

Holyrood 2007: manifesto comparison



**Friends of
the Earth
Scotland**



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Introduction and overview

This document provides a comparison of the main parties' manifestos against a published benchmark of ten proposals made by Friends of the Earth Scotland. It reveals a wide diversity of levels of environmental commitment. We hope that this will prove useful to voters wishing to compare the relative environmental commitments made by the parties.

All the manifestos included welcome commitments. All the parties also give more attention to the environment, and in particular to proposals for action to deal with the urgent and serious problem of climate change than they did in 2003. This is welcome, as the urgency required in tackling environmental problems has also grown.

However there is a wide variety in the ambition and practical detail of the environmental policies in the published manifestos. Whilst our benchmarks can only offer a partial assessment, this briefing reveals a much greater level of uptake of our proposals by the Scottish Green Party than by the Scottish Conservatives. The other parties fall between these two extremes.

Many readers will be interested to compare the two largest parties. Our analysis finds that in comparison with our benchmarks they offer a similar extent of uptake, with strengths and weaknesses in both of their sets of environmental proposals.

However, with the prevalence of positive environmental proposals in most of the manifestos, it seems likely that environmental issues will feature significantly in any coalition or other partnership negotiations. In this respect results in the first (list) vote may prove as significant for the outcome as the second (constituency) vote.

Having seen their manifestos, Friends of the Earth looks forward to working with all of Scotland's Ministers and MSPs following the May elections. We trust they will want to work with us to ensure that they deliver fully on their environmental promises and empower Scotland's people to live more sustainably in the future.

Friends of the Earth Scotland believes in democracy. We encourage readers to exercise their right to vote, regardless of their views on the specific proposals discussed here. We simply hope that this document will enable voters to be better informed when they come to the polls.



Duncan McLaren, Chief Executive

19 April 2007

Manifesto proposals

The following proposals were sent to all the main Scottish political parties well in advance of them finalising and publishing their manifestos.

Climate change

Establish statutory annual Scottish climate emissions reduction targets of at least 3 per cent per year, with the long term goal of achieving a 'carbon-neutral country'. Establish medium and long term carbon budgets based on sustainable and equal international per-capita emissions; and allocate an investment fund adequate to deliver them through support for renewable energy and other solutions.

Zero-carbon buildings

Zero-carbon buildings: Reform planning and building regulation to ensure that by 2011 all new buildings are carbon neutral in use. Set an immediate and increasing requirement that new buildings meet at least 25% of their energy needs from renewable sources of heat and/or power within the development.

Nuclear power

Phase out nuclear power in Scotland. Declare opposition to construction of new nuclear power plants in Scotland, and seek a firm timetable for the closure of existing nuclear facilities, with appropriate measures for redeployment and retraining of affected employees.

Transport

Review proposed new roads and other transport schemes in the pipeline - including the new Forth Crossing - to quantify their climate change impact and public benefit and cancel those which will lead to a net increase in carbon emissions from the transport sector.

Waste reduction

Establish an ambitious waste reduction target and a programme to deliver it. Invest in the necessary mechanisms to deliver it, ensure it is not undermined by inappropriate new waste disposal facilities, and cut climate emissions from waste management by 50% by 2020.

Local tax discounts

Introduce discounts or rebates from council or other local taxation for environmentally-friendly behaviour by householders (such as recycling and waste reduction, installation of micro-renewables, building energy efficiency standards, choosing not to own a car, etc).

Access to Justice

Establish new rules of court to implement the Aarhus convention requirements to ensure affordable, merits-based and timely access to justice in environmental matters.

Planning reform

Evaluate and review the effectiveness of recent public participation reforms in the planning system to ensure fair involvement of disadvantaged and minority communities. Assess the whole package of public participation reforms, including public consultation; against criteria including involvement of disadvantaged and minority communities in both development planning and development control issues.

Environmental Justice

Establish a fund of at least £1m annually to support citizens and communities - and charitable bodies working with them - to promote environmental justice.

