

The Highland Council has an annual budget of nearly £600m; it employs 12,000 people and it provides essential services for a population of 210,000 living in an area that covers a third of Scotland's landmass.

Labour believes that the electors of the Highlands are entitled to be given the chance to vote for a coherent and considered programme of policies for the Highlands.

What is the vision the Labour candidates have for the Highlands?

- ☒ A **prosperous** place, enjoying high and growing levels of employment, an increasing population and a reputation for the highest educational achievements.
- ☒ A **compassionate** place, providing the best possible services for the elderly, the disabled and the vulnerable, in our communities.
- ☒ An **inclusive** place where policies are developed to allow everyone to participate fully in the life of their communities, where people are not excluded from society by disability, poor housing, poverty, lack of access to transport or education.
- ☒ A **safe** place, with high quality police and fire services, with low crime rates, reducing levels of anti-social behaviour, where drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence are tackled, where road safety is improved.
- ☒ A **clean and uncongested** place setting an example in best recycling and renewables practice, with the superb Highland environment protected, domestic and industrial wastes recycled wherever possible, town centres meeting the needs of pedestrians and transport users.
- ☒ A **culturally rich** place, where diversity in language and dialect are celebrated, where the arts and sports are promoted.
- ☒ A **healthy** place where our people enjoy long lives of high quality, with reduced risk from the major killers, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

This manifesto, prepared for electors who seek more information than can be got into leaflets, sets out the objectives Labour Councillors will pursue on your behalf.

On the following two pages you will find index and contacts, and our candidates, by ward

Then follow our objectives, the priorities agreed amongst the Labour Candidates

Next, we set out how we intend to fund them, to put them into practice.

Lastly, we remind you of just a few of the valuable measures which have been put in place by Labour at Westminster since 1997 and by the Labour-led Scottish Executive since devolution in 1999.

The text of this document and a version with photographs of our candidates is also available on our website: www.highlandlabour.org.uk. where biographies and statements of candidates and email addresses can also be found.

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Highland Council Elections 2007 Labour's Manifesto



Our Highland Labour candidates, by Ward

Ward	Name	Labour Candidate	Phone *
1	North, West & Central Sutherland	Dave Andrews	01408 621170
2	Thurso	Roger Saxon	01847 893826
3	Wick	Jim Oag	01955 651207
4	Landward Caithness	Bill Mowat	01463 239247
5	East Sutherland & Edderton	Deirdre Mackay	01408 621114
6	Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Chris Conniff	01445 781331
7	Cromarty Firth	John MacInnes	01349 883158
8	Tain & Wester Ross	Sunny Moodie	01349 863726
9	Dingwall & Seaforth	Michael Macmillan	01349 877228
10	Black Isle	Chris Birt	01997 420013
11	Eilean a' Chèo	Vicki Samuels	01470 532 267
12	Caol & Mallaig	Mairi McLean	01687 462823
13	Aird & Loch Ness	Andrew Mackintosh	01463 236277
14	Inverness West	Caroline Parr	01463 713771
15a	Inverness Central	Tej Manda	01463 233155
15b	Inverness Central	Betty McAllister	01463 236830
16	Inverness Ness-side	Fraser Parr	01463 220720
17	Inverness Millburn	Jimmy Gray	01463 239936
18	Culloden & Ardersier	John Ford	01463 792646
19	Nairn	Ron Stevenson	01463 241382
20	Inverness South	John Holden	01463 235727
21	Badenoch & Strathspey	No candidate	
22	Fort William & Ardnamurchan	Brian Murphy	01397 700339



* In the event of difficulty in making contact at any of these numbers, try 07979 493 665. Be prepared to leave a message

Agreed Priorities

These then are the agreed priorities of the Labour candidates for the Highland Council 2007 – 2011.

1. Still Better Schools

We are rightly proud of the achievements of our young people in education. These arise from the abilities and application of pupils and teachers alike and from an instinctive recognition, by most parents, of the value of a sound schooling.

As the eleven new schools being built under PPP are delivered in the lifetime of the next Council, we are confident that the facilities in these schools will bring about even better results and that the Community aspects will lead to their quickly becoming established as assets to the whole locality.

We will continue with the new schools building programme.

We will apply the increases in funding provided by the Scottish Executive intended for Education to that Service, together with the Council's due share, with the aim of ensuring that every classroom in every school meets 21st century standards.

