

Scottish elections 2016 – Response from the Scottish Labour Party

Ahead of the 2016 Scottish elections, the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) wrote to the leaders of all political parties with at least one MSP, inviting them to set out their party's policies on science and engineering.

Below is the response from the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Kezia Dugdale

Dear CaSE,

Labour believes that to meet the challenges of the 21st century we need to invest for the long term. We need to give as many young people as possible the skills they need to make their way in the world. That means addressing how we teach science in our primary schools.

To improve the life chances of our next generations will depend on Scotland making itself once again a true nation of science. Our future economy will be built on highly skilled, hi-tech jobs in science and engineering. To get a sense of the scale of the challenge, Scotland needs 147,000 engineers in Scotland by 2022. Yet just a tiny fraction of those studying engineering, science and technology are women. So unless we can bring a lot more women into these subjects we risk locking half of the population out of the high skilled, high paying jobs of the future.

That is why Scottish Labour strongly supports the CaSE call for increasing investment in science and engineering. We believe that through this investment, in education especially, could mean £2 billion more in Scottish GDP and hundreds of millions more in additional tax revenue.

This is at the heart of Labour's economic plan. By investing now we can put Scotland at the heart of future technologies and secure well paid and rewarding jobs. That signal would encourage investment and bring jobs to Scotland.

On education & skills

Labour will increase investment in all areas of education in real terms. That means increased funding for STEM teachers at all levels of education and the sustainable financing of these subjects in our world class universities. The promotion of STEM subjects will be a priority for Labour, especially to widen access for women. We do this not only to tackle inequality but because it is an economic imperative.

On Science, Engineering & Policy-Making

Labour believes that scientific evidence should be gathered, assessed and considered in policy-making decisions. This should include the reasons behind policy decisions and the relevant evidence which inform them. The Scottish Government announced a blanket ban on GM crops without even asking for

Scientific advice, without listening to, or consulting their own Scientific advisor. That is a huge failure of evidence based policy making

Labour will appoint a Chief Scientific Advisor to answer to the First Minister, not a Junior Minister. A minister will be responsible for science – from ensuring support is given to the teaching of science, to promoting STEM, to championing Scottish science at home and abroad.

Faced with the choice between using our powers or making cuts to our children's future, we choose to use our powers, that is our simple message in this election. We can make fairer choices to ask the richest few to pay their fair share, and as outline above we can pledge to invest in public services rather than cut further.

Kezia Dugdale

Leader of the Scottish Labour Party