

The Path To Self-Governance

As Scotland moves along the path to self-governance there appears to be a lack of awareness of what has been achieved to date. Scotland is now making the sovereign decisions regarding a majority of the institutions of government – such as health, education, transport, council tax, and other issues.

Governments like many individuals react slowly to change – particularly those individuals in positions of authority who consider change might be a challenge to their status or jobs – yet change is ongoing everywhere in many forms and society is responding to these changes more quickly than the political establishment.

Over the centuries the rich and powerful across the UK have manipulated changes in the laws in order to protect their wealth and position – at the expense of the remainder of our society. They no longer pay an equitable share of the increasing wealth they claim – wealth that is primarily generated by society. These outdated laws contribute to the shortage of funding for core public services – services that are used by both the rich and those with less political influence.

A significant limitation to economic and social development appears to be a public service culture reluctant to embrace new ideas. A culture that all too often seeks to excuse a lack of timely decision-making by hiding behind committees and stifling layers of red tape. Red tape that results in reduced efficiency and wastes much of the available funds.

A major problem under the party based system of governance is the current lack of clear objectives regarding the future. The current system of governance has failed to adequately address the changing needs and the many inequalities within our evolving society. Reacting to situations by tweaking around the edges rather than dealing with fundamental problems and obsessed with party individuals rather than the needs of the people.

Political party elites select the majority of the candidates we are required to vote for and these candidates primarily “canvas” on the manifesto proposals set out by the party organisations. Many elected representatives see their political career prospects as dependent on accountability to party bosses rather than being accountable to the electorate who pay their wages.

Is this convoluted form of democracy what we want in a Self-Governing Scotland?

IT'S Time for a more Proactive System of Governance

Rather than political parties setting selective manifestos is it not time that WE the electorate, set out what is required to develop OUR needs in the form of a national PROGRAMME for politicians – who should be working for and accountable to US?

Sample – Government Programme for a Self-Governing Scotland

Democracy

- * A codified written Constitution that sets out the Rights of the People, the Institutions and Authorities of Government, the Powers of the Judiciary and the Financial Authorities of the State.
- * Replace the 32 Local Authorities with 18 Regional Assemblies subdivided into multiple Community Councils to enable more meaningful local government.
- * The Scottish Central government to devolve a range of autonomous powers to Regional and Community government.
- * A Citizens' Assembly with authority to scrutinise government policies.
- * A Citizens' Council to formulate and then update the Programme for Government at regular intervals.
- * A system to recall (sack) elected representatives.
- * All persons to be automatically enrolled on the electorate register on attaining the age of maturity of 16 years.
- * The Single Transferable Vote form of proportional representation to be used for all levels of government.
- * No party aligned politics at Regional and Community Government levels.
- * Following Independence from England, Scotland to hold a referendum to decide whether we trade with Europe as a member of the European Union (EU) or of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or as an associate of the European Economic Area (EEA).
- * Establish an Agency, Independent of Government, to provide details of actual benefits and drawbacks for Scotland of trading under the EU or EFTA or the EEA.

Finance

- * Establish the Pound Scots as the domestic Currency of Scotland.
- * Establish the National Central Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh.
- * The Lender of Last Resort REMAINS the Taxpayer – as at present.
- * The Central Bank of Scotland will issue all new money (as currency or credit) and regulate the Commercial Banks.
- * Commercial banks will obtain currency for their autotellers from the Central Bank of Scotland.
- * Establish Local Small Mutual Banks to promote local investment based on the pattern that has been highly successful across Germany.
- * High street commercial banks may not use deposited funds for speculative financial trading.

- * Establish a Stock Market in Glasgow
- * Establish a Scottish Mint in Elgin to provide Currency and legal stationary.
- * All levels of Government to adopt a balanced budget policy with a maximum loan liability of three per cent.
- * Establish a National Wealth Fund
- * Replace Council Tax, Non-domestic Rates and Income Tax with Land Rent.
- * Replace Inheritance Tax with a one per cent annual Asset Tax.
- * Progressively reduce VAT from 20 to ten per cent over four years.
- * Progressively reduce Corporation Tax as Land Rent revenues grow.
- * Eliminate all taxes that cost more than 50 per cent of collected revenues.
- * Zero-rate all investment in new plant and machinery for companies when the plant and machinery is manufactured in Scotland.
- * A percentage wage increase within the public sector to apply equally to all in public employment including elected representatives.
- * Negotiate an agreement for England to transfer to Scotland assets representing the balance due to Scotland from Scotland's share of United Kingdom Assets less an agreed proportion of the Westminster generated national debt.

