



Scotland's economic mandate for the next parliament

A joint manifesto from Trade Associations Scotland -
a coalition of business and industry organisations



United for Growth

Scotland has strengths that many countries would envy.

We have entrepreneurial businesses, skilled people and places that attract investment, talent and visitors. Our economy spans high streets and industrial estates, ports and town centres, homes and offices, cafés, distilleries and construction sites. Together they shape daily life for millions of people and determine how confidently Scotland competes on the global stage.

With the right policy choices, Scotland can drive a new phase of growth that supports jobs, investment and thriving communities. That means creating the conditions for enterprise to grow, for town centres to recover, for homes and infrastructure to be delivered at pace and for businesses of every size to plan with confidence.

This manifesto is brought forward by Trade Associations Scotland, a coalition of business

and industry organisations representing a wide cross-section of the Scottish economy. Together we speak for employers and supply chains in energy, infrastructure, housing, property, retail, food and drink, tourism, hospitality, and the wider service economy. These sectors support jobs and public revenues in every part of the country.

Our industries operate in city centres, new housing developments, small towns and rural and island communities. Their success underpins household incomes, public services and the resilience of local high streets. As political parties prepare their manifestos for the 2026 Scottish Parliament election, we invite them to work with us on a shared mandate for economic success built on partnership and delivery.

Sustainable economic growth

Scotland's growth has been modest in recent years.

Investment decisions across every sector are being delayed or scaled back due to uncertainty over policy, regulation and future costs. Scotland's food and drink sector, including whisky, tourism and hospitality, also plays a vital role in supporting jobs, exports, and regional economies, particularly in rural and island communities. At the same time, independent [analysis](#) shows that Scotland's renewable energy industry and its supply chain already support around 47,000 jobs and £15.5bn of economic activity. That success shows what can be achieved when policy, infrastructure and private capital pull in the same direction.

Retail, housing and property remain fundamental to Scotland's economic model and to everyday economic life. UK-wide [figures](#) show that the retail sector alone supports close to ten per cent of all jobs. A competitive, predictable personal and business tax regime and regulatory environment is essential if shops, workplaces and homes are to attract sustained investment.



We call on all political parties to:

- Commit to a stable and predictable economic policy framework that gives investors confidence to plan for the long-term
- Recognise the contribution of productive investment across Scotland's key growth sectors – including energy, food and drink, retail, housing and hospitality – to national wellbeing and public finances
- Ensure that enterprise agencies and development bodies have the mandate and resources to support innovation, exports and regeneration in every region

Infrastructure and connectivity

Modern infrastructure underpins economic growth, housing delivery and the success of town and city centres.

Transport links, digital connectivity and utilities shape whether people can get to work, whether businesses can trade and whether new homes and workplaces can be delivered where they are needed. Investment in these foundations is essential for both national competitiveness and local regeneration.

Scotland has seen how targeted infrastructure investment can unlock wider economic benefits, including through port upgrades and energy projects. At the same time, constraints in the electricity grid, transport networks and digital coverage continue to hold back development in many areas. These pressures affect not only major industries but also retailers, hospitality businesses, food and drink producers, housebuilders and small businesses seeking to invest in communities.

Infrastructure works best when it is planned as part of a wider place-based strategy. Local roads, public transport and digital access determine whether town centres attract footfall and whether new housing developments are viable and well connected – delivering benefits for employers and visitors alike.



We call on all political parties to:

- Set out a clear long-term infrastructure plan that aligns energy, transport, housing and digital investment
- Prioritise upgrades to the electricity grid and local transport networks so that new homes and businesses can connect without delay
- Support place-based infrastructure that enables the regeneration of town centres and the delivery of housing and employment sites across Scotland

Town centres, retail and the built environment

The way Scotland plans and regenerates its towns and cities shapes growth, employment and daily community life.

Town centres support a wide mix of activity including shops, housing, offices, hospitality, leisure and public services. Many places now face rising costs, vacant buildings and stalled development. Slow planning processes and overlapping regulation add delay and risk to housing delivery, commercial investment, marine and coastal development, and the re-use of existing buildings. These barriers also limit progress on retrofit and brownfield regeneration which are central to climate goals and place-based growth.

