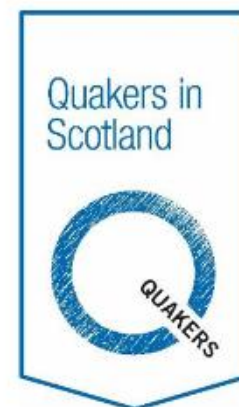


# Quakers in Scotland - Manifesto

## Priorities 2026



### Introduction to Quakers in Scotland

Quakers are a faith community with its roots in Christianity. For centuries we have undertaken internationally recognised work on reconciliation and peace, and on aspects of social justice such as penal reform. We continually adapt our work to a changing world but remain 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. Scottish Quakers' political advocacy is fronted by our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG), but we also have a dedicated Scottish Quaker Community Justice Working Group who focus on concern for penal reform.

### Election Context:

Reconciliation and peace within and between groups rests on truthfulness and openness. Quakers share parliamentarians' concerns about increased polarisation and lack of shared purpose and hopes, within our society and within politics. Democracy has been weakened by a loss of trust and connection between the electorate and the elected. This can and should be addressed with urgency. Decisive action could bring immense benefits.

Politicians must admit there are no easy answers to the challenges our society is dealing with, and explain policy choices and their necessary compromises – all things that the [Participation Climate Change Programme 2023-2024](#) identified as important. Such transparency could lay the groundwork for an optimistic and credible vision, restoring confidence and hope in a more equitable and safer future.

Our desire for greater truthfulness, integrity, and cohesion is the foundation of all our manifesto hopes as summarised below. We have set out our key policy asks and then provide some further background information in the following pages.

### Key policy asks

#### **Climate: mitigation, adaptation, climate justice**

- The provisions of the Heat in Buildings Bill, even in its new weaker form, should be used to expedite urgent changes to heating systems, to reduce costly inefficiency and high carbon emissions and to give a clear signal to industry.
- Scotland should sign up to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- A comprehensive public campaign should explain directly to the Scottish public how:
  - mitigation steps will reduce our emissions to slow climate breakdown; and
  - adaptation will help us cope with the climate breakdown already underway

This campaign must be honest about the limitations of unproven technologies such as Carbon Capture Use and Storage (CCUS).

- We should establish fundraising mechanisms such as windfall taxes and air departure tax such that over-consumption and high-carbon pollution bears a fair financial responsibility for the climate loss and damage caused.
- Scotland should continue funding the Climate Justice fund and retain a Loss and Damage Element to the Humanitarian Emergency Fund, more essential than ever in the face of cuts being made to international aid.
- A strong Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill should be introduced.

#### **Ethical public investment and human rights**

- The human rights filters used by Scottish Enterprise should be strengthened, as was agreed on a cross party basis at a Parliamentary debate on 5 March 2025.
- Criteria should be implemented which fully assess the carbon impact of any project receiving public funding, including Scope 3 emissions.

#### **Educating for peace and children's wellbeing**

- Scotland should incorporate peace education (including skills such as peer mediation, reconciliation training) into the curriculum as a cornerstone of learning for sustainability.
- Scotland's Development Education Centres should receive increased funding to equip and enable our schools to be leaders in global citizenship education.

#### **Justice and prison policy**

- The Scottish Government should critically review the costly construction of new large-scale prisons (such as HMP Glasgow at £1 billion), redirecting resources toward community-based justice initiatives that demonstrate better outcomes at lower costs.
- Positive work in the community is essential to transform society: a reinforced infrastructure of revitalised Community Justice Scotland and Criminal Justice Social Work services should focus on real change. The annual budget for community alternatives to prison should be substantially increased beyond the current £148 million allocation, recognising the evidence showing community supervision achieves a 29% reconviction rate compared to 52% for short custodial sentences.
- Small therapeutic communities within the prison system, modelled on the Barlinnie Special Unit approach, should be reintroduced as a more effective and humane alternative to solitary confinement for managing violent or disruptive prisoners.
- Citizens' Assemblies focused on criminal justice reform should be established to foster informed public dialogue on alternatives to imprisonment and the public health approach to violence reduction, particularly regarding violence against women and girls.

## Climate: mitigation, adaptation; climate justice

The incoming government 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 in the face of consistent and clear warnings from climate scientists.

