

Liberty, Respect, Accountability, Equality, Charity.



The Future Governance of Scotland

An SDA Perspective

Contents

1.	The Big Picture.....	2
2.	Economics.....	4
3.	The Governance of Scotland	7
4.	Public Services	9
5.	Funding Government Services	14
6.	Finance	16
7.	Law, Justice and Order	17
8.	Our Nation.....	19
9.	What the SDA proposals could mean to us.....	22

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1. The Big Picture

Summary

The Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA) stands for a sovereign Scotland, with a seat at the United Nations and at the top tables in Europe (Council of Europe, OSCE and the UNECE).

Scotland is a rich nation, both in human talent and natural resources. Hence the desire of the UK government to hang onto us as long as possible. But now the Scots are awakening to a renewed sense of their own worth and strengths. For centuries Scotland has been bled of our most talented people to service the needs of the government and industries of the South of England, and in return we have been fed a line of propaganda that we cannot stand on our own.

Too poor, too small? Tell a big enough lie often enough and many people will believe there is truth in it. However, after decades of brain-washing, many Scots are awakening to the reality behind the untruths, the reality that it is England who is the neighbour that Scotland is subsidising.

In 2007 the SNP government showed the truth behind the lie, achieving more for Scotland than all the previous London-controlled Labour, Lib-Dems or Conservatives unionist parties ever had. This achievement was rewarded by a landslide SNP victory in the 2011 election.

As they have done for centuries, many Scots sit in the highest positions in government and industry in the UK. The SDA advocate that all of the resources of Scotland should be harnessed for the benefit, prosperity, and future development of the people of Scotland.

A Scotland governed by the Scots for the Scots!

Is the 1707 Act of Union still valid? Commencing in 1709, there have been a series of violations of the Treaty by the UK government, with the most recent being in 1999. That year, the UK government unlawfully altered the international border between Scotland and England to allow England to claim revenues from oil fields located in Scottish waters. [See International/TNBS](#)

Scotland in Europe

We don't need to be in the European Union to trade with Europe. We can trade with Europe through the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) side of the European Economic Area (EEA) instead of the European Union (EU). As a member of the 30-member EFTA/EEA there would be nothing to stop Scotland trading with all 50 European states.

In EFTA we can continue to trade with Europe, and, at reduced cost with only a quarter of the regulations we are currently required to implement within the EU. In EFTA we would be outside the CFP and CAP, and have a seat at the top tables in Europe [which the EU is not].

In overall terms, Scotland's trade in Europe has shrunk since being conscripted into the EU, which has been a disaster for our country. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in fishing communities, in agriculture and in our commercial industries. [See International/ Scotland in Europe](#)

Scotland in the World

As a member of the United Nations, sovereign Scotland will have responsibilities to provide resources for implementing Security Council resolutions, and can play a large part in international humanitarian and development activities. [See International/ Scotland in the World](#)

Scotland's programme of development co-operation should provide quality assistance in a range of fields, provision being made in selected developing countries for an exchange of Scottish graduates and technicians for service abroad, with assisted places in Scotland for students from those developing countries.

The commercial dominance of western states is in decline, they are overly bureaucratic, too centralised, lacking in competition and up to their armpits in debt. In contrast, the developing states, such as China, India and Brazil, have adopted the essentials of capitalism and the ethic of hard work. They are progressive and innovative, and have business-oriented leaders who are investing heavily in research and development. Scotland must expand trading links with those developing states.

Scotland's Younger Generations

Young people have the confidence, the ideas and the energy, so why do the older folk not listen to their opinions more and attempt to understand them better?.

Is it because they are fearful of losing their established positions and perks?

Soon, it will be the younger generations who will shape the future, so why not give them a voice now, and a share in the decisions which will shape their lives? We must be prepared to combine the ideas and confidence of youth with the experience that only time can provide.

2. Economics

Growing our economy must be Scotland's highest priority. The world does not view us as being a business friendly area, despite our hard working, well educated, innovative and highly-skilled workforce and our plentiful supply of talented technicians and graduates.

Scotland is, and is seen as limited by excessive red tape, restrictive planning procedures, poor infrastructure and high transportation costs. There must be a culture change within government and the public sector to encourage and promote incentives and competition for more private sector jobs. The Scottish government must be more pro-active to promote trade and business investment by reducing red tape and encouraging the establishment of additional air and sea ferry destination links.



Business

It is imperative that the Scottish government adopts a more business friendly policy, and creates the conditions required for wealth generation. These conditions, when achieved, will attract more new companies, more jobs, higher wages and thus make Scotland seen to be a desirable location for career development as well as a quality place in which to live and bring up a family.

Scotland should endeavour to become more competitive than the South of England, with, for example, lower Corporation Tax, and a simpler and time sensitive planning system.

