing a renewable heat obligation for heat energy suppliers to obtain some of their fuel from renewable sources such as biomass.
- The Greens would double financial support for 'wet' renewable (wave, tidal and offshore wind) while maintaining support for the development of onshore wind power, without compromising wild places.

Financial incentives

- The SNP would remove unnecessary planning obstacles that stand in the way of micro-generation and in their first budget would set out plans to quadruple the financial support for family and community micro generation schemes.
- Labour would consult on how to reduce emissions through planning, energy, building standards, agricultural practice and incentives through local taxation.
- The Greens said councils could offer council tax or other local taxation rebates to households that take specific actions to reduce their environmental impact.
- The Conservatives would invest £12m per year into an Eco-Bonus Scheme. Households; communities and small businesses would be entitled to apply for a grant to install modern energy-saving and energy-creating technology. Households and businesses would be entitled to apply for grants to help cover the costs of buying and installing a wind turbine or solar panels, and community projects would be eligible for a grant of up to £100,000.
- The Greens would triple funding for the Scottish Community and Householder Renewable Initiative to provide grants for householders and communities to install renewable energy devices, and guarantee it on a 3 year rolling basis. They would extend the maximum grant to 50%, extend the Central Energy Efficiency Fund and introduce a loan and borrowing fund to support installation of renewable energy in public buildings.

Miscellaneous

- The SNP would build on initial discussions with the Norwegian government and EU Commission on proposals for a North Sea super-grid, able to take electricity from offshore Scotland and Norway direct to markets in mainland Europe. The Lib Dems also support plans for an offshore 'supergrid' so that Scotland develops its full renewables potential.
- Labour would work with local government to establish a local authority carbon trading scheme.
- Lib Dems would ensure there is genuine representation of environmental interests and expertise across government, with proper integration of sustainable development.
- The Greens would work with local authorities and business to develop workable ways of introducing environmental levies, for example on non-returnable packaging or road congestion. They would press for the development of effective pollution tax plans at European and UK level, and for greater powers for the Scottish Parliament to allow the development of Scottish pollution taxes. They would also seek powers for the Scottish Parliament over all energy matters, not just renewable and energy efficiency.

Nuclear Power

- The SNP, Lib Dems and Greens reject new nuclear power stations or dumps.
- The Conservatives said that use of nuclear power is a decision for the UK government; if the government endorses its use they would not block planning permission for a suitable site in Scotland.

Recycling/Waste

- The SNP, Lib Dems and Greens aspire to a zero waste Scotland. The SNP would begin early consultation with industry and other stakeholders to agree national standards. The Greens would introduce a zero waste strategy, focusing on waste minimisation, and set a target of zero waste by 2020 with interim targets in line with countries like New Zealand.
- All three also wish to extend kerbside recycling throughout Scotland. The SNP want this to include plastics recycling and would investigate the potential to introduce used cooking oil collections for biodiesel and kerbside collections for batteries. The Lib Dems said that new developments must include community composting and waste separation facilities as standard, so that problems faced with existing tenement buildings are not repeated. The Greens said every household would have access to kerbside recycling. Lib Dems want to see municipal recycling and composting rates increase to 70% by 2020, with milestones to ensure progress is made towards this target. They would roll-out the digester bin schemes developed in Aberdeen and other areas to reduce the amount of waste put out for collection. The Greens want every household with a garden to be supplied with compost bins.
- Labour would reward households that reduce unnecessary waste and would monitor voluntary measures by business to reduce excess packaging.
- The Lib Dems would continue to work with the UK retail sector and the UK Government to reduce the environmental impact of plastic bags by 25% by 2008, with more encouragement to consumers to reduce their carrier bag use, reducing the plastic content in bags, and enabling the recycling of more carrier bags. They would keep open the option of a plastic bag levy if significant progress was not made.
- The Greens would ban excessive packaging and require trading standards officers to monitor packaging in supermarkets and large stores.