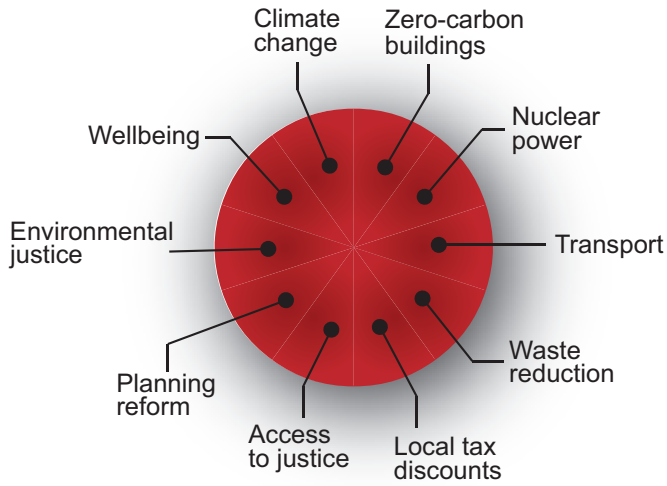
Wellbeing

Commit to develop one or more new indicators of wellbeing to complement and where appropriate, replace use of Gross Domestic Product as a measure of Scotland's progress.

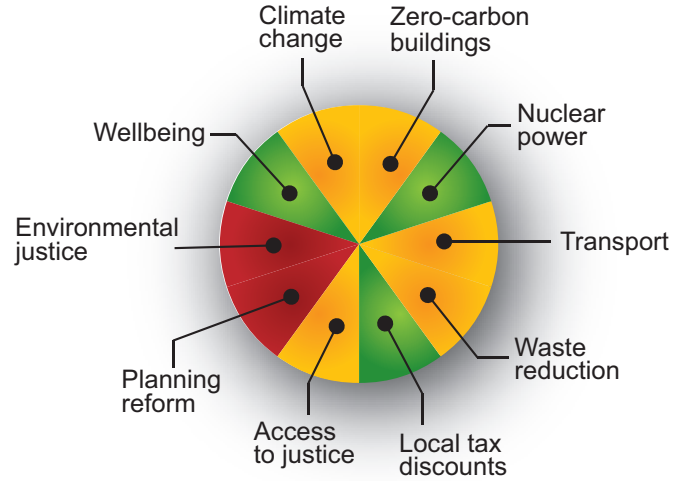
The parties at a glance

These 'traffic light' pie charts illustrate our assessments of whether the parties have included the proposals set out opposite in their manifestos.