Governance

- * Eliminate fifty per cent of government red tape within four years.
- * Equal pay for both genders doing the same job.
- * Planning system red tape complexity to be reduced by sixty per cent within two years.
- * All road and parking related fines to be ring-fenced to assist with road maintenance at community level.

Economy

- * Terminate the 1707 Treaty of Union and establish a Trade Treaty between Scotland and England that includes an open border agreement.
- * Establish a Trade Treaty between Scotland and Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Norway that includes a Fisheries Policy.
- * Scotland to adopt an oil and gas policy similar to that used by Norway.
- * A percentage of the oil and gas revenues to be put into the National Wealth Fund.
- * The Scottish National electric grid system to be operated as a non-profit making nationalised agency and developed as a strategic resource.
- * Transmission grid connection charges to be limited to actual connection costs.
- * A simplified system of taxation laws to promote a reduction in payee costs.
- * All companies operating in Scottish Territory to have a registered office in Scotland and pay taxes to Scotland.
- * New start businesses to have zero tax liabilities for first two years.
- * Bankrupt owners or directors are required to repay all liabilities prior to starting up a new business.

- * Scottish Limited Partnerships to be removed from the statutes.
- * Scottish Land Act to be amended such that the price of land for sale reflects the current use of the land.
- * All land and ownership details to be registered by December 2019 or be confiscated for designation as Common Good Land.
- * Establish a coordinated Agricultural Policy to sustain working farmers and crofters and provide more opportunities for new working entrants.
- * Establish free trade zones at designated entry locations.
- * Across the Island Communities and remote West Coast Highland Communities fuel and electric prices to be discounted to ten per cent below national average prices.
- * Charge the English government a ground rent of £100 million per calendar month for the use of military bases, munitions dumps and exercise areas throughout Scotland.
- * Charge the English government a fee of £100 million per calendar month for the presence of nuclear powered submarines and the storage of illegal Weapons of Mass destruction in Scottish Territory – until they are all removed.
- * Postal rates for letters and parcels to be standardised throughout the territory of Scotland.
- * Provide tax incentives to Scottish based yards for the decommissioning of redundant oil and gas platforms.
- * Provide tax incentives for Scottish based companies manufacturing component parts for electric powered vehicles.
- * Increase funding for research and development centres based in Scotland.
- * Provide tax incentives to establish an aircraft recycling industry.
- * Increase tax incentives for companies to provide apprenticeships.

Pensions

- * All workers, whether part-time or full employed to have a personal pension fund into which both employee and employer pay an agreed proportion.
- * All self-employed persons to have a personal pension into which they pay a minimum of 5 per cent.
- * Pension funds to be protected by joint representation by both employees and employers.
- * All pension contracts established prior to Independence to be guaranteed under the Trade Treaty between Scotland and England.
- * When employment is terminated all workers to be given a minimum of one month's notice plus a final payment that includes a proportion in lieu of holiday pay and pension liability.

Health Service

- * Review the overall funding mechanism and reduce the management structure and administration costs of the health service.

- * All medical persons trained in Scotland to be required, following graduation, to work in Scotland for a minimum period of five years or repay costs of training.
- * Post-Study work Visa scheme, which enables foreign students to remain in Scotland after graduation, to be enabled.
- * A more collaborative and considerate model is required for social care.

Education

- * Management of education to be devolved to regional and community government.
- * Education to be free up to and including College and University Tuition.
- * Music, drama and art education to be funded and supported at all schools and academies in order to promote culture and personal development.
- * Education to be re-focused on natural individual development rather than by mass style education by rote.
- * Promote understanding of the political system and individual rights.
- * Promote understanding of personal finance and money management.
- * Promote training to support modern apprenticeships.
- * Reduce the frequency of tests and targets on progress as children develop at differing pace.
- * Teach about Scottish history and culture over the past 1500 years.
- * Mental Health counselling to be available to all pupils and students.
- * Parents to be held accountable when their children attack school staff.
- * Consideration to be given to providing parenting skills tuition.
- * Education on the benefits of protecting our natural ecology and wildlife.

