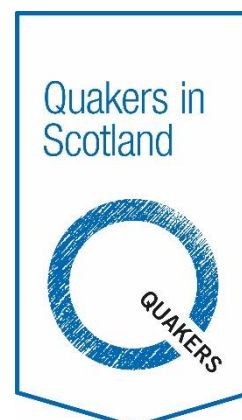


Response from Parliament Engagement Working Group of Quakers in Scotland to Labour’s Scottish Policy Forum consultation



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Introduction to Quakers in Scotland

Quakers are a faith community dedicated to advancing social and environmental justice, guided by our core values of peace, equality, truth, and simplicity and sustainability. Quakers in Scotland promote these values across Scotland through practical action and advocacy. We are responding on behalf of the Quaker Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG), but draw your attention to the separate submission of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group. As PEWG, our current focus areas are:

1. **Fossil fuel phase out:** We support the phase-out of fossil fuels and advocate for redirecting funding towards fair and sustainable solutions to the climate and cost-of-living crises, specifically promoting renewable energy and home insulation as practical alternatives.
2. **Truthfulness:** We emphasise the importance of truth-telling in relation to the climate crisis, particularly in critically examining the feasibility and likelihood of emerging technologies such as hydrogen and carbon capture and storage, while prioritising current, proven technological solutions.
3. **Climate justice:** We stress the critical need to place justice and equality at the forefront of climate action, specifically by establishing mechanisms that require polluters to fund a loss and damage fund, ensuring those most responsible bear the financial burden of climate impacts.
4. **Ethical public investment:** We call for integrity and consistency in public funding, specifically challenging Scottish Enterprise to end investments in companies profiting from arms components used in conflict zones like Saudi Arabia and Israel/Palestine.
5. **Peacebuilding through education:** We recognise the transformative potential of peace education, aiming to equip children and young people with the skills to become peacemakers who can effectively transform conflict and peacebuilders capable of non-violently confronting systemic injustices.

To summarise our outlook, Quaker advocacy priorities are:

- working to reduce conflict within our communities at home
- peace-building in conflict overseas
- taking urgent, significant action to cut carbon emissions
- upholding human rights and justice within an open and fair society
- a commitment from public representatives to act with truth and integrity

Below, we have referenced headings in the Policy Forum consultation document and submitted further details of our responses to questions which are relevant to our interests.

We would be pleased to engage further with Scottish Labour in the coming months to expand on any points of interest to you and to develop our common interests further.

May 2026 Election Context

Open and truthful dialogue with the electorate is vital to rebuilding trust in politics. We face significant challenges – climate crisis, armed conflict, rising poverty, wealth inequality, and public financial constraints driven by tax avoidance and higher borrowing costs. Despite this, decisive action can bring immense benefits. Politicians must honestly acknowledge these realities, admit there are no easy answers, and explain policy choices and their necessary compromises. Such transparency can lay the groundwork for an optimistic and credible vision, inspiring confidence and hope in a future built on integrity and shared purpose.

Commission 1: Becoming an economic powerhouse to improve lives

Skills

1. How can we plan for a Just Transition by delivering improved re-training options for those affected by decarbonisation of the economy? / 2. How can we boost on-the-job training by incentivising employers to invest in workforce development?

Our answer to these questions is more fully developed under the next section.

- We would **consider a major priority to be the training and retraining Scottish workers to support the refurbishment of Scottish buildings to make them energy-efficient, as well as to install and maintain heat pumps or alternative renewable/electric heating.**
- The proposed **Heat in Buildings Bill** represents a pivotal policy framework for systematic skills renewal. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has given evidence to the Net Zero Energy and Transport Committee about the importance of the Heat in Buildings Bill (e.g. [Meeting of the Parliament: NZET/23/04/2024 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)). Successful implementation requires a comprehensive approach to workforce training that simultaneously supports existing workers and creates meaningful entry pathways for young professionals. By strategically aligning skills development with critical infrastructure needs – such as building energy retrofitting and heat pump installation – Scotland can simultaneously address climate goals, economic resilience, and employment opportunities.
- **Qualifications need to be transferable** between the industries that must decline (i.e. fossil fuels) and those that must be developed. This has long been recognised but policymaking and implementation have been much too slow.
- To catch young people joining the workforce, we must ensure that training colleges have, or are developing, accredited courses for the new skills and technology required. There is a time lag for courses to get onto the curriculum.

