

Everyone's Environment Scotland policy reviews

The [Everyone's Environment programme](#) is a collaboration of over 80 social and environmental charities to accelerate action on the social impacts of the environmental crises.

As part of the programme, the [Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland](#) was commissioned to produce policy reviews on access to green and blue spaces, transport, renewables, housing and green jobs in Scotland between September and November 2024.

#1 Access to quality green and blue spaces

Priority groups & cross-policy priorities

Priority groups: These are noted if the policy mentions these groups in a significant way:

1. Young people
2. Minority ethnic communities
3. Disabled people and older people

Cross-policy priorities: These are noted if the policy mentions these aspects in a significant way:

1. Active involvement from priority groups in policy development and implementation
2. A rights-based/ fairness approach to policies
3. Accessible information
4. Greater action at the devolved level

What are the parties proposing?

The proposals from parties other than the Scottish National Party who set government policy have been taken from party manifestos for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election. Party manifestos for the 2026 election are currently being developed.

- Scottish National Party: References provided to current government policies.
- Scottish Labour: [National Recovery Plan](#)¹
- Scottish Greens: [Our Common Future](#)²
- Scottish Liberal Democrats: [Put Recovery First](#)³



Increase green space

Increase green space			
Party	Policy	Priority groups	Cross-policy priorities
Scottish National Party (SNP)	<p>National Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community:</i> Access to Green and Blue Space (the proportion of adults who live within a 5 minute walk of their nearest green or blue space).⁴ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This indicator can be broken down by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and urban/rural location.⁵ • <i>Environment:</i> Visits to the Outdoors (the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week).⁶ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This indicator can be broken down by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, and urban/rural classification.⁷ <p>National Planning Framework 4 ⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 15 on local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods (p.61): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development proposals will contribute to local living including, where relevant, 20 minute neighbourhood which include accessible greenspace. • Policy 20 on blue and green infrastructure (p.70): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Development Plans should encourage use of unused or under-used land as green infrastructure. ○ Development proposals not to exacerbate lack of greenspace access ○ New and new temporary greenspace supported, and these proposals should provide effective management and 	1 2 3	2 3 4



	<p>maintenance plans covering the funding arrangements for their long-term delivery and upkeep, and the party or parties responsible for these.</p> <p>The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning authority duties to produce: Open Space Strategy, a strategic framework of the planning authority’s policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks.¹⁰ <p>The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning authority duty to produce Play Sufficiency Assessments which scope the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in its area with an evidence report. Children must be engaged meaningfully in the production of this report.¹² <p>Funding for more greenspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Scotland Green Network, 40-year programme in central Scotland and takes in 87% of the country’s most deprived areas.¹³ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeted action on places, communities and individuals who experience greatest levels of health disadvantage (p.4).¹⁴ 		
Scottish Labour	<p>Create a National Housing Agency that deals with derelict and vacant land and would ensure the development of well-designed communities with green space as a key consideration.</p> <p>Invest in councils to create urban and rural safe active travel routes, green spaces and food growing places.</p> <p>Support 20-minute neighbourhoods.</p>	-	4
Scottish Greens	<p>Communities Greenspace Fund to support creation of urban rewilding areas.</p>	-	4



	<p>National planning framework to deliver 15-minute neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Bringing abandoned land back into use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform the national register of vacant and derelict land • Increase funding for local authorities to tackle abandoned and vacant land • Long-term derelict land made a top priority for development • Introduce Compulsory Sale Orders as a local authority power 		
Scottish Liberal Democrats	<p>National planning framework to support 20-minute neighbourhoods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure access to green, open spaces, wildlife corridors and woodland is available to every community. • Protect green belts and gaps • Preserve parks and playing fields <p>Local councils to have ownership of common land, infrastructure and play areas on new housing estates, with a thirty-year maintenance dowry.</p> <p>Bringing abandoned land back into use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Compulsory Sale Orders of as a local authority power. 	-	4

Encouraging use of greenspace by supporting community initiatives, outdoor learning, green prescribing, and incorporating programmed spaces

Encouraging use of greenspace by supporting community initiatives, outdoor learning, green prescribing, and incorporating programmed spaces.