At the same time, there are opportunities: jobs in new technologies; manufacturing opportunities; improved health outcomes from climate-friendly pollution reduction and active travel policies. There is a [high economic benefit and return for investment in climate resilience](#). Professor Lord Stern's comments in [A Parliamentarian's Guide to Climate Change](#) point out that the loss and damage resulting from inaction would be far greater than the investments required to make the transition to a sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy. **Both the consequences of inaction and the benefits of action must be communicated by the Government in order to gain buy-in from the public.**

- **Scotland should retain ambition in the Heat in Buildings Bill**, the original iteration of which was praised by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) as an “*early sign of good progress*” that “*must be delivered promptly and effectively to ensure Scotland can get as close as possible to meeting its targets*”<sup>1</sup>. Successful implementation requires a comprehensive approach to workforce training, supporting existing workers and creating new training entry pathways. 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. Having clear timescales for delivery will allow industry to plan and invest accordingly. It is worrying to see the announcement of the switch to ‘targets’ and away from mandatory requirements: industry needs clear signals, and heat is an essential area for Scotland to decarbonise.
- 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. **Scotland should sign up to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.**
- We emphasise the importance of truth-telling in relation to the climate crisis, particularly in critically examining the feasibility and likelihood of expensive and unproven technologies such as hydrogen and CCUS. Proven, scalable solutions must be prioritised, explained, and implemented.
  - The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ranked CCUS as among the [least effective and most expensive](#) ways to meet 2030 climate targets. IEEFA's research shows that [no CCUS project in the world has managed a capture rate of more than 80 percent](#), with many capturing much less. Over-optimistic reliance on CCS cannot exempt us from the need to decarbonise difficult sectors such as transport and agriculture.

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

- Only green hydrogen (produced through renewable-powered electrolysis) aligns with Scotland's climate objectives. **We must avoid building infrastructure that locks-in extended reliance on brown and blue hydrogen**, storing up emissions for the future.
- There is a critical need to place justice and equality at the forefront of climate action, specifically by **establishing mechanisms that require polluters (countries, companies, and individuals) to bear the costs of the climate loss and damage they have caused**.
- Scotland has established a distinctive position in international climate diplomacy through its Climate Justice Fund and pioneering work on Loss and Damage. This work should continue, including **increasing the Climate Justice fund** (Scotland's fair share for loss and damage is estimated to be around £1.15-2.5 billion<sup>2</sup> per year), and retaining a Loss and Damage Element to the Humanitarian Emergency Fund. The [small-scale projects so far undertaken](#) show the impact that Scotland, in conjunction with local leaders, can have.
- We support a **strong Wellbeing & Sustainable Development Bill** to encourage greater consideration of the impact of policy on future generations, and to support better coordination across government.

### Ethical public investment and human rights

- Public money, including that spent through Scottish Enterprise, should not actively enable governments or groups who are violating international law or human rights. We call for integrity and consistency in public funding, specifically challenging the Government to **improve the human rights filters used by Scottish Enterprise** to end investments in companies profiting from arms components used in conflict zones like Saudi Arabia and Israel/Palestine. This topic has recently been debated in Parliament (26 February 2025) and cross-party support was given to a [motion amendment](#) which called "on Scottish Enterprise to review its human rights due diligence checks to ensure that they take account of where products' end use is".
- 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. **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.

### Educating for peace and children's wellbeing

Scotland has an opportunity to establish itself as a global leader in evidence-based educational approaches that simultaneously address immediate classroom challenges while building long-term societal resilience. Peace education represents a pragmatic, cost-effective investment strategy with measurable returns across multiple policy priorities.

Quakers 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

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<sup>2</sup> SCCS Report: [Financing Climate Justice](#), p20

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.

- As well as considering global events, peace education delivers meaningful impacts within schools themselves, addressing fundamental challenges like classroom disaffection and playground bullying while fostering stronger 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.
- Peer mediation programmes such as [Scottish Mediation's Young Talk](#) empower young people to resolve conflicts constructively. These approaches help young people develop self-regulation, emotional awareness, accountability, and positive responses to conflict. These competencies directly address the root causes of disruptive behaviour while fostering positive attendance patterns and academic engagement.
- The [Educational Institute for Scotland's endorsement of Education for Peace](#) underscores the professional recognition that these approaches benefit the entire educational community – supporting teachers, engaging students, and strengthening wider community connections.
- 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, and is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4.7. **Scotland should incorporate peace education into the curriculum as a cornerstone of learning for sustainability.**
- 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.
- As part of this priority, **Scotland's Development Education Centres should receive increased funding** to equip and enable our schools to be leaders in global citizenship education.

Justice and prison policy

[See separate background information sheet].