Our policy is to take account of the future social and economic cohesion of the communities affected when school closures or amalgamations may be proposed.

Recognising the contribution of our schools in bringing about an integration of incoming families, we will strengthen the teaching of English to pupils coming into Highland schools from abroad. We will give special emphasis to schools with an influx of children who do not speak English.

We are behind the initiative of parent forums, as a means of introducing more parents into the running of their local schools.

We welcome Scottish Labour's commitment to increasing the free hours of early education to 15 hours a week and the number of weeks to 38 a year.

2. The Voluntary Care Sector.

We recognise that vulnerable people in need of help deserve the chance to show their worth, often best achieved with the dedicated work of voluntary carers. We believe that there are clear benefits to be gained for the wider community from supporting this sector – and it represents good value for money.

We will plan to ensure that organisations currently under threat from recent Council decisions are given a secure future. Recognising their valued assistance to seriously disadvantaged members of our Highland society, we will increase

financial support to the voluntary sector, which has suffered from the strain of uncertain funding.

We will investigate the suitability of other non-profit-making organisations for the delivery of services in this sector. Of particular interest, given their experience in supporting communities, will be the report anticipated from the HIE on the development of the social enterprise.

3. Care Homes; Care in the Community : Young Carers

Our older citizens have the right to expect to be comfortable and happy in their later years. Such is the prime objective of the compassionate society we aspire to be. Even here in the Highlands, where they are valued so highly, we do not always, nowadays, have the extended families which historically afforded the best support.

Having fought the majority decision of the Council last year, we oppose the privatization of Highland Council care homes for the elderly, and are committed to finding a mechanism which will enable residential services and respite care for our most vulnerable and elderly people to continue under Council direction.

We will explore avenues for funding new homes or the refurbishment of certain existing homes in partnership with other public services and not-for-profit organisations. However, the Council should retain at least 25% of total care home provisions in the Highlands in its own ownership and control. We will pursue imaginative solutions for the provision of care in the community particularly in our more remote areas.

This being the more acceptable option not only for elderly people on their own, but also for other individuals with high support needs, disabilities or mental or physical health problems but only after genuine consultation with clients, their families and carers.

Of particular concern is the burden falling on child carers. We will strive to reduce the burden they bear.



4. Anti-social Behaviour

We will promote the use of anti-social behaviour orders and dispersal orders whenever necessary to protect our decent citizens from loutish behaviour, while, at the same time, planning to counter the causes. The success of Community wardens is welcome; and will lobby for more for the Highlands. We will urge the Council to become involved in visible Payback to the areas offenders have damaged

5. Improving our Health and Wellbeing

The National Health Service is Labour's proudest achievement, with medical treatment free at time of need, a key right of every British citizen. We will work, locally, with the Labour Party nationally to "make Poverty History."

We believe that though the health services are not the responsibility of the Highland Council, Council policies can and should to contribute to the health of our people. The new regime of liquor licensing to be run by the Council will give an opportunity to curb alcohol misuse.

By collaborating with NHS Highland, Jobcentreplus and other bodies we will play a full part in the drive to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of the Highlands through a range of policies and initiatives; not only in education, housing, social work and but also by promoting more employment and improving the general quality of life.



Healthways is an example of an imaginative initiative. We would support those seeking to promote healthy living whether by growing organic vegetables locally, encouraging older people in walking groups and the like. We will ensure that school dinners are made from wholesome foods, locally sourced where possible; and we will see to it that school children are encouraged to healthy eating choices

6. A Play Strategy for Every Highland Community; Nursery Places

We will develop a strategy to utilise Scottish Labour's promise in "For Scotland's Children" to improve play facilities for our young people, refurbishing existing or creating new play areas and facilities, appreciating the advantages of health-giving exercise for growing youngsters. Scottish Labour is committed to free nursery places for all 3 and 4-year-old children whose parents desire it and the Council has a key role in delivering this. We will endeavour to ensure that this service too offers a stimulating play environment.

7. A Vision for Housing

Our aspiration, shared with Scottish Labour, is for carbon free housing by 2016.

We recognise the pressing need for more affordable homes, particularly for young people, whether to rent or buy. Equally existing Council housing stock must be brought up to modern standards.

