

# BETTER NATION



## INSIDE

Greens pledge to oppose tuition fees in next Parliament following Lib Dem let-down.



The green newspaper for Mid Scotland and Fife, Spring 2011.

[www.scottishgreens.org.uk](http://www.scottishgreens.org.uk)

## RUSKELL STANDS AGAIN



## WARM HOMES LOWER BILLS



Greens push plan to insulate every home in Mid Scotland and Fife for free.

## 2ND VOTE GREEN

If just over 5% of voters in Mid Scotland and Fife give their 2nd vote to the Scottish Greens on May 5th, they will elect Mark Ruskell as their MSP.

## BOOST TRAIN SERVICES



# £6m Green Boost



Green Party MSPs have helped deliver over £6 million pounds for communities across Mid Scotland and

Fife, creating jobs and improving local services while cutting energy bills and carbon emissions.

The Climate Challenge Fund was a top Green Party manifesto promise at the last Holyrood election, which Green MSPs delivered by using their influence with the minority Scottish Government. The fund has been a hugely popular success, supporting 45 communities across the region from Stirling to St Andrews and from Fintry to Falkland.

St Andrews and Dunblane won over £350k to run home energy efficiency programmes, while Newburgh and Callander got nearly £350k to develop community wind and hydro power. Local food-growing initiatives in Perth, educational resources for schools in Fife, bike recycling and urban regeneration projects in Stirling have all been kicked off by the fund.

Top Green candidate for the Holyrood election Mark Ruskell said, "This fund is green thinking in action, securing money for communities to turn their own good ideas into a reality, boosting jobs and the environment too. We have delivered this initiative with just two MSPs at Holyrood - think what we could do with more!"



Caroline Lucas MP backs Mark Ruskell to win in Mid Scotland and Fife

**MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**  
**2<sup>ND</sup> VOTE GREEN**  
**MARK RUSKELL**

## Invest in Public Services



**Tory and SNP Ministers want you to believe there is no choice about the savage cuts they're making.**

The truth is Westminster and Holyrood are making choices - the wrong choices. Big business and well off individuals can contribute more, which would help protect vital public services instead.

Switching from council tax and business rates to a tax on land values will raise more than a £1bn a year, and the 87% of Scots who live in homes banded A-E will pay less.

This is fairer than either council tax or relying on income tax for everything, and would enable Scotland to reverse the SNP's damaging cuts and start investing in housing, education and public transport again. Cutting services in a recession is economically reckless, and hits the poorest hardest.

The Tories have always wanted a weaker public sector, and the Lib Dems are helping them deliver it. SNP Ministers meanwhile have been like rabbits caught in the headlights, unable to defend Scotland's traditional public service values and just delivering the Tory cuts agenda for them.

In this election only the Greens are setting out an honest alternative to the cuts. We need investment in education, housing and transport, not lower taxes for the rich.

# We ask Mark Ruskell

Mark Ruskell is standing for the Green Party on the regional 2nd Vote in May's Holyrood election. Mark served as Green MSP for Mid Scotland & Fife from 2003 - 2007. Here he speaks about his approach to politics.

**Why are you standing again for election to the Scottish Parliament?**

MR: I believe the Green Party offers a bold, progressive and honest type of politics and is needed more than ever. The opportunity to give voters that choice is very exciting. As an MSP I learnt a great deal about how Holyrood works and I'm passionate about using the Parliament creatively to change lives for the better. I am not afraid to put myself and my political career on the line to make that happen. I think some of our supporters who switched to other parties last time round will look back on the last 4 years and ask what has really changed for the better.

**How did you make a difference the last time you represented Mid Scotland & Fife?**

MR: I led the successful campaign in Parliament against ship-to-ship oil transfers in the Firth of Forth, brought forward legislation on climate change and regulation of GM crops, and supported campaigns on issues as diverse as stopping Trident, community land ownership, fair prices for farmers, rail station re-openings, support for the voluntary sector, and animal welfare. If the Greens are in a strong position of influence after 5th May I could achieve a lot more for communities across the region the second time round.

**How can the Greens 'win' at this election? Won't you be squeezed out by big parties like Labour and the SNP?**

MR: The biggest party in the Scottish Parliament will never be able to govern alone because of the way the voting system works. For example our two Green MSPs have been able to use crucial votes to win support for warm homes. If enough people split their votes and use their 2nd or regional vote for the Greens we can achieve much more.

**You talk about honest politics, but wouldn't you compromise your policies like the LibDems have done?**

MR: I know many people including personal friends who voted LibDem in the last Westminster election, but were shocked at how they dropped key policies such as student fees, maintaining public services and fair votes. Politics needs compromise, but parties need to be upfront about which policies are off limits in coalition talks.

**What are the big issues that you think the Greens if elected can make a difference on after May 5th?**

MR: All the other parties are arguing for cuts in public spending, which will be disastrous for the economy and for the most vulnerable Scots. Jobs are now being lost as a result, just as investment in housing and renewable energy is urgently needed. Scotland needs to be financially responsible, but we also need to raise more revenue using the Parliament's powers in a fair and progressive way.