Net Zero and Just Transition

Context and public awareness: the need to make significant cuts in our carbon emissions grows stronger every day. The new government in 2026 will inherit a position where we know we are failing to meet the planned 2045 pathway to net zero. Difficult decisions lie ahead – like the need to change our home heating systems, and work out how to transport offshore wind energy to England. None of us relish these changes but they must be confronted.

We are already on an uncomfortable ride. Climate change is destroying people's lives and livelihoods in every continent. The British Isles is no exception. Each unit of carbon we emit leads to the destruction of another family's livelihood, and maybe life, through floods, fires, and loss of land. The impacts are accelerating, and we may be approaching a dangerous tipping point. While 2045 seems distant, the pace of carbon emission cuts is as important to focus upon as the end date. The "1.5 degrees C" Paris target is all but lost. The battle is to stay below "2 degrees C" increase. IPCC scientists' warnings are consistent and clear.

Although public awareness of the climate emergency is growing, understanding of its immediacy and severity remains low, exacerbated by widespread misinformation. Clear communication about the necessary steps, options, and timelines is essential to secure public support for the radical action that is needed.

A powerful example of accessible climate information is The Parliamentarians' Guide to Climate Change (<https://greenfutures.exeter.ac.uk/parliamentarians-guide-to-climate-change/>), produced by Members of the House of Lords ("Peers for the Planet") and Exeter University. Sent to MPs following the July 2024 election, this guide offers clear and sobering insights. It should be shared widely with politicians and the public across Scotland and the UK to foster informed, urgent action.

Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage: The UK as a whole, and Scotland specifically, places too much reliance on unproven and expensive CC(U)S, and we advocate for truth-telling from politicians about the realistic prospects of using it going forward.

We need to urgently and significantly reduce our carbon emissions, as even the most optimistic estimates show very limited benefits can be expected from CCS, while reliance on unproven technologies to store carbon passes yet more unquantifiable risks onto future generations.

Despite no gas-CCS system ever having been constructed at a commercial scale, 90% capture is nevertheless being promised for the proposed new power station at Peterhead. IEEFA's [research](#) shows that capture rates of existing schemes have been much lower and [no CCUS project in the world has managed a capture rate of more than 80 percent](#), with many capturing much less. In addition, research from Imperial College found that capture rates were [overstated by as much as 30 percent](#). Over-optimistic reliance on CCS cannot exempt us from the need to decarbonise difficult sectors – transport, and in particular, agriculture.

Since the publication of the CCC's Sixth Carbon Budget for the UK, other international climate and energy bodies have downgraded expectations for the role of CCS in zero emission scenarios and voiced scepticism about its potential to deliver climate targets. This includes the IEA in September 2023 which downgraded expectations for CCS by 39% to 2030 and 21% for 2050 in its [Net Zero Roadmap](#) Net Zero Emissions (NZE) scenario, noting that "*the history of CCUS has largely been one of underperformance*", [concluding](#) that "*Removing carbon from the atmosphere is costly and uncertain*". The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ranked CCUS as among the [least effective and most expensive](#) ways to meet 2030 climate targets.

2. How can Scotland take advantage of renewables supply chain opportunities and ensure onshoring of jobs?

Scottish Enterprise currently provides funding to several different priorities or 'missions'. **We believe that all funding given by Scottish Enterprise should be contingent on stimulating a sustainable economy, strongly prioritising projects and new processes that cut our carbon emissions.** This will free up funds to invest in renewable supply chain opportunities.

Our engagement with Scottish Enterprise revealed that their current assessment focuses on 'operational' criteria. SE acknowledged that this means a company developing products essential for our transition but without fully meeting the 'operational' emissions requirements, would fail to meet the criteria; whereas a company making polluting items but doing so in an operationally 'green' way could 'pass' the current 'operational' assessment. This is not adequate for the climate emergency we are in. **We would like to see implementation of public funding criteria that fully assess the carbon impact of any new project, including Scope 3 emissions.** This approach would ensure that public funding catalyses meaningful structural changes.

