

West Lothian **Scottish National Party**

2022 **West Lothian Council Manifesto**

Moving West Lothian **Forward**



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Our West Lothian - Our Council

For too long, West Lothian Council has delivered services using a top-down approach, with services designed in glass fronted offices.

The SNP believe that our council services are your rights as council taxpayers. The SNP believe that council services need to be created around people and communities; we must listen to what our communities tell us about what they need. The SNP believe that democratic power rests within local communities and that power must be built from within these communities and not delivered using a top-down approach. The SNP believe that our communities know best about what their needs are; we want to harness the tremendous capacities and skills inherent in our communities and work together to build local resilience.

An SNP-led Council will start by asking you about your needs and aspirations. We will then:

- Change the way West Lothian Council committees are organised, to ensure they are proportionate regarding the members elected
- Ensure that local communities are the heart of the decision-making process by creating places on every council committee for local organisations
- Redefine the relationship we have with you, as well as all citizens and stakeholders in West Lothian, by ensuring that **you** are at the heart of decision making, with a strong voice that carries weight in all decisions made for your community
- Strive to build a new engagement and participation model with community budgeting and community wealth-building at its heart.

The SNP want our local communities and organisations to experience a new system of local government as dynamic members, involved in solving local problems.

We will begin by engaging with local communities, by listening to what **you** believe are the priorities for **your** area.

By bringing the organisation of services closer to our local communities, we accept different solutions are needed for different communities. We want to help develop local partnerships, bringing together public services, the third sector and colleagues from the private sector, to deliver the shared outcomes that really matter to **you**.

We will work hard to regenerate our communities following the Covid pandemic, by ensuring additional resources are targeted towards areas identified as priorities by local community organisations.

To drive this forward we will strive to use local suppliers wherever possible. We will seek to continue to develop the excellent partnership we have with West Lothian College, supporting our people into work.

The key principle behind this manifesto is that listening to the voices of people in our communities will be at the heart of everything that we do. We will enable local communities to help shape the future of West Lothian.

We firmly believe that this collaborative way of working will help to make West Lothian a fairer, more equal, more sustainable and more prosperous place to live.

Our Council - Our West Lothian

The SNP believe that our council should be led by the people who live in our West Lothian communities and should be about addressing the needs of all who live here. Local communities are the heart of West Lothian and these communities must be involved in decision making.

The SNP will deliver changes to support local communities to become empowered, making decisions based on their priorities and the kinds of services they want to see.

The SNP believe that solutions to problems should always be made locally. The SNP want to support communities to enable them to realise all the opportunities that are available to them. The SNP believe that decisions made by those who are most affected have a far greater chance of success.

The SNP firmly believe that democracy must be community led and from the bottom up, not the current model in West Lothian which is provided 'from above'. Council-run services should be built around local communities and their own identified needs, aspirations, capacities and skills. We want to harness these capacities and skills to achieve better outcomes for all our people.

The past year has been the hardest most of us have ever lived through. However, we have also been reminded of what is most important in life – health, family and community. The next term of local government in West Lothian will be focused on recovery from the pandemic and steering our county through the chaos of Brexit.

An SNP-led West Lothian Council will work co-operatively with the Scottish Government to help our communities continue with this recovery, putting their health and well-being at the heart of all we do. **We will work to ensure:**

- Every child in West Lothian can reach their full potential
- Council services adversely affected by the pandemic are remobilised and staff supported to continue to provide high quality customer-focused services
- West Lothian is once again a place where employers want to do business
- Companies bidding for work in West Lothian will be required to employ local people as apprentices.

We know that our young people require knowledge and skills to equip them to enter the workplace and to help them realise their full potential. We will work in partnership with West Lothian College to ensure this happens.

We understand that all public service organisations need to work more collaboratively to prioritise building services around people, not the other way around.

The SNP will work tirelessly to ensure delivery of the very best services that the people of West Lothian deserve.

