

HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

An analysis of the party manifestos for the May 2003
Scottish Parliament elections

TRANSform Scotland
the campaign for sustainable transport



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for the May 2003 Scottish
Parliament elections**

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1. Executive Summary

This report evaluates the manifestos of the six main parties against a set of seven sustainable transport criteria. The results are presented as percentage scores. Only two of the parties score more than 50%:

Pass marks:

Scottish Green Party	80%
Scottish Socialist Party	63%

Failed:

Scottish Liberal Democrats	40%
Scottish Labour Party	23%
Scottish National Party	15%
Scottish Conservatives	13%

Pass marks - the parties that show promise

The **Greens**, perhaps unsurprisingly, come out top. They set out a wide range of well-thought out proposals. The Greens are the only party that sets out environmental targets and would take the hard decisions needed to meet them.

The **Socialists** also come out well. Their manifesto shows most sign of progress since the 1999 elections. They set out a huge range of proposals most of which would be very positive in impact. However, even by scrapping Labour's £1 billion road-building programme, their rail proposals would surely prove very difficult to finance.

Failing to deliver - going backwards on transport

The **Liberal Democrats**, who have gone out of their way to push their environmental credentials during the election campaign, fail to tackle the key issues needed to deliver an environmental transport programme. The Lib Dems set out some reasonable policies but, crucially, make no commitment to road traffic reduction and have blindly signed up to Labour's massive road-building programme. As such, their commitments towards tackling climate change emissions are incoherent.

Labour's transport proposals could have been written by the Confederation of British Industry. More road-building, more air transport, and no mention of the road traffic stabilisation target made just a year ago. Labour's damaged credibility on transport is done no favours by this poor document.

The **SNP** manifesto is vague on transport issues and largely policy-free. They would continue Labour's road-building programme and expand air transport - and yet, miraculously, would also reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The SNP have now backed away from supporting road user charging, which they supported in 1999.

The **Tories** come last, presenting the same failed policies that created so much of our present transport crisis. At least the Tories mention public transport in this manifesto, something they failed to do in 1999.

Overall, four out of the six parties failed to mention walking in their manifestos, despite this being the second most common mode of transport. This is a serious omission from the parties' programmes.

2. Our tests for transforming transport - sustainable transport criteria

i. Road traffic reduction

Deliver an implementation programme for road traffic reduction

The transport sector must contribute to reducing Scottish climate change emissions, if Scotland is to make an "equitable contribution" to the UK Climate Change Strategy. In order to do this, the incoming Scottish Executive needs to plan for a programmed reduction in traffic levels. The Labour/Lib Dem coalition made a start by setting a traffic stabilisation target (return traffic levels to 2001 levels by 2021) - but this target is weak, long-term, has no interim targets & has no credible implementation programme.

The parties have been judged as to whether they set out targets for traffic reduction, and whether they set out a programme to achieve this.

ii. Road-building

Prioritise investment in sustainable, not unsustainable, transport

The incoming Scottish Executive must prioritise sustainable transport investment if it is to ensure that modal shift to the sustainable modes of transport happens. The current spending programme is unbalanced; it is heavily skewed towards road-building. If implemented in full, the Scottish Executive's £1 billion road-building programme would effectively remove any prospect of stabilising, and eventually reducing, road traffic levels in Scotland. The incoming Executive needs to move the balance of expenditure from supporting unsustainable modes of transport (private cars, road haulage) to sustainable modes (walking, cycling, public transport, rail & sea freight).

Along with 25 other Scottish groups in the 'Everyone' campaign, TRANSform Scotland is calling for two-thirds of the Executive's £1 billion road-building programme to be transferred into sustainable alternatives. The incoming administration could do this at a stroke by abandoning the most destructive of the road projects - the M74 Northern Extension and the Aberdeen western bypass - which between them will consume £620 million of the Executive's transport budget. The parties have been judged on whether they meet this challenge.

iii. Air transport

Controlling the most polluting form of transport

Air transport is the most polluting form of transport

yet is expanding most rapidly. The UK Government's leading environmental advisory body, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP), in its November 2002 report 'The Environmental Effects of Civil Aircraft in Flight' highlighted the inconsistency of facilitating growth in air transport with climate change and sustainable development. The RCEP concluded that the failure of the air transport industry to pay for its external costs through an aviation fuel tax or an emissions charge represents a *"large subsidy at the expense of other modes of transport."* It also concluded that *"a failure to invest in rail infrastructure and a failure to reflect environmental externalities in the cost of air transport"* had undermined the viability of rail alternatives.