Another area in which the Scottish government could assist would be to break down large infrastructure projects into contracts of a size which would enable Scotland's small and medium sized companies to compete, retaining jobs and money in local communities.

Marketing

There should be only one national organisation promoting Scottish industry globally, showing Scotland to the world as a centre of excellence for high quality skills and research and creativity. Individual companies however could utilise their websites as a marketing tool to co-operatively

promote their region, to highlight the range of skills available and develop regional cluster strength awareness.

Websites such as Electric Scotland (www.electricscotland.com) are experienced in this style of promotion.

Tourism

This is Scotland's biggest industry and we have failed to adequately promote, market, and realise the potential of this superb product. We must be more proactive in selling Scotland, particularly in North America, Europe and Asia. As part of the marketing of Scotland, we need a dedicated organisation to coordinate all aspects of advertising, promotion and marketing the multiple tourism benefits of Scotland.

At home we should be encouraging Scots to explore our distinctive attractions, Lowland as well as Highland. [See Economy/ Tourism](#)



Fishing

A vital industry for the coastal communities of Scotland and our general economy, yet, under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), our previously well managed fish stocks have been plundered by foreign boats, and our fishing communities deprived of their traditional livelihood.

More than 100,000 jobs have been lost to Scotland's economy at a cost of some £2000 million per year. We need to get out of this disastrous EU, and rebuild our fish stocks and fishing industry. Tweaking the CFP will never achieve a suitable outcome - we must get out of it altogether.

Read the SDA's radical new proposals to rebuild our fishing industry and manage our fish stocks to sustain future generations of Scots. [See Economy/ Fishing](#)

Agriculture

Agriculture is another vital industry which has been ripped apart by the EU. A family of four in Scotland currently pays an average of £31 more for their weekly food [equivalent to £1612 per year] as a result of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Our dairy and beef herds as well as our sheep flocks are in severe decline. EU grants and payments are going to the big farmers and landowners at the expense of the small farmers they were meant to help; with applications wrapped up in layers of red tape. It's time to get out of this politically driven EUSSR.

Energy

Scotland currently has a balanced mixture of energy supplies and we must retain a mixture to provide security of supply -- available when required. Our current base load coal fired and nuclear plants are in need of replacement and we should be building a number of combined-cycle gas turbine generating plants, fuelled with LPG, as a medium term base load replacement.

We shall need more hydro-storage or hydrogen production plants to obtain any real benefit from the intermittent wind, wave and tidal stream units – but where is that money coming from?

Scotland would be better served by more community-based green combined heat and power (CHP) plants rather than the current blight of over-subsidised inefficient wind turbines. The Scottish government's national 'Renewable Heat Incentive' programme could be re-focused to enable more communities to have a CHP plant, fuelled by local supplies of sewage, community, agricultural and forestry waste biomass products, for district heating and power generation. [See Economy/ Energy](#)

Energy Consumption

Reducing energy consumption should be the first priority for all consumers and designers.

More than 55 per cent of the total energy generated is used to heat our homes and businesses. Across the UK however the base load nuclear and fossil fuelled generating plants spew their waste heat into the atmosphere, unlike some countries which have concentrated on green Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plants with electricity supplied to the grid, the remaining energy being pumped in the form of hot water in pipes around towns. All achieved without blighting their countryside with windmills!

Energy Jobs

At present, the thousands of green jobs promised by the politicians on the back of the wind farms, are pie in the sky. Where is the investment capital? Significant fiscal incentives are required to establish companies with the necessary technologies here in Scotland, as the jobs the politicians promise are currently going to other countries at our expense.

Liquid Fuels

Selective bio-fuels can offer a sustainable partial alternative to hydrocarbons. For example, instead of exporting surplus wheat we could be using the wheat as feedstock to provide bio-ethanol fuel for vehicles, and at the same time provide a co-product such as protein rich animal feed stock, which we currently import.

Alternative Propulsion Fuels

There is a need to work with other nations to develop alternative sources for powering our vehicles. Innovative use of energy sources such as hydrogen fuel cells, high-energy battery systems and hybrid electric vehicles are being developed to replace fossil fuels. Scotland needs to join this creative effort.

Infrastructure

The UK government and the London-controlled unionist parties have for years neglected the roads, railways, schools, hospitals, electrical transmission grids, airports and harbours of Scotland. Significant investment resources must be made available to upgrade our infrastructure to meet both current and future needs - we won't get them from Westminster.

Transport Vehicles

In a country with such a widely dispersed population as ours, transportation of goods and people should be a priority for our government. The road licences for commercial vehicles should be reduced by half until Scotland becomes self governing, then all road licences could be replaced by five pence per litre on the price of fuel. There is a need to look for more efficient types of public transport for our urban areas such as the new range of innovatively fuelled buses.

Railways

The most cost-effective means of transport for Scotland would be a network of high-speed trains from the Pentland Firth to the Borders. The improved travel times connecting the north, south, east and west regions of Scotland would enable a significant boost to the economy, including our all-important tourist trade.

