



APRS
The Association for the
Protection of Rural Scotland

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS MAY 2021

MANIFESTO PROPOSALS – GREEN BELTS

Proposed Manifesto Wording

"We will give stronger protection to Green Belts and promote their positive management for climate, nature, landscape and recreation. We will encourage local authorities to extend existing Green Belts and to designate new ones, preventing development on Green Belt land if there is suitable brownfield land in their area."

What are Green Belts?

- Scotland's eleven Green Belts are designated in Local Development Plans as open land around, beside or within towns and cities, where there is a presumption against development
- They are an important national resource, as they protect and enhance the landscape setting of towns and cities and prevent them from merging, direct growth to appropriate locations and provide access to open space
- They often include other important designations to protect landscape, nature, informal outdoor recreation and cultural heritage

Why are Green Belts Important?

- Green Belts provide many important benefits to quality of life and well-being in addition to their planning purposes as set out above
- They contribute to tackling the climate emergency, through storing carbon in soils and woods
- They contain significant areas of prime agricultural land, important for home-grown food production, and semi-natural woodland, valuable for carbon storage
- They can provide havens for wildlife, so can help to tackle the nature crisis

Green Recovery

- During the coronavirus pandemic many people realised how much they value their local green spaces for the mental and physical health benefits derived from walking and cycling
- All green spaces provide these health benefits, but Green Belts are particularly important for this as they provide access to local countryside for urban populations, especially for disadvantaged communities with little other access to open space
- Green Belts have great potential to do even more to tackle the climate emergency and the nature crisis and to promote home-grown food, outdoor education and recreation, as part of a National Nature Network
- Valuing and managing our Green Belts is therefore an essential component of a Green Recovery programme

Public Support for Green Belts

- The purposes and benefits of Green Belts are widely understood and supported by the general public
- In a poll of Scottish residents carried out for APRS by Survation in June 2017, 74.6% of those who expressed an opinion agreed that “All Green Belt land in Scotland should have stronger protection from building development”

Threats to Green Belts

- However, the integrity of our Green Belts is under constant threat, primarily for housing development which should mostly take place on brownfield land
- Local community groups across Scotland report serious concerns about erosion of Green Belts and damage to their quality
- For example, substantial developments are currently proposed in Green Belts around Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, St Andrews and Stirling

Green Belts Action Required

- The Scottish Government should give stronger protection to Green Belts through the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- It should promote their positive management for landscape and recreation, and encourage local authorities to extend existing ones and designate new ones
- NPF4 should set out the multiple benefits of Green Belts, and should require local planning authorities to use Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans to give stronger protection to Green Belts and to manage them more effectively for the long-term benefit of local communities, the climate and nature
- The Scottish Government should apply a strict Brownfield First policy, under which local planning authorities cannot grant planning permission for building developments on Green Belt land while brownfield land remains in their area
- Shortfalls in housing supply should no longer be considered a valid reason for allowing otherwise unacceptable housing development on Green Belt land
- The way in which population forecasts and housing land supply requirements are calculated should be reviewed, as this may reduce pressure on Green Belts

APRS Green Belts Alliance

- We have recently established the [APRS Green Belts Alliance](#) to:
 - Make the case for stronger policy protection at the national level
 - Encourage local authorities to retain and enhance Green Belt areas
 - Provide a network for advice and support for organisations working to protect their local Green Belt
- Further information is provided in the Alliance’s recent [submission](#) to the Scottish Government’s Call for Ideas for NPF4, which was supported by 17 organisations

Further Information

Please contact APRS Director John Mayhew on john@aprs.scot or 07787 195690

APRS promotes the care of **all** of Scotland’s rural landscapes. APRS is a registered Scottish charity, No SC016139. www.aprs.scot

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