Moving West Lothian **Forward**

We want to ensure that you have the capacity and the available facilities to work in partnership with West Lothian Council, helping to plan and shape local services; services which matter to **you** and **your** community. **We will work together to build the communities we all want to live in** - where children and older people feel safe; where people want to do business, building prosperity for us all and where the range of opportunities for leisure time are enhanced by promoting and looking after our country parks better.

We will invest in our children to ensure that every child in West Lothian, irrespective of their background, gets the best chance to achieve their full potential.

We want to talk to, listen to and work with parents to build excellent, affordable and flexible integrated early learning, education and childcare; we will seek to do this in partnership with the voluntary sector.

We will start a programme to build at least 1000 new council houses, working in partnership with our colleagues in the Scottish Government who have committed to support this.

We will seek to protect the health and well-being of our vulnerable and elderly citizens by ensuring the full integration of Health and Social Care; utilising our precious resources most efficiently by delivering excellent, person-centred care at home - where we know people most want to be cared for.



The SNP is determined that every child, regardless of their circumstances, should get the best start in life. As we emerge out of restrictions and into recovery, we will ensure that West Lothian's young people have the tools they need to succeed despite the economic and educational damage of Covid. **We want every young person in West Lothian to have the opportunities they need to achieve their full potential and we will work in partnership with all relevant organisations to realise this vision.**

A West Lothian SNP administration would propose to:

Close the Attainment Gap

Children and young people from more deprived areas often face additional barriers to education and perform significantly less well in examinations than their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Our number one priority is to ensure all children can reach their full potential. We will continue the amazing initiatives funded through the SNP Government's pupil equity funding such as the family support workers who have revolutionised home-to-school links.

Early Learning and Childcare

The early years of a child's education are the most vital. The SNP, locally and nationally, have long been committed to providing full-time nursery and childcare places (1,140 hours per year) to all three- and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds. We will support an extension to outdoor learning, beginning with the early years. We will consider all applications for deferment of primary education fairly and consistently.

We will also work in partnership with West Lothian College, training Childhood Practitioners in the delivery of Forest Learning. The Forest Classroom encourages children to respect the natural environment while playing and gives students and staff the opportunity to recognise and support the children's next step in learning.

Out of School Care

Affordable and quality childcare is key to enabling our parents to return to work, training or education. In 2010 the SNP administration of West Lothian Council helped create the social enterprise, Simply Play. This was a great success and we are committed to supporting the expansion of this vital service. This is vital to help our young families either to gain qualifications or return to the workplace.





Education

Instrumental Music

Sadly, the Labour/Tory-led council first tried to cut instrumental music tuition from our schools. Under pressure from parents and the SNP, they reversed that decision but brought in a harsh charging regime. We believe education should be free! We welcome the SNP Scottish Government's moves to ensure instrumental music charges are abolished and we commit to overhauling the instrumental music service in West Lothian to ensure equality of access with a commitment to keeping it free. We will also explore the possibility of a conservatoire strings centre in Linlithgow (like the extremely successful ones already well established in Livingston and Armadale).

Campus Police

Introduced by the SNP but cut by Labour, the campus police initiative was a huge success, giving support to our schools and helping to establish a very positive police/young person relationship. We are committed to strengthening this valuable service.

Period Poverty

Research showed that girls in our schools were being disadvantaged through period poverty, often missing lessons or even days of schooling. Along with the Scottish Government we will strive to ensure dignity and the availability of free period products to girls in our schools.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

One of the biggest challenges in our schools is ensuring that every child is supported. We are committed to the ideals of GIRFEC and we will support our schools and our teachers to achieve this.

Pupil Counsellors

Children and young adults must be at the centre of everything we do. We will continue to promote and provide initiatives to support our children, such as ensuring every child has access to a school counselor. We will strive to ensure that, where required, young people will have access to mental health support.

School Meals

We know our children learn best when they are not hungry. We will ensure ALL children in our primary, nursery and special schools will be offered a free school lunch and a free breakfast. We will also pilot the introduction of a good healthy start to the day for the young people in our secondary schools.