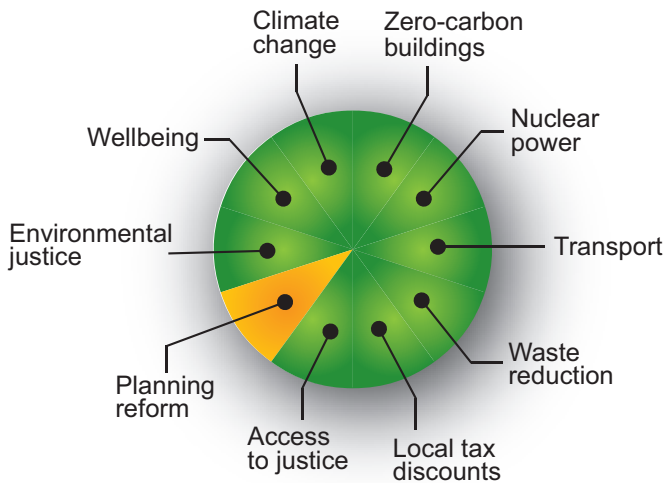
Conservative Party



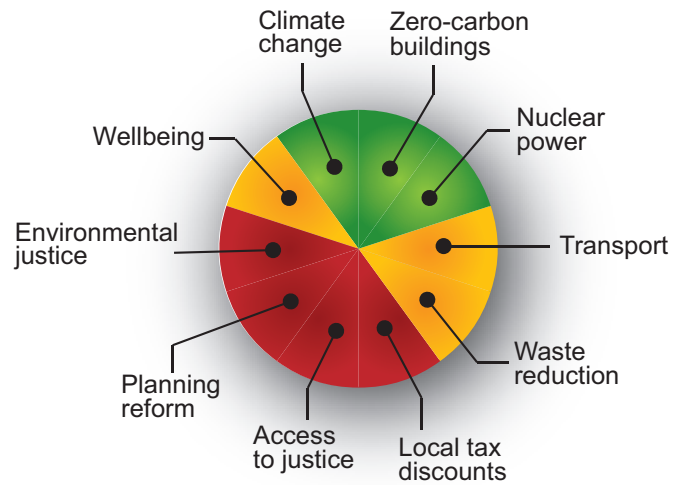
Liberal Democrats



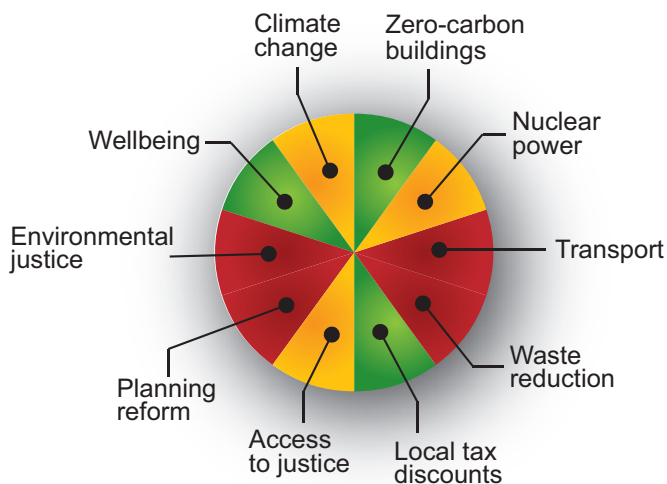
Green Party



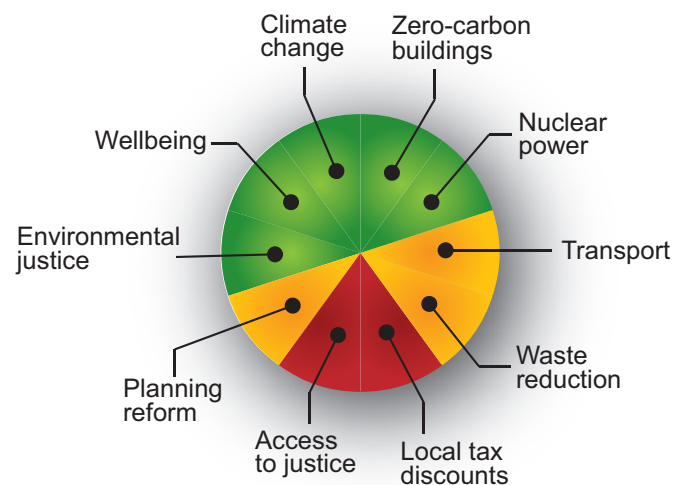
SNP



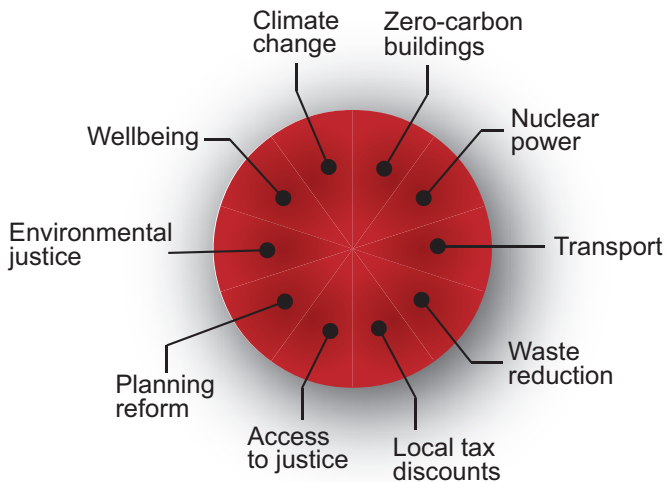
Labour Party



SSP



Conservatives



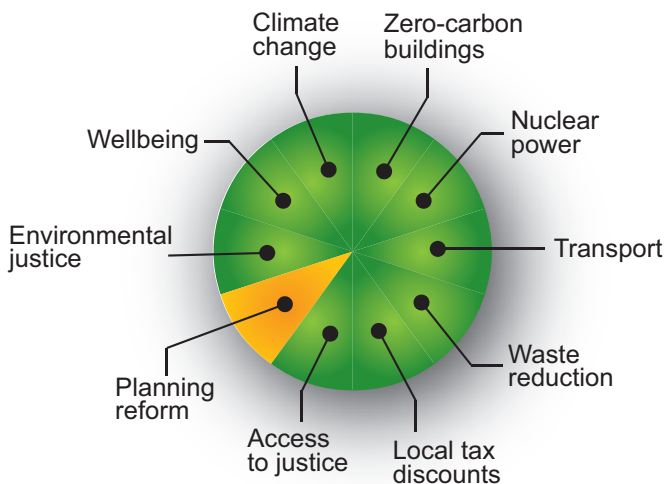
Following the welcome adoption of environmental issues by the Conservative party at Westminster under the leadership of David Cameron, we were looking forward to seeing this manifesto. Unfortunately we were very disappointed. Despite a recognition that “Climate change is an immense world concern” and that “we have our own moral obligation to preserve our planet, and do all we can

to reduce the size of Scotland’s carbon footprint”, the manifesto makes only one welcome proposal in this respect – to provide £12m in an ‘eco-bonus scheme’ to support household and community investments in energy saving and renewable power. This is positive, but completely inadequate in the face of the problem.

