

A Manifesto for a Fossil Free UK

Friends of the Earth Scotland

2019 General Election policy document



**Friends of
the Earth
Scotland**

The science is clear: next decade is crucial we are going to meet our commitments to the address climate change, set out in the Paris Agreement. The next UK Government will therefore need to start taking action which sharply reduces emissions across the UK. Below we have set out some of the policies that political parties, and candidates, should commit to to deliver this.

1. Redirect the support given to fossil fuel industries into clean energy and delivering a Just Transition

The recent 'Sea Change'¹ report, commissioned by Friends of the Earth Scotland, Oil Change International, and Platform, calculated that the 5.7 billion barrels of oil and gas in currently operational oil and gas fields will exceed the UK's share in relation to the Paris Agreement climate goals. Meanwhile oil and gas companies, with collective profits of over £1 billion, have recently been in receipt of more money in Government subsidies than they have paid in tax. This is both financially and environmentally unsustainable. To tackle high-polluting fossil fuel industries, parties should commit to:

- Not issuing licenses and permits for new oil and gas exploration and development, and revoking any undeveloped licenses.
- Starting the rapid phase out of subsidies that the fossil fuel industry currently receives, investing the equivalent money into clean energy and delivering a Just Transition, underpinned by a Just Transition strategy designed with trade unions and environment groups.
- Ruling out the development of any other unsustainable energy or distant prospects, like fracking, nuclear power, carbon capture and hydrogen fuel.
- Devolving energy policy, giving the Scottish Parliament the power to transform the energy industry, and manage how Scotland is powered.

2. Protect environmental standards during Brexit

There is no such thing as a good Brexit for the environment. Currently the UK benefits from EU membership in a number of ways, including through environmental regulations, air quality standards, the EU Single Use Plastics Directive, and the legal systems which create a route to justice for breaches of environmental legislation. It is crucial that if the UK does leave the EU, the next UK Government protects the current level of environmental regulation and legal routes we receive. Parties should commit to:

- Mirroring EU environmental standards, including as they evolve, with a commitment to exceed them wherever possible.
- Improving access to environmental justice, establishing Environmental Courts across the UK with expertise to handle specific environmental justice issues².
- Reforming legal fees and legal aid, giving the public and NGOs support to challenge powerful interests in environmental cases.

¹ <https://foe.scot/resource/sea-change-climate-report/>

² <https://foe.scot/resource/environmental-principles-and-governance-response/>



3. Abandon the Heathrow expansion and commit to investing in the UK's rail and bus network

Transport is the largest source of emissions for both Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole, with emission levels barely changing since the 1990s baseline - and increasing in Scotland in that time. It's clear that we need to transform how we travel, and future transport policy must prioritise reducing the number of high polluting journeys, such as car journeys and flights, and investing in more sustainable alternatives like train and bus travel. Parties should commit to:

- Ruling out supporting any airport or wider aviation expansion, including the Heathrow third runway
- Investing in modern, electric trains, extending free bus travel, and expanding bus and rail networks - giving people more choice and lower fares when taking greener transport.

4. Use powers across portfolios on tackling the Climate Emergency

Tackling the climate emergency, and achieving both Scotland and the UK's emissions reduction targets, will require transformative new approaches in every area. It is not enough to tinker round the edges, or look for technofixes which support 'business as usual'. The next UK Government must not shy away from using every tool possible and raising funds to support a reduction in emissions and deliver a just transition. Parties should commit to:

- Explore new taxes that drive change and reduce emissions. A frequent flyer tax, waste tax, and carbon tax could ensure that the highest polluting activities contributed towards tackling climate change.
- Accelerate the end dates for the sale of fossil fuel vehicles and heating systems .
- Bring railways into public ownership and develop a publicly owned energy company, ensuring that heating our homes and travelling are delivered as public and environment goods.

5. Commit to COP with marginalised voices at its centre, free from polluters

In 2020, the UK Government will be hosting COP26, the UN climate conference. COP should be a place for politicians, advocates, scientists and other interested parties to enhance international efforts to tackle climate change. However, too often these conferences have seen the voices of those most impacted by climate change marginalised, with the fossil fuel lobby and big business buying a high presence at the centre of the conference. As hosts, this is a crucial opportunity for the UK to shape the global conversation, and set the tone for future conferences. To reverse this broken status quo, parties should commit to:

- Prioritising access for representatives from the global south, and giving proactive support to ensure they are able to attend COP26.
- Ban lobbying by big business at COP26.