We will promote the Rural/ Residential Leasing Scheme as a means of acquiring more housing for those on the Council waiting list and for people qualifying as homeless persons.

Accepting, naturally, the recent tenants' vote on stock transfer we will explore whether the results, on close examination, justify an approach involving more local solutions to housing management.

We will use planning powers and partnership working with others in the public, voluntary and private sectors, firstly, to secure more land for housing (including for self-build) throughout the Highlands, and, second, to overcome the barriers to practical and necessary developments - such as the remit of Scottish Water.



Imaginative solutions will be pursued to keep housing built with public money affordable on resale.

We will pursue funding for a Highland-wide Combined Housing Register so as to make it easier for people to find social housing and to have accurate statistics of those requiring housing, with a view having more accurate and focussed information on housing and homeless statistics as a tool to press for accurate targeting to areas of need.

8. Economic Development

While the major economic drivers, such as the investment in Hydro power, Dounreay and the setting up of the HIDB have come from Labour governments, Highland local authorities, over the years, have also had a role. Currently, the Highland Council is playing a key part in encouraging economic development in a number of ways which we applaud and would continue. For example, by providing business, commercial and industrial estates over the years. and through Highland Opportunity , its Enterprise Trust.

We would continue to assist community groups to develop business ventures, and support and the role of the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust.

We will use the new planning powers enacted by the Labour-led Scottish Executive to bring into being up-to- date and flexible land use plans to ensure an ample supply of land for economic development as well as housing. We will work

in partnership with HIE and the new full employment agency to provide coherent public sector support for growing employment.

9. Making the Most of Renewables ; Highlands the Renewables Capital of the UK

It is commonsense to make full use of the natural assets which we have aplenty, in the form of renewable resources, and of the special skills base we have built up. The Highland Council area contains one of the foremost energy skill and knowledge bases in Europe . This stems from decades of practical experience: from the hydro electric schemes, to Dounreay and North Sea oil and gas.



Thousands of skilled workers were trained at the two main oil-rig yards (Nigg and Ardersier) or at associated facilities which, at their peak employed over 10,000 persons. Over 1,000 workers were graduates of Dounreay's admired engineering/ electrical apprenticeship scheme. Around 5, 000 people who developed their knowledge and skills in nuclear and the oil and gas industry are still based in the Highlands. Many currently working on contract abroad would prefer the more settled family life a well paid job at home would offer - whatever decisions the UK, Europe and the rest of the world make on how to solve the problem of future energy needs.

In the 21st century, we in the Highlands are once again going to play a pivotal role in meeting the future electricity needs of the UK, given our enormous potential for renewable energy.

Wind power is now an established technology. Subject to tough planning scrutiny of applications we support controlled development. We will actively encourage local community groups to take the initiative - and the income – for themselves, as is happening in Gigha and the Northern and Western Isles. While we are well placed to exploit manufacturing and maintenance opportunities, we must be vigilant not to let these slip. We will watch with particular interest the trial offshore turbines on the Beatrice Field

Wave power and tidal stream energy are not nearly as far advanced as wind power, but the potential for the exploitation of all three in, and around the coastline of, the Highlands is immense.

We need, as a matter of urgency, to identify centres of excellence where skills can be utilised, adapted and passed on to the next generation. Such centres for nascent technologies such as wave-power and tidal-stream energy should be based in Caithness and on the Cromarty Firth. We will actively support research

and development into those 'clean' energy sources; and we will press for contracts for research and development in these fields to be let in the Highlands.

In association with the all government and public service partners and existing or new private sector engineering and IT companies, the Highland Council should aim to secure for the Highlands the reputation of the Renewables Capital of the U.K.

We should not forget the importance of the contribution that can be made at the household level; we will support legislation to make it easier for people to install wind turbines and solar panels.

10. Infrastructure

Labour welcomes the setting up of HITRANS, Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership, tasked with putting forward a programme for efficient transport links and meeting the needs of those in the most sparsely populated areas. Highland Labour has responded to HITRANS consultative document making these points:-

- The Highlands and Islands of Scotland have problems and requirements, in terms of transport, which are unique in the UK ;
- Integration of modes of transport should be a high priority, meaning: - more freight by rail and sea; railheads at suitable ports and Inverness airport; matching bus, train, ferry, plane timetables.
- Urgent attention should be given to concluding work on pinch points in the road network where modest further expenditure will bring about improved access and travel time.
- We support initiatives to upgrade the rail network, to reopen railway stations and to improve the rolling stock.
- Remote communities on, the West coast, and on our islands, we recognise, deserve improved ferry services.
- Our emphasis on the value of working with partners will lead us to work alongside the British Waterways Board to consider the potential of the



Caledonian Canal; and with Scottish Water to secure water and sewerage where they are needed.