7. What changes need to take place to enable the retrofit of homes to be undertaken at the pace required, ensuring those on lower incomes are not left behind?

The proposed Heat in Buildings Bill represents a critical policy instrument for Scotland's decarbonisation strategy. Despite promising initial consultations, the legislative process requires urgent acceleration. The CCC in its 2023 Report to Parliament directly praised the proposals for the Heat in Buildings Bill, saying:

There are some early signs of good progress, including bold proposals in the Heat in Buildings consultation that, once agreed, must be delivered promptly and effectively to ensure Scotland can get as close as possible to meeting its targets.¹

Unfortunately since this report was made in March 2024, the Heat in Buildings Bill has not been subject to further parliamentary scrutiny or brought forward as draft legislation. This needs to happen urgently.

Beyond legislative momentum, successful implementation demands an equity-centred approach to funding, as well as pro-active communication. As put forward in our consultation response to the Bill, **we recommend a progressive financing model where financial contributions are tied to household economic capacity**, ensuring that retrofit costs do not disproportionately burden low-income communities. Concurrent public communication strategies should make clear to the public the many benefits of housing stock improvement - emphasising not only environmental impacts but also immediate economic advantages like reduced energy costs and enhanced living standards. **Public scepticism needs to be overcome through a courageous, open information campaign**, without which there is no sense of urgency or commitment coming through from government.

Commission 2: A Modern NHS and Social Care System That Puts People at the Centre

Prevention + Mental Health

1. What would a greater focus on prevention look like and require to make it a reality? + 1. How can we improve the mental health of the population?

It is essential not to view health, and mental health, as isolated policy areas. Particularly in relation to the climate crisis, there are a number of areas where implementing policy which is good for the planet, is also good for each of us as individuals. Health should be viewed through a climate lens, which will then have future benefits for the population. For example, at a [parliamentary event](#) that Quakers in Scotland hosted in conjunction with Medact in March 2024, we heard from a number of speakers that:

- Air pollution from burning fossil fuels is a major environmental threat to health, with children and the economically disadvantaged being particularly at risk.²
- Transport and heating for buildings account for over half greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland - accompanying emissions of pro-inflammatory oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, and fine particulate matter, damage lungs and other organs. Tackling cold,

¹ [Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland - 2023 Report to Parliament](#), p10

² British Medical Journal: [Phasing out fossil fuels would save millions of lives worldwide](#). Lehtomaki H, Rao S, Hanninen O. (2023)

damp and poorly insulated homes and reducing urban air pollution from petrol and diesel fuelled transport will benefit health as well as mitigating climate heating.³

- Making it easier for people to choose active travel options reduces reliance on cars and improves health outcomes.⁴
- Mental health effects of climate change are varied, but in some cases very extreme (suicidal ideation). This affects people of all ages.⁵ Community-based action and initiatives can really help, getting constituents involved in projects as a way to build community resilience.⁶

These evidence-backed policy initiatives require long-term thinking but the benefits for Scottish people, and ultimate cost-savings to the NHS, are evident.

Commission 3: From Cradle to Career: Giving Young People the Best Start in Life

Education: the school curriculum

9. What do schools need to deliver high and rising standards? 10. What is the role of national government in supporting delivery of the curriculum?

Quakers are concerned about the healthy development of children and young people. We believe in the potential of education to invest in the promise of each child to flourish, and to support the common hopes of young people to shape a more just, more inclusive world. Central to this vision is our deep commitment to peace education, with its emphasis on peer mediation, empathy, equality and non-violent resolution of differences, as a foundation for academic excellence and social wellbeing.

Scotland's commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4.7, provides a critical framework for ensuring all learners develop the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for peace and non-violence. In the context of current global conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere, as well as the challenges of conflict, violence and discrimination that children face in their own lives, peace education has become an urgent educational imperative. The recent update to UNESCO's *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* also provides guidance on an international standard in this area.