Your local Green candidate Mark Ruskell

## RUSKELL FACTS

- Age: 38
- Lives in Doune, near Stirling, with his wife and two young sons.
- Career: Mark worked on anti-poverty and regeneration projects for councils and in the voluntary sector in his early career
- Green MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife 2003-2007, and since then has worked for the renewable energy sector
- Likes: mountain and road biking, good food and whisky, novice beekeeper

# No Tuition Fees Here

**Greens are putting free education at the top of their list of pledges for May's election.**

The commitment to free education is seen as central to investing in a fairer, culturally rich Scotland with a vibrant competitive economy.

Stirling University graduate and Green candidate Mark Ruskell said, "University for me was enough of a challenge without having to pay for fees and living costs. After the LibDem betrayals on education we owe it to Scottish students to say no tuition fees, not now, not ever."

"Education strengthens society and benefits everyone, not just students themselves. Places in our colleges and universities must be open to all with the academic ability, not just the ability to pay."

"In 1997 Labour scrapped grants for students from poorer backgrounds and introduced fees. This let the Tory/ Lib Dem coalition ramp up fees to an extraordinary £9,000 a year, including for Scots studying in England and Wales. The pressure is on Holyrood to follow suit, but Green MSPs will always vote to protect free education."

"As an MSP, Mark Ruskell represented Mid Scotland & Fife very well previously."

"Through my work as a journalist I have been very impressed by his strong lead on climate change action, and his championing of the environment and animal welfare. On 5th May I will second vote Green, to help elect Mark to Holyrood again."

Louise Batchelor  
Kinross

"I have been impressed by Mark's continued support not just for renewable energy but for the involvement of local communities in renewable energy projects."

"Second votes for Mark would mean this support would be heard in Holyrood again."

Gordon Cowtan  
Fintry

"if just over 10% of Mid Scotland & Fife voters use their Second Vote to support the Greens on election day, the region would return two Green MSPs. That's what I'll be doing."

Bruce Fummey  
Blackford

"Mark Ruskell played a key role in defeating the threat of ship-to-ship oil transfers in the Forth."

"I would like to see the Greens do well, and for Mark to get back to Holyrood."

"We need more strong and effective voices like his to resist the many continuing threats to our marine environment."

Ron Blanchard  
Retired mariner, Burntisland

# Keep Scotland Moving

## STATIONS NEEDED

**What do the communities of Leven, St. Andrews, Blackford and Bannockburn all have in common? They all need good transport links supporting jobs and business growth but currently don't have rail stations.**

But why after years of election promises from successive Lab-Lib and SNP governments in Scotland have new line extensions and stations in these communities never been built?

The answer lies in the widening gap between spending on public transport and new roads. The last Scottish budget, for example, saw investment on rail decrease by £63m while the money diverted to fund new roads continues to rise.

The commitment to double the road capacity across the Forth through a second Forth Road Bridge is a license to burn public money. We don't need a new bridge- our Forth Road Bridge can be repaired, but only if urgent action

## RE-REGULATION FOR THE BUSES

is taken now to spend an estimated £122m on the work.

But all the other parties' politicians would prefer to spend £2300m on building the new bridge as a vanity project. For a fraction of this cost, all the communities mentioned above could have new rail stations and lines creating hundreds of jobs.

Blackford for example already has a well located, but abandoned railway station on the main Glasgow-Perth line. Currently commuters from across Strathearn have to drive South to Dunblane and Stirling to fight for car parking spaces before finally getting trains to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Re-opening the station would be relatively simple but the project has constantly lost out to new road building projects in regional transport plans. Leven is another example of where local people have been abandoned by successive governments

as the perpetual promise of reinstating the rail link lies as empty as the old platform. Given the recent boost in renewables manufacturing locally a rail head for freight and people is just good green business sense.

Building new rail stations and lines is only one part of the proper transport system we need. Bringing the buses back under government regulation would ensure we can stop 'bus barons' like SNP donor Brian Souter from shutting down lifeline routes.

Despite the chaos of de-regulation, where competing operators fight each other on profitable routes while running down less profitable ones, no government has had the will to actually challenge this disastrous Tory policy.

By regulating our buses we can keep them serving the needs of communities rather than corporate profit. Imagine, they could even be scheduled to connect with the trains!



## CAROLINE LUCAS MP

In 1999 we were inspired by the success of the Scottish Greens, and we won our first seats in the European Parliament. Last year when I was elected to serve the people of Brighton Pavilion, giving the Greens our Westminster breakthrough, we knew Holyrood would be the next big opportunity.

Mark Ruskell is an outstanding candidate for Mid Scotland and Fife. Only by using your 2nd vote to elect him as part of a big group of Green MSPs will there be a strong voice in the Scottish Parliament to back public services instead of cuts, to keep tuition free, and to insulate every home in Scotland.