- On air transport we applaud the Scottish Executive for providing supporting funds for the airports at Wick and Inverness. We will work to retain and improve the quantity and quality of our air links, particularly to the near Continent, bearing in mind that the smaller turbo-prop aircraft in use have lower emissions than jets.
- We will pursue the provision of Broadband internet access to every Highland home and business, using the corporate buying power of the Council to this end.

11. Public Transport: Roads and Parking

The Council has an important role in this field. For example in subsidising local bus services, and letting school transport contracts. The Labour-led Scottish Executive's provision of free bus passes, through the Council's Service Points, for the over-60s and disabled persons is very popular and has boosted the area's tourism.

We endorse improved road and rail access at Inverness Airport and the Executive's local residents' subsidy for air fares at Wick.

Uncongested local roads and ease of parking are part of the attraction of the Highlands for the touring motorist. But the trunk roads are our business lifelines. We recognise that, despite recent expenditure more is required. Accordingly we will campaign for the following road improvements:-



- **A82** modern single carriageway from Tarbet to Inverness ;
- **A99** Latheron to Wick
- **A9** North early completion of Ord of Caithness Phase II; Bends at Cambusavie; Berriedale Braes;
- **A9** South, dual carriageway Inverness to Perth ;
- **A96** – dualled to Airport;
- **A9, A96 – A82** (Inverness Bypass) Link.

- Nairn Bypass

Almost all Highland residents use streets and roads provided by the Council and expect to see surfaces maintained in good order.

On certain roads to and in our busier towns steps also need to be taken to relieve pressures, and cut accident risk particularly at peak times. Slip roads at busy roundabouts and hard standing at road ends, to encourage car sharing, are likely to be cost effective.

However we are against car parking charges as a means of revenue earning in smaller towns where local shops and businesses can feel threatened; they should only be used to regulate excessive demand.

12. The Coming Generation

We believe in the potential, and recognise the achievements, of young people in the Highlands. We know that they can prosper and succeed when working with a successful Council. The Council is already a leader in terms of youth provision and Youth Democracy, The goals reached by our young people in education, in sport, in politics and the arts are testament to this.

We believe that certain initiatives, requiring a modest change in mind-set rather than inroads to the budget, would enhance the Council's reputation with the younger, and upcoming, voters, and, more importantly, benefit these young people. Respecting their views, we would ensure that the recommendations made by Highland young people in the recent Arbuthnot report are taken on board. Namely -- involving Highland youngsters in the democratic decision-making process earlier on in their lives by allowing them a voice and influence in their schools and communities. By doing this today we can expect young people who will flourish in that environment and - given these responsibilities - become the successful, enterprising citizens of tomorrow.



Scottish Labour will make leaving school before the age of 18 conditional on the young person engaging in further education, work, skills training or volunteering.

13. The Environment, Industry, Sustainable Development.

It is essential that we accept that climate change is upon us now and that more resources need to be devoted to dealing with its anticipated effects.

Aspirations for local Industry must respect our all-important environment and the Council's emerging policies on Sustainable Development. We recognise the difficulty of striking a balance between the perceived demands of "progress" on the one hand and the preservation or improvement of our environment on the other; however truly sustainable solutions will have our backing

We will add our voice to those pressing for the streamlining of the process of obtaining Flood Control Orders.. We are behind the Council's bid to the Strategic Waste Fund.

We appreciate the special importance of the Cairngorm National Park

We will co-operate with other public agencies and the private sector in Caithness to find solutions for the employment gap which will open up as the decommissioning of Dounreay accelerates.

We are behind the Cromarty Firth Port Authority in their vision of securing a multi-user facility at Nigg.

We will urge maximum support for this from the Council.



We recognise the importance of the Underwater Training Centre in Lochaber in providing world-class instruction to divers and others playing key roles in existing and new offshore marine energy sources

The campaign to secure internationally enforceable controls over tanker movements in the Minch and the Pentland Firth has our support.

