

Holyrood Election 7 May 2026

Manifesto analysis re cycling, active-travel & related issues

Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign

Spokes does not suggest who to vote for. Voters have many priorities, and transport is only one of many issues to consider. For some people independence (either for or against!) is an over-riding issue, with other policies much lower in priority.

Manifesto link	Conservative	Green	Labour	LibDem	Reform	SNP
Manifesto pdf	Conservative	Green	Labour	LibDem	Reform	SNP

[As usual, we uploaded the manifesto pdf's so that they remain accessible post-election even if they disappear from some party websites]

Key to tables below

- ++ Very good and/or best
- + good
- = mixed, unclear, or less good than other parties
- poor (or unrealistic)
- very disappointing
- N Not in manifesto [N is generally disappointing, but depends on the issue, so think!]

Page numbers shown are to pages of each party's 2026 manifesto

2026 v 2021 comparison of AT Investment manifesto commitments

Sadly and shockingly, in view of the climate crisis, the cost of living crisis, and the need for healthier lifestyles to help the NHS crisis **the 2026 manifestos mark a massive deterioration in active travel policies** as compared to the [2021 election](#) – or even [2016](#). Only the Greens, and to a lesser extent the Lib Dems, retain positive approaches.

Whilst this applies to many policies and promises, the astonishing contrast is seen clearly in this comparative table on the top issue, active travel investment

AT Investment	Conservative	Green	Labour	LibDem	Reform	SNP
<b style="color: red;">2021 manifestos [AT funding then was approx £116m, roughly 3.5% of total transport]	+ 10% by 2026	++ £320m immediately [approx 10%] rising further	+ 10% [unclear if soon or by 2026]	= “aim” to double existing [this would be approx 7%]	N/A	= 10% of “capital” bgt by 2026 [BUT this is less of the <i>total</i> transport bgt]
<b style="color: red;">2026 manifestos [AT funding is now approx £163m, roughly 3.9% of total transport]	-- p35; p75 cut the AT budget; end ring-fenced cash to councils	++ p26 at least 10%; multi-year funding	N	= p66 “Invest in active travel for the first and last mile”	-- p11 End ring-fenced cash to councils	= p64 £2.5m for bike repair; new fund for outdoor recreation paths

2026 manifesto overall comparisons

Note that the manifestos include more transport policies/promises than are shown here, particularly on walk, bus and rail. We hope this table includes most of the items directly relevant to cycling, as well as some relevant wider transport issues.

Also, note that if something is not in a manifesto, it doesn't mean it won't happen, though it is less likely to.

Issue	Conservative	Green	Labour	LibDem	Reform	SNP
AT Investment [from above table]	--	++	N	=	--	=
Extent of cycle/AT routes/networks ambition	-- p36 <i>"End the obsession with cycle lanes"</i> Cycle lanes only ok if not using road or pavement space	++ p26 <i>"national blueprint of walking, cycle and wheeling networks"</i> ; faster Council AT project delivery	N	+ p66 <i>"Investing in active travel for the first and last mile"</i>	= p23 Rural Scotland: <i>"support outdoor recreation ... cycling ... with accessible paths"</i>	= p64 outdoor recreation paths fund; no Roseburn tram; support Powderhall AT path [see note 3 below]
Is AT recognised and supported as a public health measure	- p57 Only considers leisure centres & sport	+ p163 <i>"space to walk, run, play, wheel and cycle is a right not a privilege"</i>	N	++ p33 & p61 <i>"Supporting wellbeing by making it easier for people to use active travel"</i>	N	N
Neighbourhoods / Car-free lifestyles	N	+ p118 <i>"Support local living and 20-minute nbd approaches"</i>	N	+ p52 New towns <i>"prioritising features such as rail links.. and 20-minute nbds"</i>	N	N
Disincentivise car use/ Demand management	-- p35 <i>"End the war on drivers"</i> ; No targets; stop any Workplace Parking levies or congestion charging	++ p22 Seek road-user taxation powers for Scotland ++ p33 Levy on out-of-town retail, to support towns	+ p89 Business rates replaced by a new levy favouring town centre retail & hospitality	= p73 <i>"Moving all forms of transport away from fossil fuels"</i> – But carrots-only approach	-- p21 <i>"End the war on the car"</i>	N
20mph	- p36 20mph only ok where locals agree (e.g. outside schools)	++ p26 20mph default in all urban areas + full enforcement	N	N	N	N
Single-carriageway speeds	- p36 Do not reduce existing limits	++ p26 Reduce national limit, and 40mph where walk/bike use is common	N	+ p64 <i>"Dangerous Roads Programme" incl "adjusting speed limits"</i>	N	N

Potholes	-- p33 Fund pothole filling by cutting (scrapping?) the AT budget	N	+ (or --) p49 £350m fund [see note 1 below]	+ p64 "fair funding" for councils; use of new technology	+ p21 "Fix potholes"	+ p72 "up to £350m" for potholes & resurfacing
Air pollution including Low Emission Zones	-- p36 Halt more LEZs and reduce fines in existing	++ p118 expand LEZs, plus stronger monitoring	N		-- p21 Abolish LEZs	N
Transport integration, with respect to active travel	= p38 Rail, bus & tram integration; no mention of walk/ bike	+ p22, p26 Better AT links to public transport; All new rail, bus, tram to carry bikes	N	N	N	N
Road building	-- p34 New law to fast-track trunk road upgrades; dual A9 by 2031; many other trunk projects	+ p22 Future-proof roads like A83 vulnerable to climate change; no mention of expansion	-- p49 Dual A9 by 2035, look into dualling A77 and A75, & create National Roads Plan	-- p64 Dual A9 & A96;	-- p21 "plan to upgrade major trunk roads" [see note 2 below]	-- p71 Dual A9 by 2035, also parts of A96; and consider A75, A77
Air travel taxation ADT= Air departure tax	-- p39 oppose any new taxes; reduce long-haul tax	++ p34 frequent flyer levy; private jet tax; more..	N	+ p66 Higher tax for private jet passengers	N	+ p27 private jet tax; including for 'ghost' flights
USP – unique selling points (good and bad!) picked out by Spokes	-- p33 1. AT schemes are "ideological projects" 2. ban bikes in all pedestrian areas	+ p16, p156 Universal rail card; £2 max bus fares + p122 Council powers to enforce traffic contraventions	+ p55 "Crush illegal e-bikes, using drones to track & trace unlicensed bikes"	+ p64 "Dangerous Roads Programme"	-- p21 "End the war on the car"	+ p38 £2 bus fare cap

[1] Labour £350m pothole fund. The manifesto does not say where the money would come from. In early campaign speeches Anas Sarwar had said it would be from cutting Active Travel funding. On our estimate this would mean a 40% cut on current annual active travel funding – absolutely disastrous. However there was immediate [considerable pushback](#), including [publicly](#) and internally from some prominent Labour politicians, and *perhaps* for that reason is not in the manifesto, so would be up for debate. Spokes certainly supports additional pothole funding, but not taken from those who don't cause the potholes!

[2] Reform 10-year plan to "upgrade major trunk roads" – no detail given, but we assume this means capacity increases (e.g. dualling) as well as safety and maintenance improvements

[3] Why "=" rather than "+" ? The question is "Extent of cycle/AT routes/networks ambition". This all-Scotland SNP manifesto makes no mention of general policy on urban or utility routes, but picks on two local Edinburgh off-road paths (and one of which is very contentious). The £2.5m bike repair fund is insignificant compared to the current ~£163m AT funding, and in that context just feels like a (useful) gimmick.