Party	Policy	Priority groups	Cross-policy priorities



<p>Scottish National Party (SNP)</p>	<p><u>National Planning Framework 4</u> ¹⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy 21 on play, recreation and sport (p.72): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposals not to result in loss of children’s outdoor play provision, unless demonstrated that there is no ongoing or future demand, or the loss will be compensated. ○ New sport/playing space supported and development should not exacerbate lack of access to this space. <p>Outdoor learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Scotland’s Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030 (Theme 3: Learning Environment and Resources)</u>¹⁶ ○ <u>Scotland’s National Outdoor Play & Learning Position Statement</u> ¹⁷ <p>Green prescribing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Our Natural Health Service</u> (Support the health sector to embrace green health as part of policy and practice. This will see nature-based health programmes used as part of health promotion and improvement, and encourage healthier lifestyle behaviours.)¹⁸ <p><u>Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015</u>¹⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local authority duty to provide allotments.²⁰ 	<p>1</p>	<p>2 4</p>
<p>Scottish Labour</p>	<p>Give every young person a Summer Comeback Pass, provide free access to outdoor activities.</p> <p>Ring-fenced resources for school trips to outdoor activity centres for all young people.</p> <p>Introduce a Right to Play, ensuring that all children have access to spaces to play and be active.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2 4</p>



	<p>Supported by an Active Scotland Plan, enabling councils to reintegrate local services.</p> <p>A redistributive approach to sports funding, every community to have access to at least one open and freely available local space for sport and recreation, which is safe and secure.</p>		
Scottish Greens	<p>Provide free access to sport and physical activity for children and young people.</p> <p>Develop a national strategy to encourage and support older people to participate in sport.</p> <p>Develop the role of housing associations, supporting initiatives like community gardening.</p>	1	2 4
Scottish Liberal Democrats	<p>Appoint an Outdoor Recreation Champion.</p> <p>Guarantee every primary and secondary school pupil has at least one week away at an outdoor centre, as well as taking regular classroom lessons outdoors.</p>	1	2 3

Inclusive planning processes and community ownership of greenspace

Inclusive planning processes and community ownership of greenspace			
Party	Policy	Priority groups	Cross-policy priorities
Scottish National Party (SNP)	<p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, young people must be encouraged to play an active role in planning.²¹</p> <p>Fairer Scotland Duty and duty to conduct Equality Impact Assessments for public body decisions.²²</p> <p>Local Place Plans, legal right for communities to create plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land.²³</p>	1	1 2 4



	<p>Scottish Government currently preparing new guidance on effective community engagement in development planning.²⁴</p> <p><u>Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015</u>²⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Asset transfer to communities</u> ²⁶ ○ <u>Community Rights to Buy</u> ²⁷ ○ <u>Common good property</u>: Local authorities given duties on managing common goods such as parks, and involve the community in decisions about them. ²⁸ 		
Scottish Labour	<p>Publicly led development to put communities first and prioritise public health, green space and energy efficiency.</p> <p>A Commissioner for Older People to reflect their needs in policy and help combat ageism.</p> <p>Give individuals and environmental organisations the right to challenge decisions that will severely impact the environment.</p>	3	1 2
Scottish Greens	<p>Funding Local Place Plans to support community-led development planning.</p> <p>Equal right of appeal of communities on planning decisions, improvements to public engagement in planning.</p> <p>Create a Communities Greenspace Fund to help communities acquire and manage greenspace.</p> <p>Transform the land registers into a free and transparent national land information service.</p> <p>Review take-up of existing <u>Community Rights to Buy</u> and the <u>Community Asset Transfer scheme</u> to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p>	-	2 3 4
Scottish Liberal Democrats	<p>Right for communities to protect threatened community facilities through different ownership or the use of shared premises as hubs.</p>	-	2