Education *continued*

Education *continued*



Digital Inclusion

We believe in lifelong learning – and we live in an age where digital access has become ever more important. We fully support the Scottish Government’s National Digital Academy and the ever-increasing quality of learning resources available online. We commit to working with the Scottish Government to ensure every child (and lifelong learner) has access to the technology and connection they need to take advantage of these amazing resources, including providing every schoolchild in West Lothian with a laptop or tablet so they can get online. To make this happen we will also ensure that connectivity is available.

New Schools for Craigshill, Winchburgh, and East Calder

We believe our children deserve to be educated in modern schools. The two primary schools serving the area of Craigshill, while providing excellent quality education, have buildings that are past their best. An incoming SNP administration will build a new state of the art school to serve one of our most vulnerable communities. We shall also support the opening of modern, advanced high schools in Winchburgh and East Calder.



The SNP recognise that amid the enormous challenges faced worldwide by the pandemic, the climate emergency is still with us. An SNP administration will fully support the Scottish Government's commitment to ending Scotland's contribution to climate change. We can do so much more in West Lothian to ensure that everything we do is sustainable and does not contribute to the destruction of our environment. An important aim of the incoming SNP administration will be the protection of our environment - both urban and rural- from damage, overdevelopment and exploitation.

A West Lothian SNP administration would propose to:

- Develop our open spaces, firstly consulting with local communities regarding *their* priorities
- Ensure the built environment is maintained in a sustainable condition by increasing the number of Environmental Wardens and re-introducing heavy uplift, free at the point of collection
- Ensure appropriate sustainable management of the built environment by reducing energy consumption through increasing LED street lighting
- Support local communities in reducing littering and dog fouling through local community-based initiatives
- Support appropriate agencies in seeking to reduce pollution in our rivers and watercourses
- Seek to develop an ultra-modern recycling centre, potentially integrating a form of self-generating energy, for example an anaerobic digester, solar panels or wind turbine and to include the resource to sort or transfer refuse in-house. We will investigate the possibility of this centre being operated as a social enterprise
- Seek to develop electric vehicle charging provision throughout West Lothian to promote and support zero carbon target
- Develop sustainable plans for the provision of alternative heating, e.g. air/ground source heat pumps, particularly in new builds
- Develop plans for district heating systems
- Promote and deliver, through procurement channels, replacement fleet vehicles with environmentally friendly alternatives
- Support the local bus companies in the removal of fossil fuel buses from West Lothian's public transport network
- Continue to develop safe cycleways throughout West Lothian, linking with regional cycling paths
- Support the Scottish Government to promote the installation of more plastic bottle return units in all our communities
- Promote community allotments within West Lothian including investigating the use of developer contributions to their establishment
- Promote community gardens and community orchards throughout West Lothian.

Environment

Housing

We can see the impact of the housing crisis everywhere - from the increase in both young families and older people trapped in unaffordable, privately-rented homes, to the increasing homelessness that scars our society. We wholeheartedly welcome the SNP Scottish Government's commitment to build **100,000 new affordable homes** across Scotland.



Unless we act now, we face a future in which a generation of young families will be trapped, renting privately for their whole lives, where more and more people will grow old in private rentals, where millions more in welfare costs will be paid to private landlords - and sadly, where more people are forced into homelessness.

Housing is more than simply bricks and mortar. It touches everyone's lives in different ways. The SNP believe that everyone should have a safe, warm home which is affordable and we are committed to ensuring that this becomes a reality.

We fully support the SNP Scottish Government's commitment to improve our housing stock which will improve life for thousands of young families across Scotland.

We will ensure representatives of tenants' groups are invited on to the Services for Communities Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP), which covers housing.