We will work with others seeking to make the hospitality industry more attractive to local job-seekers

14. Higher Education; Lifelong Learning; Careers

We will give full backing to UHI Millennium Institute on its last lap to full University status in the lifetime of the Council to be elected on 3rd May. We recognise the value of its constituent colleges to the local students, and their communities.

If our people are to be equipped with skills which will mark them out in the global economy, we must fully accept the continuing need for lifelong learning.

We aim to expand the Council's engagement with the unions representing its workforce, with a view to affording its staff opportunities to increase their skills by

encouraging the provision of on-the- job courses. And we would hope that the Council's example in this regard will be followed by other Highland employers

We will deliver on Scottish Labour's commitment to manage the careers service as part of Council provision to ensure all our young people have the best job opportunities.

15. Council Tax

Recognising that there is no such thing as a popular tax, we believe that Council tax is a proven and efficient means of raising money for Council services. But we do not maintain it is perfect. We are open to proposals, such as increasing the number of the bands which would make it fairer We make these commitments:- we will not propose and we will not be party to a move to increase Council Tax by more than inflation for these next four years; and, we will promote further measures to reduce the burden of the tax on those on low fixed incomes, by training more front line staff to pick up and offer sympathetic assistance where it appears, for example, that available benefits are not being taken up, or energy saving measures might be available.



And they usually cut the link between the local authority and the local electorate.

Alternatives put forward to date will involve more inconsistencies and greater unfairness. Local income tax, for example is an unknown concept in Britain; the mechanism and cost of collection are not established. The wealthy can often so organise their finances as to avoid (particularly an untried) tax.

16. Sustaining Smaller Towns and Rural Communities

The enlarged wards which will come into being in this 3rd May election will mean that three or four Councillors will be able to champion the cause of the towns and rural communities in any ward. While Labour councillors will be able to call upon the support of colleagues for measures set out in this document.

We applaud the First Minister's commitment to the regeneration of Town Centres. Money is well invested in such improvements. Tourists, residents and businesses alike deserve to enjoy a more attractive environment. In the mass of challenges facing our smaller rural communities three are the subject of such promises, given to establish our commitment to do all in our power to make rural communities sustainable:-

- a) we will not allow the closure of any rural school save after the fullest, sympathetically conducted, enquiry which shall be entitled to consider the full consequences to the community of the closure;
- b) we will campaign to keep open rural post offices which are demonstrably used by significant numbers in the community, and for new services to be available from Post Offices;
- c) we will look at innovative ways to assist rural shops and filling stations.

17. Supporting Tourism; A Highland Welcome

We fully recognise the importance of tourism to the Highlands.

With unsurpassed mountain and coastal scenery the Council area includes many internationally-renowned places to which thousands are attracted. The Council improves access to natural beauty spots by providing lay-bys, car-parks, interpretation boards and paths, all of which we endorse. We recognise that visitor traffic is vital to many rural transport links, such as the Kyle and North Highland rail lines, various ferries and rural buses. Tourist income enables a range of small businesses to be viable in rural areas. Local tourist entrepreneurs provide valuable work for local trades and services, while many Highland tourist-trade workers benefited from Labour Government's minimum wage legislation.

By employment numbers, tourism is our largest economic sector. It is not only the world's fastest-growing industry, but also one of its most competitive. We will work alongside Visit Scotland in promotions to attract more visitors, particularly in their drive to attract young people from the Continent, their measures to extend the season; and generally in improving value for money and quality of service.



For the first time in decades our population is on the increase, though the balance between young and old still gives concern. We fully support the Scottish Executive policy of Job Dispersal. However, more imagination needs to be brought to bear on the "selling" of the Highlands to people whose jobs may take them to our midst

Many new residents are young people, often young couples with children, coming here from countries recently admitted to the European Union. Whether it is their intention to settle or to stay for a short time only, they are an asset, doing jobs we have not the manpower for. We have a duty to make them welcome. We will see to it that all funds available, whether from Brussels or Holyrood are sought out to provide the necessary services to these guests. We applaud our Labour MSPs initiative in securing pump-priming funding for a Polish language newspaper for the Highlands.

18. Arts, Culture, Sport

The Highlands has a vibrant arts community. Recognising the importance of the Arts and Culture for the quality of life of our people and for tourism, we will support events which showcase Highland culture. Looking to the importance of equal opportunity to participate we will aim for a fair geographic spread of facilities and activities and seek out ways to support artists and craftsmen and women in their communities.