	Expand the Scottish Land Fund to help further community ownership.		
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Address littering and safety of greenspace

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Party	Policy	Priority groups	Cross-cutting policies
Scottish National Party (SNP)	National Litter and Flytipping Strategy 2023-24 Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted behaviour-based interventions • A national online litter hub to support to community groups and other relevant local organisations • A national community-focused litter education programme • Conduct an evidence review to better understand, and address, the key barriers to current enforcement practices. 	-	3
Scottish Labour	A new litter strategy that addresses the defects in the current system, prioritises community education, commits to investment in infrastructure and reviews the barriers to enforcement.	-	3
Scottish Greens	N/A		N/A
Scottish Liberal Democrats	N/A		N/A

What policy solutions are being suggested by charities/ academics/ think tanks?

Increase greenspace

Public Health Scotland (p.11):²⁹



- Research of greenspace use during Covid-19 suggests that public and private greenspaces meet different needs and planning and housing policy should take account of their different contributions.
- Policy opportunities include providing gardens for new housing; retrofitting of existing provision; 20-minute neighbourhoods; and action to address unequal access to greenspace through open space strategies and play sufficiency assessments.

Fields in Trust:³⁰

- A park within a 10-minute walk of home to be the baseline standard for everyone (p.4).
- A multidisciplinary working group to advise on addressing the barriers to safe and inclusive access to parks and green spaces (p.4).
- Clearer directives and aspirational targets to provide sufficient levels of local green space protected for the long-term. Greater legislative powers to embed the Green Infrastructure Framework into the planning process to ensure green space provision is an integral part of improving health and wellbeing outcomes in Local Plans (p.5).

Sensory Trust:³¹

- Accessible design of greenspace, and providing pre-visit and on-site information

Woodland Trust:³²

- Planning for equitable tree cover in urban areas (tree equity), with plans to include caring for and protecting trees.

Research papers:

- Assessed the effectiveness of greenspace interventions in deprived urban communities; found that short-term interventions may be unable to affect health outcomes driven by wider, life-long factors and this issue may be particularly pertinent in deprived communities. Indicated that access to greenspace for children may be particularly critical for influencing greenspace visiting behaviours and mental health throughout life.³³

Encouraging use of greenspace by supporting community initiatives, outdoor learning, green prescribing, and incorporating programmed spaces

CEMVO, Poverty Alliance, Nourish & Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (p.8):³⁴

- Solutions proposed by people from Black and Minority Ethnic background on barriers to accessing greenspace.



- A mix of nature areas and ‘programmed’ spaces for social and active use, regular maintenance.
- Improved amenities such as seating, shelter and toilets.
- More organised trips to nature-rich spaces, more community gardening opportunities.
- More inclusion of minority ethnic groups and different ages in designing local parks and activities.

Fields in Trust:³⁵

- Increase funding for parks and green spaces to improve their quality and make them more multifunctional. Restoration of budgets for councils to maintain parks and green spaces (p.6).

Address littering and safety of greenspace

CEMVO, Poverty Alliance, Nourish & Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (p.8):³⁶

- Solutions proposed by people from Black and Minority Ethnic background on barriers to accessing greenspace.
- Clear information from housing associations on the location of local parks and information that it is free and open to everyone and the ‘cultural rules’.
- Targeted nature sensitive lighting on main pathways for safety.
- Separate dog areas and awareness raising/education for dog owners. Park confidence’ group sessions (including how to respond to dogs and unruly behaviour) similar to cycling confidence sessions.
- CCTV for safety.

