

EQUALITYNETWORK

WORKING FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL and TRANSGENDER RIGHTS IN SCOTLAND

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SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER: ELECTION 2011

WHAT'S IN THE PARTIES' MANIFESTOS?

The Scottish Parliament election is on May 5th. Each party has published a manifesto which outlines their policies and says what their MSPs would seek to achieve if they are elected to the Scottish Parliament.

We know that LGBT people and our friends and supporters are not just interested in LGBT equality issues, but will also take into account the parties' policies on other issues like health, education, crime etc.

But we wanted to let you know what the parties are promising on LGBT equality. We have focussed on the manifestos of all the parties that have previously had MSPs in the Scottish Parliament. Below, we quote directly from those manifestos any promise that relates **explicitly** to LGBT equality or to LGBT people. You can find the parties' complete manifestos at the party web addresses given.

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

www.scottishconservatives.com

There is no mention of LGBT equality in the Conservative manifesto.

Scottish Green Party

www.scottishgreens.org.uk

Equality: "Greens believe we can create a country where all can participate fully in society regardless of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We'll work towards eliminating the barriers that prevent equality from progressing in Scotland."

Marriage: “We’ll introduce legislation for equal partnership – opening marriage and civil partnership up to mixed-sex and same-sex couples, and allowing religious celebrants to conduct civil partnership. We’ll begin a dialogue with the UK Government about the need for cross-border recognition of relationships on the basis of equality.”

Hate crime: “Crimes based on prejudice, like sectarianism, racism, homophobia, and misogyny are all unacceptable. Unfortunately, these prejudices still blight many communities throughout Scotland. Green MSPs were proud to pass legislation on Hate Crimes in the last parliamentary session so the law included hatred based on disability, sexual orientation and transgender identity. This was a significant step in the right direction, but more progress must be made to tackle these crimes. We’ll prioritise tackling these problems and the crimes they give rise to through our restorative approach to justice. Restorative practices have a huge role to play in addressing and challenging prejudiced attitudes that underpin crime.”

“We believe more support is needed for those affected by these crimes, and to those who are responsible for the harm so that they can move beyond this unacceptable behaviour to the benefit of the whole community.”

Scottish Labour

www.scottishlabour.org.uk

Equality: “We will develop strong guidance for the effective implementation of the public duties under the Equality Act. We want to ensure gender, race, religion, sexuality, age and disability are not barriers to accessing public services, employability or training.”

Marriage: “We will investigate the best way to implement the ‘Alli Amendment’ in Scotland, to give religious organisations that want to, the freedom to hold civil partnerships in their buildings for the first time.”

“We also believe that the time is now right to consult on options to provide genuine equality for same-sex couples and their families, by addressing the different status of civil partnership and marriage. We are clear – Scotland shouldn’t be left behind on these issues.”

Schools: “Scottish Labour will make tackling bullying and indiscipline a priority. We will require a discipline code to be developed in every school in Scotland, ensuring each school has positive policies in place for improving indiscipline and tackling bullying – particularly for those areas of bullying that are on the rise, such as cyber and homophobic bullying. We will compel

schools to monitor and record incidences of bullying and share this information transparently with parents.”

Hate crime: “Hate crime has no place in our society, yet a worrying proportion of hate crimes continue to go unreported. Scottish Labour will work to drive up reporting rates, improve support for victims and ensure the perpetrators of hate crimes are severely dealt with. We will also ensure that sentencing guidelines deliver consistency in taking account of aggravated factors such as racism, homophobia, sectarianism and other hate crimes.”

Other: “Scottish Labour wants to end the unjust situation that has seen gay men, who were previously prosecuted for consensual acts, continue to suffer the prejudice caused by these convictions – long after the offences themselves have been decriminalised.”

Scottish Liberal Democrats

www.scotlibdems.org.uk

Marriage: “Extend legal marriage to gay couples and civil partnerships to heterosexual couples.”

Schools: “Tackle lack of awareness about gay issues, equality and bullying through the teaching profession. We will find new ways of challenging homophobia in schools and colleges and underachievement by lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils through mechanisms such as development of the Education for All programme in Scotland.”

Other: “Work with the UK Government to review the blanket ban on gay men donating blood.”

Scottish National Party (SNP)

www.snp.org

Marriage: “We recognise the range of views on the questions of same-sex marriage and registration of civil partnerships. We will therefore begin a process of consultation and discussion on these issues.”

Schools: “We want our pupils to feel safe in school and will look to partners across education to deliver a renewed focus on anti-bullying initiatives, building on best practice. This will include efforts to tackle homophobic bullying in our schools.”

Scottish Socialist Party

www.scottishsocialistparty.org

Marriage: “The strengthening of civil partnership legislation to full equality with marriage, including religious ceremonies.”

Schools: “Educational projects in schools and colleges aimed at eradicating homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and isolation.”

Other: “Guaranteed long term funding for community projects supporting LGBT people, under direct democratic control of service users, with full transparency and accountability.

Measures to tackle rural LGBT isolation through funding outreach and support projects across Scotland.

LGBT officers for local authorities, with secure funding for LGBT projects.

Full implementation of antidiscrimination laws in provision of goods and services, including hospital visitation rights for partners.”

“We will also campaign for the following measures, which are not within the Scottish Parliament’s powers:

Full recognition of homophobic persecution as a legitimate reason to seek asylum, equal immigration rights, ending the two year co-habitation rule and granting leave to remain to LGBT asylum seekers.

Equal pension rights, including survivors’ rights for all pension schemes.”

Other Parties and Independent Candidates

The other parties previously represented in the Scottish Parliament are **Solidarity** (www.new.solidarityscotland.org), and the **All Scotland Pensioners Party** (www.sscup.org). There are also independent candidates such as **Margo MacDonald** in Lothian. There are a number of other parties standing for election which have not been previously represented in the Parliament, ranging from Respect / Coalition Against Cuts (a coalition in Glasgow including Respect and Solidarity) to the Pirate Party to the Scottish Christian Party, and others. As far as we can establish, none of these has yet published a 2011 Scottish Parliament manifesto with a commitment to LGBT equality. If they do, we will publish the details on our website and via email.

You can find more about these parties here: <http://tinyurl.com/66rmt5j>
or here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-12984367>

April 2011 Equality Network, 30 Bernard St, Edinburgh, EH6 6PR

Registered Scottish charity SC037852. Company limited by guarantee SC220213