Welfare

- * Provide a fit for purpose welfare and benefits system.
- * Instigate a more cost effective system for funding of elderly care homes.
- * The National Minimum Wage to be mandatory and linked to inflation rate.
- * Consideration to be given to a Citizens Basic Salary in place of benefits.
- * Benefits for disabled and vulnerable individuals to be fit to ensure a quality life.
- * Until there is an adequate stock of social housing, all cities and towns should provide dormitory areas providing dry shelter for homeless persons.
- * Support and assistance to individual carers to be available in all areas.

Housing

- * A fifteen-year plan to provide quality housing for all.
- * Public authorities to lead the development process by acquiring land at a price reflecting its existing use.
- * Central and Regional Government to provide land for a minimum of 50,000 social housing properties for rent per year.
- * Private rented housing to be of a specified quality and a regulated rent.

- * All new housing to be of a quality that requires reduced heating and maintenance costs and provides bedrooms of a minimum size to enable adequate storage.
- * Low cost land to be made available to encourage individual house-builders.
- * Planning Bill to be amended such that rights of appeal to include community right to appeal breaches of the local development plan.
- * The Land Act to be amended to enable the building of private rural huts similar to that used across Norway.

Sport

- * Government to provide more funding for sports centres.
- * Increased funding to support school competitive team sports.
- * The owners of forests and upland estates are required to provide access tracks suitable for walkers and cyclists.

Transport

- * Free Bus Pass scheme to be changed to an annual payment that covers the cost of issuing the pass.
- * Railways to be brought back under government control and upgraded as a strategic asset.
- * Rail fares to be reduced by at least fifty per cent.
- * Students and the over 65s to be given 30 per cent discounts on rail fares.
- * Rail, bus and air travel times to be more effectively networked.
- * Single lane roads across the highlands and principle islands to be upgraded to two lane roadways.
- * Consideration to be given to follow the Norwegian policy of connecting principal islands by underground road tunnels.

Immigration

- * Immigrants are accepted to meet skills shortages or professional vacancies in Scotland.
- * Immigrants must pay for public services for an initial period of two years.

Security.

- * A Central Security Agency will coordinate all domestic and international security issues.
- * Police Scotland will be the primary agency for domestic security.
- * A National Intelligence Agency will be established reporting directly to a responsible member of the Scottish Cabinet.
- * The transportation through the territory of Scotland of weapons of mass destruction, or parts thereof, as well as nuclear waste or any other nuclear material designed or produced for weapons purposes shall be prohibited and deemed a criminal offense.

Defence

- * A Scottish Defence force will be established, supplied and supported by Scottish based companies wherever practical. The Defence Forces and the related industries would support at least 20,000 jobs in Scotland.
- * Defence operational budget one point five per cent of national budget.
- * The mission of the Scottish Defence Force will be the defence of Scottish territories and support of United Nations declared Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief operations.
- * The Coastguard Service will be a separate division operating under naval oversight.
- * Scotland will hold Observer status with NATO.

Environment

- * The territory of Scotland comprises all the mainland and Islands of Scotland, plus the territorial waters and exclusive Zone prior to 1999, as recognised by international law.
- * Re-establish the National Parks as wholly State owned.
- * The State to promote and financially support Carbon dioxide recovery and storage schemes.
- * The State to provide tax incentives for the recovery of the natural forested habitat on the mountains of Scotland to generate more jobs and wildlife.
- * Land users to be given incentives to protect natural habitats and wildlife populations.
- * Establish diesel and petrol fuelled vehicle free zones in the centre of all cities and towns by 2023.

Foreign Policy.

- * A Scottish Diplomatic service to be established to represent Scotland's interests internationally, support Scottish citizens abroad and to promote Scottish business interests.
- * Foreign Aid funding allocated for Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief.
- * Foreign students to be encouraged to study in Scotland in order to develop future beneficial international relations and business opportunities.
- * The 6000 square miles of land and waters annexed from Scotland by England in 1999 to be returned to Scotland, returning the Scottish/English border to the previous internationally agreed border.

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10-01-18