We are keen to explore the possibilities of Public Art in the Highlands, perhaps to tie in with the Year of Homecoming 2009

We recognise the special place the Gaelic language has in our culture. Through a variety of policies and initiatives we will promote the language and the development of its culture. We applaud the Feis movement and its festivals, being aware of the pleasure and satisfaction so many have gained from it over the years.

The benefit even a modest level of sporting activity can bring to health and wellbeing is well recognised. Accordingly, schemes to extend participation will have our support, as will initiatives to foster special talent and ambition.

Our Highland landscape offers immense opportunity for challenging outdoor activity and we shall work with interested parties to develop the possibilities afforded by this natural asset



19. Supporting Primary Industries. Farming, Fishing, Forestry, Food and Drink

We will support the traditional Highland industries.

We will back crofters and farmers by encouraging purchases of local foods for school meals. We will also encourage agriculture with help to market quality products nationally and internationally. New opportunities, challenges and economic pressures face today's farmers and crofters. We will encourage the Council to help promote naturally-produced lamb and vegetables, the antithesis

of 'factory farming', and will encourage diversification such as self-catering units on poorer land

We recognise crofting as an important way of life in the crofting counties (Traditional crofting areas have been more successful at holding and increasing their populations than those where larger-scale farming is practiced.). We will seek the advice of the Scottish Crofting Foundation and other interested parties in formulating our evidence to the Scottish Executive's wide-ranging Inquiry, headed by Professor Mark Shucksmith, into the future of crofting

We will assist inshore fishing by maintaining Council-owned piers and harbours and ensuring that facilities meet modern needs, providing advice and assistance through the channels set out in para 8

The output of Highland fish-farms now far exceeds that from trawlers or creel-boats. We will support the Labour Government's successful (and continuing) efforts through the European Commission to protect local salmon producers from being undercut by state-subsidised overseas competitors in Continental markets.



Forestry often makes use of otherwise unproductive hill ground, supporting jobs directly at the planting, thinning and harvesting stages. Conifers, which are fast-growing in the Highlands, provide raw materials for saw-mills and various processes, such as the Sterling board plant at Inverness, and the Balcas facility proposed for Invergordon. Poorer-grade timber is rightly seen as a 'renewable' fuel, providing re-planting follows. We recognise the contribution made to the Highland economy by the Forestry Commission and commend the Touchwood initiative.

We support local producers and farmers markets

20. Promoting the Protective Services.

Highland Councillors play a key role on the Highlands & Islands Fire Board and the Northern Constabulary Joint Police Board, although officers are not Council employees. The past four years has seen unprecedented growth in the Highlands and Islands Fire Service. Scottish Executive investment has enabled the conversion to retained status of all 95 core fire units and Local Authority support allowed the development of the new Community Response Units across the Highlands. We are anxious to see a deeper focus on prevention, The Fire and Rescue Service, in partnership with other agencies should aim to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies while delivering an improved prevention service. The recent announcement by the Executive of £1.6m capital for the coming year will see the retained stations in Fort William and Beaulieu completed and new starts in Helmsdale and Scourie. This current year saw additional investment in larger better equipped fire engines. Highland can be justly proud of

its management of this vital service and its people in recent years and its part in making the Highlands a safer place to live and work.

We will aim to ensure that the Constabulary is adequately funded to deal with all contingencies, recognising that the Force's detection rates are a testament to its efficiency and acceptance in our Highland community. The success of Community wardens is welcome; we will lobby for more for the Highlands. We will urge the Council to become involved in visible Payback to the areas offenders have damaged.

21. Within the Council

We recognise the challenges facing the Council's workers and officials, arising from the changes of May 2007, the Budget and other pressures. We pledge to engage sympathetically with the unions representing the workforce.

Looking to the duty placed on councillors to secure Best Value, we will press for what we perceive as the appropriate level of democratic supervision of the delivery of Council services being put in place following upon these changes.

To put these priorities in place demands first, success on polling day, but also - having the funding and the know-how.

How Will We Do It

With sufficient of the electorate behind us, electing an able team of Labour Councillors, we will have power to influence, if not create, future Policies and Budgets of the Highland Council.

