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GE2017: SNP promises to 'champion' green energy in Westminster



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30 May 2017



Nicola Sturgeon wants her party's Westminster MPs to back green energy deployment | Credit: First Minister of Scotland

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But Scottish National Party also likely to anger environmentalists with

unlock the UK's full potential for clean energy in its 2017 election manifesto.

The party's manifesto, launched today by party leader Nicola Sturgeon in Perth, promises that SNP MPs sent to Westminster will "work to ensure low cost green energy schemes get the long-term certainty need to support further developments and reductions in cost".

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This will include pressuring the government to clear barriers to further deployment of onshore wind, as well as adding more support for offshore wind, tidal energy and wave power. It also promises to build a favourable regulatory environment in Scotland for new energy storage schemes and make Scotland a leader in the development of carbon capture and storage technology.

On climate change, the manifesto promises the SNP will pressure the UK government to ratchet up its climate target to bring it in line with Scotland, which has promised to cut emissions by 66 per cent by 2032. The UK has promised to cut emissions 57 per cent by the same date.

However, alongside support for clean energy the SNP also expresses strong support for bolstering Scotland's oil and gas sector. In its manifesto it promises to press for more money from Westminster to encourage oil and gas firms to invest more in exploration activities and provide loan guarantees for critical oil and gas infrastructure. It also calls for more support for oil and gas companies diversifying into renewables.

"Further measures to support the industry are urgent and cannot continue to be ignored. Time and time again, the Tories have turned down our proposals on further support through late life transfers, decommissioning and exploration incentives," SNP MP ad energy and climate spokesman Callum McCaig wrote in the manifesto. "We will not let a Tory government at Westminster get away with destroying another vital Scottish industry. Our oil and gas industry can have a bright future, but it needs a UK government that is willing to act. Only strong SNP voices can ensure this happens."

In related news, the Green Party has today criticised the lack of attention paid to the environment by the major parties during the general election campaign so far.

Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats have all promised to uphold the Climate Change Act and achieve the country's climate change targets, but public debate on how these goals will be achieved has been thin on the ground in recent weeks.

The Green Party, which pledged this year to return to its core campaigning issue of the environment after focusing on social policy at the 2015 general election, has accused Labour and the Conservatives of running almost "environment-free" campaigns.

During last night's primetime leader's interviews with Jeremy Paxman, neither Conservative leader Theresa May nor Labour's Jeremy Corbyn mentioned the environment, with no questions on the topic from either Paxman or the live audience.

Co-leader of the Greens Caroline Lucas has written to Corbyn and May expressing "alarm" at the lack of debate on environmental issues.

"It beggars belief that this election has been almost environment-free when we face an air pollution crisis, the threat of an extreme Brexit and accelerating climate change," Lucas told campaigners outside Parliament today.

"Environmental protection isn't an optional extra - it must be part of any long term vision for this country's future. But shamefully it's an issue that has been conspicuous by its absence so far in this election campaign - and this has got to change."

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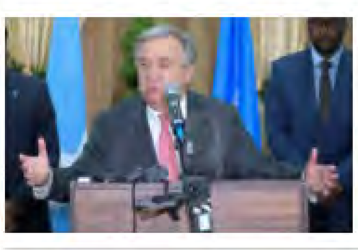
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