Roads

Many of our roads outwith the central belt and parts of the east coast are wholly unsuited to the current traffic density. We need a comprehensive programme for the upgrading of our regional and rural roads as a matter of priority, removing the bottlenecks, increasing capacity, and lowering transport costs and exhaust emissions.



I.T. Communications

A high-speed fibre-optic broadband communications system is required to cover all of Scotland. Such a networking connectivity is essential for business, social and personal development within our highly communication-capable society. Police, Fire Service, NHS and local councils each operate separate IT services. These separate services should be replaced by a national IT service, with each regional area sharing a pool of IT staff and servers, located in one building.

Freeports

With a low-tax economy, a sovereign Scotland will be able to establish itself as a cost-effective gateway to continental Europe and Scandinavia. The SDA propose Freeports -- initially at Prestwick for goods travelling by air, at Bathgate for retailing road vehicles, and at deepwater ports such as Hunterston, Invergordon and Scapa Flow - to provide (i) container exchange services between large oceangoing and coastal feeder container ships and (ii) to import high quality component parts and equipment to be developed in Scotland then exported to world markets.

Research and Development

Scotland has a global reputation for excellence in many key areas of research. We must continue to focus on skills development which will provide a flow of highly trained graduates and technicians able to contribute to cutting-edge research and development. In partnership with universities and industry we should aim to retain the benefits of Scottish research and generate jobs within the Scottish economy.

Maritime Strategy

The Scots are proficient at building ships and boats. Following the separation from the UK there will be plenty scope to continue this industry provided that we are prepared to grasp the available opportunities. At present, we build fishing vessels, ferries and warships, thus we currently possess the skills and experience to diversify.

Scotland will not require fleet destroyers or aircraft carriers but we will require Multi-role Patrol Ships for protection of the littoral waters within our extensive EEZ. We should also be planning to build multi-role ferries, offshore support and standby vessels and fishing vessels to service and

protect our island communities and our extensive oil and gas assets -- at present most of these vessels are built abroad.

Outwith the EU - CFP we will be able to rebuild our fish stocks in both our inshore and offshore fisheries. This will require a new generation of smaller fishing boats -- to be built in Scottish ports such as Girvan, Aberdeen, Macduff and Peterhead.



3. The Governance of Scotland

Scotland is significantly over-governed! Brussels sets some 80 per cent of all new regulations. The remaining 20 per cent comes from the Westminster parliament for matters reserved, and from the Holyrood parliament for devolved matters. On top of that we have local authorities who provide public service regulations.

Overall, the quality of government in Scotland is poor, with too much centralised authority. Scotland should have a slimmed down autonomous government, with power split and shared more equitably between central and local government, and more powers being devolved to local government.

Constitution of Scotland

To protect the rights and freedoms of the Scottish people and to provide for an accountable system of constitutional sovereignty, we need a written Constitution of Scotland, to replace the uncodified UK conglomerate of acts, orders in council and treaties. [See Constitution/ Draft](#)

Competence

MSPs, local Councillors and local government executives manage multi-million-pound budgets, and take decisions which impact directly on millions of people; but do they possess the necessary skills, competence and experience? The results say NO! You and I have to satisfy our employers that we have the training, skills, qualifications and experience to meet our job requirements, so why should they not be required to meet the same standards?

Accountability

Are our MSPs and local councillors really accountable to the electorate? Most commercial managers are subjected to yearly assessments of their performance and targets. Is it not time for our politicians to prove their worth on a regular basis just as everyone else has to? This would get rid of a lot of the dross and improve the quality of decision-making at both central and local government levels.

Corruption

Corruption appears to be endemic amongst our politicians. From MPs in Westminster and MSPs in Holyrood fiddling expenses, to local councillors arranging lucrative deals for their cronies. This is fraud and criminal abuse of position. It is time to terminate the gravy train.



Quangoes

There are too many quangoes with too much power and with little or no accountability, or even meaningful purpose. There is too much cronyism and patronage involved. The majority should be either scrapped or brought under proper control and scrutiny.

Those which are required should have a precise brief, regulated, audited and managed by a small number of unpaid volunteers with relevant skills and experience. Board members should be limited to sitting on only one board/quango at any one time.

Public Sector Boards

Most boards are too big and include individuals without the relevant skills. Consideration should be given for all such boards to consist of a small number of local volunteer professionals [seven would be realistic], elected on a two year rotational basis.

Immigration

Immigration should be managed and encouraged where necessary to meet Scotland's economic and social priorities. The contributions made by immigrants should be recognised, just as the input of Scots emigrants is recognised around the world. [Link here](#)

All members of what is termed the Scots Diaspora should have the right to return, with their families, to live and work in Scotland.

All immigrants should be required to demonstrate that they have the funds to support themselves until they obtain gainful employment and are capable of communicating in the Scots language.