Keep Scotland Beautiful:

- [Eco-schools initiative](#)³⁷
- [Clean Up Scotland](#)³⁸
- [Cup movement](#)³⁹
- [Green Flag Award scheme \(including safer parks principles\)](#)⁴⁰



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- ¹ Scottish Labour (2021) [Scottish Labour's National Recovery Plan](#)
 - ² Scottish Greens (2021) [Our Common Future: Scottish Greens Manifesto 2021](#)
 - ³ Scottish Liberal Democrats (2021) [Put Recovery First](#)
 - ⁴ Scottish Government (accessed 14 November 2024) [National Performance Framework: Access to Green and Blue Space](#)
 - ⁵ Scottish Government (accessed 14 November 2024) [Measuring progress - Communities, Access to Green and Blue Space](#)
 - ⁶ Scottish Government (accessed 14 November 2024) [National Performance Framework: Visits to the Outdoors](#)
 - ⁷ Scottish Government (accessed 14 November 2024) [Measuring progress – Environment, Visits to the Outdoors](#)
 - ⁸ Scottish Government (2023) [National Planning Framework 4](#)
 - ⁹ [The Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)
 - ¹⁰ NatureScot (accessed 14 November 2024) [Open space audit and strategy - The OSS Hub](#)
 - ¹¹ [The Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#)
 - ¹² Scottish Government (December 2023) [Play Sufficiency Assessment Regulations 2023: planning guidance](#)
 - ¹³ Central Scotland Green Network (accessed 5 December 2024)
 - ¹⁴ Central Scotland Green Network (2021) [Central Scotland Green Network Delivery Plan 2020-2030](#)
 - ¹⁵ Scottish Government (2023) [National Planning Framework 4](#)
 - ¹⁶ Scottish Government (2023) [Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030: 15](#)
 - ¹⁷ Inspiring Scotland (2021) [SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL OUTDOOR PLAY & LEARNING POSITION STATEMENT](#)
 - ¹⁸ NatureScot (accessed 5 December 2024) [Our Natural Health Service](#)
 - ¹⁹ [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
 - ²⁰ Scottish Government (2019) [Allotments: guidance for local authorities: Section 112 – Duty to provide allotments](#)
 - ²¹ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#)
 - ²² Scottish Government (accessed 5 December 2024) [Fairer Scotland Duty: guidance for public bodies](#)
 - ²³ Scottish Government (2022) [Planning circular 1/2022: Local Place Plans](#)
 - ²⁴ Scottish Government (accessed 5 December 2024) [Planning and architecture: Community involvement in the planning process](#)
 - ²⁵ [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
 - ²⁶ Scottish Government (accessed 5 December 2024) [Community empowerment: Asset transfer](#)
 - ²⁷ Scottish Government (September 2024) [Community Rights to Buy: overview](#)
 - ²⁸ Scottish Government (accessed 5 December 2024) [Community empowerment: Common good property](#)
 - ²⁹ Public Health Scotland (2022) [COVID-19 and greenspace use survey findings](#)
 - ³⁰ Fields in Trust (accessed 5 December 2024) [Our Manifesto for the UK Government: A Better Future for Parks and Green Spaces](#)
 - ³¹ Sensory Trust (accessed 5 December 2024) [Inclusive greenspace](#)
 - ³² Woodland Trust (accessed 5 December 2024) [Tree Equity](#)
 - ³³ Thompson, Elizade et al. (2019) ['Enhancing Health Through Access to Nature: How Effective are Interventions in Woodlands in Deprived Urban Communities? A Quasi-experimental Study in Scotland, UK'](#), Sustainability, 11(12): 3317
 - ³⁴ CEMVO, Poverty Alliance, Nourish & Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (August 2024) [Workshops on access to healthy food and greenspace: summary](#)
 - ³⁵ Fields in Trust (accessed 5 December 2024) [Our Manifesto for the UK Government: A Better Future for Parks and Green Spaces](#)
 - ³⁶ CEMVO, Poverty Alliance, Nourish & Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (August 2024) [Workshops on access to healthy food and greenspace: summary](#)



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- ³⁷ Keep Scotland Beautiful (accessed 5 December 2024) [Eco-Schools: Litter & Waste](#)
- ³⁸ Keep Scotland Beautiful (accessed 5 December 2024) [Clean Up Scotland](#)
- ³⁹ Keep Scotland Beautiful (accessed 5 December 2024) [Cup movement](#)
- ⁴⁰ Green Flag Award (2023) [Safer parks: Improving access for women and girls](#)