Without a reset, Scotland risks weaker town centres, slower delivery of homes and reduced competitiveness for inward investment.



We call on all political parties to:

- Reset planning and consenting so that decisions are faster, clearer and more consistent across Scotland, including for coastal, rural and island communities
- Put town and city centre regeneration at the heart of economic policy by supporting hospitality, retail, housing and mixed-use development while ensuring that property taxation and retail crime are addressed together

Skills, training and workforce readiness

Skills shortages are now a structural risk to Scotland's economic ambitions.

Employers across energy, construction, manufacturing, hospitality and digital services report persistent difficulty filling key roles. Without coordinated national action, workforce constraints will slow both growth and the energy transition.

Industry is already working with colleges, universities and training providers to develop new apprenticeships, retraining routes and conversion courses. Demand for engineering, electrical and digital skills continues to outstrip supply in many regions, particularly where energy and infrastructure investment is coming forward at pace. Stronger alignment between training provision and long-term economic demand would unlock faster delivery and widen access to high-value careers.



We call on all political parties to:

- Align education and skills policy with Scotland's future economic priorities
- Support reskilling and lifelong learning across the workforce
- Strengthen collaboration between employers and training providers

Energy security and sustainability

Energy is central to Scotland's economic future.

Official [statistics](#) show that renewable electricity capacity in Scotland has grown to more than fifteen gigawatts, an increase of around 10% in a single year, and that more than 90% of electricity generated here now comes from low carbon sources. Independent [analysis](#) suggests that renewable electricity generation is now equivalent to almost all of Scotland's gross electricity consumption. This progress strengthens energy security and demonstrates Scotland's potential as a clean power leader.

At the same time, oil and gas continue to play a vital role in Scotland's economy, particularly in the north east. These industries still support

a substantial workforce, critical skills and export income. They also provide much of the technical expertise and supply chain capability that will underpin the transition to renewable power, carbon capture and hydrogen. A successful energy transition depends on managing this shift in a way that protects jobs and sustains regional economies.

The renewable energy industry already supports tens of thousands of jobs and billions of pounds of economic output across Scotland. New investment in technologies such as large-scale energy storage shows how Scotland can add value by managing variable generation more effectively and by strengthening energy resilience.

However, progress on heat and transport has been slower than on power generation. Grid constraints, due to years of underinvestment in our transmission networks, have also led to significant curtailment of Scottish wind generation with associated costs for bill payers. With electricity demand expected to [double](#) by 2050, a more coordinated approach is needed to expand generation and transmission. This will ensure that growing demand is met, that the benefits of investment reach households and communities across Scotland, and that security of supply and workforce stability are maintained.

We call on all political parties to:

- Provide long-term certainty for investment across Scotland's full energy system, including renewables, networks, storage and existing offshore industries
- Support a managed energy transition that protects skilled jobs, retains supply chains and sustains regional economies, particularly in the north east
- Accelerate action on electrifying heat and transport in a joined up way so that households and businesses benefit from secure, affordable and low carbon energy

Our proposition

This manifesto is offered as a platform for partnership, not a list of isolated demands. It brings together shared priorities from sectors that are central to Scotland's growth, employment and long-term resilience. Our coalition stands ready to work with MSPs from all parties to turn these principles into delivery.

We are not seeking special treatment for any one industry. We are asking for a stable and investable environment where enterprise can thrive, where town centres and new

communities feel the benefit of investment, and where Scotland's natural and human resources are used wisely.

The next parliament has a chance to align economic, skills, infrastructure, energy and place-based policies behind a clear objective of sustainable national success. We call on all political parties to adopt that mandate and we stand ready to help deliver it.

This manifesto has been coordinated by Trade Associations Scotland, a coalition of business and industry organisations representing a broad cross-section of the Scottish economy. These groups include -

*The***ABI**



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ENERGIES UK

SPF

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SCOTLAND

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renewables

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scotch whisky
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If you have any questions or would like to discuss this in more detail,
please contact paul.murphie@bigpartnership.co.uk.