Land Reform

The pattern of land reform in Scotland has been slow to change. The bulk of Scotland's rural terrain is owned by fewer than 1550 persons, but they create a powerful lobby resisting change. Such a restricted access to the most basic resource of the country has long impinged on social justice, social economic viability and biological sustainability. Holyrood land reform measures since 2003 have failed to effect a change on the concentrated pattern of land tenure in Scotland. A fresh range of fiscal and legal measures, and the political will to implement them, will be required. The SDA has that political will.



4. Public Services

Public Services

Across Scotland, thirty-two (32) local authorities provide a wide range of essential and supplementary public services. However, many of these services are expensive in comparison to comparable services provided by charity, volunteer and other organisations within the private sector. This is not usually the fault of the hard-working front-line operatives, but more often due to the multiple levels of unnecessary management.

The on-going public sector funding cuts are in the main being directed at the front line operatives when we should in fact be slimming down the ranks of the management, and outsourcing supplementary services where practicable. Further efficiencies would be realised by reducing the number of local authorities.

Health and Safety

The principles of our Health and Safety system are sound, but once again the red tape brigade have gone too far. Too much paperwork and not enough effective enforcement has limited the safety performance and driven up the costs to both the public and the private sectors. To protect our economy and enable our industries to be more competitive against foreign competition we must reduce the red tape.

Individuals should be held responsible for their own safety, and companies should be responsible and held accountable for training and for providing safe work sites.

Schools

We must re-establish the Scottish school system's former standard of excellence, enabling our students to attain their full potential. There needs to be greater involvement and control of funding and the curriculum at local level, by the teachers, parents, pupils and employers. [See Social/Education](#)



Higher Education

Our universities, once renowned for the excellence of their academic standards are now suffering from the new 'managerialism', which has resulted in a commercialisation prejudicial to their quality of teaching and research standards. Serious consideration should be given to how universities are managed, with a view to returning the important decision-making to elected members of the academic staff.

Vocation Training

There is altogether too much emphasis on university degrees, as opposed to practical trade skills and experience. Scotland currently has significant shortages of skilled trade persons and technicians,

largely brought about by the introduction of comprehensive education in schools, and the conversion of colleges and polytechnics to universities.

Schools, colleges and businesses must be encouraged to promote and support the provision of training, assessment, apprenticeships and opportunities to fill the skills shortage.

Student Fees

The principle of free higher education is an admirable one, but can we afford it? With a limit to the available funding, should we not be prioritising the courses our taxes are used for? Publicly funded courses should be limited to those where there is a skills shortage within Scotland: other courses should be fee-paying. The SDA however accept and support the need for bursaries to be available to provide capable students from low income families with higher education.

Nursery and Child Care

There is still a lack of affordable childcare across Scotland. More funding and less red tape is required to expand childcare in order for them to benefit from the early start to education and the stimulus of an interactive environment, whilst allowing parents to return to work or secure better paid work.

Health and Care

In spite of the Scottish NHS being well funded, and staffed by highly trained, dedicated and professional personnel, the patient care record does not always meet the desired standards. Quality patient care, free at the time of need, should come first.

The problem appears to be the multiple levels of unnecessary administration and over-paid executives. The administration system requires a complete overhaul. Those who best know what is needed are those who work at the sharp end, and those who use its services. Shorter, more-flexible shift patterns, not the current 12 hour shifts, would improve patient care and be better for staff morale. [See Social/ Health and Care](#)

Care Homes for the Elderly

Is the system fair? The current application system is too complex and bureaucratic, and the Scottish government currently expects everyone with over £22,750 in savings or assets to meet the full accommodation costs in care homes, while all are being provided with free personal and nursing care.

If the resident has no savings then all accommodation costs will be paid for them; however if the resident has been frugal and possesses savings and capital, then these may all be assessed for payment of accommodation costs. The system should be reviewed, simplified, and residents entitled to retain the value of their former homes.



Housing

Lack of affordable housing is limiting development in many areas in Scotland, particularly in rural communities. The decision of the Scottish government to re-build the stock of public funded housing is the correct one. A target of 25 per cent or more of all new builds as affordable housing is a basic social necessity.

Action to ensure that the owners of the thousands of empty houses are required to pay full council rates would encourage these empty houses back into the market.

Welfare system

Our welfare system is the envy of the world - nowhere else can you get so much for doing nothing. But can we afford it? No!

Initially meant to protect those in need, the system has been adulterated by politicians seeking votes, and the system is now so complicated that it deters many of the people it was originally meant to assist. It has in fact created generations who have learned how to milk the system.

Gross welfare payments should be capped at 90 per cent of the minimum weekly wage and thus provide an incentive to return to productive work. [See Social/ Social Welfare](#)

Veterans

We ask our armed forces to serve and protect us, and they do so with distinction, earning much respect for our country. Regrettably, those who are maimed and disabled, physically and or mentally, some for life, are not always treated with the respect and care they deserve.

