

Falkirk Labour Manifesto

Local Council Elections 2017



Bo'ness &
Blackness

Grangemouth

Denny &
Banknock

Carse, Kinnaird
& Tryst

Bonnybridge
& Larbert

Falkirk North

Falkirk South

Lower Braes

Upper Braes

**Keep it Local
Keep it Labour**

Table of Contents

Building on Success	1
Councils Under Threat	1
Labour's Way	1
Our Achievements	2
Running Your Council.....	3
Continuing to Grow our Economy	3
Valuing Carers and the Cared For	3
Promoting Learning and Achievement.....	4
Providing Good Quality Affordable Housing.....	5
Improving the Environment and Reducing Air Pollution	5
Ensuring Thriving Communities	6
Staff Engagement	6
Position on Second Referendum	6

Building on Success

As we look to the future we can be rightly proud of our area's place in the country's industrial past and present. We are also recognised as a fantastic place to live and visit. A Labour led council will continue to use its powers to help create a growing local economy and new jobs, invest in our children and young people, care for the elderly and vulnerable, attack poverty, as well as ensuring other vital services like refuse collection and road repairs are not forgotten.

Councils Under Threat

For all the SNP's anti-austerity talk it is worth noting that the money the Scottish Government receives from the UK Treasury has increased over the last few years but during that time the SNP Scottish Government has cut grants to councils. At the last council elections in 2012 Falkirk Council's net expenditure was £358 million. The 2017/18 budget has an expenditure of £330 million. This cut is much greater when such things as inflation and increasing demand for services are taken into account. The Council's finance chief expects a further reduction of £70 million in real terms over the next 5 years. It is also worth remembering that Scottish Government money frequently comes with restrictions and can only be spent on certain items.

It is not just budget cuts. Police and Fire are now run nationally not locally. This has neither saved money nor improved services. If you visit a local police station the likelihood is that it will be closed and all you have on offer is a telephone on the wall. The SNP want to take more responsibilities away from councils. Already consideration is being given to our local schools being run by regional boards. Transport Scotland could be responsible for our roads. The Scottish Government will tell councils how many new homes must get planning permission. And even the proposed road closure through Ineos will be determined by Scottish Ministers not by local people.

Labour's Way

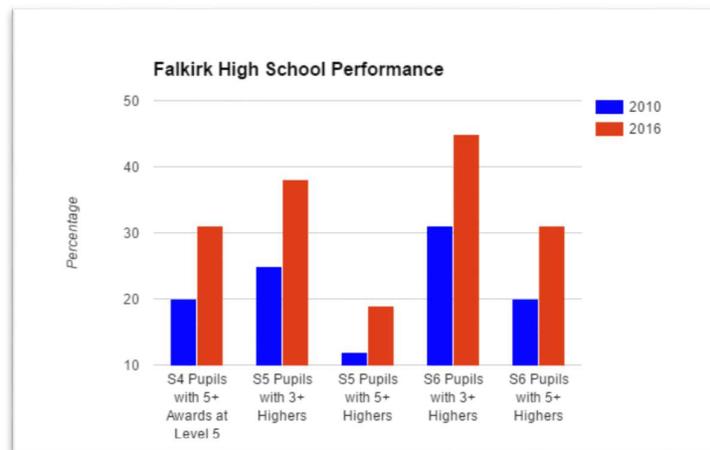
Local government should be genuinely local. Local people should be able to make real choices about the level and type of services that are provided and the amount of local tax that they pay. It is a deliberate choice to invest in education and care, to have a relentless focus on jobs, to never tire of fighting poverty, improving opportunity and the quality of life and demanding that no-one is left behind because of their disability, gender or circumstances.



Our Achievements

Despite a Scottish Government at Holyrood which does not believe in local democracy, local councils or the provision of local services, Falkirk Labour are proud of our achievements:

- We spent over £70m on schools and early years facilities; new builds, refurbishments and extensions
- We have improved youth employment and school attainment for local youngsters, in contrast to the national figures which are getting worse
- We invested £62m in council house new builds and buyback. 680 homes over last five years
- Tourism has increased by 41%
- We have a £62 million programme of investment in industry and jobs funded through the Tax Incremental Finance Initiative (TIF)
- The council has one of the highest recycling rates in the country
- We supported partnership working to deliver the Helix and the Kelpies
- We have protected our libraries and leisure facilities
- We have invested in our local parks and open spaces
- Labour led Falkirk Council has made no compulsory redundancies and all staff are paid a living wage



Running Your Council

Labour will work with our employees and service users throughout the council to improve efficiency and make sure that our scarce resources are used wisely. We will continue to oppose compulsory redundancies and privatisation of services. Any efficiency measures will be fully justified.

We will oppose any additional cuts to funding imposed on local authorities by the Scottish government and continue to fight against the persecution of those with the least through the austerity agendas of the Conservative and SNP governments

There is a democratic deficit across our communities. Decision making should lie where it belongs, with the people. We will increase the use of citizens juries, create area committees and set up a local petitions committee so that people can speak direct to the council. We will oppose the programme of continued centralisation being carried out by the SNP government.

Continuing to Grow our Economy

More support will be given to start-up businesses by delivering the Business Gateway and related packages of assistance for finance, innovation and exports. We will ensure Falkirk is an attractive area for investors by delivering the TIF, improving our town centres and preparing sites such as the Falkirk Gateway for development. We will establish an Investment Zone, focusing on areas of potential growth, the TIF sites and along the canal corridor.

Taking advantage of the increasing tourist profile of the area we will increase the number of visitors we attract through the Falkirk Tourism Partnership.

Building on our award-winning youth employment successes, we will ensure modern apprenticeships are available locally in the public sector. We will also work in partnership with Universities and the local College to ensure education continues for those who wish it.