# Successes at Holyrood



Almost twelve years ago Robin Harper was elected as the first Green MSP, and we've achieved a lot in that time, especially over the last four years. We've made every vote matter in Parliament, and Green MSPs have played a pivotal and constructive role at the heart of Parliament.

During this session we've fought for and won funding for community projects to tackle climate change, as

well as free insulation to cut people's fuel bills and create new jobs.

Parliament also backed this country's first Green law, designed to tackle hate crimes, drawing on advice from Scotland's police forces.

We also brought improvements to the Scottish Budget year after year, redirecting spending towards public transport, energy efficiency, small business and community projects.

We secured £15m of investment in wave and tidal power - essential green industries of the future.

We helped abolish the Labour/ Lib Dem "graduate endowment", the rebranded tuition fees, and we have successfully defended public transport projects when Ministers planned to scrap them.

But sometimes the other parties have lined up to support the indefensible, and we have had to be the only voices of opposition.

Ahead of this year's Budget only the Greens set out a costed and practical package of measures to limit the SNP cuts, including raising existing taxes on big business and tackling empty commercial property.

The SNP chose instead to work with the Tories and Lib Dems to squeeze public services, and when this cuts Budget first came to Holyrood only Greens voted against.

We have also been the only party working with campaigns across

Scotland, like the one to protect Aberdeenshire families from eviction by Donald Trump, or community efforts to block damaging incinerators and opencast mines.

All the other parties have lined up to spend at least £2.3bn on an additional road bridge over the Forth even though the existing bridge can be fixed for just £122m. Only the Greens have made the prudent case for repair, which would save money to invest in schools and housing, and in repairing existing roads all over Scotland.

Whenever possible, we have worked with other parties as well to deliver real changes. But where necessary we have brought a clear Green challenge to Scottish politics. A strong Green voice on all these issues is essential at Holyrood, both to tip the balance in favour of a fairer and more sustainable Scotland, and also at times when only the Greens can provide real opposition.

## AROUND THE REGION

### STIRLING BUS BATTLE

First Group have taken over subsidised bus services from Stirling to Callander, reduced timetables and increased some fares by a whopping 75%. Stirling Greens have been arguing for Stirling Council to intervene after a series of recent bus route closures.

### SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Waste incineration is dangerous and inefficient. Perth Greens supported the successful campaign against the proposed city centre plant at Friarton, and will continue the fight against another larger one at Glenfarg to stop environmental and human health threats posed by this outdated technology.

### ST. ANDREWS HOUSING CRISIS

Fife Greens are calling for affordable housing on brownfield sites around St. Andrews. Young people, particularly on lower incomes are struggling to get access to low cost housing close to where they work.

# Save Our High Streets

**Greens have been fighting to protect our high streets from a double whammy of aggressive supermarkets and tax avoidance.**

Many towns across Scotland have suffered through a hard recession and small independent retailers have been squeezed out, with boarded up shops becoming an all too frequent sight.

Supermarkets, love them or hate them, are here to stay, but they have worsened the crisis, often pushing retailing out of town. For many who do not own cars 'out of town' also means 'out of reach'.

Greens have been calling for a more level playing field between the mega-supermarkets and the small local retailers our towns rely on.

Green MSPs supported moves to introduce a modest £30m supermarket tax. But we want to go further by introducing a Land Value Tax to replace business rates, ensuring sprawling retail parks pay a fair rate for the large spaces they occupy.

Supermarkets are only part of the problem, though, and Greens are



calling for tax loopholes for empty business premises to be closed. This would help raise much-needed revenue for public services, as well as tackling urban blight and boosting economic activity.

Green candidate Mark Ruskell explains, "This is a very simple change that could bring in more than a quarter of a billion pounds over the next session of Parliament.

"It's a disgrace that empty shops,

restaurants and even hotels are being mothballed by their owners at a time when our high streets are struggling to compete. Dunblane is one example of where tax breaks for empty properties are damaging the commercial viability of the whole centre.

"It's time to tax these property hoarders, raising much needed revenue, while helping regenerate our town centres and reducing the need for cuts in council services."



[www.msfgreens.org](http://www.msfgreens.org)

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Promoted by Nigel Bagshaw on behalf of the Scottish Green Party, both at 20 Graham St, Edinburgh, EH6 5QR, and printed on recycled paper by Trinity Mirror, Stanley Boulevard, Blantyre, G72 0BN.  
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## Can you help?

Can you help the Greens in Mid Scotland and Fife win on 5th May, and help to tackle the issues raised in this newspaper? You can make the difference!

Yes, I will help by:

- Voting Green with my second vote to elect Mark Ruskell as the Green MSP for the Mid Scotland and Fife region
- Voting Green at future local elections
- Putting up an election poster on my window
- Delivering some leaflets in my area
- Doing some paperwork, such as stuffing envelopes
- Coming to a Green social event (tick to request details)
- Making a donation
- Joining the Scottish Greens

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