The Scottish government must make provision for life time care and support, available when required, for all those who have been prepared to lay their life on the line on our behalf.

Alcohol

For Scotland, alcohol continues to be a serious social problem and a major cause of road accidents, domestic violence and premature death. Following the drift away from pubs, many people, in particular the middle aged, now drink more than they should at home, often without realising how much they are consuming. They set a poor example for their children.

Cheap supermarket alcohol must therefore be more tightly controlled. All alcoholic drink should be taxed per unit of alcohol.

Drugs

Drugs are a means of escape for people who have been misled, have lost purpose, or lack the ability to face life. In Scotland drugs are not nearly as big a problem as is alcohol, but we need to respond positively to this significant social problem.

Drugs are an international, criminally controlled industry. We must consider allowing registered addicts to obtain their drugs from licensed chemists, thus removing the criminal element from the supply chain. Unlicensed drug suppliers would continue to be dealt with as criminals. In Portugal they are seeing the benefits of adopting this style of policy with a recognisable reduction in drug related crime..

Arts and Culture

Scotland has a rich and world-renowned culture, which today is alive and distinctive. A thriving, creative arts and culture sector provides jobs and economic benefit as well as improving the quality of life and attracting many tourists.

There needs to be more effective government support for both the individual and the small artistic groups who supply the bulk of the new ideas. Our national institutions such as museums, theatres, festivals and talent events require much more support with less red tape.

Language

In Scotland today there are three primary languages: Scots, English and Gaelic. Language is an important part of a nation's culture. Prior 1707 Scots was the official and legal language. It is still understood, and is a part of the local speech from the Shetlands to the Borders.

Contrary to the sceptics, Scots, including its various dialects, is a distinct language in its own right, and its recognition would increase social cohesion, cultural cohesion, as well as being distinctive and mair couthie.

Sports

There needs to be less bureaucracy to encourage greater participation in sports. Each school should have qualified physical instructors and a programme of physical activity for every pupil. There should also be access to playing fields and recreation facilities, which outwith school hours should be made available to the local community. Greater emphasis should be placed on providing swimming lessons, and inter-school sporting galas and competitions should be encouraged.

Media responsibility

As independent commercial organisations, the Scottish newspapers are entitled to adopt the political stance of their choosing -- and to suffer the severe loss of circulation which follows a refusal to recognise the groundswell of Scots opinion towards independence. On the other hand, the BBC is bound by its charter to provide a professional balance when it comes to politics, something BBC Scotland currently is manifestly failing so to do. It is also failing to provide anything approaching comprehensive news coverage across the whole nation. We should end the mandatory payment of TV licence fees to the London-controlled BBC.

Scotland needs a national broadcasting corporation with a new fit-for-purpose charter.

Planning and permissions

Planning decisions take too long, deterring inward investment, increasing costs and losing jobs from the economy. The current SNP government have attempted to improve the planning system but there has been little improvement achieved at local government level.

There should be greater devolvement of decision-making to community level, and significantly shorter timescales for decision making.



Defence

At present Scotland contributes some 9.4 per cent of the UK tax revenues, yet Scotland's share of the UK defence expenditure is less than 2.4 per cent.

So, as Scotland moves toward self-governance we shall require, and will be able to afford, a balanced Scottish Defence Force, both to protect our own territory and to meet our international humanitarian responsibilities.

A defence force comparable to similar sized countries such as Ireland and Norway will create thousands of additional jobs here in Scotland. SDA analysis indicates that independent Scotland would be able to afford operational defence funding of some £1.2 billion per year, together with a capital outlay of some £1 billion per year. [See International/ Security and Defence](#)

Volunteer Services

Scotland is well served by volunteers in every form of local and national endeavour. With local government facing years of funding cutbacks, the need for voluntary groups, charities and community partnerships to provide vital local services is growing.

A major drawback is the red-tape and bureaucracy to which all volunteer groups are being increasingly subjected. There must be a less restrictive, more flexible and common-sense approach in order to assist these volunteer groups to realise and achieve their appropriate function within our communities.

Disclosure system

The current system of disclosure, which many in the public, voluntary and private sectors are required to comply with, was meant to protect our vulnerable young, disabled and elderly. But does it?

Where is the evidence that any vulnerable person has been protected by this expensive, invasive and bureaucratic system? Is it not time that the government carried out an assessment on the performance of this system, to establish if the system is in reality doing what it was meant to?

5. Funding Government Services

Government Funding

In 2009/10 fiscal year the Scottish public services were funded by some £4.6 billion through Council Tax and Business Rates (UBR), with the remainder, some £22.4 billion being funded as a Barnett derived block grant from Westminster.