Recent UK and Scottish Executive policies have uncritically sought to expand air transport, choosing to ignore the environmental impacts of such a policy. The parties have been judged on whether they set out policies that could control the impact of aviation and/or if they set out alternative plans for external links (such as high-speed rail) for domestic and near-European trips.

iv. Economic instruments

Make transport pay its way - deliver on economic instruments

The success of London's congestion charge scheme demonstrates the need for traffic demand management strategies to be implemented. Yet, in Scotland, only the City of Edinburgh Council has any plans to implement similar pricing policies - and with scant support from central government. The Labour/Lib Dem coalition, while it did legislate to allow local authorities to implement such schemes, has run a mile from implementing such policies itself, dropping even enabling powers for trunk road user charging from the Transport Act.

The incoming Scottish Executive must take the lead in ensuring implementation of road user charging in urban areas. Only with this in place can we begin to have a more targeted way of paying for use of the roads while allowing revenues raised to be targeted towards providing sustainable alternatives to the car in congested urban areas.

v. Planning

Measures to reduce the need to travel

Perhaps most urgent is that we learn to plan to reduce the need to travel, so that we do not repeat the errors of previous decades in undermining local services. The fundamental underpinning of a

sustainable transport strategy is whether there are measures in place that reduce the need to travel.

This means taking action that increase the provision of local services, restricting the number of edge-of-town developments, and putting in place enforceable Green Travel Plans for new developments.

vi. Healthy transport

Help transport contribute to Scottish public health policy

Walking and cycling, the healthiest and most sustainable modes of transport, need to have much more emphasis in Executive transport planning if it is serious about tackling national public health problems. Yet delivery on walking and cycling has been relegated by the Labour/Lib Dem coalition to being a subset of road safety.

The parties have been evaluated on whether they set out programmes of local traffic-reducing “quality of life” measures such as Safe Routes to School, slower speed zones & Home Zones.

The parties have been awarded well if they have acknowledged walking as a mode of transport: this remains the second most common journey mode in Scotland yet is typically ignored by political parties.

vii. Socially-just transport

Deliver a social inclusion audit of transport policy implementation

The Executive’s roads programme is aimed towards already highly-mobile car users. The spending imbalance sits uneasily with its commitments to social justice: lower income groups are more likely to be negatively affected by increasing road traffic levels, while children from lower income groups are four times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than those from higher socio-economic groups in road crashes.

The parties have been judged on whether they set out policies that:

- Ensure that a fair proportion of transport expenditure goes into the modes of transport used disproportionately by low income groups (walking and bus use);
- Efforts are made to make bus travel more competitive in price terms with car travel, reversing the trend of recent decades;
- Measures that reduce impacts on vulnerable communities (e.g. speed reducing measures and traffic calming) receive priority for investment.

3. How we rated the manifestos

Scoring

Against our seven criteria, the party manifestos have been evaluated on a range of 0 (worst) to 5 (best):

0	worst
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	best

No policies

Some parties may not have expressed a view on the topics of our seven evaluation criteria. This may be because the parties are not interested, they may be avoiding the issue, or it may be a genuine omission.

If a manifesto does not take a view on a particular issue then no mark is awarded for that topic.

Final scores

The total score is calculated as total points gained divided by total possible points (i.e. the number of criteria upon which manifesto pledges have been made). Finally, this figure has been expressed as a percentage.

Comments

More detailed comments have been made isolating any particular items of interest in the manifestos.

In this section, we have also identified any particular issues regarding delivery framework and resourcing, industry structures, and cross-boundary transport & planning.

4.1 Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party

13%

Traffic reduction

No mention

Nothing specifically mentioned. But the Tories are clearly the most pro-car party with no appreciation of the need to promote alternatives.

Road-building

0

Roads-obsessed. They congratulate Labour and the Lib Dems for putting in place "the Conservative roads programme." They then call for even more road-building!

Air transport

No mention

No policies.

Economic instruments

0

Repealing legislation allowing local authorities to implement congestion charging schemes contradicts their environment policy of favouring local action.

Healthy transport

No mention

No policies aimed at promoting walking & cycling or curbing the impact of road traffic.

