

**April 2011**

## **Scottish Labour Manifesto: What it means for UNISON members**

Scottish Labour's manifesto is the culmination of two years of consultation across Scotland. A process that includes the affiliated trade unions that are represented at all levels of Scottish Labour's policy machinery. The manifesto sets out Scottish Labour's vision for Scotland and addresses many issues of concern to UNISON members.

As Scotland faces up to the Con-Dem coalition's ideologically motivated cuts, the Scottish elections could not come at a more important time for UNISON members and their families. Whilst the Scottish Parliament has limited financial powers, it can stop much of the Con-Dem's ideological excess at the border. It is in this context that Iain Gray's message to UNISON members is so important. If elected there will be no privatisation of our NHS or our universities and the marketisation of council services, promoted in the English Localism Bill, will not happen in Scotland.



### **A message from Iain Gray to UNISON members in Scotland**

UNISON members know that the public services that you deliver, and that we all rely on, are under pressure as never before. But we created our parliament for the hard times, not the good times. We created it for a time like this.

It means we can say, with our hand on our heart.

You see what the Tories are doing to the NHS in England? We won't have that here.

You see what the Tories are doing to the universities in England? We won't have that here.

You see what the Tories are doing to council services in England? We won't have that here.

This is what our parliament is for. And Labour will use it to fight for the things that really matter

Important though this message is a manifesto has to be about what Scottish Labour will do for and with the people of Scotland. In this briefing we highlight those manifesto commitments that are particularly relevant to UNISON members.

Use this as a resource to discuss the election in your workplace. The full manifesto can be downloaded from the Scottish Labour website (<http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/manifesto>) and other UNISON election materials are available from the UNISON Scotland website. A short leaflet version will also be available.

UNISON Labour Link does not endorse every proposal in this manifesto. But it does represent the best opportunity to protect our vital public services and the workers who deliver them.

# **Scottish Labour Manifesto – what it means for UNISON members**

## **Employment**

Scottish Labour will introduce the young person's guarantee – a place in education, training, volunteering or work for every 16-18 year old in Scotland. Including 10,000 work placements through a new Scottish Future Jobs Fund for young people and others who have been unemployed for over six months.

The careers service will have new roles including a return to identify the individual needs and attributes of our young people and mentor and support them into meaningful employment. This addresses a UNISON concern that the careers service is moving towards too much impersonal group work and online services.

A new Scottish Living Wage of at least £7.15 an hour, starting with those working in the public sector. Equally important is the establishment of a Living Wage Unit to monitor its implementation, advise on annual increases in the rate and drive the Living Wage into the private sector through procurement and persuasion.

A new Economic Cabinet at the heart of government, drawing on business, trade union and third sector experience to ensure the prioritisation of jobs and growth. The current economic advisors have no trade union input and are chaired by a banker.

## **Education**

An Early Years Bill that will pursue the delivery of a common package of support measures, prior to birth and until the age of 3, including provision for expectant parents during the mum's pregnancy and additional support for young mums. Labour is also keen to explore how best to utilise and invest in the skills of our health visitors and early education professionals, to better monitor and support families during the first few years and develop early education and care provision, with the aim of equaling the best international practice.

Scottish Labour believes that good quality nursery education is the first step towards delivering the productive citizens of tomorrow improving the flexibility and number of hours of supported early education and care places that parents are offered and increasing the number of free early learning places for vulnerable 2 year olds. They also recognise that delivering good quality education would not be possible without the vital contribution made by classroom assistants and other support staff to the school community.

With Scottish Labour, there will be no upfront or back-end tuition fees for Scottish university students. They will ensure Scottish students are not disadvantaged against fee-paying students from other regions and countries when applying for courses and that the number of graduates is maintained.

Scottish Labour has a longstanding commitment to trade union led learning. They initiated the Scottish Union Learning Fund and the Trade Union Working Party on Lifelong Learning. They recognise the importance of this activity in improving workplace productivity and we will work with trade unions and employers in supporting action to improve the way skills are used in the workplace. They will continue to work with the STUC to expand the availability of everyday skills training in the workplace and we will maintain support and funding for the Scottish Union Learning Fund.

## **Health**

Scottish Labour reject the UK government proposals to introduce market values to the NHS and will ensure that in Scotland the NHS remains a public service, publicly delivered. They are committed to shifting the focus of the NHS in Scotland, from being a reactive service for ill health, towards being a local, proactive, patient centred service for health and well-being.

Scottish Labour's founding vision for the NHS was to establish a service that provides universal care of the highest standards. It is unacceptable that health inequality is still so strongly linked to income levels, poverty and deprivation and that quality of provision varies from one part of Scotland to another.

Scottish Labour will prioritise the protection of NHS jobs, ensuring that there are no compulsory redundancies for staff within the NHS partnership model. They will review all NHS bonus schemes, performance-related pay, merit and distinction awards. Workplace and occupational health is important and in partnership with employers and trade unions, health awareness and promotion within the workplace will be improved and expanded.

Scottish Labour will also ensure equitable access to hospitals and will seek to complete the abolition of hospital parking charges by investigating if this can also be achieved in PPP-owned and managed car parks. With Scottish Labour, there will be no reintroduction of charges for prescriptions in Scotland.

Scottish Labour will also take swift action to review how the early intervention of talking and other therapies can help to reduce the number of people who are on antidepressants and other medicines, and work in partnership with employers and trade unions to launch a programme to promote positive attitudes to mental health in the workplace.

## **Justice**

Scottish Labour will also ensure that more police officers are out in communities, rather than stuck behind a desk. Reflecting UNISON's police staffs campaign, they are very clear – police officers should not be taken off the front line to cover the duties that should be carried out by police staff. Labour will ensure they can spend more time out on the beat – where they should be.