As well as considering global events (which is considered further below under [2. What can be done to boost awareness amongst young people about international development?](#)), peace education delivers meaningful impacts within schools themselves, addressing fundamental challenges like classroom disaffection and playground bullying while fostering stronger

³ [Sustainable health equity: achieving a net-zero UK. Report of UK Health Expert Advisory Group for the UK Committee on Climate Change](#) (2020)

⁴ [Impacts of active travel interventions on travel behaviour and health: Results from a five-year longitudinal travel survey in Outer London](#). Aldred R, Goodman A, Woodcock J (2024)

⁵ [How eco-anxiety influences climate activism and everyday life in Britain](#) Bradley, B., Hirose, R., Fitchett, H., Ranuzzi, E. & MacKenzie, G. (2021)

⁶ British Medical Journal: [Balancing climate anxiety with hope: learning from collective climate activism](#). Powell, R.A., and Rao, M. (2023)

relationships between students, staff, and their wider community. By creating safer, more supportive learning environments, peace education directly contributes to higher academic standards and student achievement. Teacher wellbeing also hinges on positive relationship and a culture of peace in their place of work – and so investing in peace education reaps dividends in terms of teacher satisfaction and retention.

The versatility of peace education allows it to enhance learning across multiple curricular areas, from personal and social education to RME and Modern Studies. Its principles support academic achievement by ensuring students feel secure and valued in their learning environment. While Scotland has examples of excellent peace education practice, current funding and training provisions are insufficient to extend these benefits to all children – it can be a ‘postcode lottery’ as to whether a specific school will benefit from these practices.

Scottish policymakers can embed schools’ cultures of peace and nonviolence in the following ways:

1. **Mandate:** the Scottish Government explicitly recognises a duty to educate for peace, aligning with international commitments and establishing clear curricular guidance.
2. **Teacher training:** training institutions in Scotland are supported to embed peace education as a dedicated study stream for the initial training and continuous professional development of school and college teachers.
3. **Funding:** a fund is established for work to enhance peace education and to support Scotland’s wealth of civil society organisations to sustain support for peacebuilding skills in schools, with resources, training and expertise.
4. **Research:** resources should be allocated for independent research and evaluation of peaceful relationship initiatives in Scottish schools, with particular attention to restorative practices and their impact on educational outcomes.
5. **External input:** the Scottish Government strengthens guidance on screening of the involvement of external agencies, such as the armed forces and weapons companies, to ensure adherence to principles of critical thinking, ethical engagement and to safeguard students’ best interests.

The Scottish Peace Institute, which is about to be piloted in the guise of a ‘Scottish Peace Platform’, could well have a part to play in delivering some of these goals.

Disengagement With School

2. How do we address the issues that lead to disruptive behaviour and violence in schools? What support do families need to do this? And how do we support staff in schools?

Scotland can be proud of its achievements in reducing school exclusions, recognising the significant inequities and harms they exacerbate. Research, including [Peace at the Heart](#) highlights how exclusions amplify social disadvantage in various ways. Notably, London’s Labour Mayor is now looking to Scotland’s Violence Reduction Unit for inspiration, working with Glasgow’s former Director of Education under whose leadership exclusions dropped significantly, focusing instead on fostering young people’s sense of belonging.

To sustain this progress, the Scottish Government must maintain a public health approach to behaviour and relationships in schools. Wraparound support for young people, provided by schools and external services, is essential. However, teachers we work with express growing

concern that funding cuts are undermining this approach. Surveys of EIS members and feedback from our conflict resolution training indicate widespread experiences of violence in schools, with staff identifying structural issues as the root of the problem.

From the peace education perspective, we are encouraged by the success of peer mediation programmes such as Scottish Mediation's Young Talk, which some local authorities are supporting in all schools. These initiatives empower young people to resolve conflicts constructively. Similarly, restorative practices are thriving in many schools, focusing on relationships and dialogue. These approaches help young people develop self-regulation, accountability, and positive responses to conflict, fostering a healthier school environment for all.

6. Are there examples of initiatives that can improve attendance?

Scotland has demonstrated significant progress in implementing relational approaches to education, particularly through peace-centred learning methodologies. However, current access to transformative programs like peer mediation remains inconsistent across communities, creating inequitable educational outcomes that require systematic policy intervention.