Moreover, the Scottish Conservatives pledge almost four times as much investment each year in road building and upgrading (£45m), as well as supporting the removal of all bridge tolls and repealing the existing enabling legislation for road user charging. They do however – positively – pledge to explore the potential for high speed rail links between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and between Scotland and London.

The Conservatives have also published a number of topic specific documents (but at the time of writing this does not include one on environment policies). We have not examined any of these topic specific documents. Overall in their manifesto, the Conservatives offered no significant support for any of our ten proposals, and of all the parties, were the least equivocal on nuclear power, with a commitment to endorse of new nuclear power stations if proposed by Westminster.

Green Party



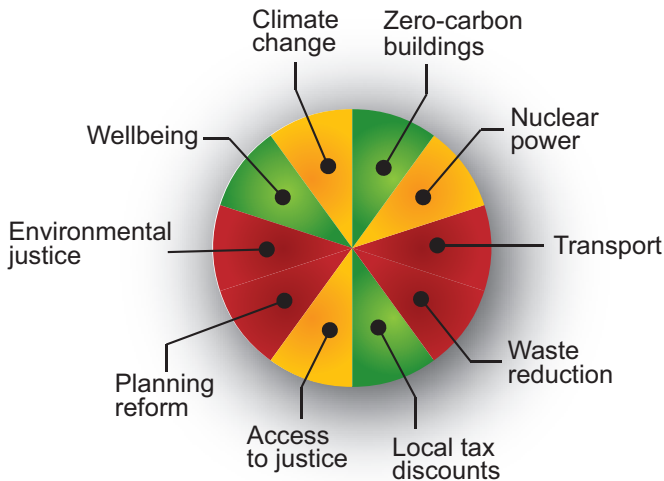
The Scottish Green Party include many specific proposals in their manifesto, across the whole range of policy areas – not just the environment – providing in most cases a welcome level of detail as to how they would seek to implement their proposals. They address all of the issues raised in our benchmark. On climate change they promise to “legislate to deliver carbon emission reductions and energy efficiency increases year on year” and offer a “climate

challenge fund worth £100m ... to support community initiatives to reduce carbon emissions”. They go beyond our benchmark in their ambition to deliver 4.5% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions every year – offering a more rapid and therefore even safer and fairer reduction trajectory.

We particularly noted the coherence between the Greens’ climate policies and their transport proposals, which include cancellation of the subsidies for new non-lifeline air routes provided by the Route Development Fund; smart tolls to help manage traffic loads on our bridges; and statutory targets for traffic reduction.

The Greens also offer welcome detail on their plans for the nuclear industry, including retrievable secure on-site storage of wastes, and retraining and redeployment for workers affected by the run-down of the nuclear power industry.

Labour Party



The Labour manifesto includes reference to many of our proposals. In several cases – both on reserved and devolved issues - their positions appear to follow Labour in Westminster even where that falls short of our benchmarks. For example, on climate change they suggest a long term target of 60% by 2050, and offer no support for annual targets.

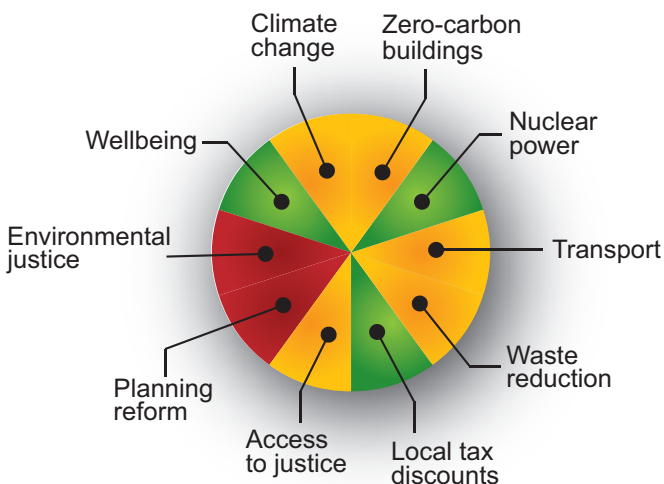
In some cases it proved hard to judge exactly what