An SNP Council administration will:

- Commit to delivering 1000 new energy efficient social houses
- Work in partnership with other social housing providers to maximise the number of homes for rent
- Actively promote mutual exchanges of properties
- Work with the Scottish Government and the energy suppliers to reduce the tariffs on pre-paid card meters
- Immediately install solar panels and battery storage on all new council housing and commence a retrofit programme to existing stock

- Build more one-bedroomed properties, to meet the demand from single households
- Explore and install different heating technologies, including district heating systems
- Ensure all Voids (vacated homes) are decorated to acceptable standard prior to being offered to tenants
- In consultation with our tenants and those on the waiting list, we will aim to set a sustainable rent strategy
- Review allocations policy, with more incentives to assist tenants to consider exchanging their homes
- Review and improve the Anti-Social Behaviour policy.

Implementing all of the above will result in a considerable financial saving for our tenants, both immediately and going forward, benefitting their household budget, helping tackle fuel poverty, and ensuring that our homes are warm, while reducing their carbon footprint.

It will create local job opportunities and apprenticeships, while ensuring that our homes are of the highest quality and giving future generations the best possible start in life.



Culture, Arts and Leisure

Culture is central to us as a nation and the SNP very much value the input made by many volunteers involved in the field of culture, arts and leisure. **During the pandemic, both volunteers and those employed in Scottish culture and the arts were an absolute necessity in supporting us through challenging times and their importance was highlighted as never before. As we come out of this pandemic and move forward, we will do all we can to attain, indeed surpass, the high standards previously achieved. We will ensure appropriate council officers work closely with our local organisations to better understand local community needs and to provide help and assistance wherever possible.**

Libraries

As libraries open their doors and welcome the public back, the SNP recognise the importance of these vital facilities and will work to ensure services are provided to best suit the needs of users. We will work to ensure that opening hours fit with community needs and that books and other services provided by the libraries are properly funded and meet the needs of the users. We recognise the role libraries can play in easing social isolation and will investigate how we can support home book visits, including the potential return of the mobile Library.

Galas and Festivals

West Lothian has an excellent tradition of galas and festivals and the SNP welcome their return. We will provide support to ensure the future of our traditions are maintained and enhanced in our towns and villages, bringing our communities back together. The SNP propose to extend this by encouraging the development of a **West Lothian Food and Drink Street Festival**, with focus on locally produced food and drink. The SNP will reinstate the Livingston Skate Park to international standard and introduce an **International Skate Park Festival**, working alongside Skateboard Scotland, Skateboard GB and users of the park.



Sports and Community Clubs

Our many clubs and organisations have been heavily affected by the pandemic and the SNP will support and give encouragement to achieve their goals and help increase the active participation of people of all ages. The SNP will work with all sports bodies, clubs, groups and community groups to ensure adequate support is available and to promote shared good practice. We will actively promote local youth clubs and provide ongoing support for West Lothian Youth Action.

The Arts

The impact of the arts is seen in the health, happiness and well-being of a community. We will work with West Lothian ARC (*Arts for Recovery and Change*) along with all our amazing arts groups, organisations and artists to develop a robust, innovative and forward-thinking arts strategy for West Lothian.

Community Arts

The SNP recognises that venues are important, they facilitate the promotion of arts, together with the many groups and individuals involved with access to a range of arts activities. The SNP are committed to providing every encouragement and support in utilising these resources and to the encouragement of local artists and groups.



Instrumental Music

West Lothian has a proud tradition of producing first class musical groups, bands and soloists. The SNP, as well as removing instrumental tuition charges from our schools, will work with our musicians to support, encourage and grow music in West Lothian and keep our tradition of talent alive.



Local Museums

The SNP view our local museum services as an important part of our community tradition and heritage. We will work to support and encourage their future development. We would like to support displays within our libraries showcasing the local history of our towns and villages, bringing our cultural heritage into the heart of our communities.



Life-Long Learning

We recognise the value of Community Education work and will support this in our local community centres. We will also strive to ensure schools, at the heart of our communities, are more accessible for the people of West Lothian.