Planning

2

Fail to expressly talk about "reducing the need to travel" but do contain, albeit only in the rural section of their manifesto, commitments to local service provision (e.g. health care, housing, schools, IT) that might have this effect.

Socially-just transport

No mention

No mention of concessionary fares, promoting bus or walking, or reducing the impact of road traffic on vulnerable communities.

Comments

A deeply depressing effort by a party that is either blissfully ignorant or wilfully ignores the links between transport and the environment. This manifesto represents a continuation of their failed policies from the 1980s and 1990s, which created the basis for the current transport crisis. At least their pledge to cut the number of Ministers might take a few Mondeos off the road.

A glimmer of light is that the Tories do mention public transport in this manifesto (albeit only large rail infrastructure projects), something that was completely absent from their 1999 manifesto.

Score: 13%

4.2 Scottish National Party

15%

Traffic reduction

2

No commitments apart from very vague pledge to improve public transport and reduce car dependency. They will have to address transport to meet their ambitious CO₂ targets.

Road-building

0

They blandly state that they would "continue the road-building programme [that they] inherit." Not clear how this stacks up with their claims that they will cut car dependence, environmental damage & greenhouse gas emissions.

Air transport

0

Heavy emphasis on expanding air transport. Difficult to see how more air transport can help meet their ambitious climate change commitments.

Economic instruments

No mention

They fail to take a position on congestion charging. This is odd in as much as the SNP has spent much of the past four years criticising Edinburgh's plans for road user charging.

Healthy transport

1

Only one vague reference to developing cycle routes.

Planning

No mention

No policies obviously aimed at reducing the need to travel.

Socially-just transport

No mention

No mention of concessionary fares, measures to improve conditions for walkers, or to reduce the impact of road traffic on vulnerable communities.

Comments

Plan to restructure the rail industry under a not-for-profit Scottish National Railway Authority and set up "Strategic Transport Authorities." They champion alternative fuels such as bio-fuels and hydrogen power - but it remains to be seen how credible this technical fix for greenhouse gas emissions would be in anything but the long-run.

The SNP manifesto is vague on transport issues and largely policy-free. They seem to have adopted a Labour Party trait here.

Score: 15%

4.3 Scottish Labour Party

23%

Traffic reduction

1

The failure to mention the Scottish Executive's, admittedly modest, target for road traffic stabilisation (return traffic levels to 2001 levels by 2021) is a serious concern: have they given up on this already? They do however go on to make a vague commitment about transferring road freight to rail.

Road-building

0

Now building more roads than the Tories at their worst. This will seriously undermine any hope of meeting environmental aspirations. Its commitment to a "second roads review" threatens even more road-building & less chance of meeting environmental commitments.

Air transport

0

They promote more air transport. Perhaps they have invented a form of air transport that doesn't pollute? They have certainly ignored the advice of the Royal Commission.

Economic instruments

2

Would allow local authorities to proceed with congestion charging schemes but make no commitment to take action themselves to control traffic growth on trunk roads.

Healthy transport

2

Support 20mph zones around all of Scotland's schools. No mention of walking or cycling; road-building programme will make conditions worse for these vulnerable road users.

Planning

No mention

No policies on reducing the need to travel in the planning section of its manifesto.

Socially-just transport

2

Promise extension of concessionary fare scheme for older people & disabled to national coverage; promise to add a new scheme for young people. No mention of walking or impact of road traffic on vulnerable communities.

Comments

Promise "strong regional transport delivery partnerships throughout the country." Its desire for the planning system to "work faster [to] allow investment decisions to be made more quickly" may be just a way to bulldoze through more roads more quickly.

They promise lots of rail infrastructure projects but fail to spell out how these will be affordable given their existing £1 billion road-building programme & the "second roads review" that they now commit themselves to.

Score: 23%

4.4 Scottish Liberal Democrats

40%

Traffic reduction

1

No mention of the Scottish Executive's existing traffic stabilisation target or how they would control traffic generated by their roads programme. They do make vague commitments to reducing car dependence.

Road-building

0

Pathetically, the manifesto says that they "will seek to limit national road-building to the levels already announced by the Scottish Executive." The Lib Dems have clearly bought into Labour's massive road-building agenda.

Air transport

2

Incoherent. Acknowledge that high speed rail would be better than further expansion of air travel - yet they then go on to promote further expansion of air travel.