their position was, notably on nuclear power. Labour promise to give “consideration to all sources of energy including ... nuclear ... we will not rule out any single energy source”. But they also commit to “ensuring a safe and secure supply of electricity which is sustainable and affordable” and say that they “will work to resolve how nuclear waste can be managed and disposed of safely.” The latter implies that they accept there is no existing solution.

Labour set a firm target date for zero-carbon buildings, albeit beyond the next term of government, and propose council tax discounts for installing micro-generation. However, we were disconcerted to see a substantial increase in house building rates proposed in advance of that target date. This could overwhelm the gains from promised extra improvement in building energy standards - of 15% by 2011.

We were surprised that, having instituted an Environmental Justice fund in 2007, Labour do not make any manifesto commitment to continue providing such funding. In addition we note positively the intent to “work to ensure that [public] procurement takes into account much more than price and considers ... socially acceptable, environmentally friendly and local procurement options”.

Liberal Democrats



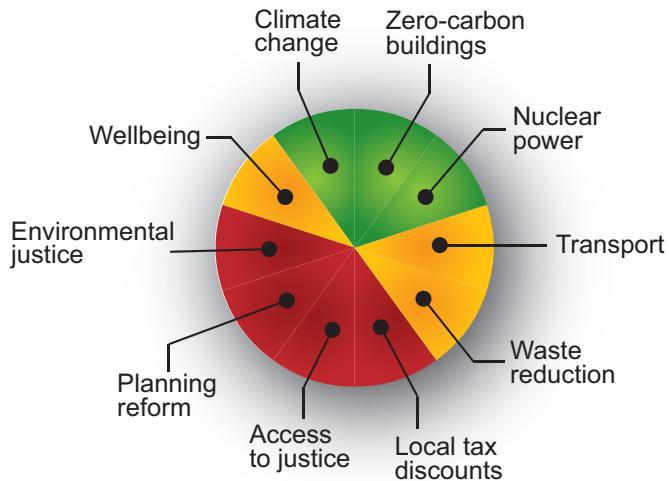
The Liberal Democrat manifesto includes policies or language relating to most of the proposals we offered, with the broadest set of environmental commitments of the major parties. Yet in several cases their commitment is not as full as we might have wished. For instance, they plan to introduce a “carbon balance sheet for transport policies and projects” and take forward road projects only “when necessary for safety reasons, to connect isolated com-

munities or for environmental reasons when it is better to re-route traffic in the interests of cutting pollution”. However they propose not to apply these criteria to roads already planned but yet to be constructed, such as the M74 and Aberdeen bypass.

Similarly, on climate targets the Liberal Democrats do not aim higher than a 60% reduction by 2050, and do not intend to set annual targets – although they do plan to establish 4-year targets (a period equivalent to a parliamentary term). More positively on energy they reject new nuclear power, set a welcome long-term goal of 100% renewable electricity by 2050, emphasize measures to improve energy efficiency in the existing building stock, and bring forward a package of welcome proposals for the decentralization of our energy system, including support for micro-generation. We also note the recognition that “It is important that Scotland offers sustainable sources of biofuels to support the industry rather than allow unsustainable imports like palm oil”.

We note with interest the proposal for a framework for promotion of corporate social responsibility in Scotland, given the significance of major Scottish businesses such as RBS in the global economy.

SNP



The SNP manifesto includes policies or language relating to many of the proposals we offered. In some areas it is notably ambitious. We particularly note the positive commitment to introduce a “Climate Change Bill with mandatory carbon reduction targets of 3% per annum and also set a long-term target of cutting emissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050” alongside a clear rejection of new nuclear power. We also note positively the support for micro-generation and proposals to improve enforcement of building