The same fiscal year total tax revenues from Scottish resources amounted to £53.4 billion with £48.8 billion being paid directly into the UK treasury. Even after the welfare costs there was still a lucrative bonus to England. Scotland also receives grants from the EU, again as only a proportion of our share (£873 millions) of the UK payments to the EU.

Fiscal Responsibility

Devolution in its current form, with no responsibility for the income side of the Scottish budget, provides no incentive for our politicians to take the decisions necessary to grow the economy, as any and all increased tax benefits would go direct to the UK treasury. The current 'one style suits all' fiscal policies, set by the UK government for the South of England, are not suitable for Scotland.

Only full fiscal autonomy to raise the money it spends will provide the necessary incentive for Holyrood to grow our economy.

Taxation

The current tax system is complicated, expensive to collect, out-dated and wasteful.

With independence, Scotland should follow the example of other successful small nations and switch to more efficient systems of revenue funding such as Flat Tax (FT) and or Land Value Rent (LVR). [See Economy/ Economy and Taxation](#)

Both FT and LVR would stimulate the production of wealth and contribute to the prosperity for the whole of our society, from the wealthiest to the poorest. The SDA advocate there should be a tax office in every city and town to deal with all aspects of taxation. VAT is an EU tax system which should be abolished and replaced by a simple sales tax, set at no more than 10 per cent.



Local Government Funding

Council Tax and Business Rates are regressive damaging taxes and should remain frozen until we recover from the current financial slump, then they should be progressively replaced by Land Value Rent (LVR). Laws must be passed to make local government progressively more self-funding, and less dependent on central government, in line with other European states.

Fuel Costs

Tax accounts for 85 per cent of the price we pay for fuel at the pumps. As an oil and gas producing nation we should have the lowest fuel prices in Europe. The sooner we are out of the union with England the sooner we can cut the taxes on fuel by at least 40 per cent; and we in the SDA advocate that the road licence fees should be included in this price, which would still enable fuel at the pumps to be under £1 per litre.

Public Service Debt

The Labour administration ran up PPP/PFI debts of some £5.08 billion for private provision of infrastructure. Hospitals and schools are among the assets which are no longer owned by the public, and which incur annual interest payments of some £980 millions by the taxpayers.

The SDA advocate that the PPP/PFI debt should be bought out and the assets reclaimed for public ownership.

Crown Estates

The Crown Estates are part of Scotland and therefore control of revenues from the Crown Estates must revert to Scotland; with the land estates and the coastal waters providing benefit to local communities, and the Continental Shelf seabed providing benefits to be used on a national scale.

Law Court Fines

At present, all fines issued by Scottish courts are paid directly into the UK treasury. The costs incurred in handling these fines are paid for by Scotland. It is time for this abuse to end and the fines collected to be paid to the Scottish treasury, and used to combat crime in Scotland.

6. Finance

Financial Sector

Scotland has been a thriving financial centre for over 300 years. It is currently recognised as Europe's fifth largest financial services centre with a turnover of some £5.6 billion and it employs more than 60,000 persons. [See Economy/ Financial Services](#)

Providing a balanced mix of services including banking, insurance, asset, and investment management, it is now well regulated, and is one of Scotland's growth areas.

Future Banking Services

The current monetary system is based on the government borrowing the funds it requires from banks. The banks charge a fee for these services and the current national debt of the UK government is some £1.4 trillion.

The SDA advocates that independent Scotland should have a monetary system based on National Credit rather than the current system of National Debt. Under such a system only the state can create money not the banks. Money would enter the public domain through the state creating the funds for public infrastructure projects. The money paid to the project works contractors would then be paid out for labour and material. Scottish Banks would be chartered as Mutuels to conduct domestic retail banking, operating with credit from deposits. Nor would they be permitted to borrow from each other. The intent being to return money to being a means of exchange and not a commodity in itself. The SDA further advocates that Scotland, following a transition period of about three years using the pound sterling, should then switch over to its own currency the Merk. [See Economy/ Financial Services](#)

Scottish Stock Exchange

The SDA advocates that Scotland should have its own stock exchange. An Edinburgh/ Glasgow based stock exchange would be beneficial to both Scotland and the North of England, providing funds at an estimated third of the costs in London. The London stock exchange - 60 per cent foreign owned - currently operates on a monopoly basis to the detriment of the remainder of the UK.



Pensions

With a growing percentage of people living longer, the traditional attitudes towards retirement and pensions need to change.

Without the millstone of the debt-ridden UK government, Scotland will have the resources to provide a basic state pension that will enable our elderly to live and enjoy a quality retirement.

The retirement age should be flexible, enabling people to decide when they choose to retire. However, there is a need for all those currently in work to save more towards their eventual pension.

An SDA analysis indicates that the current level of contributions at 3 to 4 per cent of salary from both employer and employee are insufficient to achieve an adequate life style after retirement. This anomaly therefor requires attention sooner rather than later.