Social Policy

Supporting our West Lothian communities to care for our most vulnerable people will be a top priority for the SNP during the next five years. We will develop our services in tandem with the developing National Care Service, which is backed by the SNP Scottish Government's commitment to increase investment in social care by 25%

We will manage the transition to a National Care Service seamlessly, ensuring that local people continue to receive high quality care services by a well-trained workforce. We recognise that the people in our communities who need support have wide-ranging needs and circumstances. We will strive to meet those needs in a way that puts human rights, dignity, fairness and respect at the heart of all services.

To do this, the SNP will ensure that our Social Care workforce is valued, respected, rewarded and happy; that unpaid carers are supported, included in all decision making and can have a life alongside caring; and that third sector organisations are valued and included in strategic and operational decision-making. We will therefore ensure appropriate representation of the third sector on the Social Policy Committee, helping to strengthen local decision-making.



During the next five years the SNP will:

Partnerships and Workforce development

Ensure there is collective and seamless working across all professional groups within health and social care. The SNP will do this by working to improve the integration of our health and social care teams. Shared learning across both teams is critical to ensuring that people in our communities across West Lothian receive the best care possible

Further strengthen the close working relationships with independent and third sector providers, forged during the pandemic

Work in partnership with the Scottish Government to take forward the outcomes of the National Care Service consultation.

Community Care

Seek to remove charging for non-residential social care, in line with the current development areas for a National Care Service. This would mean that the only cost for people in receipt of social care would be the means-tested accommodation costs for care home residents

Aim to improve the experience and implementation of self-directed support, placing the needs, rights and preferences of people using the services at the heart of the decision-making process

Review practices and services delivered to our vulnerable elderly in care homes

Evaluate and develop best practice in palliative care. The SNP understand that palliative care is not just about care in the last days of life but ensuring quality of life for both the person and their family from diagnosis onwards. We will strive to cherish and support people and their families either at home or in care homes. This will be underpinned by closer integration of our health and social care teams

Develop and deliver a Connectedness in our Communities Strategy, in conjunction with all relevant partners and stakeholders, which will aim at reconnecting people in a way which best suits their age, gender, situation and needs, in order to reduce or eradicate loneliness and social isolation.

The SNP understand that social isolation and loneliness can have a detrimental effect on an individual's mental and physical health. It is a difficult and challenging area to tackle, one which can affect anyone and which has increased due to the Covid pandemic. We are committed to act to decrease loneliness in our communities.

We will establish a **National Care Service** by June 2022



SNP PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 21-22



Children, Young People and Families

Ensure that care-experienced children and young people in West Lothian are enabled to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected. We will promote the Scottish Government's promise to care-experienced children and young people and ensure they are supported by the people and structures around them

Prioritise the needs of children in West Lothian who, for any reason, need to be looked after in family settings away from their own family or in an extended family. The number of children needing foster care has risen by 44% during the coronavirus pandemic, while the number of people looking to become foster parents has decreased.

The SNP will strive to meet the Scottish Government's directive that children and young people who are looked after should remain with their siblings, wherever possible and when it is in the best interest of the child or young person

- **Improve transition for young people with additional support needs into adult services as they come of age.** We will work with relevant partners to ensure seamless support for both the young person and their families at a time of natural anxiety
- **Implement a comprehensive strategic needs assessment to identify the reasons why reported incidents of domestic violence increased by 18% during 2020-21 in West Lothian, to 2,693, compared to the previous year.**

In addition, the SNP will:

- Ensure interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety of women, children and young people
- Pursue strategies aimed at education and prevention, including engaging with boys and young men in West Lothian to encourage them to individually and collectively take a stand against gender-based violence
- Evaluate services and support provided to older victims of abuse, who might have been suffering for many years before reporting.
- Commit to the development and provision of services, including training, aimed at suicide prevention.



Roads and Transport



A West Lothian SNP administration will continue to prioritise safety throughout our communities, whilst simultaneously ensuring we have a transport network fit for modern living.

