

Scottish Conservatives launch major policy paper on the environment

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22 Feb 2017



A series of new initiatives designed to protect Scotland's environment and tackle climate change have been published today by the Scottish Conservatives in a major new policy paper.

Timed to mark Scottish Environment Week, the country's main opposition party is setting out a range of new ideas in a bid to lead the debate on how we best reduce carbon emissions, protect Scotland's natural resources and encourage sustainable growth.

Writing in the paper's foreword, shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden warns that our natural resources cannot be consumed at the current "unsustainable" rate – and more work must be done by the Scottish Government to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

The paper also sets out new ways to ensure Scotland's rich biodiversity and natural landscape is protected to the highest environmental standards – and to work with urban and rural communities to grow Scotland's economy.

The new paper today includes policies which support:

- A step change in support for electric cars including incentives for electric car ownership – such as free town centre parking and allowing use of bus and taxi lanes. The document also proposes a new fund to expand electric vehicle charging across Scotland and urges public bodies to consider electric vehicle ownership.
- A target to ensure 50 per cent of Scotland's energy comes from renewables by 2030, with individual targets for heat, transport and electricity sectors.
- The establishment of new national parks where there is public support.
- The creation of a new Centre for Circular Economy Excellence – a world-leading facility to examine how best to maximise our use of natural resources.
- Support for nuclear as part of a low carbon economy – with new plants at Torness and Hunterston.
- Backing for 10 per cent of all the Scottish Government's capital budget should be spent on energy efficiency measures – with the aim of ensuring all homes are energy efficiency by 2030.
- A new target to ensure 75 per cent of all waste is recycled by 2035

through the creation of an easy-to-use collection system.

- The creation of 15,000 hectares of new quality woodland per year – up from 7600 a year.
- New developments to maximise solar energy capture and install heat pumps in design considerations.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“How we protect our environment and tackle climate change says a lot about us.

“It says what kind of nation we want to live in. It says how we want to engage with the world and each other. It says what sort of future we want to build for our children.

“The Scottish Conservatives believe in protecting and enhancing our natural heritage.

“We must do more than just repair damage, we must also improve our environment. We believe it is our duty to the next generation to leave Scotland a better place than we found it.

“Our approach will provide Scots with a greener and more pleasant land to call home.

“We set ourselves this task because it is one of the greatest challenge of our times.

“It is for this generation to tackle the issue and ensure that the next will live in a better, more productive and more sustainable world. I ask you to join us as we meet that challenge head on.”

Scottish Conservative shadow environment secretary Maurice Golden said:

“We must decrease our reliance on products manufactured abroad in order to reduce our carbon emissions but also increase jobs here in Scotland.

“To successfully transition to a circular economy, we need to refocus current Scottish Government intervention.

“Leadership on technological advancement, education and behaviour change, and the creation of a Centre for Circular Economy Excellence will together help to achieve an estimated £3 billion economic boost.

“The bottom line is that a circular economy will be a win for businesses, a win for consumers and a win for the environment.”

To access the paper, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Global-Challenge-Local-Leadership.pdf>