Scotland's success in nearly eliminating permanent exclusions represents a critical achievement in educational equity. This progress must be protected and extended through sustained investment in preventive strategies, particularly given the documented harmful consequences of exclusions on vulnerable students and communities.

Research conclusively demonstrates that successful pupil engagement strategies centre on building constructive relationships and conflict resolution skills. When schools implement comprehensive peace education approaches, they create environments where students develop essential emotional awareness, self-regulation capabilities, and social skills. These competencies directly address the root causes of disruptive behaviour while fostering positive attendance patterns and academic engagement.

Following the pandemic, and the proliferation in use of social media, children need more support to scaffold social interaction. They need to practice and develop skills such as perspective taking, reflection, affirmation and empathy. Well-facilitated, regular, circle time can be an effective way to support this (for examples, see [Carr Manor Community School's](#) use of time spent in coaching groups to 'check-in', 'check-up', and 'check out').

At secondary level schools must continue to offer young people safe but exciting projects as channels for their energy and creativity, and to support the development of healthy peer relationships such that an experience of genuine friendship becomes a reference point against which to recognise toxic contexts for what they are.

The government needs to support schools to embed a mindset of restorative rather than retributive justice, and resource schools to develop a trauma informed approach. *"Seeking to teach positive behaviour while using coercive tools can be counter productive. 'We cannot teach one thing and act another.'" Janet Gilbraith, Quaker Faith & Practice (1986)*

Peer mediation programs offer compelling evidence of effective intervention, consistently achieving approximately 90% agreement rates and high satisfaction among students,

teachers, and parents alike.⁷ This Educational Institute for Scotland's endorsement of Education for Peace⁸ underscores the professional recognition that these approaches benefit the entire educational community – supporting teachers, engaging students, and strengthening wider community connections.

For school staff, implementing these approaches demands systematic professional development and ongoing support. Teachers require comprehensive training in circle-based learning methodologies, restorative practices, and conflict resolution strategies. This professional development must be coupled with adequate resources, mentoring support, and dedicated time for implementation.

Research shows⁹ that pupils who do engage in aggressive behaviour often lack constructive conflict resolution skills, typically responding to challenges through withdrawal or force. Well-designed peer mediation programs address these limitations by teaching alternative strategies that promote constructive communication and create safer school environments. The documented success of these programs in improving school climate, reducing student conflicts, and decreasing disciplinary referrals provides compelling evidence for their systematic implementation.

We therefore recommend taking action to establish sustainable funding mechanisms that ensure universal access to peer mediation and peace education programs across all Scottish schools. This investment must include comprehensive teacher training initiatives, coordinated family support networks, and systematic program evaluation frameworks to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

Through strategic implementation of these evidence-based approaches, Scotland can build on its success in reducing exclusions while creating truly inclusive, engaging learning environments that serve all students effectively. Funding this strategy is an investment which would produce immediate behavioural gains, as well as improving teacher satisfaction and retention, and reducing costly school exclusions and likely reduces future costs connected with anti-social behaviour. This comprehensive strategy represents a cost-effective, equitable approach to addressing behavioural challenges while promoting educational excellence across Scottish schools.

Youth Work / Anti-Social Behaviour

We refer to the response of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group on this topic. The Policy Forum document rightly emphasises addressing disruptive and violent behaviour in schools and communities. Expanding training and funding for restorative justice techniques, alongside revisiting initiatives like Sure Start, can equip schools and families to foster self-awareness, responsibility, and societal impact in children, reducing the likelihood of violence and supporting them to thrive as valued citizens.

⁷ [What does research say?](#) – Scottish Mediation

⁸ [Education for Peace | EIS](#)

⁹ [What does research say?](#) – Scottish Mediation

Commission 4: More equal and safer communities so we can all thrive

Social Justice

For a more in-depth response we commend the response of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group on this topic. They make the following key point: “The community” is where the struggle to reduce crime and to reduce reoffending must begin. The most vivid illustration of this came in 2005 from research undertaken by former prison governor Roger Houchin, then working in SPS HQ, which showed using the home addresses of all the people in Scottish Prisons on one day, that they came predominantly from the poorest areas in the country¹⁰. SPS periodically updates this research data; so far it has not led to any of the “justice reinvestment” strategies which, at the very least, it suggests could be useful. Could this be part of your strategy?”