A West Lothian SNP administration will:

- Investigate the potential for erecting an additional parking structure at Livingston North Station to increase park-and-ride capacity.
- Similarly, look to increase the park-and-ride capacity at Livingston South Station, Kirknewton Station and others
- Develop a community-led bus service from routes currently subsidised by West Lothian Council, where communities and community councils have a role in determining how funds are allocated
- Work closely with the Scottish Government with its efforts to improve trunk road networks serving West Lothian
- Promote active travel through encouraging walking and cycling – and work in partnership with the Scottish Government to continue improvements to the walking and cycling network throughout our county.



Health and Care



The Integrated Joint Board (IJB) has now been in existence for six years. While it was designed to be a trail blazer for integrated working, putting primary care at the heart of our communities, *this has not happened*. An SNP administration will immediately seek to refocus the IJB on its principles of promoting further integration of health and social care, to provide more responsive, effective and enhanced services for everyone in West Lothian.

An SNP administration would propose to:

Enhance Health and Social Care Partnership Working by working to improve and consolidate the integration of our health and social care teams, which has lagged under the present administration. The outcome of greater integration will mean:

- Reduction in unscheduled admissions
- Reduction in delayed discharges
- Less pressure on hospital and ambulance services
- Less pressure on GP services
- Provision of greater person-centred palliative care
- Improved support for families with long term health conditions
- Improved support for caseload managers to deliver a more responsive service, thereby improving the patient pathway
- Introduction of improvements to the roll out of equipment designed to enable people to stay in their own home and to live as independently as possible. This will mean looking at week-end access to the joint equipment store.
- Decrease the amount of time people spend in hospital when they could be safely discharged home. We will investigate how we can improve the provision of assessment and rehabilitation at home, preserving independence and maintaining people's own routines.



- Review how services which impact on people's day to day lives can be transformed and look to deliver seven-day working for many of the health and care services currently only provided Monday to Friday.
- Introduce new, and improve current, initiatives to support long-term drug users with the development of a person-centred, holistic approach that puts more people into treatment. A commitment will be made to developing a long-term local strategy, building meaningful partnerships supporting the third sector to ensure access to services at a time that is right for people.

Enhance the community-centred approach to mental health including improved suicide prevention strategies:

- Introduction of the Distress Brief Intervention Programme including access for under 18s
- Integrating addictions support, with the mental health well-being programmes including increasing access to physical well-being programmes
- Further develop outreach mental health services in West Lothian
- Ensure every GP practice has access to a dedicated mental well-being link worker
- Focus on Early Intervention for people of all ages
- Raise awareness of support available, including for unpaid carers.

Improvements to End of Life care

The SNP firmly believe that everyone in West Lothian has the right to have end of life care in a place of their own choosing. For most of us, this will be at home, surrounded by loved ones. This needs to be underpinned by closer integration of health and social care and is one of the reasons for our support of the National Care Service. We will oversee co-location and closer partnership working between health and social care teams to provide seamless, person-centred care at this difficult time.



Enterprise and Development

The SNP recognises that successful communities need successful businesses to generate community wealth for the benefit of all.

Key to this are excellent quality local businesses providing stable employment to local people.

Maintaining high levels of employment in the long term implies robust, ongoing business creation. For creation of successful businesses there are two critical periods. The first is the initial period of setting up, the proof-of-concept stage, and then developing the growth and expansion potential.

We will work in partnership with existing business organisations, the education sector and specialist assistance in West Lothian - to guide start-ups through to stable growth.

For existing businesses, we will help provide the support required to expand. The SNP will create opportunities and encourage entrepreneurial flair and innovative ideas.

An SNP administration will actively support business proposals with the potential for growth. Experienced mentors will provide hands-on assistance to new talent, helping guide them through make-or-break business decisions in the critical phases.

An SNP administration will work pro-actively with Scottish Enterprise and West Lothian College to encourage firms that provide high-quality, well-paid jobs to locate in West Lothian.

By re-directing resource to develop a more proactive approach, an SNP administration will ensure West Lothian is an attractive, welcoming business destination ideally located in Central Scotland, providing employment opportunities for a young and growing population.