7. Law, Justice and Order

Law and Justice

Scotland was traditionally a nation whose justice was based on law. The notional 'treaty' engineered by England in 1707 pretended to preserve the independence and integrity of the Scottish judicial system. Unfortunately, in practice our Law Lords seem behoven to the needs of Westminster, and we suffer the rule of political convenience. This must stop.

The creation of a British Supreme Court is a dangerous direction with much potential for the incorporation of English Law into Scotland. Scotland's answer must be to modernise our legal system and to set up our own Supreme Court, staffed by dedicated Supreme Court Appeal Judges.

New initiatives to introduce good practices from other legal systems need to be considered and adopted if suitable, while custodial sentences need to be made to fit the crime.

Policing

To provide effective policing, Scotland requires an interactive co-operative system of local police forces, augmented by national specialised units for international co-operation. We should have nationwide standardisation of administration procedures, training, staffing levels, uniforms, pay and conditions, with responsibility for actual law enforcement, funding and recruitment devolved to local authority divisional forces.

In practical terms the current system of police boards is inadequate, and there should be a small board in each local authority divisional area.

Prisons

Our prisons are overcrowded. Should we not use our prisons to hold only persons who must be dealt with severely, those guilty of crimes against the person -- adult or child, or any other innocent and any other pre-meditated violence, up to and including murder?

All other technical crimes, which involve breaching an interdict, unlawful enrichment or any form of tampering need to be reviewed for suitability of punishment. Why should the public pay for inmates to have TVs and other luxuries? If required, surely they or their friends should pay for these? Are open prisons really the best way of assisting prisoners to become fit for release into society? Should there be open prisons at all?



Discipline

Discipline in various forms is a basic necessity to maintain a balanced law abiding society. Our children need to be taught that there are limits to what is acceptable or not acceptable within our society. Yet we also need to ensure that our children are not mistreated. But do we have the correct balance?

The majority of our children are well mannered and well behaved, but a few are disruptive. There is a lack of disciplinary measures available to schools, and many parents are afraid to discipline their children for fear of the law. It is time to face up to and deal with this core problem.

It is time for the lawmakers to review the law and redress this imbalance, allowing schools and parents to administer responsible disciplinary measures without fear of prosecution. Too many children know and abuse the fact that they have the upper hand.

Specialist organisations such as SkillForce, an educational charity, are available to encourage the use of more effective ways of handling disruptive behaviour, enabling young people to learn appropriately and teachers to work in a calm and supportive environment.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is now one of the most financially profitable forms of international organised crime. It covers the smuggling of illegal immigrants for payment, procurement for prostitution, illegal and uninsured immigrant workforces, organised public begging rackets, and much more. The gangsters' victims are often immature young women, and increasingly children, as well as deprived social groups like the Romas and others.

Scotland, in particular Edinburgh, is steadily becoming a target destination for these criminals, whose activities can be combated only by cooperation with the relevant international authorities.

8. Our Nation

Scottish Independence

The British Empire is now gone, and it is time for Scotland to regain our due status as a sovereign nation. Contrary to the unionist propaganda, Scotland has never been, or needed to be, subsidised by England.

However, there is much more to the Scots' desire for independence than the purely economic argument. We have a different culture, history and language from England -- and a different way of looking at the world. We are by nature internationalist, and for us, being independent means having the freedom to take our rightful place amongst the nations of the world, and to share the responsibilities, as well as the benefits, which this will bring. [See Independence/ Scotland's Status](#)

Referendum

The SDA support the proposals of the Scottish government and will vote for Independence. The current posturing by the UK government is a fragrant violation of international law as can be read on our website under independence. [See Independence/ Self-determination](#)

Under international law the Scottish people and government have the legal right to hold such a referendum without interference from the Westminster parliament.

The SDA would advise the Scottish government to call on the proven services of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to provide a fair and unbiased monitoring service.

Perhaps it is also the time to appreciate that the younger generations are more electronically connected than the older generations. Should we not accommodate the social networking generations by enabling them to express their opinions via the social networks.



Scottish Borders

Now is the time for Scotland to demand the return of the administration of the Berwick enclave to Scotland - no transfer of sovereignty to England ever having been legally enacted. Scotland must also demand the termination of the undemocratic annexation by the Westminster parliament of 5540 sq. nautical miles of Scottish waters in the North Sea in 1999, annexed in order to claim some of Scotland's oil fields. [See International/ TNBS](#)

International Aid

It is in the interests of wealthy nations like Scotland to help others which are poorer, or in serious need. This can cover emergency assistance by Scottish civilian and military forces in the event of natural disasters and similar events. It also means regular development cooperation, of a kind which can benefit both giver and recipient in more than one sense.

Scotland has a wide range of valuable skills and experience which can be used for this purpose, and should lose no time in bringing its foreign aid programme up to the OECD standard of 0.7 per cent of GNI.