Community Policing

We again commend the response of the Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group on this topic. They make the following key point: “More police on the streets are not necessarily a certain means of ensuring safer communities or making people feel safer. It may well be sensible to partner police officers with other support workers in dealing with some kinds of anti-social behaviour, particularly if it is attributable to mental illness. There is more to creating safe and just communities than simply making improvements to policing or tightening up responses to anti-social behaviour.”

Sentencing and reducing reoffending

We again commend the response of the Scottish Community Justice Working Group on this topic, and would like to highlight the following: “We welcome the Labour Party’s commitment to a “cross-government approach to prevent offending and to tackle the multi-generational, deep-rooted issues that many offenders have.” Labour is quite right that “a disproportionate number of offenders are from our most deprived communities, have been in and out of care and many have suffered abuse.”

The present SNP Government’s social work and penal policies have reflected these same insights and have sought in them to strike a fair and reasonable balance between custodial and non-custodial responses. We ask the Labour Party to reflect realistically on the institutional, financial and social obstacles which have contributed to failures to deliver on current government policies, such as in its *Vision for Justice* and offer realistic policy suggestions recognising and where possible seeking to address these obstacles. It is not an easy transition to move from a punitive society to one taking a more rehabilitative approach and this has both to be recognised and tackled. The current overimprisonment and stigma attached to imprisonment is damaging for those imprisoned, their families and society.

¹⁰ [Social Exclusion and Imprisonment in Scotland](#) – A Report by Roger Houchin, Glasgow Caledonian University

Nature, physical & marine environment

3. How can those who have worked the land and sea for generations be part of tackling the nature emergency whilst also ensuring that their cultures and traditions are respected and their livelihoods promoted?

Those whose livelihoods are perceived to be at risk from the changes needed to tackle the nature emergency need to be involved in the process of changing regulations, and carefully listened to. Consideration should be given to what support and training (and funding) will be required, and space given for mutual support and learning where some individuals are pioneering new nature-friendly ways of working the land or sea. Sustainable farming has short- and long- term benefits for the farmer, as well as helping Scotland to make its nature and climate targets.¹¹ There is currently a policy vacuum on the decarbonisation of agriculture. Training of a new generation of farmers, inspired to work with nature, is needed to help us turn this difficult corner and to release farming from the harmful patterns that constrain it at present. Agricultural subsidies should be made contingent on steps to help fight the climate and nature crises.

Land ownership and land use are fundamental in shaping our relationships with each other and with the natural world. As Quakers we believe that human fulfilment and right relationships are fundamentally embedded in land justice. We believe that *"We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. [... We should] work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life."* (Quaker Advices & Queries, 42).

Robust further land reform is necessary.

Scotland's land ownership continues to be highly concentrated and opaque in a way which is not conducive to human or nature flourishing. While this remains the case, Scotland will struggle to address certain inequalities within Scottish society as well as the climate and ecological emergencies which we currently face. We need to look at this from our children's and grandchildren's perspective: how can we shape a country and planet that they can thrive in?

The path forward requires

- **giving local communities a true voice**
- **freeing up land from private ownership**
- **ensuring land uses uphold the common wealth of all people and reverence for the natural world.**

We support mandatory measures to increase transparency and accountability in landownership, such as compulsory land management plans and encouragement of Memorandums of Understanding with local communities, as exemplified by estates such as Tayvallich Estate in Argyll. Any such land management plans should be part of wider landscape-scale management plans, to ensure joined-up thinking across wider regions of land. However, we believe these requirements should apply to any landowner receiving public subsidies, not just to large holdings.

If we mandate this community engagement and consultation, it is important to provide training and support to landowners and communities to enable all parties to listen well. The

¹¹ [Growing movement of farmers prove that productivity and wildlife go hand in hand](#) - RSPB

Quaker peace testimony leads us to resolve differences through open communication and finding mutually satisfactory solutions. As Quakers we have a long history of consensus-based participatory decision making: we are experienced in listening deeply; holding differences of opinion; moving forward even when there is difference; and in having meaningful dialogue and actual consultation.