We will ensure that the council's economic development strategy supports the creation of social enterprises and co-operatives.



Valuing Carers and the Cared For

We believe that everyone who needs it deserves the highest quality of care. We will sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter to ensure care providers are of a sufficient standard. We will ensure carers have enough time to carry out their duties, increase post diagnostic support for Dementia Sufferers and deliver more care at home for patients.

The integration of health and social care must be made to work better. We will continue to improve and expand person centered care through initiatives with our partners in the health and care sectors such as frailty clinics and ALFY (Advice Line For You). Emphasis will be placed on an earlier and more efficient Transition process. Home care assessments should be available within 3 hours and reviewed in 6 weeks. Budgets will reflect our desire to ensure that we can all remain at home for longer. We will review day care provision to ensure a mix of opportunities to meet everyone's need and ensure support to voluntary groups who reduce isolation and sustain strong healthy communities.

To help alleviate poverty we will continue to implement a poverty strategy including investing in welfare benefit advisors, as well as access to advice on-line. We recognise the benefit of everyone who receives support or care having a full income maximisation assessment. We will continue our support of credit unions and will launch a Community Finance Initiative to enable people to avoid high interest loans. We will increase support to foodbanks until they are no longer necessary.

We will continue to work with partners to ensure a positive destination for young adults with learning difficulties or additional needs.

Many of us become carers for those who cared for us. Labour will strive to ensure optimal services in respect of Carers Rights under the Carers Act. We will work to make sure that carers do not lose out if they give up work, or their house, to look after loved ones and that adequate support is given to informal and family carers.

Promoting Learning and Achievement

We will double the number of hours available for free nursery care. We recognise the importance of ensuring all families across the area have access to free and flexible early years care for their children. We will also continue to make sure nurseries have all they need to provide the highest level of education and care.



Breakfast club provision has been doubled under Falkirk Labour. We will continue to extend this while rolling out Summer holiday clubs to ensure children who benefit from free school meals, continue to do so during holidays. We will provide soft play areas in schools with no grass areas.

We will continue to invest heavily in improving attainment for children in our schools, including ways to deliver education for those who do not thrive in a traditional classroom setting.

We will continue to develop and implement strategies to improve literacy, numeracy and personal development including health and wellbeing in early life. We recognise the importance of, and will continue to invest in, specialist support for youngsters with additional needs.

Providing Good Quality Affordable Housing

As well as building new homes, we will continue our buyback scheme for former council properties. We will also continue with the highly popular replacement doors and windows scheme to existing properties.



A strategy will be developed for low demand areas and we will continue to assist people downsizing or who have complex housing needs.

We will also make more use of innovative energy generation schemes to help lower household energy bills. Where possible we will introduce more solar panels, heat capturing technology and improve energy efficiency of council homes and other council properties.



Improving the Environment and Reducing Air Pollution

To reduce the rates of dog fouling, fly tipping and other anti-social behaviour, more community wardens shall be deployed across the area. We will work more with local communities and Police Scotland to identify particular problem areas.

By investing in cycling we will help people of all ages use bikes more. We will make bikes available for hire to residents and tourists. More cycling lessons and clubs will be introduced in partnership with Falkirk Community Trust. We will invest more in infrastructure, making it easier for cyclists to get around safely.



More electric charging stations will be introduced at popular destinations. We will also increase the number of non-diesel powered vehicles in the council's fleet.



We will continue to support Community Bus initiatives, like the Bo'ness project. Additionally, we will campaign for powers to enable the Council to introduce a publicly owned bus service, focusing on areas the private sector doesn't deem profitable; school bus services and services for those that use our day care centres. We will encourage the use of more environmentally friendly powered buses, the creation of integrated transport payments and public transport interchanges.

If Police Scotland will not do it then Falkirk Labour will reintroduce wardens to better police and manage parking, particularly the misuse of disabled bays and rogue parking.



We are in favour of new train stations for Bonnybridge & Grangemouth and will campaign for such enterprises. We will also work with developers and land owners to have more community uses and housing in our town centres, using the council's compulsory purchase powers where necessary. We will carry out a review of the council's planning gain policies to make sure developers pay a fair share for new infrastructure.



Ensuring Thriving Communities

We have some great attractions, venues and facilities across the Falkirk area. We will look to maintain and improve these. We will also identify areas where there are fewer facilities to ensure every community has access to arts, culture and leisure opportunities. We will also explore opportunities to implement a tourist tax, to bring extra revenue and investment in our area.

We will investigate the creation of a new museum and network of heritage trails to tell the story of our industrial past. We will also continue to recognise and promote community involvement and volunteer groups who support culture and leisure opportunities.



We are committed to extending free wi-fi in town centres and all council facilities to assist people across our communities and attract more visitors and users.

We appreciate the importance of libraries and their staff to people. That is why we will continue to support our libraries and promote these as community hubs.

Staff Engagement

We recognise the importance of the Council's workforce in the operation of the Council and how this impacts on the services provided and the experience of the individual members of the public in receiving the service. These staff members; their experience, views, opinions and suggestions should be viewed as assets.

Falkirk Labour will work with Trade Unions to put in place structured and monitored Improvement Groups throughout Council departments, services and teams that will use staff involvement to improve the client experience, improve efficiency and ways of working and to reduce waste of increasingly scarce resources.

Position on Second Referendum

The Scottish Labour Party does not believe that it is necessary to have another divisive referendum. It would be a completely unnecessary distraction when there are so many other important problems to address. Whether there is a referendum or not, and whatever the result, councils will still need to be properly funded to provide essential services.

This Manifesto is the result of a consultation process which has seen submissions from Portfolio holders, Councillors, Party members, trade union members as well as supporters and friends of Falkirk Labour.

Thank you for your contributions and help.