



Scottish election 2026

Manifesto Priorities 2026

This guide gives an overview of some of the key issues for Quakers in Scotland ahead of the upcoming Scottish election in May 2026.

Quakers would like to see greater truth and integrity in public life and a strengthening of policies on climate and economic justice, peace, compassionate justice and Scotland's prison crisis.

This guide covers why each of these issues matter to Quakers and outlines the asks that we have for the next parliament.

Contents

Introduction	2
1) Truth and integrity in public life	3
2) Climate and economic justice	4
3) Peace	7
4) Compassionate justice and Scotland's prisons crisis	10

Promoted by Adwoa Burnley on behalf of Quakers in Scotland

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Introduction

Who we are

[Quakers](#) are a faith community with Christian roots, internationally recognised for our work on peace, reconciliation and social justice over several centuries. We are responding to current challenges while remaining guided by our core values of peace, equality, truth, simplicity and sustainability.

Our advocacy work in Scotland is carried out through the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) and the Community Justice Working Group, who focus on justice and penal reform.

Election context: restoring trust and rebuilding democratic confidence

Across Scotland, levels of trust in political representatives have been declining. Increased polarisation, misinformation, and a sense of disconnection between decisionmakers and communities all weaken democratic processes. The Scottish Parliament's mace symbolically anchors parliamentary work in the values of integrity, compassion, justice and wisdom; yet public confidence in politics needs active rebuilding.

Quakers believe that transparent communication; acknowledging complexity, trade-offs and limitations; is essential for restoring hope and shaping an equitable, safe future for Scotland. This commitment to truth and integrity underpins all our policy priorities.

1) Truth and integrity in public life

Why this matters

Democracy depends on honest communication and constructive debate. Many people feel alienated from political life due to negative campaigning, personal attacks and a lack of clear explanation of policy limitations. By prioritising truthfulness, political leaders can rebuild trust and strengthen civic participation.

Our asks for the next parliament

- **Model honest, respectful communication**, avoiding scapegoating or the use of hostile rhetoric. This strengthens democratic culture and encourages good-faith disagreement.
- **Improve Holyrood's systems for transparency and accountability**, including clearer communication about policy trade-offs and long-term consequences.

2) Climate and economic justice

Why this matters

The climate crisis affects every community in Scotland, but not equally. Those with fewer financial resources are more exposed to energy price shocks, poor-quality housing, air pollution and environmental hazards. Globally, the people most affected by climate-related disasters are often those who contributed least to the climate crisis.

Climate action can improve health, reduce household costs and create new employment opportunities. Delaying action leads to far higher financial, social and environmental costs.

Our asks for the next parliament

Climate justice finance

Scotland has shown global leadership by recognising its moral responsibility to support communities experiencing climate-related loss and damage. Loss and damage refers to the devastating harm to people, their property and their infrastructure from the extreme weather events caused by climate change.

We call for:

- **Increased funding for the Climate Justice Fund to £15 million in the next parliament**, enabling communities in climate-affected regions to rebuild their lives.

- **Continued and expanded contributions** through the **Humanitarian Emergency Fund**, protecting the world's most vulnerable communities.
- All climate-justice finance to be **new, additional, and provided as grants**, not loans. This ensures affected communities are not pushed into debt.

More detail and case studies are available in the [Joint Loss and Damage Briefing \(October 2025\)](#) which we wrote with Christian Aid, SCIAF and Global Justice Now. Progress has been made on loss and damage since October 2025, but further action is urgently needed.

Fossil fuel phase-out

Burning fossil fuels is a major driver of climate breakdown, worsening global insecurity and local cost-of-living pressures. Continuing investment is incompatible with a safe future.

We therefore ask the Scottish Government to:

- **Support no new oil and gas developments** in the North Sea or elsewhere.
- **Sign the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#)**, an international initiative to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels.

A just transition

Transitioning away from fossil fuels must be fair, well-planned and supported by investment in communities most affected by industrial change.