Land reform matters because it helps to re-embed people into their communities of place, centring us as a nation. As such, land reform is about more than access to building plots, renewable energy, space for entrepreneurial activity, etc. It is about what it means to become a society in which the potential of its people(s) is more fully realised. For this reason, it is important to encourage these community engagement measures to connect communities with their land.

5. What more needs to be done to protect communities from the impact of climate change and what can we learn from how current infrastructure has coped with recent storms and flooding?

We believe that there are two main considerations in answer to this question: the need for people to understand the growing impact of the climate crisis; and the need for land reform to ensure that landowners prioritise biodiversity and climate solutions.

Importance of truth-telling

In the recent general election, Greenpeace carried out a poll of 10,000 people in places where the Conservatives lost seats, and almost half said the party was wrong to weaken its commitments on climate change and the environment. Greenpeace also says over a million people accessed their ranking of the party manifestos, indicating that the climate intentions of the parties were very relevant to people's voting.

There is significant public concern about the climate crisis, but perhaps less awareness of the impact of adaptation measures on Scottish citizens – and the cost of alternatives if money isn't spent on adaptation. This was reflected in the November 2023 report by the CCC ([Adapting to climate change - Progress in Scotland - Climate Change Committee](#)) which concluded that while there had been “several notable steps forward” on adaptation, “important gaps remain”.

It continued: “Overall progress on adapting to climate change in Scotland remains slow, particularly on delivery and implementation.”

- **There are benefits to adaptation:** in the words of Anna Beswick, a policy fellow at LSE's Grantham Institute:

“There's also very strong evidence that there is a high economic benefit and return for investment in climate resilience. We know, for example, that for every £1 invested in action to increase resilience to climate change, you can expect to see between £2 and £10 net economic benefit – for things like introducing effective early warning systems and reducing flood risk.”¹²

¹² Quoted in ['Many people believe the question we face is when not if another big flood is coming'](#) – Holyrood Magazine

- **Positive, committed communication needs to come now from government** both about the costs and the benefits of adaptation, otherwise scepticism will become dangerously embedded.
- **Adaptation measures now mean less loss and damage caused later.** We've seen an increase in the frequency and severity of storms, floods, and high winds in Scotland and around the world in the last few years. Politicians and public figures need to be honest with people about the worsening weather being caused by climate damage due to past and present carbon emissions, and be honest about what it will take to adapt over the coming years as the weather becomes more extreme.

Land management plans where landowners are subsidised

To properly steward Scotland's land in a way that helps address climate change and biodiversity loss, changes in land management practices need to occur at all scales of landownership. Obligations need to be put on landowners to ensure their own land contributes to adaptation efforts.

We recommend that any landowner receiving public subsidy or tax relief related to their land should be required to produce a land management plan and legally comply with an updated Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement. The Statement itself needs revising to put greater emphasis on protecting Scotland's natural resources as sacred and finite, with landowners having responsibilities to repair, support and enable healthy ecosystems that sustain all life. This would help us to get to net zero and to tackle the biodiversity crisis.

International development

1. What values and objectives should drive our international development strategy?

Quakers in Scotland believe that an international development strategy should be rooted in peace, equality, sustainability, and integrity. The strategy should prioritise human dignity and ecological responsibility, reflecting the inherent worth of each community and their right to self-determination. The approach should be

- to address the root causes of global inequalities
- to recognise the interconnectedness of global challenges (particularly climate change and economic justice)
- to promote peaceful, collaborative approaches to international development, recognising local knowledge and expertise as fundamental to effective interventions.

To date, we believe that Scotland's international development strategy has been particularly effective in relation to loss and damage funding for projects in nations which have been unjustly affected by the climate crisis provoked by the Global North's use of fossil fuels. Although Scotland has contributed £10million to date to the fund (a small amount in the scale of funding needed), Scotland has been a leading advocate of the concept, and became the first country to explicitly pledge funding to address loss and damage. This funding has now all been allocated to various projects, including successful pilots run by Christian Aid, Oxfam, SCIAF, and Tearfund (see [Scottish Loss and Damage Humanitarian Projects – Early Learning](#), and a more in-depth briefing paper [Communities In Charge: Lessons for the Global Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage from a locally-led project in Kenya - Oxfam Policy & Practice](#)).

