



# **Scottish Parliament Elections 2021**

**- a manifesto for fairer, safer,  
healthier and greener workplaces**

## **Executive Summary**

**November 2020**

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The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined, yet again but very visibly, the crucial importance of good health and safety policy and practice, from hospitals to care homes, manufacturing facilities to schools. Scottish Hazards urges that priority be given to workplace health and safety in your election manifesto.

Scottish Hazards is a registered charity whose aim is to reduce injury, ill health and death caused by work/workplaces in Scotland. Our Scottish Hazards Centre provides free and confidential information, advice, support and training to (mainly non-unionised) individual employees and groups of employees.

### Key commitments we seek from Scottish Political Parties

1. Actions taken before and during the Covid-19 crisis show that Scotland can and will take independent and positive action to protect worker health and safety. In our view only **full devolution of health and safety regulation** allowing convergence with existing devolved powers including health, environment, justice and local authorities will provide the necessary foundation for a health and safety system that protects workers and delivers justice for those impacted by health and safety failure.

**Financial implications:** Incidences of workplace ill-health and injury resulting in 7day+ absences cost society £7.64 billion; £20000 per case. Taxpayer funding for the HSE in 2019/20 was £135.5million. Scottish Hazards believes a Scottish health and safety regulator could drive down workplace injury and ill health through proactive enforcement of health and safety regulation with indirect benefits for economic activity and improved environment within and beyond the workplace.

2. A major recommendation of the 2019 Scottish Government Health and Work Strategy Review Report was to *“Establish a single, integrated National Occupational Health body for Scotland.”* We seek a commitment to make a comprehensive **Scottish NHS based Occupational Health Service** a reality.

**Financial implications:** The HSE estimated total costs of occupational ill-health and injury across the UK to be £15 billion per year. Costs for Scotland are estimated at £1.25bn. Scottish Hazards is calling for a programme of **preventative** spend to develop a national Occupational Health Service. This needs to be linked to better mechanisms for the recognition of occupational diseases in Scotland and recovery of treatment and related costs of occupational diseases from those responsible for such diseases. This would be in line with the Cost Recovery Bill currently under consultation in the Scottish parliament.

3. Support for **Scottish Government funding for our Scottish Hazards Centre**. There will be a need to expand our advice and support service to ensure fair work is available to all, especially in a time when growing the economy will be both vitally important and very difficult post-COVID.

**Financial implications:** A cautious estimate is that over the Covid period the Centre has brought health and safety improvements for at least 2000 Scottish workers. We seek £100,000 annually to maintain and expand our services.

4. To ensure all aspects of **Fair Work** as identified in the Fair Work Framework are fully implemented. We welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to improving the quality, safety and security of work in Scotland. We welcome the Framework’s emphasis on the importance of worker involvement, trade unions and partnership.

**Financial implications:** The Fair Work Framework states: *“Researchers have pointed to international evidence on the links between high quality work and good business and economic outcomes,”* and gives detailed supportive evidence.

5. As indicated in Fair Work First, to use **public sector funding streams and procurement** to drive improvements in health and safety and support for Scottish jobs, including just transition.

**Financial implications:** In making this commitment, the Scottish Government has stated: *“Adopting such practices can make businesses more competitive by improving talent attraction, reducing staff turnover and absenteeism while improving motivation and workforce engagement.”*

6. To build on the support the Scottish Government has given **Roving Health and Safety Representatives** during the pandemic and to eventually enshrine their position in law.

**Financial implications:** There is clear evidence, accepted by the Health and Safety Executive and the Government, that Trade Union organised workplaces are significantly safer than other workplaces. However, only one third of the Scottish workforce is unionised. Roving, well trained and experienced TU H&S representatives have the capacity to extend this 'union safety effect' to many workers and their employers.

7. To ensure Public Health Scotland and local public health departments work in partnership with others to ensure strong **public health action and messaging** which recognises that work and the work environment is a key factor determining the population's health, and that improving workplace health is a key part of reducing inequalities in health

**Financial implications:** During the pandemic, the inextricable links between occupational and public health have become clear: protecting the health and safety of individual workers also protects public health and the economy.

8. To support the development and adoption of a Scottish **Toxics Use Reduction Strategy** which would provide resources and tools to help businesses, local authorities and communities to find safer alternatives to toxic chemicals.

**Financial implications** The HSE estimated (2014/15) 13,000 UK deaths per year linked to exposures to hazardous substances at work. Between 1990 and 2016, companies in Massachusetts reduced toxic chemical use by 66%, by-product production by 72% and onsite releases by 92% through TUR.

9. Support for moves toward a **national free at the point of need social care service** and within that a specific commitment to the establishment of collective bargaining in the social care sector. The Fair Work Convention, along with many others, has recognised the need for "urgent interventions by policy makers, commissioners and leaders in the social care sector to improve the quality of work and employment for the 200,000 strong workforce in Scotland"

**Financial Implications:** *"In the care home sector about 12% of fees are extracted as profit. If that money was re-invested in care, a significant part of the funding shortfall for the care home sector could be met"* Nick Kempe, 2020

10. Support for proposals to amend the law on **culpable homicide** in Scotland to ensure all those responsible for involuntary deaths by homicide are prosecuted consistently, regardless of where that death occurs, whether in our communities or workplaces, large or small, serving as a deterrent and helping prevent future loss of life.

**Financial implications:** The HSE's Cost to Britain publication estimates the cost of each work-related fatality at approx. £1.7M, since the introduction of the Corporate Homicide legislation upward of 160 Scottish workers have lost their lives in fatalities at work or £272 million in 12 years. This does not, and could never, include the immeasurable pain and suffering of bereaved families affected.

11. Continue and expand support for the marking in Scotland of **International Workers' Memorial Day** each year on 28 April. We welcome the fact that the Scottish Government and Parliament recognise and support IWMD as do a majority of Scottish Local Authorities. We want to see this expanded to every Scottish local authority and to see all elected politicians supporting and joining in local commemorations.

12. To put in place a regulatory/licensing system to improve **electrical safety** in Scotland, to ensure those undertaking electrical work in homes are appropriately trained and competent

**Financial Implications:** "The Regulation of Electricians in Scotland" report produced for the Scottish Government estimates cost of a new system to be around £2M to £5M over two to three years. Set against the five-year cost of defective installations to the Scottish economy of around £75M – not to mention the potential loss of 40 lives – the report concludes that "there would seem to be a reasonable business case for action."