Terrorism

The world today is so integrated that another major international conflict is highly unlikely. The threats that face us nowadays are of a different nature, and include international terrorism for ideological or political motives. This has to be combated at its roots by resolving genuine grievances, and not simply by police and/or military action.

Terrorism's sources of finance, above all from illicit drug trafficking, have to be cut off. For these purposes there is no alternative to close co-operation between Scotland and the relevant international authorities, for this problem cannot be solved by any country on its own.



Exit Strategy

As Scotland moves inevitably towards regaining its sovereignty, there is a need for an agreed exit strategy from the UK. A strategy which will include a negotiated division of UK assets. Scotland contributes some 9.4 per cent of the revenues of the UK, hence the Scots own some 9.4 per cent of the collective fixed and movable assets (including financial reserves) of the UK.

The exit strategy therefore must be:

1. Provide the Scots electorate with a balanced and fact based understanding of the options provided by Self Governance (Independence from the UK and the EU).
2. A concrete decision on independence through a national referendum and a parliamentary act.
3. Negotiation on the division of the UK assets (oil, financial, military, Lewis chessmen, etc.).
4. Formulation of an administrative scheme for to handle the legacy of the UK, which must run on a joint basis (immigration, war graves, foreign representation, and many others).
5. Scotland to remain a member of the Commonwealth.

Political Parties

Do we really need them? Basically they are undemocratic and wield far too much power. Is there a viable alternative? Yes! Let us go back to basics and let the selection of candidates be done on a local constituency basis, from potential candidates resident in the constituency, standing on issues relating to the constituency.

Each registered candidate to stand as an independent and only allowed to spend a specified amount on campaigning; hold them accountable and if they don't measure up then sack them. Fantasy? No - it's called accountable democracy! Let's try it!

A Fresh Approach

The Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA) is a new political group dedicated to preparing Scotland for Independence. At present we operate as a Think Tank working to develop practical policies for

Scotland's people and communities which will provide real benefits and also enable us all to have more say in our own futures. We seek to give all Scots a chance to contribute to Scotland's future. Many Scots spend a lot on supporting their football club but nothing on improving our government.

Let us hear your views - Please - We will listen - You can make a difference

9. What the SDA proposals could mean for us

Far more say in how our country is run.

More choice and responsibility for our own lives.

A higher quality of life, greater life expectancy and better health.

A safe and secure country to bring up a family.

A more efficient and more fairly balanced tax system.

Our rights and responsibilities set out in a written codified Constitution.

Having all of Scotland's tax revenue raising and spending powers under Scots control.

You'd save some 40 pence or more on a litre of fuel.

You'd no longer have to pay a vehicle licence fee as it would be included into the price of the fuel.

A family of four would pay £31 less per week on food.

You'd pay no tax on the first £12,000 of your earnings.

In EFTA we could trade with all of Europe without being burdened by the CFP and CAP.

Most of the £843 millions we currently pay into the EU each year would be spent in Scotland.

As an EFTA/EEA member Scotland would be liable for about a £200 million contribution.

The £2000 millions lost to the EU each year under the Common Fisheries Policy would be gradually recovered with the restoration of our fishing industry.

We would be able to rebuild our manufacturing, fishing and farming industries.

Then of course we'd also have

Slimmer government and a lot less red tape.

The funds to provide better quality public and social services.

Our own currency, the 100 pence Merk, initially linked to the £ sterling.

Our own Stock Exchange and Investment Bank to provide investment to industry.

Tighter control of the regulation of our own banking and financial services.

Full Fiscal Control to grow our own economy and create more jobs and wealth.

Security and Defence Forces to protect us and provide thousands more jobs in Scotland.

The funds to rebuild our railways, roads, schools and other vital infrastructure.

A balanced immigration system to meet our needs and responsibilities within the global society.
More entrepreneurs starting their own businesses.
More medium and large companies locating in Scotland.
Scottish research being converted into jobs here in our own country.
More jobs for graduates, technicians and trades-persons here in Scotland.

However, we'd also have to deal with

The choice between lower taxes for individuals and companies, or better quality public services.
The choice between national debt and national credit.
The need to expand our economy and exports to compete within the global economy.
The need to find work opportunities for our younger generations.
Securing affordable sustainable energy sources without the current massive subsidies.
The will to challenge vested interests who oppose much needed modernisation.
Facing up to and dealing with the inequalities and deprivation which exist within our society.
Holding our politicians accountable for their performance and integrity.
Decentralising government decision-making and devolve it down to the lowest effective local level.

Our Research

Our research entails costs. We would therefore ask you to assist us by donations, or joining and assisting us as subscribing members.

Further Information

The statements you have read are based on an ongoing co-operative development programme by SDA members, their supporters and advisors. Much more in-depth articles and policies are contained within our website. Why not have your say and tell your opinions - we welcome your input.