It is important that this work continues in the next Parliament, and Scotland maintains its international reputation on the issue of loss and damage by allocating more ring-fenced funding to the issue, retaining and growing the Climate Justice Fund, together with continuing to use Scotland's 'soft power' influence with UK and international counterparts.

2. What can be done to boost awareness amongst young people about international development?

Quakers' work on peace education¹³ promotes peace at all levels, from the individual and local to the social and global – at this scale it is known as 'Global Citizenship Education' (GCE). For example, Quakers in Britain have facilitated connections between secondary school classrooms and peacebuilders in the Middle East and East Africa.

Together with other members of the Scottish International Development Alliance, we are calling for improved availability of resources and teacher training on peace education. Peace education is an approach to learning and growth which, by cultivating healthier ways of relating to one another and to society, aims to enhance wellbeing, promote inclusion, and encourage conscientious engagement in the social challenges of our times.

Scotland has vibrant civil society support for GCE, including via the Development Education Centres (DECs) which provide expert resources, training and advice to schools. This helps teachers build confidence to engage with global themes, integrating the latest best practice, for example challenging racism and decolonising development narratives. However, the sector faces funding pressures following the loss of UK and EU support. It is important that funding for the DECs is maintained and increased in the next Scottish Parliament.

New technology can enhance global connections, but it is important to ensure equitable collaboration rather than perpetuating colonial dynamics. Initiatives like STEKA Skills' Critical Dialogue Model in Scotland and Malawi offer valuable examples of good practice.

The "[Rebooting Education Report 2023](#)", revealed that *"a very large percentage of teachers believe that the current curriculum taught in our schools is inadequate to meet the needs of future generations. Overwhelming numbers of teachers are convinced that the good health of our precious planet Earth, sustainability of our ecosphere and wellbeing of people should be at the heart of learning."* Yet fewer than one-third of teachers reported including peace and nonviolence in their lessons over the past year, highlighting a need for prioritisation and funding for professional development in peace and GCE.

Peace education aligns with Scotland's *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* framework and the Curriculum for Excellence, helping students become responsible citizens and effective contributors to society. It also supports the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now part of Scots law, to prepare children for responsible life in a free society.

In the words of Hannah Arendt, education is 'the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it'. Schools must go beyond teaching students to adapt to society, equipping them instead to discern what is at stake in their world and act in good conscience. To achieve this, Scotland must invest in DECs, develop updated teaching materials that centre global and local voices, and ensure easy access to high-quality resources like the Educational Institute of Scotland's [Education for Peace](#) materials.

¹³ See our report: [Peace at the heart: A relational approach to education in British schools](#)

3. Should the Scottish Government's international development funding be restricted to non-profit organisations?

Yes. Scotland is host to several non-profit organisations which have an excellent history of delivering on international development projects. It makes sense to continue to invest in these organisations and use their skills, rather than turning to businesses motivated by profit.

Inspired by the funding approach taken by Christian Aid and other charities working in the sector (e.g. see [Shifting Power in Aid](#)), we believe that funding should prioritise local and national organisations and implement flexible funding with grants going directly to local partners in community-led organisations, and not being tied to specific project deliverables.

4. How can we maximise the value of our international development strategy, and what can be done to improve the transparency and accountability of funding?

As with all parts of the budget available to the Scottish Government, the international development strategy should be aligned with our net zero climate goals. This means both providing funding for loss and damage programmes, and also knowledge-sharing about our innovations and practices in clean energy production.

The projects highlighted above show the benefits of direct grant funding, which is not tied to specific project deliverables but is flexible to suit local needs. To measure the effectiveness and ensure transparency and accountability, there should be regular partner feedback processes with authentic storytelling, and clear metrics for the locally led programming.

Further information

Please contact Sarah Komashko, the Parliamentary Engagement Officer (Scotland) for Quakers in Britain, if you would like further information on anything outlined in this paper or if you would like to discuss it. Her email address is: sarahk@quaker.org.uk.