

Our manifesto for the Scottish Government Elections 2026



UK Health Alliance
on Climate Change

Strong action to reduce emissions, improve health, and build resilience

The climate and nature crisis is a public health emergency that needs an urgent response.

Evidence of climate change and its impacts on health are already being seen in Scotland.

High temperatures during heatwaves impact health and heat-related deaths are predicted to rise over the next decades.

Periods of prolonged rainfall have resulted in widespread flooding, disruption to transport and infrastructure, trauma and death.

Poor air quality is associated with multiple negative health outcomes including asthma and other respiratory illnesses in children.

Climate change is bringing wildfires to Scotland, previously rare events, which in addition to causing fire risk to people and homes, affect a considerable surrounding area with dangerous smoke particulates known to seriously damage health.

The increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events pose significant challenges to Scotland's healthcare system.

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change is an alliance of 54 UK-based health organisations with a shared vision for a just, sustainable, healthy world. Our members' membership represents about one million health professionals.

Collectively, we advocate for just responses to the climate and ecological crisis, promote the health benefits

that flow from those responses, and empower health organisations and individuals to make changes to respond to the crisis.

The Government elected in 2026 must deliver strong action to keep Scotland on track to achieve its legally binding emission reduction targets alongside actions to improve the health of the nation and establish the long-term resilience of our health and care services.

Find out more: <https://ukhealthalliance.org>

Contact us: info@ukhealthalliance.org

We call on parties to commit to:

- 1 Transition to clean energy
- 2 Deliver environmentally-friendly homes
- 3 Provide clean ways to travel
- 4 Access to nutritious sustainable food
- 5 Protect our natural environment
- 6 Achieve a resilient health service



1 Transition to clean energy

Clean, renewable energy offers wide benefits including reducing air pollution and lower and less volatile energy bills compared to fossil fuels.

Scotland will play a critical role in the UK's transition away from oil and gas to clean, renewable energy. The benefits have the potential to be significant for Scotland, including lower air pollution, lower and less volatile energy bills, and green job creation.

We call for:

Oppose new licences for oil and gas exploration and extraction

- Work with communities, workers and business to develop proactive transition plans that enable access to secure employment and business plans
- Accelerate the planning process for electricity infrastructure in Scotland, such as transmission lines and onshore windfarms
- Work towards equity of energy bill costs across the UK

2 Deliver environmentally-friendly homes

Almost 90% of homes in Scotland are heated with fossil fuels and about half have poor energy efficiency. For too long, this has driven years of people suffering fuel poverty and the impact this has on their physical, mental and emotional health. Urgent action is needed to rapidly accelerate the installation of electrical heating systems to get households off volatile oil and gas and bring homes up to safer energy efficient standards. Achieving this will both help Scotland lower its greenhouse gas emissions and improve population health.

We call for:

- Regulations and incentives for homeowners to switch to heat pumps and other electrical heating systems
- Require all new homes built in Scotland to be highly efficient with clean, low-carbon heating systems
- Ban the installation of wood burning stoves in new houses as a secondary heating source with exceptions for those in very rural locations and unreliable alternative sources of energy
- Set minimum energy efficiency standards for privately owned homes
- Develop specific support for island communities particularly susceptible to fuel poverty to transition to low carbon electricity generation, heating and insulation

3 Provide clean ways to travel

Transport is the highest emitting sector in Scotland, accounting for 23% of emissions. Transformation of the way in which the people of Scotland travel can bring multiple benefits: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, cleaner air, connected communities, and healthier people. The next government must grasp the opportunity quickly with immediate actions to improve transport.

We call for:

- Expansion of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- Long-term funding and power for local councils to develop active travel infrastructure and provide access to council owned EV chargers
- A strategic plan for the phase-out of diesel trains
- Investment in bus services to improve routes and access
- Incentives that encourage the use of public transport
- Funding and infrastructure to increase levels of active travel, including the development of protected routes for walking and cycling

4 Access to nutritious sustainable food



The Good Food Nation Bill sets a framework for Scotland's transition to a sustainable food system that brings improvements to people's physical and mental health. The development, delivery and reporting on progress set out in good food plans at national, local and health board level must be sustained and supported by the government. Agriculture currently accounts for 19% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions while the Scottish diet is high in calories, fats and sugars and low in fibre, fruit and vegetables. Changing land use to reduce emissions and protect biodiversity goes hand in hand with improving access to affordable, nutritious foods to improve the national diet.

We call for:

- Incentives for farmers and land and estate managers to diversify land use and management into woodland creation, peatland restoration, agroforestry and renewable energy
- Provide long-term certainty on public funding for farming practices and technologies to reduce emissions from managing crops and livestock
- Increase choice and availability of plant-based whole foods in public procurement, restaurants, and supermarkets
- Incorporate the right to healthy and sustainable food into Scots Law as a component of the right to a healthy environment in the Human Rights Bill
- Reduce food waste in partnership with supermarkets, shops and other food businesses; enable excess usable food to be automatically sent to food banks

5 Protect our natural environment

Nature will play a critical role for Scotland to achieve its emission reduction targets. The natural environment also brings multiple benefits for physical and mental health, cleaner air and cooling from extreme heat. Delivering actions that protect and restore Scotland's biodiverse landscape, and ensure the people of Scotland can connect with nature will create a better, healthier, and more sustainable future.

We call for:

- Deliver a human rights bill for Scotland that incorporates the right to a healthy environment
- Every Scottish resident to have access to safe green space within walking distance within 15 minutes of their home
- Ensure all new developments provide adequate green spaces
- Policies that double tree-planting rates over the next decade to put Scotland on target to achieve 23% woodland cover by 2045
- Encourage councils to ensure the right to roam is enforced and prevent blocking of core paths
- Rewetting and restoration of peatlands

6 Achieve a resilient health service

The health service accounts for about 5% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions and has established targets to be net zero by 2045. Health and care services are also a major source of waste and pollution of rivers and seas. The increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events pose significant challenges to the health system. Extreme weather, rising temperatures, and shifting disease patterns also threaten the health of the population and place additional strain on existing and future healthcare resources.

In Scotland, over 400 health and social care facilities are at risk of frequent flooding, a number expected to rise even if global warming remains below 2°C. There are currently no systems in place to report instances of overheating in healthcare facilities in Scotland. Many primary care premises in Scotland are poorly ventilated and not adapted for very warm weather.

Ensuring a sustainable, resilient health service demands actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

We call for:

- Introduce a comprehensive multi-year programme for decarbonisation actions in public buildings, including NHS sites, such as rooftop solar panels and retrofitting, supported by long-term capital settlements
- Dedicated ring-fenced funding for climate adaptation initiatives within the NHS budget, including significant funding to improve insulation and ventilation to protect increasing risk of overheating
- Risk assessment for all NHS facilities identify vulnerabilities and responses to them
- Sustained financial support for NHS Scotland Greenspaces to support biodiversity on NHS sites that benefit staff, patients and local communities
- Encourage medical, dental, nursing, pharmacy and allied health professional licencing bodies mandate for climate and health training into curricula
- Reduce waste from health care services, including avoiding single-use items wherever possible
- Financial support for local authorities and health boards to deliver public transport and active travel routes to health workplaces for staff
- Support and require regular reporting on Scottish health board good food plans that promote more sustainable, healthier food choices
- Policies to drive the cultural and societal shift needed to secure a healthier, more sustainable way of life such as active travel, healthy diets, and connection with nature