Voluntary Organisations

The SNP recognise that a flourishing, resourceful and properly supported third sector is vital if we are to achieve our aim of ensuring that local people are at the heart of planning and delivering local services to our West Lothian communities. With local people at the heart of our thriving third sector, communities will be empowered to design the services that *they* need, putting local needs first. The strength of our communities lies in using their local assets and building on the strengths found within our own neighbourhoods.

The SNP appreciate the substantial contributions our successful third sector partners bring to the ever-increasing demand to deliver vital services to our communities, brought so very starkly to the fore during the pandemic. We believe it is vital to build on this community capacity by the provision of real and ongoing support to our third sector partners. The continuing development of third sector enterprises in West Lothian is an important element of an expanding demand for sustainable organisations, local groups that build and support inclusive communities whilst also contributing to our local economy.

The SNP believe that to achieve all of this we must:

Understand and quantify the impact of our voluntary organisations, by implementing a register of organisations operating in West Lothian with information relating to:

- The needs or services provided
- The number of employees, with full time equivalent numbers, in the organisation
- The number of volunteers involved and their time commitment
- The income, if any, generated by the organisation.

Immediately engage in a significant consultation with all West Lothian third sector organisations to learn their needs and their local community aspirations.

Provide ongoing support from West Lothian Council by restoring the lead officer policy, with detailed and specific assistance from officers who understand the sector.

Explore the prioritisation of the local third sector in any competitive bids, ensuring West Lothian finances support local companies, spending Council monies locally

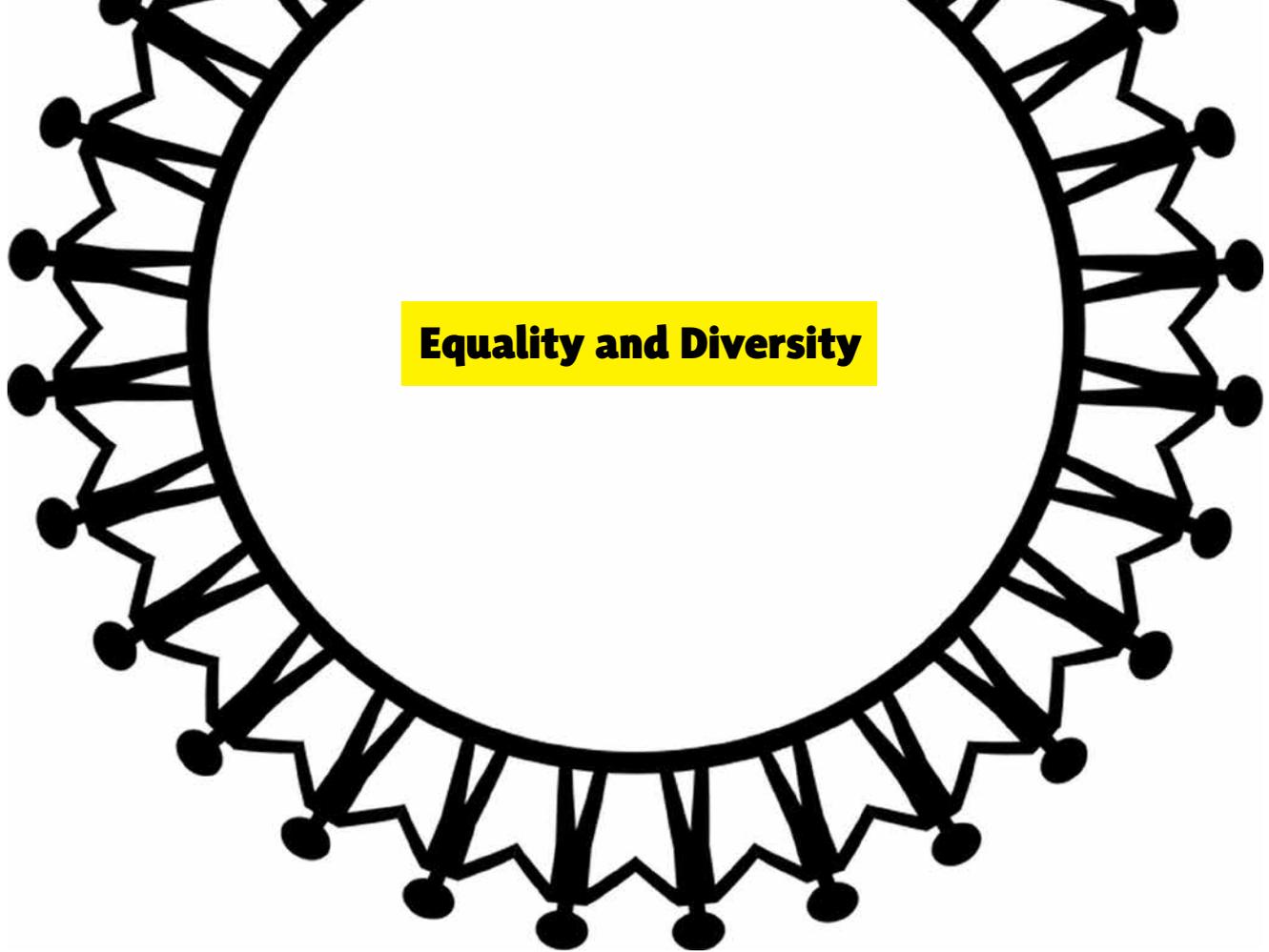
To ensure a buoyant and resilient third sector, the SNP will commit to increase funding and will ensure the sector is represented in budget negotiations.