Economic instruments

2

Pledge support for local authorities that wish to take forward congestion charging. However, in practice, the Lib Dems have opposed this at a local level in Edinburgh. As this is the only proposal for congestion charging in Scotland, the Lib Dems are clearly trying to have it both ways.

Healthy transport

3

Commitments to Safer Routes to School & Home Zones. Walking & cycling get brief mentions.

Planning

4

Strongest of all the parties with commitments to Green Transport Plans for employers and the public sector, and more sustainable locational choice for health facilities.

Socially-just transport

3

Promise a national concessionary fares schemes (as they did in 1999) and Demand Responsive Transport services. Little mention of walking and none on the impact of road traffic on vulnerable communities.

Comments

They pledge beefed-up regional transport partnerships and early work on a further 10-year plan. They commit to a string of rail projects but also make some sensible comments on public transport service quality issues. The Lib Dems make commitment to implementing Strategic Environmental Assessment. Perhaps a first step should be to apply this to the road-building they, with Labour, have put in place over the past 4 years?

Score: 40%

Traffic reduction

1

Acknowledge the problems caused by traffic growth but set no targets for road traffic levels.

Road-building

5

Scrapping the M74 would release up to £500 million for sustainable alternatives. Commit to a review of the Executive's road-building programme focussed on road safety and road maintenance rather than capacity increase. It is however not clear how the ambitious rail construction programme would be financed.

Air transport

2

Acknowledge the low price of air travel but propose no policies to tackle the environmental impact of this sector.

Economic instruments

3

No mention of urban congestion charging. However, propose "road tolls" for HGVs to offset road maintenance costs.

Healthy transport

4

Would provide traffic-calmed 20 mph zones where requested by the local community. Propose a national cycling strategy with major investment in facilities as well as cycle training for all children. Omit policies for walking.

Planning

No mention

Nothing specifically on reducing the need to travel.

Socially-just transport

4

Promise free public transport for older people, disabled people, children and benefits claimants & a general price cap of 10p a mile for all public transport. Little on minimising impacts of road traffic on vulnerable communities however.

Comments

Would set up locally-accountable regional passenger transport executives tasked with improving public transport. They also commit to a huge rail construction programme. The SSP's very ambitious programme would be very difficult to deliver under devolution (e.g. rail renationalisation). *(Plus we're not sure how TRANSform Scotland's public transport operator members would appreciate being nationalised without recompense!)*

Overall, the most improved of the manifestos since 1999.

Score: 63%

4.6 Scottish Green Party

80%

Traffic reduction

4

The only party to commit itself to a specific target to reduce traffic levels (10% by 2010). Arguably lacking in a clear implementation programme.

Road-building

5

The decision to scrap damaging road-building projects would free up resources for delivering sustainable alternatives & meet the climate change commitments they set out.

Air transport

5

The only party to take seriously the Royal Commission for Environmental Pollution's exhortation to make air transport pay for its external impacts through an emissions charge. They also acknowledge the need to promote rail alternatives to air travel.

Economic instruments

5

A clear commitment to use the tax system (reform of VED) and congestion charging as tools to encourage sustainable transport use.

Healthy transport

4

Commitments to Home Zones and Safer Routes to School (although not detailed). Clear commitment to a national cycling network and better provision for people on foot. The resources released from scrapping the trunk road programme would allow for delivery.

Planning

3

Clear acknowledgement of the need for travel reduction policies - although somewhat lacking in detail. Have one policy relating to essential car use in rural areas but no specific mention of maintaining or reinstating local services in areas of poor accessibility.

Socially-just transport

2

Promise travel passes for all low income groups, but no mention of the impact of road traffic on vulnerable communities.

Comments

They also advocate a not-for-profit rail network, a dedicated Transport Minister & creation of "regional transport commissions." Their public transport project priorities focus on tram lines for the four cities and high-speed rail to substitute for air travel.

Overall, the manifesto shows that sustainability and the environment is still a fringe issue for the other parties. An even higher mark could have been achieved through a greater focus on detail, highlighting of social justice issues, and more concrete plans for delivery.

Score: 80%

About this paper

In advance of the May 2003 Scottish Parliament elections, this report evaluates the manifestos of the six main parties against a set of seven sustainable transport criteria.

About TRANSform Scotland

TRANSform Scotland was launched in November 1997. Our fifty-seven member organisations - including transport operators, local authorities, national environment campaigns and local transport groups - support the development of sustainable transport policies and structures for Scotland.