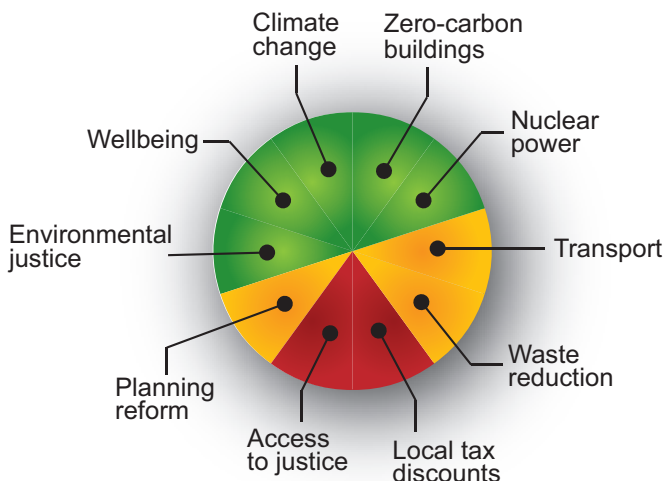
regulations; with an aim to bring forward micro-generation and energy efficiency measures in a million Scottish homes. However the SNP do not set a target date for new buildings to be zero-carbon.

We believe, however, that the SNP may find it difficult to meet both its overarching climate change goals and fulfil its transport policy commitments – especially those relating to road construction and air travel: the latter including an intent “to promote and encourage an extension of international connections”. We note with interest the novel proposal to “assess and then offset the carbon impact of major government projects, including much needed improvements to Scotland’s road network”, the effectiveness of which cannot be judged without further details.

We are concerned that the SNP would choose to cancel investment in a new tram system for Edinburgh.

We note positively proposals to stimulate creativity and innovation to help deliver environmental goals through earmarking the first proposed ‘Saltire Prize’ for work on renewable energy; and by establishing “Scottish Energy Efficiency Design Awards”.

SSP



The Scottish Socialist Party include many specific proposals in their manifesto. Their manifesto includes policies or language relating to most of the proposals we offered. Their goals on climate change are ambitious. They propose “an independent audit commission, to enforce Scottish climate emissions targets of at least three per cent a year, with an accelerating rate of reduction in the future.” We also note their intent to “campaign for the Scottish Parliament to set up, as a matter of urgency, a spe-

cial commission including ... to develop a carbon rationing scheme” to help meet these targets in a redistributive manner. In parallel, they reject the use of tax measures to reduce carbon emissions.

The SSP promise to cancel planned road building and airport expansion projects including the M74 extension, the Aberdeen bypass, the A701 “realignment” through Midlothian, and the Dalkeith bypass. We also note with interest their pledges to “fight for the Scottish Parliament to phase in ... a free public transport system”, and to campaign for “all biofuels to have sustainability and greenhouse gas certification”.

We also note the proposal that “public contracts ... be refused to any company with a record of dangerous work practices or polluting the environment” as a positive step towards corporate accountability.

Methodology

Early in 2006 FoES developed a list of 10 proposals which we have promoted to all the parties for inclusion in their manifestos for May's Holyrood elections (see p4 for details). This spring we notified the parties of our intent to use that list of ten proposals as a benchmark for our assessment of their published manifestos. This document is the product of that analysis.

For each proposal we have used our best judgement to assess whether the party has included it in their manifesto, using 'traffic light' categories: green indicating full or substantial inclusion; amber partial, and red that the proposal does not appear. The following pages summarise the outcomes for the manifestos published by the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrat Party, the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Socialist Party. We excluded the Solidarity manifesto from this analysis as it includes only a set of proposals for Members' Bill, rather than a comprehensive set of policy proposals.

We sought to word our proposals in such a way as to be equally practical for a party likely to be forming a Government, as for one at best hoping to extract some commitments in a coalition partnership agreement or some other formal arrangement to enable a minority administration to govern. It appears that the larger parties may not have shared our opinion in this respect, and readers may wish to consider for themselves whether our benchmarks would have been easier for some parties to adopt than others.

Where we noted other policy proposals - beyond our benchmark list - that appear to us to be particularly environmentally beneficial or potentially damaging, we have noted this in the commentary on the relevant manifesto. However such proposals are not reflected in the 'traffic light' pie-charts.

Our analysis should not be taken as endorsement of any party, nor of the financial feasibility of any particular proposal. Without a comprehensive financial analysis of the manifestos we cannot comment on the latter, even though it is possible that expensive commitments - such as a new Forth crossing - might prove challenging for a party to deliver on limited financial resources.



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Friends of the Earth Scotland

Lamb's House, Burgess Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6RD.

Tel: 0131 554 9977 Fax: 0131 554 8656 Email: info@foe-scotland.org.uk Website: www.foe-scotland.org.uk

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