

Mon 8 Mar, 2021

The Scottish Greens have agreed a major budget deal with the Scottish Government to tackle rising poverty, give frontline workers a pay rise and sow the seeds of a green recovery. Here's what we've delivered.

## **Pandemic Relief Payments**

To help tackle rising poverty, particularly amongst children and families, £100m will be allocated to Pandemic Relief Payments.

A payment of £130 will be made to approximately half a million low income households in early summer, targeted at those in receipt of Council Tax Relief.

Families in receipt of free school meals will get two further payments of £100; the first in August in time for the new school year, and the second in December for Christmas.

These payments will reach approximately 170,000 families, giving them a total £330 extra this year.

## **Free school meals**

Tens of thousands of children across Scotland live in poverty but are not currently getting free school meals. For many more hard-pressed families the cost is a huge financial burden. Universal free school meals tackle poverty, improve health, and tackle health inequalities.

The Scottish Greens have agreed that all Primary pupils will be given free school meals, and for this to be phased in between now and August 2021.

Currently, P1-P3 pupils already get free school meals. This will be extended to P4 children in August this year, P5 in January 2022, and P6 and P7 children in August 2022. This will mean over 200,000 more children benefiting from free school meals.

All primary and secondary children on the basis of low income will also get free school meals through the holidays, starting in time for this summer.

An additional £49.5m has been allocated for free school meals in this financial year, and a commitment made to the full year costs of £112m next year.

## **Free bus travel for young people**

In 202/21 Scottish Budget the Greens secured a commitment to introduce free bus travel for under 19s, supporting families and young people and encouraging a public transport culture. This is being implemented now and is due to commence this year.

Our 21/22 deal will extend the scheme to cover 19, 20, and 21-year olds.

Free bus travel helps tackle poverty, improves household budgets, and builds a culture of public transport, helping reduce climate emissions from transport.

An additional £18m has been allocated to fund this this year but this is less than would be anticipated in a normal year because of Covid restriction. A commitment has been made to full year costs from next financial year of £57-69m/year.

## **Public sector pay**

We have negotiated an enhanced and progressive public sector pay deal, boosting the pay of all public sector employees, including teachers and NHS staff like nurses. The deal will see another £100m invested in public sector workers and is as far as we could go within the envelope of funding made available by the UK government.

We consider this additional commitment is a step in the right direction to recognising the significant contribution which has been shown by all public sector workers over the past year, though we believe much more still needs to be done in Scotland and across the UK.

Our deal means that all public sector workers on £25k or under will get a pay increase of £800. For a Nurse on the average starting salary of £24,900 this is equivalent to a 3.2% raise. For a teaching assistant on £18k it's 4.4%.

It's important to note, however, that the public sector pay settlement is followed by sectoral negotiations with the Unions, and this effectively acts as a raised baseline for any such negotiations. The NHS Scotland pay review for example is due soon.

Public sector workers on £25k-40k will see their salary increase by 2%, and above that it's 1%, capped at £800.

## Green recovery

Building on last year's budget deal, which saw significant increases in the funding available for green infrastructure, we have secured:

- ***An additional £15m for infrastructure for cycling, walking and wheeling, bringing the total budget to £115m for this year. In addition, a commitment has been made to ensuring the £50m town centre fund supports cycling, walking and wheeling. These funding lines are key to ensuring a green recovery from the pandemic, and to continuing to expand the Spaces for People programme and make the many benefits this has delivered over the last year permanent.***
- A further £10m for energy efficiency measures, helping make homes warmer and low carbon. This is in addition to the £45m increase already announced, and we hope to see it going towards a new push behind "whole home retrofits" of social housing. Developing and expanding this approach, which brings the most inefficient homes up to most efficient in one go for a whole street or block of flats, is essential to meeting our climate targets. Energy efficiency investment is also a quick and reliable means of creating green jobs at scale.
- A new £10m Nature Restoration Fund. This fund will offer grants for projects that deliver nature restoration, rewilding, and nature-based solutions to the climate emergency. We aim for this fund to scale up in the coming years and to play a critical role in addressing the nature emergency in Scotland.
- £5m for agri-environment support for farming adopting low carbon, wildlife friendly farming techniques. Agri-environment grants are a key delivery mechanism for tackling the climate and nature emergencies in the food and farming sector.
- Continued commitment to taking forward investments in upgrading the Milngavie to Glasgow rail line, which is one of the worst performing in the country, and to re-opening the Alloa to Dunfermline railway to passengers.

## Self-isolation support

The Scottish Greens have for many months led calls for the £500 self-isolation grant to be made more accessible, and ideally universal. We believe this is critical to effectively and quickly break the chains of transmission and suppress the virus. Eligibility for the grant was widened earlier this year in response to Green pressure, and £5m has been made available in the budget to fund this.

## More details

[Letter from Kate Forbes to Patrick Harvie on 8 March 2021 outlining the Green Budget Deal](#)

[Letter from Patrick Harvie to Kate Forbes on 8 March 2021 agreeing the Green Budget Deal](#)