Ensure the third sector is represented on West Lothian Council's committee system in a meaningful and relevant way

Provide ongoing support with strategic planning, to ensure stability for organisations and staff.

Consider the use of West Lothian Council premises for voluntary organisations, including supporting co-location of organisations where this is desirable.

Voluntary Organisations are at the very core of our society and deserve full support, advice and close co-operation with West Lothian Council. *The SNP intend to ensure this is delivered.*



Equality and Diversity

We in Scotland are lucky to live in one of the most diverse and tolerant societies in the world.

We have a proud record of welcoming migrant and refugee families from all four corners of the world and helping them to become New Scots. As our national bard, Robert Burns, said so well *"We're a' Jock Tamson's bairns"*. We are proud to live in a tolerant and diverse society.

The SNP strives to make our country one which is recognised throughout the world as a place where xenophobia, hate crimes and racism are not tolerated in our communities. We will not allow hate to become acceptable and we take every opportunity to reassure people that they are all valued and welcome citizens of Scotland.

The SNP councillors will commit to continue working with the Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC) and West Lothian Community Race Forum as well as supporting Fair Justice System for Scotland. We will support any other groups working in the field of diversity and discrimination who are working with local bodies and programmes to prevent racism, xenophobia and religious bigotry.

An SNP administration will work to ensure implementation of current equality and diversity legislation covering:

- Racism, ageism sexism, disability, and religion
- Sexual orientation and gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership.

We will seek to re-introduce Diversity Week and consider how we can increase the range of different festivals in the West Lothian cultural calendar. The SNP, in recognising the values, skills, talent and experience that exist in our communities, welcomes the input of workforce organisations in helping to fulfil the full potential of a fairer West Lothian.

The priorities of an SNP council will be to:

- Protect Freedom of Speech
- Tackle all forms of Discrimination
- Reduce harassment and victimisation in relation to religion, disability and sexual orientation.

Underpinning this manifesto is the key principle of empowering our communities to shape their future as we work to make **West Lothian a fairer, more equal and more prosperous community.** To help achieve this, we support an independent Scotland where we will set out our own priorities and make our own choices, free of a discredited Westminster establishment and once again joining the family of nations in the EU. We look forward to discussing this with you all and to working with you to **Move West Lothian Forward.**



Stronger for Scotland 