We call for:

- **Delivery of the Climate Change Plan**, with decisive action to get Scotland back on track for net zero.
- **Funding redirected to proven climate solutions**, including:
 - Energy-efficient homes and buildings;
 - Decentralised renewable energy;
 - Accessible public transport;
 - Sustainable local food systems;
 - Responsible forestry, waste and water management.
- **Robust carbon-impact assessment** (including full lifecycle and Scope 3 emissions) for any public-funded projects.
- **Prioritising proven and scalable technology**, rather than speculative approaches like Carbon Capture and Storage, which remain unproven at the required scale.
- **A nationwide public awareness campaign** to help people understand the benefits of climate action for prosperity, health and community wellbeing.

Scotland is currently off track for its 2045 net-zero pathway. The incoming government must act decisively and without delay.

3) Peace

Why this matters

Quakers believe that all life is precious. We have opposed war and promoted peace since the earliest days of our faith in the 1600s. Today, peace remains a crucial issue in Scotland because:

- Public money supports companies in Scotland to make arms components going to conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.
- Military and arms companies are given access to our schools. By contrast, peace education, if embedded in our schools, would cultivate values of mutual respect and reconciliation at all levels from the personal to the international.

We accept that, unfortunately, violence seems deeply rooted in our world. But we believe that responding with further violence and fuelling the military and the arms trade only makes us more insecure. Genuine human security comes from investing in all the things that make us feel secure, such as healthcare, a fair economy, the environment, peacebuilding and diplomacy.

We believe people need to be taught how to transform conflict and build peace from a young age. Peace education is helping children and young people across the country to build positive relationships at different levels, from personal to societal to global, but it needs more funding and support.

Our asks for the next parliament

Responsible public investment

- Strengthen human-rights checks on **Scottish Enterprise** and all public-funding bodies, ensuring Scottish public money do not support human-rights abuses or international law violations.
- **A shift in public spending away from weapons and the military** to be redirected to address the causes of conflict such as gross inequality and climate breakdown.

Peace education

- **Embed peace education across the curriculum**, as a cornerstone for learning and sustainability.
- **Increase funding for Scottish Development Education Centres**, enabling Scottish schools to lead in global citizenship education.

More information can be found: In the Quakers in Britain report, [Peace at the heart](#) and from the [Scotland International Development Alliance](#) of which Quakers in Scotland are members.

Human rights and peace protections

We want the Scottish government to:

- **Introduce the Scottish Human Rights Bill** which was promised and then paused. It covers the right to a healthy environment, protection from discrimination and protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

- **Use advocacy opportunities** to call for an end to devastating conflicts and nuclear weapons (e.g., Trident). Also, to highlight the security needs of all people and ensure accountability for violations of international law.

4) Compassionate justice and Scotland's prisons crisis

Why this matters

Scotland has one of the highest imprisonment rates in Western Europe. Imprisonment is extremely expensive yet often ineffective at reducing reoffending. Many people in prison could be better supported in community-based programmes that reduce harm, build accountability and lower future costs.

Evidence shows that community-based alternatives reduce reoffending more effectively than short prison sentences. Quakers have long supported restorative justice because it seeks to repair harm, rebuild relationships and create safer communities.

Our asks for the next parliament

- **Halt new large-scale prison construction**, including reassessment of developments like HMP Glasgow which is expected to cost £1 billion.
- **Create small therapeutic units** (based on the Barlinnie Special Unit model) as humane alternatives to solitary confinement for managing violent or disruptive prisoners.
- **Reinvest in community-based justice**, strengthening Community Justice Scotland and Criminal Justice Social Work.
- **Expand restorative and community alternatives** proven to reduce reoffending. Increase the annual

budget for community alternatives to prison substantially beyond the current £148 million allocated.

- Establish **Citizens' Assemblies on criminal justice reform**, creating space for informed public dialogue.

Scottish elections 2026: Manifesto priorities

This guide forms part of the Scottish election resources produced by Quakers in Scotland for the 2026 Scottish election. Visit the document section of quakerscotland.org/election to see all the materials available.

For further information about the Quakers in Scotland manifesto priorities for the 2026 Scottish election contact: scottishpolitics@quaker.org.uk

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