Scottish Labour will also roll out specialist domestic abuse taskforces across Scotland, supported by specialist domestic abuse prosecutors. They will seek to maintain funding for existing services that aim to tackle violence against women.

Scottish Labour will support measures in the Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill (voted down by SNP, Tory and Lib-Dem MSPs last year), placing particular emphasis on protecting public service workers from physical and verbal abuse. They will also take forward new laws to ensure that employers can be effectively held to account for accidents to employees which are a result of negligence by employers.

## **Housing**

Scottish Labour isn't making any promises it can't keep on housing investment but council housing is part of the solution. They will also ensure that housing allocations address priority needs - including the needs of key workers – but also that sufficient weight is given to meeting the needs of local people.

They are also determined to end fuel poverty by 2016, delivering affordable, warmer homes for the people of Scotland. They will also fulfil a commitment to meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and consult on raising building standards, especially with regard to energy efficiency.

Scottish Labour will introduce First Foot – a new mortgage indemnity guarantee scheme that will reduce the level of deposit required of first time home buyers to only five or ten per cent, helping them to realise their aspiration of owning a home.

## **Communities**

Scottish Labour will establish a Fairer Scotland Commission, to consider the most effective action to tackle poverty, equality and social exclusion in Scotland. They see a key role for credit unions in a strategy to help lift people out of poverty.

They are committed to developing strong guidance for the effective implementation of the public duties under the Equality Act. They want to ensure gender, race, religion, sexuality, age and disability are not barriers to accessing public services, employability or training. They will ensure that the Government takes the lead in this area, giving clear direction to public bodies on equal pay and supporting family-friendly employment policies that take into account the needs of those with caring responsibilities

Scottish Labour wants to end the unjust situation that has seen gay men, who were previously prosecuted for consensual acts, continue to suffer the prejudice caused by these convictions - long after the offences themselves have been decriminalised. Giving religious organisations that want to, the freedom to hold civil partnerships in their buildings for the first time. They also believe that the time is now right to consult on options to provide genuine equality for same-sex couples and their families, by addressing the different status of civil partnership and marriage. We are clear – Scotland shouldn't be left behind on these issues.

## **Local Government**

Scottish Labour will deliver a new process of consultation through which an accord between Scottish central and local government will be delivered, based on the principles of mutual respect, transparency and accountability to all stakeholders. Developing a social dialogue and partnership between the Scottish Government, COSLA, trade unions and the voluntary sector will be central to ensuring local services are delivered in the most effective manner. They will therefore develop a structure which promotes partnership

working at a strategic level in local government, so that transparency in decision-making is improved and the future development of local government across Scotland is jointly shared by all social partners.

Scottish Labour will strengthen the range of social work provision to help those who require support and protection in our communities. Scottish Labour takes a more realistic view of self-directed support encouraging it for people living with disabilities and will support the development of personalised care, whilst ensuring that any new measures do not lead to deterioration in other areas of support.

Scottish Labour knows that libraries are at the heart of many communities and we understand why people feel so passionate about protecting them during difficult economic times. They recognise that libraries are a key way of achieving digital inclusion in Scotland and will do all they can to protect local services. They want to widen access to books and will prioritise the modernisation of library services, expanding the provision of superfast broadband, delivering free wifi for workers on the move and enhancing opportunities for e-book lending. They will also protect mobile libraries in rural areas

## **Utilities and Environment**

There is a clear guarantee that that Scottish Water is kept in public ownership. A key UNISON policy together with a commitment to enhancing powers so that Scotland's greatest asset can fulfil its renewable energy potential and use its assets more effectively. In energy Scottish Labour will establish Energy Scotland to drive forward Scotland as a world leader in the low carbon sector

On climate change Scottish Labour supports UNISON's view that a strong public duty is required to help drive change. This needs to include mandatory reporting and should identify the contribution that could be made by encouraging greener workplaces and work practices.

## **Procurement**

UNISON has long argued for action on government procurement with stronger staff protections and the manifesto has a number of important commitments.

Scottish Labour is committed to drive down the government's spending on consultants. Deliver government procurement that makes effective use of community benefit clauses and Article 19, and gives due weight to good working practices, employability approaches, local employment and the living wage. They will strengthen the current section 52 provisions and other procurement regulations to minimise staff transfers and ensure that good employment practice is an essential element of procurement decisions.

The privatisation of social care is a particular concern to UNISON with the current government guidance deliberately ignoring staffing issues. Scottish Labour will revise health and social care procurement procedures, ending e-auctions for social care contracts and introducing quality standards.

Scottish Labour will also work with third sector trade unions, staff representatives and organisations to ensure that jobs and fair working conditions are sustained during uncertain times. This includes ensuring that government procurement makes effective use of community benefit clauses, Article 19, and gives due weight to good working practices, employability approaches, local employment and the living wage.

Scottish Labour will introduce the reforms required to deliver the intended benefits of shared services. Labour is committed to strengthening the procurement guidance to facilitate agreements between public service organisations. This is an important defence against privatisation.

Scottish Labour will abolish the failed Scottish Futures Trust, whilst retaining some of its functions within the Infrastructure Investment Unit. There will be a level playing field for investment and they will use all available finance mechanisms, including prudential borrowing, to deliver suitable, sustainable funding to get Scotland's public building programme moving again. Prudential borrowing is the preferred option and powers will be extended.

### **Can you help?**

There are a number of UNISON members standing as Scottish Labour candidates in this election. If you can help with their campaigns it will assist in getting MSPs elected who like you have worked in our public services and understand the challenges you face every day. For further details email Dave Watson [d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk) or Malcolm Burns [m.burns@unison.co.uk](mailto:m.burns@unison.co.uk) or call 0141 342 2855.