We recognise that contracts let and commitments given by the present Council reduce the room for manoeuvre and that essential services must always be maintained. Our proposals however mostly involve taking a fresh, thoughtful and coherent look at how the Council goes about its business – your business- - rather than simply spending more of your money.



In our alternative Budget, knocked back by the SNP the Liberal Democrats and most of the Independents present at the Budget debate this year, we proposed an additional spend of £2.m - on education, the voluntary sector and care homes. These were and are our top priorities, to be put into early effect, funded by monies from two sets of unallocated Reserves.

Where could money be saved and income increased?

- Shared services with other key partners in the Highlands will reduce overheads;
- Exploiting the Executive's investment in broadband technology will reduce costs;
- An early review (after one year) might reveal further staff savings are possible arising from the Operational Management Area set up.
- Investment in IT, notably audio- and video-conferencing, together with a culture change, will cut back on the time and expense of councillors and officials alike undertaking long journeys for short meetings.
- Officials in each Service should be charged with making an early assessment - and report - on funding to come with Scottish Executive initiatives. This would enable the Council to make best use of these initiatives.
- Where the Executive places a new task on Local Authorities,, the Council should adopt a strenuous negotiating stance for the funding to implement, based on the (proof of) the greater expense , caused by the size of the Council area and the sparsity of population.
- A tightening of procedures for brisk ingathering of debts due to the Council will result in fewer of these having to be written off.
- An expanding tax base, arising from significant population and household growth, will bring in extra cash.

Team Labour

Labour is experienced in government, at Westminster and Holyrood. Your Labour councillors would act as a team on the Council. They could legitimately call on each other's expertise and support. But they would also be part of another team, ready willing and able to help the Labour Group on The Highland Council fulfill its pledges, namely Labour MSPs, MPs and MEPs



What Has Labour Done For Me

This is a regular refrain. It is human nature to let past problems fade from recall and to concentrate on the present and future. But it does no harm, at times of decisions, to look back. We have become used to a stable economy, low interest rates for mortgages and low unemployment. Lest we forget, at the depths of the last Tory administration we faced economic crises, such as Black Wednesday, interest rates at 15%; not to mention 3 million unemployed.

Since coming to power, in 1997, Labour has brought about a transformation. This has been often gradual, untrumpeted, forgotten. But not by everybody. Did you know - do you remember?

Labour's top achievements since election to power in Westminster in 1997

- Longest period of low inflation for decades
- Minimum wage introduced and regularly raised
- More people in employment than ever before
- Devolution to Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland
- Paternity leave for fathers
- Child Benefit up by 25%
- Tax Credit system
- Sure Start helps children from low-income households
- Disability Rights Commission set up
- Winter Fuel Payment of £200.00 to pensioner households; extra £100.00 for over 80's
- On course to exceed the Kyoto target to reduce greenhouse gas omissions by 2010
- 4 weeks paid holiday as of right
- Introduced Child Trust Funds– 1.5 million now set up
- Free eye tests for over 60'
- Free entry to national museums and galleries



- Debt written off in poorest developing countries.

Achievements of the Labour-led Scottish Executive and Parliament since 1999

- Nursery places for 3 and 4 year old children whose parents want one (94%)
- ASBOs and Dispersal Orders
- 150,000 more people in jobs
- 2,000 public sector jobs relocated throughout Scotland
- Universities to get 23% increase in funding (2005-2008)
- Target of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships reached early
- 89% of Scottish graduates now stay here (79% in 1999)
- Education Maintenance Allowances for 16 - 19 year olds
- Scotland-wide free bus travel for over 60s and disabled
- Air Discount Scheme has an 88% take up
- Focus on killer diseases has brought about 30% fewer deaths from heart disease; 22% reduction in stroke deaths; and 7% reduction in deaths from cancer
- Ban on smoking in enclosed public places
- Free personal/nursing care, benefiting 72,00 Scots
- Strategy to address domestic abuse has seen an increase by 28% in available refuge places
- Licensing of private landlords and of houses in multiple occupation
- Free (non-means-tested) central heating and insulation for the elderly and disabled living in qualifying houses
- Statutory right of responsible access to land
- Scottish Water, retained in public ownership, funded (2002 – 2006) to the tune of £1.6 billion

THE END

**Highland Council Elections 2007
Labour's Manifesto**

